**The Orton-Gillingham Approach has been rightfully described as language-based, multisensory, structured, sequential, cumulative, cognitive, and flexible. These characteristics can be easily amplified and extended as they are in the following attributes.**

**The basic purpose of everything that is done in the Orton-Gillingham Approach, from recognizing words to composing a poem, is assisting the student to become a competent reader, writer and independent learner.**

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## Personalized

**Teaching begins with recognizing the differing needs of learners. While those with dyslexia share similarities, there are differences in their language needs. In addition individuals with dyslexia may possess additional problems that complicate learning. Most common among these are attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity (ADHD).**

> **Brain Rule - Optimal brain activation occurs when the material holds personal meaning:** When subjects are in a positive emotional state that connects to their interest, is presented in a novel way that evokes wonder, optimal brain activation occurs. Attentiveness is closely linked to positive emotional cueing and personal meaning. (Willis, 2006)

## Multisensory

**It uses all the learning pathways: seeing, hearing, feeling, and awareness of motion, brought together by the thinking brain. The instructor engages in multisensory teaching to convey curricular content in the most understandable way to the student. The teacher also models how the student, by using these multiple pathways, can engage in multisensory learning that results in greater ease and success in learning.**

**Brain Rule - Neurons that Fire Together Wire Together:** When there are multiple pathways (cross-brain referencing) connecting the learning, retrieval can occur from a variety of cues and memories are more permanent. (Willis, 2006)

## Diagnostic and Prescriptive

**An Orton-Gillingham lesson is both diagnostic and prescriptive. It is diagnostic in the sense that the instructor continuously monitors the verbal, nonverbal, and written responses of the student to identify and analyze both the student's problems and progress. This information is the basis of planning the next lesson. That lesson is prescriptive in the sense that will contain instructional elements that focus upon the resolution of the student's difficulties and that build upon the student's progress noted in the previous lesson.**

**Brain Rule: Summarizing (recapping) is dendrite food:** Just as summarizing is a valuable memory booster, it is also a way to assess the day's learning. This summarizing is dendrite food, because it makes new learning connections that can grow more dendrites. (Willis, 2006) Listening to a student's summary, is a great diagnostic tool that can lead to your prescription for the next lesson or a tool for error analysis.

**Brain Rule - Repeat to Remember and Remember to Repeat:** Practice makes permanent. The more times the neural networks are stimulated, the stronger the memory becomes. Reviewing in a variety of ways helps build hardwired brain connections. (Medina, 2008)

## Direct Instruction

**The teacher presentations employ lesson formats which ensure that the student approaches the learning experience understanding what is to be learned, why it is to be learned, and how it is to be learned.**

**Brain Rule - The One That Does the Thinking Does the Learning:** Employ "elaborative rehearsal". When information is fully processed and multiple connections are made better consolidation takes place and the memory is stronger. (Wolfe, 2001)

## Systematic Phonics

**It uses systematic phonics, stressing the alphabetic principle in the initial stages of reading development. It takes advantage of the sound/symbol relationships inherent in**

**the alphabetic system of writing. Spoken words are made up of individual speech sounds, and the letters of written words graphically represent those speech sounds.**

> **Brain Rule - Patterns are paths for memories to follow:** Patterning is the process whereby the brain perceives and generates patterns by relating new with previously learned material or chunking material into pattern systems it has used before. Whenever new material is presented in such a way that students see relationships, they generate greater brain cell activity (forming new neural connections) and achieve more successful long-term memory storage for retrieval. (Willis, 2006)

## Applied Linguistics

**It draws upon applied linguistics not only in the initial decoding and encoding stages of reading and writing but in more advanced stages dealing with syllabic, morphemic, syntactic, semantic, and grammatic structures of language and our writing system. At all times the Orton-Gillingham Approach involves the student in integrative practices that involve reading, spelling, and writing together.**

> **Brain Rule - Feedback works when teachers understand the actions that can close the gap:** For feedback to work, teachers have to understand: 1) the student's current level of performance, 2) the student's expected level of performance, 3) actions they can take to close the gap. (Fisher, 2016)

## Linguistic Competence

**It increases linguistic competence by stressing language patterns that determine word order and sentence structure and the meaning of words and phrases. It moves beyond this to recognizing the various forms that characterize the common literary forms employed by writers.**

> **Brain Rule - The brain is stimulated by an interesting challenge:** The challenge needs to be one where success can be gained through a reasonable amount of effort. If the challenge seems either overwhelming or too easy and boring, motivation tends to shut down. (Healy, 2010)

## Systematic and Structured (note: Synthetic & Analytic)

**The teacher presents information in an ordered way that indicates the relationship between the material taught and past material taught. Curricular content unfolds in linguistically logical ways which facilitates student learning and progress.**

**Brain Rule - Humans are Pattern Seeking Beings:** Brain activity related to long term memory storage and memory retrieval is stronger and faster when connected to patterns and relationships between concepts. Putting together and taking apart builds relational thinking. (Willis, 2006)

## Sequential, Incremental, and Cumulative

**Step by step learners move from the simple, well-learned material to that which is more and more complex. They move from one step to the next as they master each level of language skills.**

**Brain Rule- Prime the Pump & Activate Prior Knowledge:** When there are multiple pathways (cross-brain referencing) connecting the learning, retrieval can occur from a variety of cues and memories are more permanent. (Willis, 2006)

**Brain Rule: Patterns are paths for memories to follow:** Patterning is the process whereby the brain perceives and generates patterns by relating new with previously learned material or chunking material into pattern systems it has used before. Whenever new material is presented in such a way that students see relationships, they generate greater brain cell activity (forming new neural connections) and achieve more successful long-term memory storage for retrieval. (Willis, 2006)

## Continuous Feedback and Positive Reinforcement

**The approach provides for a close teacher-student relationship that builds self-confidence based on success.**

**Brain Rule - Effective feedback enhances learning:** Individualized feedback can build skills and competence when compassionately delivered. Growth of learning and thinking skills takes place during the process of introspection and self-awareness. When there is a problem or error that students can identify without fear, they are mentally prepared to process the learning experience, rather than becoming emotionally blocked to constructive suggestions. (Willis, 2006)

**Brain Rule - Feedback has a powerful impact on learning:** When errors are celebrated and expected, feedback takes hold. With an effect size of .75, feedback is one of the top 10 influences on achievement. But it's only when feedback is received that it works. (Fisher, 2016)

**Brain Rule - Feedback is designed to close the gap from current to expected learning:** Feedback needs to be "just-in-time, just-for-me information delivered when it can do the most good." (Fisher, 2016)

## Cognitive Approach

**Students understand the reasons for what they are learning and for the learning strategies they are employing. Confidence is gained as they gain in their ability to apply newly gained knowledge about and knowledge how to develop their skills with reading, spelling, and writing.**

**Brain Rule - Memorable Events Make Memories:** The brain is biologically programmed to attend to information that has strong emotional content. Connections to learning occur when thinking and feelings are involved. (Willis, 2006)

## Emotionally Sound

**Students' feelings about themselves and about learning are vital. Teaching is directed toward providing the experience of success. With success comes increased self-confidence and motivation.**

**Brain Rule - Emotion Drives Attention:** Emotion is the primary catalyst in the learning process. Just the right amount of "good stress" is motivating, but an overstressed environment prevents processing information and learning. (Willis, 2006)

**Brain Rule: Building resiliency:** Therapists point out that young adults who have faced and conquered learning challenges are sometimes better equipped with both self-knowledge and grit than those for whom things have always come easily. (Healy, 2010)

**Brain Rule: Positive emotions jump start brain activity:** When the gatekeepers of the limbic system are jump-started by position emotion, more brain activity is seen passing through these portals and lighting up the frontal lobe memory storage centers. (Willis, 2006)