



# MDA Newsletter

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## *Madras Dyslexia Association*

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#### Announcement

Our next one-month teacher training course will be conducted in July 2011.

Contact our office for details.

### ARE YOU LISTENING?

By Mrs. Lakshmi Radhakrishnan

*"One friend, one person who is truly understanding, who takes the trouble to listen to us as we consider a problem, can change our whole outlook on the world."*

— Dr. E. H. Mayo



"You never listen" is the refrain one hears from every one; mothers to children; children to parents; teachers to students and so on. One can listen with eyes and ears. The signals from body language and verbal language prove that one can communicate and comprehend effectively. Just guttural sounds between two like 'hun' and 'hun hun' can convey meaning to the persons involved. Listening is the ultimate state of awareness.

Listening is an important tool of communication. A good listener is able to focus his attention on the speaker, understand, think and respond properly. Listening skills are essential for both teachers and students. For a student to do well in academics, he has to listen to lectures and take notes; follow instructions and explanations in class. Listening depends on both body language and verbal language. The best teachers are those who are excellent listeners; they are the ones who intuit the needs of the students and act upon them. Through conscious listening teachers can intuitively feel the sagging interest among students while they teach. The non-verbal cues and verbal interactions help the teacher to understand the students' state of mind and suitably adapt the communication pattern.

Learning a language begins with listening, then speaking, reading and writing respectively. Listening is as important as speaking when it comes to face to face communication. Speaking and listening work in tandem. To communicate well one has to listen. The most complicated skill of writing is taught last but in the present times, listening gets the lowest priority and writing gets the highest attention. Children are made to write at the K.G. level without any prior pre-writing motor exercises.

### **Misconceptions about listening:**

It is common perception that since we hear, we also listen. Hearing and listening are not synonymous. Hearing is an automatic process by which the sound waves reach the ear and listening is an active process involving our mindsets, interests and needs. We hear since birth. We have no control over what we hear but listening gives us a choice. We can choose not to listen and ignore what the speaker tries to communicate. Listening is a skill which has to be acquired through training. For students this is an important skill which needs to be enhanced for better performance. In this context listening involves understanding and executing. Teachers and parents are facing the problem of making the children listen.

### **What are the factors inhibiting listening?**

- Lack of training in the early years
- Environmental distractions like noise, T.V., etc
- Language deficits – insufficient vocabulary, language skills
- Lack of interest and lack of motivation
- Short attention span
- Noodle thinking leading to day dreaming
- Internal dialogues; preparing to talk before the speaker completes
- Judging and arguing prematurely
- Voice, speed and intonation of the speaker
- Lack of eye contact with the speaker
- Mastery over the subject
- Lack of creative presentation of the topic by the teacher
- Teacher interested in her delivery rather than taking cues from the students regarding their interest and attention levels

### **Listening and Speech and language:**

From speech a student learns to apply letter-sound relationship in the formation of words and later applies to print while reading. If a child is given the word 'kroom' he would be able to read it only if he is familiar with the letter sound rules. If an irregular word like 'ache' is given he may not be able to pronounce it without the help of the teacher. Students listen for information. So, vocabulary, attention and memory are key factors in facilitating listening.

Listening comprehension is a process through which oral instruction/teaching/message is understood by the listener. Students have to understand what is being communicated verbally in class. The pre-requisites for comprehension is the suitable vocabulary to understand the concepts in different subjects and understanding of general vocabulary,

sentences, meanings, idioms, etc. Context, meaning of words is an essential component in comprehension. Students must have age appropriate and subject vocabulary to get the meaning out the teacher's communication.

There are some processes that happen with the senses and some involve the mind. Listening is associated with the mind while hearing, seeing are with the senses. Speaking is a motor activity involving the mind and knowledge gained from the senses. It is important for the mind to build a mental dictionary for speech and print.

### **Role of listening in spelling:**

In developing spelling, listening plays a vital role. The student has to hear the speech sounds, sound patterns, syllables and words. The meaning of words and in context has to be built up. A dyslexic child may hear the word but cannot distinguish the sounds involved therein. In India, English words are pronounced in the manner of their mother tongue. Lack of auditory discrimination ('p' and 'b'), auditory loss (not hearing the end of the word like 'acts' as 'act') and omitting the short vowel sound contribute to the spelling mistakes. A child should be taught to pronounce the word correctly and later combine visual and auditory inputs by showing word cards to enhance the spelling ability.

### **Listening and Attention:**

Teachers are complaining about the short attention span of students. Students of the present times are used to viewing T.V, computer games and other visually stimulating programmes. The verbal interactions with others are minimal. Sending text messages in abbreviated forms is another inhibiting factor in developing language. The present day students need to acquire the skill of listening without moving images.

How to develop this skill? Here the importance of visualization comes in. A teacher has to be aware of these factors:

- ❖ Visualize and verbalize technique is useful in training to develop listening skills.
- ❖ Students should be encouraged to talk on topics in class.

- ❖ Giving the students the duration of listening at the beginning helps. The rate of speaking and the process of understanding the conveyed message are interconnected.
- ❖ Voice modulation is important to the teacher. When the attention wanders due to an attention deficit disorder the teacher should provide the student a seat near her; maintain an eye contact and constantly recall the student's attention to what is being said in the class.

### **Listening and memory:**

Auditory memory is essential in listening process as one has to get the meaning from words heard. For example the math teacher teaches the concept and gives problems to work or she works on the board and simultaneously explaining the process. The students need to follow the verbal instruction and solve the problem. If sequential memory is lacking, then he might skip a step. Developing auditory memory by making them repeat what they heard is essential.

Auditory memory, attention and motivation go hand in hand to get the information correctly. Using information received helps in better retention. Repetition of the concepts helps in long term memory.

### **Pseudo listening:**

Teachers generally like silent students as they think that they are listening. Students may pretend to listen but in fact their minds are wandering. They may be day dreaming. This happens with kids who are not interested in the subjects or due to ADD. Motivating the students to listen can be achieved with some games like:

- ❖ adding a word suitable to the word said 'egg', 'chicken'.
- ❖ Add a sentence: the teacher says a sentence; the student repeats the same and adds a sentence of his own as a sequence.
- ❖ Add a sentence and create a story: this is a group activity where each one repeats the sentence uttered by the previous person and adds his own till a good story is formed.

### **Activities for building listening skills in students:**

Name that sound: Teacher can play bird chirpings, animal sounds, traffic sounds etc and ask the child to name it.

Then combining a vowel and consonant sound, ask them to name the letters; 'laaa'

Make them say the sounds in a word, then split the component sounds. They can remove a syllable and say the word again. 'sun' ; remove 'un' and name the sound that remains.

Make the students listen with closed eyes and then play this game for better perception.

A sentence can be said and the student has to use a synonym, or antonym and create a new sentence.

Auditory closure exercises: teacher gives the first part of the sentence and the student completes it.

Bingo game helps. Give the students a sheet with words in boxes and then say the word once and they have to circle it.

From newspaper take a passage and ask the student to circle the word said by the teacher. Listening to news broadcast on the radio helps.

Mindset is very important for the listener. The teachers can prepare the students in advance about what they are going to teach in 3 stages:

**Stage 1:** ' I'm going to talk on —— this topic'.

**Stage 2:** 'this is what it is ——'. Discuss suitable vocabulary words; concepts using analogies.

**Stage 3:** Recap

### **Listening comprehension passages:**

Teacher says a sentence and questions the children on that for eg: Rama went to the forest with Sita and Lakshmana for fourteen years. "Who", "where", "how long" can be the questions based on the sentence. Passage can be read out and the child questioned on it.

### **Importance of listening in nurturing teacher-student relationships:**

Listening is of great importance in building healthy relationships. It helps teachers *to forge relationships with students*. Teachers have to listen to the difficulties of students, empathize and help.

Since the students are facing increasing problems and have no one to listen to their woes it sometimes results

in depression and behavioral problems. More counselors' help is sought as people are losing the ability to listen effectively. Students are constantly under academic and peer pressures. Parents also pressurize their children and force them to take up a course against their wishes. This career pressure from parents start even when their children are as old as 5 years.

Every teacher has a role as a counsellor. By listening to the students venting out their deep rooted emotional outbursts, one can actually make them calm, think better and take a positive decision. With both parents working long hours, children return to locked homes and get lost in their problems. Parents miss out the signals of distress from their body language and so the steam is built up further. Only a teacher can act as a bridge between the parents and children by her empathetic listening.

***Time has come now for the teachers to realize the role played by listening and the impact it has on the students. They should get trained to listen and help the children enhance their listening skills. This skill helps to develop good academic skills and social skills.***

- ❖ **Listen with your eyes by maintaining eye contact**
- ❖ **listen with your ears by focusing your attention on the speaker**
- ❖ **listen with your body with complete awareness.**

*"Listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force. The friends who listen to us are the ones we move toward. When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand."*

— Karl Menninger

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## **AN ARTIST - AN ENTREPRENEUR**

Namrutha was studying in a CBSE school and was an average student till she reached the 8<sup>th</sup> std. Then she realised she had difficulties with Hindi, comprehension, retention of words and forming sentences. Her English was good but had problems understanding concepts in Maths and Science. She had given up hope and thought she would be a school drop out. It was then that her mother read an article about Ananya in the newspaper. She took her there for an assessment and soon Namrutha was admitted to Class 10 at Ananya.

Namrutha says 'I actually passed the 10<sup>th</sup> Board exams with good marks. The small classroom situation, the individual attention and the no stress atmosphere that I got there helped me. The teachers were really understanding and patient'.

After she left Ananya there was no looking back for Namrutha. She joined Anna Adarsh for her Plus 2 taking Home Science and Dress Designing. Kudos to Namrutha for scoring 91.45 in her 12<sup>th</sup> Board exams and actually standing first in class. She coped admirably as the course was a blend of practicals and theory. With her artistic bend of mind she found Interior Designing very interesting and scored full marks in her practicals for Dress designing.

## **ALUMNI CORNER**

Namrutha took the 3 year course in Visual communication for her under-graduation. According to her the theory portions were tough but she managed to pass. There were subjects like marketing, media studies, printing, publishing, and psychology. After finishing college Namrutha got a job in an advertising agency where she worked for a few months. Her job was to design logos and print advertisements and some done by her have been published in newspapers. Soon Namrutha realized sitting in front of a computer 9-5 was not really her cup of tea.

Global Art, an academy that conducts an international art programme for children from 5-15 years had advertised for franchisees. The aim of the academy is to improve a child's creativity through art. Namrutha's father thought this kind of a job would suit her ideally as she has been attending art classes from the age of 13. She has made some pencil sketches, oil pastels and water colours which are very impressive.

Namrutha quit her job and attended the training sessions at Global art. She took her first step towards self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship but

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# PROCRASTINATION

## Scenario 1

Anxious mother: Your exams are tomorrow.

Child: Yes I know.

Mother: You haven't started studying yet.

Child: I will soon.

## Scenario 2

Mother: Why are you up so early?

Child: For football practice.

As parents all of us go through both these scenarios. The same child who is motivated to go for football is not ready to do his academic work. Why this procrastination? Can we find out more?.

## What is Procrastination?

by Dr. Mangrum & Dr. Strichart

Procrastination is putting off or avoiding doing something that must be done. It is natural to procrastinate occasionally. However, excessive procrastination can result in guilt feelings about not doing a task when it should be done. It can also cause anxiety since the task still needs to be done. Further, excessive procrastination can cause poor performance if the task is completed without sufficient time to do it well. In short, excessive procrastination can interfere with school and personal success.



## Why Do Students Procrastinate?

There are many reasons why students procrastinate. Here are the most common reasons:

1. **Perfectionism.** A student's standard of performance may be so high for a task that it does not seem possible to meet that standard.
2. **Fear of Failure.** A student may lack confidence and fear that he/she will be unable to accomplish a task successfully.

3. **Confusion.** A student may be unsure about how to start a task or how it should be completed.
4. **Task Difficulty.** A student may lack the skills and abilities needed to accomplish a task.
5. **Poor Motivation.** A student may have little or no interest in completing a task because he/she finds the task boring or lacking in relevance.
6. **Difficulty Concentrating.** A student may have too many things around that distract him/her from doing a task.
7. **Task Unpleasantness.** A student may dislike doing what a task requires.
8. **Lack of Priorities.** A student may have little or no sense about which tasks are most important to do.

## How Do I Know if I Procrastinate Excessively?

You procrastinate excessively if you agree with five or more of the following statements:

1. I often put off starting a task I find difficult.
2. I often give up on a task as soon as I start to find it difficult.
3. I often wonder why I should be doing a task.
4. I often have difficulty getting started on a task.
5. I often try to do so many tasks at once that I cannot do any of them.
6. I often put off a task in which I have little or no interest.
7. I often try to come up with reasons to do something other than a task I have to do.
8. I often ignore a task when I am not certain about how to start it or complete it.
9. I often start a task but stop before completing it.
10. I often find myself thinking that if I ignore a task, it will go away.

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Can the readers share with us any strategies they have found that works to overcome procrastination? We would love to hear from you.

## NEWS AT MDA/ ANANYA

### Field trip

For their field trip the Juniors went to Guindy Park and the Seniors went to the Aavin milk factory at Sholinganallur. The Junior students got a chance to explore the Park and learn about the birds and animals there. From one of the students we get an idea of what they saw at the Aavin factory. Akshay Kumar of 10<sup>th</sup> NIOS writes:

*We went to a field trip to the Aavin Milk Factory in Sholinganallur on Saturday on 19<sup>th</sup> march. The fun bus is given specially to schools. The bus had a ramp to help children who have difficulty in climbing. We left the school at 9am. Our teachers accompanied us. The route taken was cenotaph road, old mahabalipuram road. We reached the factory and waited till we got the clearance. No cameras or cell phone were allowed inside the factory. We went to the conference hall. An employee told us about processing of milk. Then he showed us the silos and the milk tankers. We went inside the factory and saw the lab. He said that there are 19 kinds of tests done in the lab. Milk is processed and refrigerated and later filled in pouches. We came out of the factory and ate some snacks. We got back to school at 12.30 pm and I liked the trip very much.*

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### **Continued from page... 4**

she did it with a confidence that belied her young age.

Doodles is the name of the sub-centre that Namrutha has started with the help and support of her father. The classes are held on weekends and on Mondays and Fridays in the evenings. Each class consists of 10 children of different ages and levels. They are given a theme and asked to draw. They are encouraged to come up with new ideas so that thinking and creativity improve. Namrutha has now employed 2 teachers trained at Global Art to help her.

Global Art also encouraged her to start other activities at her centre. So she decided to start handwriting classes for school children. Of course it helped that Namrutha herself has a beautiful hand writing. She attended a week's programme at Writerright to teach children how to improve their handwriting. Now she conducts handwriting classes for an hour on Mondays and Wednesdays. Parents who are worried about their children's poor marks due to an illegible handwriting are quite relieved to send their wards to Namrutha. She feels this training might help dyslexic children with letter confusion (b/d, p/q).

Namrutha also teaches calligraphy to students who are interested. Calligraphy as we all know is a stylish way of writing and many students use it for charts, greeting cards and school projects. She has also started art and craft classes. The children who attend learn to make creative craft like masks, glitter greeting cards using quilting art and so on.

It has been a year since she started Doodles. Has she faced any challenges? Says Namrutha "it has been smooth sailing so far. Parents are happy to send their children to my classes. The kids come here to have fun and learn something new. It allows their imagination to take flight and soar to heights they never thought was possible".

Namrutha is conducting a summer camp for children during the holidays. The activities include Global Art, handwriting, calligraphy, art and craft sessions. It is a fast track programme with classes from Monday to Friday starting 18<sup>th</sup> April upto 31<sup>st</sup> May.

A timid girl who was not sure of completing her schooling to a young woman brimming with self assurance and great ideas, Namrutha has indeed come a long way. Wish you all the best! Namrutha. Namrutha can be contacted at : **9940353661**

## NEWS AT MDA/ ANANYA

### Attending a kutcheri

Children enjoy listening to different kinds of music. Some of the NIOS students attended the Carnatic music kutcheri organised for students by VExcel. The first of these was a concert by the violin brother-sister duo Lalgudi Krishnan and Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi.

### Exam Time

The 5 students who appeared for their ESLC exams have cleared their exams.

12 of the students have appeared for the State Board exams in March- April. Most of them will be going back to the mainstream for their NIOS. About 40 students are being mainstreamed from the Junior section. 10 are going to the Senior school.

### Project Day

The Senior Project Day "This is the way we learn at school" was held on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April. Mrs.R.Mahalakshmi, Principal of A.M.M. school was the chief guest. She as well as the other visitors took back a lot of learning strategies. The children had Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic and Tactile methods of learning and also used their Multiple Intelligences to learn concepts. The causes of the second world war came alive with their role play and so too the composition of blood with a song among other things.

### Annual Day

The Annual Day of Ananya Learning Centre was held on 11<sup>th</sup> February at Infosys Hall, RKM school. The chief guest of the evening was Mr T.M Krishna eminent Carnatic musician and his wife Sangeetha Sivakumar gave away the prizes. The theme of the Juniors was Navarasa which was portrayed through song, dance and drama. The seniors had 'nava" as their theme and had dances and plays to entertain the audience. Mr.Krishna gave an inspiring speech beseeching parents to look for talents in their children and to reexamine the term "mainstream" as what is mainstream for one isn't mainstream for another.

### Multiple Intelligence Centre

The MI centre "Hydra" has been established with the expertise of "Vidya Sagar" to discover the child's strengths and interests in a non-academic setting. It is operating out of Gopalakrishnan Street , T.Nagar. 15 children from the Junior section of Ananya learning centre have been going there for classes twice a week after school. They have a host of activities which they do depending on their interest. The children have been very excited about Hydra as it gives them time to pursue their line of interest which would ultimately spill into the learning areas as well.



Annual Day



Project Day

# MDA News Snippets

- 01/02/11 Hello Ungaludan -DD Podhigai live chat show on 'Spelling difficulties' by Harini Mohan & Gowri Ramnathan
- 01/02/11 Awareness programme for Rotary Club Ambattur District by Geetha Raghavan
- 11/02/11 Ananya Annual Day @ R.K.M School Infosys Hall Chief guest- T.M. Krishna. Ms.Sangeetha Sivakumar distributed the prizes.
- 17/02/11 Visit by Trainees from Bala Vidyalaya for Hearing & Speech Impaired, Adyar to Ananya Learning Centre
- 28/02/11 Children from Junior School start attending M.I. programme by 'Hydra' at Gopalakrishnan Street, T,Nagar.
- 12/03/11 Field trip- Junior Section of Ananya
- 18/03/11 Field trip- Senior Section of Ananya
- 24/03/11 Visit to Rashmika Learning Centre, Coimbatore to interact with parents of the learning centre: Subha Vaidyanathan
- 02/04/11 Senior Project Day inaugurated by Ms.R.Mahalakshmi, Principal of AMM Matriculation, HSS, Kotturpuram
- 09/04/11 Conducted one-day workshop for Junior Teachers at Kavi Bharathi Vidyalaya, by Vilasini D & Sujatha R.
- 12/04/11 A visit by the SSA team to Ananya Learning Centre and demonstration of some learning methodology
- 18/04/11- 5-day workshop for students at Vijayaraghava Rd premises and Sambasivam Street premises.  
22/04/11
- 25/04/11- 6-day Mainstream teachers Training Course at Sun Plaza, T.Nagar  
30/04/11
- 26/04/11 1-day workshop for Junior teachers at Primrose Schools by Sujatha R.

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

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