

Really Great Reading for Students with Dyslexia



Really Great Reading's Phonics Suite contains three research-based programs for teaching foundational reading skills to emerging and beginning readers: *Countdown* (Kindergarten), *Blast Foundations* (Grade 1), and *HD Word* (Grades 2-12). There are also two programs, *Phonics Boost* and *Phonics Blitz*, specifically designed for older emerging or struggling readers in Grades 3-12 that require a slower teaching pace and more targeted practice with both phonemic awareness and phonics concept tasks. *HD Word* is also appropriate for older students who need to quickly fill in gaps in their decoding skills. At Really Great Reading, we wholeheartedly believe that strong foundational reading skills instruction can help struggling readers, such as those with dyslexia, overcome the reading hurdles before them.

According to the International Dyslexia Association (2015), students with dyslexia require structured literacy instruction in phonology, sound-symbol association, syllable

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instruction, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Kilpatrick (2015) believes that there are three components necessary for successful reading intervention programs: "1. Eliminating the phonological awareness deficits and teaching phonemic awareness to the advanced level; 2. Teaching and reinforcing phonics skills and phonic decoding; 3. Providing opportunities

for reading connected text." The Really Great Reading approach contains critical, evidence-based components of dyslexia instruction. Our explicit, systematic, engaging, multisensory, and developmentally appropriate programs teach students the key skills they need to become efficient and accurate decoders, which ultimately leads

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to their success not only in word identification, but also in comprehending what they read.

The International Dyslexia Association (2015) also states that instruction for students with dyslexia should be systematic and cumulative, explicit, and include diagnostic teaching. Our instruction is systematic, explicit, and multisensory. Student practice is cumulative and controlled. The easier, more foundational skills of phonological awareness, phonemic awareness (specifically segmenting and blending individual phonemes in words at first; later, manipulation of phonemes), and letter-sound fluency are taught before moving on to encoding; decoding; and phrase, sentence, and passage reading. Teachers are able to use our complimentary, diagnostic assessments to pinpoint, and then correct, their students' specific areas of weakness in decoding, phonemic awareness, letter-sound knowledge, and sight word knowledge.

At the heart of Really Great Reading's instruction is phonics; students are taught to understand the systematic relationships between sounds and the spellings of those sounds. Systematic, explicit phonics instruction is critical for students with dyslexia. In fact, Eide (2011) explains that brain research has shown that "the use of intensive phonics is the only way to teach dyslexics and learning disabled individuals how to read and is the best way for everyone to learn to read."



Although not the immediate focus of our Suite instruction, orthography and morphology are naturally enhanced when decoding is taught through our approach. Part of what we are helping students do is digest multisyllabic words by breaking them into the six syllable types. When students see patterns in these decodable chunks, affixes naturally expose themselves. Spear-Swerling (2016) indicates that “at more advanced levels of word reading and spelling, interventions should also explicitly and systematically teach structural and morphemic analysis (e.g., recognition of common prefixes, roots, and suffixes), as well as useful spelling generalizations (Lovett, Lacerenza, DePalma, & Frijters, 2012; Masterson & Apel, 2010).” In the Really Great Reading lessons, prefixes and suffixes are explicitly taught along with their meanings, and when prefixes and suffixes are isolated, base/root words are often naturally exposed and then explored.

Dyslexia is characterized by effortful and slow reading, lacking fluency (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2008). “In order to decode unknown words fluently, readers need to develop at least the following knowledge and skills to a fluent level: knowledge of sound-symbol relationships, blending of sounds into words, recognition of reoccurring patterns

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across words (phonograms), and coordination of phonemic/orthographic and meaning information to determine exactly the right word” (Torgesen, 2006). Really Great Reading lessons teach to students’ understanding rather than their memory. The lessons teach flexibility, strategies,

and common patterns rather than having students memorize a list of syllabication rules that are difficult to apply. It is important to understand that we absolutely target students’ true understanding of the underlying substructures of words: syllable types, prefixes, suffixes, base words and root words, and spelling patterns.

Because we are not targeting their memory, we are targeting their conscious understanding of these features, allowing them to recognize these patterns more fluently. It is only when a student has a conscious understanding of these features that he or she can really build up automaticity with decoding.

The International Dyslexia Association (2017) states that “it is important for these individuals [students with dyslexia] to be taught by a systematic and explicit method that involves several senses (hearing, seeing, touching) at the same time.” Throughout our programs, children are actively engaged in learning concepts using their whole

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bodies. They listen carefully to words and phonemes, move their bodies to help build their phonemic awareness, and manipulate objects during phonics instruction. The combination of those pathways into the brain seems to help students learn

the concepts faster and retain them better, both of which are major factors in our ability to move quickly through a robust and rigorous phonics scope and sequence.

We have been refining our approach for the last 10 years, and even teachers with a great deal of experience with other programs are often quick to recognize that our approach is more succinct, efficient and digestible than many other approaches. We know it works well with all students, including dyslexic students. By explicitly teaching students to play with the sounds in spoken words and then to analyze and attack those words on paper in developmentally appropriate ways, *Countdown*, *Blast Foundations*, *HD Word*, *Phonics Boost*, and *Phonics Blitz* lessons set students on the path to becoming successful decoders and, ultimately, successful and fluent readers.

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