Strategies for Learning and Teaching

In addition to the tips below, please also see '*Understanding Dyslexia - A Guide for Schools*' which provides information, practical support and guidance for parents and teachers in relation to supporting and teaching children with dyslexia. These are the outcome of a project implemented by a working group that was established by the Special Education Co-ordination Committee of the North-South Ministerial Council. These resources were originally distributed to schools in 2004 in CD and DVD format.
Click here for an on-line version of the contents of 'Understanding Dyslexia - A Guide for Schools'.

- Recognise the confusion and frustration of the student and avoid situations that increase pressure.
- Do not equate genuine variability of performance with lack of effort.
- Provide support with additional recording mechanisms where appropriate (e.g. appropriate literacy software, charts, diagrams, dictaphones, electronic dictionaries, models, voice recognition software and word processors with spellchecker).
- Employ line trackers and/or coloured overlays as appropriate.
- Provide opportunities for the student to re-learn and over-learn.
- Encourage the process of drafting and redrafting.
- Amend worksheets to make them understandable.
- Provide assistance with elements of the writing process, such as the using of planning sheets and editing checklists.
- Read questions aloud.
- Encourage self-correction.
- Practise memory games.
- Use a structured multi-sensory literacy programme with the student.
- Establish the students' strengths and their individual learning styles.
- Teach a range of word-attack skills (e.g. contextual cues, look and say, phonics, punctuation and word shapes).
- Use a graded-reading programme that is appropriate to the student's level of literacy skills as well as his/her interest level.
- Provide supplementary reading material that is below the student's assessed reading level, which allows the student to read independently (i.e. less than two errors in one hundred words).
- Use a rehearsal-reading system. Instead of calling on students at random to read aloud, assign each student a specific passage a day in advance.
- Start with the student's free writing when selecting spellings to learn. Target specific spelling patterns that the student requires assistance with as evidenced in the student's free writing.
- Correct spellings positively and allow students credit for correct letters or sounds in words.
- Employ a number of multi-sensory methods when teaching spellings and consider the use of the strategy of look, copy, trace, picture, cover, write and check selectively.

- Construct logs or diaries of essential words.
- Break tasks into small steps and allow adequate time for completion.
- Select and highlight most important errors, not all errors – focus on the nature of the errors (quality) rather than the number of errors (quantity).
- Teach study skills (e.g. highlighting central points, mind-maps®, mnemonics, etc).
- Give regular constructive praise and encouragement and maintain high expectations.
- Limit copying from the board. Write in different colours on the blackboard.
- Expect students' work to be erratic and inconsistent.
- Encourage students to repeat the directions for completing a task.
- Use visual cues to help the students to organise themselves.
- Acknowledge that extra time is needed by students in order to complete tasks.
- Use appropriate computer software to support reading, spelling and writing (e.g. Wordshark®, Numbershark®, etc).
- Encourage the use of spelling dictionaries such as ACE Spelling Dictionary® and spellcheckers such as the Franklin®.
- Particularly at post-primary level consider the use of some non-printed learning materials such as taped books, recorded classes and curriculum texts on tape.
- Remember a student with dyslexia may have great difficulty with figures (e.g. learning tables), reading music or anything which entails interpreting symbols. Learning foreign languages can be particularly difficult.

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