How can I meet the needs of learners with dyslexia? Part 2

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Inspiring Potential

Introduction

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This resource was developed by the National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults (http://www.literacyandnumeracyforadults.com/). It is part of a suite of resources on dyslexia.

The main purpose of these resources is to support the professional development of educators who are working to strengthen the literacy and numeracy skills of adults studying and working in New Zealand. The resources can also help inform adults with dyslexia and the people who support or work with them.

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The needs of learners with dyslexia

How the impact of dyslexia can be minimised

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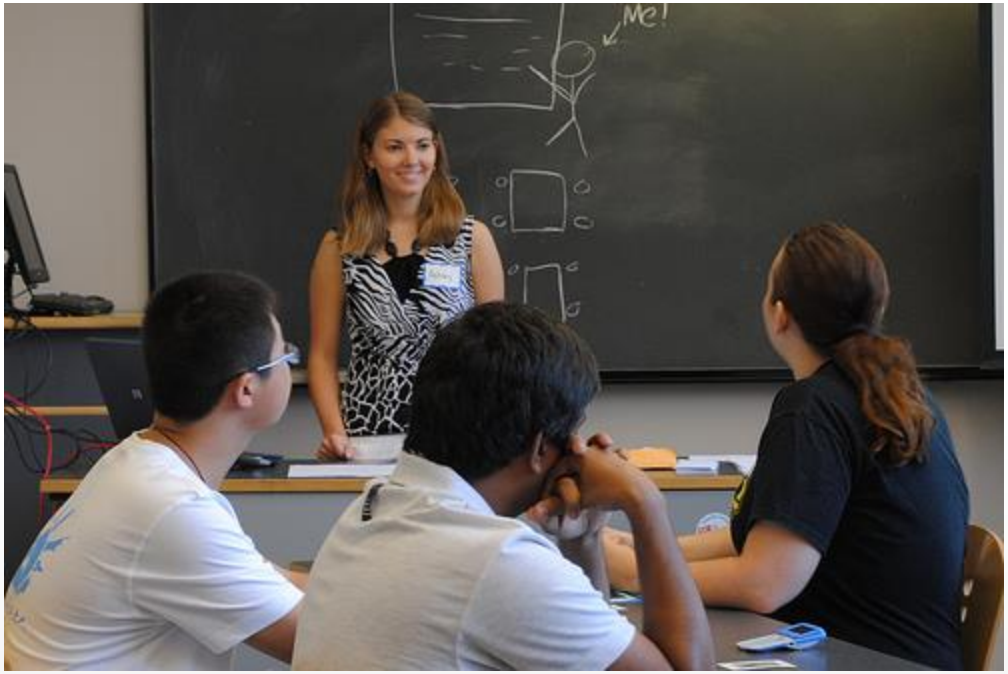
If we want to provide an inclusive education and meet the needs of our learners with dyslexia we need to have a good understanding of what these needs are and how we can address them.

This resource is in two parts. Part 1 describes how you can meet their learning needs and Part 2 their social and emotional needs.

PART 1: Meeting learning needs	PART 2: Meeting social and emotional needs
• Adopt a suitable teaching approach • Teach literacy and organisational skills and strategies • Provide accommodations	• Raise awareness • Commit to inclusion • Build rapport

You can make a difference



As educators you are capable of making the critical difference in the life of a dyslexic adult

Adapted from Frank & Livingston, 2002

What can it feel like to have dyslexia?

How one thing can lead to another

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You find reading and writing hard and don't get the help you need. Sometimes you feel humiliated and bullied by others...

...so you start to doubt yourself. You feel a failure and have no confidence. You feel isolated and alone.

Sometimes you withdraw. Sometimes you act the fool to hide how you feel. You try anything to hide the fact that you have a problem. You skip school. Sometimes you feel like lashing out.

(Edwards, 1994)

What can it feel like to have dyslexia?

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I don't feel part of the group

Nothing I can do will make a difference

People think I'm lazy

I am no good

I am thick

I feel embarrassed about my reading

They often pick on me

We can reverse the spiral of failure

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humiliation

failure at school

bullying

disengagement

low self-esteem

frustration

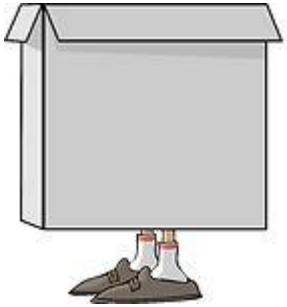
How can we reverse the spiral of failure?

- **Raise awareness**
- **Inclusion**
- **Build rapport**

Dyslexia is often hidden

The **candid** dyslexic

The **confused** dyslexic



The **closet** dyslexic

Nosek (1997) identified three types of dyslexics.

- *Closet* dyslexics try to hide their difficulty.
- *Confused* dyslexics know they have a problem, but don't know what causes it.
- *Candid* dyslexics are not embarrassed about their difficulty and openly disclose it.

Dyslexia is often hidden

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Tanner (2009) used Nosek's categories in a study, when she interviewed 70 people with dyslexia.

- 48 out of 70 were *closet* dyslexics
- 12 out of 70 were *confused* dyslexics
- 5 out of 70 were *candid* dyslexics

People with dyslexia are often skilled at masking their difficulties. This means it is harder to pick up and they don't always receive the help they need.

> Dyslexia is a secret I carry with me wherever I go
>
> Frank & Livingston, 2002. p. 9

See also: How do I know if my learner has dyslexia?

Raise awareness

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If everyone was informed of what dyslexia is, how it affects people and what can be done to help, people with dyslexia would feel more valued, understood and included. There would be no need for them to hide their difficulty. We all have a part to play in raising awareness.

Raise your own awareness

What can you do to build your own background knowledge of dyslexia? Your learners need to know you understand their difficulty.

Inform your learner

It can be empowering and motivating for your learner to know they are able to learn. Show them their areas of strength and need so they can take control of their own learning.

Build public awareness

There is much you can do to help inform all your learners, your colleagues, managers, whānau, employers etc.

Inclusion

The social model of dyslexia

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Dyslexics are not hindered by what they are, but by what they are expected to be

Cooper, 2006

It is disabling to expect that everyone

- thinks the same way
- learns the same way
- can take notes when listening
- can read and write fluently
- can follow multiple instructions

In a social model of dyslexia society needs to make adjustments to meet the needs of the individual. It is not the individual who needs to adjust to fit in with the expectations of society. This would be a deficit model.

What does this mean for our expectations as teachers or employers?

(Cooper, 2006)

Inclusion

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Are we expecting all our learners to be sequential thinkers, just because that's an easier way to organise our teaching or because we think that way?

Do we provide enough room for creative thinking?

Do we provide ample time for all learners to complete tasks set?

Are we being inclusive in our teaching?

(Riddick, 2001)

Build rapport

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- A **positive belief** in your learner's ability is very important.
- Make sure your learners **experience success** to strengthen their self-image.
- **Show you care, have empathy** and make them feel **included.** It's important your learner feels that you know what it's like to have dyslexia.
- **Recognise effort** and give **constructive feedback:** provide tangible evidence of progress.
- **Don't lower your expectations** and give them a sense of control. You could, for example, give them a choice of how they present a project. Set realistic targets.

(Edwards, 1994)

Build rapport

Setting realistic targets: 'SMART goals'

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Specific — What exactly is the learner expected to do?

measurable — How will be demonstrated that the goal has been achieved?

Achievable — Can the task be achieved by the learner within the timeframe?

Relevant — Is the task relevant to the learner?

Time-related — By when does the task need to be completed?

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