

Running Head: DYSLEXIA

How to help students

With Dyslexia

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Abstract

Dyslexia being the most common learning disability however the hardest to identify causes many problems for parents and teachers alike need to be ready to help there student. Parents and teachers need to partner together to help all students that have a disability. Teachers need to know the characteristics of Dyslexia as well as methods for instructions. Parents need to reinforce the learning that takes place at school. This paper contains many ideas as well as other places to look to find possible helpers for the students with learning disabilities, Dyslexia in particular.

When Josh moves into a new school system, no one knows about his disability. However, when he says his teacher's name they all know of his needs, when he begins to talk to some of the neighborhood children. The town found out about this special boy. His brother has also been giving him a hard time lately, blaming him, as the reason for his family having to move. On the first day of school he tries to make friends by inviting some of the guys over to his house. However, by the time he has formed his words, the other boys had already left. During recess, Josh finally convinces his brother to play kickball with him and his friends. Yet, when up to kick, Josh kicks the ball but he runs towards third base instead of first (Janover, 1988). For Josh, diagnosed with Dyslexia, he faces many challenges that others simply take for granted or would not consider a problem at all. As listed, this explains some of the problems that students with Dyslexia face, these problems come in a variety of areas beyond reading and writing.

Like so many students in today's school systems, many students, with or without a labeled disability, struggle with reading. The earlier a teacher or parent detects a reading problem the easier it becomes to help struggling students. As Levinson titled his book, Smart but Feeling Dumb (1984), explains how it feels to have Dyslexia. These students should not have the label of "dumb," in fact; many have average or above average IQ scores. However, when it comes to reading and writing specifically, letters begin to invert themselves. At this point, inferior feelings will often arise, and confidence will subside. At times like these teachers need to make sure students do not have these feelings. Instead, educators should partner with their students to brainstorm solutions that would help them learn best. At these times, learning will take place and all negative feelings will subside. Unfortunately, the prevalence of Dyslexia exceeds what many believe, but teachers need to come to school prepared to help all of their students continue learning and to enjoy school.

According to Poulos, Dyslexia impacts about 15% of the population, both boys and girls equally (2002). Teachers and parents alike have difficulty recognizing the characteristics of this data. Dyslexia, a neurological disorder, impairs students' abilities to read, write, and communicate. Other than this, professionals cannot agree on a clear definition (Poulos, 2002). Dyslexia, much like a fingerprint, looks very different case to case. Dyslexia is the most common learning disability and also happens as well as the hardest to disability to recognize in students. A large percentage of students in the world today have this neurological disorder that drastically affects their abilities to read, write, and communicate.

However, some similarities in the diagnostic signs have helped to determine if a student may have Dyslexia. As compared to his or her peers, a student with Dyslexia will often behave more immaturely. These students tend to speak using "baby talk" much longer than other students their age. These students seem to struggle in developing words within their mind. In addition, they also often lack, and have underdeveloped fine and gross motor skills. These skills present problems in the student's abilities of coloring within the lines, and cause problems with activities such as putting puzzles together. Also, when it comes to the gross motor skills, these students often have a hard time learning to crawl and walk because they often mix up their left and right (Wagner, 1979, p.3). These characteristics and early signs look different from one student to the next, therefore a student with Dyslexia might not show any or all of these signs.

When a student first learns to read and write, parents and teachers begin to see similarities within Dyslexia. Once students get a little further along and begin writing. Family, friends, and teachers will begin to see the inversion of letters, the most common sign of Dyslexia, which takes place when the students begin to learn to read and write (Wagner, 1979, p.4). At this point, the disability will become apparent to parents and teachers.

Another warning sign, the student will have a hard time discovering which arm is their dominant arm, also known as ambidextrous (Wagner, 1979, p.5). Something that parents should do to help their student would include making sure shoes, and other objects that deal with a particular side of the body, should have labeled, stating the correct side, “left” or “right” (Poulos, 2002).

Teachers and administrators serve an important role for students with Dyslexia. These people that have the most interaction with these students, and as their job suggest, ultimately need to help each and every student in their classroom succeed. Often it becomes most important for these people to communicate with one another. The conversation should include an explanation of what each person does with the student, which will help to keep things consistent across the board, and will further discover what works and what does not work for a particular student. Customizing learning to each and every student individually, is key for them to succeed.

Often teachers and parents see very different symptoms from the same student with Dyslexia. Often times, in the case of Dyslexia teachers, they often notice a struggling student first. The varying signs can appear in reading, writing, mixed up thoughts, and many other components. Parents, teachers and students all need to work together to discover the best methods to use for each and every student that encourages them to work independently and used to control their own actions.

Many parents when first told that their student has a learning disability, like Dyslexia, they will have a feeling of shock. They often blame themselves for their student not being “perfect” (Wagner, 1979, p.1). At this time, they need a teacher’s support so that they know

about the support networks available to them, as well as, explanation that they did nothing wrong and no one is blaming them for their student's disability.

Sometimes other professionals need to be involved in the plan to effectively educate a dyslexic student. Some possibilities include: educators, hearing specialists, vision specialists, neurologists, pediatricians, and psychologists (Wagner, 1979, p.62-66). Through research within the world of special education, people quickly discover that they do not have all of the answers. If an educator struggles to find a method that works for a particular student, another professional can offer a new perspective and help brainstorm possible services. "When at first you don't succeed, try, try again." When trying something out, a parent or teacher may discover something that does not help out the student with Dyslexia, so then try something new, or talk to another professional for more ideas.

First, let's discuss the roles that parents need to play within their child's educational plan. Parents are one of the most important people to have involvement. Parents will help to formulate the perfect learning atmosphere, similar at home and school. Parents must take their student to places so that they can learn about something new, and reading to their student as another way to interest them. Phonics worksheets and Real life applications also help students to begin to assemble all of the pieces of the puzzle as one (Wagner, 1979, p.5). With this, they will discover how the pieces come together to solve problems and how things interrelate with one another.

Students with a disability in reading will often cause problems in a classroom. The most common feelings that come with Dyslexia often include feelings of resentment, especially when they discover that they need to repeat a grade to help them. This causes the student to do the exact same work for the second year in a row and will cause feelings of boredom, which often leads to misbehavior (Wagner, 1979, p.2). Some times they will "act out" so that they can

get out of doing their homework. This student will often pretend to be busy during work time, doing activities such as sharpening their pencil, fetching books and leafing through papers more than many of their peers. “In other words, the children with literacy difficulties were quite good at looking busy while not fully engaged with the learning tasks” (Rack, 2003). This students will appear to be working and doing on task activities but in all actuality nothing is being accomplished. In this way, they believe they are not letting anyone down. They also believe that they can avoid doing their work by wasting all of this provided work time.

To help students with Dyslexia it takes only fifteen minutes a day. This time will help them to continue learning and make it an exciting interactive activity. During these fifteen minutes, a number of things a parent can do include anything and everything from staying connected with the student’s teachers, to planned interactive activities with their child. Due to their short attention span, lessons and activities for these students need to be shorter (Wagner, 1979, p.70). If the student needs a longer period of time, include breaks along the way, during which encourage the student to get up and move about. When they return to work, the student then will focus on the work placed before them (Wagner, 1979, p.71). Another thing to consider, remember that sometimes parents need to find someone else to help tutor their child. This person will teach them things that the parent simply can not convey. Along these same lines, sometimes a student needs to work on their homework somewhere other than home. When at home, many distractions will arise and will often hinder the learning process (Wagner, 1979, p.69). Once the process of tutoring has begun make this a consistent part of the daily schedule (Wagner, 1979, p.71). In only takes fifteen minutes to sit down with a student on a regular basis, and help them to enjoy learning all over again. This reinforces the learning process that takes place within the classroom.

All people involved in the student's life should include themselves in the learning process, including their siblings. Siblings often spend the most time with one another, sometimes more than anyone else. This person serves as a good friend, and often has a closer relationship to the child than a parent has. It becomes extremely important for these students to know that they have the support of their sibling, whether older or younger. Siblings should spend time seated together working on homework. During this time they can also work together to present information in new ways for one another (Wagner, 1979, p.7). Often times this person can truly explain difficult material in a new way to help their sibling. They will also know of the latest fads to present needed information in a new exciting way. One simple task to reinforce in a household of a student with Dyslexia would include: when a child completes their work ask them to sit down with their sibling help them with their homework.

Teachers one of the most important people to a child's learning process, also needs to know resources and methods to help students with Dyslexia. This person needs to know his or her students so well. That they know how each one of them learns. Teachers need to remember to converse with previous teachers as well. Previous educators know exactly what has worked and what does not work for any given student. This is a resource for all students, for those with or without a disability. The ultimate goal is finding ways to get through to these students and how they learn best.

One way to help them early in a student's career, have them create their own personal dictionary. This resource can be kept on desks and used at any point in the school day. This book will include items that the student struggles with most, often including: the short vowels, long vowels, synonyms, and irregular spelled words, to name a few. For each of these components, include an explanation of the rule, and give examples of words that make this

particular sound or apply to that particular rule (Miles, 1970, p.29-39). All teachers need to have training in a variety of disabilities which should include methods for teaching these students in particular. One thing that all students enjoy is being read to aloud, so that they can hear the words creating sentences, paragraphs, and stories (Poulos, 2002). Consistently repeating information in new ways as needed and laying the foundation so that the learning process can continue; as well as checking comprehension along the way.

Many resources exist to help educators teach students with Dyslexia. One resource is, Practical Ideas That Really Work for Students with Dyslexia and Other Reading Disorders (2003). This book displays possible ways to present information in a new way. Resources like this one serve as great resources for teachers and parents alike. One example mentioned in this resource helps students organize their thoughts by using graphic organizers. Some other examples include using context clues, memory, thought mapping, cause and effect, predicting, summarizing, reflective questioning, and graphic organizers (Higgins). These resources should be used while presenting new information or reviewing old material. These ideas, as mentioned in this book, provide examples and reproducible handouts for all areas of the curriculum and in all subject areas. Books containing information and resources will help parents and teachers alike. Pick them up and use these as the springboard for future lessons and discover what has worked for other students with Dyslexia.

Now that we have discussed each group and their role for students with Dyslexia, a few things that everyone involved should remember. Allow the student to type out their thoughts rather than writing them out on paper. This allows the student to see the actual letter formation as printed in the document as well as having automatic spell check to see if the correct letters were selected. Sometimes a hands-on approach to learning seems to work most effectively, this

includes using movable materials, like shaving cream, to create things. Other hands on approaches can include finding letters in alphabet soup to spell various words (Poulos, 2002).

As mentioned previously, this finger print looks quite different within the world of Dyslexia. As Dr. John Rack states, “one size does not fit all” (2003). In a test given to over three-hundred and fifty children in over two-hundred schools, while studying seven-year-olds, in attempt to discover literacy difficult some methods were found to help out this process (Rack, 2003). One method that worked extremely well in this study individualized multi-sensory teaching. This method encourages students to use more than one of their senses during the learning process. An example would include having a student read something aloud so that they would be using their eyes as well as their ears (Poulos, 2002).

Similarly, a kit has been created to help parents and teachers. This resource includes manipulatives and explanations of activities to reinforce skills that students with Dyslexia need extra practice on. Using these resources the parent can also include the important elements, while reinforcing what happens in the classroom. Students that use this method in the study achieved a higher degree of performance as compared to that of their peers. “Without support, children with literacy difficulties fall further behind and are likely to develop bad learning habits” (2003). For this reason we need to make sure that parents and teachers partner to keep students at their correct learning level and at a comparable level to that of their peers (Rack). The last article also notes that literacy difficulty will occur most commonly in language, memory, and attention (Rack, 2003). Students with Dyslexia often struggle, in not only reading, but also in spelling, and math (Wagner, 1979, p.6). Always remember with Dyslexic students and their parents to act patiently, provide care, and provide a support network (Wagner, 1979, p.8).

What do the following people have in common: Babe Ruth, Lewis Carroll, Steven Spielberg, Thomas Edison, Whoppi Goldberg, Henry Winkler, Cher, and Tom Cruise? These household names all have Dyslexia. Could someone simply tell by the ways that they behave on the television screen or by the stories that we hear about any given person that they have Dyslexia? These people have overcome their disability; they know their limits and how to learn best. Because of this they have become successful individuals and household names. The same needs to happen for students, teachers and parents need to partner together to find their potential and help them to become successful no matter what disability they might have (Poulos, 2002). A final way to help students with Dyslexia, remember to inform these students of other people that have Dyslexia, especially famous icons. In this way they will no longer have the feeling of being alone in the world (Poulos, 2002).

Many resources exist to aid parents and teachers alike to fully support their students with Dyslexia. These resources include ways to assist students especially during the learning process. Importantly, remember patience, caring, and get every around the student involved in the learning process. When parents and teachers partner together, the student will ultimately win because they a strong support network.

Bibliography

Higgins, J., McConnell, K., Patton, J. R., & Ryser, G. R. (2003). *Practical ideas that really work for students with dyslexia and other reading disorders*. Austin: PRO-ED, Inc.

What should teachers do to help their students with dyslexia? One major area that is drastically affected by dyslexia is the reading process. This hands-on book helps to assess what students understand and what is still unclear. Teacher's resources are included in this book of worksheets and teacher's guides help both the teacher and students with the reading process, not only for those students that have dyslexia.

Janover, C. (1988). *Josh a boy with dyslexia*. Burlington: Waterfront Books.

What better interpretation of dyslexia than that of a child with the disability. That is exactly what this children's book does. Helping out persons around someone with dyslexia, giving them a glimpse of how they are feeling. Especially important is explaining how the child is feeling about reading. The other thing is the fact that dyslexia does not just affect Josh in reading, but it also affects Josh in other areas of his life.

Levinson, H. N. (1984). *Smart but feeling dumb*. New York: Warner Books.

Dyslexia is something that affects even the smallest things in a person's life which ultimately makes many things more complex than they are to others. How does it feel within this daily life to be dyslexic? In how many different ways can it affect a person's daily life? Many questions are presented in this text. Also attempting to answer the questions to some of these very difficult feelings, and taking a glimpse at assist those students are very intelligent but feel dumb.

Miles, T. R. (1970). *On helping the dyslexic child*. London: Methuen Educational LTD.

What are some simple ways that teachers and parents can help their students with dyslexia? This book offers some of these small things that teachers can do to help their students. These include encouraging students to believe in themselves, creating a personal dictionary that they can use as a resource. Students in this situation lastly discussing time management for handling all of the things that students need.

Poulos, Stacy. Dyslexia.tv. 2002. 18 Apr. 2009.

This website is a great resource for parents and teachers alike. This has a link to biographies of famous people that have Dyslexia. This also has links to other great websites on Dyslexia with ideas to help out parents and teachers alike. This website would be a great resource to like at to discover the many forms of Dyslexia as well as the ways that it affects different people as well as bring it all together.

Rack, J. (2003). Dyslexia support-one size does not fit all. *The Dyslexia Institute*. March, 2003, from Ebsco Host.

Wagner, R. F. (1979). *Dyslexia and your child: guide for teachers and parents*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.

Dyslexia can be related to so many other things. In some cases with a student with dyslexia they are also more likely to have other learning disabilities, which can be known as the “umbrella concept”. It also gives a number of resources for both parents and teachers along with a list of other resources that would be helpful to both of these people.