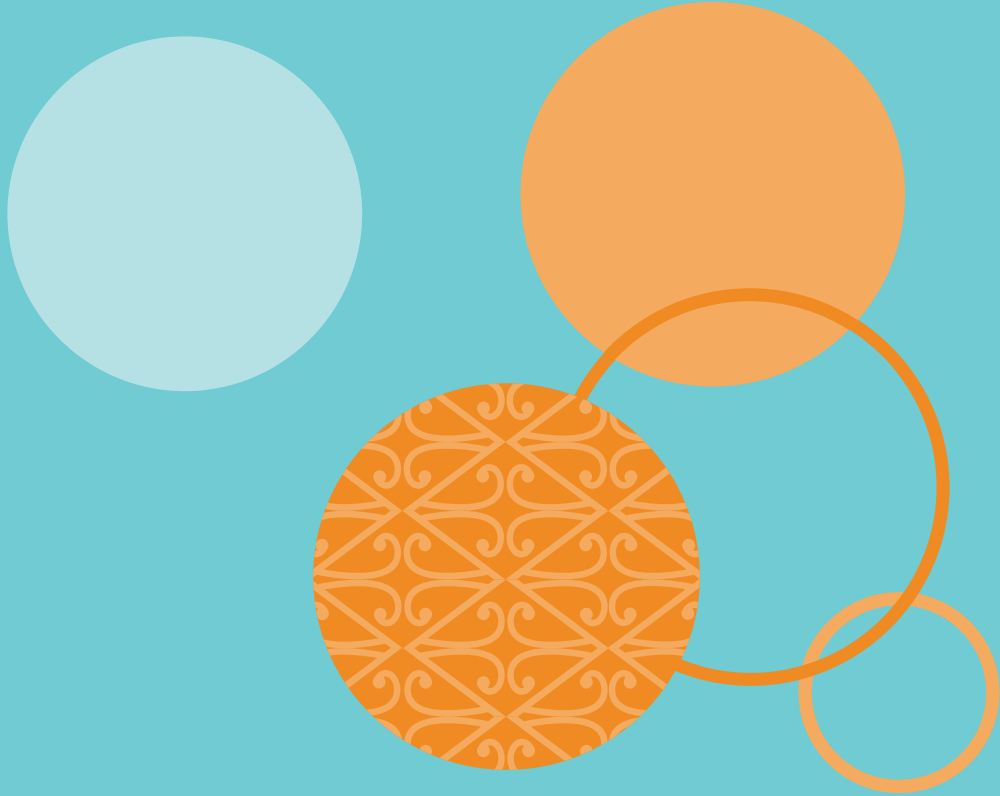


teacher resource



about

# dyslexia

ISBN: 978-0-478-13824-5

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This publication has been produced by the Ministry of Education in consultation with teachers, Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour (RTLb), Resource Teachers Literacy (RTLit), Reading Recovery Tutors, Literacy Development Officers, and relevant sector group such as Specific Learning Disabilities Federation (SPELD), Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand (DFNZ). Professor Bill Tunmer from Massey has peer reviewed the resource.

This publication uses papers sourced from sustainable well managed forests.

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## Introduction

Dyslexia is a term used to describe a range of persistent difficulties with aspects of reading, writing and spelling. It may assist with understanding why some students do not make expected progress in these areas despite the teaching and extra support that would be helpful for most other students. By working with the strengths of students, difficulties associated with dyslexia can be reduced with effective personalised teaching and, when required, specialist support.

This resource is for classroom teachers with students who show signs of dyslexia. It provides teachers with practical strategies they can use to help identify the difficulties these students experience, along with supportive teaching strategies that build on these students' strengths. It is not a replacement for specialist advice, assessment or instruction. Classroom teachers can and do make a difference!

This booklet adds to a package of material already developed to assist students in schools who may have dyslexia, along with a pamphlet for parents and caregivers, a review of research and the development of a definition. These further resources can be accessed from [www.tki.govt.nz](http://www.tki.govt.nz).

In this resource there is information about:

- defining dyslexia
- the indicators and characteristics of dyslexia
- the impact on students' participation and self-esteem
- the challenges dyslexia presents for acquiring literacy
- how teachers can use classroom assessments to support instruction
- what schools and teachers can do to support students who appear to have dyslexia.

## About dyslexia

The term dyslexia was coined in 1887 to refer to a boy who had a severe impairment in learning to read and write despite showing age-appropriate intellectual and physical abilities. Research early in the 20th century focused on the belief that dyslexia was a visual defect that involved seeing letters backwards or upside down. Later, it was thought to be related to the way people heard and processed the sounds of speech (phonological processing) and related the sounds to written words.

While phonological processing is still considered to be the central feature of the difficulties that students experience, recent brain research has shown that students with persistent literacy learning problems are using their brains in ways that are not effective for reading. These ways of operating can, however, be changed with the use of appropriate evidence-based intervention strategies that focus on improving phonological processing and word recognition. It is not the intention of this booklet to promote any one particular intervention. Rather, the booklet aims to give teachers practical and sound strategies they can use in the classroom to assist students who are experiencing the kinds of ongoing reading, writing and spelling difficulties that are associated with dyslexia.

### Defining dyslexia

Defining dyslexia is a complex and contested area and there are no internationally agreed definitions. Every student who may have dyslexia will have a unique range of abilities and difficulties related to literacy learning. Researchers in different countries base their definitions on their particular ways of conceptualising literacy and learning: for example, in some countries, provision of special education support depends on a student having a defined disability. In New Zealand, support is provided on the basis of individual needs. See Ministry of Education *Literature Review: An International Perspective on Dyslexia*, page 13, for further details.

Definitions increasingly recognise that dyslexia involves the phonological processing of spoken language. Phonological processing involves becoming aware of the sounds within spoken words. For most children this processing occurs mainly without specific or conscious instruction. This could explain why phonological processing may have been largely taken for granted by parents, caregivers and teachers, leading to the 'unexpected' aspect of the difficulties that students with dyslexia have.

The ability to attend to and focus on phonological processing can affect the ability to identify or record the sequence of letters (orthographic or spelling patterns) correctly within a word, or words correctly within a sentence.

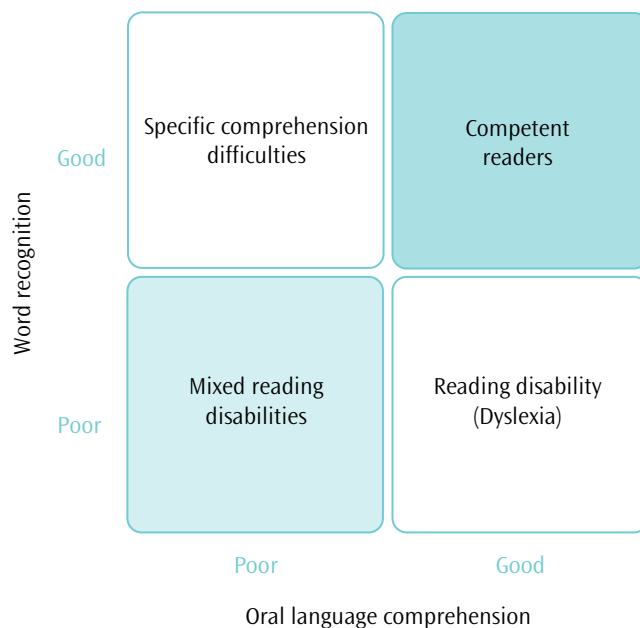
The underlying theme through all modern definitions is that dyslexia involves an *unexpected* and *persistent* difficulty in learning to read, write and spell that cannot be explained by other factors. The difficulties experienced relate specifically to decoding and encoding of print: they do not usually affect a person's ability to understand what is read to them or to formulate text that others can write down for them (unless the person has insufficient vocabulary and/or grammatical knowledge to understand spoken language).

For many years, the term dyslexia was not widely used in New Zealand because the available definitions were regarded as problematic and were based largely on unsubstantiated assumptions. Other terms, such as learning disability or learning difficulty (often with 'specific' added), have been used here and internationally. Dyslexia is a subgroup of these wider terms; not all students who have learning difficulties have dyslexia. The terms are often used interchangeably, however, and this can be confusing.

The Ministry of Education recognises dyslexia as a term that covers a 'spectrum of specific learning disabilities' and has drafted a working definition as a starting point for New Zealand schools. This can be found at: [http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy\\_numeracy/lit\\_dyslexia\\_working\\_definition\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy_numeracy/lit_dyslexia_working_definition_e.php).

### Conceptualising reading difficulties

One model of viewing reading difficulties uses a quadrant chart to show how two factors can be compared in terms of their impact on reading. There is a continuum along both axes and it is a model that can be used to help clarify understanding rather than for defining dyslexia.



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In this model, dyslexia can be seen as a combination of good oral language comprehension and poor word recognition. Difficulties with writing follow a similar pattern.

### Identifying dyslexia

Early identification of literacy difficulties, such as dyslexia, is critical because literacy is the foundation of much learning, in particular, academic learning. With early identification, young children can be supported to participate fully at school. Older students, too, can be given the understanding, support and accommodations needed to help them make progress socially and academically.

Students who have learning difficulties associated with dyslexia experience similar difficulties with reading, writing and spelling while, at the same time, having their own individual differences in relation to their knowledge, skills and experiences in these areas. Effective assessment and support for students combines an understanding of their strengths as well as their differences. Understanding the core characteristics of dyslexia, along with indicative behaviours, can help teachers to improve recognition and to support students in the classroom through the use of effective teaching strategies. The challenge for every teacher is to make the recognition of individual differences a part of their everyday practice.

Dyslexia seems to affect people of all ages. In this resource, distinctions are made, where applicable, between young children (the first year or two of school), primary and secondary students. These broad distinctions can be seen as forming a continuum and teachers working in all three areas may find useful suggestions at all levels.

Some people who identify themselves as having dyslexia (and their families) often believe that this difference has enabled them to develop compensatory abilities in areas that do not rely heavily on reading or writing, such as drama, art, sport, construction and debating.

Weta's success is born out of hiring those who doodled on their maths exam and drew monsters on their pencil case. We need to empower New Zealanders to give them a creative future.

– Richard Taylor, Weta Workshop

### Common misunderstandings

#### Writing letters back-to-front is a symptom of dyslexia.

Writing letters and even words backwards is common in the early stages of learning to read and write. It does not necessarily mean a child is dyslexic.

#### People with dyslexia need special coloured lenses or texts.

There is no strong research evidence that these kinds of interventions improve reading for people with dyslexia.

#### More boys than girls have dyslexia.

Research shows that girls and boys are equally affected by dyslexia. It is more likely that boys are identified more readily than girls because of behavioural differences.

#### People with dyslexia will never learn to read.

This is not true. The earlier children with dyslexia are identified and given appropriate support, the less severe their problems will be. Even older students with dyslexia can become readers if they are given suitable intensive, individualised instruction.

#### People with dyslexia are often gifted.

People with dyslexia are no more likely to be gifted than anyone else in the population.

### Indicators and characteristics of dyslexia

People who appear to have dyslexia can be found across the achievement spectrum and may experience a range of associated difficulties that affect all areas of their lives.

Dyslexia is often described in terms of particular characteristics or indicators because these can be helpful for initially identifying or screening students who may need further assessment. Taken together, the characteristics shown by a student help to build a picture in which patterns or significant differences can be seen.

All students with dyslexia have the same core characteristic: they have persistent problems with phonological processing. This means they will have difficulties with decoding (when reading) and spelling (when writing).

The related features and indicators (often consequences) of this core characteristic can vary greatly from one student to another, however, and not all affected students will have issues in the same areas. Conversely (and importantly), not all students who display related characteristics will have dyslexia.

Some of the characteristics of dyslexia are known as persisting factors. These are factors that seem to continue over time. They can appear from an early age and still be present when the person leaves secondary school. As well as the core phonological processing difficulties, persisting factors or consequential behaviours can include:

- ▲ variable performance (for example a student may be able to complete literacy tasks with little effort one day but will need to make a huge effort the next day)
- ▲ poor retention of previously learned reading and writing skills
- ▲ unexpectedly poor output for considerable effort (which may result in fatigue and loss of motivation)
- ▲ difficulty with word storage (for example retaining word patterns for spoken language)
- ▲ difficulty with sequencing and with retaining a sequence (such as the letters in a word) over time.

The following lists identify characteristics and indicators that may be related to dyslexia at different times during schooling, but many form a continuum across all ages. Although a lot of the characteristics relate to academic learning (and specifically to reading and writing), a continuing experience of failure can increasingly affect self-esteem and motivation that, in turn, further hampers students' success at school, and their social and emotional wellbeing.

The presence of one or even several of these characteristics does not mean that a student has or will develop dyslexia. Many characteristics will, on their own, be common to students who do not have dyslexia. For example, a lot of young children struggle with letter reversals and word confusions in the first year of school. A young student may muddle the sounds within words, but a close examination could point to a specific language impairment rather than dyslexia. The presence of many characteristics will indicate a need to carry out a close assessment of the student.

### In the first year of school

Young children develop in ways that are often unpredictable and very dependent on external factors. Teachers need to use great caution as they observe their students, being wary of overlooking important signals or of being too hasty in identifying 'problems' – for example, many of the points below are commonly seen in the first year of school and frequently resolve themselves.

Teachers should pay particular attention to students who *consistently*:

- ▲ have difficulty with certain spoken language skills, such as understanding vocabulary and grammatical awareness (note that this is common for many young children and may be an oral language problem and therefore not an indicator for dyslexia)
- ▲ have very poor reading (compared with expectations for the age) even of very familiar words
- ▲ have extremely messy handwriting with poorly formed letters
- ▲ have great difficulty spelling simple, common words (for example, *here* or *going*)
- ▲ often mix up letters or figures (for example, b/d, p/q, or 15 for 51)
- ▲ have a poor sense of rhyme
- ▲ are unsure of the sound a letter or combination represents (for example, *h* or *sh*).

After the first year of school, teachers should continue to attend to the indicators above, as well as noticing students who, despite focused instruction:

- ▲ are slow to identify the connections between sounds and letters
- ▲ constantly make inconsistent spelling errors (for example, a student who spells a word several different ways within one piece of writing)
- ▲ leave letters out of words or write them in the wrong order and are unable to see the errors
- ▲ have good ideas but take longer than average to do written work
- ▲ make errors in reading or writing that involve reversals or confusions with words (*saw/was*, *stops/spots*, *does/goes*)
- ▲ read very slowly and consistently make decoding errors
- ▲ have difficulty decoding single words in isolation
- ▲ show frustration with, or avoidance of, text tasks
- ▲ appear to be fatigued by the effort needed to complete a reading or writing task
- ▲ lack confidence and appear to be developing a poor self-image.



Upper primary and secondary school teachers may notice students who show indicators from the above lists, as well as students who *consistently*:

- ▲ struggle to express their ideas in writing (although they may be able to express themselves well orally)
- ▲ use incorrect letter order in words when writing but are not able to see what is wrong (*galsses* for *glasses*)
- ▲ have trouble finding a word in the dictionary
- ▲ become tangled with multisyllabic words (in oral and written language) such as *preliminary*, *philosophical*
- ▲ may read, but very slowly, with limited understanding (often because of the time and effort required to access the words)
- ▲ are able to understand a class text that is read to them but unable to read the text themselves
- ▲ have poor confidence and self-esteem, which may be seen as lack of motivation, disengagement or challenging behaviours.

### Strengths

It is vital that teachers are alert to and recognise the strengths that students who appear to be dyslexic may have, and the ways in which many may develop compensatory skills to mask or sidestep their difficulties. It is also important for teachers to understand just how much hard work is involved in the struggle to cope in the classroom when the literacy skills that most people take for granted are not available or are constantly just out of reach:

To find out that I was dyslexic was a relief. I had thought I was merely stupid. It made others patient with me and, more significantly, perhaps, it made me patient with myself. I recall that almost physical sensation of mist clearing, until then I and people closest to me felt like we were walking in a dark cloud.

– Anonymous

We are told our dyslexic children often become successful when they leave school. Surely, we want them to experience success whilst they are there!

– Parent

Students who may be dyslexic can develop strengths in almost any area that is not primarily literacy based. When the need to read and write is removed (for example, by using a reader/writer or by working in other modes) students are capable of achieving in the same ways as other students.

For some students, the challenges of dyslexia may result in them developing great persistence and perseverance. Others may enjoy helping with chores and physical tasks because these are things they can do well and for which they receive positive feedback.

Older students may choose not to study subjects such as history because the literacy demands would make such study very taxing. A student may, instead, choose to study design and follow up an interest in historical architecture.

Students with learning difficulties often become accomplished at compensating in other ways. Sometimes these can become strengths, but they can also prevent effective identification and enable difficulties to persist undetected.

## Participation and self-esteem

In the classroom, talking, reading, writing and spelling are essential parts of most activities across the curriculum. Students who may have dyslexia often find themselves in situations where they are regarded as different, strange or unintelligent. This can result in feelings of anxiety, stress, depression or disengagement. Students may be subject to bullying and taunts of being stupid. Teachers have a vital role in nurturing positive self-perception and self-esteem.

Studies have shown that young at-risk or dyslexic students have similar levels of self-esteem as other students. If students with difficulties do not receive effective instruction and support for their literacy learning, their self-esteem decreases significantly.

– Hales, 2001

It is important that problems associated with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, do not limit a student's access to learning experiences and progress across the curriculum. In addition to directly addressing difficulties, schools need to consider what other supports are required to enable the student to participate and engage meaningfully in learning with their peers.

As students who have persistent literacy learning difficulties move through the school system, it may be increasingly difficult to keep them engaged and participating. Without engagement and the expectation of success, students are unlikely to continue putting in the large amount of effort needed to make progress. Students who are not participating because of specific literacy learning difficulties will need a great deal of support from the classroom teacher, reading specialists and home.



**See also:**

- *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, (Ministry of Education, 2003a) page 11, chapter 8.
- *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8*, (Ministry of Education, 2006) pages 195-196.

### Understanding the challenges of acquiring literacy

The ministry's handbooks *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4* and *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8* describe literacy acquisition and development as having three aspects: learning the code, making meaning and thinking critically. The aspect that appears to be most challenging for people who have dyslexia is learning the code. This may be seen in the early primary years as a lack of phonological awareness (for example, an inability to detect rhyme or record sounds), but the persistent nature of the literacy learning difficulties can be seen through primary and secondary school and into adulthood. Most typically, dyslexia is shown through difficulties with learning the code (specifically, decoding and spelling) that fail to improve with general instruction. This often results in attitudinal and motivational problems, and can present challenges for both students and teachers in the acquisition of literacy.

#### Learning the code

Learning the code refers to the ability to decode and encode written forms of language. It encompasses the various processing strategies that proficient readers use as they read and write letters, words and texts. In order to learn the code, students must develop phonological awareness and an understanding of the alphabetic principle.

#### Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness is the broad term that refers to the ability to become aware of the sounds (phonemes) within spoken words. Phonological awareness is essential for discovering the connections between sounds and letters and, therefore, for literacy development. There are several kinds or levels of sound units involved. They include whole words, syllables within words, onsets and rimes (a rime is the sound in a word made by the letters after the first consonant, see page 24) within syllables and individual phonemes.

The onset is the initial sound in a syllable. The rime is the part of a syllable that follows the onset (the initial sound), as in *th-at*. When written down, many of the most common rimes can be represented by spelling patterns that are always the same (for example, *-ill*, *-ack*, *-ing*, *-am*) but rimes may have different spelling patterns (*sky*, *high*).

A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound within a word: there are about 43 phonemes in English, represented by the 26 letters of the alphabet. As an example, the word *telephone* has three syllables and uses nine letters, but it has only seven phonemes (/t/, /e/, /l/, /ee/, /f/, /o/, and /n/). Phonemic awareness is a subset of phonological awareness – it is the ability to hear, differentiate and attend to the individual sounds within words.

#### The alphabetic principle

Most children start school knowing that sounds make words. Associated with phonological awareness is the 'discovery' that many young children may make spontaneously – that the sounds they already know and can identify in spoken words relate to letters or groups of letters of the alphabet. The alphabetic principle includes learning the names of the letters of the alphabet as well as understanding the following key concepts:

- ▲ we use letters to record sounds
- ▲ there are different ways to write sounds
- ▲ we can use more than one letter to write a sound (for example, the letters 'ch' make different sounds in *chicken*, *chemist* and *chef*).

Students who have poor phonological awareness will probably not be able to make these discoveries for themselves and will need considerable support to use the alphabetic principle. Some students may be unable to link letter names with the sounds they are trying to write, or to move past letter names when reading.

### Phonological awareness and phonics

There is sometimes confusion about the terms phonological awareness and phonics. Young children develop attending and listening skills that enable them to 'hear' sounds within words; that is, they develop *phonological awareness*. As they achieve this they also learn the relationship between spoken sounds and the letters that represent them. *Phonics* refers to the correspondence between sounds (phonemes) and symbols (letters) in an alphabetic writing system.

These two sets of knowledge then become reciprocal and intertwined. During spelling and reading, students combine their knowledge and use of both.



See the teaching suggestions that start on page 23.

For further information see:

- *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, (Ministry of Education, 2003a) pages 32-37.
- *Sounds Sense: Phonics and Phonological Awareness* (Ministry of Education, 2003b) (part of the Ready to Read notes for teachers).
- *Exploring Language: A Handbook for Teachers*, (Ministry of Education, 1996) page 105.
- *Literacy Learning Progressions* (Ministry of Education, 2007).
- The website: <http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz>, which provides support for teaching phonological awareness and spelling in Years 1 to 8.

### Reading words

Proficient readers use a variety of strategies and cues (meaning, structural and visual) as they work out how to read unknown words. Sometimes these strategies are known collectively as decoding, word attack or word recognition (see page 28). All of these strategies are used by proficient readers but students with dyslexia may struggle to use any of them. Many students with dyslexia use the context to 'guess' words (as all children do while they are acquiring literacy skills) as a compensatory strategy when reading, and this works well for them as long as the surrounding context is supportive. Students who are unable to recognise words in print easily will not be fluent readers and this will impact on their ability to comprehend what they are reading.

An understanding of what is involved in reading words will help teachers to identify the areas that will be challenging for students with dyslexia and to fine-tune instruction in those areas.



See the teaching suggestions that start on page 23.

### Writing words

Most research about dyslexia focuses just on reading. The critical notion of the importance of writing, of being able to hear sounds in words and record them when writing, is often omitted.

Proficient writers use a variety of strategies as they work out how to write unknown words. The developing writer has to think about recording sounds (phonology) and also about the spelling (orthography), and these two things need to be juggled. Often this is a challenge for the student. Early on, they need to learn about the way they record the sounds they hear. Later, they learn about the many exceptions there are in English to 'regular' spelling patterns.

Many students make spelling errors as they are learning and moving through the phases of becoming a writer. Consistent and persistent spelling errors (despite explicit instruction) can be an early indication that a student may be dyslexic. Analysis of these errors can also help to identify older students who have escaped notice until they are required to write independently. Students who are unable to record words easily will not be fluent writers and this will impact their ability to produce coherent text.



See the teaching suggestions that start on page 23.

See also:

- The website: <http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz>, which provides support for teaching phonological awareness and spelling in Years 1 to 8.
- *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, (Ministry of Education, 2003a) pages 144-148.
- *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 4 to 8*, (Ministry of Education, 2006) pages 161-166.

### Fluency

Fluency in reading refers to the ease with which the competent reader processes and takes meaning from a text. It involves fast and accurate reading of the text, stress and intonation, phrasing and speed. All of these factors come together to support comprehension. A fluent reader is one who can read and comprehend a text at the same time.

In writing, fluency refers to the ability to write words and sentences quickly and easily, and with coherence and cohesion. Fluent writers are able to hold the ideas they want to write in their heads and write text that makes sense while at the same time applying the conventions or surface features of written language.

Students with dyslexia may find fluency difficult to achieve because they often read (or write) slowly as they work out every word with great effort. By the time each word has been read or written, fluency is lost and, along with it, meaning. The student's working (short-term) memory will thus be taken up with the letter-by-letter effort, leaving little space for holding on to the words and putting them together into meaningful sentences.

### Making meaning

The purpose of reading is to gain meaning from written text. Students with dyslexia may show reading comprehension that is well below expectations, given their overall range of ability. This is understandable if reading is slowed down to enable the painstaking word recognition processes to be enacted. They may be unable to access meaning and the structures of language. In addition, coherence in their writing and an understanding of what they have written may be lost during the writing process because of the effort of putting the sounds they can hear down as letters and words on paper.

Teachers may find it useful to check for listening comprehension before making decisions about how to assist students to build their use of comprehension strategies. If students do not have good listening comprehension (or are unable to express their ideas well orally), then their difficulties with reading (or writing) may not be caused by dyslexia.



For further information about the strategies readers use for comprehension, see:

- *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, (Ministry of Education, 2003a) pages 131-135.
- *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8*, pages 141-152.



For information about the strategies writers use to construct meaning, see:

- *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, (Ministry of Education, 2003a) pages 136-141.
- *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8*, (Ministry of Education, 2006) pages 153-160.

## Setting up for success: identification of needs

Early identification (of dyslexia) followed by a systematic and sustained process of highly individualised, skilled teaching primarily focused on written language, with specialist support, is critical to enable learners to participate in the full range of social, academic and other learning opportunities across all areas of the curriculum

– From Ministry of Education draft definition

[http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy\\_numeracy/lit\\_dyslexia\\_working\\_definition\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy_numeracy/lit_dyslexia_working_definition_e.php).

### Early identification

The longer students struggle to read and write, the more complex the difficulties they face may become. As the gap in achievement widens between these students and their peers this may also result in self-esteem, attitudinal and behavioural problems. Evidence suggests that students start to develop their self-concept as readers within the first six months at school, so close observation and clear teaching is needed to establish the early reading and writing concepts.

Identification of difficulties associated with gaining the knowledge, skills and awareness required for literacy is best made at the end of the first year of school where the achievement gap is small and there are reliable and valid assessment tools available (Observation Survey: see page 17). Discrepancies noticed at this stage can be owing to a variety of factors, not necessarily dyslexia, so teachers may also need to focus assessment on all areas of literacy learning.

Early identification alone, however, will not improve literacy achievement unless the student receives appropriate instruction and, where needed, early individual intervention before reading and writing problems become entrenched and require extensive specialist intervention.

### Eliminating questions

When a student has persistent difficulties with reading and writing (in particular, spelling), some or all of the following questions can assist decision-making by eliminating possible causes.

Question	Purpose	Then
Has the student had rich early literacy experiences?	Find out the extent of literacy 'cultural capital' or schema.	<b>YES</b> assume adequate level of literacy knowledge/awareness for tasks. <b>NO</b> explore further; build knowledge and experiences.
Is there a hearing condition such as glue ear?  (Ensure student has had hearing checked.)	Check for hearing issues that may affect reading and writing.	<b>YES</b> will affect ability to hear sounds. May affect listening comprehension. May affect oral language development.  Seek advice from speech-language therapist or hearing specialist teacher.  <b>NO</b> assume can hear normal range of sounds – eliminate hearing as possible cause of problem.
Is there an existing eyesight problem?  (Ensure student has had vision checked.)	Check for vision issues that may affect reading and writing.	<b>YES</b> (and not corrected by glasses): may affect ability to distinguish letters and/or words.  Seek advice from vision specialist.  <b>NO</b> assume can see normal range of letters etc – eliminate vision as cause of problem.
Is English the first language? If not, is the student fluent in English?	Check for language issues that may affect reading and writing.	<b>YES</b> eliminate language as a possible cause of problem.  <b>NO</b> assess using English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) measures.
Does the student have good oral vocabulary?	Check for understanding of spoken language.	<b>YES</b> check for listening comprehension. <b>NO</b> explore further; focus instruction on building vocabulary.
Does the student have good listening comprehension?	Check for understanding of spoken language.	<b>YES</b> check for ability to read written texts. If problems exist, check for phonological problems.  <b>NO</b> explore further; focus instruction on oral language.
Are there any other factors or characteristics that would likely have a negative impact on all areas of learning?	Check for factors such as poor school attendance, inability to focus attention on learning tasks, distractability, possible signs of emotional disturbance, bullying.	<b>YES</b> seek appropriate professional advice, support and assistance.  <b>NO</b> consider the following characteristics commonly associated with dyslexia, such as poor phonological awareness, poor decoding skills, inaccurate or slow context-free word recognition, poor spelling and, as a direct consequence, poor reading comprehension, poor written composition, poor reading and writing self-concept, motivation and engagement.

## Classroom assessments

Classroom teachers carry out a variety of assessments, such as those listed in the following table, to inform instruction by identifying areas of strength and weakness in literacy. These cannot diagnose dyslexia, but they can indicate the strengths that can be built on and areas that need explicit instruction – or further investigation. By carrying out a variety of assessments, teachers can fine-tune instruction and share their knowledge of a student with other people who may need to be involved.

When selecting assessments, teachers need to consider how and why they are using the assessment. It is the analysis and interpretation of students' responses that will inform good teaching decisions, not scores. The assessments that follow give an overview of commonly used classroom tools that can support instructional decision-making.

### Using classroom assessments to inform instruction

Name	Purpose	What it will show	How will information help shape instruction?
School Entry Assessment (SEA)	General screening for new entrants.	This collection of assessment tasks includes an oral retelling task that may be useful in showing areas to observe more closely. Does not specifically assess reading or writing skills.	May help identify oral language issues to investigate further.
Observation Survey	Survey literacy skills of five- to seven-year-olds.	See page 17.	See pages 17 and 18.
Record of Oral Language (ROL)	Check and record oral language of five-year-olds.	Allows teachers to observe aspects of a child's control over oral language and assess a child's ability to handle selected grammatical structures.  Will guide a teacher's own use of grammatical structures with individuals (to provide appropriate modelling).	Can help group students for specific instruction.  Can help the teacher construct a systematic plan for developing the student's control over aspects of language with direct reference to what the student already controls.
Junior Oral Language Screening Test (JOST)	Informal check for oral language. Teachers can use with students who score poorly on ROL.	Gives an indication of oral language skills in three areas: vocabulary, pragmatics (social language) and grammar. Does not test speech sounds.	Can be useful for alerting the teacher to areas that may require further observation.  Use to build a programme or to help make a decision about referral to a speech-language therapist.
Running record (for students of any age)	Check for strategies used in reading text.	Useful for indicating the kinds of difficulties a student is having with reading (for example, the ways in which the student approaches unfamiliar words). Careful analysis will help identify the kinds of information that students are (or are not) accessing when they read.  The teacher should also record how the student reads the text; that is, fluently, with expression or flat, ignoring punctuation etc.	If a student makes frequent visual information errors relating to the sounds (phonological information) or the orthography (visual information), the teacher will want to carry out further checks of the student's abilities in these areas.



Supplementary Test of Achievement in Reading (STAR)	Standardised reading test.  STAR assesses word recognition, sentence comprehension, paragraph comprehension and vocabulary range in Years 1 to 7. Two additional items are assessed for Years 7 to 9.	Teachers can allow extra time for a student to complete this test, and although this will invalidate the stanines (which are standardised based on time), it will not affect the diagnostic value of the test. If the time is extended, teachers need to keep careful check of how long the student actually takes (this could be a useful comparison for post-instruction assessment) and step in before frustration becomes an issue.	STAR can yield valuable information to help identify what the student finds easy and what they find difficult.
Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs)	Assess achievement in reading comprehension and vocabulary, also listening comprehension.  Years 3 to 10.	There are several tests in these areas at each year level, so a teacher can make an appropriate choice of test level for students identified as dyslexic.	Identify broad areas of strength and teaching need. Use as a starting point, where answer patterns may guide further investigation.  Listening comprehension results can indicate areas for instruction.
Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (asTTle)	Enables teachers to assess literacy development of students in Years 4 to 12 against the objectives of NZC L2-6 and against the performance of nearly 100,000 New Zealand students.	Less useful as a diagnostic tool for students who have difficulties in word recognition or decoding. asTTle measures aspects of comprehension, and a low score needs further interpretation: was this because the student did not understand or because they could not read the text? If reading the text is the issue, a reader/writer could be used to assess the student's ability to comprehend the content of the text.  The tools can be used to analyse the achievement patterns of students.	The asTTle tasks are created by the teacher according to the curriculum content and level of the teaching programme. asTTle provides valuable links to next teaching steps.
Assessment Resource Banks (ARBs)	Curriculum-based assessment.  Levels 2–5	The resources have a specific assessment focus making them suitable for checking skills, knowledge or understanding in a particular area.	The ARBs support formative assessment.  The flexible search facility allows the teacher to choose a resource that is suited to the needs, interests and experiences of the class. There will be different resources that address the same concept in a different context, allowing teachers to check if students can transfer their learning. Teachers can select assessment tasks that match the students' learning contexts.

## Using classroom assessments to inform instruction continued

Name	Purpose	What it will show	How will information help shape instruction?
New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars (writing)	To give teachers an indication of expected achievement.	Exemplars of writing in different forms at specific curriculum levels, with commentary.	Contain useful guidance for next-step teaching of spelling.
Funding Assessment Guidelines for ESOL	To indicate eligibility for ESOL funding.	For ESOL students: assesses for listening, speaking, reading and writing.	Useful way to identify ESOL needs if these are compounded by reading difficulties.
Writing sample analysis	To show what individual students can produce.	Provides samples teachers can analyse in relation to coherence, cohesion, vocabulary, spelling, grammar and punctuation. Use revised and unrevised drafts to find out degree of awareness student has of need to revise and/or edit.	Identify disparities (for example, good ideas, poor spelling; inconsistent errors) that can inform instruction.
Informal spelling tests	Check for spelling knowledge and accuracy; processing strategies used.	Teachers often make their own tests to check for spelling knowledge but they can also be analysed to help pinpoint specific spelling issues (for example, phoneme/grapheme knowledge); letter order; use (or not) of spelling strategies.	Use error analysis to help make teaching decisions.  Helps avoid teaching words (and phoneme/grapheme relationships) students already know.
Informal dictation	As above.	Also highlights students who take a lot of time to record words.	Indicates need for further assessment (or analysis of errors) to identify instructional needs.
Pseudo word test (reading)	Check for letter/sound knowledge.	Enables teacher to identify the specific letters and groups of letters the student can decode.	Indicates specific instructional needs.  Use age/level-appropriate test from reliable, research-based source.
Pseudo word test (spelling)	Check for sound/letter knowledge.	Enables teacher to identify the specific letters and groups of letters (including spelling patterns) the student can encode.	Indicates specific instructional needs.  Use age/level-appropriate test from reliable, research-based source.



## See:

- <http://www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/two/pdf/reviews.pdf> for a review of other assessment tools that many teachers use. This review includes comments on the overall strengths, weaknesses and usefulness of the reviewed tests for New Zealand classrooms.

### Observation Survey

This is often called the Six Year Net, and has been extended to include stanines for five- to seven-year-olds. Like most assessment tools, the five tasks that make up the Observation Survey can provide a wealth of useful diagnostic information if analysed appropriately. Also see running records page 14. None of the tasks are stand-alone indicators of literacy learning or predictors of progress.

Some of the most useful information can be obtained from a careful analysis of the student's strengths and needs. In most cases, this should lead to well-informed teaching decisions designed to make learning of new information as easy as possible.

The following table is intended as a guide for analysis. For further detailed help, see: *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Clay, 1993).

Task	Things to look for
Letter identification	<p>What letters has the student already mastered? Is there a pattern? Why might these letters be easier for the student to master than others?</p> <p>What letters does the student confuse? Is there a pattern? Why might the student think this was one letter rather than another (for example, z and s are similar; b is a d if you flip it around). These items require fine discrimination and the errors could be seen to be logical to the student.</p> <p>Is there a question about how effectively the student discriminates one letter from another? Sorting activities with magnetic letters could supplement the assessment information gained.</p> <p>What type of response did the student give – sounds, letters, words?</p>
Concepts about print	<p>Can you group the known and unknown items (for example, punctuation, letter knowledge, word knowledge, use of page)? Are there any patterns?</p> <p>What level of detail can the student attend to?</p>
Word reading	<p>Do substitutions have some correct features, such as initial letters, final letters, groups of letters?</p> <p>Can the student attempt unknown words or do they simply balk?</p> <p>Are there some confusions evident and, if so, what might be contributing to them?</p>
Writing vocabulary	<p>Do substitutions have some correct features, such as initial letters, final letters, groups of letters?</p> <p>Can the student attempt unknown words or do they simply balk?</p> <p>Are there some confusions evident and, if so, what might be contributing to them?</p> <p>Is letter reversal an issue?</p> <p>Does the student attempt to write new words using known parts from other words? Can they add endings to known words?</p> <p>Did the student 'know' the words or attempt to work them out? How accurate are they in either case?</p> <p>How does the student use the page?</p> <p>Does the student always work left to right?</p>
Hearing and recording sounds in words	<p>Does the student make sequencing errors?</p> <p>Are sounds omitted or added?</p> <p>Is there any unusual use of space and lines?</p> <p>What substitutions are used? (Some substitutions are acceptable so pay particular attention to those that appear illogical.) Are there patterns you can detect?</p>

This assessment should be used for all six-year-olds in New Zealand schools who are not responding well to instruction, before decisions are made for intervention and/or further assessment. The Observation Survey is a screening process and is a standard assessment designed to give reliable indications of progress. The survey can be carried out by the classroom teacher, with support if required.

### Using Literacy Learning Progressions

*Literacy Learning Progressions* (Ministry of Education, 2007) is a professional tool for teachers. The progressions identify the aspects of literacy that most students are expected to have mastered (with good teaching) at specific points of their schooling from entry to the end of Year 10.

When students are significantly behind the expectations (and this may be for many different reasons) teachers can identify needs and attend to them in small group or individual instruction.

When teachers notice significant discrepancies that do not improve with the usual range of supports (for example, good first teaching, Reading Recovery as an individualised short-term intervention, intensified small group or individual instruction, the use of peer or buddy supports), they will need to use further assessments and/or seek specialist teacher help (such as Resource Teacher: Literacy or Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour) to determine the specific areas of need. A few students will require long-term specialist support.

The companion document to the *Literacy Learning Progressions* is the *English Language Learning Progressions* (Ministry of Education, 2008). This resource for teachers contains examples of what might be expected of ESOL students at different stages and these can be compared with those in the Literacy Learning Progressions. For example, the writing component gives examples of the kinds of errors an ESOL learner might make: these could easily be confused with the characteristics of dyslexia.

### Other guidelines for progress

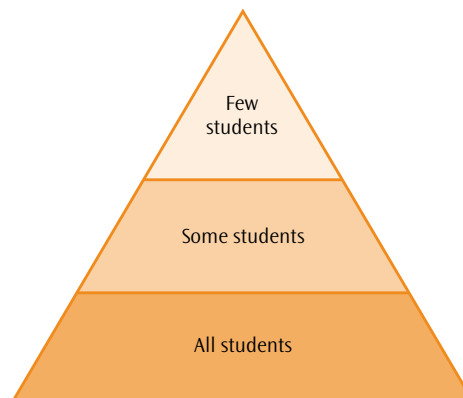


#### Other Ministry of Education publications with guidelines for progress that may be useful include:

- *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4* (Ministry of Education, 2003a) (see the Patterns of Progress, pages 70-74).
- *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8* (Ministry of Education, 2006) (see the Patterns of Progress, pages 72-74).

### Specialist assessments

As this model shows, most students receive literacy support (including assessment) from their classroom teachers as part of the usual curriculum. Some students may require individualised assessment attention, which may be available within the school or nearby (for example, from a literacy leader in the school, the reading recovery teacher or special education needs coordinator (SENCO)).



A few students may need an in-depth assessment to identify specific difficulties and to inform an individual educational plan (IEP). Other specialist help can be sought, using the school's procedures for referrals. A specialist assessment will have features such as:

- ▲ an initial screening
- ▲ gathering of birth, early childhood education information (for example, birth, health, emotional and social impacts, family history)
- ▲ a cognitive assessment (in the broadest sense, not an IQ test), which can also give information about particular discrepancies between skills
- ▲ a diagnostic assessment, including reading, writing, spelling, self-concept
- ▲ a teacher report of strengths and concerns in school
- ▲ a user-friendly report for the purpose of informing the planning team (parents, caregivers, whānau, teacher, SENCO, teacher aide and the student, if appropriate). The report also acts as a reference point for a reflection and review process the following term, two terms or year, as decided by the planning team.

### Keeping records

Any assessments carried out need to be recorded and notes made about the techniques and/or tools used. This allows others who may become involved with the student (and teachers in future years) to use, adapt or add to the previous experiences when working with the student. Any modifications to instruction that are made as a result of assessments should also be recorded and monitored to ensure that the impact, or otherwise, of the instruction can be gauged.

## Setting up for success: the role of the school

### Developing an inclusive school

All schools have an obligation to recognise and respond to the diverse needs of their students. This includes students who are not achieving, students who are at risk of not achieving and those who have special education needs. Schools must also develop and implement teaching and learning strategies to address these needs.

This applies just as much to students who struggle to read as it does to those with obvious disabilities or who are gifted and talented. An inclusive school is one in which all students are valued and their needs recognised and met.

The website [http://www.tki.org.nz/r/specialed/diversity/index\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/specialed/diversity/index_e.php) provides information and a model of how schools can develop their own ways of identifying and responding to the diverse needs of students.

Features of a school in which all students (including those with dyslexia) are valued and supported also include:

- ▲ strong and supportive leadership
- ▲ staff who recognise the particular strengths and needs associated with literacy learning difficulties, such as dyslexia
- ▲ a strong emphasis on good first teaching, with early intervention (reading recovery) where needed followed by long-term specialist help when this is indicated
- ▲ the use of a range of specialists (based on school policies and procedures for referrals) to support classroom teachers to assess and help plan instruction for students
- ▲ a whole-school approach to identifying and meeting students' teaching and learning needs, with some shared understandings (for example, regarding task completion, homework, the use of formative assessment and specialist support)
- ▲ teachers working together to ensure the whole school takes responsibility for students' strengths and needs, not just the individual teacher
- ▲ the use of evidence-based effective strategies and programmes that match the students' strengths and needs
- ▲ a culture of high expectations for all, including ways of identifying, valuing and nurturing areas of interest and strength to maintain students' engagement and self-esteem
- ▲ efficient systems for recording, and rigorous monitoring, evaluation and sharing of information
- ▲ the valuing of student voice, and strong partnerships with parents, caregivers and whānau, including effective two-way communication
- ▲ ongoing professional development for teachers
- ▲ effective processes for transitions into, out of and between schools and between classes.



#### See also:

- page 35 for information about the ways in which schools can develop support teams to enhance their ability to meet the needs of students with dyslexia.

### Making accommodations for older students

There are many ways in which schools (and individual teachers) can make a difference for older students who may have dyslexia. Alongside instructional practices, there are accommodations that will make life easier for these students and help to maintain engagement and self-esteem. These commonly used classroom accommodations will allow a student to demonstrate knowledge and strengths even if their reading, writing or spelling is not yet at their age level.

- ▲ Support for tests and examinations: students who are unable to effectively read or write work that they can do orally can benefit from extra time or the provision of a person who reads texts aloud to the student and/or writes the responses as the student dictates. This can be done informally in the classroom or formally with assistance for examinations. Formal support for examinations is available through the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). This may include the provision of a reader/writer, an extra time allowance or a quiet room. See the NZQA website for information [www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz).
- ▲ Ask the student how they learn best: often, students can explain to their teachers the strategies and techniques that help them learn. These are usually easy to incorporate into a classroom.
- ▲ Reduce and/or adapt the homework load: a student with dyslexia may need three or four times longer than other students to complete homework. Based on an agreed minimum time expectation, teachers can explain which parts of the homework are essential ("must do") and which are optional ("may do"). Assignments can be adapted so a student can present their information in a variety of media (for example, using collage, video or audio). Allow a parent, caregiver or others to act as a scribe for work the student dictates.
- ▲ Evaluate on content, not spelling or handwriting: whenever possible, students with dyslexia should be evaluated on the content of an assignment rather than spelling and handwriting. Even use of a computer will not overcome the challenges many students experience with spelling.
- ▲ Reduce copying tasks: it takes students with dyslexia longer to copy information from the board and if they have issues with writing, they may not be able to read their notes. Provide buddy or lecture notes; discreetly assign a fellow student to act as a scribe or photocopy notes.
- ▲ Alternative assignments: teachers can offer alternative ways to show mastery of material other than a written paper. These could include oral or video presentations, dioramas, collages or debates. Expertise in presenting in these ways also helps build self-esteem.
- ▲ Cooperative learning: cooperative group work can be structured to enable students who may have dyslexia to show their strengths and contribute their ideas, without the challenge of lengthy reading and writing tasks.
- ▲ Avoid or reduce essay and multiple-choice tests. Where possible, an alternative test format for students who experience reading and writing difficulties can be helpful. Multiple-choice questions are often unavoidable, but they may be difficult for students because of the similarity of some answers and the volume of reading required to answer them correctly.
- ▲ Conduct a class review session before a test. Alternatively, provide students with a study guide with key terms and concepts.
- ▲ Technology tools: computer technology that can be helpful includes continuous speech recognition software, portable electronic dictionaries, word-processing keyboards, taped books, touch-typing programmes and any word-processing packages with good spell checkers. Teachers need to be aware of the degree of proficiency a person has to have in order to use these tools effectively (for example, to be able to select the correct word from the choices given by a spell checker).

### Guidelines for instruction

Schools can encourage and support teachers to use the following general guidelines as they plan and carry out instruction with students who may have literacy learning difficulties associated with dyslexia. Most of the guidelines apply to all students but they are worth reviewing on a school-wide basis from time to time.

- ▲ **Build on strengths:** instruction that identifies and builds on the strengths and knowledge that students already have will reinforce those strengths. Use them to develop new knowledge and build students' sense of themselves as successful learners.
- ▲ **Systematic and cumulative instruction:** teachers should plan for the staged introduction of strategies and continue to weave previously learned strategies and knowledge into current lessons to reinforce them and integrate their use. Regular monitoring of student progress and frequent reviews of previous learning will be needed to ensure it is not lost.
- ▲ **Direct, explicit instruction:** reading and writing strategies should be taught directly and explicitly. It helps to teach one strategy (or piece of new knowledge) at a time, giving opportunities for practicing it until the student is able to use it fluently across different contexts. Instruction needs to have a clear and explicit focus.
- ▲ **Intense instruction with ample practice:** instruction needs to be intensive and to offer many more opportunities for practice than would be required for most students. Practice needs to be done across different tasks and contexts to ensure the strategies learned can be transferred and used as needed.
- ▲ **Supporting learning:** a variety of tasks and media can support learning. These include visual aids (charts, diagrams, illustrations, labels, graphic organisers), colour (to code or highlight), movement (mime, gesture, drama), games, flash cards, audio texts (with matching printed texts) and music. Using different kinds of resources and materials to teach a concept may give a student several supports for learning a specific strategy or skill. Research has shown that when people who have dyslexia use all of their senses when they learn (visual, auditory, tactile and kinaesthetic) they are better able to store and retrieve the new information.
- ▲ **Feedback:** teachers need to provide explicit feedback when the student uses the taught strategies. This will reinforce their use and help the student develop metacognition.



## Setting up for success: suggestions for teaching

Most of the suggestions that follow are useful for all students, but are essential for helping those who may have dyslexia to become literate. Many of the suggestions can be used across different ages and will serve several different purposes – not all are necessary for all students, so teachers need to select activities carefully according to identified needs.

### Phonological awareness

The focus of instruction to develop phonological awareness starts at the point at which the student is able to detect similarities in sounds between or within words. This may be at the level of the whole word, syllable, rhyme, onset and rime, or individual phonemes (the smallest unit of sound in a word). Students will not be able to manipulate phonemes (have phonemic awareness) if they are not first able to identify the broad sound patterns.

Phonological awareness is about sounds, but as students become aware of the ways in which letters are used to represent sounds, these activities need to be balanced with those that cause students to look at print as well.

### Syllables

Junior classes work a lot with syllables as part of the literacy programme, but students who appear to have difficulty identifying the syllables in words may require further opportunities to practise hearing and marking syllables (for example, by clapping, tapping, nodding or spacing the syllables as they say them). When students understand how to do this, prompt them to notice the syllable chunks within printed words to discover how words are made of parts.

See activities in the following chart.

### Syllable activities

Activities	Purpose	Application and transfer
Syllable clapping	Support awareness of syllable breaks within words.	Have students clap and/or count the syllables in a variety of words using students' names, the names of items in pictures, the items in a grab bag of different objects or words that are used in topic studies across the curriculum. "How many syllables are in the word decimal?" Ask "What's the first, then second, then third part of the word".  When students are able to mark (clap, hear, say) syllables in familiar words, provide words that differ in the number of syllables.
Adding syllables	Extend awareness and give practice in manipulating syllables.	Have students add missing syllables to familiar words, using a picture or object as a prompt if necessary: "This is a photograph. Can you finish the word for me: <i>photo_____</i> ?"
Syllable deletion	Extend awareness and give practice in manipulating syllables.	Have students practise syllable deletion: beginning with compound words, ask students to clap the syllables as they say the whole word (for example, toothpaste) then say the word with a part left out: "Say toothpaste without the tooth".  Move on to non-compound words: "Say invent. Now say it without the in".
Same or different?	Extend awareness to distinguishing same/different sounds within words.	Ask students to tell which syllables are the same or different in words. "Which part of promote and provide are the same?"
Compound words	Develop awareness of syllable sounds and their relationship to morphology (how words are constructed).	Explore compound words in which the syllables can stand alone as separate words ( <i>playground, playmate, football, drainpipe</i> ) and help students relate the parts they hear to the parts of the written words.
Rhythm and rhyme	Extend awareness of syllables in a variety of forms.	Older students can also explore syllables and their relationship to rhythm and rhyme in songs, poems and raps.

### Rhymes and rimes

Rhyme is the term used for words with the same end sound, usually in poetry and songs. The rime is the technical term used to describe the part of a syllable that follows the onset (the initial sound). Remember that rimes and rhymes refer to sounds, not print. It is the sounds they make rather than the ways they are spelt that determine whether or not two rhymes or rimes are the same. For example, in each of these groups of words, the words have the same rime (the sound made by the letters after the first consonant/s) and they rhyme (sound the same) but they are not necessarily spelt the same, *fluff, gruff, enough; snake, break, flake; pie, sky, cry, high*.

As students develop an awareness of rhyme and rimes, they can be prompted to notice the ways in which they are represented in print. For example, many rimes can look and sound the same. In other examples, students can be prompted to discover rimes that sound the same and look different, or look different and sound the same.

See activities in the following chart.

### Rhyme and onset/rime activities

Activity	Purpose	Application and transfer
Playing with rhymes: junior classes	To develop awareness of rhyme in oral language.	In junior classes, the exploration of rhyme is an important feature of early literacy learning – teachers can extend the range and focus for students who do not appear to recognise rhyme. See <i>Sounds Sense: Phonics and Phonological Awareness</i> (Ministry of Education, 2003b) for specific examples.
Exploring rhymes: older students	To develop and extend awareness of rhyme in oral language. To transfer awareness to written poems, raps and songs.	For older students, word and sound explorations can come from reading poems, raps and songs. For example, students can make lists of words that can be used to create raps.  Draw attention to rhyming words as they occur in normal classroom interactions, noticing rhymes in literary materials and words that share rimes in regular reading materials.
Incorporating rhyme games	To provide multiple opportunities for awareness to develop and be reinforced.	Use spare or between-activity moments for a syllable or rhyming game (for example, clapping names, adding to a short verse or rap).
Use literature	To provide further opportunities to develop awareness. To provide opportunities to transfer awareness to written texts.	Read texts that use rhymes as an integral part of the story (for example, many of the books by Lynley Dodd, Dr Seuss, Roald Dahl and others).  The ability to hear the similarities and differences between the words that rhyme is often essential for comprehension of the story.  Older students can explore the sophisticated rhyming stories of Roald Dahl and strongly rhymed poetry (for example, traditional ballads, limericks and the sonnets of poets such as James K. Baxter). They can create their own versions of these, reciting and recording them or dictating them for others to write down.

Noticing differences	To extend awareness with closer attention to detail.	Notice the 'odd words out' in a rhyming poem or story (for example, lines in which the rhyme pattern is broken for effect).
Innovate on rhymes	To provide practice with producing as well as hearing rhymes orally.	Extend an activity by having students innovate on a rhyme pattern in a poem or story to make up further lines.
Manipulating rimes	To develop and extend awareness by manipulating sounds within words and syllables.	Work with oral onset and rime activities that encourage manipulation of these parts of words and syllables. For example: "What happens if I change the sound /j/ of your name ( <i>Jack</i> ) to /b/? ( <i>back</i> ). What other words can you make by changing the first sound of your name?"
Use blends and digraphs? (A digraph is two successive letters whose phonetic value is a single sound, e.g. ea in <i>bread</i> , ng in <i>ring</i> , wh in <i>whale</i> )	To develop and extend awareness by manipulating blends and digraphs within words and syllables.	Explore onsets that are blends and digraphs too: "What do you get if you join <i>sh</i> and <i>ip</i> ? ( <i>ship</i> ). What other words can start with the /sh/ sound? What other words end with the /ip/ sound?"
Onset and rime games	To provide extended practice in recognising common onsets and rimes in print.  To provide opportunities for students to make nonsense but pronounceable words.	Make onset and rime games: for example, using two dice, one has an onset written on each face and the other a different rime written on each face. The students roll the dice and say the resulting word (it may be a nonsense word). This can be played in pairs with one student reading the separate dice and the other student putting the sounds together.
Listing rimes (or onsets)	To build a bank of familiar sounds and the way they are usually represented in print.	As students develop onset and rime awareness orally, start to introduce them to the ways that many rimes are written. Select the 'dependable' rimes at first (those that are nearly always spelled the same way). Students can build lists of words they come across (know) that use these rimes.  The same approach can be used with onsets.

### Phonemes

Teachers need to be aware of how they present phonemes to students: a common error is to say a sound with a vowel tagged on (/tuh/ instead of /t/). The phonemes in *cat* are /k/ /a/ /t/, not /kuh/ /a/ /tuh/. This may seem a minor point but it makes a big difference for students who are struggling to focus on these small units of sound.

In teaching for phonemic awareness, the focus can gradually shift across to noticing the graphemes (letters) that represent the phonemes. Balance activities that build phonemic awareness with those that cause students to look at print to make connections between sounds and the ways these sounds are represented by letters. For example, activities can be used that help the student to notice the sequence of letters through a word. Use words they know as well as unfamiliar words.

Not all students need to be taught sound/letter relationships – this is where assessment of what students can already do is essential. There is no point in ‘teaching’ sound/letter relationships that are already well known. Students do, however, need to be supported to make connections so they can apply what they know in different situations. For example, students need to connect their understanding about the sounds in words to the representations of those sounds with letters.

See activities in the following chart.

### Phoneme activities

Activity	Purpose	Application and transfer
Initial sounds box	To develop awareness of initial sounds in words.	When discussing a new sound, have the students bring objects from home that begin with that sound. Place the objects in a box. The objects can then be taken out one at a time and discussed, with the focus on the initial sound of the name of the object. For example, when introducing the /h/ sound, the students may bring in a <i>hat</i> , <i>toy horse</i> or <i>hula hoop</i> .
I Spy	To develop awareness of initial sounds (including blends).  Extend to include sounds in the middle and end of words.	Use the initial sounds of words as the clues for identifying objects or people. For example, start by saying, “I spy something that begins with /m/”.  Use blends as well as single letter sounds.  As students become proficient at identifying sounds, ask them to look for things that end with the focus sound, or that have the sound in the middle (for example, “I spy someone whose name ends with /l/” ( <i>Paul</i> ). I spy something in this room that has the sound /b/ in the middle ( <i>cupboard</i> ”).
Picture sort	To develop awareness of initial sounds (including blends).  Extend to include sounds in the middle and end of words.  Extend and transfer to print.	Given six cards with pictures of a bear, pig, pin, bat, pen and bike, the students sort the pictures into two groups according to the initial sounds associated with the pictures.  After the students achieve mastery with the initial sounds, they can be challenged to complete the same task for the ending sounds and middle sounds.  The written words for the pictures can be introduced and students encouraged to notice that where the initial <i>sounds</i> are the same, the initial letters that represent them <i>look</i> the same too.
Odd one out	To discriminate between the initial sounds of words.  Extend to include final sounds.  Transfer to print.	Students discriminate initial sounds by listening to three or four words and then telling which words start with the same sound and which word does not belong. For example, <i>dog</i> , <i>desk</i> , <i>fun</i> .  Continue the activity for ending sounds: <i>pat</i> , <i>fit</i> , <i>run</i> , <i>lot</i> ; and middle sounds: <i>pat</i> , <i>sit</i> , <i>lap</i> , <i>sad</i> .  From the discrimination activity above, introduce the written words for each set and prompt students to notice that when the initial (or other focus) sounds are the same, the written words start with the same letter.

Phoneme deletion	To provide practice in listening for and manipulating phonemes.	<p>Ask students to omit or break off the first phoneme in a syllable or word. For example: "I'll say a word then you repeat it without the last sound. So if I say <i>bear</i>, you say /b/".</p> <p>Alternate this by asking students to omit the initial phoneme and say what is left of the word. "What is left if you leave out the first sound in <i>nice (ice)</i>?"</p> <p>Use blends as well: "What word do we get if we take the /l/ out of <i>flat (fat)</i>?"</p>
Phoneme addition	To provide practice in listening for and manipulating phonemes.	<p>Ask students "What word do I get if I put /s/ at the front of <i>nail (snail)</i>? What word do I get if I put /tr/ in front of <i>eat (treat)</i>?"</p> <p>Do the same with phonemes added at the ends of words.</p>
Phoneme substitution	To provide practice in listening for and manipulating phonemes.	<p>Ask students to change the initial, middle or ending sound in a word. "If the word is <i>cat</i> and you change the first sound to /b/ what is the new word?"</p> <p>As students become proficient at substituting initial sounds, proceed to middle and ending substitution tasks. For example, ask "What rhymes with <i>big</i> and starts with /p/?"</p> <p>Students can be further challenged by using consonant blends (two or more phonemes) at the beginning, such as "What would you hear if you took the /t/ off <i>tree</i> and replaced it with /f/?" (<i>free</i>). What would you hear if you took the /j/ off <i>jump</i> and replaced it with the sounds /g/ and /r/ (<i>grump</i>)?"</p>
Alphabet sound game	To develop awareness of initial sounds.	<p>Work through the alphabet orally, finding objects to correlate to each sound. Be sure to specify the sound clearly (for example, the long or short vowel sound, the hard or soft /k/ sound).</p> <p>Extend the activity by asking the students to think of a food, an animal or a place that begins with each sound.</p> <p>Transfer learning to print by matching printed words (with pictures if appropriate) to the spoken words.</p>
Build sounds-based routines	To provide practice at distinguishing phonemes in routine contexts.	Use formal and informal experiences to build routines that rely on phonemic awareness. For example, call students to group or line up according to the first (middle or last) sounds in their names.
Alliteration	To develop awareness of initial sounds in different contexts.	<p>Read stories and poems that use alliteration, stressing the sounds as you read. Encourage students to notice and identify repeated sounds.</p> <p>Older students can explore the effect that alliteration has in advertising, speech and poetry.</p>

There are many publications, programmes and websites that offer activities that build phonemic awareness. Ensure activities match the specific needs and ages of the individual students you wish to use them with, and that they are based on sound principles.



See further references on pages 38-40

See also:

- *Draft Literacy Learning Progressions* (Ministry of Education, 2007) (for expectations at year levels).
- *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, (Ministry of Education, 2003a) pages 71-74 (indicators).
- *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8*, (Ministry of Education, 2006) pages 73-74 (indicators).
- The website <http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/>, which is a draft online resource to support teachers of students in Years 1 to 8 as they provide instruction in [http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/glossary/phonological\\_awareness](http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/glossary/phonological_awareness) (including [http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/glossary/phonemic\\_awareness](http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/glossary/phonemic_awareness) and <http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/glossary/phonics>) and spelling.
- *Sounds Sense: Phonics and Phonological Awareness*, (Ministry of Education, 2003b) pages 2-6, 17 (Ready to Read Teacher Support Material).
- *Exploring Language: A Handbook for Teachers*, (Ministry of Education, 1996) pages 107-111, 115.

## Reading words

Strategies for reading (decoding or recognising) words include:

- ▲ decoding (using grapheme/phoneme knowledge as well as knowledge of spelling)
- ▲ recognising parts of words (roots, affixes, chunks, rimes)
- ▲ using analogy (comparing the unknown word with all or part of a known word)
- ▲ recognising words on sight (automatically)
- ▲ knowing the position of a letter relative to the other letters in a word (for example, distinguishing *trap* from *tarp* or *part* by correctly locating the identifying the location of the letters in the word)
- ▲ using the context to confirm partial decoding attempts.

The activities that follow will help to develop and reinforce the use of these strategies.

See activities in the following chart.

## Activities for reading words

Activity	Purpose	Application and transfer
High frequency words	To build automatic reading of commonly used words.	<p>Use lists such as Dolch to check for words that need teaching. Teach these words out of context first; if students can recognise a word out of context, they will usually be able to recognise it in a sentence (Beers, 2003, p 213).</p> <p>Select a few words to teach at a time and write them on index cards for the student to hold on to. As a word is learned, replace it with a new word.</p> <p>Reinforce word learning by using a word wall. In junior classes, these are useful for most students. In later years, they can be used for topic words that students can add to themselves.</p> <p>Allow plenty (a lot!) of time for reading at the student's independent level. This allows students to practise the words they have learned as they read running text.</p>
Focus on specific features of words	To strengthen letter/sound connections and apply knowledge to new words.	<p>Select a word feature that the student knows well and use this to explore other less well-known aspects of that feature. Features could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>short and long vowels</li> <li>consonants (including blends and digraphs)</li> <li>letter clusters and chunks (including commonly encountered syllable patterns and rimes)</li> <li>word families (using root words, prefixes and suffixes, compound words)</li> <li>analogies and how to maximise their use.</li> </ul>
Check decoding attempts	To provide instruction and practice in checking decoding attempts.	Model then guide students to use the meaning and sentence along with the visual information to check that partial decoding attempts are correct.
Guided practice	To support use of strategies.	Allow time for individual or small group instruction where students can be guided (scaffolded) to use strategies to decode words (for example, how to segment and blend the sounds in words).
Prompting	To give support to students as they read.	Use prompting rather than correcting to help students decode words themselves. Prompts can be general ("Try that again") or specific ("Can you find a pattern you know?"). See <i>Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4</i> , page 81 (Ministry of Education, 2003a); <i>Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8</i> , page 83 (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Model fluent reading	To encourage fluency and to cue students into meaning and structure.	At all year levels, teacher modelling is an important way to encourage fluency. When the teacher reads a short extract aloud, students are better able to continue reading the text with fluency and accuracy.
Using prior knowledge	To increase word and text knowledge by building on the known.	<p>Teach students to use phonological and spelling knowledge (including the use of analogy) of how words work (for example, start with known sound or spelling patterns and develop lists of words that fit these patterns).</p> <p>Highlight the known patterns in the words and make connections between known and unknown words.</p> <p>Teach students to draw on prior knowledge of text to help with prediction of structures and vocabulary.</p>
Using morphology (word structure)	To develop word recognition strategies.	<p>Teach students how many words can be analysed into the parts they are 'built' from. Start with familiar parts (roots, affixes, chunks, syllables, rimes) and use word-part cards to explore possible combinations.</p> <p>Older students can be taught about Latin and Greek roots and how they are used to build words.</p>
Punctuation search	To develop awareness of punctuation in text (reading).	<p>Students search for common punctuation marks in texts they are reading, or in shared reading texts. Start with the simplest and gradually increase the range, focusing on where they occur and what they do in texts. This includes the way readers use them to signal pauses and intonation.</p> <p>Transfer this awareness to the use of numerals and symbols (for example, in notices, advertisements, math texts or newspapers).</p>
Use electronic storybooks	To provide scaffolded reading practice.	The interactive CD-ROMs produced for the Ministry of Education by Learning Media provide reading and writing activities that are highly scaffolded. They are designed to be used by Years 5-6 and Years 7-10 students.

## Writing

As students write, they need to spell the words that express their ideas. Writing is an ideal activity for exploring the relationships between sounds and letters and for learning about morphology (how words are constructed, for example, with roots and affixes) and orthography (how words are spelt, for example, with spelling patterns, 'rules' or conventions). Teachers should select no more than one or two spelling issues to deal with at a time, using words that have arisen in the context of regular writing; focusing on too many areas may mean that students become confused and frustrated.

Words with irregular spellings (*said, does, enough, friend, journey*) present challenges for many students, but students with dyslexia may have an over-reliance on 'phonetic' spellings or they may attempt to recall a visual image of an irregular word, leading to an incorrect letter sequence. Other spelling errors may include words in which the student writes the letters but in the wrong order (for example, *bule* for *blue*, *siad* for *said*, *fredn* for *friend*). Students may not have the ability to use visual memory of known words to check that the words they write 'look right'.

The complex and often irregular orthography (spelling) of the English language compared with many other languages makes the task of spelling even more difficult for students with dyslexia.

The role of the teacher is to understand the ways in which writing vocabulary develops and to teach the strategies that proficient spellers use, providing support until students are able to operate independently. Teachers draw on whatever spelling strengths students have (for example, using words they can spell easily or sound/letter patterns they know, and quickly making analogies that will help to spell words that have similarities).

Analysis of errors in both written samples and tests is an important way for teachers to determine areas of strength and weakness (for example, medial vowel difficulties (those in the middle of words) or difficulties with specific consonant clusters).

Teachers should reinforce the spoken aspects of language to help students organise their thinking and to ensure sequencing is supported at the word, phrase and sentence level as well as over the whole text.

Strategies for writing (encoding) words include:

- ▲ encoding (using phoneme/grapheme knowledge)
- ▲ using knowledge of morphology (for example, recognising parts that make up many words such as roots and affixes)
- ▲ using knowledge of orthography (for example, spelling patterns and 'rules')
- ▲ using analogy (comparing the unknown word with all or part of a known word)
- ▲ knowing the position of a letter relative to the other letters in a word (for example, writing *trap* not *tarp* or *part* by correctly recalling the correct arrangement of the letters in the word)
- ▲ writing words automatically.

The activities that follow will help to develop and reinforce the use of these strategies.

See activities in the following chart.



## Writing and spelling activities

Activity	Purpose	Application and transfer
Spelling strategies	To develop a strategic approach to spelling.  To develop a metacognitive awareness of strategy use.	Automatic retrieval of words from long-term memory is the most efficient spelling strategy, but the other strategies (see page 30) are also used together or separately to spell unfamiliar words.  Students can be explicitly taught to use these strategies and to apply metacognition as they start to select and use strategies themselves.
Write every day	When students are encouraged to write every day, the need for them to access words they know becomes very apparent.	Teachers can support students to make connections between the sounds they know (in isolation and in words or parts of words) and the sounds in the words they want to write.  Students can also be supported to learn that there are sound-to-letter mismatches within many words. This will help them to learn spelling patterns.
Spelling patterns	To build on the known.	Explicit instruction about spelling patterns and the relationship between the sounds and letters they use (using rime, chunking and phoneme recognition) enables students to build on what they already know.  If the words selected for instruction are from class studies or topics, the students will also have opportunities to have them explicitly introduced and to see/read those words many times, this then informs both reading and writing. Through regular writing and focused instruction, teachers can help students to discover that not everything that sounds the same looks the same. This will assist the development of rime patterns. Linking back to a word the student knows how to write will help the student write new words.
Using what students know	To help students understand that they hold useful information for spelling words.	Students often do not realise that they hold information they can use to help solve problems. For example, a student who knows how to spell <i>night</i> can use this knowledge to help spell <i>right</i> . If the student knows how to write <i>looked</i> they can write the inflection for <i>jumped</i> but will need to know a different word to link to the inflection in <i>wanted</i> or <i>played</i> . With examples for all the sounds that this inflection makes, the student has a point of reference they can use to get to know new words.
Word analysis	To build on the known.	Teachers can analyse the words students are able to spell, then show them how to use what they know to spell other words. Students can build personal banks or charts of words they can spell, based on knowing one word.
Writing conversations	To scaffold learning about writing.	In a writing conversation, teacher and student carry out a conversation in writing. The teacher can scaffold the student's writing and, without overemphasising spelling, select one or two things to explore (such as a spelling pattern that occurs more than once or the shape of a word) as the 'conversation' progresses.
Interactive, paired and shared writing	To support and reinforce new learning.	Teachers can routinely use these approaches to writing as ways of sharing the onus of scripting text. The pen may be held by the teacher or a student, and the text is discussed orally before it is written. As the writing progresses, there are many opportunities to discuss spelling, word order and the sequencing of ideas.
Punctuation placement	To develop awareness of punctuation in text (writing).	Students focus on the use of punctuation in texts they are writing, or in shared writing texts. Start with the simplest and gradually increase the range, focusing on where they are needed and how they affect meaning.  Students can be given an allotment of marks (full stops, commas, exclamation points) to use, checking them off as they write.
Use electronic storybooks	To provide scaffolding for writing.	The interactive CD-ROMs produced for the Ministry of Education by Learning Media provide writing activities that are highly scaffolded. These are designed to be used by Years 5-6 and Years 7-10 students.
Making resources for others	To give practice at using models for writing.	Older students can create simple texts and games for younger students (for example, innovating on a Dr Seuss story, a rhyming book, an alphabet poster, a Snap game with words or a limerick). Use models for support when necessary. As an added benefit, this often increases participation and builds self-esteem.

**For further information and advice on teaching writing and spelling, see:**

- *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, pages 144-148 (Ministry of Education, 2003a) (spelling).
- *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8*, pages 161-166 (Ministry of Education, 2006) (spelling).
- *Monitoring Progress in Spelling Using Developmental Information* (Croft, 2004).
- The website <http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/>, has a draft online resource to support teachers of Years 1 to 8 as they provide instruction in phonological awareness [http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/glossary/phonological\\_awareness](http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/glossary/phonological_awareness) phonological awareness (including [http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/glossary/phonemic\\_awareness](http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/glossary/phonemic_awareness) phonemic awareness and <http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/glossary/phonics> phonics) and spelling.
- The website [http://www.tki.org.nz/r/wick\\_ed/literacy/spellbinder.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/wick_ed/literacy/spellbinder.php), which is an interactive resource for practising commonly misspelt words.
- *Exploring Language: A Handbook for Teachers*, pages 92-93 (Ministry of Education, 1996), 105-115.
- Several commercial resources on spelling are also available for teachers to use. As well as information about how to diagnose spelling difficulties and how to address learners' needs and strengths, these may provide descriptions of spelling at different stages.

### Participation and self-esteem

In an inclusive school and classroom environment, all students should feel they are able to participate and are valued class members.

Studies have shown that young children who are at risk of underachieving (including those who may have dyslexia) have similar levels of self-esteem as other children. If these students do not have effective instruction and support to make improvements in their reading, their self-esteem is found to decrease as they grow older.

Teachers can help students overcome barriers to participation in learning in many ways, some of which may be small but that can have a big impact. The suggestions in this section apply to many students but are particularly relevant for older students who may have already developed avoidance and other negative ways of coping with their reading and writing difficulties.

### Supporting participation

Teachers support the participation of students who may have dyslexia when they:

- ▲ keep instructions short and simple and reinforce with visual prompts when possible
- ▲ present information through two or more learning pathways simultaneously whenever possible (for example, visual and auditory)
- ▲ use a constructive system for marking, where separate consideration is given to content and presentation
- ▲ use the school's website for posting homework assignments
- ▲ provide notes rather than expect students to copy text from a blackboard or whiteboard
- ▲ use brief notes or outlines that students can add to as they complete an assignment
- ▲ identify how a student learns best and build on this for teaching and learning (for example, allowing the student to sit in a place in the classroom that maximises learning)
- ▲ give guidance on how to tackle tasks systematically, by being prepared to explain things many times and by allowing plenty of time for literacy tasks
- ▲ teach students to rehearse learning: many successful students silently rehearse by, for example, writing stories in their heads or going over their spelling while they walk home (students who have difficulty retaining new learning can be taught to do this explicitly)
- ▲ give specific prompts and feedback quickly rather than waiting for the student to fail (search 'scaffolding learning' on <http://www.tki.org.nz> for a large number of articles)
- ▲ use assistive technologies if these help the student (careful observation and discussion with the student will help determine the value of the technology for that student. Go to <http://www.tki.org.nz/r/ict/software/> and select 'assistive technology')
- ▲ encourage peers to support the student either informally or in a structured setting (for example, buddy study or paired work where the peer does the writing; small group work where members are assigned tasks that match their strengths). (This has to be managed carefully to ensure positive outcomes for all parties and buddies need to be trained: see McNaughton, Limbrick and Cameron, 1985)
- ▲ consider how other support people, such as teacher aides, can help the student in classroom situations (for example, by reading and/or writing for the student)
- ▲ recognise the students who become bullies, the class clown or who truant (especially on test days) as well as those who spend a lot of time sharpening pencils or visiting the toilet (these behaviours may be indicative of poor self-esteem, task avoidance or problems with organisation).

**Building and maintaining self-esteem**

Teachers need to be alert for signs that a student is feeling bad about themselves as a learner or that the student's contributions are not valued. Teachers can help build a student's self-esteem when they:

- ▲ learn about and support the student's interests and strengths
- ▲ use information from parents and caregivers and knowledge of the student to support and celebrate strengths
- ▲ use strengths as a basis for teaching to maximise successful and positive learning experiences
- ▲ pick up quickly on any concerns about the student's wellbeing (for example, bullying, exclusion by peers), then develop a plan with the student, their parents, caregivers, teachers, whānau and selected peers to keep the student safe
- ▲ use the student's individual profile to identify classroom situations, tasks and activities in which it may be embarrassing for the learner to participate because of specific difficulties
- ▲ explore ways to get around barriers: for example, by colour-coding workbooks and timetables or providing instructions in visual or sign form. (There is no stigma when these measures are adopted for everyone.)
- ▲ support the use of out-of-school programmes and activities that will provide a supportive environment for learning. (These are often informal and can enable students to socialise with others who may be experiencing similar difficulties or who have similar interests.)

## Setting up for success: working together

### Building a school support team

When a student experiences difficulties at school, a support team may be required for the student. This can be informal or formalised through an IEP. It will include school staff, the family/whānau and it may be extended to include other resource people.

Typically, when a teacher identifies a need to seek support she or he turns to other members of the staff such as:

- ▲ senior teacher or syndicate leader (primary), dean or department head (secondary)
- ▲ special education needs coordinator (SENCO)
- ▲ school literacy leader
- ▲ reading recovery teacher.

If these resources are unable to address the concerns or are unavailable, a referral to other specialist teachers and staff outside (or connected to) the school should be made according to the school's established policies and procedures. The availability and functions of external support services will vary around the country; teachers should refer to the local offices of the Ministry of Education, Special Education for advice about support available in their area.

When a support team exists around the needs of a particular student or group of students who have similar needs, the classroom teacher (or dean) is usually the person who has most to do with the student. For this reason, it makes sense for the teacher to be the central person for communication and coordination. It may be necessary to clarify roles and responsibilities and to ensure that the family (and student, when appropriate) is able to contribute to plans and actions for the student.

### Working with parents, caregivers and whānau

Successful people with dyslexia attribute most of their achievement to the support, both emotional and practical, they received from those closest to them. The primary responsibility for the education of all students lies with the school. Some parents and caregivers may choose to seek additional support from out-of-school providers. A long-term cooperative effort between teachers and families/whānau plays a crucial role in helping students with dyslexia.

Difficulties associated with dyslexia are evident in the home as well as at school. Parents and caregivers will probably be the first to recognise their child's difficulties, such as an inability to rhyme when recalling familiar nursery rhymes. Once at school, a child's difficulties in responding to school expectations and requirements may create tensions for students that are often expressed at home through irritability and anger.

Identifying a student's difficulties as possibly indicating dyslexia can bring a myriad of feelings and responses for parents and caregivers, including relief, anxiety, guilt and anger. For some families/whānau, there may be others who have had similar difficulties that may or may not have been identified as dyslexia. Therefore, any bad experiences of how others in the family/whānau were treated in the past may colour how the family responds to teachers and the school now: they may need extra reassurance and evidence that their child's needs are being met.

Families/whānau can be particularly anxious about their child's emotional response to their difficulties as well as about what the school has done or will do to help.

Involving families/whānau actively requires time, effort and planning. The relationships that teachers develop with parents, caregivers and whānau must be supportive and empowering for all concerned if they are to help the child.

### What the teacher can do

- ▲ Communicate with parents and caregivers in a way that demonstrates understanding and support of their concerns.
- ▲ Help parents and caregivers develop confidence in the class and school programmes by discussing with them a comprehensive assessment of their child's difficulties and strengths.
- ▲ Provide opportunities to listen carefully and respond positively to what parents and caregivers have noticed or assessments they have had done outside school.
- ▲ Involve parents and caregivers in determining what they can do at home to support the student's learning, and likewise, what will be done at school to teach the student. Remember, it is the school's role to teach and the parents' and caregivers' role to support. The two things are not interchangeable and the school's expectations of parents and caregivers should be kept at a reasonable level.
- ▲ If parents and caregivers are using other instructional methods or materials at home, the teacher needs to work with and not against them to maximise consistency and support for the student.
- ▲ Develop a home/school communication system with parents and caregivers (for example, a home/school notebook, or text messaging).
- ▲ Ensure that parents and caregivers understand the terms and concepts used (which may be jargon to them and therefore disempowering).
- ▲ Develop systems for passing on information about a student's needs, progress and next steps from one teacher to the next.
- ▲ Share information about out-of-school programmes that may help boost general self-esteem (for example, classes or groups for music, art, debating or other non-academic interests).
- ▲ Invite the parents, caregivers and student to create an information sheet (with photo) about the student. This can be distributed to the student's teachers to help them get to know the student and how they can best support their specific needs.

My name is Matthew, I have dyslexia and I have huge problems with spelling and handwriting. If you want my writing to be neat please give me extra time and don't ask me to copy from the board. Sometimes I don't hear all of the instructions I am given, this is not because I wasn't listening it just takes me a while to process them. I get very embarrassed when I have to keep asking again and again so if you could check in with me when you go past, I won't have to keep on bothering you and I won't feel so embarrassed.

– Anonymous, supplied by parent.



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#### See also:

- The website [http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy\\_numeracy/hsp\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy_numeracy/hsp_e.php) for information about the Home-School Partnership programme.
- The website <http://www.teamup.co.nz/> for information for families/whānau about many aspects of schooling.

### Managing transitions

Transitions can be exciting and positive or challenging and fraught with uncertainty. Whenever a child moves from one setting or teacher to another, there will be changes and differences that can be stressful for a child or student who may have dyslexia. It is useful for all staff involved in a transition to be aware of issues for the student to ensure a collective responsibility for the success of the transition.

#### **From an early childhood education service to school**

If early childhood education service staff or parents and caregivers have concerns about a child's progress, open communication and careful observations will be needed. Supports such as pre-entry visits and careful pairing with a more confident peer may be useful.

It is important to avoid attaching a label or diagnosis to a young child: apart from the potentially negative consequences of labelling, young children develop rapidly and unevenly. They will need time in a new environment to establish themselves and to show what they are capable of.

#### **From class to class, school to school**

To build on learning as students move up year by year, schools need to develop school-wide processes for documenting progress and the next teaching and learning steps (for example, the sounds, letters and spelling patterns taught and mastered). By doing this, teachers can reinforce and build on the previous year's work, then move on to the next steps, rather than having to rediscover what students have already been taught and learned. Effective teaching strategies, areas of strength and interest should also be noted and passed from one teacher to the next. A summary sheet for relievers can also be useful. An individual profile sheet can be a useful tool. This kind of information transfer is also important for transitions between schools.

## References and further information

### Ministry of Education print and online resources

Ministry of Education (2008). *English Language Learning Progressions*, Wellington: Learning Media Limited. See also: [http://www.tki.org.nz/r/esol/esolonline/ellp\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/esol/esolonline/ellp_e.php).

Ministry of Education (2007). *Literacy Learning Progressions*, Wellington: Learning Media Limited. See also: <http://www.literacyprogressions.org.nz>.

Ministry of Education (2006). *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8*, Wellington: Learning Media Limited.

Ministry of Education (2004). *Effective Literacy Strategies in Years 9 to 13*, Wellington: Learning Media Limited.

Ministry of Education (2003a). *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, Wellington: Learning Media Limited.

Ministry of Education (2003b). *Sounds Sense: Phonics and Phonological Awareness* (Ready to Read Teacher Support Material), Wellington: Learning Media Limited.

Ministry of Education (1996). *Exploring Language: A Handbook for Teachers*, Wellington: Learning Media Limited.

*Quality Teaching for Diverse Students: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration* at: <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/5959>

*Literature Review: An International Perspective on Dyslexia* at: [http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy\\_numeracy/lit\\_dyslexia\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy_numeracy/lit_dyslexia_e.php)

*Integrating Readymade Commercial Packages into Teaching Programmes: An Evidence-based Approach* at: <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/curriculum/5015>

See <http://www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/two/pdf/reviews.pdf> for a review of assessment tools.

See [http://www.tki.org.nz/r/specialed/diversity/index\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/specialed/diversity/index_e.php), which provides information and a model of how schools can develop their own ways of identifying and responding to the diverse needs of students.

See <http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/> for a draft online resource to support teachers of Years 1 to 8 as they provide instruction in phonological awareness [http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/glossary/phonological\\_awareness](http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/glossary/phonological_awareness) phonological awareness (including [http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/glossary/phonemic\\_awareness](http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/glossary/phonemic_awareness) phonemic awareness and <http://soundsandwords.tki.org.nz/glossary/phonics>) and spelling.

See [http://www.tki.org.nz/r/wick\\_ed/literacy/spellbinder.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/wick_ed/literacy/spellbinder.php) for an interactive resource for practising commonly misspelt words.

See <http://www.teamup.co.nz> for information for families and whānau about the education system and things they can do to support their children's education.

See <http://www.tki.org.nz/r/ict/software/> for advice, information and support about educational software.

See [http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy\\_numeracy/lit\\_materials\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy_numeracy/lit_materials_e.php) for information about interactive literacy resources, such as The Game and Other Stories.

See [http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy\\_numeracy/lit\\_dyslexia\\_working\\_definition\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy_numeracy/lit_dyslexia_working_definition_e.php) for a definition on the term dyslexia.



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### Other websites for information

See <http://www.education.canterbury.ac.nz/people/gillon/resources.shtml> for phonological awareness resources produced by Gail Gillon. Mainly for early childhood education and junior classes.

See <http://www.dfnz.org.nz>, the website of the Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand.

See <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/understandingdyslexia>, a British government site that links with a variety of resources including a 'framework' for understanding dyslexia.

See <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>, the website of the British Dyslexia Association, an advocacy and information site for anyone with an interest in children or adults who may have dyslexia.

See <http://www.ldonline.org/>, a website for teachers and parents, based in United States.