

Not ADHD? Think Dyslexia



by Danielle Wood

Although as many as one in 10 people have [dyslexia](#), it's one of the most commonly misdiagnosed learning issues for school-age children. At least, according to Drs. Brock and Fernette Eide, physicians and co-authors of the book *The Mislabeled Child*. That's because [ADHD](#) often acts as a red herring, throwing evaluators off the scent.

"If you talk to most parents or teachers, ADHD, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, is the first thing on people's minds when a student's falling behind in class or is struggling in school," says Dr. Brock Eide. "But what they should be doing is thinking about dyslexia. The dyslexic child is often a mislabeled child."

Children with unrecognized dyslexia are often seen as inattentive, careless, or slow, but, the Eides say, often nothing could be farther from the truth. "Dyslexics are overrepresented in creative and inventive fields like art and architecture or computers and engineering, " according to Dr. Fernette Eide. "As young people, their gifts and talents may be overlooked because society only sees their weakest link."

Although dyslexia is one of the most common specific [learning disabilities](#), it's not always identified in school. Many parents and professionals are more aware of attention deficit disorder checklists than ones for dyslexia.

That's exactly why parents need to be on the lookout, says Dr. Fernette Eide. "Parents need to be alert to the possibility of dyslexia, because they may be the only one who recognizes their child's pattern of difficulties, so they can help get them the proper assessments, accommodations, and remediations they need."

That's all well and good. But what exactly should you look for? The authors say the following traits are red flags for possible dyslexia:

- Reading is slow and effortful (especially reading aloud)

- Tendency to make wild guesses with new words
- Trouble appreciating rhymes. For example, they may not "get" Dr. Seuss
- May skip over small words (like a, an, the) while reading
- Mixes up order of letters
- Avoids reading aloud
- Listening comprehension much better than reading comprehension
- Letter reversals, unusual spelling errors (may look like wild guesses)
- May avoid writing by hand
- "Careless" errors in math or with reading test instructions
- Does much better with oral testing

If your child shows these signs, the Eides urge, don't just assume they're being lazy. There may be something else at work. ADHD might be a big buzz word in the media, but dyslexia is far more common. And the earlier it's diagnosed, the sooner help can arrive.

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