



# MDA Newsletter

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*Madras Dyslexia Association*

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## IN THIS ISSUE ...

### Strategies for educators

By Mindy Eichorn

Page 1 to 4

### A Ray of Hope :

Page 5

### Children's Page:

Page 6

### News at MDA/Ananya

Page 7

### MDA News Snippets

Page 8

## Strategies for educators : extract from Inclusive Education in India: How to make it a reality in your school! By Mindy Eichorn

Mindy is a special educator working with Destiny Education in Maharashtra. She has a Masters degree in special education from University of Tennessee and has worked with resource rooms in the public schools in the US. She is currently doing her higher education in the U.S. During her stint in India, she worked in the rural areas, training teachers both in special ed and mainstream. As a special education consultant in a developmental pediatrics unit she has evaluated Indian children using formal and informal assessment tests. She talks about inclusive education and multi sensory education as well as individual plans and strategies for students and families.

Mindy believes in inclusion and feels that children with disabilities must have the opportunity to participate fully in all community activities. Right from her school days she has had the experience of seeing severe special ed kids being integrated and that has made a great impact on her. She feels that it is not enough to have a resource room. Its a whole school chain, a mindset to help with a team. It should not be learning support during PT, art or lunch. Learning support should not be viewed as a punishment. It can be done with the core teachers or done after school.

The article we have here for you is part of Mindy's presentation at Samyukth 09 about Inclusive education In India. Though her main focus of the paper was inclusive education in schools she has shared many **strategies for educators** which we present here.

### Some strategies that would help children with difficulties:

#### Behaviour and organizational strategies:

Often teachers ask about child not sitting in his seat, wont have a pencil box or math book. Children who lack organization need to be given a morning or night checklist whenever they pack their bag

**Checklist**

Before I leave for school check

Diary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pencil box	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 sharpened pencils	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eraser	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spectacles	<input type="checkbox"/>
English notebook	<input type="checkbox"/>
English textbook	<input type="checkbox"/>
Math notebook	<input type="checkbox"/>
Math text book	<input type="checkbox"/>
Homework book	<input type="checkbox"/>

A white board marker can be laminated. The checklist can be put on that and can be ticked off. Erase and use it again everyday. The student can check it off and knows what to take. This makes the child more independent.

**Observation:**

An ABC observation is often done to see what the child is doing in the class.

A is antecedents that is what happens before the behavior, B for behaviour, what is the reaction and C is concept planning.

**An example of an observation:**

The class settles down to write, the child opens his pencilbox, finds he has no pencil, he gets out of his seat and finds one, it is his neighbour's pencil. The neighbour says "it's mine" and then the child gets frustrated and he gets up again and the teacher notices him moving around. Teacher asks him to get back to his seat. Why is he out of his seat? Only when you do an ABC checklist can you know what happened. At times another teacher can be asked to do it. A random observation can be done.

**To improve attention:**

Write the names of the students on strips of paper or sticks and put them in a container. When the teacher asks a question, she pulls out the stick and calls out the name on the stick. That child will have to answer the question. This will increase attention and it keeps the children alert as they don't know when their chance is coming.

Many ADHD children keep moving, jiggling their leg or tapping on the desk. They are fidgety and distractible in class. Velcro and clay can be used for this. Give only one side of a small piece of Velcro. They can hold and lightly stroke it, it is tactile and it gives them some sensation. Teachers may say everyone wants one and distracts others. Tell the children that he needs it but they don't. Clay can also be given rolled into a small ball. They can be warned that if it is not used properly

it will be taken away. With practice children use it quite effectively and continue to do their work while they keep stroking it with the other hand.

When a child is not organized an ABC can be done with him. The English teacher says "take out your English text book and turn to page 56." The child isn't sure which book it is. He is still searching in his bag and the teacher has started the teaching and he hasn't yet located the book. Put the name of the books on the side of the books so that he can see it right away.

**Behaviour charts** : are helpful and can be made differently for different children depending on what the behaviours to be worked on and modified are. When a child is not behaving you need to probe about what happened before he came to school. On probing you may find that he had had a rotten morning or had a rotten day at school. If he takes forever to wake up, leaves stuff on the breakfast table, never brings the right books- another laminated chart can be made and the parent is in charge. If he wakes up at the right time, a tick mark or star or happy face is given and he chooses his reward if he has 15 stars or happy faces.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
I woke up at 6:30 am – the first time my mother told me					
I kept my breakfast plate in the kitchen sink					
I packed my bag at 7:00 pm, using my timetable					

**Partner work:**

Sometimes the text book can be quite dry and needs to be made interesting. Example, the subject and predicate are given as word strips. The children are asked to match them and see how many are correct. With manipulation, simple movement and talking, it becomes interesting and then they can move back to the text book.

The same movement can be used with number tiles. Some tiles are given and they are asked to move the tiles and make as many numbers as they can

with them. When the movement is there the attention is sustained and the child is able to work more.

**Graphic Organizers:**

In the Secondary, vocabulary can be taught using a graphic organizer. It will have a definition and synonyms and a box for drawing as well so that the word becomes clear to the child.

Many other graphic organizers can be accessed from this site: <http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/>

Etymology and Part(s) of Speech	Variations, Synonyms, Antonyms
Symbol/Logo/Icon	Definition(s)
Sentence	

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

Houghton Mifflin English  
**Sandwich Chart**

Write your topic at the top. Add details to the middle layers. Add a concluding sentence at the bottom.

Topic:

Detail:

Detail:

Detail:

Concluding Sentence:

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**Anticipation guide:**

Give a little quiz before the lesson. Have them write true or false or a or b for a whole set of statements. Then they read and they are really motivated as they self correct. This is just a way to increase their motivation. They are reading with a purpose and this helps.

**Prior Knowledge Topic Survey  
Anticipation/Reaction Guide**

Instruction: Respond to each statement twice: once before the lesson and again after reading it.

- Write A if you agree with the statement
- Write B if you disagree with the statement

Response Before Lesson	TOPIC: Water	Response After Lesson
	You can survive longer without food than without water.	
	Salt water is the only habitat for plants and animals.	
	Water covers ¼ of the earth's surface.	
	Evaporation and condensation are part of the water cycle.	
	Water is cloudy in nature, so light cannot penetrate.	
	Salt is obtained from sea water.	
	Rain water, or fresh water, should be purified before you drink it. It has a lot of germs and dissolved pollutants.	

**KWL** is a very good strategy for comprehension. It asks "What do you know?", "What do you think you want to know?", "What have you learnt". It can be used in a wide variety of situations from concepts to even statement sums.

**Multisensory methods:**


Children need a Multisensory phonics as well as a Sight words programme. English has many non- phonetic words which are difficult to learn. A cross stitch screen is taken and a paper is put on top. With a red crayon the child writes a word like 'said' on the paper, on the screen. It is written three times with a lot of pressure. Now the paper is bumpy and the word can be traced and it gives a tactile feeling. A sentence can be made using the word 'said'.

Non-phonetic words can also be learnt using the tactile and kinesthetic modalities. The child is made to stand with his left arm out like taking a pledge. The whole word is said as the other hand slides down the arm. Then the word is segmented according to a rhythm. E.g. People has 2 segments P-E-O and P-L-E that is tapped on the upper and lower arm respectively. The whole word is repeated again. The card with the word is also shown. The children decide how they want to break the word for rhythmic breaking. Tactile-kinesthetic strategy works with any word but is better with non-phonetic words.

**The multi sensory method of VAKT** (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, and Tactile): can be used in a wide variety of learning situations.


In Comprehension: they find key words, underline them, colour code and also draw a picture. It can also be used in word problems where schematic representations can be done to show the relationships among the problem parts.

Multiplication tables are a big problem for many children. Children with memory deficits need strategies with visualization and rhythm.



$3 \times 3 = 9$   
Tree x Tree = Line

$8 \times 8 = 64$

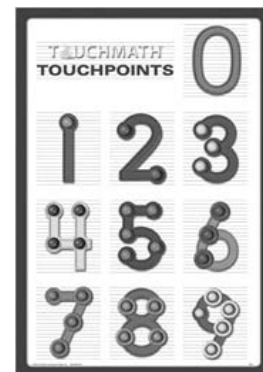


**Skate x Skate =  
Sticky Floor**

(Memorize in Minutes: The Times Tables by Alan Walker)

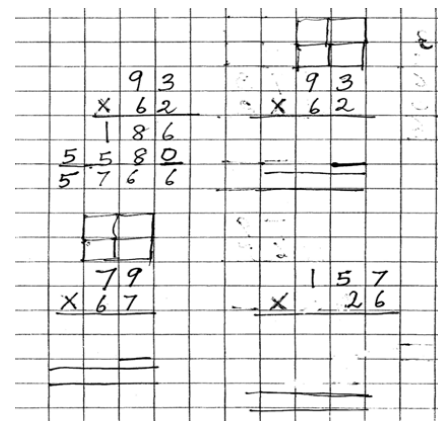
A Mnemonic **FOPS** can also be used for word problems.

- **Find** the problem type.
  - **Organize** the information in the problem using the diagram.
  - **Plan** to solve the problem.
  - **Solve** the problem.
- [http://www.k8accesscenter.org/training\\_resources/mathprimaryproblemsolving.asp](http://www.k8accesscenter.org/training_resources/mathprimaryproblemsolving.asp)



In touch math using pictorial objects each numeral from 1 through 9 has Touch Points corresponding to the digit's value. Young children learn to associate numerals with real values (number quantities).

Some children need a modified work sheet in Maths, see example



**Writing :**

In India, pencil is used by children when they are very young. In the US, for younger children a thicker pencil is used. As an alternative a tubular pencil grip will make it thicker. Some times pre-shaped grips are used.

When the writing is organized it becomes less laborious. The use of graphic organizers helps them with their ideation.

Stick drawings can also be used. Example, the class does a lesson on King Solomon and Queen Sheeba. What they understand is drawn by using stick figures and they verbalise what they drew. The transitional words can be put in a pocket chart and used appropriately. Then the children translate it back to writing.

**Editing:** They are taught to do COPS which is C for Capitals, O for organization, P for punctuation and S for spellings. If while monitoring they notice a spelling error, all the teacher has to say is Cops and then the children know they have to look for their mistake.

# A Ray of Hope

**Divya Rajan shares her story with us**

## Her background

I am a 25 year old female with moderate to severe level of dyslexia (discovered at age 11). Now, I have a double bachelors from a well known institution in America. My degrees were in Environmental science and pre-veterinary. I am currently in the process of becoming a Veterinary surgeon from a top vet institute in London.

## Her difficulties

I could not read, write or understand English let alone any other language. Could not understand anything in math. The addition, subtraction, multiplication, division symbols looked the same to me. Theorems made no logical sense to me. Their existence was my nightmare. Took me a long time to memorize the alphabets. It just looked like disfigured symbols to me. My handwriting was simply unacceptable. I did not understand the concept of writing between the lines because I could not see the line as a straight line in the notebook. It looked slanting. When I read an English sentence, I would not understand the sentence because I was unable to connect the meaning of the first word with the second word with the third word, etc. Not to mention, I could not distinguish between certain alphabets such as b, p and d.

## Some successful strategies

My mother, a doctor herself, studied my problem medically and found that playing a lot of sports will increase blood supply to the brain which is often an excellent method to reduce the effects of dyslexia. I began playing the game of squash when I was in 5th grade. This definitely helped. Apart from physical activity, I spent a lot of time practicing the alphabets. My organizational skills were very poor and my concentration span was about 10 seconds. I decided to divide my time initially into 30 second intervals where for 30 seconds I would concentrate on work and next 30 seconds I would take a break. Every second day I increased it. In 4 months time I was close to concentrating for 25 minutes with a 15 minute interval. Eventually I was able to read 2-3 sentences at a time and then summarize those sentences in a separate notebook. This helped me work on understanding what I had written, my hand writing and my spelling.

## The changes

I could read!! I started recognizing the alphabets. Sentence formations became a little easier. I was able

to read paragraphs and even managed to get through chapters. After 4 years of this constant training, I read my first story book in 9th grade at the age of 14. It was a fantastic moment in my life.

## Strategies still relevant

I have difficulties now if I am mentally very tired. At such a point, I need to stop my work and rest for a short time. Apart from resting, when problems arise, I go back to the basics. I re-organize, and split my work into smaller time intervals. It has always worked brilliantly for me.

## A message for parents

Dyslexia is an obstacle that one needs to get over. It is not a problem that one is forced to live with (like for example a physical disability). All I did was strengthen my weak points and made my strong points stronger. With this, my self confidence automatically grew. If you have any questions, please contact me at [ms.divyarajan@gmail.com](mailto:ms.divyarajan@gmail.com)

## Divya's parents say

Watching 'Taare zameen per', we could relate both to the dyslexic boy in the movie and with the parents (and teachers) in the movie who did not recognize the child had a difficulty. If the problem has been identified in your child, we would suggest that the parents first empathize with the children and truly understand their actual difficulties individually as each child may have his/ her own unique issues. Our daughter's strategies may or may not work for other children because each child has to come up with his or her own way of getting over the disability. It is hard work but is an achievable goal in every single dyslexic child. Our daughter struggled a lot in school and her grades, just like the Taare Zameen Par boy (Ishaan), were very low. But now, after she has got over most of her dyslexia, she is in the process of doing a subject she loves the most. She had the opportunity to experiment with many subjects before she realised her passion in Animal Science. Sport, Yoga, Tai Chi and meditations gave excellent support for her progress. As parents, we could not ask for more and we are proud to say we are the parents of our Divya Rajan.

For any queries, especially on how Tai Chi [which has been scientifically proven to improve functions of the brain] can be introduced to the children, please do mail Divya.

We had a lovely trip to GNANODAYA Printers .They showed how they print.The colours are cyan, magenta, yellow and black. This is known as offset printing. These colours on the 4 plates give all the colours. The room temperature is maintained at 17 to 21 degree celsius so that the print comes good and glossy. The chiller for the printing machine is used by adding distilled water with industrial chemicals so that the water does not evaporate. Then they showed us with the magnifying glass the words are made of dots. Then they took us to the place where the paper gets cut. The paper cutting machine has 102 cutting styles.The program of cutting is already installed and it works automatically in a quick way. The printing machine is capable of printing 1,2 or 4 colours at a time.The density meter helps to see the paint is uniform or not. Then they showed us how to make the envelopes with a template.Then we saw how the papers are folded, in an hour 15 thousand sheets are folded. Then they showed us how the pamphlets are pinned. This machine can pin 2000 copies in an hour. We were very lucky to get the Deccan Chargers team cricket special album. I was very happy and thrilled when I got this book.I enjoyed the trip.



By  
Rishikesh Pratap  
XII- NIOS

Continued from Page 4:

**Identification:**

There are many checklists available for identifying children with specific learning difficulties and sending them for assessments and help. Many such checklists are available on the Internet too. Here we have one set of checklists.

**Teacher checklist**

Please circle one: **Y=Yes , most of the time**  
**N=No,never**  
**S=Sometimes,occasionally**

**Attention**

- The child is easily distracted Y N S
- The child is inattentive Y N S
- The child fidgets with his /her hands or feet or squirms in his/her seat Y N S
- The child has a short attention span Y N S

**Behaviour:**

- The child loses things that are necessary for tasks or activities (pencils,assignments,books)? Y N S
- The child blurts out answers instead of waiting for his/her turn Y N S

**Learning**

- The child has learning difficulties in the following area(s):
  - Reading Y N S
  - Reading Comprehension Y N S
  - Writing/Handwriting Y N S
  - Math Y N S
  - Spelling Y N S

**Play**

- The child runs or climbs excessively, where it is inappropriate Y N S
- The child mingles with other children Y N S

## NEWS AT MDA/ ANANYA

### **Ananya goes double shift:**

The biggest excitement of the year for us has been Ananya going on 2 shifts. The think tank has been brainstorming and deliberating for a while before the experiment was decided to be carried out. Why the shift? It was done primarily to help more children with difficulties. With the present space we were unable to house more than 80 children. Many admissions had to be refused just because we had inadequate space. So a simple formula was arrived at where the Juniors would work in the morning shift and the Seniors in the afternoon shift. Initial apprehensions were there like in any change but the settling down process is on.

### **Soroptomist International competitions:**

It is the time of the year again when our children get to participate in competitions which are organized exclusively for the learning disabled. 34 of our children participated in many of the competitions with great verve and enthusiasm. 2 children won in the Art competition, 1 in singing and 1 group for group singing. In oratorical a student got a special mention from the judges even though she didn't win a prize. The dramatics group put up a creative skit on the flying carpet with make do costumes and props.

### **NIOS field trips:**

Our NIOS children have been at their active best. They made a visit to a serviced apartment to see how it functions. Then they got an opportunity to see how a printing press works. They each came back with a lovely hard bound copy of a cricketing book. Our young bakers have been baking more and more tasty cookies and cakes.

### **Mainstreamed:**

Like other years, we have had many children going back to the mainstream this year too. 18 children from the primary went back to mainstream schools. 11 completed their 10<sup>th</sup> std State Board and while 10 have gone back to schools, 1 is continuing here to do his NIOS 12<sup>th</sup>. 5 children passed their 10<sup>th</sup> NIOS and 3 have gone on to do their Plus 2 in school while 1 is continuing with NIOS Senior Secondary and 1 is doing a vocational course. From the NIOS 12<sup>th</sup> batch 3 have gone into college. Parents of older children often report that their children longingly say " Why cant Ananya have a State Board Plus 2 stream ? " Well that may be a thought to pursue!!

### **Teacher training**

Our one month teacher training course had its valedictory function on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August. Lalitha Sai of the Hindu gave away the certificates and also covered the aspects of teacher training in The Hindu Downtown 22.8.10 and 29.8.10. Mr. Maheish MDA committee member spoke a few inspiring words along with President Mr. D. Chandrasekhar. Here is what some of that the trainees had to say about the course:

### **Trainee Feedback on workshop:**

"The workshop gave a real insight in to the problems and solutions to the world of dyslexia. It was a real opportunity for me and value it as one the best things that happened in my life"

"Workshop was really above my expectation. I got many ideas about the strategies to help a child with dyslexia. The most valuable treasure I got is the hope that dyslexic child can be a successful person and the efforts to help the child is really worthwhile"

# MDA News Snippets

- 15.4.2010& 16.4.2010 Math lab workshop conducted for Ananya teachers by Mr. Ramachandran , Freelance Maths lab consultant
- 19.4.2010 Half day workshop on dyslexia in the teacher training workshop of Southern regions organized by Shaurya Army School at Secunderabad
- 15.4.2010 to 23.4.2010 Advanced Teacher Training programme of teachers who have worked in the field
- 19.4.2010 to 24.4.2010 Junior / Senior summer workshop for students at Ananya
- 3.6.2010 to 6.6.2010 Workshops for teachers of Ananya conducted by: Dr. Balaji Occupational Therapist and Lakshmi Radhakrishnan
- 14.6.2010 Ananya starts in full swing 2 shifts into operation. MDA Office starts functioning at 15, Sambashivam St.
- 19.6.2010 Attended the CIOSA workshop- Subha.V and Vilasini.D
- 24.6.2010 Conducted a 4 hour session on LD and remedial intervention in the National Seminar on LD organized by Fathima Memorial Training college Kollam
- 13.7.2010 to 15.7.2010 Workshop on Dyslexia for trainees of the KG teachers at P.S.B.B , by Subha.V and Vilasini.D
- 16.7.2010 Video Conference @ Loyola College organized by Vidyasagar and the US consulate , Chennai chaired by Julie Viens on MI attended by Geetha.R and Vilasini.D
- 19.7.2010 Teacher training programme commenced @ Tamara Hall GN chetty Road
- 24.7.2010 Soroptomist International competition at MCTM 34 students participated in art, oratorical, music and dramatics

Our editorial team - Indu Ramesh, Kamala Ramaraj, Shanthi Gopalan

## BOOK POST

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