Supporting Those With

Contents

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Dyslexia Awareness

Before you start, it would be a good idea to assess your own dyslexia awareness. Read the statements about dyslexia, put a tick in the boxes on the right to indicate whether you think they are correct or not, or to indicate that you don’t know.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Yes | No | Don’t Know |
| 1. Approximately 3% of the population is dyslexic
 |  |  |  |
| 1. The majority of dyslexics are left handed
 |  |  |  |
| 1. ‘Specific learning difficulties’ is another term for dyslexia
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Most dyslexics are boys
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Most people with dyslexia have problems with reading
 |  |  |  |
| 1. All dyslexics are creative and good at art
 |  |  |  |
| 1. A people get older dyslexia disappears
 |  |  |  |
| 1. ‘Slow earners’ cannot have dyslexia
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Dyslexic people rarely achieve high academic status
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Dyslexic children could learn more if they tried harder
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Dyslexia means having a more memory for some information
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Dyslexia causes poor handwriting
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Dyslexia is an inherited condition
 |  |  |  |
| 1. All children with dyslexia need specialist teaching
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Dyslexics are clumsy
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Dyslexic children usually have problems with spelling
 |  |  |  |
| 1. All dyslexic children need a statement of special educational needs
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Dyslexia cannot be identified until the child is eight or nine years old
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Dyslexics are poorly organised
 |  |  |  |
| 1. Dyslexics are good at maths
 |  |  |  |

*Now Check Your Answers And Score*

Dyslexia Awareness Scores

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | No | Research by the British Dyslexia Association suggests that up to 10% of the population is dyslexic. Around 4% are severely affected |
| 2. | Yes | An estimated 60-80% of dyslexics are left handed |
| 3. | No | The term was used to refer specifically to dyslexia, but it now covers a range of learning differences, including ADHD and dyspraxia |
| 4. | Yes | Evidence suggests a larger number of boys than girls are dyslexic. One estimate suggests a ratio of 4:1 |
| 5. | Yes | Although some learn to read well, their reading maybe slower than their peers, and they may need to re-read text to comprehend it |
| 6. | No | Some dyslexics are good at art and some have strong spatial awareness, but others have little artistic ability |
| 7. | No | Research indicates that dyslexia has a biological and genetic basis. Its effects can be minimised but it does not go away |
| 8. | No | Some dyslexics are extremely able; others average and others ‘slow learners’. Even if there are generalised learning difficulties, there may still be specific literacy problems. Verbally able children may be noticed because of the discrepancy between their oral and written work |
| 9. | No | Many achieve good academic qualifications |
| 10. | No | Most work far harder than their peers. A significant feature of dyslexia is inconsistent performance, which may give a misleading picture. |
| 11. | Yes | A poor short-term memory is a very common feature of dyslexia |
| 12. | No | Many children with dyslexia also have poor fine motor skills that can lead to poor handwriting. This is not true of all |
| 13. | Yes | A genetic, biological bases is not always obvious but it’s likely that a relative in the past with a similar learning difficulty has passed on their genes |
| 14. | No | The severity of dyslexia, and its impact on learning, varies. Many dyslexics respond well to a teacher who differentiates appropriately. Others need a structured, systematic, different and additional programme |
| 15. | No | Difficulties with motor skills are common within the overall dyslexic profile but are not a definite indicator. Some dyslexics have highly developed motor skills |
| 16. | Yes | It is not an indicator by itself but should be seen as part of the overall profile |
| 17. | No | The majority have needs that fit into the framework of provision offered by mainstream schools. A statement safeguards additional resources for those with significant difficulties |
| 18. | No | Many of the characteristics of dyslexia are evident in very young children. Screening programmes such as the Cognitive Profiling System (CoPS) and the Dyslexia Early Screening Test (DEST) can be used with children as young as four |
| 19. | No | Some dyslexics are wonderfully organised. Many dyslexic adults who do have problems have developed organisational strategies or employ others to be organised for them |
| 20. | No | Though many dyslexics are good at maths, this is not a dyslexic quality |
| Scores |
| 18 – 20 | Well Done! You are really dyslexia aware |
| 13 – 17 | You have a good understanding of many of the issues |
| 8 – 12 | You are beginning to develop your understanding |
| 0 - 7 | There is no failure, only feedback, and only direction for you to travel – UP! |

Famous People With Dyslexia

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| http://t1.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTBX2zBoyXZuuOjY9eTebvMxAEqqTm_i_i0oiaJTLcnoOz6BQeb | http://creativethinking.net/articles/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Disney.photo_1.jpg | http://t2.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQ7Dg355R8LcI35WrLCBAWj2tkZIaQQ5c9omGYAOE8DC-1DFmVkTg |
| http://blog.ewea.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/richardbranson.jpg | http://www.mlahanas.de/Physics/Bios/images/AlbertEinstein.jpg | http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_zp0h1YAc0Co/SQwRUkZb_jI/AAAAAAAADQQ/Hnxlrps3YgM/s400/winston_churchill.jpg |
| http://www.moviespad.com/photos/keira-knightley-pirates-of-the-caribbean-b2d72.jpg | http://t1.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcTcKwSLplqkbfY6OHtJV3CH2E72Fr3iJYiswz2yYYdRV-r6EBeq3w | http://t3.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcT8T1ds7olPBcXtmMk84u1Qksh-8FfiQyoJ5iyWEc7FD_it1gYwUw |

What Is Dyslexia?

The word ‘dyslexia’ comes from the Greek word *dys* meaning difficulty and *lexis* meaning language, hence ‘difficulty with words’. Dyslexia is a learning difference to do with the way language is processed. We need to shift our thinking away from seeing dyslexia as a deficit model of learning – from being a learning difficulty – to seeing it as a learning difference. Children with dyslexia are often alienated from the learning process owing to a style of teaching that focuses primarily on linguistic intelligence. We need to adapt our teaching to the way dyslexics learn, not the other way round

Before we look at ways of structuring the learning of students with dyslexia, we need to be clear about why we should identify the specific area of difference, and understand what this learning difference actually is.

Why Define Dyslexia?

You may instinctively feel that the way a student is learning is ‘not quite right’. An awareness of the key features of dyslexia will give you a fuller understanding of your students and help you modify the support you offer them

Your role is to help students to learn in the most appropriate way. Understanding dyslexia will help you plan the appropriate learning environment for all children

In the past decade teachers have become more accountable, to parents and to employers, in the wake of innovations like target-setting and performance-related play. In an era of increased litigation, teachers are more likely to be held to account if they fail to spot a dyslexic students whose education subsequently suffers

Is Dyslexia Just About Language?

Dyslexia is about processing language. Dyslexics have different ways of storing, retrieving and organising language. For dyslexics, language acquisition becomes a memory challenge. Dyslexics are also slower at processing auditory and visual information. The way in which they organise the sound system of language is often different from that used by others and this can lead to sounds in words being missed or confused

Why Is Identification Of Dyslexia Necessary?

Early identification is important for the following reasons:

*To Clarify Needs*

Identifying learning differences benefits the students, their parents and teachers

*To Organise Appropriate Intervention*

This is only possible when learning needs have been recognised. Identification is pointless without appropriate teaching strategies being put in place. Students will fail to access other aspects of the curriculum without good reading skills. As a student moves through school, their needs to be able to read and write independently increases. The amount of information students with poor reading skills can access independently is very limited

*To Prevent Loss Of Self-Esteem*

Students who fail to earn maybe seen as lazy or unable to concentrate. They are blamed by others for their failures and they blame themselves. By putting a name to their learning difference, students are enabled to begin to feel better about themselves. Also, by identifying a student’s needs to learn in alternative ways teachers begin to accept responsibility for their student’s learning. The majority of children, and adults, are relieved when they are told their problems with learning to read and write in a conventional way are a result of dyslexia and not a failure on their part

*To Plan And Differentiate*

Being aware of the spread of need in a class will help you focus on the activities that lead to effective learning for all

*To Improve Standards*

Raising the performance of just one student in a small school can significantly affect the overall percentage of students getting good SATs results

What Is A Dyslexic Friendly School?

Dyslexia friendly schools are able to identify and respond to the ‘unexpected difficulties’ that a dyslexic learner may encounter

Teachers are expected to identify and respond to a range of diverse learning needs in mainstream settings. It is also becoming recognised that differences between teachers are far greater than differences between schools

Parents are also becoming more aware of their rights and are becoming vociferous in ensuring that the learning needs of their children are being met. This is creating a developing culture of accountability and evidence that is supported by the inspection process

**Dyslexia Friendly Schools Are Effective Schools Because They Identify And Select Best Practices To Get The Job Done**

Being aware of trends and initiatives, dyslexia friendly schools demand excellence from their pupils and support them by linking new ideas to traditional values. People are required to be the best they can and the school culture has a ‘zero tolerance’ of failure. This is not an aggressive response, but is more of ‘rough love’. Such schools do not allow failure in terms of an ‘accepted percentage’ of pupils leaving without ability, appropriate basic skills and/or national qualifications

A particular feature of such schools is the awareness among all teachers of what each pupil should be able to achieve, together with a range of response strategies when targets are not met. Also the school’s aims and targets are part of the whole school development plan (SDP). Progress towards these goals and targets is the responsibility of a member of the Senior Management Team. This means that all staff are proactively led to:

◊ demand excellence

◊ have zero tolerance of failure and take action when targets are not met

◊ promote whole staff awareness

◊ adopt flexible approaches – ‘If people don’t learn the way we teach, we will teach them the way they learn’

How To Identify Dyslexia In A Secondary School

**A Young Person In A Secondary School May:**

◊ read inaccurately

◊ have problems spelling

◊ confuse places, times and dates

◊ have difficulty remembering maths tables and formulae

◊ need to have instructions repeated

◊ get ‘tied up’ using long words

◊ have difficulty planning and writing essays

◊ suffer poor confidence and low self-esteem

In addition, secondary school offers a new set of challenges which place immense pressure on dyslexic pupils. This may demonstrate its self as:

◊ forgetting which books to take to class

◊ difficulty organising life around a timetable

◊ misunderstanding complex instructions

◊ problems trying to write down notes at speed, and completing work on time

◊ memory difficulties which effect the marshalling of learnt facts effectively in exams

As a result, the student maybe extremely tired and fractious and employ avoidance techniques whenever possible. It is easy to see how motivation and self-esteem drop rapidly. For some these manifest themselves as challenging behaviour.

There are many persisting factors in dyslexia which will still be noticeable when the dyslexic child leaves school. These include:

◊ obvious good or bad days, for no apparent reason

◊ disjointed written work

◊ misreading which may affect comprehension

◊ forgetfulness in everyday life

Concern that a learner maybe dyslexic should trigger an assessment. A good understanding of the nature of their difficulties and strengths should inform classroom practice and any extra help the child requires. If they continue to fall behind they should be ‘fast-tracked’ to more specialist assessment and support

Reading

You may find the following useful when analysis pupil’s work

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Focus** | **What Are You** **Looking For?** | **What Would Indicate A Dyslexic Profile?** |
| **Accuracy** | ◊ How accurate is the reading of the key words◊ Are errors substitutions (e.g. home for house)◊ Do errors begin with the same sound?◊ Are there errors or confusions with initial sounds? (e.g. t/f, w/m)◊ Is the reading ‘word for word’◊ A words read left to right?◊ Any omissions, lines missed of loss of place? | ◊ Some dyslexic readers struggle with the key words as these are abstract words with no accompanying image that students can visualise◊ Compare the errors with those of the student’s peers. Would you expect the same?◊ Scanning is often an issue with single letters, individual words and whole sentences. This can lead to the reader losing their pace in the text |
| **Fluency** | ◊ Are words read confidently or sounded out?◊ Are there long pauses between words? | ◊ These are common errors for poor readers generally and very common for dyslexics. Give credit if the child is able to sound out the word, by note that this does not constitute fluent reading |
| **Speed** | ◊ Has speed come more important than accuracy?◊ Is the reading very slow and tortuous? | ◊ Both are seen in dyslexics. Sometimes as accuracy increases, speed decreases. This is because students are looking carefully at the words |
| **Understanding** | ◊ Where errors occur, do students show an understanding of the text?◊ What is the general level of understanding?◊ Is there an ability to predict the outcome or summaries the action so far? | ◊ Often the level of understanding is much higher than the accuracy would suggest. Dyslexic readers can often infer meaning accurately from one or two key words |
| **Strategies** | ◊ What strategies are being used?◊ Context cues?◊ Picture cues?◊ Inference and deduction?◊ Reading on to the end? | ◊ Dyslexic readers tend to use limited strategies when reading and these are taught specific strategies explicitly, and have them constantly reinforced |

Writing

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Focus** | **What Are You** **Looking For?** | **What Would Indicate A Dyslexic Profile?** |
| **Content** | ◊ What ideas are present in this writing?◊ Do they reflect the discussion with the teacher that preceded the writing? | ◊ Often dyslexic writers can talk very eloquently on a subject, but when they come to write about it they stick to very simple vocabulary and ideas as these are easier to cope with |
| **Structure** | ◊ Are the ideas in the right sequence?◊ Is the use of tenses muddled?◊ Does the writing ramble with no clear direction or focus? | ◊ Sequencing is a very common problem for dyslexics◊ These are often muddled or incorrectly used◊ The ideas may all be included but not linked logically in paragraphs  |
| **Handwriting** | ◊ Is it in print or cursive styles?◊ Are the letters correctly formed and even in size?◊ What about spatial aspects?◊ Are words close together, near to the margin etc.? | ◊ Some dyslexics have superb handwriting although they write slowly. Others are very poor at handwriting. Work may not be arranged logically |
| **Quality** | ◊ Does the amount of writing meet your expectations? | ◊ Frequently the task is not completed in the allocated time, or is very short |
| **Spelling** | ◊ Look at:-CVC words-high frequency irregular words-key vocabulary words◊ Are errors auditory or visual? | ◊ Errors with CVC words can show initial letter sound confusion. A very common error is confusion with medial short vowels◊ Auditory errors are common, showing limited phonological awareness◊Visual confusion is also common◊ Some errors may be quite bizarre |

Support In The Classroom

When planning appropriate support for dyslexic children, we need to move away from the idea that teaching them is different from teaching other children. Quality-first teaching still applies. We should not underestimate the impact of focused learning.

**The Basic Principles Of Support**

The basic principles of effective classroom support can be summed up by the following:

◊ Begin with the child, not the curriculum

◊ Remember today, much of our work in schools is driven by the need to complete the curriculum and to prepare children for continual rounds of assessment. It is easy to forget that the reason we are in the job is to help children to learn

◊ Make the learning and teaching active. Using a multi-sensory approach enables a wide range of learning styles children have to be taken into account

◊ Support should enable, challenge and scaffold. Sometime we can achieve all three simultaneously; teach children *how* to learn as well as *what* to learn; have high expectations for their thinking skills and abilities, and realistic expectations for their written work; and provide support, always bearing in mind that it should be temporary

◊ Recognise that needs change. This may lead to the focus of support changing. The learner is not a passive entity. Support is a two-way process that needs to be dynamic and responsive

◊ Differentiation. Support needs to be class based. Planning should begin with what *everyone* in the class can achieve, avoiding the situation in which those children who are struggling with their work have to stay in at breaks to finish. Provide activities for all to do and have extra ones for the quicker workers. The latter group will often include dyslexic children; the activity may be one that exploits their strengths. Planning for the average performers in the class may mean that differentiation results in a watered-down curriculum without breadth

◊ Try alternative strategies. There are many ways to support learning: you need to work out which is most suited to you and the children you teach

◊ Finally, remember that there is no failure, only feedback. If a strategy you’re using is not working, try something different. Reflect on your results, consider why they have not met your expectations and, if needs be, change them

Support In The Secondary School

Here are some strategies to consider when supporting older students:

**Priorities The Needs**

If the student has a reading age less than nine, improving reading skills needs to be apriority. Evidence suggests that once a reading age of nine is achieved, improvement is more likely to occur because the reader is then able to practise their skills independently. Before this level is achieved, reading is often a word-by-word process

Study and organisational skills can become a priority to master for the dyslexic student in secondary school. Often, secondary schools have fortnightly timetables, which can be a challenge to the dyslexic. For parents, strategies such as putting timetables on the kitchen door or bedroom wall, and highlighting important points in colour, may help. In school, if support time is offered it needs to be at the same time and place every week if the student is to have any chance of remembering to turn up

**Use Of ICT**

There are many programmes that focus specifically on developing study skills. If the student is particularly good with ICT then voice-activated software may be an option

Students at secondary school may benefit from having a laptop to use rather than struggling with poor handwriting. By the time a student is twelve or so, it is unlikely that their handwriting will continue to be a priority or to improve, so this age may be the time to look at other strategies

**Give Individual Help Without Helping The Individual**

Class teachers often say that in a busy classroom it is not possible to give individual help to just one student. The key is to teach in a way that enables all students to learn. This could include the following:

◊ Give notes on handouts rather than expecting students to copy from the board

◊ Give homework at the beginning of the lesson. This allows time for clarification if needed

◊ Use visual aids to support written text

◊ Encourage students to use all the clues on the page before tackling the text

◊ Make the learning objectives explicit. Is the activity you are teaching about writing or ideas?

◊ Use the computer

◊ Remember that we all learn best when we have information in little chunks with opportunities to revise. Information presented at the beginning and end of the session is remembered most easily, so build in lots of beginnings and endings within one session.

◊ We learn best when we are involved

**Using The Teaching Assistant**

It is rarely helpful for a TA to work consistently with a dyslexic student. Encourage the student and TA to work out the least obstructive way for support to be given. This may mean letting the student start the work independently with the TA checking after five minutes that all is on track. Giving the student some influence over the way in which support is offered may help them feel that they are in control of their learning

**Be Aware Of Any Students Who Have Individual Educational Plans**

This can be very difficult in a large secondary school, but if a student has targets then it makes sense for everyone to be aware of them to ensure consistency. Make sure the students themselves know their targets

**Have A Whole School Approach To Support**

More than ever a whole school approach to support is needed. When a student has nine or ten different teachers, and the teachers themselves may teach 200 to 300 different students a week, then procedures and practices need to be in place so that students with dyslexia do not slip

through the net

You may want to think about how you remember those students who are dyslexic. Having a photo of the dyslexic student in your planner is helpful. It is good practice to have at least one member of staff in each faculty or subject area who liaises with the SENCO on a regular basis

How are students put into ability groups? Is the deciding factor the level of literacy? This may not be appropriate in subjects such as maths or science

Top Tips For Teaching Assistants

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. | Have a tool kit so that everything you need is at hand. This could include the following:* Highlighters – many dyslexics have visual strengths and using colour will help them to focus and remember
* Spare pencils – not having a pencil is a common work avoidance strategy
* Pencil sharpener – as above
* Soft rubbers – dyslexic students tend to rub out more often than others
* Blank cards to prepare on-the-stop memory cards
* ‘Well Done’ stickers or cards to send home to say that a task has been successfully completed
 |
| 2. | Remember – the ultimate goal in supporting dyslexic pupils is to encourage independent learning.  |
| 3. | Use the photocopier when you can so that the pupil does not have to copy from the board |
| 4. | Think about learning styles – are you supporting to the pupil’s strength or your own  |
| 5. | Build in opportunities to rehearse and consolidate difficult areas |
| 6. | Make the links for the pupil |
| 7. | Ensure that the class teacher is aware of the success and confusion of the dyslexic pupil – this will help with planning future work |
| 8. | Do you know the objective for every lesson? Check them with the class teacher |
| 9. | Familiarise yourself with the resources available so that you can feed this information into the planning. This includes all software for computers |
| 10. | Support in a multi-sensory way. Try to plan at least two or three ways of doing each task |
| 11. | Help pupils break down the tasks into manageable steps |
| 12. | Praise effort and focus on what has been achieved |

Teachers Who Are Easy To Learn From

The following tips where drawn directly from children who suffer from dyslexia to try to make life in the classroom easier:

◊ understand us and spend time helping us

◊ be prepared to repeat instructions

◊ be happy to answer questions

◊ check we are doing it right

◊ check we understand – if not, explain with pictures

◊ write things clearly – if possible on a white board

◊ give the basic information without rambling

◊ help with at least two examples before allowing us to continue

The teacher’s personal characteristics seem to be of great importance, rather than on the provision of support. However the qualities of resources were also discussed. In particular they like it when teachers:

◊ use a white board

◊ number lines at both ends – different lines can also help

◊ leave instructions where they can be checked again

◊ prepare individual crib sheets to limit copying from the board

◊ put homework instructions on tape

◊ encourage work to be presented in different ways

**Teachers Who Are Difficult To Learn From – What Do They Do?**

◊ overemphasis on grammar, spelling and punctuation

◊ expect to much writing

◊ instruct notation

◊ expect too much reading

◊ memorise facts and formulae

◊ don’t give enough time to note things down

◊ too much copying from the board

◊ talk too much and too fast

◊ put us down in front of others

◊ shout

◊ impatient

What The Children Say

‘Peace and quiet so I can concentrate’

‘Don’t push me all the time – just let me go for it’

‘More helpers who could come over to help you when you put your hand up – that would give me more confidence to have a go’

‘Pictures help me ‘coz then I can have a guess even if I don’t know the word’

‘Pictures help – it’s easier to read a picture than it is a page in a book’

‘It helps when the teacher just writes the word down that you need. I hate it when they say ‘how do you think its spelt?’ – if I knew I wouldn’t need to ask’

‘When things are photocopied over and over again they become fuzzy and distorted and hard to read’

‘Bigger writing that is spaced out with pictures is easier to read’

‘Working with a friend makes it easier’

‘The best thing is to make them (teachers) understand that being dyslexic means work takes longer to do than other children, because we struggle with it’