



SUCCESS IS WITHIN REACH

BY DR. RINAT R. GREEN

Leah, a smart, talented, and social fifth grader down right hates school! According to her mom, Leah would feign just about any illness to avoid going to school. This has resulted in increased conflict and tension in the home as Leah's parents are at their wits end trying to figure out what is wrong with their agitated child.

For Leah, school is a struggle. Although she tries her best to keep up with her peers, she finds that no matter how hard she tries, she's often gets failing marks and sees herself falling further and further behind academically. For those who know her, this problem does not make any sense. Leah is bright, very curious and full of life but she turns into a ball of frustration and anxiety as soon as she is required to do anything school related.

Leah is not alone. Many children today struggle in school but this does not need to be the case. Often the struggle is a result of an undiagnosed learning disability the most common of which is dyslexia. Yet with the right approach, these students can not only succeed, they can soar.

Dyslexia is a neurologic language based learning difficulty that affects ones ability to acquire reading, process language, write, spell and comprehend

written material despite adequate exposure, motivation, and at least average to very superior level of intelligence. Research shows that dyslexia affects 1 in 5 children and varies in severity from mild, moderate, severe, to profound. Children with dyslexia are present in every classroom, but often are not identified because of lack of knowledge on the part of the school and the parents, and also due to the child's strong desire to hide their learning difficulty. Because these children don't look different from children who are not dyslexic; there are no outward physical signs of dyslexia aside from the child's obvious struggle to read or comprehend written material, dyslexia is often referred

to as a "hidden disability". Only recently through fMRI research have researchers been able to uncover and identify the neurological imprint of dyslexia in the brain. Although dyslexics can be

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YOURSELF ABOUT
WHAT DYSLEXIA IS
AND WHAT IT IS NOT.**

helped to improve their reading skills throughout their lifespan, early identification, ideally by no later than first grade, combined with a proven research based reading intervention can go a long way to correct and not just compensate for this learning difference.

In addition to an appropriate reading intervention there is much that teachers and parents can do to enable these students to succeed in school. Knowledge is power. Start by educating yourself about what dyslexia is (a neurological learning difference) and what it is not (it is not about seeing letters backwards). Visit your local library or learning disabilities websites online to learn more about this condition. Many children with dyslexia can be taught to read, yet once they master reading, they will still need appropriate accommodations and modifications to succeed in the classroom, because having dyslexia compromises their reading and writing speed and spelling as compared to their non-dyslexic peers. With the right combination of accommodations and modifications that gap can be minimized, while enabling the child to demonstrate their true capabilities and experience success.

Some may express concern that giving dyslexic children accommodations and modifications will give them a "leg up on the competition". That they will have an "unfair advantage" over their non-dyslexic peers. Research shows that nothing can be further from the truth. Even with accommodations and modifications in place, dyslexic students still have to work harder than their non-dyslexic classmates to succeed. Having these resources simply enables them to better acquire the information and demonstrate what they know.

Accommodations refer to the way in which the student learns the material and modifications refer to what the student is expected to learn. For example, an accommodation for a struggling reader may be to provide them with books on tape. The student listens rather than struggles to read the material. This accommodation typically greatly increases the student's ability to comprehend the material. Thankfully, there are libraries and online websites that offer such a service. An appropriate modification for such a student would be shortened or more simplified reading assignments. During test taking times, accommodations such as extra time on tests, having questions read aloud, using tools such as text to speech and speech to text technology help the student bypass their reading, spelling or writing difficulties. Many of these software products now come standard on computers, tablets and smartphones. Testing modification may include lessening the amount of material to be covered on the test or providing alternative material to be studied and tested on. Many of these

accommodations and modifications do not cost extra money to implement, but rather require knowledge, good will and a positive attitude. They help instill confidence, success and a sense of accomplishment while enabling the student to demonstrate and reach their true potential; a potential that no doubt will greatly benefit society at large.

For more information on dyslexia and how to help the struggling student please visit us at www.kolkoreh.org

Dr. Rinat R. Green is a psychologist and the founder and executive director of Kol Koreh, a non-profit organization for children with dyslexia and other learning disabilities. She is also the author of the "How to use this book" section of The Cancer that Wouldn't go Away which is available in English and Hebrew. She can be reached at RGreen@KolKoreh.org



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