**IDEAS FOR DYSLEXIA**

1. **Specialized instruction in reading and spelling (including specialized instruction in underlying phonological awareness skills)** is recommended in the school setting. Recent research has indicated that intervention for reading disorders needs to be between 30-60 minutes a day, 4-5 days a week, and delivered in a one-to-one, or, at most, a three-to-one, setting.
2. **Phonological Awareness and Reading Skills:** Engage in activities that emphasize the application of phonological awareness to phonetic tasks to develop skills; the following activities are recommended:
   1. **Visual Representation:** Use a variety of objects, such as blocks, M & Ms, poker chips, or colored Legos, to visually show children how many sounds are in a word. For example, for the word “rain” three different colored blocks would be used (r-ai-n). Practice changing the first, middle, or last sound in the word by “swapping” the colored block for a different color (ex: a blue, green, and red block are lined up to represent *rain*. . .”now, let’s change the word *rain* to *pain*” and Edwin would swap the first blue block with a purple block to show that the child s/he changed the first sound). This activity will strengthen the child’s awareness of individual sounds within words and how to manipulate them. Eventually the goal would be for the child to do this in her head (ex: “Okay, say the word *rain*. Now change the “r” to “p” and what is the new word?”).
   2. **Pictographic Flashcards for the Short Vowels:** A fun strategy used to emphasize one letter label, or “phoneme,” is to create a pictograph using each letter and this technique be used for the short vowel sounds. These picture cues will pair the child’s visual memory skills with learning letter shapes and their phonemic sounds, to help strengthen the accuracy and fluency in retrieving the sounds when reading or writing. Once retrieval is fast and strong with individual letters, add letter combinations and word parts (e.g. om, ip, at, ub, ing, ight, ly, etc.) to further strengthen retrieval speed when decoding.

“aaa” “ah” “ehhh” “iiii” “uh”

apple octopus elephant igloo umbrella

1. **Decoding and Encoding Drills:** Using the flashcards that display various sounds, letter combinations, and word parts, have the child practice both decoding drills (she is shown the flashcard and must quickly read it) and encoding drills (an adult says the sound/s or word part on the flashcard without showing it to the child, who must quickly write down the letters/word part). The goal is to have the child able to decode and encode the sounds with complete fluency and accuracy.
2. **Create “alien” words:** Create faux (non-sense) words representing common English letter patterns (bip, dop, plit, faps, etc.) for the child to sound out and practice decoding. These words can be written down on notecards or a dry-erase board, or combinations can be created using letter tiles (use Scrabble tiles or Boggle cubes!). This activity will reinforce focusing primarily on the individual sounds in the words without having contextual information that may lead to “guessing” what the word is.
3. **Awareness of phonological units:** Have the child categorize words based on whether they share a common spelling/phonological unit (e.g. Group #1 has words with /ou/ sound, Group #2 has words with /ight/ sound, etc.). She could also be asked to generate her own real and “alien” words containing a specific phoneme unit (e.g. create a list of words with /ou/ sound in them). Create word lists of these similar spelling patterns and have the child highlight the similar pattern in each word before reading/practicing the list so that the letter patterns visually stand out.
4. **Increasing Morphological Awareness:** The child should participate in activities that increase his awareness of word forms and their derivations to increase understanding of the English language, as well as improve decoding and spelling skills. Examples of helpful activities include those that build upon word-building (creating new word forms using prefixes & suffixes), unit finding (underlining prefixes/suffixes), word sorting (grouping words by similar prefixes/suffixes), increasing understanding of word meanings (the suffix -er can have different meanings, such as singer vs. smaller), and sentence completion tasks (place the grammatically appropriate word in the blank). One instructional resource to consider would be **Teaching Word Meaning** by S. Stahl and W. Nagy, which contains many practical ideas.
5. **Word Attack Strategies:** The child should be encouraged to use the following strategies and activities to strengthen ability to “sound out” unfamiliar words:

**Continuous voicing:** Encourage the child to slowly say each sound, “stretching” them out, as she sounds out the word, keeping her voice “on” the whole time.

**Decode “alien” words:** As described above, practice decoding nonsense words. This activity will reinforce focusing primarily on the individual sounds in the words without having contextual information that may lead to “guessing” what the word is.

**Syllabification:** Visually break down multi-syllable words (e.g. color code using a different color for each syllable, or use lines to divide the syllables) for a period of time to highlight the smaller and more manageable pieces when decoding and spelling.

1. **High Noon Books:** High Noon Books (www.highnoonbooks.com) publishes a variety of high-interest books at various reading levels so that children who read below their grade level can still read and enjoy material in which the content is still at their age and grade level. They also have available phonetic-based reading material to provide a systematic, phonetic-based approach to reading.
2. **Sources of curriculum material:** The following are a variety of wonderful sources of curriculum material that can provide structure for a phonological awareness/early reading program:

**Sound Start: Teaching Phonological Awareness in the Classroom**, by Orna Lenchner & Blanche Podhajski. Stern Center for Language, 20 Allen Brook Lane, Williston VT 05495, (800) 544-4863. This is an excellent program that offers a variety of game-like activities to be taught in a prescribed sequence. It starts with rhyme activities and ends with the activities involving letter sounds and simple reading and spelling tasks. The kit comes with a set of picture cards and other materials to be used in the games, and it also includes a video tape that demonstrates some of the activities.

**The Phonological Awareness Kit,** by Carolyn Robertson & Wanda Salter. LinguiSystems (http://www.linguisystems.com/). Activities to stimulate phonological awareness and transition to early decoding skills.

**Launch into Reading Success Through Phonological Awareness Training**, by Lorna Bennett, Creative Curriculum Inc 456 Moberly Rd, Vancouver BC V5Z 4L7, (604) 876-6682. Manual, pictures, game boards. This is a comprehensive set of activities to stimulate phonological awareness from beginning stages through letter sound activities. In addition, it contains a set of activities to help children become more aware of the way their mouths work to produce different consonant phonemes.

**“Explode the Code” Workbooks:** Educators Publishing Services, Inc. publishes a wonderful series of workbooks called “Explode the Code” of various levels, increasing the difficulty dependent in the area of focus. These workbooks can be purchased at local bookstores or educational supply stores, as well as through www.amazon.com.

1. **Apps:** There are a wide variety of apps available to help support early literacy skills including phonological awareness. These are not meant to supplement specialized instruction; rather, they may be used for extra practice. Some examples include:

* Reading Doctor Apps
* Phonological Awareness Lab (by “Smarty Ears”)
* Montessori words (by “L’Escapadou”)

1. **Computer Software:** There are many commercially-available software programs which focus on phonological awareness and reading skill development. A highly recommended published program to encourage skills in this area, **Earobics CD Rom**, marketed by Cognitive Concepts, Inc., is an excellent tool for systematically emphasizing phonological awareness, auditory processing, and decoding for strengthening reading and spelling skills. If used properly, research has shown children should practice this CD game a minimum of 15-20 minutes a day, 4 days a week, for optimal benefit. Anothis fun resource is the **Headsprout** reading program (www.headsprout.com), which provides 40+ online learning lessons focusing on fundamental reading skills. Once a child is enrolled in the program, s/he can work on the lessons at her or his own pace, and access each lesson at school or at home since the program is online. It will also send out intermittent progress reports so teachers and parents can track progress. **Starfall** (at www.starfall.com) and the **Reading Rockets** (at www.readingrockets.org) are websites that are excellent resources on reading for family members and professionals to use when helping Edwin develop reading skills.