

The Dyslexia Debate:
A Round-Table Discussion

(Session Coordinator: Lynn Senecal, Ph.D.)

The authors of the new book The Dyslexia Debate do not question the existence of reading difficulties. They *do*, however, question the utility of the term ‘dyslexia’—arguing that the neural signature and needs of students with this diagnosis do not differ from those of other struggling readers/writers. (That is, this label does not add to teaching/learning, as best instructional practices for students with dyslexia apply equally to all who struggle with ‘the nuts and bolts’ of reading and writing.)

Needless to say, this book is making waves. This session will feature a quick overview of the book’s ‘big ideas’, followed by a round-table discussion of the authors’ position. Emphasis will be placed on a very practical question: How helpful is the term ‘dyslexia’ to teachers, children and parents?

To support a rich conversation, an advance summary of the book’s big ideas is attached. Please note that this document outlines the authors’ (to some, provocative) positions; your views may differ, which will promote lively debate. There are no black-and-white answers to this question; all (civil 😊) points of view are welcome.

As you read/reflect upon the summary, it may be helpful to consider the following:

Scenario:

A struggling reader/writer is assessed—and identified as ‘dyslexic’. What are the implications?

Is this diagnosis ‘value-added’? — i.e., Does the term further clarify our understanding of this struggling reader/writer’s learning profile and needs?

How will this diagnosis affect others’ (teachers’, family’s, peers’) perceptions of this learner?

How will this diagnosis affect this student’s perception of him/herself as a learner?

Are there instructional/remedial techniques that selectively help students identified with dyslexia (i.e., as opposed to all those struggling with reading/writing...or all learners)?

Will this struggling reader/writer now be eligible for additional resources (resource-time, accommodations, technology...)?

Thorny questions, indeed. Looking forward to the conversation! (Lynn)