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 BOON
Education

Supporting Students with Learning Differences

Supporting Students with Learning Differences

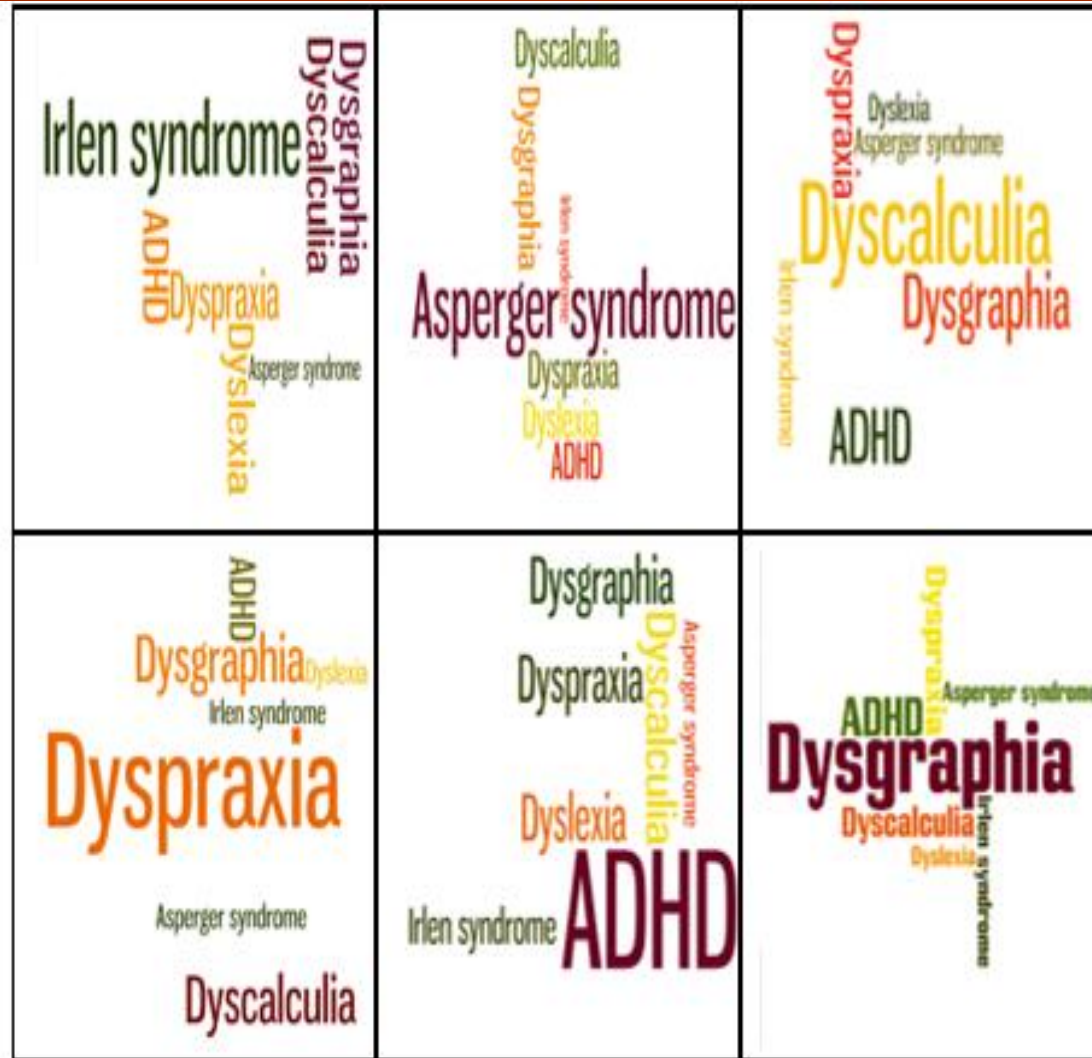
If you have arrived a little early for this session, why not try the Starter quiz below?

Decide which of the statements are TRUE and FALSE.

1. 30% of self-made millionaires have dyslexia.
2. Einstein, Leonardo De Vinci, Bill Gates, Margaret Thatcher, Kiera Knightly, Benjamin Zephaniah and Richard Branson had/have dyslexia.
3. People with dyslexia have terrible trouble rhyming and this is why there are few hip hop artists with dyslexia.
4. Dyslexia is hereditary.
5. Somewhere between 25-40% of children with dyslexia also have ADHD.
6. Men are more likely to have dyslexia than women.
7. Most people with dyslexia have bigger brains than those who do not.

You will find out most of the answers when you watch the video clip later in the session

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Session overview.

This session is for teachers who would like to have a better understanding of some of the challenges students with learning difficulties and students with physical disabilities face in the EFL classroom.

This is a workshop style session which allows teachers to discuss and share ways they support their learners. However, do not worry if you feel you might not be able to contribute much to this discussion as you will be provided with a basic toolkit on how to support your learners.

Please note this session is not delivered by a Learning Difficulties specialist but by a teacher who has worked with students with a variety of learning difficulties. The tips and advice shared in this session are ideas that EFL teachers who are also non-specialists might benefit from.

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Task One: Access for All

Task Aims:

To introduce the Access for All book - a great resource for teachers teaching students with learning difficulties or disabilities.

To explore some of the strategies outlined in the Access for All resource (available from

[http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk /resource/Access+for+All/pdf/](http://rwp.excellencegateway.org.uk/resource/Access+for+All/pdf/)

To share ideas and tips on how we can support learners with different learning difficulties and disabilities.

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Look at the tips below and match them to the learning difficulty or disability. Although many of these would be suitable for all/many learners, choose the difficulty/disability that might benefit from the tip the most.

- Eliminate background noises as much as possible and speak clearly.
- Emphasise over-learning to help get learning into long-term memory.
- Be sensitive to the fact that some people will find it very difficult to work in a group: do not force participation.
- Use cue cards and posters with, for example, multiplication tables, abbreviations.
- Do not talk and demonstrate at the same time.
- Enable learners to have immediate successes in learning.
- Ask questions and allow people to show and demonstrate, for example, answers to calculations.

Students who are/have:

- a) **speech difficulties**
 - b) **deaf and have partial hearing**
 - c) **blind/partially sighted**
 - d) **dyslexia**
 - e) **mental health problems**
 - f) **autistic spectrum disorders**
 - g) **memory difficulties**
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Task Two:
What would
you do?

Task Aim:

To identify potential difficulties that may arise in the EFL classroom and possible solutions for them.

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Case Study One:

You have a student with Asperger's who does not like change. He has his classes in the same room and always sits in the same place. Next month he is taking an exam and he will need to do it in another room. What could you do to help?

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Case Study Two:

You have a student who is severely visually impaired. The student has an amanuensis to help her during the lesson but she is often not able to do the homework as she does not have anyone to help her. How can you make homework exercises/activities more accessible?

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Case Study Three:

You have a student with quite a severe stammer. The student is preparing for a Trinity GESE speaking exam. You know the stress of the exam is very likely to make the stammer worse. What could you do to help the student?

Case Study Four:

You have a student with a hearing impairment. She can lip read but because she is lipreading in her second language, she sometimes misunderstands or gets lost. What could you do to help?

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Case Study Five:

You have a student who always arrives early to class and always sits in the same place. However, in the last lesson she arrived late and someone was sitting in her seat. She got very angry and after a couple of minutes you managed to calm her down and get her to sit somewhere else. For the rest of the lesson the student did not copy anything you had on the board, which is very uncharacteristic of her, and she struggled with all the activities in that lesson. What might be the cause of her behaviour and what would you do to confirm if you are right?

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Task Three: ***Poor Tom***

Task Aim:

To identify some of the potential signs of someone with dyslexia.

To look at common classroom practice that may be problematic for a student with dyslexia,

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What does Tom find difficult?

What does his teacher promise not to make Tom do again in the future?

[video](#)

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Top Tips for people supporting students who have dyslexia and related specific learning difficulties

Try not to have too much on the board for students to copy and allow students to use their mobile phones to take photographs of your boardwork.

Do not force students to read aloud. In fact, there are many arguments against reading aloud in EFL classes; some people would argue the only reading aloud should be done by the teacher.

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Be aware of past negative learning experiences and avoid repeating the same approach – possibly use humour to lessen any tension.

Use strategies which suit learning preferences and allow for success, e.g. personalised hand-outs, contextualised examples, problem solving activities, working from the ‘big picture’ to the specific, helping make connections, using mind maps.

Use the results of diagnostic assessment, when available, to inform the support plan.

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Use a range of multi-sensory approaches, e.g. pattern, colour, images, mind maps, mnemonics, rhyming words, stories and role play. These can all aid learning and memory.

Manipulate written materials with highlighters and be aware of accessible font styles (choose *sans serif* fonts).

Offer a range of lined coloured paper for learners to write on and ensure all handouts are printed on their preferred colour. Alternatively, use 'coloured pockets' to turn white handouts into a colour of the learner's choice.

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For spelling, try to find out what works best for your students. Often it is a combination of strategies. For example, getting students to trace around words like 'elephant', which can help them remember where the 'l', 'p', 'h' and 't' are in the word. Also, use mnemonics such as 'There is a **rat** in se**para**te'. However, be careful with some mnemonics like 'A shirt is ne**cess**ary'. This mnemonic, which is used to help students remember how many letter 'c's and 's's are in the word 'ne**cess**ary', can complicate matters rather than help.

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Make sure your instructions are clear and concise. When doing an activity which has a number of stages, give instructions for each stage separately. If you have to give all the instructions at the same time, then have them written on the handout or on the board – somewhere students can easily refer to.

When producing your own worksheets, try to incorporate pictures to aid learning and make sure that texts are well spaced out. Try to use 1.5+ line spacing and avoid underlining – use bold instead.

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Be careful when using models and writing frames. Sometimes when students look at models, they notice a significant difference between the model and what they are able to produce. As a result, they can feel a little demoralised. The advantage of writing frames is that they help the student produce a piece of writing better than what they could have done on their own. However, some students feel they need to fill the space provided and others might want to write more than what the space allows in the frame.

Use technology to help, especially in cases of poor handwriting and spelling.

Do not rely on the written texts all the time. For example, if you have an online scheme of work, homework tasks can be recorded using a range of recording apps and websites such as audioboo.

Give strategies to help with poor time management, organisation or work.