



Handy Handouts®

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Why Is My Child Not Learning To Read? The Need for Early Intervention

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When parents express concern about their kindergartener or first grader's reading or language skills, and/or the teacher observes and confirms that a student is having difficulties in the classroom, an evaluation process usually begins. The speech-language pathologist (SLP) usually takes the lead in this process by informally screening and evaluating the student's language skills using a checklist similar to one designed by Dr. Hugh Catts.



Dr. Hugh W. Catts, Professor and Chair of Speech-Language-Hearing: Sciences & Communication Disorders at the University of Kansas has been instrumental in compiling research for the early identification of kindergarteners and first graders at risk for reading disabilities. Through his extensive research, Dr. Catts created the *Early Identification of Language-Based Reading Disabilities: A Checklist* (1997). Click here to view and print the checklist in its entirety <http://www.ocslha.com/LEarly%20ID.htm>.

Teachers and Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) can use this checklist to evaluate the language and reading skills of kindergarteners and first graders at risk for reading deficits. Parents can use the checklist to document observations and help them express concerns about their child's reading and language skills to the classroom teacher or the school's SLP. This checklist, or similar ones, can help the SLP or another qualified educator identify primary students at risk for language-based reading disabilities. If a checklist reveals many weaknesses, there should be no cause for alarm. Having many weaknesses simply confirms that the student is in need of immediate intervention. Before testing to determine if a learning disability is present, the student must participate in a structured intervention program.

An early intervention program provides very intense, individualized, and targeted instruction in reading and language skills. This focused intervention gives a student the opportunity to learn the skills he or she is lacking and provides the best chance to overcome his or her reading deficits. A student that responds to intervention likely does not have a true disability but may require intense, targeted instruction to obtain the skills he or she lacks. If the student does not respond or make progress during an intervention period, further assessment will determine if a learning disability is present and if he or she qualifies for special education services.

Children identified **early** as being at risk in either phonological processing (kindergarten) or reading skills (first grade) have shown significant gains after participating in an intense intervention program, placing them well within the average range of their peers. Unfortunately, many children do not receive quality instruction or intervention until the third grade and beyond. Early identification of struggling students and focused, targeted intervention offer students the greatest chance to become proficient readers.

Resources

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). *Language-based learning disabilities*. Retrieved September 2012 <http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/lbld.htm>

Montgomery, Judy; Moore, Barbara. (2006). *START-IN – Students are responding to intervention*. Greenville, SC: Super Duper Publications Page 1.

Edwards, Adrienne. *Dyslexia Tutor: News Resource and Other Matters*. Retrieved September 2012. <http://dyslexia.wordpress.com/2007/06/02/early-identification-of-language-based-reading-disabilities/>

Catts, H. (1997). Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools. *The early identification of language-based reading disabilities*. 28, 88-89.



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Webber® Hear It! Say It! Learn It!™
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Early Literacy & Language Assessment®
Item# ELLA-22

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