



Identifying Dyslexic Students in the Classroom

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As teachers, we are all aware that children learn at different paces - there will be fast and slow learners. But some students might not just be slow in learning, but could also be battling a specific learning disability that needs special care and attention. Among the various learning disabilities, Dyslexia manifests primarily as a difficulty with reading and spelling, listening and speaking, and written expression.

During the year 2008-2009, we had attended a training conducted by STC, Education Department, on "Dyslexia". This training motivated us to identify dyslexic students in the school and provide them with remedial measures to improve their performance in the classrooms.

The main objectives of the study were:

- To identify the dyslexic students by comprehensive test & sustained observation over a period of time.
- Conducting Pre-Test and Post Test for dyslexic students.
- Imparting adequate training for the students to develop sensory motor skills.

How to identify students with dyslexia?

A teacher has to continuously observe his/her students inside and outside the classroom for signs of dyslexia. Teachers could look out for the following symptoms to identify dyslexic students.

Reading problems : slowness, hesitancy, omission, substitution, reading by guessing, reading the words backwards (on for no), misreading (put for but).

Writing problems : slowness, lack of regard for even basic rules of grammar such as capitals and full stop, poor handwriting, poor organization of the writing space, poorly formed letters, words, and sentences.

Spelling problems : writing letters in wrong order, reversal of letters (b for d), inversion of letters (u for n), mirror writing (no for on), omission (wet for went); these are best elicited by asking the child to write to dictation.

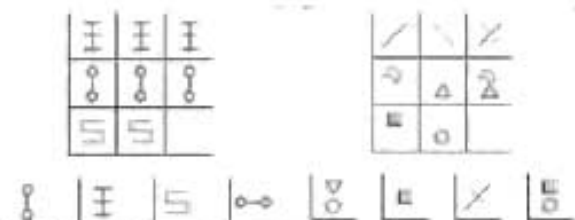
In addition, they may have problems related to *fine motor skills, right - left orientation, and sequential learning.*

Although the above mentioned symptoms are helpful in identifying dyslexia, it is important to avoid labelling the child dyslexic without consulting a specialist. For a thorough assessment of dyslexia, we must get a developmental, medical, behavioral, academic and family history of the child and a measure of the general intellectual functioning and language skills. The testing may be done by a single individual or a team of specialists. There is no single test which can be used to identify dyslexia, instead a battery of tests need to be administered.

Some examples of questions to assess :

- I. The general problem solving ability,
- II. Tests of reading and spelling, particularly word level processes

1. Fill in the Missing Pieces



2. Word sounds To ask children to identify the picture that begins with a particular sound. E.g.: /s/ , /k/



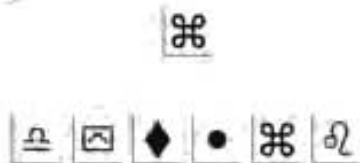
3. Spelling Test - To identify the spelling by looking at the word.

E.g.: String is spelt as :



4. Visual search-

i. To identify Matching shape








ii. To identify the direction - Eg. Mark the downward arrow.



5. Identification of alphabets - Circle the letter b



6. Match each picture with its starting alphabet

| | |
|---|----------|
|  | g |
|  | b |
|  | f |
|  | p |
|  | d |

7. Copy Writing -

i. Write the following letters:

b, d, g, f, p _____

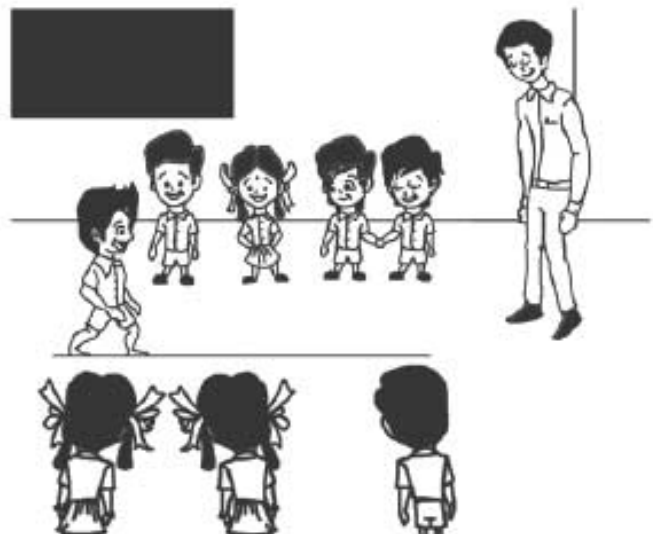
ii. Write the following paragraph given below:

The Balloon Man

He always comes on market days
And holds balloons a lovely bunch.
And in the market square he stays,
And never seems to think of lunch.

Simple tests can be done to assess a student's psychomotor skills. Psychomotor skills include the ability to do coordinated muscular movements with precision. These tests are :

- i. Catching and throwing a ball
- ii. Walking on a straight line
- iii. Riding a bicycle



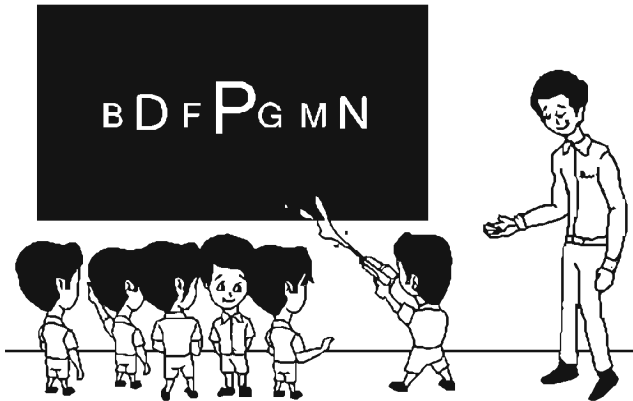
Remedial Approaches

Students with dyslexia need to be taught at a pace they are comfortable with. They must be given sufficient time for practice and to respond to questions. The training imparted must be structured and sequenced from simple to complex. It is good to ensure that the child has thoroughly mastered a particular stage before moving on to the next one. The trainings must include a multi sensory approach that involves vision, hearing and touch.

In this study, the students were imparted with a variety of training and activities to develop their language skills, motor and auditory skills and

motivate them. Few of the activities are listed below:

- Students were trained to identify alphabets with the **sense of touch**. They were made to write letters on rice, sand, sand paper, cello tape and colored clays. They were also made to model the alphabets with clay to feel the shape of the alphabet. **Drawing and painting** are also good methods to develop their fine motor skill.
- Using **water balloons and water pistols** - Alphabets were written on the blackboard and the students were asked to throw water balloons when the teacher pronounces the particular letter. This helps the student recognize the sound of the letter and differentiate between the alphabets.



- Adequate **physical exercises** were conducted to develop coordination and kinesthetic ability. Students were given opportunities to develop their abilities to throw, catch and kick a ball. **Yoga and Meditation** sessions helped improve their concentration levels.
- Students were also given training using **computers** available in the school. They learnt to type letters and words using MS Word and verify basic arithmetic operation in MS Excel. Digital Learning Resources were used to teach a few lessons. Phonetic software were used to coach their development of sound and develop their listening skills.
- **Music** is a powerful medium for auditory training. Students were taught to sing songs and rhymes that helped improve their pronunciation, and intonation. Students were told the **stories and lives of great achievers**

who were dyslexic in their childhood. Anecdotes from their lives as to how they overcame obstacles inspire students to face life and challenges that come their way.

- Gardening is a good physical activity and also helps develop sensitivity towards nature in students. With that intention, a **herbal garden** was created in the school compound and the children grew various herbal plants, watered and nurtured them regularly. This aided in bringing all the students together as they collectively worked towards establishing a herbal garden.

Efforts were taken to ensure that no child was isolated in the classroom. Activities were designed in such a way that all children would joyfully take part in it and learning was guaranteed for all. These activities showed to have a positive impact on the students and in their ability to identify alphabets and learn the language. It also showed significant improvement in their learning ability and attitude.

Reflections :

A student suffering from dyslexia is in no way less intelligent than any other normal student in the class. The child has a genuine difficulty in learning and is not lazy or uninterested. When one identifies such a student in the classroom, the teacher can offer adequate support and motivate the student to learn better. It is important to engage the child in simple tasks initially to boost their sense of achievement. Many such children would be creative and hence they should be given opportunities to use and express their creativity in their learning. Parents also need to be made aware that dyslexia is not a disease but a learning disorder which can be overcome by providing support to the child.

The students of our school who showed symptoms of dyslexia were trained with utmost care and they were rejuvenated by this project. The multi - sensory trainings imparted to them were useful to improve their concentration levels. There was a change in their learning ability and attitude. The training also helped students overcome their initial learning struggles and there was an improvement in their academic performance. It is suggested that such projects be periodically carried out in schools for the students' overall development.

