DYSLEXIA IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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"If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way that they learn."
(Ignacio Estrada)

Abstract

This conceptual paper considers dyslexia as one with the rest of the normal learners. Some strategies and suggestions are given where it would help the teachers in a normal classroom to carry out the proper function of teaching and learning in an orderly manner. It also touches topics of how to deal with the homework. The child is helped to cope with learning in the best way that they can. Also suggestions are given where parents are encouraged how to deal with the situation.

The pupil

●The pupil is made aware of their difficulties and with encouraged to express his / her concerns to appropriate staff dyslexia.

● The pupil receives support regarding emotional or behavioural issues

● The pupil is assisted in identifying his / her unique learning strategies

● The pupil is involved in IEP Planning

●Non-dyslexic pupils are made aware of dyslexia.

Whole-school

● New staff, substitute and temporary teachers and classroom consultation assistants be made aware of pupils with dyslexia Provision is made for training of school staff.

● Teachers make provisions in their planning for pupils with dyslexia.

● Teachers inform colleagues of any pupils with dyslexia as they pass on their classes, to ensure smooth transition.

● Teachers are made aware of and facilitated to attend in-service courses on dyslexia. Arrangements are made to allow / encourage them to attend.

● Procedures are in place to aid transition to second level.

Classroom

●All teachers are made aware of possible classroom management and management strategies in dealing with the pupil with dyslexia: organisation.

● Seating position, blackboard writing and alternatives.

● Chalks / markers / pens / pencils, cream paper and font size.

● Peer support and group work, where appropriate.

● Key words / classroom / whole-school labels.

● Classroom language Teaching styles.

● The teachers are made aware of the suitability of their teaching styles and adapt these to suit the particular pupil with dyslexia Assessment.

● There is a system of assessment in place to initially identify pupils with literacy difficulties and that specific interventions are reviewed periodically.

● There is regular whole-class monitoring to assess progress and to unearth unexpected difficulties.

● The pupil with dyslexia is assessed in terms of his / her knowledge rather than literacy ability Intervention.

● There exist clearly defined classroom intervention and support programmes.

●Suitable learning challenges are set for the pupil with dyslexia.

● Pupils with dyslexia are afforded the opportunities to work in a variety of ability groupings so that lesson content teaching, will be cognitively challenging.

● The teacher is made aware of the various strategies that teaching may be implemented when dealing with pupils with dyslexia strategies.

Homework

● Consideration be given to the following:

1. Who can read / write homework for pupil at home?

2. Writing down homework.

3. Monitoring time spent.

4. Presentation format may vary: oral, illustrate, mind maps, outlines, projects, computer use ICT.

●Particular attention is paid to the following:

1. Software usage

2. Font size / size

3. Screen colour

Writing ● Consideration be given to varied presentation of writing to include mind maps, spider webs, bullet charts, flow charts, marking system, use of coloured paper / notebooks / copies

Reading ● The opportunities for shared / paired reading and 'Readalong' are availed of on a regular basis.

Spelling ● The resources available for the development of spelling include spellcheckers, magnetic and wooden letters, sandpaper letters and dictionaries

Resources ●Ample and appropriate resources are made available to each class teacher to support the pupil with dyslexia or Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD).

Parents

● Parents are made aware of school's policy on dyslexia

● The communication between the school / teacher and parents is effective

● The school notifies parents of concerns regarding possible dyslexia at an early age and that parents are actively encouraged to express concerns and know to whom these concerns should be addressed.

The Special School for Pupils with Dyslexia as a Centre of Excellence.

 1. Setting of targets to achieve Centre of Excellence status.

 2. Policies that address the needs of pupils with dyslexia.

 3. Use of strategies, to assist the pupil with dyslexia to access the curriculum in his / her own school / class setting.

● They are outlined in the Centre's development plan

● Plans are in place for monitoring on an ongoing basis.

● They have been developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including schools, pupils, parents / carers and board officers.

● They are effectively communicated to those stakeholders.

● Issues relating to SEN, differentiation and inclusion are addressed.

● Learning and teaching are specifically addressed in policies.

● Pastoral care is included and stressed.

● Subject work is appropriate while materials match reading ability.

● Assessment and monitoring are included in policies.

● Marking homework is included in policies.

● Partnerships with parents is included in policies.

● Partnerships with schools is included in policies.

● Behaviour, particularly that associated with dyslexia, is included in policies.

Working in partnership with pupils

● Pupils are involved and are helped to understand their dyslexia. Their achievements are valued.

● Help with emotional and behavioural issues is available to pupils.

● Pupils are assisted in identifying their own learning strategies and are helped to implement them. Information to mainstream teachers is recorded and disseminated.

● Pupils are involved in Individual Education Plan (IEP) planning.

● Pupils' strengths, interests and needs are identified and included in their IEPs and in general planning.

● A pupil advocacy service, mentors and counsellors is promoted.

● A 'can do' culture is promoted.

● The stigma is removed and role models for pupils are provided.

1. For parents – awareness of, and confidence in, arrangements to meet the special educational needs of their child.

2. Procedures for notifying parents of concerns and for listening actively to concerns of parents.

3. Active involvement of parents by the Centre.

● Effective communication is in place for parents to understand dyslexia and the basis on which the Centre teaches and supports their child. This should include reference to the Code of Practice, the Centre systems for keeping parents informed (and vice versa) and, at least, two parent / teacher consultations per year.

● Partnerships which contribute to effective learning at home and school are promoted ● Parents are encouraged to express concerns as they occur.

● Parents know to whom they should address those concerns.

Children with Dyslexia: Feelings, Thoughts and Behaviours Introduction Children with dyslexia often share common problems in the areas of feelings, thoughts and behaviours. To be able to empathise with, and understand the child, it is important to be aware of the effects of dyslexic difficulties on a child's feelings (emotions), thoughts (cognition) and behavioural development, and to be able to identify these effects, when presented. It is critical for the child's development that teachers and parents find ways to support the child in managing these challenges. However, we often only look at what a child does, e.g. tends not to finish work set for him1 (poor task completion), finds a variety of ways of avoiding starting a piece of work (task avoidance), or displays poor spelling performance on class assessments or in written work. The most common difficulties for such children arise from the child's

emotional reactions to his experiences of failure in the learning environment, and the associated strategies he develops for dealing with these. These reactions can affect the child's thinking strategies, as well as trigger a range of behaviours. The single most common and most powerful negative impaction for the child with dyslexia is the denial of the 'thrill of success', which is, in fact, the single greatest motivator towards learning, and the most significant basis on which self-esteem is built. Emotional Reaction The child finds himself being set literacy activities to do, on a frequent basis, many times a day, every week day, for a large part of the year, for many, many years. This usually occurs in a public arena involving people of high emotional significance for the child, i.e. parents, peers and teachers. These very activities are repeated failure experiences. As the child grows older he becomes increasingly aware of how much value adults and peers place on these skills, how much they may affect future life prospects, as well as how disruptive they can be in terms of lesson flow, home life etc. As a secondary consequence, the dyslexic problem creates stresses for the adults helping the child, of which the child will become increasingly aware. Such experiences can render the child very sensitised to the effects on parents and teachers of such difficulties, manifested possibly as confusion, frustration, and even anger. Consequently, they can become keen and astute observers of the reactions and the passage of thoughts and feelings across the faces of those with whom they are working. In the absence of a breadth of life experience, the child is vulnerable and highly likely to take on the responsibility for such situations, and to come to feel at fault. An almost inevitable outcome will be a developing sense of anxiety, which can only become more intense over time, and more deep-seated. High level anxiety is typically a brief experience for most people, and is most usually associated with external indicators such as trembling or shaking, breathing difficulties, and vocal hesitations. However, such a feeling over repeated exposure, with low level and gradual origins, can, over time, become hidden from the observer, and so familiar to the child experiencing it, that he actually comes to see such a state as relatively normal. Hence, there is usually an absence of external signs of anxiety. Nevertheless, there are outward signs, in the child's learning style, thinking style and responses to activity demands. These changes in learning and thinking styles, and responses to activity demands can be seen as adaptive ways of minimising stresses or anxieties.

A real-life event in the experience of a pupil as observed by an Educational Psychologist (EP) is as follows:

Seema (15-year-old pupil) had been experiencing severe difficulties all her life in reading and writing. After several interview sessions, she revealed that she worried a lot about how

her mother felt about her difficulties. She said she knew that her mother often felt stressed and frustrated by her difficulties. Her mother had admitted that she found Seema's problems very difficult to cope with and would get extremely frustratedand even angry at times. However, she was absolutely convinced that her daughter would not know this, because she was always very careful to hide this from her, for fear of upsetting her. On further questioning, Seema said she always knew when her mother was stressed about her efforts to read, because her mother always breathed in and held her breath when she was frustrated or annoyed at her reading attempts. Seema had become sensitive even to the sound of her mother's intake of breath.

Teacher-pupil relationship: Possibly the most important aspect of a successful approach to helping the child will be the quality of the relationship between the adult and the child. This needs to be founded on understanding and empathy. Supportiveness, friendliness and nurturance can all be communicated by tone of voice (soft, relaxed, calm) and warm and gentle 'eye contact' (not staring, nor avoiding focus). Frequent encouragement and supportive comments are necessary (always tied in to real efforts or success, and not patronising or false).

Conclusion / Summary: It is our job, as education professionals, to ensure that children who are experiencing serious literacy difficulties, do not feel responsible for these or for the interpersonal and practical issues that arise from them. Furthermore, we must ensure that all of the important people in a child's life understand the nature and origin of these difficulties, and can empathise with the child. It is also our responsibility to ensure that these adults know how to minimise the stresses on the child, as well as how to maximise the child's capacity to access the curriculum and learn. Achieving this aim requires work with parents and teachers as well as with colleges of education. Task-related behaviours Reluctance to The child becomes worried about making mistakes or take a guess getting things wrong, or just being unsuccessful YET AGAIN. An adaptive strategy therefore is to avoid the risk of error by avoiding making guesses. Sometimes it is much less painful to fail without effort than to put in a lot of effort and then fail. Reluctance to This strategy helps to avoid the pain, fear and worry of re-check work finding that the last effort was incorrect. It also holds the possibility of bringing the activity to an end more quickly. Distractibility The child may be highly distractible during literacy activities or activities that require a written or reading response. Such a strategy may be pure avoidance, or may simply reflect a belief that success on the task will not be possible. Poor listening the child may demonstrate poor listening skills. One skills possible explanation is that the child finds it hard to listen to instructions because he is

worrying about the outcomes of the activity. It is hard to take in information when preoccupied with something else. An everyday example of this, is the common experience of not remembering someone's name when first introduced to that person. This is because you may be anxious about the conversation that will follow, and do not give full attention to the name. Over-literal The child may take an over-literal understanding of understanding instructions, especially in interpersonal situations. The child may have become overly keen to please the adult (to avoid displeasing or disappointing the adult), and so learns to do exactly what the adult says. The problem with this is that very few instructions are meant to be taken absolutely literally. Further attempts to explain a way out of the misunderstanding simply leads to greater misunderstanding and frustration for both adult and child. Of course, some children may be naturally literal-minded, irrespective of the emotional context.

Immediate 'first the child may look for immediate solutions, which often impression' lead to superficial solutions. This means that the child does solutions not fully scan the task initially. The child may have in problem- developed an absence of a basic expectation of success, solving tasks which would be necessary for developing the confidence needed to scan, to persevere or to re-check initial hypotheses. Losing the child may 'lose' essential equipment / books. This can equipment / be a good strategy for avoiding the stress of failure books experiences by reducing the likelihood of having to do the task, or by reducing the time available for the task. These potential failure experiences are not only embarrassing (which is painful), but can also lead to further loss of self-esteem (which can be even more painful). Other The child may adopt a variety of other strategies, feigning avoidance feeling unwell, seeking to go to the toilet, sharpening strategies pencils, finding ways to bring the task to an end quickly (i.e. gives up very easily and quickly), talking to other children etc.

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