

## ***Reading Methods and Learning Disabilities***

No single reading method will be effective for all students with learning disabilities. Most individuals with learning disabilities will benefit from the application of a variety of methods. Instructors need a repertoire of instructional methods. However, the following guidelines may be useful in developing educational strategies to address your child's reading disability:

**Phonics approach.** The phonics approach teaches word recognition through learning grapheme-phoneme (letter-sound) associations. The student learns vowels, consonants, and blends, and learns to sound out words by combining sounds and blending them into words. By associating speech sounds with letters the student learns to recognize new and unfamiliar words.

**Linguistic method.** This method uses a "whole word" approach. Words are taught in word families, or similar spelling patterns, and only as whole words. The student is not directly taught the relationship between letters and sounds, but learns them through minimal word differences. As the child progresses, words that have irregular spellings are introduced as sight words.

**Multisensory approach.** This method assumes that some children learn best when content is presented in several modalities. Multisensory approaches that employ tracing, hearing, writing, and seeing are often referred to as VAKT (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile) methods. Multisensory techniques can be used with both phonics and linguistic approaches.

**Language experience approach.** The language experience approach uses children's spoken language to develop material for reading. This approach utilizes each student's oral language level and personal experiences. Material is written by the child and teacher for reading using each child's experience. This can be done in small groups and individually. Familiarity with the content and the vocabulary facilitate reading these stories. Each child can develop a **book** to be read and re-read. This approach helps children know what reading is and that ideas and experiences can be conveyed in print.

**Reading comprehension support.** Persons with learning disabilities who need work on reading comprehension often respond to explicitly taught strategies which aid comprehension such as skimming, scanning and studying techniques. These techniques aid in acquiring the gist, and then focus is turned to the details of the text through use of the **cloze** procedure. The cloze procedure builds upon a student's impulse to fill in missing elements and is based upon the Gestalt principle of closure. With this method, every fifth to eighth word in a passage is randomly eliminated. The student is then required to fill in the missing words. This technique develops reading skills and an understanding not only of word meaning but also of the structure of the language itself.