



Common Myths about Learning Differences

Myth 1 – “It is just developmental – he’ll grow out of this”

Research shows children do not grow out of learning challenges, the challenges just get worse over time (from “How Psychological Science Informs Teaching of Reading”). Students who do not receive help as soon as a problem is noticed can end up several grade levels behind before diagnosed. With a solid foundation at a young age, students with learning differences can thrive.

If students do not learn a skill the first time, the method or approach must be changed for a student to learn the skill. In a traditional classroom, teachers often use the same approach again and again with no success. A tutor or teacher with a multi-sensory teaching background can recognize how a student will learn and change the method or approach so the student understands the concept.

PARENT ACTION: Parents may not notice a problem, but a teacher will. If a teacher says “give him/her another year, it may get better” or “he/she is slow maturing,” that is a red flag. Teachers want to be optimistic about their students - they do not want to “label” a student. As a parent, if you hear this from a teacher, it is your job to contact a specialist, like Trident Academy OutReach, for evaluation and testing. You can then determine if you can help your child, if he/she needs extra tutoring or if a different school will work the best.

Try reading “Basic Facts About Dyslexia and Other Reading Problems” by Louisa Cook Moates and Karen Dakin. Available at www.interdys.org for \$15.

Myth 2 – Dyslexia is more common in boys, than girls

Research shows the same number of girls and boys are dyslexic (from the Connecticut Longitudinal Study). Girls often do not act out like boys, so their dyslexia can be harder to detect.

PARENT ACTION: You may notice that first and second grade homework is a challenge. Typically, it should not be, homework should reinforce what is learned in the classroom. If it is a challenge - that may be a sign your child is not learning concepts in class. You may also hear from your teacher that “your daughter seems anxious or stressed” or “your daughter has wonderful (non-academic) skills,” which can be a red flag. If you see any of these signs, it is your job to contact a specialist, like Trident Academy OutReach, for evaluation and testing. You can then determine if you can help your child, if she needs extra tutoring or if a different school will work the best.

Try reading “Parenting a Struggling Reader” by Susan Hall and Louisa Cook Moates. Available from amazon.com.

Myth 3 – Spell check will solve a child’s spelling problem

Spell check only works if your spelling is close to the correct spelling AND if you can identify the correct spelling from the list of choices provided.

Many students do not spell well enough for spell check to detect the word they are trying to spell. Students get frustrated when they see so many words incorrect and when they don't understand the choices spell check is giving them. For many students, a spelling goal would be to spell well enough for spell check to recognize the word.

PARENT ACTION: You may notice your child does not want to use spell check. If this is the case, ask why. You may also notice that your child aces a spelling test, but the next week is unable to spell the same words or your child is making what look like careless errors. In any of these cases, your child may need to learn spelling a different way. Trident Academy multi-sensory teachers focus on "spelling rules" and origins so a student can figure out how to spell any word, without relying on memorization.

Try an assistive technology program that says the spell check options out loud.