"How can we identify and support students at Waikiki Primary School with Dyslexia?"

Watch video *What is dyslexia?* Kelli Sandman-Hurley

What is Dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a language-based specific learning difficulty which can affect reading, writing and spelling including the interpretation of words, letters and symbols.

As each student with dyslexia is different it is important to identify each student's strengths and weaknesses rather than focusing on a 'one size fits all' approach.

Educational Implications

Dyslexia may cause a deficit in reading, writing and spelling thus affecting academic achievement in all learning areas.

Some students with dyslexia have decreased comprehension as greater emphasis is placed on word identification rather than making meaning from the text.

It is important for schools to recognise the "vulnerability of these students to bullying and the exclusion from peer groups, activity groups and sporting teams that may occur for these students." (Woodcock, Dixon, Tanner, 2013, pp. 88).

Teachers need to provide students with dyslexia with differentiated assessments of the content taught. This is essential as all students should be able to convey their knowledge and understandings of the concepts.

Teaching Strategies

Multi-sensory approach
Research suggests that a multi-sensory approach incorporating visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile strategies are highly recommended for students with dyslexia. (Reid, 2005; Kelly & Phillips, 2011). For example, when the focus is on the alphabet sandpaper, wooden letters or playdough can be used to assist kinesthetic learners in making a connection to what they are feeling to the letter and sound names.

Additional learning time
Working memory and processing time are areas in which teachers are able to enhance with significant changes to the environment. "Key strategies to maximise following instructions include providing visual prompts - gestures, signing, diagrams, timeline, actual examples, desk reminder." (Woodcock, Dixon & Tanner, 2013, pp. 118)

Visual Aids
Visual factors can be modified to cater for students with dyslexia. Research suggests that "changes to the font size, paper colour and amount of text per page" (Dunoon, 2010, pp. 145) can help assist students to track what they are reading. This creates less need for them to rely on their auditory

processing and memory skills as what the teacher is saying or directing them to is already visually prepared. "Key strategies to maximise following instructions include providing visual prompts - gestures, signing, diagrams, timeline, actual examples, desk reminder." (Woodcock, Dixon & Tanner, 2013, pp. 118)

Resources to support students with dyslexia

Letterland uses mnemonics to assist students in remembering the sounds of the alphabet. For example, the letter Z is represented pictorially by a zebra and referred to as "Zig Zag Zebra".

Jolly Phonics is a program that uses a synthetic phonics approach. Students progress through a specific sound order. The order enables students to begin making words early in the program.

The Dyslexia SPELD Foundation is an invaluable resource for teachers and parents in supporting students with dyslexia. The website provides links to useful information, recommended resources to purchase as well as workshops and Professional Learning for parents and teachers.

Dandelion Launchers is a series of 60 books that introduce the sounds of the alphabet in simple, decodable books. Each page has one line of text. This is an ideal reading resource for any phonics reading programme, especially used in conjunction with the Dandelion Readers Initial Phonic Code. Each set contains 4 books which focus on a specific set of sounds and each has a reading game.

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