

Helpful Hints for Teachers

Strategies for In-Class Work and Homework

Problems with reading, handwriting, and spelling make in-class work or homework hard to complete for students with dyslexia. Therefore, learning through discussion is beneficial to them. When asked to read, these students benefit from choral reading, partner reading, following along as the teacher reads, or being asked to read independently only at their reading level in order to learn information through reading. Many of these students have attention issues and, understandably, will not sustain independent silent reading, especially if asked to read independently above their reading level.

Students with dyslexia often have problems with remembering and following directions. Listening and writing (note taking) may be difficult for them. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- Give a direction and ask the student to repeat it back before starting a task
- Break down tasks into manageable parts
- Model what to do when giving directions for each part, rather than explaining what to do all at once
- Provide directions and information both verbally and visually in written form

Integration with the Daily School Routine

Schools work hard to help students at all academic levels. In addition to regular classroom learning environments, schools often have resource rooms for students in special education and remedial reading small groups to help students who are working below their grade level. Every school structures and schedules their support services differently. Parents and teachers should explore what resources are in place at their school and understand the purpose of the program as well as the skills a student will be working on.

Students with dyslexia often need many more repetition to master the same material as those without dyslexia. Additional accommodations may be necessary. These may include:

- Allowing more time on a task to learn a skill
- Receiving extra help outside of class, coordinated with what is being taught in the classroom. Helping students finish in-class work or homework in this time is not as important as working on the underlying skills of reading and spelling at the student's level. Additional practice on needed skills in how progress can best be accelerated

Useful Classroom Modifications

There is no doubt that students with dyslexia can be well taught in the regular classroom. However, they can benefit from extra work at their instructional skill level and with some accommodations. Because these students struggle in their processing of single words, they often become very tired at school, especially during reading and writing tasks. There are many classroom accommodations and modifications that can make learning easier and less tiring for students with dyslexia. These accommodations and modifications should not take the place of teaching these students to be efficient

readers, spellers, and writers; rather they will allow the students to best take information into their brains for quick processing.

Seating Arrangement: With this accommodation, all students are seated so they face the board. Students with dyslexia should not be looking over their shoulders as they copy from the board. Rows work well and students can sit in rows with a desk partner. A horseshoe-shaped desk arrangement also works.

Writing: Have students with dyslexia say a sentence aloud before they write it. This will help them get their thoughts on paper quickly (before forgetting) and with semi-accurate spelling.

Students who struggle with letter formation should sit near the teacher for monitoring. While teaching students how to write their letters properly must happen in separate lessons, students with dyslexia should not be allowed to practice making their letters incorrectly because inefficient letter formation ultimately slows down sentence writing.

Keyboarding: Do not jump to keyboarding as the solution for poor handwriting. “Although computer keyboards may make it easier to produce letters, evidence shows that children write longer compositions and write them faster by pen than by keyboard”¹

Reading: Use recorded books as a scaffold. Students can follow in their own text. This may help move these students through text.

Spelling:

- Teach spelling as suggested in the Instruction and Intervention in the Classroom section. Reading and writing skills both improve when spelling improves.
- Goods spellers visualize in their “mind’s eye” the spelling of words. Teach students with dyslexia to use their ears to hear the sequence of sounds and their “mind’s eye” to visualize words, especially words they need to spell every day (such as they and because) or words that are hard to decode.

Spelling and Reading: Very few words need to be taught by sight or memory. Instead, sound through words and look at all letters and meaning patterns in each word. Teach students to blend. This strategy (sounding out the word) is the most efficient for word identification.

General Accommodations

- Break assignments into small steps and provide examples
- Provide more time for assignments and tests
- Use graphic organizers, calendars/student planners, written schedules to support organization

¹ Berninger, & Wolf, B (2009, pg 133) Teaching students with dyslexia and dysgraphia: Lessons from teaching science. Baltimore Books.

Check students work frequently. Nothing is more discouraging to a student than doing something incorrectly overtime and having to go back and relearn a skill.

Specific Accommodations for Students with Section 504 Plans

Students with dyslexia may be eligible for additional accommodations under Section 504.

Accommodations may include:

- extended time on tests,
- a designated note taker,
- computer support for writing,
- books on tape,
- reducing distractions,
- use of multi-sensory instructional methods (i.e. visual graphs and charts, to accompany oral presentation)
- supplemental instructions, and
- modified test delivery.