

# Multisensory structured language reading instruction

Multisensory Structured Language (MSL) therapy involves direct instruction of the phonological, morphological, semantic, and syntactic layers of language and is based on the principle. MSL is based on the principals of the Orton-Gillingham approach to reading instruction.

"Multisensory teaching is one important aspect of instruction for dyslexic students that is used by clinically trained teachers. Effective instruction for students with dyslexia is also explicit, direct, cumulative, intensive, and focused on the structure of language.

Multisensory learning involves the use of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic-tactile pathways simultaneously to enhance memory and learning of written language." Institute for Multisensory language education.

"Individuals with dyslexia or a related difference require explicit, direct and systematic instruction in both oral and written language. (National Reading Panel 2007) (Australian Dyslexia Working Party document 2010) (National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy ." Australian Dyslexia Association

"Current research tells us unequivocally that struggling learners benefit: When the structure of spoken and written language, beginning with phonemes, is represented for them explicitly, sequentially, directly and systematically In the context of a comprehensive reading program"

Judith R. Birsh Catherine Ghassemi

# Content: What Is Taught

**"STRUCTURED LITERACY INSTRUCTION IS MARKED BY SEVERAL ELEMENTS.**

- **Phonology and Phonemic awareness instruction:** Phonology is the study of sound structure of spoken words and is a critical element of Structured Language instruction. Phonological awareness includes rhyming, counting words in spoken sentence, and clapping syllables in spoken words.
- **Sound-Symbol Association:** Once students have developed the awareness of phonemes of spoken language, they must learn how to map the phonemes to symbols or printed letters.
- **Syllable Instruction:** A syllable is a unit of oral or written language with one vowel sounds. By knowing the syllable type, the reader can better determine the sound of the vowel in the syllable. Syllable division rules heighten the reader's awareness of where a long, unfamiliar word may be divided for great accuracy in reading the word.
- **Morphology:** The Structured Literacy curriculum includes the study of base words, roots, prefixes, and suffixes.
- **Syntax:** Syntax is the set of principles that dictate the sequence and function of words in a sentence in order to convey meaning. This includes grammar, sentence variation, and the mechanics of language.
- **Semantics:** Semantics is that aspect of language concerned with meaning. The curriculum (from the beginning) must include instruction in the comprehension of written language." IDA

# PRINCIPLES OF INSTRUCTION: How It Is Taught

STRUCTURE LITERACY IS DISTINCTIVE IN THE PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE HOW CRITICAL ELEMENTS ARE TAUGHT.

- **"Simultaneous, Multisensory (VAKT):** Teaching is done using all learning pathways in the brain (visual/auditory, kinesthetic-tactile) simultaneously in order to enhance memory and learning.
- **Systematic and Cumulative:** Multisensory language instruction requires that the organization of material follows the logical order of the language. The sequence must begin with the easiest and most basic elements and progress methodically to more difficult material. Each step must also be based on those concepts already learned. Concepts taught must be systematically reviewed to strengthen memory.
- **Direct Instruction:** Multisensory language instruction requires the direct teaching of all concepts with continuous student-teacher interaction.
- **Diagnostic Teaching:** The teacher must be adept at prescriptive or individualized teaching. The teaching plan is based on careful and continuous assessment of the individual's needs. The content presented must be mastered to the degree of automaticity.
- **Synthetic and Analytic Instruction:** Multisensory, structured language programs include both synthetic and analytic instruction. Synthetic instruction presents the parts of the language and then teaches how the parts work together to form a whole. Analytic instruction presents the whole and teaches how this can be broken down into its component parts." IDA

# **MSL specialised literacy therapists versus tutoring**

## **MSL LITERACY THERAPIST**

- Experienced MSL therapists will use specific and individualised methods that will remediate a student's weaknesses whilst utilising their strengths.
- MSL therapists address the cause of academic struggles.
- MSL therapists focus on clear and efficient ways of thinking and remembering, using proven evidence based methods.
- MSL therapists have extensive knowledge and are trained to work with difficulties such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, ADHD, Autism, working memory problems, executive functioning and secondary issues such as anxiety.
- MSL therapists are highly qualified and experienced in the remediation of dyslexia and other literacy difficulties.
- The therapist continually assesses their student's ability to understand and apply learned concepts as individuals with dyslexia may require instruction of greater intensity and duration than typically developing readers and writers." ADA

## **TUTORS**

- Typically tutors use the same or similar educational methods that are used in the classroom.
- Regular tutors may range from HSC students through to qualified teachers.
- Tutors rarely have specific specialised training in interventions that have shown to work for students struggling in literacy.

## How to find a registered MSL therapist

The Australian Dyslexia Association will have an online registers in 2015. They can be contacted for a registry of therapists in your area. They are a not for profit organisation.

Head Office PO BOX 38 Burleigh Heads 4220 QLD AUSTRALIA

email: [dyslexia.association@gmail.com](mailto:dyslexia.association@gmail.com)

SPELD in each State are also able to provide therapists. SPELD are a not for profit organisation.

Dyslexia Support Australia advises that;

- qualifications of therapists or tutors are sighted.
- not all therapists or tutors may be an adequate match for a student's learning difficulties.
- Professional accredited and registered therapists should be sought.
- A specific MSL trained therapist should be specifically asked for when seeking information from a therapist registers.

## Resources and references

Information adapted from

- Clinical Studies of Multisensory Structured Language Education for Students with Dyslexia and Related Disorders" published by the International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council (IMSLEC). <http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/read.msl.ida.pdf>
- What instruction is appropriate? Australian Dyslexia Association <http://dyslexiaassociation.org.au/index.php?page=what-treatment-is-appropriate>
- MSL therapy vs Tutoring Language and Literacy Learning Centre Cockburn Central <https://www.facebook.com/LearnItLanguageAndLiteracy>

- Effective reading instruction for students with dyslexia International Dyslexia Association  
<http://eida.org/effective-reading-instruction/>
- Are Multisensory Instruction and Science Based Reading Research (SBRR) in Tune  
Judith R. Birsh Catherine Ghassemi <http://education.wm.edu/centers/ttac/documents/webinars/languageinstructionsupportdocs/Lesson%200%20intro/T49BirshGhassemi.pdf>
- <http://www.multisensoryeducation.net.au/what-is-msl>

## Further reading

- Independent review of the teaching of early reading Jim Rose 2006 (Rose Report) <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100526143644/http://standards.dcsf.gov.uk/phonics/report.pdf>
- The National Reading Panel (NRP) <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/nrp/documents/report.pdf>

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