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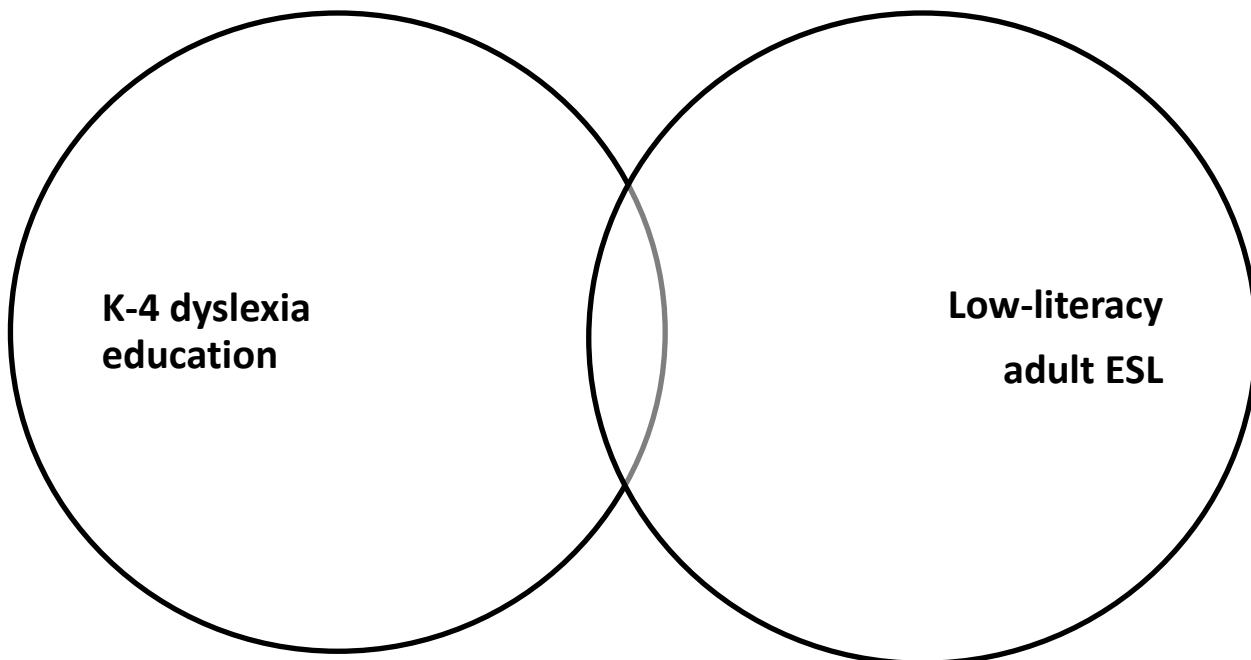
Crossing Contexts: Teachers of Low-literate ESL Learn from Dyslexia Educators

COABE (Commission on Adult Basic Education) Incentive Grant Project Summary:

Five adult low-literacy ESL teachers took part in a study circle in fall 2013 to explore how dyslexia educators teach early literacy. Their young learners are discovering the alphabetic principle, acquiring the components of reading, and building their identities as readers and writers as they prepare for academic success. While these two contexts (adult ESL and K-4 dyslexia education) are strikingly different, there is much overlap.

To explore early literacy and enhance their classroom practice, the adult ESL teachers investigated early literacy instruction for young new readers in a study circle. Over several weeks they observed and debriefed instruction at a school specializing in children with dyslexia and learning challenges. They completed assigned readings and tasks and engaged in extensive discussions and reflective journaling and sharing. The facilitator encouraged them to make connections among the practices they were drawn to and to think together about how those practices might be wisely applied to their adult learners. By tapping into a new teaching context, the participants uncovered key literacy practices for dyslexic children and transformed and applied their learnings to adult low-literacy ESL learners.

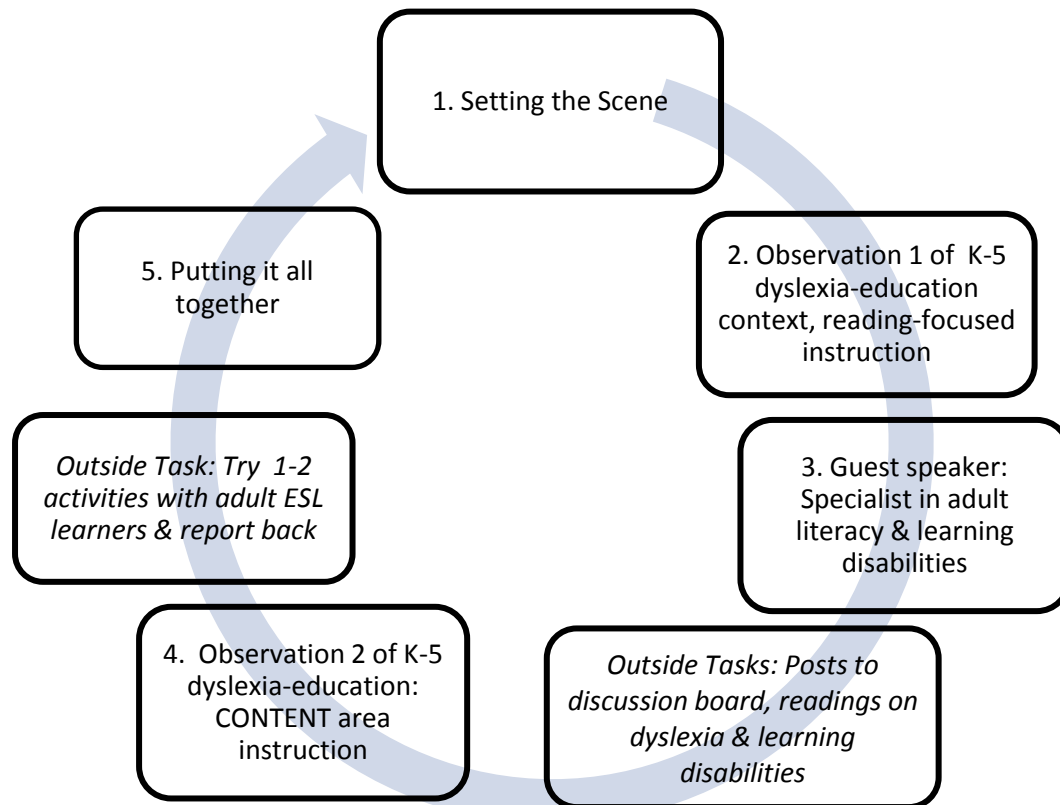
List some of the overlap and distinctive qualities of dyslexia education and low-literacy adult ESL, particularly around literacy instruction. In other words, *what's similar and different about teaching literacy to the new readers in these two contexts?*



3 guiding questions for our study circle:

- ① *How are our low-literacy adult ESL learners' reading skills different from & similar to the skills of learners (typically native English speakers) receiving dyslexia/reading disability interventions?*
- ② *What knowledge and practices used in K-12 dyslexia/reading disability instruction might have promise for the adult ESL teacher?*
- ③ *Of those practices identified as worthy of consideration for low-literacy adult ESL learners, how would they first need to be adapted for our context?*

STUDY CIRCLE MEETINGS:



Literacy-related observations in learners with reading disabilities AND also in low-literate adult ESL learners:

1. Trouble with print/page orientation
2. Guessing, not decoding
3. Difficulty blending phonemes
4. Savvy – many ‘work around’ and coping strategies
5. Lack of transfer of skills learned in routine activities
6. Confusion of similar symbols b/d, g/q
7. Difficulty processing oral instructions
8. Decoding so strained, comprehension is lost
9. Struggling more than others, despite persistence and excellence in other areas
10. “Hit wall” of memorizing and other coping strategies

Findings from our project: What dyslexia education practices may have potential for low-literacy adult ESL?

Cautionary Tales: Transforming Practices from K-4 dyslexia education -> Adult Low-literate ESL

Recommended Reading

Wolf, M. (2007). *Proust and the squid*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Shaywitz, S. (2003). *Overcoming dyslexia: A new and complete science-based program for reading problems at any level*. New York: Random House, Inc.

The International Dyslexia Institute. (2009). *Multisensory Structured Language Teaching*. Available: <http://www.interdys.org/ewebeditpro5/upload/MSLTeaching.pdf>

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