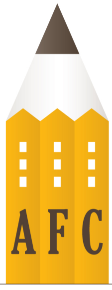

Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Questions and Answers about Literacy and Dyslexia

This guide is for families of New York City students who need more help learning to read. It provides an overview of reading instruction, answers some common questions about dyslexia, and explains how to get help if your child is struggling.

What do I need to know about how kids learn to read?

Learning to read is not easy, and many children struggle to do so. While our brains are wired from birth for *spoken* language, **learning to read is *not* a natural or automatic process**. This is because *written* language is a fairly recent invention. No part of the brain is specifically devoted to reading, so in order to read, we each have to build new connections between areas of our brains that evolved for other purposes, like speech and vision. For some kids, this seems to happen without much effort, but the majority need to be explicitly taught how to break the code that links spoken language with print. Without the right instruction, students struggle unnecessarily and don't learn to read as well as they could. This is *especially* true for students with disabilities like dyslexia.

The good news is that we know a lot about what works when it comes to teaching all students how to read! There are five essential components to reading instruction, sometimes called the "five pillars": phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

PHONEMIC AWARENESS

Before children can learn to read, they first have to understand that words can be broken down into smaller "chunks." Being able to notice and use these chunks in spoken language—for example, clapping out the syllables in words and recognizing words that rhyme—is a skill called *phonological awareness*.

Phonemic awareness is a specific type of phonological awareness: the ability to hear and work with the individual sounds (called *phonemes*) that make up a spoken word. Research shows that children who have weak phonemic awareness skills have a much harder time learning how to read.

Students develop phonological and phonemic awareness through activities that let them play with sounds and language. For example:

- Identifying words that start or end with the same sound.
- Making up rhymes and playing rhyming games.
- Blending sounds together into words and breaking words apart into their individual sounds.
- Adding, dropping, or changing individual sounds within words to make new words.

PHONICS

Phonics instruction teaches children how to connect the sounds they hear in spoken language (phonemes) to the letters they see written down. Knowing letter-sound relationships is what lets us decode, or "sound out," words we haven't seen before. Phonics teaches students the letter(s) that can represent each sound. It explains the "rules" of written language and the exceptions to those rules.

FLUENCY

Fluency is the ability to read easily, correctly, and with the right expression and speed. Fluent readers recognize words right away, without having to sound them out each time. When they read out loud, it sounds natural and smooth (they don't get stuck on individual words). Fluency comes with lots of practice—reading and re-reading texts out loud.

LITERACY LINGO

A ***phoneme*** is the smallest unit of sound in a spoken word that makes a difference to the word's meaning. English has 44 phonemes, which combine to form syllables and words. For example, the word *bat* is made up of three phonemes (three sounds): /b/, /a/, and /t/, and the /t/ sound is what makes it different from the word *bag* or *ban*. The slash marks mean that we're talking about the sound a letter makes, not the name of the letter itself.

In order to read, children have to be taught how letters represent speech sounds—this is called ***phonics***. For example, there are several spelling patterns that represent the sound /k/: K (as in *kite*), C (as in *cat*), CK (as in *duck*), CH (as in *school*), and CC (as in *account*).

VOCABULARY

Vocabulary refers to the words we know and use. It is easier for beginning readers to sound out words that they have already heard and said many times before. A large vocabulary is important for comprehension. To understand what we read, we first have to know what most of the words mean and how they can be used. Vocabulary instruction should also teach students about word structure and how to use the useful parts of words, like prefixes and suffixes, to figure out their meaning.

COMPREHENSION

Comprehension is the ability to understand what you are reading. It means making connections between what is read and what is already known and drawing conclusions based on the text. It requires background knowledge and vocabulary, as well as the ability to understand spoken language. Teaching comprehension skills means helping students ask questions like "what's the most important point?" and "why did things happen that way?" This is the end goal of reading—getting meaning from print!

How can I tell if my child's elementary school is providing good reading instruction?

In the early elementary grades (K–2), children need to be taught how to decode—how to get the words up off the page. This is the foundation for becoming a strong reader. Research is very clear that phonemic awareness and phonics instruction is most effective when it is *systematic* and *explicit*. This means:

- **Speech sounds and the letters that correspond with those sounds are all intentionally taught, in a logical order that is planned out ahead of time.** Each new lesson builds on

what students have already learned, moving from simple and consistent letter-sound patterns to harder and more complicated ones, so that students steadily build their knowledge of sounds, letters, and spelling patterns.

- **Everything is directly explained in a clear, straightforward way.** Students never have to guess at what they're supposed to know or do, and they're not expected to "discover" the rules of language on their own. The teacher tells them what the rules are and shows them how to apply those rules to read and spell.
- **Students have lots of opportunities to practice what they're learning in a meaningful context** by reading sentences and stories that use the letter-sound relationships they've been taught. Stories written for this purpose are sometimes called "decodable texts."
- **Students get feedback from the teacher right away as they're practicing new skills**, so they know what they're doing right and when they've made a mistake.

A FEW THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN YOUR CHILD'S CLASSROOM

- ☐ Does phonics instruction happen every day, and are the relationships between sounds and letters taught in a deliberate, planned order? The teacher should be able to tell you where the class is in the sequence, what's coming next, and why.
- ☐ Is there direct instruction—lessons led by the teacher where they break things down step-by-step and demonstrate skills with specific examples?
- ☐ When a student comes across a word they can't read, are they encouraged to sound it out? Students should be taught to pay attention to *all* the letters in the word, *not* to guess based on the pictures, just the first letter, or what might make sense in context. (These guessing strategies are the workarounds many struggling readers use to try to get by—they're *not* what good readers do.)
- ☐ If there's a classroom "word wall," are words grouped by sound and spelling patterns, *not* listed alphabetically from A to Z?

Phonics is essential, but phonics alone is not enough! The school's English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum should also build students' vocabulary, language skills, and knowledge about the world. This means it will teach children about:

- Topics like science, history, geography, and the arts.
- The definitions of new words and the relationships between words.
- Grammar and sentence structure (for example, the parts of speech, how to use punctuation and capitalization, the difference between a sentence and a fragment).
- Common text structures (like compare/contrast) and features of language (like metaphors).

What is NYC Reads?

The goal of NYC Reads is to ensure all New York City students become strong readers. As part of this initiative, each of the City's 32 community school districts picked one of three literacy curricula to use for core instruction in all its elementary schools. The three options are HMH Into Reading, EL Education, and Wit & Wisdom. For foundational skills instruction (phonemic awareness and phonics) in

grades K–2, schools can use Wilson Fundations, Heggerty Phonemic Awareness, or Really Great Reading. Some schools were already using one of the approved programs before the launch of NYC Reads, but other schools are adopting new materials and ways of teaching. (Charter schools choose their own curricula and will not be affected by these changes.)

NYC Reads is phasing in over two years. Fifteen "phase 1" districts rolled out uniform K–5 literacy curricula in the 2023–24 school year. The other 17 districts are doing so in 2024–25 ("phase 2").

PHASE 1: District 5 in Manhattan; Districts 11 and 12 in the Bronx; Districts 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 32 in Brooklyn; and Districts 25, 26, 29, and 30 in Queens.

PHASE 2: Districts 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 in Manhattan; Districts 7, 8, 9, and 10 in the Bronx; Districts 13, 15, 17, and 18 in Brooklyn; Districts 24, 27, and 28 in Queens; and District 31, Staten Island.

Learn more at www.schools.nyc.gov/nycreads.

"STRUCTURED LITERACY" vs. "BALANCED LITERACY"

NYC Reads is an effort to move New York City schools away from "balanced literacy" and towards "structured literacy."

Structured literacy is an approach to teaching reading that is based on a large body of research (this research is often called the "science of reading"). In structured literacy classrooms, students learn how to break words apart into their individual sounds, are directly taught letter-sound relationships in a systematic way, and get lots of practice building foundational skills.

Balanced literacy is an approach to teaching reading that includes some phonics, but phonics isn't emphasized or taught systematically. Instead of focusing on sounds and letters, balanced literacy classrooms usually encourage memorizing words and guessing based on context and pictures. This prevents many students from building strong decoding skills. In the past, many schools in New York City used these practices.

When my child's teacher says they're reading at a certain level, what does that mean?

A reading "level" is a measure of how well a student can read and understand a text. Teachers use this information to help plan instruction and track student progress over the year. Levels can give you a general sense of how your child is doing compared to other students their age, but for students who are struggling, their reading level doesn't tell you *why* they're having trouble or the specific areas where they need extra help.

Schools may organize books by levels to help students choose independent reading that isn't too easy or too hard. Levels are loosely associated with a school grade and are often referred to by letters or numbers (for example, "Level D" or "600L" books). These levels are usually based on things like the number of words in each sentence, the number of sentences on each page, how difficult the vocabulary used in the book is, and how much the pictures help the reader understand the text. You can think of levels as *general guideposts* for what books your child is ready to read on their own, without much help from an adult. Levels should *not* be used to limit students' access to interesting books!

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is the most common learning disability: experts estimate that between one in five and one in ten students is dyslexic. Dyslexia has nothing to do with intelligence, and it can range from mild to severe. **Students with dyslexia typically have problems with reading because they have trouble mastering the relationships between the *sounds* of spoken language and the *letters* that represent those sounds in print.** This means they have a hard time converting the written letters they see on the page into words they can say out loud, even though those words might be part of their spoken vocabulary. This results in difficulty being able to decode words accurately and quickly. And when you get tripped up trying to get individual words off the page, it's a lot harder to remember and understand the meaning of what you're reading.

Dyslexia is *not* a visual problem. It's a common myth that the main symptom of dyslexia is seeing and writing letters backwards. Students with dyslexia don't see letters and words any differently than other students, and it's actually fairly common for young children to reverse letters (for example, mixing up *b*'s and *d*'s) when they're first learning how to read and write—on its own, this isn't a warning sign that a student has dyslexia. And some dyslexic students never reverse letters at all, so just because a child *doesn't* do this doesn't mean they *don't* have a disability, either.

Is dyslexia something my child will outgrow?

No. Dyslexia is a lifelong, neurobiological (brain-based) condition, *not* a delay in typical development. **Signs of trouble should always be taken seriously—if your child is struggling with reading, don't assume things will get better on their own.** Scientists have used brain scans to show that when someone has dyslexia, their brain is "wired" differently—they're using different pathways and regions of the brain when they read. But with the right instruction, students with dyslexia are fully capable of learning how to read and achieving success in school. The positive effect of high-quality, evidence-based reading interventions can be seen on brain scans, too! While effective reading remediation is possible at any age, it gets harder and takes longer the more time passes. Addressing difficulties as soon as they show up helps keep students from falling behind or losing self-esteem.

What are some signs my child might be dyslexic?

Students with dyslexia may:

- Struggle to learn nursery rhymes, tell if two words rhyme, or make up their own rhymes.
- Have a lot of trouble learning the names and sounds of letters.
- Frequently mix up words that sound alike or mispronounce words that they already know (more than other children their age do).
- Read aloud slowly and awkwardly, with lots of stopping and starting and mispronunciations.
- Frequently skip over words when reading.
- Read words that have no connection to the letters on the page but have similar meanings in context (for example, saying *puppy* instead of *dog*).

NOTE

Dyslexia often runs in families, so if you or another family member struggled with reading in school—even if you were never diagnosed with a disability—that can also be a sign that your child needs extra help.

- Make wild guesses at words based on the initial letter sound or on the first and last letters, ignoring the rest of the word.
- Become frustrated or upset when asked to read or go to great lengths to avoid reading at all.

See AFC's fact sheet *Reading Milestones: What your child should know and be able to do* for a list of the skills your child should be mastering in pre-K through second grade, as well as some possible warning signs of a reading disability at different ages.

Will my child be screened for dyslexia at school?

Schools in New York City are supposed to screen all students for potential problems with reading three times a year. Generally, this screening happens in September, January, and May. **Screeners are very quick "check-ups" that identify students who aren't on track with their reading skills and may need extra support. They cannot diagnose dyslexia.**

Different schools use different screening tools for different grade levels, but the most common ones are Acadience, MAP Growth, i-Ready, and Degrees of Reading Power. These are all standardized, research-based assessments used by schools across the country, which means they can help you understand how your child is doing compared to national norms. The school should let you know what screening tool they are using and what your child's results are. You can also find your child's screening results in your NYC Schools Account (NYCSA) in the "My Student" section.

If screening shows cause for concern, the school may then give your child additional tests, called "secondary screeners" or "diagnostic assessments," to better understand their needs and decide on the right response. Secondary screeners do not diagnose disabilities like dyslexia, either. They are tools that help identify the specific skills where a student needs more instruction in order to become a proficient reader. The school should then use this information to develop a plan of action for providing that support.

How do I get help?

If you think your child may be having trouble learning to read and write, ask for help right away! You know your child better than anyone, and it is better to act early than to "wait and see." **Start with your school: talk with your child's teachers, the school psychologist, or the principal.** For suggestions of questions to ask to get the conversation started, see our fact sheet on literacy and parent-teacher conferences.

When you first talk to staff at the school about your child's progress in reading, they may tell you about Academic Intervention Services (AIS) and/or Response to Intervention (RTI).

ACADEMIC INTERVENTION SERVICES (AIS)

Academic Intervention Services (AIS) refers to extra instruction and support for students who are not meeting grade-level standards. This support is offered in multiple subject areas, including English Language Arts (ELA), and is one way a student might receive reading intervention. AIS can take place before or after school, on weekends, or in extra periods during the regular school day.

Schools identify which of their students need AIS using state test scores, the universal screener, and other assessments. English Language Learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, and students in general

education are all potentially eligible. The school does not need your permission to provide AIS, but they *do* have to notify you in writing if they start or stop providing these services. The notice should tell you what intervention(s) your child will be receiving and why. You also have the right to receive updates about your child's progress while they are receiving these services.

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION (RTI)

In grades K–5, New York City schools are required to use a process called Response to Intervention (RTI) before referring a student to special education because of difficulties with reading. RTI is a model to figure out what students need and match them with the right level of support. There are three levels, or "tiers," under RTI:

TIER 1 — General classroom instruction

All students are tested to figure out their individual strengths and needs. Students who are having trouble get extra help in their regular classrooms.

TIER 2 — Intervention for struggling students

Students who aren't making enough progress in Tier 1 get more intensive support in small groups of three to five students, based on their specific needs. In New York City schools, Tier 2 interventions are supposed to be provided three to five times per week, in sessions of at least 20–30 minutes each, by a teacher other than the classroom teacher.

TIER 3 — More intensive intervention

Students who don't respond to Tier 2 interventions move to Tier 3, the most intensive level of RTI services. This means spending more time receiving interventions (30–60 minute sessions, four or five times per week) and working with a teacher or reading specialist one-on-one or in a group of just two or three students.

The school does not need your permission to start or stop RTI services, but they *are* required to notify you if your child is found eligible for RTI or moves from one tier to another. This notification should be in your home language. It should tell you what data was used to make the decision to mandate RTI services, the specific services that will be provided, and your right to request a special education evaluation at any time.

NOTE

RTI is not the same as special education! If you think your child has a disability and needs special education services at any time during the RTI process, you can ask for your child to be evaluated. You do NOT have to go through all three tiers first.

While middle schools and high schools are not required to use the RTI process, they may choose to use a similar structure (three tiers, with increasing levels of intensity) in their AIS program.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Some students struggling to learn to read may benefit from special education services, either right away or after trying other interventions. **A student can receive *both* AIS and special education services at the same time.** Reading interventions provided through AIS are appropriate for students with and without disabilities, though students with disabilities may need instruction that's more intensive—to work with a teacher one-on-one or in a smaller group, or simply to spend more time practicing in order to fully master a skill.

If your child is not currently getting special education services, school staff can help you start the process of evaluation. Evaluations help figure out if your child has a disability, what skills your child needs to work on, and what supports and services will help your child the most. If the evaluations find that your child qualifies for special education services, you will then meet with the school to create an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP is an important legal document that outlines your child's needs and the services they should receive. To learn more about the IEP process, check out the resources on AFC's website and download NYC Public Schools' *Family Guide to Special Education Services*.

If your child already has an IEP, you may need to work with your school to fine-tune the services. Remember, you are an important member of the IEP team. You have the right to take part in all IEP meetings and to invite others (like a therapist or tutor, if your child is working with one) to join you.

ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD

If your child is receiving reading intervention, some questions to ask the school include:

- ☐ What program is being used?
- ☐ Why was that program chosen for my child? How do you know it's the right fit?
- ☐ Who will be working with my child and providing the intervention?
- ☐ Will they be receiving intervention one-on-one, or in a small group? How many other students are in the group?
- ☐ How often and for how long will my child receive the intervention?
- ☐ How will you be monitoring my child's progress?
- ☐ What happens if this intervention doesn't help?

Put everything in writing. Many different reading programs exist, and some of them have *very* similar names. When you talk to the school, write down the date of the conversation, the names of the people you spoke with, and any information you learn right away so that you can remember it later. Keep your notes on what interventions have been tried in a file, along with copies of any letters or reports you get from the school. This information will be helpful to have if your child moves to a new school or if you need to advocate for changes to their IEP in the future.

If you feel like you are not getting the help you need at the school, don't give up! Reach out to your Superintendent's Office for help. Every district has a Family Support Coordinator, who helps families resolve problems, and an AIS Coordinator, who can help schools that need support around implementing interventions. You can find the contact information for your Superintendent and Family Support Coordinator by looking up your school at https://schoolsearch.schools.nyc/. If you're still not getting answers, you can also contact the City's Special Education Hotline at (718) 935-2007 or specialeducation@schools.nyc.gov.

What are my rights if I want a special education evaluation?

A student needs to be evaluated before getting any special education services. Evaluations can highlight reading, writing, and other academic skills your child is struggling with. The best evaluations also suggest ways school staff can help your child build those skills. NYC Public Schools is required to

evaluate your child for free, and you have the right to get copies of those evaluations five days before the IEP meeting. However, you may decide you want to get an evaluation done by someone not connected to the public schools. There are two ways to make this happen:

1. You can get ***private*** evaluations yourself and share them with the school. A private evaluation is one set up and paid for by you or your health insurance company. The school must consider any private evaluations you bring them along with any evaluations they do themselves.
2. If the school fails to do evaluations on time, or if they do evaluations and you are not satisfied with them, you can ask NYC Public Schools to pay for an ***independent*** (outside) evaluation—a "second opinion." Make this request in writing to your child's school (or your Committee on Special Education, if your child attends a charter or non-public school). NYC Public Schools will either: (a) pay for the independent evaluation through an "assessment authorization form," which lets you find a private provider at a City-approved rate; or (b) file an impartial hearing to try to prove their own evaluations were appropriate. For more information, see our *Guide to Special Education*.

"PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL" vs. "NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL"

For a child struggling with reading, NYC Public Schools will typically do what's called a ***psycho-educational*** evaluation, which combines psychological and academic achievement testing. This type of evaluation is not meant to diagnose a specific condition like dyslexia. For that, you need a ***neuropsychological*** evaluation, which includes many more tests designed to assess how your child's brain works. This type of evaluation provides a detailed picture of a student's strengths and weaknesses. It may also give research-based recommendations for how to best meet their learning needs. Unfortunately, private neuropsychological evaluations can be very costly and are not always covered by insurance. See above for information on requesting an independent evaluation paid for by the City.

My school says they're not allowed to use the word "dyslexia" on my child's IEP. Is this true?

No. Dyslexia is not one of the 13 disability classifications defined by special education law, so it won't be listed in the "disability classification" box on the first page of the IEP. However, there is nothing in federal, state, or city law or regulations that says you can't use the word "dyslexia" elsewhere on the IEP (it could be used in the "present levels of performance and individual needs" section, for example).

The New York State Education Department put out guidance in August 2018 that *encourages* use of the term dyslexia when it's appropriate for a given student. Schools don't always know this, so you may want to bring a copy of that guidance document with you to the IEP meeting.

I've heard my child needs multisensory instruction. What does that mean?

"Multisensory" is just a fancy way of saying that children experience learning material in multiple ways, using multiple senses, including sight, sound, and touch/movement. For example, a teacher might have a student trace a letter with their finger while saying the sound the letter makes out loud. This makes instruction more engaging for kids while providing lots of opportunities for them to practice what

they're learning in different ways. Students with and without disabilities can both benefit—multisensory teaching strategies aren't just for special education! While multisensory instruction is often associated with reading, it can be used with other subjects, too.

What's "Orton-Gillingham"?

Many parents and teachers have heard that students with dyslexia or other reading difficulties need something called "Orton-Gillingham" or "OG." Orton-Gillingham isn't a specific program or curriculum that a school can purchase and use. **It's a very structured approach to teaching decoding and word recognition skills.**

This approach to instruction is named for the neuropsychiatrist Dr. Samuel Orton and the psychologist and educator Anna Gillingham, who developed its principles in the 1930s. In a nutshell, it involves teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, and the structure of language in an explicit, systematic, multisensory way. This means that everything is directly and clearly explained, lessons follow a consistent structure and a logical order, and students have lots of opportunities to practice and get feedback. Many reading programs call themselves "Orton-Gillingham-based" because they use these key ideas and strategies—they're explicit, sequential, and engage multiple senses. Wilson Reading System, SPIRE, and Sounds Sensible are a few examples of OG-based intervention programs that are used in some New York City schools.

***All* children benefit from structured decoding instruction.** The teaching strategies that work for students with dyslexia work for everyone! The difference is that students with dyslexia *must* have systematic and explicit instruction in order to learn to read, while some kids will do okay no matter what sort of approach is used. Students with dyslexia may also need significantly more practice and repetition to solidify skills.

NOTE

There's no one-size-fits-all solution that a school can go buy. There are many quality programs, and it's important that students are matched with an intervention that targets their specific needs (for example, an intervention that focuses just on reading fluency is not the right choice for a student who can't decode). When a student is receiving reading intervention, the school should be closely monitoring their progress to make sure the intervention is helping.

Does New York City have any special schools or programs for students with dyslexia?

While most students with reading disabilities can learn in inclusive settings alongside their peers who don't have IEPs, New York City has a few programs for students who need more intensive support.

THE I READ EARLY LITERACY PROGRAM

The Intensive Reading Education and Development (I READ) Early Literacy Program is a specialized NYC Public Schools program for elementary school students with IEPs who are struggling with early reading skills. It is a reduced class size integrated co-teaching (ICT) model, which means students with and without disabilities learn together in a classroom with two teachers, one of whom is a special education teacher. In I READ classrooms, targeted literacy support is woven into all subject areas. A part-time intervention teacher also "pushes in" to the classroom and works directly with individual students.

The I READ program is in eight schools: one in Manhattan (District 2), two in the Bronx (Districts 9 and 12), two in Brooklyn (Districts 14 and 15), two in Queens (Districts 27 and 30), and one on Staten Island. There are a limited number of seats, and families must apply when their child is in pre-K or kindergarten. See the NYC Public Schools website for more information and contact IREADProgram@schools.nyc.gov with questions.

LITERACY-FOCUSED SCHOOLS

There are two stand-alone public schools in New York City that have a special focus on serving students who have dyslexia or other reading difficulties:

- **South Bronx Literacy Academy (SBLA)** is a new public school that opened in fall 2023 in District 7. SBLA is open to students with and without IEPs who need extra support building strong foundational skills and who will benefit from intensive structured literacy. The school is serving grades 2–4 in 2024–25 and will eventually grow to serve grades 2–8. An application is required. Learn more about the admissions process on the NYC Public Schools website.
- **Bridge Preparatory Charter School** is a charter school on Staten Island that serves students in grades 1–5, with a focus on children with language-based learning disabilities. Learn more about the school and their admissions process at www.bridgeprepcharter.org.

What else should I be thinking about?

There are a variety of strategies and services that can help a child learn to read and write. Every student is different, and what helps one child may not work for another. Below are a few more options you may want to think about if your child is not making progress.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Accommodations are changes to the way material is presented. There are many accommodations that can help students who are struggling to read and write. These are typically arranged as special education services. Some examples include extra time on tests, or test-taking in quieter and smaller spots; texts shown in larger print; and organizers, pre-written notes, and study guides.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Reading below grade level should not prevent a student from accessing age-appropriate books that they're able to understand. Assistive technology (AT), such as audiobooks or text-to-speech software, can help students who struggle with decoding or fluency by letting them focus on content and meaning, instead of getting stuck on individual words. This is *especially* true for older students who are still working on foundational skills because they didn't receive appropriate instruction when they were young. While technology is not a substitute for effective reading instruction and intervention, it can keep students engaged and on track with the curriculum.

If you think your child could benefit from assistive technology, ask your school for an AT evaluation. To learn more, see AFC's *Guide to Assistive Technology*.

RESOURCES

Students with dyslexia, vision impairments, and other qualifying disabilities can get *free* audiobooks at www.bookshare.org.

All NYC Public Schools students have access to a library of e-books and audiobooks on Sora.

SUPPORT OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

If the public schools have failed for a long time to teach your child to read and write, your child may be eligible for extra help outside of school. If you believe this is the case, you can ask for intensive reading tutoring from an outside provider as a legal remedy. For more information on how to do this, see our *Guide to Special Education* or call our Helpline.

LEARN MORE: A FEW RESOURCES

- **Reading Rockets** is a great place to start if you want to learn more about the key components of reading instruction, why some students need extra help, and what parents and caregivers can do to support learning at home.
- The **National Institute for Literacy** publication *A Child Becomes a Reader: Proven Ideas from Research for Parents* explains what your child should be able to do at each grade level, what to look for in their classroom, and how to support them at home. There's one booklet for birth–preschool and another for kindergarten–grade 3.
- **NYC Public Schools** has printable flashcards and other activities to help families and caregivers support literacy learning at home. Activity instructions are available in 10 languages.
- Check out YouTube playlists from the **Philadelphia Read by 4th campaign** and the **Florida Center for Reading Research** for more examples of activities you can do with your child to help build their foundational literacy skills.
- For more information on dyslexia and supports for students with language-based learning disabilities, download the **International Dyslexia Association's Dyslexia Handbook**.
- **Understood.org** is a helpful website that provides information and resources for parents on a wide range of topics, including learning disabilities, ADHD, social and emotional skills, and more.

Have questions or need assistance?
Please call AFC's Jill Chaifetz Education Helpline:

866-427-6033 (toll free) • 10am to 4pm • Monday — Thursday

www.advocatesforchildren.org

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