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Dyslexia

Common Characteristics

- Difficulties with learning and organizing speech (both written and verbal)
- Difficulties learning letters and the corresponding sound
- Difficulties learning and memorizing math facts and correctly completing math operations
- Difficulties reading fluently enough to comprehend and understand text
- Difficulties with spelling
- Difficulties learning foreign languages

Less Common Characteristics

- The severity of dyslexia varies. In severe cases dyslexia can qualify students for special education and support services.
- Some dyslexics are able to learn basic reading and writing without much difficulty but experience symptoms of dyslexia when the tasks become more difficult (reading and comprehending long passages in textbooks, applying grammar correctly, and writing essays).

Modifications

Directions

- Break complex tasks and directions into small steps. Check to make sure the child is following along with you
- Demonstrate/model directions and expected behavior to the student
- Use both oral and written directions while presenting material to students
- Frequently check for understanding by having the student explain the content under study

Writing

- Use worksheets or organizers that require minimal writing. Encourage drawing and visual images
- Provide a "designated note taker" to act as a scribe for the student or photocopy another student's notes or the teacher's notes
- Allow student to type notes on a computer
- Have student focus on a single component of a writing assignment. Offer the chance to have a peer mentor and reviewer for the completed work
- Reduce written work and copying tasks
- Allow student to respond orally in lieu of writing

Math

- Allow student to draw visuals or use concrete examples
- Re-teach the current material if student is struggling to understand the concepts
- Read story problems aloud while doing in-class activities
- Break math problems into smaller steps with explicit modeling of how to solve the problem in its entirety

Testing

- Allow tests to be taken in a room or hallway with few distractions
- Oral Testing- tests are read to the student and students are allowed to give answers orally
- Untimed test- allow as much time as needed to complete the test
- Reduce the amount of words on spelling tests
- Avoid or reduce essay tests

Homework

- Reduce homework load. An agreement can be arranged between the parents and the teacher to set a maximum time to spend on homework. Have the parent sign off on the amount of time the student spent completing the homework.
- Give grades based on the submitted content, not on the spelling or handwriting
- Assign the class alternate projects that are done through video, presentations, collages, or art projects

General Instruction

- Don't force dyslexic students to read-aloud in front of the class
- Ask the student how he or she learns best, and adapt teaching strategies accordingly
- Grades should be less important than the progress

Common Misconceptions

- Dyslexics see backwards.
- Dyslexia is due to a lack of intelligence and motivation.
- Dyslexics are incapable of learning.

It is important to remember...

- People with dyslexia are capable of being successful learners with appropriate teaching techniques.
- People with dyslexia may spell incorrectly and it may appear that they are spelling backward; however, they may be remembering the letters in the word but are struggling with remembering the correct order.
- Students with dyslexia need to be encouraged in order to feel like they are making progress and are successful learners. The teacher needs to help students see dyslexia as something that can be conquered. Even though dyslexia lasts a life-time, with coping mechanisms and strategies students and people with dyslexia can function fully and be successful in life.

Curricular Modifications/ Adaptations

Teaching systematically using a multisensory approach will benefit students with dyslexia. By using all learning pathways in the brain simultaneously, dyslexics are more likely to remember the material. Students with dyslexia benefit from learning and reviewing the basic elements of a concept and progressing to more difficult aspects. Multiple review sessions that cover all of the material can be very helpful. There are many specific modifications and adaptations to help students:

- One-on-one spelling tests
- Shorten spelling tests to focus on mastering the most frequently used words
- Giving extra time to complete assignments
- Additional assistance with spelling on writing assignments
- Explicit modeling of correct spelling on projector
- Substitute alternatives for written assignments (posters, oral or video presentations, projects, collages)
- Seat student close to teacher in order to monitor understanding
- Peer editing and review of written work

Resources

Dyslexia Awareness and Resource Center

<http://www.dyslexiacenter.org/>

National Center for Learning Disabilities

<http://www.nclld.org/ld-basics/ld-aamp-language/reading/dyslexia>

Michigan Dyslexia Institute, Inc.

<http://www.dyslexia.net/>

Bright Solutions for Dyslexia, Inc.

<http://www.dys-add.com/>

Davis Dyslexia Association International

<http://www.dyslexia.com/>

Dyslexia Teacher

<http://www.dyslexia-teacher.com/index.htm>

Dyslexia Directory

<http://children.webmd.com/dyslexia-directory>

LD OnLine

<http://www.ldonline.org/>

