

Dyslexia in Primary School

Dyslexia Conference

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Special Education in context

- Legislation:

Education Act 1998

Equal Status Act 2000

Education Welfare Act 2000

Education for Persons with

Disabilities Bill 2003

- National Council for Special Education
- Special Education Support Service

Dyslexia in Primary School

- Unrecognised
- Underachievement
- Current provision:
 - Assisted mainstream*
 - Resource teaching*
 - Special Reading unit*
 - Special Reading school*
- Teachers not experts

Task Force definition of Dyslexia

Dyslexia is manifested in a *continuum* of specific learning difficulties related to the acquisition of basic skills in reading, spelling and /or writing, such difficulties being *unexpected* in relation to an individual's other abilities and educational experiences. Dyslexia can be described at the **neurological**, **cognitive** and **behavioural** levels. It is typically characterised by *inefficient information processing*, including difficulties in *working memory*, **rapid naming** and *automaticity* in basic skills. Difficulties in *organisation*, *sequencing* and *motor skills* may also be present.

A pattern of difficulties

- Difficulty reading single words
- Difficulty decoding nonsense words
- Reading comprehension better than decoding individual words
- Laboured/inaccurate reading of passages
- Trouble with small ‘function’ words
- Slow reading
- Poor spelling

Overcoming Dyslexia

- Difficulty in a sea of strengths
- Deficit v difference
- Re mediation or compensation
- Whole school approach
- Teacher awareness
- Parent advocate
- Students

What students say

- Teachers who go too fast
- Teachers who do not stick to the point
- Same amount of work as non-dyslexic
- Too much copying from board
- Test results read out loud
- Being made to read out loud
- Asking my friend for help
- Teachers who know I am dyslexic but do not help me

Ways teachers could help

- Help given discreetly to individuals
- Being given more time
- Handouts that summarise work covered in lessons
- Access to catch up exercises
- Marks for content not spelling
- Praise for effort

Practical strategies for class teacher

- Time (difficulties with rote learning, rapid word retrieval)
- Multi sensory
- Reduce complexity of task; differentiation of tasks
- Stress what is important
- Marking system

Teacher strategies

- More frequent review, revision
- Reward effort not only results
- Give structure - routine
- Present work in different ways
- Group projects; co operative learning
- Positive behaviour policy

Teacher strategies to help reading

- Major difficulties in decoding: phonological awareness; letter sound relationship
- Apply higher level skills : *general intelligence; vocabulary; reasoning; concept formation*
- Prepared reading; prior knowledge; SQ3R
- Fluency

School strategies to help reading: whole school policy

- Early intervention; SEN policy
- Models of good practice: use of IEP, LST/resource support
- Paired reading programs; paired spelling, allow a reader, reading aloud
- Assisted technology; Text onto tape etc
- Cursive writing
- Introduction of formal reading
- Marking policy

European survey: teacher concerns

- Slow to start work
- Starting work without individual instruction
- Completing written instruction
- Losing focus during tasks
- Misinterpreting instructions

Teacher concerns

- Accepting criticism from peers
- Fiddles with blu tak, etc
- Distracts others
- Withdraws quietly from task
- Does not seek help even when needed
- Believes they will fail on a task before starting
- Thinks they cannot improve / learn

Summary of teacher interventions

- Time given
- Position of child in class
- Targets set; praise and reward
- Use of Learning support assistant
- Social skills training
- Starting points
- Use of IT

Teacher ideas to address writing difficulties

- Use concept maps, mind maps, writing frames
- Train students in proof reading, editing, revising
- Plans, list of points,
- Help memory difficulties - glossaries; personal dictionaries; colour coding; organisers
- Mark for content; Evaluation of written work
- Word banks, word walls
- Word processing, ICT
- Cursive writing

School accommodates writing difficulties

- School marking policy
- Notice boards
- Use of colour, charts, worksheets
- Word walls in each class
- Spelling tests
- Oral presentations; awareness
- Celebrate students 'sea of strengths'

Parents role

- Parent NOT teacher
- Talking to student, opinions, conversation, oral feedback
- Hobbies, interests, talents
- Communicate with each new teacher; advocate
- Paired reading; paired spelling
- Transition to second level
- Take life span view

Student

- Preferred Learning style
- Study skills; note taking
- Organisational skills
- Self advocacy

Conclusion

‘If he is not learning the way you teach him,
can you not teach him the way he learns?’

H. Chasty

- Fable on importance of appreciating learning differences

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