

Dyslexia

At Dannevirke South School we recognise and celebrate uniqueness of all our students.

"We aim for our all children to be confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners."
(NZ Curriculum)

In the last 4-5 years we have been exploring the world of the dyslexic child and the implications this has for how we teach. When I first heard the Dyslexia Foundation of NZ say that dyslexia was a gift I wanted to cry. Watching your dyslexic child, try and fail, seeing their self-esteem plummet, asking you why they cannot do things other children find easy and watching everyday activities cause frustration, breaks your heart. But there is hope and there are many things both in school, at home and with outside help that can be done to assist these children to become confident achieving teens and adults. The more I learn about dyslexia and the unique way they see the world I often wish I could step into their shoes for a while. We would like this part of our website to be useful to you so will appreciate feedback and questions as we go along. We are not experts in this area but have made a start. Firstly at South School we see Dyslexia as a different way of learning - not right or wrong just different. Dyslexics tend to think in pictures and we often refer to these children as being 'picture thinkers.' We do not label students as dyslexic, only a psychologist can do this in NZ.

As a staff we have had a range of professional development in this area. Several of us attended a 3 day training workshop in the Davis Dyslexia Techniques down in Christchurch. We have had a course in Davis Learning Strategies where staff and support staff continued to learn about ways of supporting students in their learning. Our school is also a member of the 4-D Schools - a useful website to check out. We have been very lucky in having the opportunity to attend a Neil Mackay seminar this year. Neil MacKay is one of the world's foremost thinkers on dyslexia and the author to several books and papers.

We have a great BOT who support us, in what we are trying to do for the students at South School who show dyslexic type learning difficulties. In Dannevirke we are also very lucky to have a Davis Facilitator who can help children and adults.

A good point to remember is what helps the 'picture thinking' child to learn will help all learners.

About dyslexia:

Difficulties with literacy and numeracy are a common feature of dyslexia, and the most immediate attribute is a problem in decoding words and their meanings. However, this is still only one aspect of a broader spectrum of difficulties affecting skills such as auditory and information processing, planning and organising, motor skills, short-term memory and concentration. Some of these can make it especially challenging for individuals to follow

instructions, turn thoughts into words and finish work on time. (Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand)

Over the next two terms will bring you homework tips, ways to improve self-esteem, signs of 'picture thinking', comments from students, useful websites and more.

I hope this section of our website is useful to you, and feel free to discuss concerns, questions or suggestions with your class teacher or other staff members.

Caroline Gyde

Most dyslexics will exhibit a variety of the following traits and behaviours. These characteristics can vary from day-to-day or minute-to-minute. The most consistent thing about dyslexics is their inconsistency

General

- Appears bright, highly intelligent, but unable to read, write, or spell at year level.
- Labelled lazy, careless, immature, "not trying hard enough," or "behaviour problem."
- High in IQ, yet may not do well with written tests; tests well orally.
- Feels dumb; has poor self-esteem; hides or covers up weaknesses with ingenious compensatory strategies; easily frustrated and emotional about school learning.
- Talented in art, drama, music, sports.
- Gets lost easily or loses track of time.
- Difficulty sustaining attention; seems "hyper" or "daydreamer."
- Learns best through hands-on experience and visual aids.

Vision, Reading, and Spelling

- Complains of dizziness, headaches or stomach aches while reading.
- Confused by letters, numbers, words, sequences, or verbal instructions.
- Reading or writing shows repetitions, additions, transpositions, omissions, substitutions, and reversals in letters, numbers and/or words.
- Complains of feeling or seeing non-existent movement while reading, writing, or copying.
- Seems to have difficulty with vision, yet eye exams don't reveal a problem.
- Extremely keen sighted and observant, or lacks depth perception and peripheral vision.
- Reads and rereads with little comprehension, or can have very good comprehension.
- Spells phonetically and inconsistently.

Hearing and Speech

- May be highly sensitive and easily distracted by sounds.
- Difficulty putting thoughts into words; speaks in halting phrases; leaves sentences incomplete, mispronounces long words.

Writing and Motor Skills

- Trouble with writing or copying; pencil grip is unusual; handwriting varies or is illegible.
- Clumsy, uncoordinated, poor at ball or team sports; difficulties with fine and/or gross motor skills and tasks; prone to motion-sickness.

- Can be ambidextrous, and often confuses left/right, over/under.

Math and Time Management

- Has difficulty telling time, managing time, learning sequenced information or tasks, or being on time.
- Computing math shows dependence on finger counting and other tricks; knows answers, but can't do it on paper.
- Can count, but has difficulty counting objects and dealing with money.

Memory and Cognition

- Excellent long-term memory for experiences, locations, and faces.
- Poor memory for sequences, facts and information that has not been experienced.
- Thinks primarily with images and feeling, not sounds or words

Behaviour, Health, Development and Personality

- Extremely disorderly or compulsively orderly.
- Can be class clown, trouble-maker, or too quiet.
- Had unusually early or late developmental stages (talking, crawling, walking, tying shoes).
- Prone to ear infections; sensitive to foods, additives, and chemical products.
- Can be an extra deep or light sleeper; bedwetting beyond appropriate age.
- Unusually high or low tolerance for pain.
- Strong sense of justice; emotionally sensitive; strives for perfection.
- Mistakes and symptoms increase dramatically with confusion, time pressure, emotional stress, or poor health.

Ron Davis 1992

Check out this

link <http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz/content/download/14819/87329/file/Dyslexia.pdf> for further information about dyslexia or view our page on dyslexia under information in the bar at the top.

Homework

Homework should be a time where you share in your child's learning but with a dyslexic child it can become a frustrating and upsetting experience for both of you. If homework is becoming stressful it is important you talk to your child's teacher and find out how you can, reduce the pressure but at the same time continue to support their learning. For example there are many ways you can help your child with reading homework – listen to them read, read along with them, read a page each, read a page and then get them to repeat it, read to them and then discuss the story. Always offer lots of praise for the effort they put in.

Once homework becomes stressful the learning stops.

Here are some tips for making homework a more productive experience:

- Remember homework should be to practice something that your child is already familiar with.

- If homework is too difficult, discuss this with your child's teacher. Don't allow your child to become frustrated because homework tasks are beyond their skills or take too long.
- It may be necessary to negotiate with the class teacher:
 - *May you act as scribe?*
 - *May the homework be typed on the computer?*
 - *May the homework be presented in an alternative format, e.g. timeline, diagram, mind map?*
- Develop a homework routine – work out with your child, the best time to do homework. Keep in mind that your child may be very tired after school - they have had to work harder than their peers because of their dyslexia. They may need a break before starting homework.
- Find a quiet place with a minimum of distractions, making sure they have all the things they need – paper, pen etc.
- Make sure your child understands what she/he has to do. Talk through the task together.
- Help them break down the tasks into manageable chunks and to prioritise what is most important.
- If your child is involved in lots of after school activities morning may be a better time for homework.

<http://www.4d.org.nz/family/>

Famous Dyslexics

Keira Knightley The film star was diagnosed with dyslexia when she was just six years old. Though some may see dyslexia as being detrimental for an aspiring actress, Knightley used it as a springboard for her career.

Steven Spielberg When people think of successful filmmakers in Hollywood, Steven Spielberg is typically at the top of the list. Most people, even his loyal fans, would never guess that the famous director has struggled with dyslexia throughout his entire life. What is even more amazing is the fact that his learning disorder went undiagnosed for years.

Hans Christian Andersen was Danish author, best known for his children's stories such as "The Little Mermaid", "Thumbalina", and "The Ugly Duckling".

Ludwig van Beethoven was a German pianist and composer and is one of the most influential composers of all time. He continued to compose, perform, and conduct even after becoming completely deaf.

Orlando Bloom is an English actor best known for his role as Legolas in the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy and then as Will Turner in the "Pirates of the Caribbean" trilogy. He was also named the UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador in October of 2009.

Leonardo da Vinci, an Italian inventor, is truly one of the original Renaissance men. He is best known for his art work. He is the creator of such masterpieces as "The Mona Lisa", "The Last Supper", and his drawing of the "Vitruvian Man". He is also known for his technological conceptualisation of the helicopter, the tank, the calculator, and many other modern day inventions.

Albert Einstein was a German theoretical physicist, author, and is one of the most influential scientists and intellectuals of all time. He has published over 300 scientific and over 150 non-scientific works and has received several honorary doctorate degrees from numerous American and European colleges. His name "Einstein" has in modern day, become synonymous with the word "genius".

Jamie Oliver

Johnny Depp

Walt Disney

Mozart

Winston Churchill

Any many many more

Common Characteristics Adult Dyslexia

A dyslexic child often has a dyslexic parent or close family member. This site shows the characteristics of adult dyslexia. Often dyslexic adults have a negative view of school because it let them down and made them feel inadequate. Schools have changed and we see dyslexia as a different way of learning – we celebrate their differences and try hard to accommodate their learning needs. We adapt assessment procedures and allow children to show their learning in different ways e.g. visual rather than written. If you have any questions after reading this information feel free to come along and talk to your child's teacher.

<http://www.dyslexia.com/about-dyslexia/signs-of-dyslexia/common-characteristics-of-adult-dyslexia/>