

# South Florida Dyslexia Institute

*at Child Provider Specialists*



Individuals with dyslexia share many features in common, however, each is also unique. Remediation programming must be flexible and dynamic, matching specific remedial strategies to specific constellations of symptom clusters. Phonological skills, somatosensory skills, timing (processing speed), working memory, attention, emotional regulation, and social skills development are all areas addressed in a truly comprehensive remediation program.

Just as muscular systems with specific targeted exercise can be improved, so can cognitive systems and areas of academic weakness.

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## Who We Are

Few psychologists have training in school neuropsychological theory, best practice assessment techniques, and evidenced-based interventions. Children are increasingly arriving at school with known or suspected learning challenges related to neurological differences in the core cognitive abilities and skills required for academic success. Approximately fifteen percent of students, demonstrate average or better intelligence and struggle with aspects of managing school curriculum (reading, writing, listening or mathematics). These students do not lack intelligence. Rather, they demonstrate differences in brain organization which impedes learning like most peers.

Our staff at the South Florida Dyslexia Institute (SFDI) are experts in understanding how children learn, diagnosing underlying systemic differences in brain function that impede academic skill acquisition, and specialize in the treatment of comorbid social, attentional and emotional concerns. Dr. Michael Rizzo, founder and clinical director of SFDI, is himself dyslexic. In spite of his learning challenges, he went on to earn his doctorate and became a licensed school psychologist. He has dedicated his life to working with children with learning challenges.

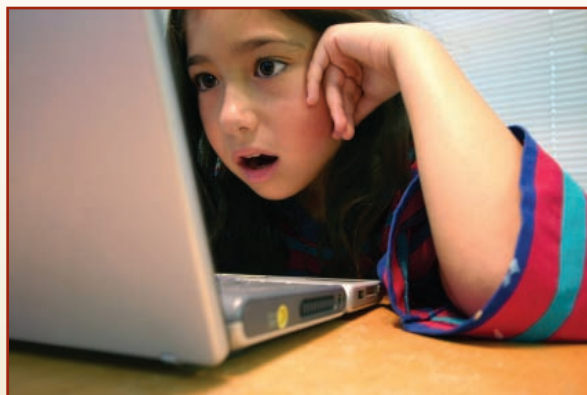


## What Is Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin, i.e. it is the result of differences in how the brain processes information. Brains of “normal” readers process reading with the left hemisphere posterior and medial brain regions. Functional brain imaging has shown that the brains of individuals with dyslexia fail to function in the same way during reading. Dyslexia is distinguished by serious difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. The source of these difficulties is usually a deficit in the phonological component of language.

Many individuals with “dyslexic brain organization” also demonstrate subtle cerebellum differences. The cerebellum, in conjunction with the vestibular and somatosensory systems, is to a large degree responsible for one’s coordinated and fluid “movement through space” (balance, coordination, motor planning, fine and gross motor control). Many dyslexic individuals also demonstrate weaknesses in these areas that impact among other things the development of processing speed skills, pencil grip, and handwriting skills.

Another common characteristic of individuals with dyslexic brain organization is related to the development of the hippocampus and resulting weaknesses in working memory skills. The hippocampus plays a major role in holding information in immediate awareness long enough to use that information for higher level thinking and reasoning (problem solving). Weaknesses in this area contribute to limitations regarding the ability to process higher level mental challenges. They can also create or amplify attention problems.



In fact, many children diagnosed with ADHD have learning challenges that result in overt behaviors that “look like” ADHD (Inattentive Type) when in fact they are simply fatigued or overwhelmed by tasks others can manage fluently resulting in avoidance and off task behavior.

Addressing reading weaknesses is important. However, to truly impact learning efficiency in those with “dyslexic brain organization,” phonological processing, somatosensory skills and working memory skills must all be aggressively remediated.

Finally, from a psychosocial perspective, the differences in cognitive skill efficiency, the chronic uphill battle to manage school work and the underachieving outcome of otherwise bright kids, contributes to frustration, mood volatility, poor self-esteem and social challenges.

A large component of our programming is dedicated to developing social skills sophistication and emotional intelligence (understanding and managing ones’ emotions) in the process of grooming the whole child to successfully manage life as a dyslexic learner.



## We Are Not A School

The South Florida Dyslexia Institute provides dyslexic students with intensive, science based, prescriptive, cognitive and academic remediation. Beyond cognitive and academic skill development, social, emotional and attentional skills are also targeted. While individuals with dyslexia share many features in common, each is also unique. Therefore, intervention programs must be flexible and dynamic in matching specific remedial strategies to specific constellations of symptom clusters.

## What To Expect

1. All children start with a comprehensive school neuropsychological evaluation.
2. Students register with their respective county public school districts as attending a home school program. Our counselors assist with this process.
3. Based on historical information and psychometric data, a prescriptive program is developed that encompasses cognitive skill development, academic skill mastery, as well as social, emotional, and executive function skill training.
4. Students and their families must be willing to make a long term commitment and typically engage in SFDI programming for 1 to 4 semesters.
5. Students follow our school calendar which consists of four 9-week sessions per year (2 sessions is equivalent to one semester), and one 9-week summer session (optional).
6. Students will attend from 8:30 am to 2:30 p.m. daily (after care is available).
7. Progress meetings are held monthly.
8. At the conclusion of your child’s time with us, we assist in finding an appropriate school that can match your child’s needs.

**For additional information please contact our intake department at 954-577-3396.**