

Information for Parents of students with dyslexia

Dear Parents,

Following on from our information evenings for parents of students with dyslexia, we have put together some information on websites/supports which we hope you will find useful:

Dyslexia Courses Ireland

Dyslexia Courses Ireland www.dyslexiacourses.ie was set up by Wyn McCormack, Deirdre McElroy, Deirdre McGuinness and Mary Ball who have been working in the field of dyslexia for many years. The support is offered through courses within the school setting and on-line information. Their website is packed full of information and advice in 18 down-loadable factsheets which cover everything from an explanation of dyslexia, understanding the assessment, developing reading and comprehensive skills, mathematics and dyscalculia, languages, educational choices, assistive technology and tips in the Leaving Cert. Details of their upcoming study workshops for senior cycle students with dyslexia are as follows:-

STUDY WORKSHOP FOR SENIOR CYCLE STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA

Wednesday 4th January Royal Marine Hotel, Dun Laoghaire 9.30 – 1.30

Saturday 11th February Talbot Hotel, Stillorgan 9.30 – 1.30

Students with dyslexia may experience difficulties with organisation, reading, memory and learning, note-taking, writing and spelling. They may find it hard to show what they know in exams due to misreading questions and poorly structured answers. The workshop covers strategies that help the student to achieve and which also target their specific difficulties. It is particularly useful for those students who do not qualify for additional teaching support and who, while taking several higher level subjects, are struggling to achieve their potential due to their dyslexia. Since September 2016 five workshops involving 80+ students have been held. In feedback over 95% of those present said the course had given them at least 6 practical study strategies that they could put into immediate use. In particular they mentioned the following strategies as being very helpful: Mindmaps, Venn diagrams, planning essays, the strategy for Paper 1 in English, time management and Latin & Greek roots as a way to develop vocabulary.

Topics covered in the workshop include

- Organisation and goal setting.
- Reading and comprehension skills.
- Note-taking, memory and learning strategies.
- Writing techniques, in particular focussing on Paper 1 English in the Leaving Certificate. This includes understanding the question being asked, structuring answers, and choice of essay.
- Project Maths.
- Useful resources including websites/Apps on study, exam preparation, on-line tutorials, subject specific revision notes.

The cost is €50 per student.

Presenters

Wyn McCormack is a former guidance counsellor and special education teacher, who has designed and presented courses on dyslexia for teachers, parents and students since 1996. She is the author of the *Factsheets on Dyslexia at Second Level* (2014), *Lost for Words, a Practical Guide to Dyslexia at Second Level* and co-author of *Dyslexia, an Irish Perspective*.

Deirdre McElroy has worked for a number of years as an educational psychologist with NEPS. Before that she taught Mathematics and History to Leaving Certificate Higher level. She has a Masters in Special Education and has worked as a resource teacher.

For full details and booking form contact Wyn at wynmccormack@sky.com, www.dyslexiacourses.ie, E: wynmccormack@sky.com, M: 0872582345.

This a copy of Factsheet 16 from their website which is an incredible resource for parents:-

FACTSHEET 16: HOW PARENTS CAN HELP THE STUDENT WITH DYSLEXIA

Consistent parental understanding, support and interest are vital components for the student's progress. They have a major contribution to make in achieving effective outcomes. However the most important contribution which parents make is to provide a safe and reassuring home.

This Factsheet outlines some ideas on how parents may help. Select the most appropriate at any stage as the students' needs will change over time. As well parents have a limited amount of energy and need to put time in what works best.

Tips on organisation of homework

- Negotiate a homework timetable that takes into account any sports or other commitments. Once agreed, put it up in the study area and expect that it will be kept to. The website www.studentenrichment.ie has templates for timetables and goal setting.
- No distractions such as television or mobile phone.
- Homework should be done at a desk/table, with good light.
- Plenty of space with shelves to organise books and files.
- All necessary equipment that help with good filing and multisensory learning such as pens, pencils, crayons, staplers, punches, highlighters, plastic wallets, index cards, etc.
- Show the student how to colour code their timetable with different colours for different subjects.
- Colour coded files/copies, e.g. red for English, yellow for Maths etc. This could be with a tag or colour stripe.
- Calendar or planner on the wall with key dates marked in such as deadlines for assignments, exams, projects, as well as sports and other commitments.

Tips on routines

- Ensure that the homework journal is used to take down homework in each class of the day.

- If necessary, the student could write in the names of subjects in the journal the night before to make it quicker to take down homework.
- Get the student to use the homework journal to pack the school bag for the next day.
- If homework has not been entered accurately, does the student have the phone numbers/emails of reliable students who could be contacted?
- Is there a school network which might have homework tasks listed on it?
- Negotiate that the student does a weekly 'housekeeping' session where the bag is checked and notes are filed.

Communication with the school

Good communication between the school and parents is an invaluable support and can be fostered by the following:

- Ensure each teacher is aware of the difficulties the student may face. This could be done by sending the summary of the report or key points from it.
- If a teacher is absent for a period of time, send the summary into the substitute teacher.
- If the student does not read fluently aloud, make sure teachers are aware of this before the student enters the school in September in 1st year.
- Monitor the homework journal for teacher comments and use it yourself to communicate with teachers.
- Ask teachers for written notices of events.
- Inform yourself about who is the key teacher to contact about supports such as accommodations in exams or subject choice.
- Inform the school if the student is stressed or homework is taking an excessive amount of time.
- Ask if the student could sit in the front of the class if it helps with concentration.
- Be informed about educational choices such as subject choice at school, types of Leaving Certificate programmes such as the LCA, exemptions from the study of Irish or a third language, reasonable accommodations in state and school examinations and be ready to act as an advocate for the student to access appropriate supports.
- Suggest through the Parents Association that the school organise an in-service for teachers on dyslexia and/or a talk for parents on how to help students with dyslexia.

Tips to help with reading

- Reading is a key skill at second level. Parents can foster it by ensuring the student reads for about 20 minutes every day. Paired reading may help or reading books with an appropriate reading level. The school library or local library may have literacy reading schemes with books with more adult content but which have been abridged and vocabulary simplified.
- Reading should continue through the summer, otherwise reading may regress.
- Listen to tapes of books on long car journeys so they are not missing out on the stories their peers are accessing through reading.
- Dyslexia Action has published a book Dive in – a book guide for the reluctant and dyslexic readers which gives guidance on books that might engage the reluctant reader as well as a guide for parents called Reading hints and tips for parents of reluctant and struggling readers. Website: www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk.

Tips for helping learning

- Be in the background when homework is being done to monitor that it is done effectively and to help sort any difficulties out. This should reduce as routines become established. Is the homework of good quality? Is the layout and writing clear?
- Help them develop memory strategies. Students with dyslexia must make the material 'their own' to get it into long term memory. Receiving information in one channel such as

language and expressing it in another such as a mindmap helps information transfer from working to long-term memory. Possible learning activities include talking, listening, debating, answering questions, drawing timelines or mind-maps, visualising, creating mnemonics or making up cards with key facts.

- If there are difficulties, don't do the homework for the student. Teachers need to be aware if students cannot cope.
- If teenagers are not feeling confident, they may be defensive and reluctant to accept help. Ask them for their ideas on how you can help. Possible strategies to help include:
 - Test new vocabulary which has been learnt.
 - Listen to the student explain a new topic which has been learnt.
 - Ask questions based on the textbook or revision book.
 - Help with the planning of an essay.
 - Show them how to make clear concise notes with bullet points, colour, numbering of points and headings. Then make sure the notes are filed.
 - Get tapes of texts for English, so that they can hear and read the text at the same time.
 - Some educational publishers make digital copies of textbooks available. (See Factsheet 15)
- Revision books can help by giving access to keypoints for learning. There are also websites that have on-line tutorials and revision notes available in different subjects. They are listed on Factsheet 17 for students.

Tips for home life

- Help the student be organised in the house. Have consistent routines. Make lists of jobs and chores to be done.
- Keep a masterfile where all the school reports and assessments are held. The assessment report is an important document and may be needed in future years.
- Be informed about dyslexia, read books, attend lectures or courses and talk to professionals so you are aware of what is available and can help.
- Encourage the development of keyboarding skills.

Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology (AT) gives invaluable support. See Factsheet 15. There is so much hardware and software available that it is easy to be overwhelmed by the choice. Ask teachers for advice or get a demonstration/free downloads to find out what is most appropriate and useful.

- These websites help:
 - www.dyslexia.ie
 - www.bdatech.org.uk
 - www.callscotland.org.uk
- UCC Assistive Technology Outreach have online videos showing how to use AT at www.ucc.ie/en/dss/callouts/resources/videos/.
- Dyslexia Association of Ireland (www.dyslexia.ie) and UrAbility (www.urability.com) have courses on AT.

Tips for developing self esteem

Self-esteem means young people feel competent and, when faced with new challenges, they feel that they can achieve. It is fostered by taking interest in their activities and giving genuine praise for achievement.

- Encourage them to partake in activities that will yield success. Focus on their strengths. It might be in sports, drama, music, art, scouts, or voluntary social activities.

- Spend family time together where they contribute and are listened to. Family discussions over meals or on outings can promote social skills and verbal expression. Watch TV programmes, films or the News together and give them an opportunity to express their opinions. Board or interactive games will help develop communication skills, problem solving and decision making.
- Ask them to contribute to decisions about planning holidays or home decoration.
- Be open about the fact the student has learning difficulties. Reassure them that they can talk to you and you will listen and try to help.
- Discuss the assessment with them, judging the amount of information that is appropriate for their stage of development and how much they will understand. By the end of second level they should know how the dyslexia affects their learning and their learning strengths and weaknesses. They will need this information to be able to make appropriate decisions and to maximise learning.

KEY DATES

Beginning for First Year

- Give all teachers a profile of the student's abilities, strengths and weaknesses along with the recommendations on the report. Do this every year.
- Discuss with the school if reasonable accommodations are an appropriate support for the student. If they are, check they are in place for house examinations.

Third Year

- Applications for reasonable accommodations (RACE) in Junior Certificate examination are made in October/November.
- If the student has been granted accommodations for the Junior Certificate, check that they are in place for the Mocks in February.

Third Year or Transition Year

- Apply to NUI (National University of Ireland) for 3rd language exemption if appropriate. If the student is exempt from the study of Irish because of a specific learning difficulty, the third language exemption will be granted. If not exempt from the study of Irish, the criteria for the 3rd language exemption are that the student is at or below the 10th percentile (standard score 81) in two literacy areas.

Fifth Year

- If applying for RACE, keep the scripts of Christmas house examinations to accompany the application.
- The applications forms for RACE for the Leaving Certificate are completed and submitted by the end of May or September prior to the Leaving.

Sixth Year

- Students interested in applying for DARE should make a CAO application by 1st February.
- They should disclose their disability or learning difficulty by correctly filling in Section A of the Supplementary Information Form by March 1st. If they wish to be considered for the DARE scheme, they must tick the Yes box on Question 1 and answer Section A.
- It is the student's responsibility to ensure that Educational Impact Statement prepared by the school (Section B) and evidence of disability (Section C) are submitted to DARE by April 1st .
- It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the CAO are aware of the existence of language exemptions.

- Full details of DARE is available at www.accesscollege.ie.

Further information:

Free Talks in Kildare Libraries

Did you know there are lots of free talks in Kildare Libraries? (see www.kildare.ie/library for a full list of talks. They will be updating their website shortly with next year's talks, so be sure to book ahead as places are limited. There were so many excellent talks this year. Michael Ryan from Peace of Mind Counselling gave a talk about 'Mental Health Management for Teens and Adults with Asperger's, Autism, Dyspraxia, Dyslexia or ADHD (see www.peaceofmind.ie for further information or email michael@peaceofmind.ie. Amy Smyth from the Dyslexia Association of Ireland gave a talk about 'Dyslexia' and told us a very interesting fact – that Microsoft have a special team of people (who all have dyslexia) who are called in to solve any really difficult problems, as they have the ability to think outside the box and come up with solutions that others can't! That is amazing. Dorothy Armstrong from Achieve Occupational Therapy in Celbridge gave a talk about 'Dyscalculia' and how to help a child who struggles with maths (see www.achieveot.ie for further information or call 086-3613376). Finola Colgan from Mental Health Ireland talked about 'The Five Steps to Good Mental Health', which are to 'connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give' in a talk entitled 'You cannot get water from a dry well' (see mentalhealthireland.ie for further details or call 01-2841166).

Association for Higher Education Access and Disability

The Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (www.ahead.ie) is a non-profit organisation working to promote full access to and participation in further and higher education for students with disabilities and to enhance their employment prospects on graduation. AHEAD recently launched their 'Disability Access Map' which is a new interactive online desktop tool which allows you to track your path to college step by step and gives lots of great information and advice about the college application, what you need to do to prepare for college and how to get supports in college. Sign up for regular Newsletters.

The Dyslexia Association of Ireland

The Dyslexia Association (www.dyslexia.ie) offer information and advice on supports available and membership is €40 per year or €20 per year for families on low income. You can drop into their office in Talbot Street between 2.00pm and 5.00pm every Wednesday (ring first to confirm) or call their information line on 01-877-6001. The cost of a Psycho-Educational Assessment through the DAI is €490.00 which includes free membership for one year and the waiting time is about 8-10 weeks. If you are on a low income, the cost is €245.00 and the current waiting time is 5 months. You do not have to be a member of the DAI to avail of this service. Their website also has a list of actors and entertainers who have dyslexia.

The Special Needs Parents Association

This is a national parent-run organisation which provides support and information for families who have children with disabilities and special needs in Ireland, regardless of age or diagnosis. By bringing parents together, they aspire to give parents a voice by promoting improved treatment, education, welfare and acceptance of children on a national level and peer support on a local level. Membership is free and their website www.specialneedsparents.ie contains information on National Support Groups and Organisations.

We hope you will find this useful and if you would like to include any further information on this page, please send an email to the School.

Kind regards,

The Parents Association

