Inclusive Education

Early identification of literacy learning needs



A suggestion for implementing the strategy 'Support early literacy development through a structured literacy approach' from the Guide: Dyslexia and learning

Includes:

Take action early What to look for Recognising reading and writing difficulties Identifying learners needing support Key elements of early intervention Useful resources Inclusive Education From Guide: Dyslexia and learning Strategy: Support early literacy development through a structured literacy approach Suggestion: Early identification of literacy learning needs Date 17 September 2025 Link

inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/dyslexia-and-learning/early-identification-of-literacy-learning-needs

Take action early

If the persistent achievement gap between dyslexic and typical readers is to be narrowed, or even closed, reading interventions must be implemented early, when children are still developing the basic foundation for reading acquisition.

Emilio Ferrer, Bennet Shaywitz, John Holahan, Karen Marchione, Reissa Michaels, and Sally Shaywitz

Source:

Achievement gap in reading is present as early as first grade and persists through adolescence https://www.jpeds.com/article/S0022-3476(15)00823-9/fulltext

What to look for

Notice those students who are having difficulty with phonological awareness tasks, learning letters, basic sounding out of words, and word recognition.

This is part of a larger video.



Video hosted on Youtube http://youtu.be/ogks_oVVPok

No captions or transcript

Source: Tanya Forbes (AUS) https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDjuuqKjBNVDpgqp14IMSSA/featured

Recognising reading and writing difficulties

The simple view of reading

	Oral language comprehension – Listening	
Word recognition – decoding	Competent reader – is average or above in: • decoding • listening comprehension • reading comprehension	Specific comprehension difficulties • average or above in decoding • below average in listening comprehension • below average in reading comprehension
	 Reading difficulty (maybe dyslexia) average or above listening comprehension below average decoding below average reading comprehension 	Mixed reading difficulties – is below average in: • decoding • listening comprehension • reading comprehension

The simple view of writing

	Ideas	
Spelling	Many interesting ideasAccurate spelling	Accurate spelling Lack of ideas
	Writing difficulty (maybe dyslexia)	Inaccurate spelling Lack of ideas
	Many interesting ideas Inaccurate spelling	

Adapted from:

Dymock, S. & Nicholson, T. (2015). The New Zealand Dyslexia Handbook. NZCER Press, Wellington, New Zealand. Gough, P. B. & Tunmer, W. E. (1986). Decoding, reading, and reading disability. Remedial and Special Education, 7(1).

Source:

Adapted from The New Zealand dyslexia handbook https://www.nzcer.org.nz/nzcerpress/new-zealand-dyslexia-handbook

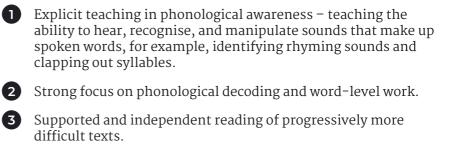
View full image (311 KB)

Identifying learners needing support

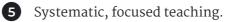
The initial trigger for action is the child needing noticeably more reading support than his or her peers. **Step 1:** Notice those making slow progress despite receiving highquality literacy teaching – especially in teaching word recognition and language comprehension in keeping with **the simple view of reading**.

Step 2: Undertake further assessment, planning, and intervention with parents, whānau, and carers. Teaching is likely to include Tier
2 and/or Tier 3 interventions. It is reasonable to expect most children to respond well to these.

Key elements of early intervention







Useful resources

www

Signs of dyslexia

Descriptions of learners in early years, primary school, secondary school, and in adults.

Publisher: The British Dyslexia Association

Visit website



Three steps in screening for dyslexia

The New Zealand Dyslexia Handbook outlines three steps in screening for dyslexia. This screening approach is recommended by the Ministry of Education. The steps and tests listed on pages 61–75 are listed with links to the tests.

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