



Help Your Child Thrive

Ontario Dyslexia Toolkit for Parents

JK to Post-Secondary

Decoding Dyslexia Ontario (DDON)
decodingdyslexiaon.org

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Dedication

This tool kit is dedicated to the parents, students and educators who are advocating for a child's right to read in Ontario schools. It is the result of our journeys seeking support and effective instruction for our dyslexic children in the education system. This tool kit brings together the information and knowledge that has proved most helpful to us in our advocacy. We hope this is helpful to you as well.

You are not alone!

Decoding Dyslexia Ontario

About this tool kit

This tool kit was created by Decoding Dyslexia Ontario parent volunteers with input from parents, students, educators, advocates, experts and professional editors from Ontario and around the world. Thank you!

Our writing and editorial committee was led by Lark Barker, Anne Boys, Natalie Gallimore and Annette Sang. They are Decoding Dyslexia Ontario founders/parent volunteers with more than a decade of experience advocating for their own children and on behalf of other families.

How to use this tool kit

1. We have designed the content to help you at each stage of your journey. Find what you need by:
 - a. Going directly to the section you want to by “clicking” on the heading in the table of contents at the beginning of this document or located on the left hand side of this document.
 - b. Hitting “Control F” on your keyboard – this brings up a search box on your computer screen – type any word into the box and it will show you where to find it in the document.

-
2. As you're scanning, look for "Top Tips" and this icon about documenting your journey:

Note:  **document, document, document**

This icon identifies when and where parents are encouraged to keep notes and documentation about meetings and services. This documentation is useful in keeping the school accountable for services and supports that have been offered. It is also crucial if parents ever need to file a complaint with their school board's human rights office or with the tribunal of Ontario.

3. If you're not sure of a word, look for it in our [glossary section](#).
4. [Printables](#): These are key documents you can print and organize into a binder (and take to meetings at your child's school, paediatrician, etc.).
5. Please feel free to share any part of this tool kit – please give credit to DDON for use of content/images.

Disclaimer

The comments and views within this tool kit are based on personal experiences and knowledge and do not constitute legal advice.

Changes to Ontario's language curriculum and related student supports are expected to change rapidly in 2022-23. This document will be updated to reflect these changes.

Contact us

Send your comments and suggestions by email to: decodingdyslexiaon@gmail.com.

Introduction

In Ontario, approximately 1 out of every 5 students struggles to learn to read because of dyslexia. This adds up to 4 or 5 dyslexic children in every Ontario classroom. While there is growing knowledge about dyslexia, many dyslexic children do not receive the instruction and support they need to become good readers and successful students. We at Decoding Dyslexia Ontario (DDON) want to share this knowledge with parents, caregivers, students, and educators so that all children receive the instruction and support they deserve!

Who we are: Decoding Dyslexia Ontario (DDON)

Decoding Dyslexia Ontario (DDON), which began in 2015, is a volunteer-based organization driven by parents and families. DDON is concerned for the thousands of dyslexic children in Ontario schools who are not receiving the reading instruction they need to succeed. DDON believes that *all* children have a right to learn to read. That matters for all children *and* for all teachers because:

1. Reading instruction that works for students with dyslexia is equally effective and valuable for all students.
2. Teachers should be provided with effective teaching instruction to ensure they can help all children learn to read.

We believe in the possibility of change. We believe advocacy will one day lead to an education system that does not view our dyslexic children as “disabled” but as capable students with gifts and talents, worthy of investment by our education system.

Decoding Dyslexia Ontario:

- spends countless hours working with families to help them access the

information they need to support their children with dyslexia

- supports parents in advocating for their children
- meets with Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) about student needs and the barriers that they face
- writes letters to the Minister of Education asking for change, and
- collaborates with other organisations in supporting parents and advocating for change

In 2017, DDON and Dyslexia Canada requested that the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) examine the discrimination that students with dyslexia face in Ontario public schools. This request led to the OHRC Right to Read inquiry, which was launched October 3, 2019. The results of that inquiry were released in February 2022.

Find us on:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Instagram](#)

[YouTube](#)

Part 1: Dyslexia

A: What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a common learning difficulty that makes it hard to read, write, and spell. It is not related to intelligence or effort. Children with dyslexia are often bright, creative thinkers who work extra hard to keep up with their peers in school. Dyslexia is often described as a “learning disability”; however, many in our community prefer the term “dyslexia.”

Dyslexia:

- ranges from mild to severe and is called a “spectrum condition”
- is often inherited, which means that dyslexia runs in families, and
- can affect other things as well as reading, writing, and spelling—such as phonological processing speed, working memory, and other executive functioning skills

Children with dyslexia may also have other “exceptionalities.” These can include dysgraphia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and giftedness.

More about dyslexia:

- Usable Minute: What Is Dyslexia? by Harvard Graduate School of Education
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2tvrJ8roa8>
- “7 common myths about dyslexia” by Amanda Morin, from Understood.org
<https://www.understood.org/articles/en/common-myths-about-dyslexia-reading-issues>
- What is Dyslexia? by University of Georgia, [short video](#)

B: Signs of dyslexia

If you suspect your child has dyslexia, ask yourself:

- Do you have a family member with dyslexia or are you dyslexic? Dyslexia is often inherited.
- Have you noticed changes in your child? Does your child say they don't like reading or school?
 - Does your child withdraw at school or act out?
 - Does your child get anxious about school or even refuse to go to school?
 - Does your child say they feel stupid or different from their friends?
- Has your child's teacher noticed early reading challenges or changes in behaviour?

More about the signs of dyslexia:

- "Understanding Dyslexia: Risks by Age" from the National Center on Improving Literacy
<https://improvingliteracy.org/sites/improvingliteracy2.uoregon.edu/files/briefs/understanding-dyslexia-risks-by-age.pdf>
- "Signs of Dyslexia" from the Yale Centre for Dyslexia and Creativity
<https://dyslexia.yale.edu/dyslexia/signs-of-dyslexia/>
- "Warning Signs of Dyslexia" from Bright Solutions for Dyslexia, by Susan Barton
<https://www.dys-add.com/resources/RecentResearch/DysWarningSigns.pdf>

Part 2: Getting Help

A: Who should you speak with?

The first step is to talk with your child's paediatrician and/or teacher. Share your concerns with them. Speech language pathologists, psychologists, and occupational therapists can all provide input on supporting your child. Your goal in speaking to any one of these professionals is to:

- identify that you are concerned with your child's development (in reading and/or in oral language skills);
- begin (or continue) the process of putting effective reading interventions into place as soon as possible; and
- identify how this professional can help you get a formal psycho-educational (PsychEd) assessment of your child's skills, and then get the instruction and support recommended.

Tips for talking to your child's teacher, doctor or other professional

You know your child and when they are struggling. However, you may find that the professional you speak with doesn't know about dyslexia. Many teachers, school administrators and paediatricians do not have training in dyslexia. With the right information, and with a good working relationship, you can help them understand your child's needs and the interventions and support that your child requires. A good working relationship is focused on shared goals for your child and respectful communication.

Code Read Dyslexia Network Australia offers tips for talking to your child's teacher. These include:

- prepare for the meeting
- ask questions
- put everything in writing
- use the meeting time wisely
- follow up
- educate respectfully

See Code Read Dyslexia Network Australia:

<https://codereadnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Code-Read-7-tips-for-meeting-with-your-childs-school.pdf>



Note: document, document, document:

As soon as you have any interaction (in person, by phone or email) with a teacher, school administrator, speech & language and/or psychology professionals, your family physician, or anyone else who has commented on your child's reading progression, **document it**.

- Write down what happened, the date, time & location that it occurred, who was present and what the outcome was
- Make sure to follow up with a written request for documentation of the meeting

Top tip: Create a binder

Create a binder that includes all key documents related to your child's learning. Make sure that it is kept up to date. The binder will become a useful tool in advocating for the support and services your child needs in the classroom.

It should include:

- written notes/records from meetings about your child's education
- examples of your child's work
- list of your child's strengths and weaknesses
- progress reports
- official report cards
- speech and language reports
- psychoeducational assessment reports
- IEP documents
- IPRC documents
- lists of key contacts and advocacy/IEP goals ([use these templates](#))
- any other documents you find useful

B: Getting a diagnosis? Do not “wait and see”!

The Ontario Psychological Association says that students can and should be identified with dyslexia as early as kindergarten (age 4 or 5). The key point is to *get support for your child as soon as possible*.

Early signs of dyslexia are often missed as people take a “wait and see” approach. Early support helps your child develop critical reading skills and boosts their self-confidence. Students who don’t receive early support for their learning challenges are at higher risk for school failure, dropping out of school, long-term reading difficulties and mental health challenges.

Identifying dyslexia early opens the doors to services and a greater understanding of your child’s strengths and weaknesses. Parents, other family members, or caregivers should be discussing ways to get a formal diagnosis at either of these times:

- By the second half of grade 1, if the child is not reading at grade level
- At any time, if the child’s mental health is impacted—for example, the child is withdrawing, refusing to go to school, crying about school, or having outbursts



Some factors that can make it harder for your child to get support are socio-economic status, race, gender, and other disabilities. These factors may lead to a missed diagnosis and lack of support, further increasing the negative impact of dyslexia for these children.

Top Tip: The “wait and see” approach *was* educational policy across Ontario. Until 2017, a child had to be 2 grade levels behind in reading in order to become eligible for reading intervention. The revised assessment and intervention recommendations from the Ontario Psychological Association (OPA) were released in March 2020. The [revised guidelines](#) discard the old “wait and see” approach, but be aware that the revisions may not have reached all Ontario schools, teachers, and other professionals.

More about identifying dyslexia and acting early:

- Decoding Dyslexia Ontario’s “Dyslexia Road Map”
<https://decodingdyslexiaon.org/2020/12/09/dyslexia-road-map/>
- “Dyslexia Help’s “Frequently Asked Questions”
<http://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/answers/faq>
- “The Human Cost of Dyslexia: The Emotional and Psychological Impact of Poorly Supported Dyslexia,” from the British Dyslexia Association
<https://cdn.bdadyslexia.org.uk/uploads/documents/Final-APPG-for-Human-cost-of-dyslexia-appg-report.pdf?v=1573557026>
- “Supporting your child at home” from the International Dyslexia Association Ontario Branch
<https://www.idaontario.com/supporting-your-child-at-home/>

C: Psycho-educational assessments

A psycho-educational assessment (often called a PsychEd) is needed to get a formal diagnosis of dyslexia. Only a psychologist can perform the PsychEd, which should note whether the dyslexia is mild, moderate, or severe. A PsychEd usually involves assessing other cognitive processes. For example, a child with dyslexia might also be diagnosed as having attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or giftedness.

A PsychEd gives caregivers, students, and educators specific information about that child's strengths, challenges, and unique learning needs. If dyslexia is ruled out, the assessment may note other reasons your child is struggling to learn to read and ways to support them.

Psychologists in Ontario usually follow the guidelines from the Ontario Psychological Association. Many psychologists also refer to information from the American Psychiatric Association. The American Psychiatric Association's reference is called *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition* (often called the *DSM-5*).

Two advantages to having a diagnosis that refers to the *DSM-5* are:

1. The *DSM-5* offers the term *dyslexia* as an alternative to the term *learning disability* when diagnosing dyslexia.
2. The *DSM-5* encourages identifying the dyslexia as mild, moderate, or severe, which is not spelled out in the Ontario Psychological Association (OPA) guidelines.

From the American Psychiatric Association's DSM 5: "Dyslexia is an alternative term [to Specific Learning Disorder – Impairment Reading] used to refer to a pattern of learning difficulties characterised by problems with accurate or fluent word recognition, poor decoding, and poor spelling abilities. If dyslexia is used to specify this particular pattern of

difficulties, it is important also to specify any additional difficulties that are present, such as difficulties with reading comprehension or math reasoning.”

More about identifying dyslexia and acting early:

- Ontario Psychological Association (OPA) Guidelines
<https://www.psych.on.ca/OPA/media/Members/Guidelines/OPA-Guidelines-for-Diagnosis-and-Assessment-of-Learning-Disabilities-03-2020.pdf?ext=.pdf>


D: Understanding the PsychEd report

The PsychEd report is the key document that will help you and your child's teachers understand their learning. The PsychEd is important because it should be referenced when discussing and creating plans for your child's learning. The report will include specific recommendations for accommodations and services that your child will need at school.

The psychologist should review the report with you. Consider what questions you have about your child's learning and note them beforehand. The meeting should give you a *clear picture* of what your child needs to succeed in the classroom in terms of the following:

- reading and learning instruction in the classroom that will support your child,
- any additional supports (such as “pull-out services” or services where your child is pulled out of class, including speech and language services),
- assistive technology, and
- accommodations.

More about understanding assessments:

- IDA Ontario - Formal Assessment for Dyslexia:
<https://www.idaontario.com/assessment-for-dyslexia/>
- “Understanding Your Child’s Psychoeducational Evaluation Report”: a 1-hour recorded webinar from 2020.*
[\(https://www.php.com/elearning/webinar-understanding-your-childs-psychoeducational-evaluation-report/\)](https://www.php.com/elearning/webinar-understanding-your-childs-psychoeducational-evaluation-report/)
- Using Assessment to Drive Literacy Instruction (IDA Ontario webinar - April 14, 2021).*  Using Assessment to Drive Literacy Instruction by Dr. Margie Gillis

(*Note - You may notice slight differences in this information because they are US sources and the US has a few different disability exceptionalities.)

- Ontario Ministry of Education - Learning for All: A Guide to Effective Assessment for All Students, K- Grade 12.

<https://files.ontario.ca/edu-learning-for-all-2013-en-2022-01-28.pdf>

The graphic features a teal border. At the top, the text "Decoding Dyslexia Ontario" is in a teal font, and "Parent Tool Kit" is in a larger, bold black font. Below the text is an illustration of a young girl with brown hair, wearing a red shirt and blue pants, sitting on the floor and reading a book. To her right is a large red backpack with yellow accents and a black strap. Below the illustration, there is a paragraph of teal text. At the bottom of the graphic, the website URL "http://decodingdyslexiaon.org/" is written in black text.

**Decoding Dyslexia Ontario
Parent Tool Kit**

Often, telling your child about dyslexia helps them to understand why they are struggling at school. This understanding can be a big relief for a child. Help them understand what dyslexia is (and is not) and that you are there to be their best advocate on this journey.

<http://decodingdyslexiaon.org/>

Part 3: Supporting Your Child at Home

Children who have dyslexia need support and understanding both at home *and* at school. Parents and caregivers can help their child understand their learning difference and thrive with it. Students can also learn how to become self-advocates.

A: Accepting and talking about dyslexia

The most important things you can do are to:

1. accept your child's reading challenge, and
2. recognize that your child is capable of learning to read

Parents and caregivers may struggle to accept either the symptoms of dyslexia or a diagnosis of dyslexia for their child; they might deny the diagnosis and/or become frustrated with the child. Recognizing and accepting dyslexia are important first steps for you, your child, and your family. To help you do so, you may want to learn about all the amazing people who have dyslexia in our world, and their important accomplishments and contributions to society.

If you or a member of your family is really struggling with acceptance, and it is interfering with the process of seeking help for your child, consider getting professional help to help you come to terms with this diagnosis.

Often, telling your child about dyslexia helps them to understand why they are struggling at school. This understanding can be a big relief for a child. Help them understand what dyslexia is (and is not) and that you are there to be their best advocate on this journey.

Here are a few resources to help you get started:

- “See dyslexia differently” video for kids, from the British Dyslexia Association (BDA): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11r7CFIK2sc>
- “For students: Dyslexia survival guide” from Decoding Dyslexia Ontario, which includes kid-friendly information, fun resources, and book suggestions: <https://decodingdyslexiaon.org/for-kids/>



B: Reading with your child at home

There is a lot *you* can do at home to support your child. The first is reading out loud together every day. Hearing stories supports a child’s vocabulary and knowledge growth. When listening to stories, parents can ask questions to check comprehension. Get access to audiobooks by visiting your public library or by subscribing to the Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA). This video explains how to use the CELA:

<https://www.idaontario.com/free-webinar-accessible-audio-e-books-centre-equitable-library-access-cela-bookshare-2/>.

Here are a few resources and tips to help you get started:

- “Games to Support Early Literacy Skills” from the Rhode Island Department of Education. This is a fun and free guide for parents and caregivers to understand and teach early literacy skills at home:
<https://media.ride.ri.gov/IAC/StructuredLiteracy/GamesToSupportEarlyLiteracySkills-Sept2020.pdf>
- “Decodable readers and text passages” from the International Dyslexia Association Ontario Branch
<https://www.idaontario.com/decodable-readers-and-text/>
- “Reading and writing” from Understood.org offers tips.
<https://www.understood.org/pages/en/school-learning/learning-at-home/encouraging-reading-writing/>
- “What Parents Can Do: The A to Z of Teaching Beginning Reading” from the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity
<http://dyslexia.yale.edu/resources/parents/what-parents-can-do/the-a-to-z-of-teaching-beginning-reading/>

C: Building your child's self-esteem

Find something that your child loves to do or has a particular skill in. Spend time on these activities, skills, or passions. Emphasising and encouraging your child's talents and interests will help them develop self-esteem and resilience, while managing stress that can often go along with dyslexia. Find role models who can encourage them in these activities as well.

Here are a few resources to help get you started:

- “Dyslexia portrait gallery” from Decoding Dyslexia Ontario
<https://decodingdyslexiaon.org/people-with-dyslexia/>
- “Promoting Self Esteem and Reducing Anxiety in Children Who Have Dyslexia” from Learning Ally
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8Ur1a-qml8>
- “Dyslexia Awareness Part 1: Module 2 – Dyslexic Strengths” from Made by Dyslexia
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4VRiQnBoWM>



Part 4: Reading Assessments and Levels

Reading assessments are typically done in the early grades, about three times a year, to see how each student is progressing in reading skills. Most Ontario schools use an assessment system such as the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) or “PM Benchmarks.” These assess **reading fluency** and **reading comprehension**. These types assessment systems use numbered or letter levels that determine what skill level a child is reading at (according to that system). For example, a child might be described as reading at a level C or J [i.e. Fountas & Pinnell (F&P) or Levelled Literacy Intervention (LLI) , or level 34 (i.e. Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) or PM Benchmark). Assessments are kept by the teacher. If you are concerned, request to see a copy. There are also research-tested diagnostic assessments which, thankfully, more Ontario educators are moving towards which comprehensively assess reading skill elements.

A: Why does assessment and reading levels matter?

Diagnostic assessment and reading levels are used to see how a child is progressing in reading skills; how a child compares to peers in the same grade, and what reading materials they will use. A child with dyslexia will often take longer to “master” these levels and move ahead, and will often remain in lower levels than their peers. For example, if 75 percent of a child’s class has moved ahead to level J readers, but your child is at level D, this reading skills gap indicates that interventions must be provided or the reading gap will only get larger. This is a red flag for reading struggles and/or dyslexia.

Reading gaps get larger over time if they are not addressed with effective intervention. This does not align with Ontario policies on the early identification of difficulties. Research over the past decade has consistently and clearly indicated that reading intervention must be

provided as soon as the reading skills gap is identified. There are two reasons for this:

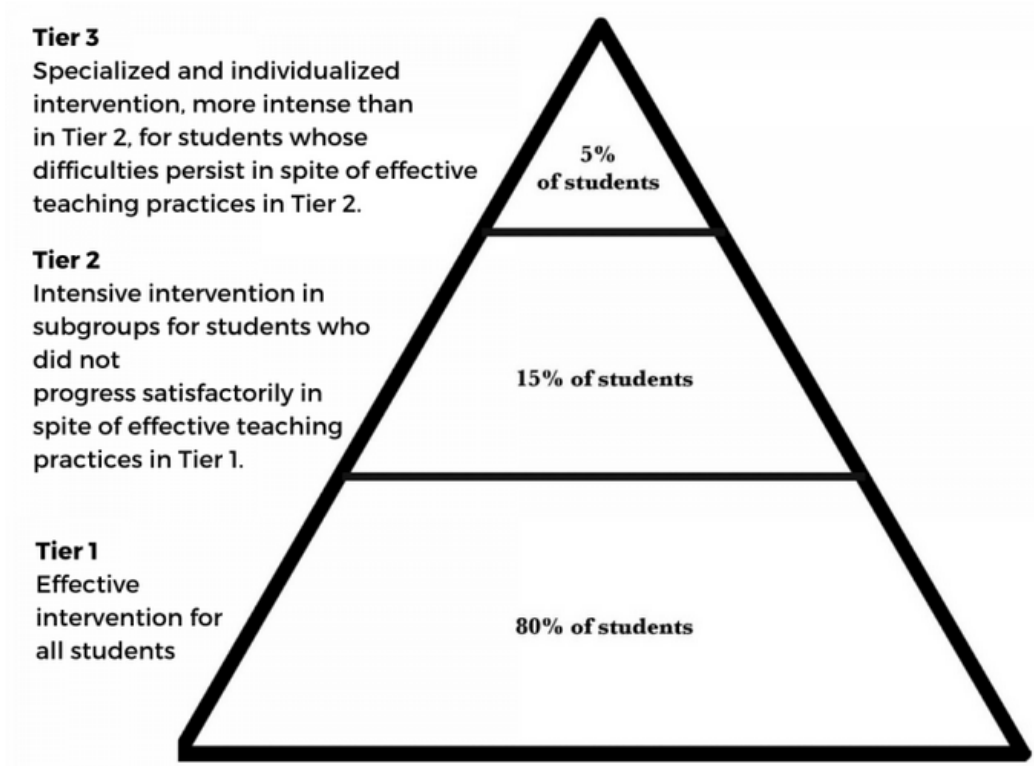
- Smaller gaps close quicker with intense, evidence-based intervention. This can help the child avoid the development of anxiety and other mental health issues associated with challenges in learning to read.
- Neurologically, all children’s brains offer greater flexibility (neuroplasticity) for language-based remediation before the age of 7. Intervention provided after grade 2 may take longer and require more intensity to close the gap.

B: Reading interventions

High-quality reading intervention programs are evidence-based, follow a learning sequence (known as *scope and sequence*), and offer ample practice for students to master skills. The intervention is generally referred to structured literacy-based intervention. The goal is to close the reading skills gap by accelerating learning and catching your child up to meet grade level reading expectations.

Reading intervention is a school board choice. Most boards tend to use the Response to Intervention Model (RTI). This means that students with greater challenges get more intensive interventions. This is shown on the diagram below. However, if a psychologist diagnoses a child with severe dyslexia, the PsychEd might state that a child should go directly to Tier 3 interventions from the outset. Having a PsychEd report is very helpful in such a case, and the parent or caregiver can advocate for Tier 3 interventions.

Chart: Three levels reading interventions



(Image from LDAO: <https://www.ldatschool.ca/response-intervention-reading-fluency/>)

Note: In most RTIs, Tier 2 refers to “programs” and Tier 3 refers to 1-1 support with a specialised teacher. A Tier 3 approach (i.e., 1-1 support) may not be available in your child’s school.

C: IEPs & IPRC

Ideally, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) should be in place by the beginning of grade 2, but most often it isn't until grades 3 or 4. After you have the IEP you should push to get it "formalized." To get the IEP formalized, you must have a diagnosis (See [Part 2](#) of this tool kit). Once you have the diagnosis, the school can arrange for your child to go before your school board's Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) to be given a formal identification as an "exceptional student."

Top Tip: The Ontario Ministry of Education policy indicates that all students suspected of having a specific learning disability (eg. in reading, writing, math, individual or co-occurring) are supposed to have an IEP developed and in place. It should include both general instructional accommodations, but also specific accommodations and goals for those learning areas with known gaps. No IEP = No Accountability.

For more information about Structured Literacy Instruction, the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) see:

- Structured Literacy Approach to Reading Instruction [and intervention] University of Georgia

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Y4Fup3s-nE>



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- Ontario Ministry of Education information about the Individual Education Plan (IEP)
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/individual-education-plans>
 - Ontario Ministry of Education IEP Standards for Development, Program Planning, and Implementation (PDF; published in 2000, but still in effect)
<http://www.oafccd.com/documents/IEPstandards.pdf>
 - IEP standards summary
<https://www.ontario.ca/document/special-education-ontario-policy-and-resource-guide-kindergarten-grade-12/appendix-e-1>
 - Ontario Ministry of Education sample IEP template
<https://www.ontario.ca/document/special-education-ontario-policy-and-resource-guide-kindergarten-grade-12/appendix-e-2>
 - Goals and needs for IEPs—described by Dr. Kelli Sandman-Hurley, Dyslexia Training Institute
<http://www.dyslexiatraininginstitute.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Dyslexia-Goals-are-Needy-Dr-Kelli-Sandman-Hurley.pdf>
 - Ontario Ministry of Education information about the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/identifi.html>
 - Justice for Children & Youth - Ontario IPRC Process, 2 minute video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyOOSzDIIFo>

Accommodations & modifications

The school may propose *modifications* on your child’s IEP. Modifications are *not* the same thing as accommodations. Usually, a modification means that your child will be “graded” according to a lower grade level than they are currently in. For a child with average intellect, there is no reason to modify the expectations. For example, if your child is in grade 6 and they are at a grade 3 reading level, if their IEP is not modified, they might get a C on

their report card. If the school modifies the grade level expectation to grade 3, then they might get an A or B+ on their report card. However, that grade aligns with the modified grade on their IEP (grade 3), not what age-appropriate grade they are in (grade 6). These modifications could result in your child being unprepared to be successful in high school, and will not keep all their educational pathways open. We cannot stress this enough: modifications are *not* the same as accommodations.

Demonstration Schools & Segregated LD Classes

The Ontario Ministry of Education operates “provincial demonstration schools,” which are predominantly boarding schools for severely learning-disabled students. These schools operate at both the elementary- and secondary-level and use the Empower and Lexia Programs to close students’ reading skills gaps. There are three English-language provincial demonstration schools in Ontario and one French-language provincial demonstration school, which is in Ottawa. Applications to the demonstration schools are made in the fall of the year before admission, often by referral from your child’s school.

For more information, see Ontario Ministry of Education: Provincial and Demonstration Schools Branch “Schools”: <https://pdsbnet.ca/en/schools/>.

An Intensive Support Program (ISP), or “LD class” might be offered to or suggested for your child. This ISP placement would be offered through an IPRC. When offered a placement in an ISP, it is important to ask the school what specific support would be offered to, and benefit, the student. For example, would a student receive access to a Tier 2 program (i.e., The Wilson or Empower programs)? Would it be easy for a student to transition back to a mainstream classroom after their reading skills gap was closed? If an ISP cannot ensure that a student’s reading skills gap will be closed, parents should not agree to this placement.

D: Reading programs (Tier 2) in Ontario schools

The Ontario Human Rights Commissions' Right to Read Inquiry Report lists many evidence-based reading interventions (Chapter 10). Included in their list:

Empower Reading Program (Empower)

Empower was developed by Toronto's Sick Kids Hospital as a one-year intervention program. It was not designed to be used repeatedly, over several years, with students. Empower was originally offered in grade 3 or grade 4, but it is now frequently offered in earlier grades because more is known about providing reading intervention before grade 2. As early as grade 1, you can ask if your school board has Empower and when your child can access it.

Top Tip: Note that Empower:

- may only be offered at certain schools and there is frequently a wait list.
- may not be intense enough to remediate moderate to severe dyslexia. If a child is a non-responder to Empower, more intense or more targeted structured literacy intervention should be provided (i.e., access to a 1-1 dyslexia tutor).

Learn more here: <https://www.sickkids.ca/en/learning/empower-reading/>

Wilson Reading System

The Wilson Reading System was created by Barbara Wilson, a Fellow of the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators (AOGPE). It was developed on the principles of Structured Literacy and has been accredited by the International Dyslexia Association. Wilson may only be offered at certain schools.

Learn more here: <https://www.wilsonlanguage.com/programs/wilson-reading-system/>

Remediation Plus

Remediation Plus, developed in Ontario, offers explicit systematic phonics instruction, including targeting phonemic awareness to build decoding and spelling skills and knowledge. Remediation Plus also can be leveraged for in class instruction.

Learn more here: <http://www.remediationplus.com/>

Lexia

Lexia is a computer-based reading intervention program. It may be offered to students in grade 4 or higher. Like Wilson, Lexia was designed based on Structured Literacy principles. Lexia was not developed as a stand-alone intervention program, and requires well-trained educators to guide the intervention and monitor its use in school. In Ontario, the provincial demonstration schools that use Empower with students often supplement learning with Lexia.

Learn more here: <https://www.lexialearning.com/>

E: Reading programs that don't work (for dyslexics)!

The OHRC's Right to Read Inquiry Report (released in February 2022) also indicated that the following programs were to be discontinued. From the [Report's executive summary](#):

“The OHRC is concerned with school boards' use of Reading Recovery® because it focuses on cueing systems, levelled readers and running records. There has been more research on Reading Recovery® than LLI. However, the adequacy of the program and research has been consistently contested. Programs without a strong evidence base or that are based on the three-cueing approach should not be used for students with reading difficulties. Ineffective programs will delay student progress.”

Levelled Literacy Intervention (LLI)

Levelled Literacy Intervention (LLI) is the reading intervention offered by most school boards in Ontario. LLI is based on the principles of Balanced Literacy/Three-Cueing and is not evidence based in remediating dyslexia.

Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery is a reading intervention program that is not evidenced based in remediating dyslexia. Most Ontario school boards have phased out the Reading Recovery program. Educators who trained in this program may continue to be reading consultants in their school boards. Reading Recovery is based upon the principles of Balanced Literacy and three-cueing.

For more information on Reading Interventions:

Right to Read Inquiry Full Report, Chapter 10 Reading Interventions

<https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/right-to-read-inquiry-report/reading-interventions>

Part 5: Advocating for Your Child In the Public School System

Kindergarten: Focus on early identification and support



Kindergarten is the ideal age for screening and identifying any learning challenges a child has. In both Junior and Senior kindergarten, your child’s teacher should be assessing your child’s reading skills throughout the year. If you suspect a problem, tell the teacher as soon as possible. You can ask if any in-class assessments indicate a challenge with early and foundational reading skills. You should tell the teacher any relevant history about your child, including:

- if your child started speaking late or accessed speech-language, or other, services, or
- if there is a family history of dyslexia

Top Tip: As early as kindergarten, parents and caregivers can advocate for support for their

child:

- If challenges have been identified, teachers are expected to differentiate their instruction to address those challenges. That means that teachers are expected to teach in different ways as needed. Parents and caregivers can ask about what support is planned for their child once specific challenges are identified.
- Many school boards have speech-language pathologists who can be accessed to provide early literacy services.
- Parents and caregivers can advocate for an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for their child in kindergarten. The Individual Education Plan should include specific learning expectations and outline how the school will address these expectations. For example, an Individual Education Plan in kindergarten might focus on phonemic awareness of individual letters or blends of letters.

More about early identification:

- “Policy on Early Identification of Children’s Learning Needs”
<https://www.ontario.ca/document/education-ontario-policy-and-program-direction/policy-program-memorandum-11>
- “An Introduction to Special Education in Ontario” from the Ontario Ministry of Education website <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/ontario.html>

Grades 1 to 3: Focus on instruction, assessment and intervention

At the beginning of grade 1, make sure that the teacher understands any struggles your child has had with early language learning and any diagnosis they may have.

If your child is struggling with sound-to-letter associations (phonemic awareness), which is common with dyslexia, ask the teacher to continue working on these skills with your child. A lot of teachers do not provide enough practice of sound-to-letter associations for dyslexic students to master these foundational skills. This may mean you have to seek outside help. ([See Getting Help in this tool kit](#))

As in kindergarten, teachers conduct reading assessments throughout the school year.

Parents and caregivers can:

- ask to be informed when the assessments take place, and
- ask for the outcomes of the reading assessments and if the child is falling behind.

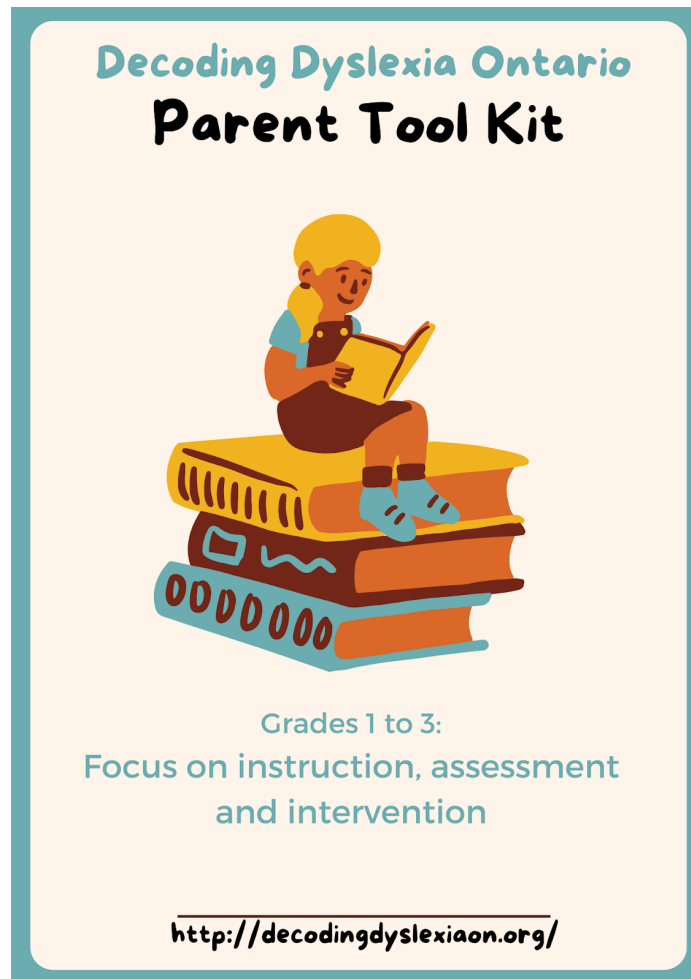
Top Tip: If you express concerns regarding reading assessments and potential signs of dyslexia, you may hear that you should “wait and see.” As mentioned earlier, do not wait and see. Now is a critical time to ask for an Individual Education Plan (IEP) to be developed for your child. By grade 2, certainly no later than grade 3, an IEP should be in place for your child.

Assistive Technology (AT)

AT helps individuals access grade-level content and demonstrate knowledge. Decoding Dyslexia Ontario does not support schools offering or providing assistive technology in grade 1, because grade 1 is the time to identify a reading challenge and close the reading skill gap.

Too frequently, assistive technology is actually used during the primary grades to replace the school board’s responsibility to teach your child to read.

For more about assistive technology, see “[Assistive Technology](#)” in the Resources section of this tool kit.



Grades 4 to 7: Focus on IEPs, assistive technology and other options



Once an IEP is in place, and with a formal diagnosis of dyslexia, it is important to advocate for an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) to formalise an Individual Education Plan. If you do not have an IEP, or have not had it formalised through IPRC, we strongly recommend acting now. The IPRC will formally/legally recognize your child as an ‘exceptional student’ which can provide greater weight when requesting special programs or supports for your child.

Top Tip: In grade 4, the focus of instruction in schools moves from **learning to read to reading to learn**. At this stage, two things should be happening if your child has difficulties with reading and writing:

- The school should continue to provide the needed Structured Literacy intervention services to close the reading or writing gap.
- You should consider assistive technology for your child. For more about assistive technology, see “Assistive Technology” from the Ontario Teachers’ Federation (OTF) Teachers’ Gateway to Special Education website:

<https://www.teachspeced.ca/assistive-technology>

By grade 4, you want the annual goals in the Individual Education Plan to be smart, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely (in short, SMART).

See below for more about these IEP goals, and examples by Dr. Kelli Sandman-Hurley of the Dyslexia Training Institute:

<http://www.dyslexiatraininginstitute.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Dyslexia-Goals-are-Needy-Dr-Kelli-Sandman-Hurley.pdf>

Your child's IEP should outline:

1. what the school is doing to close your child's reading skills gap, or
2. how to pursue appropriate school services (If necessary, this means escalating, which means connecting with special education, the principal, and then the school board. See [Part 7](#) of this tool kit.)

If your child is still struggling to learn to read, and the services being offered from your school are not closing their reading skills gap, it might be necessary to look for private support.

Grade 8: Focus on preparing for secondary school (high school)



In grade 8, a transition plan should be established for your child in consultation with both the child and parents/caregivers.

Your child and you should know which secondary school they would like to attend. Most students attend their “home secondary school,” which is determined by their postal code. Many Ontario public secondary schools offer varying programs such as gifted, French immersion, specialty music, and International Baccalaureate. It is important to understand these programs and options, what interests you and your child, and what courses will be required starting in grade 9 for the program at the target high school. This is determined in grade 8 and might involve tours and information sessions, as well as applications. Students with dyslexia should be able to attend specialty high schools such as high schools for athletics or the arts. Courses within these schools should be accessible and available.

When planning for high school, the ideal objective is to take academic-level courses. This keeps all educational pathways (to university or college) open to your child. If the school suggests that you or your child should “lower their expectations” or claims that you “aim

too high,” this is ableism, a form of discrimination. (For more see the *Policy on Ableism and Discrimination Based on Disability*, from the Ontario Human Rights Commission: http://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Policy%20on%20ableism%20and%20discrimination%20based%20on%20disability_accessible_2016.pdf)

Such statements indicate that the school does not understand that dyslexic students often have average to above-average IQ, and are capable of taking academic-level courses with the right accommodations and support.

Top Tip: In grade 8, students and parents should meet with the new high school to fully understand supports. Some school boards offer preparation courses the summer before high school. Investigate if such courses are available in your school board. Finally, you should discuss and consider whether taking summer courses could benefit your child, as many Ontario school boards offer in-person summer school. If these are not available, consider getting outside tutoring/remediation to address skill gaps to prepare your child for grade 9.

For more information, see “Transition Plans” from the Ontario Teachers’ Federation (OTF) Teachers’ Gateway to Special Education website: <https://www.teachspeced.ca/transition-plans>

Secondary school: Focus on thriving, self-advocating and choosing a path



Secondary school is a good time for students to learn how to advocate for themselves, which becomes critical when they start post-secondary education and work. Parents and caregivers should involve their child in reviewing their IEP so they can understand the plan and ask for the supports and accommodations they need. This is necessary because some teachers might not initiate direct support and accommodations (such as being able to write examinations in a private room, with a computer, or with extra time).

High school differs from previous grades and stages in other key ways:

- Most high schools have resource rooms and/or guidance personnel. A resource/student success room may have special education staff that will provide support services. The way this support is offered differs from board to board.
- In grade 11, another transition plan should be developed—one that plans for what is required to exit high school with opportunities and goals intact.
 - “Transition plans are a required component of Individual Education Plans

(IEPs). Students on IEPs who are 14 years of age and older require a transition plan as part of their IEP to plan for post-secondary activities, except for students who are solely identified with giftedness.” (source:

<https://www.teachspeced.ca/transition-plans>)

- o See page 24, 32 and 33 of the Ministry of Education “Transition Guide”:
<http://www.oafccd.com/documents/transitionguide.pdf>
- By grade 11, students should be thinking about post-secondary plans. What is it that they want to do after they finish high school (i.e., university, trade-school)? For example see: <https://ldadvisory.com/>
- When researching and choosing post-secondary schools for your child, it is important to look at the types of support services that will be offered to them at any given school. Note: some post-secondary institutions offer more substantial support services than others.
- If your child wants to attend post-secondary school, a new PsychEd report may be required to ensure they can access and receive accommodations there. High school will not always provide free PsychEd assessments for students transitioning to post-secondary schools. You may need to look for a psychologist outside of the school system to provide a private assessment.
- When your child applies to post-secondary institutions through the OUAC online portal, they can choose to identify as a student with a disability and share their IEP. This is important because this is how post-secondary institutions become aware of their needs and accommodations.

Post-Secondary: Ensuring accommodations and supports for success



In post-secondary, students will be advocating for themselves with your parent/caregiver support in the background. Post-secondary accommodations may differ from what was available in high school and will differ from school to school. Many universities often provide the same accommodations that the student received in high school. However, some universities may be more reserved in setting guidelines around what accommodations and services students can access.

For more information, refer to the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s policy about post-secondary education and the duty to accommodate students with disabilities. This is an important policy if a student feels they have not received the accommodations or supports they require:

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/opportunity-succeed-achieving-barrier-free-education-students-disabilities/post-secondary-education>

Part 6: Advocating for Support at School

“All parents are advocates and leaders in the lives of their children. They advocate for their children's well-being, and grow as leaders as their children grow, and as they develop as parents.”

Source: [Head Start, The National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement](#)

Your role as a parent-advocate begins the moment you suspect your child needs help learning to read. You should request to meet with your child's teacher about how they will help. To be an effective advocate, you will need to learn about dyslexia and how it impacts your child, so that you can request the support and accommodations your child needs to close the reading skills gap.

Begin by speaking to your child's teacher (as early as kindergarten or grade 1). It may take more than one conversation to get the support your child needs. If your school board only offers interventions that are ineffective for dyslexic students (e., LLI), you will need to talk to them about other services and supports that will be used to teach your child to read. You can and should escalate your concerns to the principal if your child is not getting the support they need.

You will need to know about your child's right to read and what they are entitled to in their school under Ontario law. The Ontario *Human Rights Code* guarantees that your child has a right to an education without discrimination, because of a disability:

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h19#BK19>

The Ontario Human Rights Commission's (OHRC) website offers important information that explains what this law means for your child. See the OHRC's Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities released in 2018:

http://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Policy%20on%20accessible%20education%20for%20students%20with%20disabilities_FINAL_EN.pdf

Top Tip: Many school board employees may not understand their obligations under the Ontario *Human Rights Code* and this policy, and so **you should**.



Note: document, document, document

Document Everything:

Keep a record of all communication and correspondence you have with the school, including phone calls, emails, meetings, etc. This will create a “paper trail” of dates, questions and answers, actions, and results. Document the *whole* journey for your child by also including school records and report cards. Make notes, including the date and time, of each interaction. Keeping records helps you work toward getting what your child is guaranteed in policy and/or law and holds the professionals involved accountable.

Questions for your school and your school board management:

Here are some sample questions you may ask as you advocate for your child at different stages:

- I have noticed my child is struggling with their reading; tell me what you are seeing in the classroom. Are they keeping up with their peers?
- What are you doing in the classroom to help my child learn to read? What method(s) do you use to teach reading and what materials are used?
- Will my child be caught up to classmates within a year?

-
- My child is still falling behind. I want them to be taught how to read. How do you propose doing this?
 - Can my child be provided a PsychEd assessment so that we can understand why they are struggling to learn to read?
 - Can we develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that outlines how they will be taught to read and supported in the classroom? (See [Part 4, IEPs](#), in this tool kit)
 - Have the learning expectations for my child been modified on their IEP? (Warning: Children with dyslexia should NOT have learning expectations modified: they should be taught to read. See [Part 4](#) in this tool kit for more about modifications versus accommodations.)
 - Can my child go before the School Board Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)?

Depending on the answers to these questions, and your own personal circumstances, you may want to do the following:

- Access private tutoring (See [Part 8](#) in this tool kit)
- Arrange for a privately completed PsychEd assessment (See [Part 2](#) in this tool kit)
- Consider transferring your child to a specialty private school to avoid the challenges and barriers within the public school system (See [Part 8](#) in this tool kit)

Part 7: Advocating & Escalating

Escalation 1: “What if the public school does not help my dyslexic child?”

If you are not satisfied with the solutions your school has offered your child, you should raise your concerns beyond your child’s principal.

After the principal, you would next reach out to:

- the school’s superintendent
- the school board’s head superintendent of special education/learning supports
- your school board’s Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC): the LD representative
- your school board’s Human Rights office, and then
- the director of the school board

Top Tip: when writing to, or meeting with, members of a school board, always involve another person by taking them with you to the meeting or copying them on an email. This way, you have another person who can verify what was said in these conversations regarding your child.

Escalation 2a: Ontario Ombudsman

If you are still unsatisfied after attempting to get appropriate reading intervention services from your school board, you can contact the office of the Ontario Ombudsman:

<https://www.ombudsman.on.ca/home>. The Ombudsman’s office “promotes fairness, accountability and transparency in the public sector by investigating public complaints and systemic issues within [the Ombudsman’s] jurisdiction.”

If you eventually need to file a complaint with The Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO), you will be asked if you have contacted the Ontario Ombudsman first, so be sure to do so.

The following should be sent to the Ombudsman's office via post or email:

- Write a letter/email to the Ombudsman that describes how your child has been denied support or services at school. Be sure to attach copies of any letters or emails that you have received from the school board indicating a denial of services and/or supports that are required (e.g., as outlined by their PsychEd Assessment, IEP, and/or IPRC documentation).
- In the email, ask the office of the Ontario Ombudsman to intervene on your child's behalf.
- Copy the school board employees you have been communicating with on this email. You might also copy your school trustee and the Ontario Minister of Education through www.edu.gov.on.ca.

For more information about the Ontario Ombudsman, see "Ombudsman Ontario, What We Do, Topics, Education": <https://www.ombudsman.on.ca/what-we-do/topics/education>.

Escalation 2b: Ontario Special Education Tribunal (OSET)

The OSET "hears appeals from parents or guardians who are not satisfied with the school board's identification or placement of a child with exceptional learning needs," and "only after parents have completed all possible appeals at the school board level under the *Education Act*." Note: **The OSET is limited to addressing IPRC issues**, so if you have other challenges (e.g., wait-lists or failure to provide evidenced-based instruction/intervention), this tribunal DOES NOT hear these common complaints. For more

information: <https://tribunalsontario.ca/oset/>.

Escalation 3: Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO)

Escalating to the [HRTO](#) should be a family's last resort, as it is a long and demanding process, which often includes a hefty price tag.

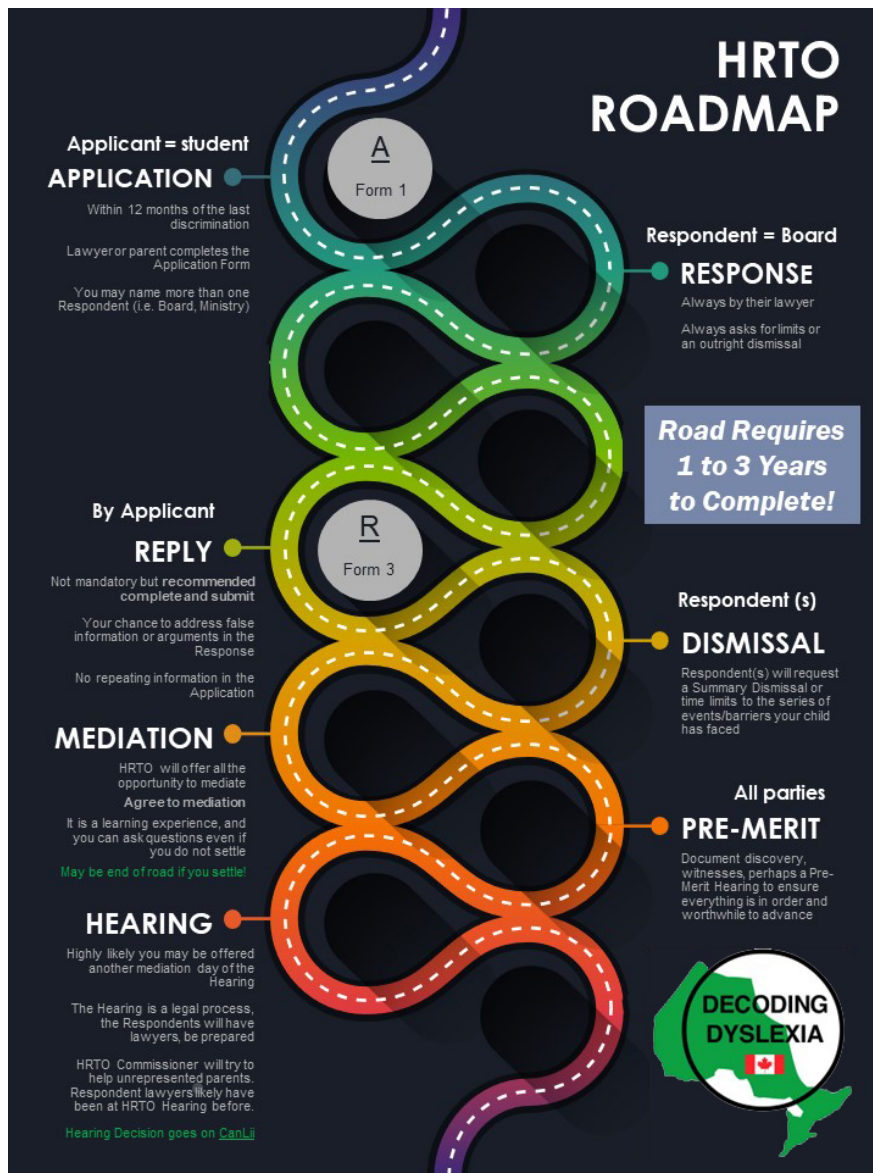
Representation and Costs at the HRTO

Anyone who has been through the process of escalating to the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario will confirm that this path is demanding. You (the Applicant) may be provided legal representation from the [Human Rights Legal Support Centre \(HRLSC\)](#) but it is not guaranteed. HRLSC legal representation ends if the Applicant (that's you), does not successfully mediate. Hiring your own lawyer to represent your complaint (called an Application) to the HRTO can cost \$250 to \$400. If you are offered free (pro bono) legal help, it may be prudent to take it.

Note: even if you win your case, your legal costs are not reimbursable. That means your legal costs will not be part of the "settlement" that you win.

Steps to File a Complaint with the HRTO

DDON has created a visual roadmap to help you navigate the process of filing a complaint to the HRTO:



Items to note in this Road Map are:

- The “Applicant” is listed as the student, but a parent/legal guardian must apply on behalf of the child, who is a minor.
- Minors are anonymized (meaning their names are not revealed to the public) to protect their privacy.
- Applicants often speak for themselves but may be represented by lawyers.
- About 80 to 90% of Applicants settle at mediation.
- At a point of mediation (usually before the Hearing), if an Applicant is successful at mediation, the mediated agreement is final.
- Before signing a draft mediated agreement, the Applicant should have a lawyer review the draft settlement. Decoding Dyslexia Ontario has been told that Applicants without lawyers have been told to sign a mediation agreement immediately at the Mediation. **We recommend delaying and requesting that a lawyer review the draft mediated settlement agreement before signing.**
- The mediated settlement agreement cannot be appealed after it is signed by both parties (Applicant and Respondent(s)).
- Institutions will likely ask for a “blanket” Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA), which means that you cannot discuss the events that led to the HRTO complaint, the Respondent(s) or any individuals noted in the supporting documents, and the outcome (settlement). Variations to the NDA can be negotiated, including the ability to speak about the events that led to the complaint, and the actual complaint, in general terms. Negotiating this in your NDA allows others in the dyslexia community to benefit from the outcomes of your complaint.
- If the Applicant does not mediate and is eventually successful at the HRTO hearing,

the Respondent(s) is/are allowed to appeal to the regular Ontario appellate court system.

- If the Respondent appeals,
 - the application may be held up for many more years (i.e., Moore v. BC Education):
<http://www.ccdonline.ca/en/humanrights/litigation/Moore-Case-Key-Findings-9Nov2012#:~:text=On%20November%209%2C%202012%2C%20the,the%20service%20of%20public%20education>
 - the Applicant cannot represent themselves in the Court of Appeal, therefore requiring a lawyer to represent as the appeal works its way up through the court system.

For more information:

- The Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO): <https://tribunalsontario.ca/hrto/>
- Human Rights Legal Support Centre: <http://hrlsc.on.ca/en/welcome>
- “Navigating the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario: An Overview of the HRTO Process” by David Doga, 2020:
<https://www.canlii.org/en/commentary/doc/2020CanLIIDocs1950#!fragment/zoupio-Toc59714551/BQCwhgziBcwMYgK4DsDWszlQewE4BUBTADwBdoAvbRABwEtsBaAfX2zgFYBOAdgEYALBw58AIABpk2UoQgBFRIVwBPaAHI14iITC4ECpao1adekAGU8pAEKqASgFEAMg4BqAQQByAYQfjSYABGOKTsoqJAA>

Part 8: Private Tutors and Private Schools

In our experience, Ontario's public schools have not provided structured literacy-based reading instruction in class or the necessary and intense structured literacy-based reading intervention that children with dyslexia require.

Decoding Dyslexia Ontario strongly recommends that parents and caregivers explore possibilities *outside* of the public education system to support their child. This might include private tutoring or private schools.

Private Tutoring

Remediation support for dyslexia is recommended at a minimum of two hours weekly. There are private tutoring centres and individual tutors who offer their reading intervention services for a fee. Reading intervention can be provided in-person or online (virtually). Not all programs or interventions are effective for remediation of dyslexia and are therefore a waste of time and money.

For more information on literacy intervention for dyslexia, please consult the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) which establishes standards, and even tests and accredits reading interventions: <https://dyslexiaida.org/accredited-teaching-training-programs/>.

Finding a qualified tutor can be very hard. Make sure the tutor is qualified to address the specific needs of students with dyslexia. It is important that parents check the qualifications of their tutor. The Ontario branch of the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) posts questions and answers about finding the right professional, and maintains a list of certified dyslexia tutors. The list can be accessed at <https://www.idaontario.com/hiring-a-professional/>.

Some additional options include:

- **Scottish Rite Learning Centres**—There are free or low-fee learning reading intervention services offered by the Scottish Rite Learning Centres. These centres offer structured literacy based reading intervention. Note: there are often waiting lists for these services. Check with your local centre through the Scottish Rite Learning Centres web page: <http://www.srcf.ca/learning-centres/>.
- **Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario**—Some chapters of the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) offer access to tutors and to summer programming. Check with local chapters through the LDAO web page (<https://www.ldao.ca/contact-us/ldao-chapters/>).

Private schools

There are some private schools that offer programs for students with dyslexia. If you consider a move from the public education system to a private school, consider the impact this will have (i.e., the social & academic well-being of your child, family finances, transportation). Note: there is little government support to offset the high cost of private school tuition.

For more information see:

- The Decoding Dyslexia Ontario (DDON) web page “Learning to read: Schools, tutors, resources”
<https://decodingdyslexiaon.org/dyslexia-friendly-reading-instruction-and-schools/>
- The Reading Well: A Virtual Well of Dyslexia Resources website and a list of schools for dyslexia in Canada
<https://www.dyslexia-reading-well.com/schools-for-dyslexia-canada.html>

Part 9: The OHRC's Right to Read Report

On February 28, 2022, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) released the Right to Read Inquiry report, the result of a three-year investigation into the systemic discrimination facing students with dyslexia/reading disabilities in Ontario's public schools. The inquiry found that "Ontario is not fulfilling its obligations to meet students' right to read...[and] that Ontario is systematically failing students with reading disabilities and many other students." (OHRC, executive summary, p. 6.).

The report puts forth some important recommendations, including that:

- The Ministry of Education, faculties of education & school boards explicitly recognize the term "dyslexia"
- The Ministry of Education work with an external expert or experts to revise Ontario's Kindergarten Program, Language Curriculum, and related instructional guides to remove use of cueing systems for word reading and instead require mandatory explicit, systematic and direct instruction in foundational word reading skills
- The Ministry of Education mandate and standardise evidence-based screening on foundational skills focusing on word-reading accuracy and fluency [and]...to screen every student twice a year from Kindergarten Year 1 to Grade 2 with valid and reliable screening tools
- The results of early screening can help identify students at risk of failing to learn to read words adequately, and to get these children into immediate, effective evidence-based interventions.
- Wait times for psychoeducational assessments be completed in an equitable and timely way

-
- A psychoeducational assessment must never be required for accessing interventions and accommodations

There are 157 recommendations contained in the OHRC's Right to Read Report that, while not legally binding, contain recommendations based on the rights of students with disabilities protected by the Ontario Human Rights *Code*. These rights belong to your child and it is important for you to be aware of these rights as you advocate for their needs at school. DDON recommends having a copy of, at the very least, the Executive Summary to refer to in meetings with school professionals, particularly when it comes to screening, IEPs, interventions, accommodations, and modifications.

OHRC Right to Read Inquiry Report, Executive Summary:

<https://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Right%20to%20Read%20Executive%20Summary%20OHRC%20English%200.pdf>

OHRC Right to Read Inquiry Report, Executive Summary audiobook (stream or download):

<https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/right-read-inquiry-report/executive-summary-audiobook>

OHRC Right to Read Inquiry Report, Full Report:

<https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/right-to-read-inquiry-report/introduction>

OHRC Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities (2018):

<https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-accessible-education-students-disabilities#overlay-content=en/policy-employment-related-medical-information>

Part 10: Advocating for All Children

Once you are confident in your knowledge of dyslexia and advocacy, consider reaching out to help other parents and caregivers of dyslexic children.

Ways to help and advocate include:

- using the word “dyslexia,” which
 - raises awareness and ends the stigma, and
 - helps children get instruction and support specifically suited to dyslexia
- providing evidence-based information to teachers, administrators, and other professionals (see links to resources from [IDA Ontario](#))
- meeting with other parents and caregivers who have similar concerns
- sharing your story of dyslexia on social media, and
- meeting with your school board trustee or MPP to help them understand what dyslexia is and how it impacts the lives of people in their school community and in their riding (see our [MPP/Trustee Tool Kit](#))

Part 11: Glossary

Accommodations—Accommodations are adjustments made to allow a student to demonstrate knowledge, skills and abilities without lowering learning or performance expectations and without changing what is being measured (e.g., providing text in audio-format when academic knowledge, e.g., history, biology, literature, is the target skill being measured). Accommodations may include more time to take a test, a quiet place to work or being allowed to record a lesson rather than taking notes. Accommodations do not change the content of instruction, give students an unfair advantage, or change the skills or knowledge that a test measures. Accommodations make it possible for students with dyslexia to demonstrate their learning without being hindered by their disabilities.

Definition taken from: <https://dyslexiaida.org/accommodations-for-students-with-dyslexia/>

Assistive technology (AT)—Assistive technologies include devices and applications that help people with dyslexia with various tasks including: reading; spelling; writing; organisation of ideas; note-taking; time management. Assistive technologies can be very helpful for students to access or produce larger volumes of reading/writing material as required in older grades or post-secondary schools. Definition taken from

<https://www.idaontario.com/assistive-technologies/>

Balanced Literacy— is a “philosophical orientation that assumes that reading and writing achievement are developed through instruction and support in multiple environments using various approaches that differ by level of teacher support and child control” (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Although phonics, decoding, and spelling may be taught in word study lessons, the skills typically are not emphasized and rarely taught systematically (Spear-Swearling, 2019). Rather, students are encouraged to use word analogies and pictures or context to identify words. Balanced Literacy instruction is focused on shared

reading (e.g., the teacher reads aloud to students and asks questions about the text), guided reading (e.g., students read texts at their current ability level and discuss them with the teacher in homogeneous groups), and independent reading (e.g., students self-select books to read on their own).”

<https://iowareadingresearch.org/blog/structured-and-balanced-literacy>

Curriculum—The Ontario curriculum sets out the knowledge and skills that are taught to students at each grade level in Ontario’s publicly funded elementary and secondary schools. The Ontario curriculum is organised into separate curriculum documents, each of which covers specific subject(s). Each curriculum document is further divided into grade levels, strands, and topics.

<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/language18currb.pdf>

Decoding—“Decoding is the ability to apply your knowledge of letter-sound relationships, including knowledge of letter patterns, to correctly pronounce written words. Understanding these relationships gives children the ability to recognize familiar words quickly and to figure out words they haven’t seen before.” Source:

<https://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/phonics>

Dysgraphia—“*Dysgraphia* is the condition of impaired letter writing by hand, that is, disabled handwriting. Impaired handwriting can interfere with learning to spell words in writing and speed of writing text. Children with dysgraphia may have only impaired handwriting, only impaired spelling (without reading problems), or both impaired handwriting and impaired spelling.”

<https://dyslexiaida.org/understanding-dysgraphia/>

Dyslexia—is a difficulty in learning to read and spell. The Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity includes this in its definition: “Dyslexia is an unexpected difficulty in reading for

an individual who has the intelligence to be a much better reader. It is most commonly due to a difficulty in phonological processing (the appreciation of the individual sounds of spoken language), which affects an individual’s ability to speak, read, spell, and often, learn a second language.”

Exceptionalities—“A student in Ontario can be identified as ‘exceptional’ under 1 of 5 categories of exceptionalities. School Boards must develop an IEP for each ‘identified’ student and have the discretion to develop IEPs for students who are not identified as exceptional but are receiving special education services. The categories of exceptionality are:

1. **Behaviour**
2. **Communication** (including Autism, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Language Impairment and Learning Disability)
3. **Intellectual** (including Giftedness, Mild Intellectual Disability and Developmental Disability)
4. **Physical** (including Physical Disability and Blind and Low Vision)
5. **Multiple** (including Multiple Exceptionalities)

<https://fasdontario.ca/service-areas/education/exceptionalities/>

Top Tip: Students with dyslexia are considered “exceptional” under category 2 - Communication - Language Impairment and Learning Disability.

Exemptions—“are decisions made for students whose Individual Education Plan (IEP) states that they are not working toward and Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).”

https://cdn5-ss14.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_73620/File/Our%20Board/Departments/Special%20Education%20Services/OSSLTacom.pdf

Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)—“Exceptional pupils are identified as such by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC). Upon receiving a written request from a student’s parent(s)/guardian(s), the principal of the school must refer the student to an IPRC. The IPRC will decide whether the student is an exceptional pupil and, if so, what type of educational placement is appropriate. The principal may also, on written notice to the parent(s)/guardian(s), refer the student to an IPRC. The parent(s)/guardian(s), as well as a student who is sixteen years of age or older, have the right to attend the IPRC meeting and may request that the IPRC discuss potential programs that would meet the student’s needs. On the basis of these discussions, the IPRC can recommend the special education programs and/or services that it considers to be appropriate for the student.” The IPRC committee can also recommend that a student be referred to one of Ontario’s Provincial Demonstration Schools.

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/identifi.html>

Individual Education Plan (IEP)—

“An IEP is a written plan describing the special education program and/or services required by a particular student, based on a thorough assessment of the student’s strengths and needs that affect the student’s ability to learn and demonstrate learning.”

“School boards must develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for every identified student. School boards also have the discretion to develop an IEP for students who have not been formally identified as exceptional but who are receiving special education programs and/or special education services.”

“A student’s IEP must typically have a direct progress reporting link to the Provincial Report Card.”

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/ontario.html>

Modifications—“Modifications are changes made in the grade–level expectations for a subject or course in order to meet a student’s learning needs. These changes may involve developing expectations that reflect knowledge and skills required in the curriculum for a different grade level and/or increasing or decreasing the number and/or complexity of the regular grade–level curriculum expectations.”

http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/policy/os/2017/spec_ed_6.html

Top Tip: “Modifications to grade-level expectations from a lower grade are a form of streaming: they place students below the standard grade level of their peers and can interfere with students’ access to future learning at the same level as their peers.”

<https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/right-to-read-inquiry-report/accommodations>

Phonemes—are the individual units of sound in words. As noted in Margaret J. Snowling’s book, phonemes are the smallest sounds that differentiate words, such as the B or P sound differentiating “bit” from “pit.”

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/dyslexia-a-very-short-introduction-9780198818304?cc=ca&lang=en&>, p.13

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03054985.2020.1765756>

Phonemic awareness—is the understanding of the distinct sounds in spoken language and the ability to work with them—such as noting that “oat” and “goat” rhyme. It is the “ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds or phonemes in spoken words” according to the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity.

Reading comprehension—“is the understanding and interpretation of what is read. To be able to accurately understand written material, children need to be able to (1) decode what they read; (2) make connections between what they read and what they already know; and

(3) think deeply about what they have read.”

<https://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/comprehension>

Reading fluency—“is defined as the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. In order to understand what they read, children must be able to *read fluently* whether they are reading aloud or silently. When reading aloud, fluent readers read in phrases and add intonation appropriately. Their reading is smooth and has expression.”

<https://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/fluency>

Structured Literacy—“is a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction that research has shown is effective for all students and essential for students with dyslexia.

Structured Literacy instruction addresses all of the foundational elements that are critical for reading comprehension, as outlined in the [Simple View of Reading & and the Scarborough Reading Rope model](#), including both word recognition/decoding and oral language skills.

Structured Literacy is characterised by the provision of systematic, explicit instruction that integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Structured Literacy teaches the structure of language across the speech sound system (phonology), the writing system (orthography), the structure of sentences (syntax), the meaningful parts of words (morphology), the relationships among words (semantics), and the organisation of spoken and written discourse.”

<https://www.idaontario.com/effective-reading-instruction/>

Short video on Structured Literacy by University of Georgia:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Y4Fup3s-nE>

Part 12: Resources

Organisations

Decoding Dyslexia Ontario (DDON)

<https://decodingdyslexiaon.org/>

- “What is dyslexia?” <https://decodingdyslexiaon.org/dyslexia-facts/>
- “Organisations” list <https://decodingdyslexiaon.org/organizations/>
- “Books, movies, articles, and more!” <https://decodingdyslexiaon.org/books-and-at/>
- “Dyslexia Road Map” <https://decodingdyslexiaon.org/2020/12/09/dyslexia-road-map/>
- “For Students: Dyslexia Survival Guide” <https://decodingdyslexiaon.org/for-kids/>
- “Dyslexia Portrait Gallery” <https://decodingdyslexiaon.org/people-with-dyslexia/>
- “Learning to read: Schools, tutors, resources”
<https://decodingdyslexiaon.org/dyslexia-friendly-reading-instruction-and-schools/>
- “French language resources” <https://decodingdyslexiaon.org/french-language-resources/>

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario Chapters (LDAO)

<https://www.ldao.ca/contact-us/ldao-chapters/>

- “A parent’s guide to the IPRC and IEP”
<https://www.ldao.ca/introduction-to-ldsahd/articles/about-education/a-parents-guide-to-the-iprc-and-iep/>

International Dyslexia Association Ontario

<https://www.idaontario.com/>

- Definitions of dyslexia <https://www.idaontario.com/about-dyslexia/>
- “Science of reading” <https://www.idaontario.com/science-of-reading/>
- “Use the term dyslexia” <https://www.idaontario.com/use-the-term-dyslexia/>
- “Supporting your child emotionally” <https://www.idaontario.com/supporting-your-child-at-home/>

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- “Decodable Readers and Text Passages” <https://www.idaontario.com/decodable-readers-and-text/>
 - “Supporting your child at school” <https://www.idaontario.com/supporting-your-child-at-school/>
 - Reading instruction used currently by schools in Ontario
<https://www.idaontario.com/literacy-in-ontario-public-schools/>
 - Interventions <https://dyslexiaida.org/accredited-teaching-training-programs/>
 - “How does Structured Literacy instruction differ from ‘whole language’ and ‘balanced literacy’ instruction?” <https://www.idaontario.com/effective-reading-instruction/>
 - “What is Structured Literacy? A Primer on Effective Reading Instruction”
<https://dyslexiaida.org/what-is-structured-literacy/>
 - “Structured Literacy Training” <https://www.idaontario.com/structured-literacy-training/>
 - Webinars about Structured Literacy:
 - “Implementing Structured Literacy in the Classroom—Part 1: Phonological Awareness”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZrA8ak0lnw>
 - “Implementing Structured Literacy in the Classroom—Part 2: Moving to Print”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDcb5Jfc658>
 - “Implementing Structured Literacy in the Classroom—Part 3: Putting It Together”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Bjzsfml-qo>
 - Professionals, including speech language pathologists
<https://www.idaontario.com/onbida-professional-directory/>
 - List of certified dyslexia tutors <https://www.idaontario.com/hiring-a-professional/>

International Dyslexia Association

<https://dyslexiaida.org>

- “Universal Screening: K-2 Readings” <https://dyslexiaida.org/universal-screening-k-2-reading-2/>
- “Dyslexia Screener for School-Age Children”
<https://dyslexiaida.org/screening-for-dyslexia/dyslexia-screener-for-school-age-children/>
- IDA Dyslexia Handbook: What Every Family Should Know
<https://dyslexiaida.org/ida-dyslexia-handbook/>

Dyslexia Canada

<https://www.dyslexiacanada.org/>

- Mark it Read campaign for International Dyslexia Awareness Month
<https://www.dyslexiacanada.org/en/mark-it-read>

British Dyslexia Association

<https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>

- “See dyslexia differently” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11r7CFIK2sc>
- “The Human Cost of Dyslexia: The Emotional and Psychological Impact of Poorly Supported Dyslexia”
<https://cdn.bdadyslexia.org.uk/documents/Final-APPG-for-Human-cost-of-dyslexia-appg-report.pdf>

Code Read Dyslexia Network Australia

<https://codereadnetwork.org/>

- “7 tips for talking to your child’s teacher”
<https://codereadnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Code-Read-7-tips-for-meeting-with-your-childs-school.pdf>
- “Evidence based reading instruction”
<https://codereadnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Evidence-Based-Literacy-Instruction-Fact-sheet-.pdf>

Ontario Psychological Association

- Ontario Psychological Association (OPA) revised assessment and intervention recommendations released in March 2020
<https://www.psych.on.ca/getmedia/9710b802-aae3-4b6e-a215-789f2bfe59c5/OPA-Guidelines-for-Diagnosis-and-Assessment-of-Learning-Disabilities-03-2020.pdf>

Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity

<https://dyslexia.yale.edu/>

- “Signs of Dyslexia” <https://dyslexia.yale.edu/dyslexia/signs-of-dyslexia/>
- “What Parents Can Do: The A to Z of Teaching Beginning Reading”
<http://dyslexia.yale.edu/resources/parents/what-parents-can-do/the-a-to-z-of-teaching-beginning-reading/>
- “Time & Tools” <http://dyslexia.yale.edu/resources/accommodations/time-and-tools/>
- “Stories from Dyslexics: Giving Voice to a Young Person’s Dyslexia Journey”
<http://dyslexia.yale.edu/resources/dyslexic-kids-adults/stories-from-dyslexics/giving-voice-to-a-young-persons-dyslexia-journey/>

The Reading Well: A Virtual Well of Dyslexia Resources <https://www.dyslexia-reading-well.com/>

- List of schools for dyslexia in Canada
<https://www.dyslexia-reading-well.com/schools-for-dyslexia-canada.html>

Understood

<https://www.understood.org>

- “Dyslexia Success Stories”
<https://www.understood.org/articles/en/dyslexia-success-stories>
- “7 common myths about dyslexia”
<https://www.understood.org/articles/en/common-myths-about-dyslexia-reading-issues>
- “Encouraging reading and writing”
<https://www.understood.org/pages/en/school-learning/learning-at-home/encouraging-reading-writing/>
- “Inside a dyslexia evaluation” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNu4WiQaVTI>
- “Assistive Technology Overview”
<https://www.understood.org/articles/en/assistive-technology-for-reading>

Books

More books here: <https://decodingdyslexiaon.org/books-and-at/>

For Parents

- *Dyslexia: A Very Short Introduction*, by Margaret J. Snowling [print book] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019)
- *Overcoming Dyslexia*, by Sally Shaywitz and Jonathan Shaywitz, 2nd edition [print book] (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2020)
- *At Home with Dyslexia: A Parent's Guide to Supporting Your Child*, by Sascha Roos [print book] (London: Robinson/Little Brown, 2018)

For Kids

- *Fish in a Tree*, by Lynda Mullaly Hunt
<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/22402972-fish-in-a-tree>
- “Kids’ Books with Dyslexic Characters”
https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/134863.Kids_Books_with_Dyslexic_Characters
- “7 Books Featuring Characters with Dyslexia or ADHD”
<https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/learning-at-home/encouraging-reading-writing/7-books-featuring-characters-with-dyslexia-or-adhd>
- “Children’s Books Featuring Positive Characters with Dyslexia”
<https://www.dyslexicadvantage.org/positive-childrens-books-featuring-characters-with-dyslexia/?cn-reloaded=1>

Subjects

Dyslexia, Reading and Teaching Methods

- Stanislas Dhaene explains how the brain learns to read
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25GI3-kiLdo>
- “Usable Minute: What Is Dyslexia?” by Harvard Graduate School of Education
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2tvrJ8roa8>
- Journal articles about the neurobiology of dyslexia
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0040059918820051> or
<https://escholarship.org/content/qt8qc2t0nt/qt8qc2t0nt.pdf> and
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4293303/>
- *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction* by the [US] National Reading Panel (2000)
<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pubs/nrp/Documents/report.pdf>
- “Leveled Literacy Intervention: Reading Progress for Special Education LLI Students” from Fountas & Pinnell, Heinemann
https://www.heinemann.com/fountasandpinnell/research/LLI_DataColl_SPED-subreport_JULY2011.pdf

Signs of Dyslexia, Phonological Awareness, and Early Literacy

- “Understanding Dyslexia: Risks by Age,” from the National Center for Improving Literacy
<https://improvingliteracy.org/sites/improvingliteracy2.uoregon.edu/files/briefs/understanding-dyslexia-risks-by-age.pdf>
- “Warning Signs of Dyslexia,” by Susan Barton
<https://www.dys-add.com/resources/RecentResearch/DysWarningSigns.pdf>
- “What is phonological awareness?” by Kelli Johnson
<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/child-learning-disabilities/reading-issues/phonological-awareness-what-it-is-and-how-it-works>
- Sensational Strategies, “Phonological Awareness: The Foundation of Learning to Read”
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-4yUpFpfBdQH_FROxfUdhs7uKODi75HS/view?fbclid=IwAR1_0

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- [Lzs-HtgORMeoEBW61Qa_RfkoM3GpG8tOE1kuon00W6Q9AONbAolK4c](#)
- “Dyslexia Help: Frequently Asked Questions” <http://dyslexiahelp.umich.edu/answers/faq>
 - “Colorado Department of Education Dyslexia Handbook”
<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/codyslexiahandbook>
 - “Games to Support Early Literacy Skills” from the Rhode Island Department of Education
<https://media.ride.ri.gov/IAC/StructuredLiteracy/GamesToSupportEarlyLiteracySkills-Sept2020.pdf>
 - “Promoting Self Esteem and Reducing Anxiety in Children Who Have Dyslexia,” from Learning Ally
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8Ur1a-qml8>
 - Made by Dyslexia, “Dyslexia Awareness Part 1: Module 2 – Dyslexic Strengths,” from Made by Dyslexia
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4VRjQnBoWM>

PsychEd and the Individual Education Plan

- “Demystifying the Psycho-Educational Assessment Report,” from LD@school
<https://www.ldatschool.ca/demystifying-the-psycho-educational-assessment-report/>
- “Formal Assessment for Dyslexia,” from IDA Ontario
<https://www.idaontario.com/assessment-for-dyslexia/#:~:text=There%20is%20no%20one%20test,be%20tested%20at%20any%20age>
- “A hand-holding guide to IEPs: This is your guide to the Individual Education Plan: what it is, how to get one and why it may be the key to your kid’s success,” by Claire Gagne, in *Today’s Parent* magazine, 2019 [online text]
<https://www.todaysparent.com/family/special-needs/a-hand-holding-guide-to-ieps/>
- “A Parent’s Guide to the IPRC and IEP,” from the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO)
<https://www.ldao.ca/introduction-to-ldsadhd/articles/about-education/a-parents-guide-to-the-iprc-and-iep/>
- “Individual Education Plan: A Parent’s Guide to the Individual Education Plan,” from Peel District School Board
<https://www.peelschools.org/elementary/special-education/iep/Pages/default.aspx>
- “Dyslexia: Goals are Needy.” Goals and needs for IEPs, described with examples, by Dr. Kelli

Sandman-Hurley, Dyslexia Training Institute

<http://www.dyslexiatraininginstitute.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Dyslexia-Goals-are-Needy-Dr-Kelli-Sandman-Hurley.pdf>

Assistive Technology and Audiobooks

- Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA), and how to use CELA
<https://www.idaontario.com/free-webinar-accessible-audio-e-books-centre-equitable-library-access-cela-bookshare-2/>
- “Assistive Technology,” from the Ontario Teachers’ Federation (OTF) Teachers’ Gateway to Special Education website
<https://www.teachspeced.ca/assistive-technology>
- Toronto Public Library “Dial-a-Story”
<https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/services/dial-a-story.jsp>
- <https://www.understood.org/articles/en/assistive-technology-for-reading>

Training Programs and Tutors

- Stephen Parker’s website <https://www.parkerphonics.com/books>
- The Barton Reading and Spelling System <https://bartonreading.com/>
- Explode the Code Online <https://www.explodethecode.com>
- Lexia Learning <https://www.lexialearning.com/>
- Orton-Gillingham <http://funlearning.ca/about-us/>
- The Wilson Language Training programs <https://www.wilsonlanguage.com/programs/>
- Scottish Rite Learning Centres web page <http://www.srcf.ca/learning-centres/>

Ontario Curriculum, Ministry of Education, MPPs and Related Information

- Ontario Ministry of Education www.edu.gov.on.ca
- Ontario Ministry of Education, Curriculum <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html>
- Ontario Language Curriculum Grade 1 to Grade 8 (2006)
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/language.html>
- Ontario Special Education Policy and Guidelines (2017)

<https://www.ontario.ca/document/special-education-ontario-policy-and-resource-guide-kindergarten-grade-12>

- About the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/identifi.html>
- The Individual Education Plan (IEP) Process
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/individu.html>
- Individual Education Plan (IEP) - Ontario's Standards
<http://www.oafccd.com/documents/IEPstandards.pdf>
- Provincial and Demonstration Schools Branch "Schools" <https://pdsbnet.ca/en/schools/>
- Transition Planning: A Resource Guide (2002)
<http://www.oafccd.com/documents/transitionguide.pdf>
- Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) <https://www.eqao.com/>
- Ontario Legislative Assembly list of MPPs <https://www.ola.org/en/members>
- Effective Early Reading Instruction: A Guide for Teachers, Ontario Ministry of Education (2022):
<https://www.dcp.edu.gov.on.ca/en/guide-effective-early-reading/development-reading-skills>

The Right to Read Inquiry, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC), Ontario Ombudsman, the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO) and Related Resources

- Right to Read Inquiry Report (February 2022)
<https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/right-to-read-inquiry-report>
- Right to Read Inquiry Report - Executive Summary audiobook
[Executive summary audiobook | Ontario Human Rights Commission \(ohrc.on.ca\)](https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/right-to-read-inquiry-report/Executive-summary-audiobook)
- Right to Read Inquiry public hearings (videos)
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxdcxnZRhsC4Rn7wg6PoSFQ>
- Renu Mandhane, former OHRC Chief Commissioner about the Right to Read inquiry
<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/right-read-videos#Renu%20Mandhane>
- Ontario Human Rights Commission <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en>
 - Policy on *Accessible education for students with disabilities*
http://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Policy%20on%20accessible%20education%20for%20students%20with%20disabilities_FINAL_EN.pdf

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- Policy on *Ableism and discrimination based on disability*
http://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Policy%20on%20ableism%20and%20discrimination%20based%20on%20disability_accessible_2016.pdf
 - Post-secondary education and the duty to accommodate students with disabilities
<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/opportunity-succeed-achieving-barrier-free-education-students-disabilities/post-secondary-education>
 - Ontario Ombudsman (<https://www.ombudsman.on.ca/home>)
 - Ombudsman Ontario, What We Do, Topics, Education
(<https://www.ombudsman.on.ca/what-we-do/topics/education>).
 - Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario (HRTO) <https://tribunalsontario.ca/hrto/>
 - Human Rights Legal Support Centre <http://hrlsc.on.ca/en/welcome>
 - “Navigating the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario: An Overview of the HRTO Process,” by David Doga, 2020
<https://www.canlii.org/en/commentary/doc/2020CanLIIDocs1950#!fragment/zoupio-Toc59714561/BQCwhgziBcwMYgK4DsDWszlQewE4BUBTADwBdoAvbRABwEtsBaAfX2zgFYBOAdgEYALBwBsfAJQAaZNIKEIARUSFcAT2gBydRIiEwuBluVrN23fpABIPKQBCagEoBRADKOAagEEAcgGFHE0jAAI2hSdjExIA>
 - Moore v. BC Education—Supreme Court Judgments
<https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/12680/index.do>

Printables

Documents you can print off for your binder and have ready to share at meetings with your child’s school, paediatrician, etc.

Top Tip: Printing in “grayscale” saves time and money!



IEP/IPRC Basics

Your child’s Individual Education Plan (IEP) should ideally be in place by the beginning of Grade 2. But most often, it isn’t in place until grade 3 or 4.

After you have the IEP, you should ask to get it “formalised”. To get the IEP formalised you must have a diagnosis. (See [Part 2](#), “Getting a Diagnosis”, in this tool kit)

Once you have the diagnosis, the school can arrange for your child to go before your School Board’s Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) to be given a ‘formal identification’ as an ‘exceptional student’.

Accommodations and Modifications

The school may propose *modifications* on your child’s IEP. Modifications are *not* the same thing as accommodations. Usually a modification means that your child will be ‘graded’ accorded to a lower grade-level than they are currently in. For a child with average intellect, there is no reason to modify the expectations. For example, if your child is in grade 6 and they are at a ‘grade 3’ reading level, if their IEP is not modified they might get a ‘C’ on their report card. If the school modifies the grade level expectation to grade 3, then they might get an A or B+ on their report card. However, that grade aligns with the modified grade on their IEP (grade 3), not what age appropriate grade they are in (grade 6). These modifications could result in your child being unprepared to be successful in high school, they will not keep all their educational pathways open.

Top Tip: We cannot stress this enough—modifications are *not* the same as accommodations. The Ontario Human Rights Commission stated in the [Right to Read Inquiry Report](#): “Modifications to grade-level expectations from a lower grade are a form of streaming: they place students below the standard grade level of their peers and can interfere with students’ access to future learning at the same level as their peers.”

Templates

Parent and advocate Jeanie Fuscaldo created a tool kit to help parents and students with dyslexia navigate the special education system in Ontario.

She gives you advice on how to set up a binder, including printable templates to set your advocacy and IEP goals in writing and to keep a list of school contacts.

Use the link below to open and print out for your binder and to bring to IEP meetings at your child's school.

 The Parents Advocacy toolkit for Dys - Learners; copyright J. Fuscaldo


The tool kit is shared here with permission from J. Fuscaldo.

More IEP Resources

For more information about the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and the the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) see:


- Ontario Ministry of Education information about the Individual Education Plan (IEP) Process <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/individu.html>
- Goals and needs for IEPs—described with examples by Dr. Kelli Sandman-Hurley, Dyslexia Training Institute
<http://www.dyslexiatraininginstitute.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Dyslexia-Goals-are-Needy-Dr-Kelli-Sandman-Hurley.pdf>
- Ontario Ministry of Education information about the Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC)
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/identifi.html>

Infographic: Signs & Possible Indicators of Dyslexia




What Are the Effects of Dyslexia

Signs of typical reading development and possible indicators of risk for dyslexia.




Typical Readers




Readers at Risk for Dyslexia May


Preschool Years


	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notice repeated sounds in oral language (e.g. Baa, Baa, Black Sheep) May start to pay attention to beginning or rhyming sounds in words Know the functions of print (e.g. know that different texts are used for different purposes, know that print has meaning) Know 10 alphabet letters, and the letters in their name 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have trouble learning common nursery rhymes Not recognize rhyming patterns. Have difficulty learning and remembering the names of letters in the alphabet Use persistent "baby talk"
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Kindergarten to 1st Grade

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn one-to-one letter sound correspondences Understand that speech sounds map on to printed letters to form words Learn to decode regular one-syllable words using their knowledge of letter-sound correspondences Begin to make sense of what they are reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not associate letters with sounds Make reading errors that show no connection to the sounds of the letters on the page Not understand that words "come apart" Not be able to sound out simple words like map, cat, pan Complain about how hard reading is
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2nd Grade and Beyond

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use knowledge of letter-sound correspondences to sound out unknown words Use word parts to decode regular multisyllabic words Read accurately and fluently enough to concentrate on comprehension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often be very slow in acquiring reading skills Often guess at words Not be able to sound out words Confuse words that sound alike Avoid reading out loud Have poor spelling and messy handwriting
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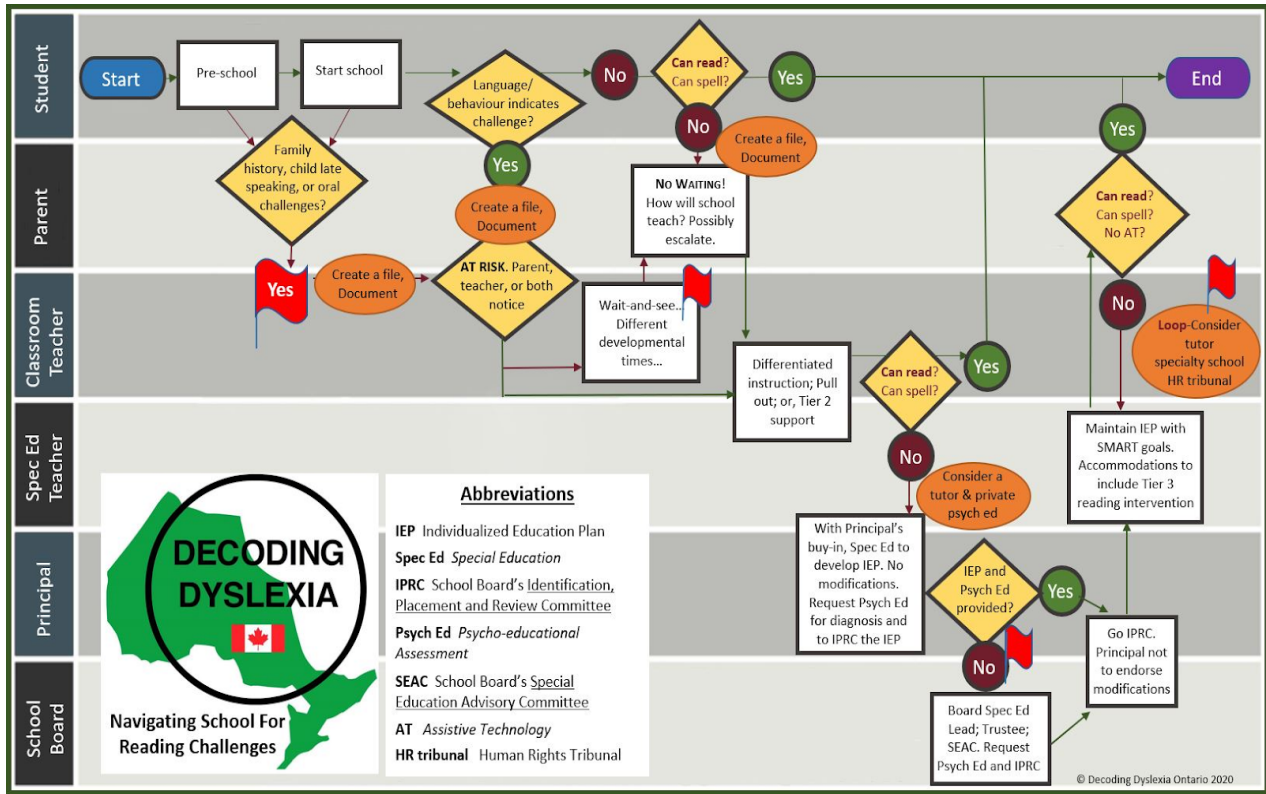


The research reported here is funded by a grant to the National Center on Improving Literacy from the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, in partnership with the Office of Special Education Programs (Award #: 5283D160003). The opinions or policies expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of OESE, OSEP, or the U.S. Department of Education. You should not assume endorsement by the Federal government. Copyright © 2019 National Center on Improving Literacy.

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Source: <https://improvingliteracy.org/brief/understanding-dyslexia-what-are-effects-dyslexia?fbclid=IwAR1RBXpeE7C-to>

Infographic: Navigating the Ontario School System if your child has reading challenges



[Download graphic](#)

Created by: Natalie Gallimore, DDON research lead

Right to Read - Executive Summary



Print the Executive Summary of the Right to Read Inquiry Report, which you'll find at the link below. Keep it on hand for meetings with your child's school.

[https://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Right%20to%20Read%20Executive%20Summary OHRC%20English 0.pdf](https://www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Right%20to%20Read%20Executive%20Summary%20OHRC%20English%200.pdf)

Infographic: OHRC Right To Read Commission

RENU MANDANE
ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS CHIEF COMMISSIONER

PARENTS EXPECT:

1 PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO ADOPT SCIENCE-BASED APPROACHES THAT ALLOW THEIR CHILDREN TO LEARN TO READ

2 THAT EDUCATORS WILL USE CURRICULUM AND TEACHING METHODS THAT ARE EFFECTIVE FOR THE LARGEST NUMBER OF STUDENTS

3 THAT STUDENTS WILL BE SCREENED AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY POTENTIAL ISSUES

4 THAT STUDENTS WILL BE SUPPORTED WITH EARLY INTERVENTIONS THAT ARE EVIDENCE-BASED

5 THAT STUDENTS WILL GET TIMELY AND EFFECTIVE ACCOMMODATIONS WHEN THEY NEED THEM

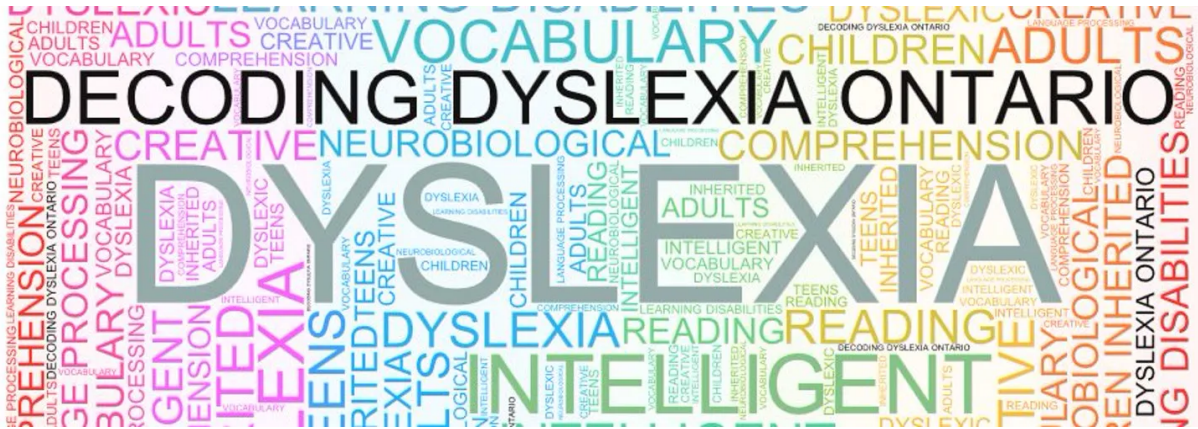
6 THAT STUDENTS WHO NEED THEM WILL BE PROVIDED WITH PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENTS IN A TIMELY MANNER

THESE ARE REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS AND THEY ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE **RIGHT TO READ**.

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES
THAT AFFECT STUDENTS WITH READING DISABILITIES
IN ONTARIO'S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

Infographic: Dyslexia Wordle

A popular wordle created by a DDON parent. Print off for your office or use it on social media.



Meeting with your MPP: Advocating For Your Child and for All Children

What can MPPs do?

In Canada, education is the responsibility of the province, so it's important for your elected provincial representative (MPP = Member of Provincial Parliament) to understand how the lack of services in the school system impacts your child and family.

Talking to your MPP can have an impact, whether your MPP is a member of the ruling government or is in the opposition. For example:

- Any MPP can raise your concerns in their caucus meetings
- Your MPP can write a letter to the Ministry of Education about your concerns and request a response
- Your MPP can help arrange a bi-partisan meeting with them, the Minister of Education and you


1. Contacting and requesting a meeting with your MPP:

- Find your local MPP's name and contact information from the Ontario Legislative Assembly list (<https://www.ola.org/en/members>)
- Fill-out and send DDON's template letter to set up an appointment <https://decodingdyslexiaon.org/2021/03/14/right-to-read-write-your-mpp/>
- Ask a supportive person to go with you to that meeting to take notes

2. Preparing for the meeting:

- Write your personal story or record it on video and present the story at the meeting with your MPP. See the example below for tips about personal stories.

3. Preparing personal stories:

- Tell your MPP about your child and the challenges they face in school and how this affects your family. Your child may want to tell their story for themselves.
- Keep the story simple with specific examples. Here is an example of a personal story: “My child is 12 years old. Although I suspected there was a problem for him in Grade 1, when he was 6, the teacher told me I should wait until Grade 3 to have him assessed. We waited. Now my child is in Grade 7, is reading at a Grade 1 level, and hates to go to school. The school doesn’t have a specialised reading program that he can go to. If the school had assessed him early, I don’t think we would struggle like we do today.”
- Bring information about dyslexia and education.
 - Definitions and key facts about dyslexia, from Decoding Dyslexia Ontario <https://decodingdyslexiaon.org/dyslexia-facts/>
 - Information about the Right to Read Inquiry Report, from the Ontario Human Rights Commission <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/right-to-read-inquiry-report/introduction>
 - Video release:  Right to Read inquiry report release
 - OHRC Right to Read Backgrounder: What the Community Said: <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/right-read-backgrounder-what-community-said>

4. After meeting with your MPP:

- Send a thank-you email highlighting what you want them to remember about your meeting. Follow-up with your MPP in a few weeks to ensure that they have done what they promised in your meeting.

Consider contacting your school board trustee to share your concerns and raise awareness.



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