

## **In the know ...**

Here is an interesting article by Aisling McGuire about how if teachers adopted strategies used for teaching students with dyslexia, then all literacy rates might rise.

## **EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH**



### **Why we should teach all pupils as if they have dyslexia**

For Dyslexia Awareness Week 2017, one head of learning support argues that there is a great deal we can learn from dyslexic teaching methods.

Huge advancements have been made in education around the teaching of pupils with dyslexia. Teachers are more keenly aware of both when a diagnosis may be necessary and of the techniques required to enhance the dyslexic student's progress. However, it often strikes me that the strategies we use for dyslexic pupils are fundamental for the learning of all. If we taught every pupil as if they were dyslexic, literacy rates might rise.

Skills such as overlearning and organisation are prime examples of things schools and teachers are quick to use for pupils with an additional support needs, but often ignore when it comes to the rest of their class. If a child can't read, we teach them to read, if a child can't count, we teach them how to count, but if a child is disorganised, we punish them. Instead of reserving these proficient teaching tools for those with an additional need, let's just use them for everyone.

What follows is not an extensive list of the strategies and tools that can be used globally in your classroom, but a starting point to consider things you might do for those with dyslexia that may benefit everyone in your class.

#### **1. Interactive board set-up**

One of the issues many dyslexic pupils face on a daily basis is visual stress, but this is not an issue solely reserved for those with dyslexia. It is often felt most acutely when looking at small black font on a white background. A simple solution is to change the colour of your interactive whiteboard. There is research to suggest that pale blue is the easiest colour for the majority of people to see clearly.

#### **2. Breaking tasks down**

Again, this is a simple thing to do that many teachers have become very accomplished at and which can help all young people stay on task and focused. A quick starter task, a couple of activities and finally a plenary. This summing up at the end of the lesson is particularly important as it allows information to more easily be transferred from the short-term to the long-term processing memory.

### 3. **Overlearning or repetition**

This technique is often used in dyslexia-specific resources, because knowledge has increased that repeating skills develops the confidence and self-esteem of the pupil as well as making ideas, words or formulas stick. This, however, is a failsafe technique for all, particularly when learning a new concept.

### 4. **Organisational skills**

Students with dyslexia often have very poor working memory and have subsequent difficulty with the recall of instructions. It can, therefore, be very helpful for students to have organisational aids such as planners and folders with colour-coded dividers and for teachers to ensure that homework tasks are written down. These simple organisational skills are important for all students.

### 5. **Software applications**

Finally, developments in IT and increased understanding of the difficulties of dyslexia have prompted a spate of excellent software programmes that can be easily downloaded to tablets or computers, which can aid everybody's learning. Many of these programmes develop skills such as typing, alongside increasing reading and spelling ages. No parent is going to resent their child using such a program.

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