

# LEARNING DIFFICULTIES HANDBOOK

**A Guide to Identification and Assessment of  
Learning Difficulties  
&  
Suggested Teaching and Learning Strategies**

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# Introduction:

In his lecture (Effective Teaching and Making Classrooms More Inclusive) at the 1997 Student Disability Conference in Melbourne, Peter Westwood pointed out that over 20% of students in our schools have some type of learning disorder. There are;

- 4% with special needs, being eligible for resources (integration program)
- 16% with general learning difficulties (1-3% of whom have specific learning disabilities)

In addition, there are many students (% not known) who have behavioural disorders or challenging behaviours that affect their learning, and more than 4% of students who are gifted and talented and who often do not perform to their full potential.

Therefore, any typical classroom will have at least 3 or 4 students who need special consideration. Teachers are generally very adept at identifying these students but are not always confident about how to cater for these students' needs.

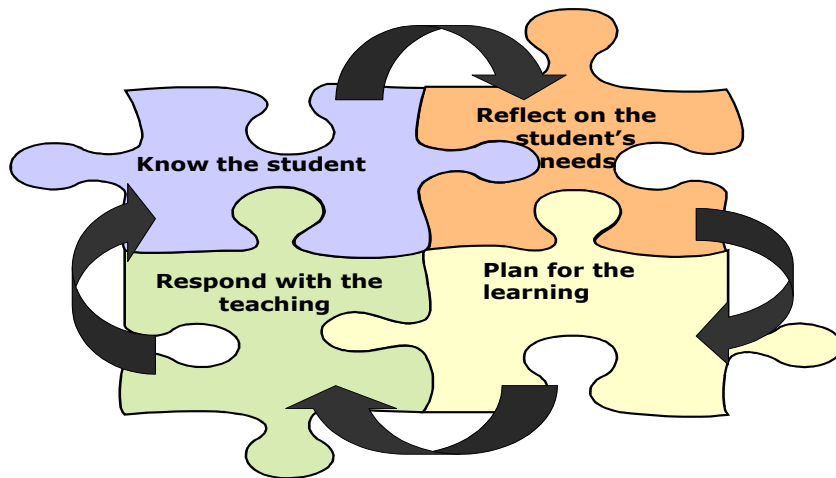
This handbook has been designed to provide teachers with a reference to help understand the range of difficulties experienced by students. It also provides teachers with a variety of strategies to meet the learning needs of students who have been identified as not performing as expected.

In section B, specific behaviours and difficulties are listed under the main areas of:

- 1. Organisation**
- 2. Reading (Word recognition and Comprehension)**
- 3. Writing**
- 4. Spelling**
- 5. Language/communication**
- 6. General Comprehension**

This section aims to assist teachers to investigate the level at which the student's learning is breaking down. Therefore, possible causes of the learning disorders were included to ensure that all aspects that can affect learning are considered. Assessment tools are recommended to assist this investigation and strategies to try are included for each area. Many, if not all, of the strategies may be familiar to teachers but serve as a reminder for varying teaching approaches to try and meet the needs of underachieving students. It is often only through trial and error that a successful strategy is found.

This handbook is not meant to be a substitute for referring students to Student Support Services, rather it is a first step in helping teachers gain important data about targeted students and an aid to assisting the students before outside intervention is accessed.



**Close monitoring and assessment** of a student's skills will assist in discovering:

- Specific areas where the student does/does not perform satisfactorily
- What the student can already do without assistance
- What the student can do if given a little prompting
- What gaps exist in the student's prior learning
- What the student needs to be taught next

This information can greatly assist both the teacher and the school to develop an appropriate learning plan to meet the student's needs. Some informal assessment materials are included in Section C of the handbook.

Section A provides information about Specific Learning Difficulties to help teachers understand the problems some students' experience in learning academic skills. Strategies for these students are suggested. There is also information about dyslexia. A further selection of teaching and learning strategies to cater for individual differences plus some general strategies to assist reading skills can be found in section D.

The handbook concludes with a list of resources including commercial testing material, texts and websites, which may be of further use.

\*\*\* Meeting the needs of the 20% of students identified as having learning difficulties requires an effective partnership between school and home and, where appropriate, student support services. This guide is designed to develop a shared understanding of student needs and to aid in the development of programs that will help students gain greater enjoyment and success in their learning. Student Support Services wish schools well in their endeavours.

# Information on Specific Learning Difficulties

**Students with Learning Difficulties (L.D.)** can be identified by;

- a) a **discrepancy** in achievement levels and **expected** levels of academic skill proficiency based on I.Q. (i.e. student does not lack general ability)
- b) a **significant delay** in academic performance, particularly reading and spelling, compared with peers.

The four main areas that contribute to learning difficulties are **Language** delays/disabilities, or difficulties with **Attention, Audio-verbal Information Processing** and **Visual Perception**

\*\*\* **Secondary features** of learning difficulties are

- Behavioural disturbance
- Attentional problems
- Decreased motivation – “learned helplessness”
- Withdrawal, fear of failure, low risk taking
- Anxiety/depression
- Poor organisational skills

## 1. LANGUAGE

The main difficulties experienced by L.D. students with speech and/or language disorders are:

- Delays in learning to speak, halting speech, mispronunciations
- Difficulties with naming, says “that thing”, uses hand gestures to help convey meaning
- Difficulties understanding concepts, following instructions, understanding main idea
- Small vocabulary
- Poor grammar, may avoid talking
- Difficulty naming letters and/or problems associating letters with sounds
- Difficulties in single word decoding
- Poor phonological processing (blending/sequencing sounds, segmenting words into separate sounds or syllables)
- Reliance on ‘sounding out’ with limited success but unable to employ other strategies
- Difficulty comprehending texts during/after reading and making inferences
- Difficulties in making connections and/or organising ideas for writing
- Poor spelling skills
- Written assignments are short or incomplete

### **The language delayed/disabled student will need**

- Possible assessment and therapy by a speech pathologist
- Much oral language practice with adults and peers
- A variety of experiences to broaden knowledge and vocabulary
- Good role modeling of correct speech and language structures
- Explicit and short instructions – possible rephrasing or repeating
- Time to process information and to formulate responses
- Help with organising ideas, planning for writing
- Explanation of terms, examples to develop concepts

## 2. VISUAL PERCEPTION DIFFICULTIES

The student has difficulties:

- Understanding the whole spectrum of **written and pictorial symbols** (letters, words, numbers, math symbols, diagrams, maps, graphs, music notes)
- **Attaching meaning** to visual images, **discriminating** among similar images, **recognising** the same symbol in different forms

When **reading**, the student may

- Confuse similar looking letters and words and/or reverses words (was/saw, no/on)
- Have difficulty remembering sight words
- Make guesses at words using only some of the letters
- Frequently lose place in reading / skips lines
- Have trouble finding letters/words in words/sentences
- Have poor comprehension of main ideas and themes

When **writing**, the student may

- Dislike and avoid writing
- Produces work that is messy and incomplete
- Space words unevenly
- Have difficulty remembering shapes/correct starting points and formations of letters
- Make frequent letter/number reversals
- Omit letters/words
- Copy inaccurately
- Have poor spelling (spells phonetically, not by recalling look of a word)
- Poor revising/proof reading skills
- Difficulties organising written work

In **mathematics**, the student may

- Have poor alignment of written work, resulting in computational errors
- Have difficulty memorising number facts, multiplication tables, formulae, equations
- Have trouble interpreting graphs, charts and diagrams
- Have difficulty with higher level maths concepts

\*\*\* **Other related problems** with visual perception difficulties are

- Left and right confusion
- Poor sense of direction
- Difficulty estimating time, judging speed and distance
- Trouble getting to the point – gets bogged down in details
- Does not pick up on other peoples' moods and feelings
- Poor planning and organisational skills, often loses things
- Distaste for puzzles
- Difficulties perceiving strategies for being successful in games

### **These students need**

- Comprehensive training in phonemic awareness
- Well sequenced, structured and explicit instruction in the alphabetic code with extensive practice to ensure mastery of component reading skills and their integration into the reading of text
- Practice to improve speed and accuracy of recognition of high frequency words and letter groups

- Practice at reading familiar texts until fluent
- Carefully selected texts with some control of vocabulary
- Older students may need text read to them or listen to tapes before attempting to read for themselves
- Reduced amount of text to read at once
- Reduced amount of copying from blackboard
- A multi-sensory approach for younger students (combination of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic modes of learning)
- Teachers to understand their difficulties and modify written tasks
- Acknowledgement that every L.D. student is different and needs an individually designed program
- Particular strengths to be recognised and opportunities provided for them to be utilised
- Self-esteem and independent learning skills to be fostered

### **3. AUDITORY-VERBAL INFORMATION PROCESSING**

Limited ability to process verbal information means that a student can only 'take in' a certain amount of information at once and may have difficulty recalling what he has heard. He can soon become overwhelmed by too much information and 'tune out' easily. In the classroom the student may appear to be

- Not concentrating, not knowing what to do, always forgetting things
- Lazy, daydreaming, passive, withdrawn
- Distracting, 'class clown', talking too much
- Aggressive (boys), self-pitying (girls) ..... to the teacher's mind, "**He doesn't listen**"

#### **The student**

- Is always asking for help, can't understand, gets bored, gets tired
- Asks others what to do
- Gains little success and does not want to keep on trying
- Diverts attention of peers from own sense of failure, feeling of helplessness
- Talks so he doesn't have to try and listen ..... to the student's mind, "**I can't understand**"

#### **Auditory processing difficulties** lead to

- Poor reading skills, owing to limited 'working memory' for blending and sequencing sounds and syllables or recalling what has just been read
- Poor spelling skills, linked to phonological awareness difficulties
- Poor writing skills – student cannot retain and manipulate words mentally when planning and composing written work
- Difficulties following instructions
- Lack of understanding of spoken information and new concepts
- Slowness in processing new information and in formulating responses
- Student becoming confused, feeling incompetent

#### **Strategies to try**

- Check understanding by seeing what the student does, not by asking about it
- Believe the student if he says he doesn't know
- Refer to information on reading, general comprehension and organization

#### **4. ATTENTION**

Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are at high risk for academic and social problems. Main features of ADHD are **Inattention**, **Hyperactivity** and **Impulsivity**, and the student

- Has difficulty sustaining attention, can't concentrate
- Does not seem to listen
- Makes careless errors and is forgetful, poorly organised
- Avoids school work, fails to finish tasks, has poor academic performance
- Is easily distracted
- Fidgets, often leaves seat, interrupts others
- Has difficulty waiting turn
- Talks excessively

\*\*\* **Other causes of Inattention** can be chronic stress or anxiety (bullying, home issues), poor child management, family dysfunction, frequent illness, hearing or vision problems, physiological causes (hunger, lack of sleep), inappropriate educational placement.

#### **Students with attention difficulties need**

- A definite routine at home and school
- Assistance with following routines and organising self
- A consistent approach to discipline – definite boundaries
- Minimum distractions around the room or in immediate environment
- Possible diet management
- Medication if diagnosed with ADHD and ADD
- See suggested strategies for Organisation

#### \*\*\* **Acknowledgement**

Much of this information about learning difficulties was provided by Bernice Dodds, educational psychologist, at the Learning Difficulties Centre, Royal Childrens Hospital. Many thanks for her kind permission to reproduce her work.

#### **For ALL students with learning difficulties the emphasis should be on**

- Specific goals and objectives, clearly stated so that outcomes can be effectively measured and reported
- Strengths and weaknesses together, not on either separately
- Long term monitoring
- A sequenced, structured program
- Specific skills to be taught through demonstration, direct explanation and guided practice (to point of mastery)
- Strategies are taught – **how** to attempt the set task
- Revision and review of previous learning at regular intervals
- Encouragement to become more independent
- Peer assistance and co-operative learning
- Eliciting high motivation



# What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia simply means **difficulty with words** – (dys ... difficulty with, and lexis...words).

The difficulty is a cognitive one, affecting those language skills associated with the written form, particularly visual-to-verbal coding, short-term memory, order perception and sequencing. – Thomson 1990

Dyslexia is not a disease to 'have' and 'be cured of', rather it is a kind of mind. Very often it is a gifted mind and there have been many famous, productive, creative dyslexics. – Orton Dyslexia Society in Gearheart & Gearheart 1989

**Dyslexia is primarily a difficulty with reading, spelling and writing**, but there can also be problems with mathematics. The problem occurs despite average or above average intelligence. It can affect people in different ways and not all dyslexic people experience the same difficulties. Although it can be mild or severe, research indicates that it is characterized by a pattern of difficulties rather than one single problem.

Some common features are:

## **Phonological Awareness**

- Difficulties with identifying and manipulating sounds in words, blending letter sounds into words and matching letters to their corresponding sounds.
- Adults may still occasionally mix the order of sounds in spoken and written words.

## **Language Development**

- Some children experience difficulties with their oral language development, e.g. with a delay in their first words, or with speech pronunciation, expressing ideas easily or comprehending language.
- Processing and retrieving words may also be a problem

## **Short-term Auditory Memory**

- Students have difficulties recalling verbal information such as a series of letter sounds long enough to blend them into a word or remembering a series of verbal instructions.

## **Short-term Visual Memory**

- Students may have difficulty recalling the correct 'look' of words, leading to spelling and reading problems
- May find copying accurately from the blackboard difficult

## **Directional Confusion**

- There may be uncertainty about right and left directions, a tendency to read from right-to-left, confusion of b/d, was/saw, on/no, and reversal of numbers, e.g. 12 for 21

## **Sequencing** (difficulties can affect many areas)

- Student may find it hard to keep letters, numbers, letter sounds and ideas in correct order. This can lead to incorrect spelling (lsot for lost), incorrect pronunciation of words (flamilia for familiar), misordering of numbers (writing 698 instead of 689), difficulties organizing ideas in written form and problems with multiplication tables.

### **Organisational Skills**

- Can affect students' daily routine as well as academic work

### **Visual Processing**

- Some people experience problems looking at words in print. Words may not stand out clearly, or may appear to move or run into each other.
- Some have trouble keeping their eyes on the correct line while reading

### **Visual Perception**

- Refers to difficulties in discriminating the differences between letters (u/n, w/m) and words (bread/beard) and a tendency to confuse the order of letters (thistle/thistle)
- Students often guess at words which look similar (e.g. surface is read as surprise) and some add words that are not on the page

### **Visual-motor Co-ordination**

- Many students have problems writing their thoughts on paper (through difficulties with written expression, language skills, spelling etc.)
- May also have difficulties co-ordinating the act of writing (motor movement) with what is seen (perception) or thought
- Often have slow, poorly formed handwriting and unusual pen grip

### **Attention Control**

- Poor ability for ignoring distractions, either externally (noise in classroom or close by) or internal (difficulty focusing on one idea at a time)

### **\*\*\*Acknowledgement**

The above material was adapted from information provided by S.P.E.L.D. (Specific Learning Difficulties Centre, Melbourne)

### **Some suggested strategies from Girard Sagmiller (author of 'Dyslexia My Life') that he found to be helpful as a child with dyslexia:**

- Give hope
- Use alternatives to books such as software that reads texts, captioned television, taped books.
- Use a shape-based system to help students memorize words
- Develop a visual clue to remember things
- Allow the student to do whatever they do best and give credit for their skills
- Use concrete materials whenever possible – children can develop mental pictures with 'hands-on' activities
- Give all instructions on paper as a checklist. Have student repeat instructions.
- Put 3 lines of spaces between test questions
- Help the student develop phonemic awareness

## PLEASE READ BEFORE USING THE FOLLOWING TABLES

The following set of tables has been designed as a quick reference for teachers to find strategies that may be appropriate for particular students' needs.

- **Please note that the tables do NOT read across from left to right, i.e. the first suggested cause, assessment tool or strategy does not necessarily match the first listed difficulty.**

The difficulties may have various causes and several of the assessment tools and strategies may apply to any one difficulty. Conversely, one particular strategy may be appropriate for a number of the difficulties.

It is also important to bear in mind that, although the reading section has been separated into Word Recognition and Comprehension, these two things occur simultaneously during the reading process, and they are both crucial in constructing meaning. Word recognition (or the limited skill in this area) certainly affects comprehension, but context, prior knowledge and understanding of language structure are important factors that assist with working out unknown words and gaining meaning from the text. Therefore, strategies selected for a student with reading difficulties should be taken from both areas.

# ORGANISATION

Difficulties experienced by student	Possible Causes	Assessment Tools	Strategies to try
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wastes time in class</li> <li>▪ Slow to get started – no plan of attack. Time spent on superficial details e.g. borders, headings</li> <li>▪ Avoidance tactics such as sorting out papers, looking for materials, continually restarting of task – achieving little</li> <li>▪ Does not complete tasks in given time</li> <li>▪ Difficulties with:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- following directions</li> <li>- organising materials</li> <li>- losing things</li> <li>- setting goals</li> <li>- taking notes</li> <li>- identifying main idea</li> <li>- using study techniques</li> <li>- poor research skills</li> <li>- inferential thinking</li> <li>- decision making related to task</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Is impulsive – misses important details and instructions, does not work through problem strategically</li> <li>▪ Does not use timetable correctly – relies on others to get to correct class</li> </ul>	<p>Does not understand what to do. Teacher instruction may be unclear</p> <p>May have a language disorder that affects comprehension or ability to organise and express ideas</p> <p>General ability may be low</p> <p>Poor auditory processing – difficulties listening to and following instructions</p> <p>Has not yet developed independent organisational skills – needs to be taught these.</p> <p>Overwhelmed by task – cannot break it into manageable steps without assistance</p> <p>Has poor understanding of time needed to complete tasks</p> <p>Emotional problems may be over-riding student’s thinking</p> <p>Lack of confidence in own ability, fear of failure</p> <p>ADD, ADHD or similar difficulties in staying focused on one task</p>	<p>Check hearing if deemed necessary</p> <p>Digit recall test</p> <p>Sentence repetition test</p> <p>Discuss student’s behaviour with parents – are there issues the school needs to know about?</p> <p>Discuss with past teachers to check if this behaviour is usual. What strategies have proved to be successful?</p> <p>Student may need to be assessed by a speech pathologist if comprehension appears to be the main difficulty</p>	<p>Provide individual instruction – ensure student has understood what to do. Emphasise main points</p> <p>Provide shorter tasks, given more frequently, and some selection of tasks</p> <p>Specify the procedural steps that need to be taken to complete the task</p> <p>Provide samples of an assignment for student to use as a model</p> <p>Set minimum requirements and expectations</p> <p>Use visual planning board and colour coded labels for materials</p> <p>Promote use of checklists, diaries, sticky notes etc. Clear pencil cases help to find things more easily</p> <p>Promote self-talk and/or cue cards, e.g. “What do I have to do? Where will I start? I can do this.”</p> <p>Communicate frequently with teachers and family regards homework requirements, behavioural expectations</p> <p>Work individually with student to assist with organisation, time management etc</p>

# READING – Word Recognition

*(Please refer to front page of this section)*

Difficulties experienced by student	Possible Causes	Assessment Tools	Strategies to try
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Limited automatic recognition of words and letter clusters</li> <li>▪ Unable to recall alternative sounds for letters (long/sort vowels, c,g,etc) and letter clusters, eg. ou as in house, would, pour, etc.</li> <li>▪ Difficulty in blending sounds / sequencing sounds in words correctly (often producing non-words)</li> <li>▪ Limited number of strategies for working out unknown words</li> <li>▪ Does not see words within larger words, eg <u>cardigan</u>, <u>refrain</u>.</li> <li>▪ Visual confusions (b/d/p, saw-was, for -of)</li> <li>▪ Unable to predict unknown words through grammatical structure or context of sentence/passage</li> </ul>	<p>May be some vision problems.</p> <p>Limited phonological awareness (hearing and manipulating sounds in words).</p> <p>Text too difficult (language and/or subject matter unfamiliar)</p> <p>Not employing variety of taught strategies independently – still relying on prompts</p> <p>Has not been taught specific decoding skills</p> <p>Not using self-questioning to ask “What else could it be / what else can I try?”)</p> <p>Lack of practice.</p> <p>Possible visual perception and visual memory problems (dyslexia)</p> <p>Poor oral language skills</p> <p>Negative attitude to reading and/or lack of belief in oneself as a learner</p>	<p>Observation Survey – assess how children work with letters/words/text</p> <p>Burt Word Test (test of word recognition)- analyse the types of errors to see where student needs help</p> <p>Word recognition and Phonics Test (WRAPS) - ACER (P-2)</p> <p>Phonological awareness test – check that student can identify rhyming words, individual sounds, syllables and is able to segment and blend sounds in words. (Test included)</p> <p>Running Records – analyse errors for cues the student uses to assist word attack</p> <p>General observations of how student reads aloud – word by word, pausing incorrectly, losing place etc.</p> <p>Neale Analysis of Reading Behaviour (Accuracy) 1:1 W.A. First steps continuum</p>	<p>Check Vision</p> <p>Discuss student’s progress with former teachers – which strategies were successful?</p> <p>Demonstrate variety of ways to work out words - breaking into syllables, looking for parts already known, relating words of similar appearance / meaning, using context to help prediction etc.</p> <p>Rereading of familiar texts to improve automatic word recognition, especially of frequently used words.</p> <p>Reading aloud on regular basis – to assist fluency and confidence. (Easy level text)</p> <p>Provide appropriate level texts.</p> <p>Introduce key vocabulary – ensure students can pronounce words correctly and know the meanings.</p> <p>Encourage use of context and draw on student’s prior knowledge before reading. Cloze activities help with prediction.</p> <p>Modify the print – insert questions or diagrams to break up print</p> <p>Peer support from reliable student</p>

# READING – Comprehension

*(Please refer to front page of this section)*

Difficulties experienced by student	Possible Causes	Assessment Tools	Strategies to try
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Poor word recognition limits comprehension</li> <li>▪ Can read the words but not understand the content</li> <li>▪ Does not use background information appropriately (underuse or overuse)</li> <li>▪ Does not monitor own reading for meaning</li> <li>▪ Does not identify main ideas</li> <li>▪ Cannot recall information</li> <li>▪ Cannot summarise</li> <li>▪ Not linking ideas or events while reading</li> <li>▪ Unable to make inference and/or predictions</li> <li>▪ Difficulty in drawing conclusions</li> </ul>	<p>(See previous section on word recognition)</p> <p>Too much attention given to decoding words, especially when reading aloud.</p> <p>Poor receptive language skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited vocabulary</li> <li>- Difficulty understanding concepts, main ideas.</li> </ul> <p>Limited background knowledge to draw on</p> <p>Poor auditory processing (not taking in what they have 'read')</p> <p>Inability to visualise to assist with gaining meaning</p> <p>Lack of interest in subject matter</p> <p>Loss of confidence, therefore lack of practice and skills do not improve.</p> <p>Low intellectual functioning – limited reasoning skills</p>	<p>Reading interview or questionnaire to determine attitude to reading / strategies used</p> <p>Analysis of running records (is student using meaning / context when reading?)</p> <p>T.O.R.C.H. test (Cloze activities suitable for whole class, grades 3 – 10)</p> <p>Neale Analysis (comprehension) – administered 1:1 for targeted students</p> <p>D.A.R.T. (reading) Whole class/small group. Similar to AIM Test – works on different text types.</p> <p>P.R.O.B.E. test - comprehension-testing looking at 3 levels of questioning, 5-15 years. Triune, available ACER</p>	<p>Cue students into topic. Introduce concepts and key vocabulary</p> <p>Read through questions with student before reading text– clarify if necessary</p> <p>Remind student of good reading strategies – re read or read on further to self-correct and improve comprehension.</p> <p>Model how to look for information, interpret questions, make inferences.</p> <p>Provide appropriate level texts or cassette tapes.</p> <p>Pair student with a good reader.</p> <p>Teach students how to visualise and discuss how to 'see' things as they read.</p> <p>Encourage 'self-talk' so student asks himself questions as he reads, reflecting on the meaning and deciding on strategies.</p> <p>Teach 'Before, During and After Reading' strategies (information included).</p> <p>'Bridging the Gap' program</p> <p>Peer Assisted Learning Strategy</p>

# WRITING

Difficulties experienced by students	Possible Causes	Assessment Tools	Strategies to try
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Difficulties expressing ideas on paper (but can possibly have good oral expression)</li> <li>▪ Lacks knowledge of effective, strategies eg. Doesn't plan</li> <li>▪ Difficulties in organising ideas.</li> <li>▪ Lack of cohesion - writing can resemble a list of unrelated details</li> <li>▪ Written answers to questions are vague or unrelated. Writes irrelevant information when given specific topic</li> <li>▪ Does not take notes efficiently</li> <li>▪ Poor sentence structure</li> <li>▪ Lack of punctuation</li> <li>▪ Does not edit own work</li> <li>▪ Dislikes writing</li> <li>▪ Has difficulty getting started and /or does not remain on task</li> <li>▪ Does not complete or submit work on regular basis</li> </ul>	<p>Limited spelling skills affects willingness to write</p> <p>Language difficulties in either (or both) receptive or expressive areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- doesn't understand what to do</li> <li>- difficulty formulating sentences</li> <li>- limited background knowledge and vocabulary</li> <li>- difficulty in making connections</li> </ul> <p>Poor organisational skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- doesn't know how to get started or plan sequence of ideas</li> <li>- overwhelmed by task perceived as too hard or too large to tackle</li> </ul> <p>Poor auditory memory can affect ability to hold ideas/sentences in head when writing</p> <p>Limited knowledge of appropriate language/ format of different text types, e.g. report writing, recount</p> <p>Unwilling to ask for help /clarification when unsure</p> <p>Sees no purpose in writing Lack of interest in topic</p> <p>Physical act of writing may be arduous</p>	<p>AIM Test</p> <p>D.A.R.T. – writing component (whole class) – similar to AIM</p> <p>Analysis of work samples over time</p> <p>Check to see where difficulty lies – with authorial or secretarial aspects?</p> <p>Writing interview (example provided) to determine attitude of student toward writing</p> <p>Early Years writing analysis guide – looks at known skills for planning, composing, recording, revising and publishing.</p> <p>W.A. First Steps writing developmental continuum – check list for writing skills.</p> <p>W.A. Next Steps check list for middle years</p>	<p>Ensure student knows what to do</p> <p>Have authentic purpose for writing and provide an audience.</p> <p>Give specific help to make a start on the task. Student to verbalise ideas first.</p> <p>Model how to plan/organise ideas, revise, take notes, write summaries etc. Use graphic organisers for planning</p> <p>Always respond to content before spelling, grammar, handwriting.</p> <p>Model how to answer questions by emphasising key words.</p> <p>Allow for alternative means of showing knowledge – other than in writing (see enclosed handout).</p> <p>Modify the task and expectations. Allow more time for completion of task. Allow student to complete the task in stages. Give feedback at the end of each stage.</p> <p>Interact frequently with student while working on task</p> <p>Allow for partner work Student to work in quiet area Use interests of the student to motivate.</p>

# SPELLING

Difficulties experienced by student	Possible Causes	Assessment Tools	Strategies to try
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can spell only limited number of frequently used and/or irregular words.</li> <li>▪ Relies on phonetic approach - spells through use of sounds, with limited visual recall of word.</li> <li>▪ Omits letters/syllables from words</li> <li>▪ Confusion of spelling rules, not remembering when to add e, drop or double letters etc.</li> <li>▪ Confusion of vowel digraphs (e.g. ferst-first, grate-great, jernee-journey)</li> <li>▪ Reverses letters or sound units e.g. bowl-blow</li> <li>▪ Spells words correctly in one context but not in another.</li> <li>▪ Poor knowledge of word meanings / not aware of base words e.g. <u>fright</u> in frightening</li> <li>▪ Not using analogy (using words already known to spell other similar words).</li> <li>▪ Overgeneralisation of spelling rules, e.g. adding 'e' to end of words unnecessarily.</li> </ul>	<p>Hearing difficulty (Past or present)</p> <p>Poor phonemic awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- not identifying all sounds in words</li> <li>- unable to syllabify or sequence sounds correctly</li> </ul> <p>Poor visual memory makes it difficult to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- recall letter clusters needed to represent sounds</li> <li>- know when a word looks right</li> <li>- know how to correct words</li> <li>- cannot tell when a string of letters is not a word</li> </ul> <p>Has not been taught/or has not learnt specific spelling strategies</p> <p>Poor handwriting (fluent, joined writing lends itself to writing letter clusters and whole words more automatically)</p> <p>Limited output of written work – spelling skills are improved through regular writing practice</p>	<p>Check hearing and for history of glue ear.</p> <p>Check phonemic awareness – ask students to break words into individual sounds <u>orally</u>. 'South Aust. Spelling test' from Peter Westwood's 'Spelling Approaches to Teaching and Assessment' (ACER) Gives age levels.</p> <p>Spelling Analysis Guide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- dictation from 'Spelling in Context' by Smith and Peters. Analyse type of errors to guide instruction</li> </ul> <p>Spelling Analysis sheet from 'Word Matters' by Fountass and Purnell (Analyses spelling errors into specific categories, e.g. common words, long vowel sounds, adding suffixes etc.)</p> <p>Teacher-made tests</p> <p>Writing samples</p> <p>Teacher observations</p>	<p>Demonstrate how to identify and then write the sounds of a word.</p> <p>Use "look, cover, write, check" for learning irregular words (Students with poor visual memory may benefit from stating the letter names as they write)</p> <p>Use CHIMP Strategy as outlined in "Spelling Recovery" by Jan Roberts (ACER)</p> <p>Model word study skills - how to select most effective strategies for learning words. (e.g. recognise if the word is phonetically regular, applying rules such as doubling letters, dropping the e etc.)</p> <p>Important that student writes the word, not just state the letters when learning new words.</p> <p>When correcting write whole word again.</p> <p>Encourage students to write frequently. Teacher to accept some invented spellings.</p> <p>Teach spelling in situations other than the spelling lesson. Students to learn own list of words or those for topics being studied – need for relevancy and practice.</p> <p>Limit number of words to be learnt</p> <p>Ensure high frequency words are 'solid' before moving on to more difficult words</p> <p>Daily practice of new words.</p> <p>Weekly testing may be needed.</p> <p>Revise and 'overlearn' with games or word puzzles</p> <p>Use mnemonics (encourage students to find own way of remembering)</p> <p>Student to keep at hand own list of words s/he finds difficult.</p> <p>Student to monitor own progress, recording new words learnt</p> <p>Encourage neat handwriting.</p>



## LANGUAGE / COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Difficulties experienced by student	Possible Causes	Assessment Tools	Strategies to try
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor comprehension</li> <li>• Doesn't answer the question asked</li> <li>• Poor word order</li> <li>• Grammatical errors - particularly verb tenses and pronouns</li> <li>• Word searching – can't find the appropriate word</li> <li>• Use of non specific words e.g. overuse of 'doing' 'thing'</li> <li>• Unable to stay on topic</li> <li>• Poor interactive skill – does not use appropriate social language</li> <li>• Does not understand / use appropriate body language</li> <li>• Poor sequencing and coherence</li> <li>• Many revisions - half sentences, starting again</li> </ul>	<p>Refer to <b>General Comprehension</b> Section</p> <p>Delayed/disordered language development</p> <p>Poor word retrieval</p> <p>Poor vocabulary</p> <p>Poor pragmatic skills i.e ability to use language for different purposes/contexts</p> <p>Poor organisation</p> <p>Inadequate grammar</p> <p>Limited experiences</p> <p>Low intellectual functioning</p>	<p>Record of Oral Language - analysis of errors</p> <p>Tell Me procedure or other story retell</p> <p>Tape the student while speaking to listen more carefully to sentence structure and use of vocabulary</p> <p>General observations, e.g student cannot find a word but recognises it when he hears it.</p> <p>Refer to Pragmatic Observations Checklist (appended)</p> <p>*Language for Learning" checklist available from Oz Child ph:96952200 gives a fuller guide to observing skills described here.</p>	<p>Modelling and expansion techniques</p> <p>Use of predictable, repetitive sentences.</p> <p>Talk about interesting pictures.</p> <p>Games to practise tense/pronouns e.g. Yesterday I <b>went</b> to the beach and I <b>saw</b> a ship. Then I <b>built</b> a sandcastle. <b>He</b> likes pizza and <b>she</b> likes chips.</p> <p>Build up word links/ retrieval skills by working in groups, categories, associations</p> <p>Modelling and role play</p> <p>Practise narrative using simple sequences and building up to more elaborated stories. Use of sequence pictures, comic strips and books without text.</p> <p>Many language activities and games can be found in "Time for Talking" by Love and Reilly and "W.A. First Steps – Oral Language Resource Book"</p> <p>Allow extra time for student to formulate answers.</p> <p>Provide opportunity for a daily chat with an adult or older student.</p>

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## GENERAL COMPREHENSION

Difficulties experienced by student	Possible Causes	Assessment Tools	Strategies to try
<p>Missing / not following verbal instructions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not understanding what questions mean / what information is needed</li> <li>▪ Unable to answer written questions correctly</li> <li>▪ Difficulty in summarising and recognising key points</li> <li>▪ Difficulties with abstract concepts and making inferences</li> <li>▪ Cannot form correct conclusions</li> <li>▪ Does not realise s/he has misunderstood and therefore cannot ask for clarification</li> <li>▪ Difficulty starting and / or completing tasks</li> <li>▪ Slow worker</li> <li>▪ Short attention span unless interested in task</li> <li>▪ Appears not to be listening attentively</li> <li>▪ Easily distracted</li> </ul>	<p>Hearing problem</p> <p>Poor auditory processing and short-tem auditory memory skills affect student's ability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to take in so much information at once (soon 'overloaded')</li> <li>- in recalling what was heard</li> <li>- to follow instructions in correct sequence</li> </ul> <p>Long term memory deficit – cannot recall and build upon past learning without much revision</p> <p>Language difficulties, especially in receptive area (but difficulties in expressive area can prevent student showing how much s/he really understands)</p> <p>Limited vocabulary</p> <p>Difficulty in linking ideas and seeing 'whole picture'</p> <p>Limited experiences to draw upon and make connections</p> <p>Low intellectual ability limiting reasoning skills.</p> <p>ADD or ADHD (attends too readily to other stimuli)</p> <p>Malnourishment (e.g. no breakfast)</p>	<p>* Ensure student's hearing has been checked.</p> <p>Digit recall test (provided)</p> <p>Sentence repetition (provided)</p> <p>PROBE – Reading Comprehension Test (3 level questioning)</p> <p>Teacher made tests including questions, multiple choice, cloze etc.</p> <p>Discussion with student about what s/he understands.</p>	<p>Speak slowly and clearly</p> <p>Limit number of instructions at once</p> <p>Encourage student to ask for instructions to be repeated or clarified if not understood</p> <p>Teacher to evaluate own directions and questions – are they explicit and unambiguous?</p> <p>Emphasise important points. Students to repeat instructions before beginning work.</p> <p>Reduce directions to steps – student completes a step before being given directions to next.</p> <p>Seat student at front of room.</p> <p>Ensure student is attending before beginning</p> <p>Try to maintain some eye contact to ensure engagement.</p> <p>Reinforce student for maintaining attention.</p> <p>Give outline of lesson</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explain purpose / key ideas</li> <li>- Relate new learning to students experiences</li> <li>- Review what was taught in previous lesson</li> <li>- Teach new vocabulary</li> </ul> <p>Stop occasionally to check comprehension before moving on.</p> <p>Provide visual aids (charts, lists, pictures etc), alongside verbal information</p> <p>Remove distracting stimuli in immediate surroundings.</p> <p>Peer helpers. Working in pairs / small groups</p> <p>Allow more time for processing / responding.</p>



# Short Term Auditory Memory - Digit Recall

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State the digits at one-second intervals. Repeat the digits if the student is unsuccessful at first attempt but record the fact that repetition was necessary.

## Digits Forward

Series	Trial 1	Trial 2
2	3 - 6	7 - 4
3	4 - 9 - 2	8 - 2 - 1
4	8 - 3 - 6 - 5	4 - 9 - 3 - 7
5	2 - 9 - 4 - 8 - 6	6 - 1 - 5 - 3 - 8
6	7 - 1 - 9 - 3 - 8 - 2	3 - 2 - 6 - 9 - 4 - 8
7	4 - 3 - 6 - 2 - 5 - 8 - 1	9 - 4 - 3 - 7 - 2 - 6 - 5
8	5 - 2 - 7 - 8 - 1 - 9 - 3 - 4	2 - 5 - 8 - 1 - 9 - 4 - 7 - 3
9	8 - 3 - 2 - 9 - 5 - 1 - 7 - 4 - 6	7 - 3 - 9 - 5 - 1 - 8 - 2 - 4 - 6

## Digits Backwards

Series	Trial 1	Trial 2
2	7 - 5	8 - 2
3	6 - 4 - 9	7 - 3 - 1
4	3 - 7 - 8 - 2	2 - 6 - 9 - 4
5	6 - 5 - 2 - 8 - 9	4 - 2 - 5 - 8 - 3
6	2 - 7 - 4 - 8 - 1 - 5	9 - 4 - 2 - 9 - 7 - 3
7	8 - 4 - 2 - 6 - 9 - 1 - 3	1 - 8 - 2 - 4 - 6 - 5 - 3
8	9 - 3 - 5 - 1 - 8 - 2 - 4 - 7	7 - 5 - 3 - 1 - 8 - 4 - 9 - 2

Score is the highest number of digits repeated without error on either trial

Forward total (F) + Backward total (B) = Total Score

AGE	Score (total)
5.0 - 5.9	5
5.10 - 6.5	6
6.6 - 7.5	7
7.6 - 9.1	8
9.2 - 11.1	9
11.2 - 14.1	10
14.2 - 15.1	11
15.1 - above	11 or above

# Memory for Sentences

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Procedure:** Tell the student, “I want you to say something for me. Say ‘big boy’ (or ‘big girl’) Now say, “I am a big boy (or girl)” Now say .....

1. I went into town.
2. Mum is in the car.
3. I am going home.
4. I went outside to pick some flowers.
5. We are going to buy some lollies.
6. Jack likes to feed the little puppies.
7. Jane wants to build a big castle for her cubby house.
8. Tom has lots of fun playing ball with his sister.
9. Mum asked Kerry to bring the brown dog in the house.
10. Fred asked his father to take him to see the clowns in the circus.
11. Billy has made a beautiful boat out of wood with his sharp knife.
12. Mum bought Susie a chocolate ice-cream cone after the movie yesterday.

If the student hesitates, urge him to try by asking him to “say it.” For objective scoring, it is not permissible to repeat the sentence. Stop testing after 3 consecutive failures.

**Scoring:** Misarticulations and contractions do not count as errors. Omissions, substitutions or additions of words are errors. Changes in word form or word order are also considered as errors.

The test score is the number of sentences repeated without error. For qualitative interpretation, the student’s response should be transcribed.

Norms	Age	Median Score
	4-0	5
	4-6	6
	5-0	7
	5-6	8
	6-0	8.5
	7-6	9
	8-6	10
	9-6	11

# Phonological Awareness Test

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Syllabifying

Demonstrate how to listen for syllables by clapping out child's name and allow some practice with other words such as picnic, fantastic, holiday, television.

Clap out these words for me:

monkey \_\_\_\_\_ (2) kangaroo \_\_\_\_\_ (3)  
alligator \_\_\_\_\_ (4) fish \_\_\_\_\_ (1)  
koala \_\_\_\_\_ (3) tiger \_\_\_\_\_ (2)

## Rhyme Detection

Demonstrate how to listen for rhyming words. Give examples such as: jam – lamb, coat – boat etc.

Listen to these words and tell me if they rhyme: hat – bat \_\_\_ test – west \_\_\_  
man – gun \_\_\_ name – game \_\_\_ fine – like \_\_\_ stamp – plant \_\_\_ cold – hold \_\_\_

## Rhyme Production

Here are some words that rhyme ...bat - fat. Another word that rhymes with these is hat. Can you think of another? Help the child if necessary. Give several examples.

Now it's your turn. Think of a word that rhymes with;

Go, low \_\_\_ hot, not \_\_\_ can, tan \_\_\_ keep, heap \_\_\_  
night, fight \_\_\_ June, soon \_\_\_ head, bed \_\_\_ hill, will \_\_\_

## Initial sounds

Tell me the sound you can hear at the start of these words, e.g. I can hear b at the start of ball. (If child states letter name explain that you want to know the sound it makes)

fish \_\_\_ jam \_\_\_ sun \_\_\_ monkey \_\_\_ garden \_\_\_ toast \_\_\_ house \_\_\_  
log \_\_\_

## Final sounds

Listen and tell me what sound you can hear at the end of these words.

Tap \_\_\_ roof \_\_\_ big \_\_\_ mouse \_\_\_ came \_\_\_ fan \_\_\_ sack \_\_\_

## Segmentation

Demonstrate how to break a word into separate sounds. Allow some practice.

Say the sounds of these words slowly to me.

Man \_\_\_ jet \_\_\_ go \_\_\_ cake \_\_\_ light \_\_\_ hand \_\_\_ feet \_\_\_

Jump \_\_\_ sent \_\_\_ soft \_\_\_ clap \_\_\_ still \_\_\_ frog \_\_\_

## Blending

Demonstrate how to blend sounds into a word.

Now you join these sounds I say to make a word.

b..ee \_\_\_ h..ay \_\_\_ l..i..ke \_\_\_ l..a..te \_\_\_ f..l..a..g \_\_\_

sh.. ee.. p \_\_\_ g..r..a..b \_\_\_ l..a..m..p \_\_\_ h..u..n..t \_\_\_

# Reading Interview

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you like reading? Why?
2. What do you read? and When?
3. Do you prefer to read silently or out loud?
4. Do you choose books at the right level? How do you do this?
5. What do you do when you don't understand something?
6. What do you do when you don't know a word?
7. What makes a person a good reader?
8. Do you think good readers ever have difficulties working out words or understanding what they read? What would they do?
9. Do you have any difficulties with reading? Explain.
10. Do you ever - Lose your place? ..... Find your eyes soon get tired? .....  
Find it difficult to read in certain light? .....
11. How would think you could be helped to improve your reading?
12. What could you do to improve your reading?



# Writing Interview

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are you a good writer? \_\_\_\_\_ Why do you think so?
2. What do you like to write about?
3. Do you like to write at home? \_\_\_\_\_ What do you write?
4. What do you do to make your writing better?
5. What don't you like about writing?
6. When you've worked on several pieces of writing, how do you choose the one you'd like to publish?
7. What would you like to do better as a writer?
8. What have you enjoyed most about writing this term/year?

# Pragmatic Observation Checklist

## Sentence Types

Can the child

1. use imperative sentences e.g. Shut the door. Pick up the books?
2. use declarative statements e.g. That book is mine. My dog is naughty.
3. use negative statements e.g. That's not mine. Mum won't cook.
4. ask yes/no questions?
5. ask WH questions?

## Appropriateness

6. Is the student's language relevant to the situation and context?
7. Is the student's language appropriate to the situation and people present?
8. Does the student provide sufficient (but not too much) information?
9. Is the student's language sufficiently polite?
10. Is the student's language sufficiently truthful?

## Discourse and Conversation

Does the student

11. establish eye contact?
12. initiate conversation?
13. respond to conversation?
14. take conversational turns?
15. establish a topic?
16. maintain conversation appropriately?
17. terminate a conversation appropriately?
18. change topics appropriately?
19. honour the new topic (accept the topic change)?
20. correctly use a range of syntactic structures (determiners, pronouns, relative clauses, adjectives)?

## What can the Student do with Language?

Can the student

21. ask for help?
22. label objects?
23. give names to people and animals?
24. offer help?
25. greet people?
26. verbalize a problem?
27. disagree with another?
28. predict outcomes?
29. give directions?
30. tell others they have made an error?
31. suggest action?
32. make choices?
33. speculate?
34. tell jokes and play with language?
35. "talk about talking" (metalinguistics)?
36. open and close phone conversations?
37. tell stories?
38. express needs and feelings?
39. console?
40. deceive?
41. pretend?
42. use pragmatics in reading?

# Considerations for Teaching Students With Special Needs

(with reference to Peter Westwood's lecture on effective teaching and inclusive classrooms)

\* Many students with special needs require **highly structured teaching** which should include

- explicit instruction
- demonstration
- guided practice
- learner involvement
- independent practice
- meaningful connections of content to real life

**Teachers need to;**

- have precise objectives as to what is to be achieved
- give clear instructions and explanations (not too long or complex)
- demonstrate and model
- give manageable steps
- give guided practice with feedback
- use descriptive praise
- use effective questioning
- revise/revisit work
- adapt instructions to individual needs
- provide WAIT time for responding to avoid student learning how to avoid answering questions

Research suggests that **effective teachers do the following:**

- have a well managed classroom
- impose structure on the content to be covered
- have high expectations of what each student can achieve
- use effective strategies
- present new material in easy steps
- use a variety of teaching methods and resources
- monitor students closely
- monitor their own performance
- adapt instructions and re-teach
- explore topics in a variety of ways (visual, kinaesthetic etc)
- consider student seating and grouping

**Ways to modify** in order to assist students with special needs

- simplify and restate instructions
- use more descriptive praise
- reward differently
- set shorter term goals
- monitor more closely than others
- give more guided practice
- accept a different quality and quantity of work
- ask questions at different levels of complexity
- make arrangements to help student work more independently
- have realistic outcomes
- vary assessment procedures if appropriate
- consider other assistance that may be needed
- consider adaptations that need to be made to content, method, resources, class organization and time allocation

# Reading Strategies

## **Before Reading Strategies**

**Aim:** To prepare the brain for reading  
Preparation involves much discussion

Reading is an active process so we need to consider:

- Why am I reading?  
Are you reading a story or reading to get information?  
If you have to get information what will you be expected to do with it? Answer comprehension questions?  
Summarise it?  
Follow the instructions?  
Note the main points?
- What is the text about?  
Here you can use such things as the title, headings, subheadings, illustrations or skim reading the first few pages to help you work out what the text will be about.
- What do I know already about the topic?  
It helps if you can add new information to what you already know. If you already know something about a subject then you have hooks on which to hang the new information – you have more opportunity to make sense of it.
- How will I go about reading?  
There are lots of different ways to go about reading. Some ways might suit you more than others.
  - Will you listen to yourself read and make a picture of the information in your mind?
  - Will you add to or change the picture that you have already in your mind?
  - Will you try to work out the meaning of new words you come across or guess and read on?
  - Will you go back and reread a section if it isn't making sense?

## **During Reading Strategies**

**Aim:** To self-monitor reading and recognise point of miscomprehension.  
To focus on details or concepts that are relevant to the purpose for reading.

Reading is an active process where we need to understand what is being read at the level of the word, sentence, the section of the whole text. We need to consider:

- Where will I pause or stop for a short time to think about what I have read? Try pausing at the end of a sentence or a paragraph or the end of a section to see which helps you to remember what you have read.
- When you come across a new word will you try a few guesses and see which one makes the most sense?
- Will you listen to yourself read in your mind just like you were reading aloud?
- How will you use punctuation to help you work out the meaning of a sentence?
- Will you make a picture in your mind from the information you have read? You can change this picture with any new information you find. If this strategy works for you, it sometimes helps if you describe to another person the picture you are getting in your mind.
- Will you imagine that you are in the story or the time that you are reading about? You can ask yourself how you would feel, what you would see or do.
- If you start to lose the meaning of what you are reading, will you go back to the part you did understand and then reread the harder bits?

- Will you ask yourself questions while you are reading the text? You could ask questions such as ‘What will happen next?’ or ‘What has this told me?’
- Will you need to remind yourself of why you are reading and how you are going to go about reading? This can help you keep on track when you feel you are losing concentration.

### **After Reading Strategies**

**Aim:** To reflect on, and respond to text

To select, organise and use relevant information for a specific purpose.

It is tempting to skip these strategies but they are important to help you check how much you understand and remembered of what you have just read. They also help you think about which reading strategies helped you to read so that you can use them again or try other ones in other reading activities. Think about these:

- What did I learn from the reference book or what was the story about?
- How well did the writer set out the information or story to help you to understand?
- What reading strategies helped you while you were reading?
- Did you find out anything new or unusual?
- Why did the writer write this material?
- How will I go about remembering the information? You could try these remembering strategies:
  - Describe the main ideas briefly
  - Connect the new information to what you already know
  - Draw a picture of the ideas
  - Draw an ideas map of the ideas
  - Think about how you might use these ideas in the future
- What new words did I meet in the text? When might I use these words in the future?
- What words did I find hard to read?

### **\*\*\*Acknowledgement**

These strategies were devised by Dr. John Munro, Education Faculty, Melbourne University.

# Teaching Approaches to Support Students in their Understanding of Text

Students need to be guided through texts to develop their reading skills and to help them gain meaning from what they read.

## Strategies to help students include:

- Introduce the text with a specific focus, e.g. ‘This text explains how ...’ or ‘This is a persuasive text about ...’.
- Give some background information on the topic. Explain key words and specific terminology.
- Draw information from the students about what they already know.
  - prior knowledge is a powerful tool, especially when trying to get the deeper levels of comprehension.
- Ask students to predict (where possible) what information might be found
  - A risk-taking environment will promote further thinking.
- **Guided reading** involves students reading a manageable chunk of a text, a few paragraphs or pages at a time, and looking for specific information as they read. Discuss the passage and refer back to the text to draw out the writer’s intention and implied meaning and to locate important details. Small group work is an ideal way of developing these skills.
- **Shared reading** involves the entire class seeing the enlarged text and can be used to demonstrate how we make links for interpretive and implied comprehension.
- **Reading to** involves the teacher reading to the class and then asking questions of the text which delve into the 3 levels of comprehension. Discussion after reading, making connections between text already read, prior knowledge and new information leads to deeper thinking about text.
- Read questions with the students before the text is read so that they know what information to read for. Teach them to skim the text to find a name, a description, a particular piece of information that is asked for in the question.
- Allow students the opportunity to ask the meaning of words, or to gain clarification of concepts and ideas, after reading the text.
- When giving tests or research tasks, consider the instructions and questions you give;
  - Read through them with students to ensure they understand what to do and what the questions mean
  - Rephrase the questions if necessary
  - Consider alternative ways of allowing students to demonstrate their understandings
- Continually check that students have gained meaning from their reading
  - don’t assume they have understood
  - they will not readily admit they haven’t.

# General Consideration for Improving Spelling

## **Spelling is Part of All Curriculum Areas**

Students need to learn about words – structure and meaning in all learning areas.

## **Understanding about Spelling**

It is essential that students understand specific information about spelling to assist their word-solving strategies (more about this later)

## **Spelling Approximations**

Students must be encouraged to approximate and experiment with spelling. This does NOT mean incorrect spelling is acceptable.

## **Strategies**

It is essential that students are taught a number of strategies to aid word solving.

## **Resources**

Students must be taught HOW to use a range of useful spelling resources.

## **Proof Reading**

Encourage students to proof read their own and others' spelling. This will develop a critical attitude and responsibility for correct spelling.

## **Integrate Spelling with Writing**

Frequent writing opportunities will provide the most valuable application of spelling knowledge.

## **Demonstrate**

Teachers should demonstrate a commitment to correct spelling and foster an interest in words.

## **Words**

The spelling program should include the study of a wide selection of words

- students should be involved in selecting which words they require
- words should be related to meaningful events, topics, tasks and subjects
- students should develop (and have access to) a number of word lists – personal, class, home.

# Understanding About Spelling

## Visual Information

Students must be encouraged to look at words carefully to find critical/familiar features. Visual memory will assist them to reproduce words with uncommon letter patterns.

Strategies to use: Have-a-go, Look-say/cover/write check

## Morphemic Information

Students should know that words with a common visual pattern e.g. nation, national are connected in meaning. Sometimes only parts of words are connected in meaning e.g. telephone, television.

Morphemic knowledge involves an understanding of affixes and suffixes e.g. necessary, unnecessary and play, played.

## Phoneme/Grapheme Relationships

Students must have knowledge about sound/symbol correspondences, however, attempts to spell on the basis of sound alone will be of limited success.

E.g. ee (sound) can be represented with see, money, he, people, happy.

ea (symbol) can have different sounds as in ready, great, leaf

## Patterns

Students need to learn that our language is not 'phonetically' regular, but that it is highly predictable. Most words contain a predictable sequence of letters such as tion, dge, ious.

Strategies to use – Word sorting. Categorising.

## Rules and Generalisations

Teach students rules and regulations only when they have adequate interactions with words to understand HOW the rules and generalisations apply.

## Mnemonics – Memory Aids

These are trick ways of remembering words.

e.g. You HEAR with your EARS, a PIECE of PIE.

Encourage students to find their own ways of remembering words.

## Resources

- Provide students with a variety of resources – different dictionaries, thesaurus, charts, word books
- Encourage students to have personal word banks, dictionaries
- Make collections of words related to – topics, themes, news, community



# Alternative Ways to Respond to text and Present Knowledge about a topic

1. Draw a map or plan based on the text.
2. Prepare a version of the text to be read by younger children.
3. Construct a mobile. (Can be accompanied by an oral presentation the class)
4. Build a model (Can be accompanied by brief written notes or an oral presentation)
5. Create a word puzzle from key words.
6. Design a poster
7. Write a poem based on the text (Can be used for a non-fiction text also)
8. Talk to the teacher about the text.
9. Students select a short passage to read aloud. Consider opportunities for students to get assistance, practice etc.
10. Write a letter to the editor concerning issues raised by the text or the topic being studied.
11. Write a newspaper style story.
12. Present the aspects of the text as a radio play.
13. Prepare a summary, report etc on the text for oral reading and tape-record.
14. Make transparencies or IT presentation (PowerPoint, Kid Pix etc) in response to the text.
15. Change the text into a comic strip.
16. Create a drama presentation or play script based on the text.
17. Arrange a display of artifacts to accompany a text/topic etc.
18. Illustrate the topic, issues etc by using a variety of art techniques.
19. Make an illustrated or annotated time line based on the text.
20. Re-write the text in a different text form.
21. Develop a crossword puzzle.
22. Write a television presentation/commercial. This could then be acted out or videoed.
23. Pretend you are one of the characters in the text and write a letter to the class. This could present the character life story, achievements etc.
24. Make a cumulative summary, review etc by adding a sentence or two as students finish paragraphs, chapters etc.
25. Write a report on a real life event from a personal perspective.
26. Write an alternative version of the text, e.g. what ifs ...
27. Compare and contrast two similar or different events.

- 28.** Construct a game of Trivial Pursuit using events, characters etc from the text in your questions.
- 29.** Run a quiz game with 3 contestants and an announcer using questions about the text or topic.
- 30.** Organise a Treasure Hunt (answering questions from the text to get clues etc)
- 31.** Write a newsletter based on the topic, issues etc.
- 32.** Compile an imaginative diary that may be kept by an historical character.
- 33.** Make a video taped presentation.
- 34.** Write an imaginary letter between two characters.
- 35.** Organise story telling/reciprocal teaching activities for younger students.
- 36.** Plan and make a board game, similar to Monopoly but using a map of the text and events etc.
- 37.** Make a series of cloze exercises. Students could do this for other students also.
- 38.** Make a Choose Your Own Adventure type response. (Could be used to explore hypothetical situations).
- 39.** Interview a character/figure from the text and tape the interview.
- 40.** Jumble the sentences in a story for others to reassemble.
- 41.** Make a set of newspaper headlines based on the text or issue.
- 42.** Make a list of new language from the text or topic.
- 43.** Design a flow chart of events, information etc.
- 44.** Organise a panel discussion of the topic, issues etc.
- 45.** Construct a mind map
- 46.**
- 47.**
- 48.**
- 49.**
- 50.**

This list is by no means exhaustive. The approaches that you take are restricted only by your imagination.

Good Luck.

# Managing Auditory Memory Problems in the Secondary Classroom

- 9 Provide visual back-up for auditory information:
  - written instructions, diagrams, charts
  - checklists e.g. in front of text book
  - students to make a glossary from relevant vocabulary
- 9 Practise note taking activities so that students know to jot down key words and concepts, not grammatical functions
- 9 Use tape recordings of lectures and study groups so that the student can hear them again (independently)
- 9 Keep instructions within the student's memory limits
  - e.g. go to the library and investigate topic
- 9 Provide information in chunks rather than long strings
  - e.g. wait until the student has the appropriate book in front of him/her before you indicate the page and paragraph
- 9 Reduce background noise when giving instructions or information
- 9 Have the students sit at the front of the class, the visual information of lips moving and body language assists auditory processing
- 9 Teach use of timetables for both class and homework schedules
- 9 Ensure the student understands the instructions by either
  - repeating back the instructions
  - repeating instructions to him/herself
- 9 Establish routines
- 9 Ensure the student knows how to ask or indicate the need for repetition of information
- 9 Cue the student that careful listening is needed before you provide the information
- 9 Explain memory difficulties to the student so that s/he can prevent problems by:
  - asking questions
  - “tuning in” more carefully
  - making notes

# Resources

## Commercial Testing Material

Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (one-on-one testing of speed, accuracy and comprehension – suitable for 6 to 13 years)

Test of Reading Comprehension (T.O.R.C.H) in form of cloze activities. Can be administered to whole class, suitable for grades 3 to 10

Word Recognition and Phonic Skills (W.R.a.P.S.) Word recognition test requiring student to select words from a line of similar words.

D.A.R.T A battery of tests that includes listening, viewing, writing, reading. Reading component covers different text types (similar format to A.I.M.)

PROBE test of comprehension. Suitable for early and middle years students. Questions based on three levels of understanding.

Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests – A battery of tests including word recognition, word attack, sentence comprehension.

(All the above materials are available from A.C.E.R.)

## Reference Books

Pre-Referral Intervention Manual – McCarney, Wunderlich and Bauer A most comprehensive reference of strategies for specific difficulties exhibited by students. Silvereye Educational Publication Pty Ltd

Learning Disabilities A – Z Smith and Strick

Reading and Learning Difficulties – Peter Westwood

Numeracy and Learning Difficulties – Peter Westwood

Spelling and Learning Difficulties – Peter Westwood (includes the S.A. Spelling Test)

Commonsense Methods for Children with Special Needs – Strategies for the Regular Classroom – Peter Westwood (Rouledge)

One in Eleven - Gough, Brent and Robinson (Excellent resource for use with language disordered adolescents)

Day-to-Day Dyslexia in the Classroom – Joy Pollock and Elizabeth Waller

Spelling Recovery – Jan Roberts

Spelling in Context – Margaret Peters and Brigid Smith  
A Sound Way - Love and Reilly (Activities to develop phonological awareness)

Time for Talking – Love and Reilly (Activities to develop oral language skills)

Reading for Understanding – Ruth Schoenbach (Strategies for developing comprehension skills)

Blueprints for Thinking in the Co-operative Classroom – James Bellarea and Robin Fogarty (Hawker Brownlow – available Ballarat Books)

Really Useful Stuff for written Language (Books 1,2,3) – Dalwood Assessment Centre, 1 Dalwood Avenue, Seaforth, NSW 2090 (Explicit teaching to guide students through various text types)

All the above texts are available from A.C.E.R. unless otherwise stated.

### **Websites**

Many good ideas are found on Wimmeranet in the Early and Middle Years sites. Go to Literacy site for strategies, resources, assessment and links to other sites for supporting students.

Use search engines for specific areas of interest. A few that have been found this way are:

[www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org) (Learning Difficulties Organisation) Go to LD in Depth, then For Teachers and Teaching Strategies and Techniques.

[www.dyslexiamylife.com](http://www.dyslexiamylife.com) (written by someone who has dyslexia – gives suggestions for helping students)

[www.nathhan.com/audvis.htm](http://www.nathhan.com/audvis.htm) (strategies to assist auditory and visual processing)

[www.voy.com/32297/](http://www.voy.com/32297/) World of Dyslexia Advice Line and Discussion Board

<http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/readquest/strat/> Strategies for Reading Comprehension