

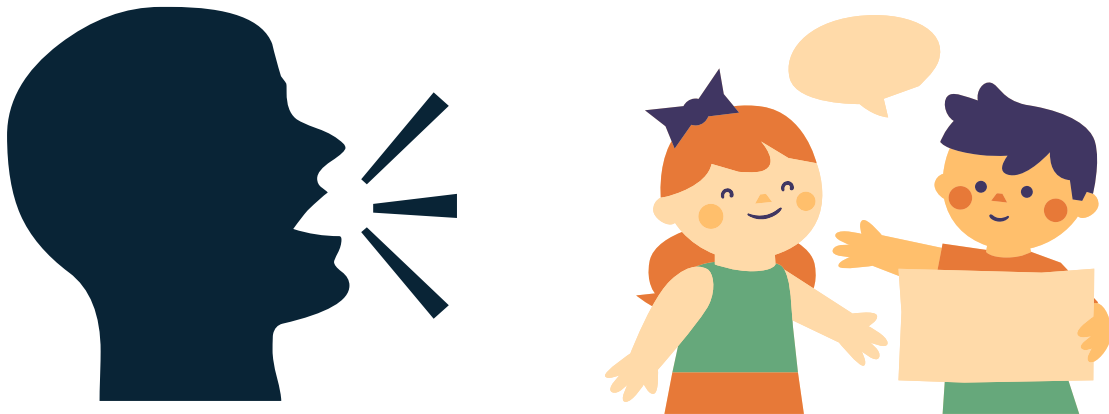


Reading, Language, & Literacy

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Understanding Dyslexia

Dyslexia is getting a lot of attention these days as researchers learn more about what it is, and educators understand the importance of early diagnosis and intervention. In this month's newsletter, we dive into a definition of dyslexia and strategies for supporting students with it.

For decades, dyslexia was commonly conceptualized as simply the flipping of letters so that “b” was seen and understood as “p” or “d.” In reality, it reflects difficulties in making connections between phonemes and graphemes. This is not a matter of seeing a “b” as a “d” or vice versa. It is a difference in the way the brain is wired in terms of the phonological component of language. The International Dyslexia Association defines dyslexia as *“a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction.”*

[Turn to page 4 for more on dyslexia!](#)

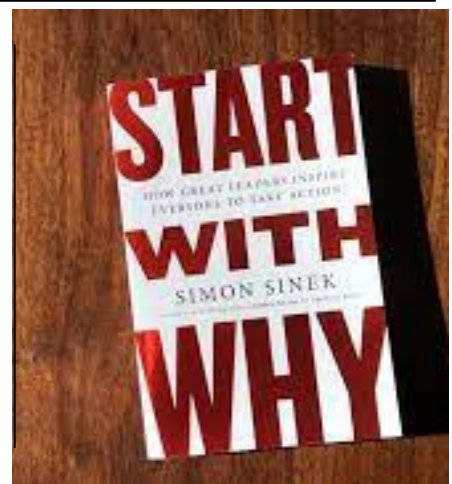
The reward of a thing
well done is to have
done it.

~ Seneca

What are we reading?

Start With Why

by Simon Sink





Alumni Spotlight

When I first learned of the RLL program through CSU San Marcos, I knew it was the right program for me to pursue my master's degree. The focus on literacy was most appealing as I knew this was the area that would really help me refine my teaching practice as a secondary language arts teacher. I was motivated to learn about how to best help my students gain confidence with their literacy skills and know how to utilize those skills beyond the classroom.

When I think about my time in the RLL program, I am reminded of how I was given space to reflect on and expand my current teaching practices. The RLL program has given me an opportunity to grow my teaching practice in ways I hadn't previously considered. As someone whose professional life has centered around the practice of writing and teaching it, the RLL program really challenged me to reflect on my existing writing teaching practices and grow them in a way that best serves my students and highlights my ultimate goal of helping students better understand how to use writing beyond the classroom. The RLL program has also helped me gain a strong understanding of how to make my teaching of literacy more relevant to and impactful for my students.



Rachel Singer-Gallouzi

Check out Rachel's [awesome project](#) which provides insights on teaching writing effectively in the 21st Century.



Something I remember hearing often in Professor Daniels' lectures was her always empowering us to "lead from any seat" to facilitate changes at our school sites or within our districts. It is my goal to continue to use my professional learning from this program to help address literacy needs at my school site and within my district. I have already started on this goal by leading professional development centered on improving writing practices for my colleagues at my school site.

I feel so fortunate to have been a part of this program because of the wealth of knowledge I received from it and because of the opportunity to learn alongside an amazing cohort of educators.

Each and every course gave me a deeper understanding of my teaching practice, and I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from all of the incredible professors who taught me. Dr. Daniels and Dr. Wood provided me with so much encouragement and guidance, for which I am so very grateful! This was absolutely the perfect program for me to grow as a literacy teacher and I know I will always center my professional practice in the learning I gained from this program.



Virginia Hansen Speaker Series Spring 2024



Professional
development



Alex Shevrin-Venet Trauma-Informed Education

[Click Here to
Register](#)

**Saturday
March 2, 2024
Time: 10:00 am - 12:00 pm (PT)
Zoom**

Scan To Register



Do you have any of the following questions?

Is trauma the same thing as PTSD?

I'm not a social worker, so what should I do about trauma?

Does everyone really have trauma these days?

Is trauma-informed education just lowering expectations?

How does this influence the way I teach?

What about teacher trauma?

We'll explore these questions in the Introduction to Trauma-Informed Education. We will broaden our understanding of trauma, see how trauma shows up in our classrooms and institutions, and define trauma-informed education as a proactive and responsive approach for all.

Registration will close at NOON on Friday, March 1, 2024

The Zoom link will be sent via email by 5 pm on 3/01/24



[Register Here](#)

Dyslexia, Continued

Dyslexia is not an indicator of ability or intelligence. It is unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. This is especially important for current elementary school teachers and tutors because they are working with children who were in the primary grades during the school lockdowns of 2020 and 2021. Children did not universally receive effective instruction during this time, which is manifesting itself in reading and writing challenges that may or may not be signs of dyslexia.

Further, educators should take care to not conflate dyslexia with English language learning. There are 400+ languages currently spoken in American schools, and students' proficiency with those languages varies. There are limited standardized assessments to measure literacy skills in all these languages and few practitioners who are fluent in the less common languages while also being reading specialists or experts in literacy. This means that, when English learners struggle, their teachers should ask whether it is because of a challenge learning the language or because of a difference in the way the brain is wired.

Behaviors that indicate intervention might be necessary include:

1. Inability to sound out new words (real or nonsense)
2. Limited sight-word vocabulary
3. Stronger listening comprehension than reading comprehension
4. Difficulty when manipulating sounds and/or hearing rhymes
5. Difficulty with recognizing and/or naming letters

When teachers notice these behaviors in their students, they should also rule out ineffective instruction and/or lack of intervention strategies.



Addressing dyslexia involves a multi-faceted approach that combines early identification, specialized instruction, and support services. Some key strategies include:

- Targeted instruction focused on phonics, phonological awareness, and word recognition strategies. This instruction should be guided by teachers and reading specialists.
- Opportunities to hear a variety of texts read out loud by proficient readers or audiobooks (will help students develop prosody).
- Study tools such as outlines, checklists, and graphic organizers to give students a place to hold their thinking.
- Technology such as voice-to-speech tools so that students can focus on the conveyance of meaning.

For more information, we encourage you to check out the [CA Dyslexia Guidelines](#). Also, the [UC/CSU Collaborative for Neurodiversity and Learning](#) has created a wonderful series of [self-paced modules](#) on what dyslexia is, the neuroscience of dyslexia, and screening and assessment practices.