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# A Multi-Dimensional Service System for Children with Dyslexia Based on Family Education

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## Abstract

Children with dyslexia are usually misinterpreted as being lazy or intellectually impaired, because their behavior seldom reveals obvious symptoms in daily life. The authors have established a “school-family-service organization” system based on experience of dyslexia remediation. The system centers on family education, and detects the signs of dyslexia in time. With the contributions of these three parties, children with dyslexia will improve their academic achievements and reduce their reading difficulties.

Keywords: family education; dyslexia; “school-family-service organization” system; children’s education

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## INTRODUCTION

In the current intervention patterns for children with dyslexia in mainland China, parents tend to send them directly to professional service organizations, and leave them to the therapists or teachers; meanwhile, few parents participate in the training courses. The weak connection among schools, parents, and service organizations leads to an unexpected situation: family education has been extremely marginalized in dyslexia remediation.

Since the symptoms of dyslexia are usually invisible to many people's knowledge, a large number of children with dyslexia missed the best time for remediation. Moreover, people have a low awareness about dyslexia in Mainland China, which leads to more difficulties to identifying potential children. By the time that the parents realize that their children are potentially dyslexic, they are already in middle school, or even drop out of school.

Quite a number of parents do not have a basic knowledge of dyslexia, and unfortunately, they support the children in the wrong way, such as forcing the children to do too much homework, or unhelpful communication with them. What's more, some parents are increasingly anxious when confronted with dyslexia, even losing their temper with family members, for the reason that they have not yet been equipped with systematic methods to deal with it.

Little relevant action has been carried out for children with dyslexia in schools in Mainland China. To be precise, it is hard to find integrated education for children with special needs, or teaching according to different levels of literacy in campus. In fact, it turns out to be the barrier against children with dyslexia, and causes more misunderstanding with teachers and schoolmates.

Aimed at the problems above, we hope to connect school, family, and service organization as a team, and therefore identify the children with difficulties in literacy in time, so the parents could play a positive role in the remediation. Based on the family education oriented idea, we are trying to establish a "school-family-service organization" system as an exploratory concept in mainland China, and hope to help the families of children with dyslexia. In this system, parents would play a leading role for children with dyslexia, and therefore regard family education as the core of dyslexia intervention.

In the following paragraphs we are going to introduce the multi-dimensional service system. The emphasis is on how family education improves the training effect, and how parents are enabled to play a crucial part.

## 1. "SCHOOL-FAMILY-SERVICE ORGANIZATION" SYSTEM

A "school-family-service organization" system allows all the participants to take an active part in dyslexic interventions, including schools and families. In the traditional one-way system, only the service organizations undertake most training, and families receive the intervention services passively. Schools and families are encouraged to perform the more important functions of connection.

However, school is the place where students spend the longest time, and it has a great influence on their development. In the "school-family-service organization" system, school will inform parents with knowledge of dyslexia, detect the early symptoms of dyslexia, offer professional accommodations and a better learning environment. School plays the starting role in the system, which is expected to increase the children's literacy directly.

Family should be the harbor of love for dyslexic students, where the children are able to flourish. Family education is influential to improve communication between parents and children, and therefore children will become more confident, which will help reduce the barriers of dyslexia. It is an important point connecting school and service organization.

Service organizations should provide children with dyslexia with professional intervention including a comprehensive assessment for children with dyslexia, a professional training program, and specific support for parents. The Service organization is the key point connecting schools and family.

A "school-family-service organization" system relies on sufficient communication among the three parties for timely detection, early intervention and targeted services, so as to minimize the impact of dyslexia on schoolchildren.

Our "school-family-service organization" system had played an important role in spreading knowledge of dyslexia as well as screening targeted group with dyslexia. The service organization has developed a set of screening tests on WeChat, which assesses the children's literacy briefly, as well as covers more potential users on the platform of WeChat. Compared with assessments on site, the online test system is designed to keep children's private information from leaking, and therefore parents are willing to accept it as the preliminary screening test. In the meantime, when teachers have a basic knowledge of dyslexia, they could discover the targeted students in time and inform parents that the students may be potentially dyslexic.

In the service system, parents are required to take courses at parents' school, in order to master the training skills as a positive role in the dyslexia remediation. By increasing their actual time of participation every week, parents are able to help reduce the barriers of reading and writing instructions, and achieve better parenthood. With more confidence, the children will have a better training results in literacy.

A “school-family-service organization” system should be constructed on active and timely communication. Being fully aware of dyslexia, we can discover the potential children and arrange specific interventions and services, as well as keep an up-to-date record of students’ academic achievements, and eventually minimize the impact of dyslexia on the children.

## **2. THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY EDUCATION ON THE MULTIPLE DIMENSION SERVICE SYSTEM**

Family education is correlated with the training results of children with dyslexia. In the multi-dimensional support system, we shall maximize the strength of family education and change the one-direction service style into multi-dimensional service.

According to the results of the literacy assessment, parents can make corresponding adjustments to family education. A comprehensive understanding of the children with dyslexia is the foundation for intervention training and new family education. An appropriate family education program should be developed based on the characteristics of the child's language proficiency, by the parents with the assistance of professionals. Moreover, the language ability training within family education follows the system of language acquisition and progressive learning. Parents can solve different problems at different stages of children’s language acquisition. Meanwhile, parents are expected to encourage the children with more guidance. When the children make progress, their efforts will be appreciated, and the praise should help enhance their confidence.

Service organizations can support the parents with professional skills and knowledge, and therefore establish the family education system together. The system of ShenZhen Sparkling Education as an example, builds a family education system including literacy assessment, family education consultation, parents’ school, family education program, student training system, and academic achievement tracking. Based on the children with dyslexia’s needs, the parents school video library consists of various modules. Within the family education support system, the children with dyslexia are assessed for literacy, and then they will be provided with a customized training program according to their assessment performance. As for the parents, they are required to learn from the customized training program videos, acquire the training skills in corresponding units, and finally help train the relevant abilities of the children with dyslexia at home with the help of the service platform. The family education support system provides parents with professional support for family education through video learning, breaking the barriers of space and time. In the meantime, professional tutors on the platform will help parents tutor children with dyslexia with more specific instruction, so as to keep a professional family education and service quality.

## **Introduction of Family Education Service System**

### **1. Fast screening tool**

With low public awareness, it is difficult for parents to find out whether their children have dyslexia, so they need a tool to help them identify their children's problems directly. One of the main features of the tool is the convenience of dissemination, for example, the fast screening tool can be carried in Wechat, and ordinary people can quickly screen only by using Wechat to scan the two-digit code. In addition, it should be noted that when disseminating, it is necessary to set keywords that are easy to attract the attention of parents, rather than words with dyslexia directly. For example, if your child has frequent spelling mistakes, missing words or skipping lines while reading, parents will be interested in scanning the QR code to learn about their children's abilities and then find out their children's problems.

### **2. Parent tutor training course (parent school)**

The main contents of the parent tutor class include: understanding dyslexia, how parents can deal with children's dyslexia, the basic methods of family counseling and so on. Through the training courses, parents can not only understand children with dyslexia as a whole, but also master some basic skills of tutoring children with dyslexia, so as to lay a foundation for family counseling.

### **3. Capacity evaluation and program development**

Before making a targeted plan, we need to have a comprehensive understanding of the child's reading and writing ability. According to the characteristics of simplified Chinese, we have developed an evaluation system, which can understand children's problems from 21 dimensions, such as Chinese application, phonetic ability, reading fluency, glyph structure and writing ability, visual perception, writing posture, pen holding posture and so on. With the results of the evaluation, we can formulate a targeted training program according to the characteristics of the child's ability.

### **4. Daily training**

Daily training usually takes up 4-5 hours a week. It mainly consists of two parts. The first part is carried out by students under the guidance of their parents. When carrying out the training, the parents first learn the training video according to the training program, and after the parents master the training methods, they guide their children to do the training, and input the training results into the learning system. The second part is for the students to train by themselves through the

electronic training platform, the platform has designed the training content into games, students can complete the training by playing games, and the platform can record the results of game training.

### 5. **Learning status tracking and feedback**

The system can track the effects of students' training and give feedback to parents in time. At the same time, through the training records recorded by the system, we can form an analysis report for the parents. At the end of a stage of training, we can analyze the points that have not been improved, and thus adjust the training program.

### 3. **IN DAILY TRAINING, WE SHOULD BE GOOD AT USING TEACHING AIDS TO HELP CHILDREN.**

Teaching aids can be used skilfully in family education for children with dyslexia's literacy training. The most important principle of intervention is to motivate in children with dyslexia an interest in learning, because it is their nature to enjoy playing. So, we design games in family education in which parents and children enjoy making teaching aids together. On the one hand, they will have a closer parent-child relationship by making teaching aids together. On the other hand, dyslexic students are likely to have more interest in learning by making teaching aids, which can be used in the training course and school class in the future.

Here is an example of training case, making Chinese with plasticine. This game is aimed at training the strength and flexibility of hand muscles, and increasing students' interest in Chinese characters. Before we start, a few hollow Chinese characters are prepared. Then we rub the plasticine into strips, and fill them into the hollow Chinese characters above. Read this aloud and feel the strokes of the plasticine Chinese characters with fingers. Finally take away the hollow characters and encourage the children to repeat the plasticine characters. In this game different part of Chinese characters can be represented by various colours of plasticine. We may also make more Chinese characters, and then cover the eyes, guessing the characters by touch.

### 4. **THE KEY ROLE PLAYED BY PARENTS IN THE SERVICE SYSTEM**

First of all, parents could detect the symptoms of dyslexia. According to scales designed for children of different ages, parents are able to discover the specific performance which is similar to dyslexia, by comparing with children of the same age. Parents are required to pay attention to children's hand muscles and fine operation, large muscles and large movements, language proficiency, hand-eye coordination, sensory integration and so on. As for the pupils, they have more word processing tasks, and their parents shall begin to observe the reading and writing performance, to confirm whether they can

memorize the words within an efficient time, to focus on reading fluency and errors.

Apart from observing children with dyslexia's literacy and behavior, parents are expected to communicate with multiple parties for support. Having discovered any symptoms of dyslexia, parents must communicate with schools, hospitals or professional organizations, so that they can fully understand what happens to the children. A good connection between parents and other people will definitely help them to understand the difficulties the children with dyslexia suffer from, and seek extra support from their school teachers. In addition, parents can argue for an appropriate adjustment to their children's homework, find learning style suitable for their own children, and help release academic stress, in order to create an inclusive environment.

Last but not least, parents' emotional management is actually supportive to the dyslexic students. Parent who do not have any idea of dyslexia and are informed that their children might be dyslexic for the first time, usually become panicked. However, as parents, your children with dyslexia need you. Difficult as it is, parents need to put aside panic, doubt, and denial, and try to understand and accept dyslexia. In fact, once parents are capable of emotional management, they will be contributing their efforts to better training effects. Once the children feel that their families understand and support them, they will concentrate more in the training days. Children with dyslexia are in need of ongoing support. Parents who make quick adjustments to their emotions and face the facts of dyslexia, will eventually be the strongest supporters for the children.

This approach of involving parents in developing dyslexia awareness is not new and has been effective in other countries. These include the USA, where the Orton society (now the International Dyslexia association) combined professionals and parents, in the UK, with the foundation of the BDA, largely driven by an anxious parent of a dyslexic son whose dyslexia had not been recognised, namely Marion Welchman. Over time, a number of dyslexia associations have been set up world- wide, which have transformed awareness of dyslexia, with the most effective combining parents and professionals. The Dyslexia Association of Singapore, DAS, for example has provided ongoing training for parents and ensures their involvement in understanding and supporting their children's needs.

The unique aspect of the current approach is the ability to use modern media to ensure that awareness is disseminated, which should provide a wide and sustainable reach for all involved. These positive steps in China have the potential to create a greater understanding of dyslexia throughout society and improve outcomes for the whole family.