

## Struggling Teen Readers: A Focus on Solutions

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## + Why are there teenagers who still can't read?

- Teachers are overwhelmed already with regulations, lesson planning, administrative duties, school responsibilities.
- When a struggling reader does appear in the classroom, teachers focus on differentiating content, but don't focus on basic reading tasks (due to lack of time).
- So, issue becomes ignored (or, in "limbo", in the wait for special education services/support from the district).
- This is not the teachers fault **AT ALL**, just the nature of how things are done in a large district.

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## + Needed: Advocate!

- Without a parent, guardian, or supporter who can advocate...
- OR...(and even better!)
- A student that can advocate for themselves...
- Students do get lost in the system (especially teens).



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## + Undiagnosed dyslexia

- Sometimes, dyslexia can be undiagnosed for years and years...into adulthood.
- However, it is **NEVER TOO LATE** to seek help **OR** to get an evaluation for a possible Learning Disability
- What is needed is a solution based focus to intervention.
- **BUT FIRST**, we have to understand the problem...

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## + The difference between late readers and those with dyslexia

- All have heard stories of
- Early readers: < 5 years of age
- Late readers: > 6 or 7 years of age
- Our current system gives students a very small window to learn to read (< 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) until they are reading to learn (4<sup>th</sup> grade +)
- Important to remember that development is not linear...some kids do learn to read late and catch up.
- BUT...our current system does not allow late reading to be possible...so we tend to "ignore" and move forward.

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## + Solution

- Let's be more realistic about when students can learn to read.
- Let's be proactive re: good evaluation (and let's teach those who evaluate the above)
- Let's give students the resources they deserve early on (and allow students time and space to catch up), so they don't become the teen that can't read.
- Let's be honest about and reduce the stigma re: what a learning disability really is.
- LD is not a disorder of intelligence, it is a disorder of achievement.

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## + Elements to supporting teens with dyslexia

- One to one tutoring and support, using a research based reading program and direct, systematic, explicit instruction in phonological awareness/phonics/decoding)
- Teaching/tutoring with sensitivity to the age of the learner. (Also, make it fun and not a chore).
- Assistive tech use, high interest, low level text use, and audiobook/movie use to hook them to love/see literacy in many forms (literacy is more than print!)
- Lessons that are relevant/generalizable to their everyday life AND making sure students see the reasoning behind the lessons.

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## + Let's take it apart!

- One to one tutoring and support, using a research based reading program and direct, systematic, explicit instruction in phonological awareness/phonics/decoding.

- Hunter College Learning Lab



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## + The importance of One: One Support/Relatedness

- We know students make great strides after 12 hours of 1:1 intervention (Moats & Dakin, 2008)
- One to one support provides "safe" space for the learner
- One to one support provides the relatedness/advocacy needed for the learner \*\*and provides privacy for the struggling reader to really learn how to read without embarrassment/shame
- One to one support allows the instructor time/space to EXPLAIN why specific activities are important for the learner (which makes connection between activity and long term goal obvious).
- One to one support leads to successful outcomes (for learner and instructor)

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## + Reasoning behind phonics based programs.

- The brain needs to process individual sounds before they put them all together.
- When you look at these programs as "babyish"...think twice. You can and should use programs like Wilson (or OG) with older learners, although you should also let them know WHY you are using Wilson/OG.
- Admins: Support teachers getting paid training for relevant reading programs.

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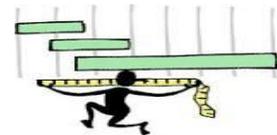
## + Clear, explicit lessons

- Provide direct, systematic instruction
- Provide opportunities for direct practice
- Do not make decoding/encoding/phonics the entire focus of lesson! \*\*we talk about this in depth later!
- Plan lessons sequentially – with a distinct beginning, middle, and end

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## + Ongoing Progress Monitoring

- Built in to some reading programs
- Measurement of outcomes using test/survey/reevaluation
- Let student take the lead on progress monitoring!



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## + Teaching/Tutoring with Sensitivity...

- Take into consideration age/needs/strengths of the learner
- Let the learner explicitly know the connection between the activity (i.e.: phonics) and the long term goal (i.e.: becoming an effective reader)
- If a teen, you can use video game speak.
- "We need to complete this task so we can 'level up' and get to the next challenge"
- Don't wait for perfection.
- Use authentic materials related to individual life goals/needs and interests (How to do this? Modified ELA survey gives you clues).

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## + Make literacy enjoyable!

- Assistive tech use (apps)
- Audiobook/movie use
- Simplified text on adult related subjects/high interest low level books
- Learner dictated stories/storytelling
- Taped readings
- Graphic Novels
- Comics
- It is important that teens/young adults see literacy as more than text based.

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## + Also...

- Encourage students to read meaningful stories that appeal to their interests (even if it is hard/not on grade level), as you will help!
- Like Harry Potter but can't read Harry Potter? NYHS had a great Harry Potter exhibit with lots of visuals. It's important that teens/young adults experience the magic of literature, even if they are not ready to read it.

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## + Create lessons that are generalizable to everyday life

- Teach important, school/work/transportation relevant sight words (i.e.: danger, stop, fire, sale).
- Ask students what they need ASAP in terms of reading (help with a job app? College app? Form?) Make that part of your work with them. (i.e.: read material out loud, record it for them for later reference, give them immediate help filling out forms)
- Allow them to see the purpose of reading (both for pleasure and for work)

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## + Teach Self Advocacy Skills

- Important for work, college, and beyond
- Let students know it is important for them to ask for what they need
- Educate them re: ADA and College/Work based disability supports
- Give them tools to take with them

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## + Any questions?



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