

## **DYSLEXIA (AND OTHER LEARNING DISABILITIES): RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS**

### **Give students with dyslexia preferential seating.**

- Seat the student in your direct line of vision where you can easily assist them. Also consider seating them next to students who will be willing to assist them.
- Seat the student near the focal point of the lesson, near the teacher, presenter, or audiovisual equipment.
- Whenever possible, have the student work in naturally lighted areas.

### **Prepare group for in-class lessons.**

- Before beginning a lesson, list and highlight what students should learn from the lesson. At the end of the lesson, review these points. Photocopy any notes presented during the lesson for the students (enlist another student in the class to serve as the notetaker).
- Encourage students to work in small groups for in-class assignments and allow for peer tutoring.

### **Use multi-sensory teaching methods.**

- Present information aurally, visually, and tactilely at the same time to assist with encoding. For example, present instructions visually on an overhead while you review and explain them orally to the class.
- Over-teach skills you want the students to learn.

### **Provide students with thorough instructions.**

- Condense instructions into small, understandable units; keep them brief and concise.
- Highlight or boldface key words. Whenever possible, demonstrate the tasks that will be performed.
- Have the students paraphrase your instructions back to you to test for comprehension.

### **Ensure thorough understanding of homework and classwork.**

- Give the students photocopies of homework and classroom assignments as well as the instructions needed to complete the assignments. Do not make the students copy these instructions from the blackboard.
- Mark on their assignments using a highlighter where they are expected to begin and end. In some instances, it may be helpful to include markings that remind the students to work from left to right.

### **Help students develop organizational skills.**

- Print class/homework assignments for different subjects on paper colored to represent the subject (e.g., math=blue, reading=green, spelling=white, etc.). Avoid using florescent paper.
- Photocopy instructions that are adequately spaced and in large, readable fonts.

- Include check boxes at the end of each step of the instructions so that the students can check that they have completed each step as they proceed.
- Encourage students to use daily planners.
- For more disorganized students, develop homework assignment sheets that the students' parents and teachers sign to ensure that they know their assignments and complete them. Work with the students and their parents to develop a daily routine.
- Design a personal toolkit for the students that contain all of the materials they frequently use throughout the school day. Reinforce them for having their toolkits with them and being prepared.

**Assist students with their reading.**

- Choose books that match the skill level of each student.
- Emphasize instant letter recognition whenever possible. For example, write a letter on the board and tell students to line up if their names begin with that letter.
- Teach the student to understand the relationship between how a word looks and how it sounds—i.e., teach phonetic rules. Teach the student to apply phonetic rules to words by having them manipulate the syllables and phonemes within the words (use omission, addition, subtraction, and substitution procedures).
- Teach students to break down multi-syllabic words. Have them read syllables written on individual cards and arrange them into words. Then have them read the words aloud.
- Begin teaching the students words that are phonetically correct before progressing to words that do not follow phonetic rules. Expose students to new words gradually.
- Teach reading skills through demonstration. Model self-monitoring strategies to help students with dyslexia learn to keep track of their understanding while reading. For example, point out how they can use pictures and context cues to assist their reading comprehension.
- Create story maps to help students integrate concepts and events in the story, understand the relationship between characters, and summarize key concepts.
- Build background knowledge and set a purpose for reading to strengthen their comprehension.
- Encourage regular reading practice in class and outside of class with others (e.g., friends, parents).
- Provide opportunities for peer reading so that they can follow along as others read. Reinforce effort in addition to correct pronunciation.
- Familiarize yourself with, and be able to teach students the rules of the English language (e.g., use of prefixes, suffixes, and root words, etc.).
- When possible, read passages with the student and then have the student reread the same passage to you.
- Provide the student with access to books on tape and encourage them to follow along in the text with the narrator (this will help increase reading fluency).
- Give students and parents advance notice of outside reading assignments.
- Inform parents and students about oral reading assignments in advance so that they have time to practice the reading.

- Following a reading assignment, ask students specific questions about the reading to test for comprehension.

**Assist students with their math.**

- When presenting the students with decimal problems, highlight the decimal point.
- Teach for mastery of mathematical terminology (sum, difference, multiple, etc.) using multi-sensory techniques.
- Have the students create a reference sheet that contains several key terms or concepts they can readily access.
- When performing mental arithmetic, let the students write down the sign used in their calculation process on a piece of paper.
- Encourage and teach the students to use estimation to check their work for accuracy. Have each student dictate aloud how they are solving a problem as they solve it.

**Assist students with their handwriting.**

- Practice handwriting skills using words the students know.
- Provide the students with reference sheets demonstrating the correct way to write cursive letters. Provide the students with a reference sheet of common handwriting mistakes. Allow the students to critique their own handwriting and have them identify areas where they can improve.
- Encourage the students to use electronic spell checkers to proofread their work.
- For students with extremely poor handwriting (dysgraphia), allow them to word process their work or have them dictate what they have written.

**Assist students with their spelling.**

- Teach students to proofread their work and identify grammatical mistakes they frequently make as well as words they frequently misspell. Have them record their mistakes on a reference sheet and allow them to refer to the list. Have the alphabet posted clearly in the classroom or on small strips the students keep with them.
- Do not have the students repetitiously re-write words they spell wrong; rather, teach them to form a picture in their mind of how the word looks.
- Teach them to identify how the word sounds.
- Teach them how the word feels when it is written; get them to analyze their own hand motions while they write the word correctly.

**Consider accommodations during testing.**

- Follow the criteria outlines in the students' IEPs and when appropriate, allow for the following accommodations or modifications: Allow extra time for students to complete tests and assignments.
- Allow testing to proceed in a different room/setting.
- Have test directions read to the student.
- When applicable, use oral testing to supplement or replace written tests and assignments. On non-spelling tests, grade for content and comprehension instead of deducting points for misspelled words.

- Construct tests to include a variety of items from different domains; use multiple choice, matching, short answer, true/false and essay questions. Group similar test items together and separate them into brief segments.
- Print the students' tests in large readable fonts and provide adequate spacing.
- Allow opportunities for the students to study before the test session and provide the students with review sheets.
- Let the students record their answers directly on the test form. Do not make them transfer their answers to a separate answer key.

**Additional Resources:**

Broomfield, H. (2003). *Overcoming dyslexia: a practical handbook for the classroom*. Philadelphia, PA: Whurr.

Cooke, A. (2002). *Tackling dyslexia*. Philadelphia, PA: Whurr.

Meredith, C., Steele, J., & Dawson, M. (1997). Reading. In G.G. Bear & K.M. Minke, Children's needs II: Development, problems, and alternatives. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Muter, V. (2003). *Early reading development and dyslexia*. Philadelphia, PA: Whurr.

[specialed.about.com/b/a/039668.htm](http://specialed.about.com/b/a/039668.htm): Dyslexia Interventions.

[www.dyslexia.com](http://www.dyslexia.com): Dyslexia: The Gift.

[www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content3/dyslexia.html](http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content3/dyslexia.html): What is Dyslexia?

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