



MDA Newsletter

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Madras Dyslexia Association

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Weekend Teacher Training
Programme for Mainstream
Teachers

Oct 13 to Dec. 15, 2012

Registration Is on.

Contact MDA office

Understanding Some Aspects of Memory for Teaching and Learning

As teachers of children with learning difficulties as well as parents we are often confronted with children who struggle to recall. "My child's memory seems like a sieve!" A common statement from frustrated parents is that the child can remember film songs lyrics completely but is unable to remember his answer. He can parrot the script of his favourite movie or a popular jingle but look blank when a question is asked in History. The mother makes him learn thoroughly and the child goes to the test and says "I forgot". Teachers too are often baffled by the child who seems to have a very poor memory for spellings, for tables and for answers. The child gets charged with having a "selective memory" and that he chooses to remember what he wants like his father's promise of going to the mall on Sunday but not the test he has the next day.

The educational system in the West does not make much demands of a child's memory whether it is spellings, tables, or formulae. These are often provided to them and the ability to apply these is checked rather than trying to overload the memory system with myriads of facts. The demands of the Indian educational system on the other hand makes the child rely heavily on memory. Children who have been scoring very well are often children with a good memory who can reproduce their answers verbatim. Most of the exams are mainly testing the memory of the child and it is only recently that the Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) questions are being introduced. Very often children tend to do Math through rote as numbers are given just as in the text book. The lack of language skills are being compensated by their strength in memory. With CBSE's plans of introducing Open book exams the understanding and application skills would surely improve.

Teachers, educators and parents would do well with an understanding of the nature of memory and to know some techniques to help enhance memory. According to the All Kinds of Minds website, "... briefly records new information, mentally juggles information while using it to complete a task and stores and recalls it at a later time in some way needed. It is the storage system of material that varies in size and format. Understanding something and remembering are different.

Much more memory is needed to do well in school than at any other time”.

Researchers have shown there are many kinds of memory; upto 200 kinds and each of these would have implications for various kinds of academic performance. We have to be aware that children may have deficits in some kinds of memory and strengths in others and that there is nothing like poor memory as such. As we all know the short term memory holds things for a short time only and is the first halt in remembering something. There is a lot of competition for this space as new information wants to enter here. Kids with a “leaky” short term memory could forget something that they have just heard or seen. It also acts as our relay station and sometimes sends them to the long term memory and sometimes just forgets it. (Levine 2002) Children with dyslexia sometimes have a good long-term memory for incidents, places, movies and faces they are familiar with and forget what has not been experienced. Internal dialogue is important in remembering something and children need to be shown how to whisper or subvocalise what they have to remember.

Some children have a good ‘recognition memory’ and these children would do well on multiple choice questions, those good in long term storage or access will do essay questions well. When word recall is a problem giving one word answers for questions becomes a problem. There was a student who had a hard time recalling the word Hitler and had to hit his cheek every time to he had to recall the word Hitler.

Considering that memory plays such a major role in our education system and since children with memory deficits need to be helped we need to have a thorough understanding of it.

- If the child remembers better when he sees things written on the board, through colours, charts, pictures, graphs etc. he has a good visual memory. This child would need to see the text and print. He/she needs homework and reminders of things to be brought, on a side of the board allocated for reminders.
- Some children prefer to listen to instructions or the teacher teaching and take in every word. They are happy learning in group study as they can learn using their ears. These children have a good auditory memory.

- Some others like action while learning, whether pacing up and down or rocking or even working on an exercise bike. They are using their muscle memory. They are more kinesthetic.
- The child learns all the answers at home but does not write in a test or exam. The parents think he has a poor memory and teachers think he hasn't learnt well. On probing why he did not write the answer though it was revised the day before in class, he replied that he didn't know that he had to write that particular answer for that question. So here the understanding of the question, the language aspect of it, was interfering with his output. He knew the answer but didn't realise that that was the answer for that question.
- When a child comes unprepared for the test that was announced it could be that he/she hadn't paid attention in class when instructions were given. In this case his /her attention has come in the way of remembering.
- Other children know the answer but their hand just doesn't cooperate as it does not keep pace with their thought process due to poor motor skills. With a reluctance to write, what comes out on paper is just a small percentage of what they know.
- While some children know to learn an answer they tend to forget in a test situation. Here they have to read the paper, understand the question which may be differently worded, bring in other information like spellings, the test presentation etc. What is needed here is “active working memory” which maybe poor for the child.
- For some other children acting out a scene helps. These are children who can remember scenes in a movie or an incident that happened quite a while ago. Their episodic memory is good and needs to be used effectively. Wherever possible if role play can be done then even World War II can be taught by using this method.
- For some others the association memory maybe good. They learn to associate one with the other to be remembered. They maybe good visual spatial learners and associate with parts of the house, the entrance verandah with some point and then the living room, kitchen, bathroom, bedroom study etc. Others could associate with a rhyme.

- Those high on musical memory can put tables into songs and some other facts too into songs. We taught some of our strategies to children in the form of songs and they found it easy to learn and remember.

Sung to the tune of "Here we go round the mulberry bush"

*This is the way we edit our work
 Edit our work, edit our work
 This is the way we edit our work when we finish writing
 We look for C, capitals
 in the beginning and for names
 We look for O, overall if all the words are there
 We look for P, punctuation, commas, full stops
 question marks
 We look for S, spelling mistakes, spelling mistakes, spelling mistakes
 This is the way we edit our work, by checking for COPS
 Checking for COPS
 This is the way we edit our work, by checking for C..O..P..S*

Considering students learn in their own preferred way, if information is presented using different formats, the teacher is able to reach out to a larger number of students in the classroom. Students find that the use of strategies helps them to organize and retrieve the information better. According to Howard Gardner, Father of Multiple Intelligences, "The more different ways in which we present ideas, the more intelligence that we can activate, the more likely that the person will really understand the idea, the topic, the theory that we are talking about."

There are various ways that would facilitate the learning process in a child. The most fundamental ones are key-word underlining, taking down points, chunking, highlighting key phrases etc. Given below are some specific strategies that would help a child become a better learner.

Highlighting the Verb Method:

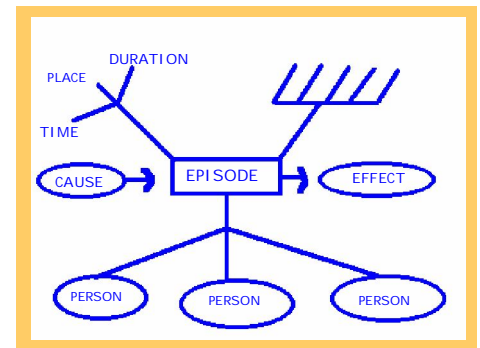
In this method the verbs in the sentences are underlined and/ or written in colour. They are also written down as a list in a box on the left side of the page and questions are generated around them. For example, the functions of the Election Commission are:

- a) **preparing** the electoral rolls
- b) **fixing** the date of the elections
- c) **supervising** the elections
- d) **arranging** for the counting of votes
- e) **declaring** the results

So, the questions would be - Preparing for what? Fixing what? Supervising what? Arranging for what? And declaring what? An acronym could also be formed with the first letters of the verbs so that they can be remembered. The acronym of *p f s a d* will help them recall better or even a sentence using these letters: "Pat felt sad" can be used.

Episodic Patterns:

An episodic pattern organizes information about specific events. It includes the time and



place, specific

people, the duration and the sequence of events. It can be used for teaching or learning the II World War or the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre.

<http://classroom.jc-schools.net/daley/nonlinguistic%20rep.ppt>

Tapping a Child's Special Interest:

Teachers can help students learn by using their areas of interest like music, arts, sports etc. A student in class who plays football used the game to memorize an answer in Economics. He visualized himself passing the football on the field and associated the action with "total value of goods and services produced". Next was tackle and this was associated with "income and payments received". Finally, as he visualized shooting the ball into the goal – he memorized "expenditure on consumer goods, investment and saving".

Play- acting:

Kinesthetic learners like to express themselves through movements. This helps them remember and process information. Enacting an important event in history is a good strategy. For example, the Balkan

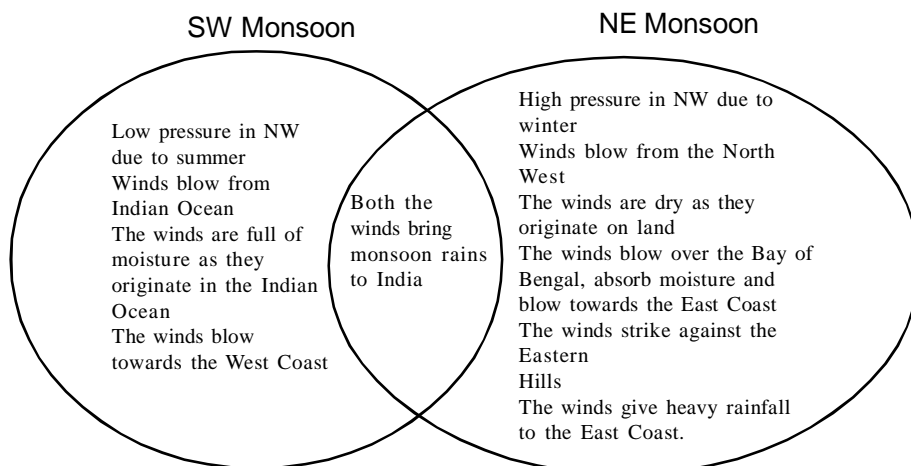
wars. Five students in class played the part of the five Balkan countries who wanted to be independent of Turkey. The defeats of Turkey, the signing of the treaty and so on were acted out by the students. This helped the students memorize the answer and write it down.

Visualization:

Visualization helps students get a mental picture of an event, a concept, an idea. For example, the sentence “Monarchies were abolished in Germany, Russia, Austria and Turkey”. The acronym GRAT was used as a clue. The students were asked to close their eyes and visualize a RAT (with an initial G before his name) sitting on a throne with a crown on his head. This helped them remember the name of the countries and the context in which they were used in the sentence. In the geography lesson on climate, the lengthy answer about the south-west monsoon was memorized in a similar manner. The students visualized the winds blowing from the Indian Ocean, turning towards the West Coast, striking against the Western Ghats etc.

Venn Diagrams:

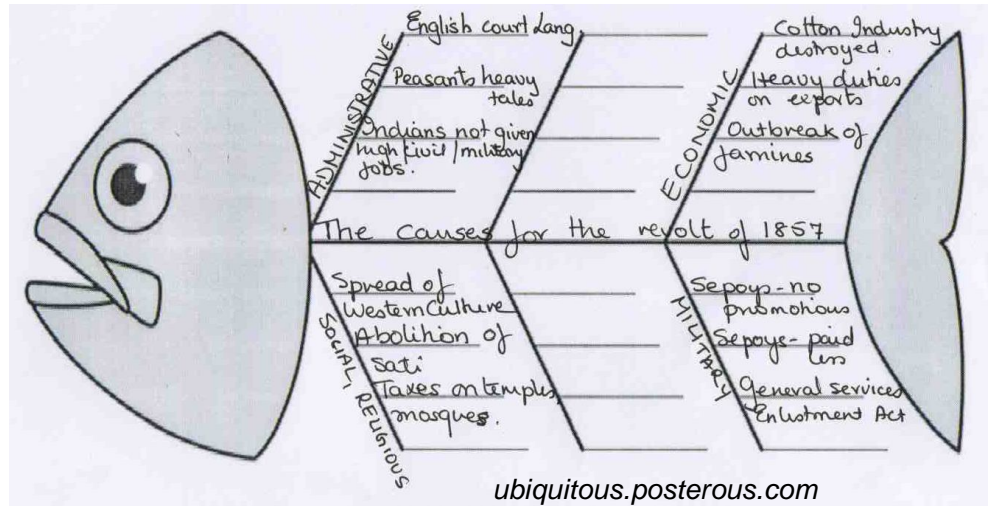
Venn diagrams are drawn as two circles overlapping each other. The inner zone represents the common aspects while the outer zones represent the differences. Hence these diagrams are used for comparing and contrasting two ideas or concepts in a



lesson. The Venn diagram below shows the similarities and differences between the south-west and the north-east monsoon.

Herring-bone Mapping:

The object of this graphic organizer is to identify the main idea and supporting details. An advantage of the herring-bone techniques is it enhances the ability of students to answer essay questions. A herring-bone map is set up like a fish skeleton. The backbone of the map represents the main idea, while the spine of the map represents the supporting details. In class,



we used this strategy to learn the causes of the revolt of 1857. Each spine and the supporting information were written in a specific colour.

Learning using the students preferred modalities and using their memory strengths along with adequate repetition, rehearsal and practice is going to be the answer for effective recall and retrieval.

Apart from these, some basic factors that would work as well are exercise (It keeps the brain ticking and are important before class), adequate sleep, good breakfast, stress free learning and not watching TV as the last thing at night.

References:

Levine M.A. “Mind at a Time”, 2002, Simon and Schuster.
<http://www.allkindsofminds.org/memory-module>

Parent Contribution

Down Memory Lane at Ananya

We, the parents of S.Vigneshwaran, an Ananya product, look back with pride. It has been a long journey for him from Ananya in 2007 to a reputed college in Chennai City today. He spent 2 years in Ananya studying Class IX and X. He sat for Class X public examination as a private student. On the advice of Ananya, we got Govt. concession of extra time of one hour for taking up the examination which was otherwise not known to us. Vignesh secured 67%. It was definitely an achievement for him and for us.

We saw Vignesh improving day by day under Ananya CARE. He gained confidence which led him to all the other straits like effective listening, studying, retaining and reproducing what he learnt. The entire credit goes to TEAM Ananya. Their guidance did not stop there. They advised us to admit Vignesh in a School (for HSC) free from peer pressure. They suggested that we may choose a less difficult course for him. We decided to admit him in Commerce Group with Computer Science for the HSC. Luckily, we could locate a School near our residence. The school authorities were kind enough to offer him a seat. All the teachers were also friendly.

HSC or Plus 2 being a turning point, we were a bit worried. His mother being a teacher (MA., B.Ed., M.Phil) decided to join the School. She taught him Economics at School and took care of the other subjects at home. While both of us planned the strategies, his mother smoothly implemented them.

Some of the strategies we followed are as under:

- We never forced him to be NUMBER ONE in his class. At the same time, we never made him feel that he is destined to be the LAST in his class.
- We subtly made him understand that he had some learning difficulties, without affecting his self esteem. He understood that HE NEEDED TO PUT IN EXTRA EFFORT.
- His mother sat with him whenever he studied at home, helping him out to understand the lessons easily.

- Vignesh's elder brother, a software engineer, helped him particularly in completing his drawing assignments and subjects related to Computer Science, English etc.

Besides all, Vignesh was immensely benefitted by his grandmother, who lent him the much needed emotional support.

Some of the techniques we followed are as under:

- Vignesh concentrated on the following types of questions:
 - Questions with one word answers
 - Questions of "Fill up the Blanks" type
 - Questions with short answers and those with direct answers.
- Vignesh did not worry about those questions which he could not answer.
- He presented whatever answers he knew in a neat and tidy manner, highlighting the Sub-headings and important points with a Black Gel Pen.
- Initially Vignesh had the habit of getting doubts before even fully reading the question or answers. He got over this habit due to our counseling and understood that he should study the question and answer and then only come out with doubts.
- Besides the above, we engaged him in the following activities:
 - On the advice of a Trainer at Bangalore, Vignesh did various activities called "BRAIN GYM" exercises.
 - He attended PRANAYAMA classes and practised what he had learnt, on a daily basis.
 - He drank lot of water at regular intervals.
 - He maintained two diaries. One was a normal diary used for recording his day-to-day activities. The other one was a "Dream Book". He recorded whatever he dreamt of achieving, on a daily basis. It was kept a secret by him.

- We came to know that among various dreams, like owning a foreign car, air travel etc., he had written almost daily that **“I have scored 90% in my HSC exams”**. The beauty of this Dream Book is that he wrote about his dream in a language as if it is already achieved. He was very particular about writing his dairy and Dream Book daily. This created a VERY POSITIVE ENERGY in him. BELIEVE US! He scored 87% in his HSC exams. (1039 out of 1200 and Third in his school)
- To add strength to our human efforts, our entire family invoked God by sitting on “Group Prayer” whenever time permitted. We prayed with him and for him for his prosperous future.

To be frank, Vignesh started taking his studies seriously only during the second year of HSC. He studied very hard from around October 2010.

Vignesh got the following concessions from Govt. of Tamil Nadu:

- One hour extra time for writing the examination.
- Leniency by ignoring Spelling mistakes committed, if any.
- Use of calculator for Accountancy Paper.

Vignesh took his HSC examination during March 2011 with full confidence. When the results were declared, we were thrilled. VIGNESH HAD SCORED 1039 OUT OF 1200 (87%).

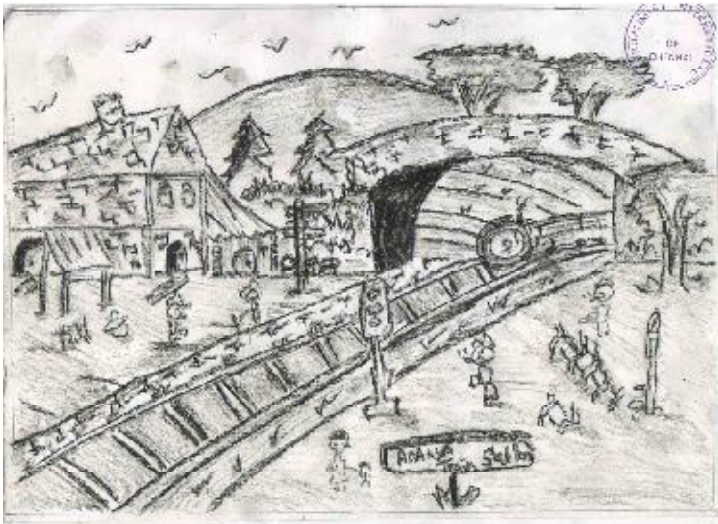
Today, he is pursuing B.Com (Bank Management) 2nd year in a reputed College in the city. **IT WAS A MOMENT OF PRIDE FOR US WHEN HE WAS OFFERED A SEAT ON HIS SHEER MERIT.**

We remember Team Ananya with gratitude and wish all success to Ananya for producing many more students like VIGNESH.

THANK YOU TEAM ANANYA.

S Seshadri & Lakshmi Seshadri
(Parents of S Vigneshwaran)

Prize Winning Entries for Soroptimist Inter-School Competition



Senior school - Entry from R. S. Janani



Junior school - Entry from Vishnu Sathwick

News at MDA / ANANYA

Orientation Programmes for MDA Staff

The workshop on Neuro Linguistic Programming or NLP kick started the new academic year 2012-13 with great gusto. Mr. Magimai Prakasham explained to all the teachers present how people learn, motivate themselves and how they can change their behaviour to achieve excellence in any endeavour. Techniques were taught which could enhance the productivity of the teacher, build rapport with the students, and modelling for effective interpersonal skills.

Mrs. Usha Ramakrishnan with her quiet charm gave the teachers a wonderful and simplistic way of looking at the child. She gave them an introduction to Transaction Analysis (TA). She discussed the different kinds of transactions that take place between people and the specific outcomes when there are crossed transactions.

Armed with this almost magical tool, teachers of Ananya Learning embarked on their journey to bring success in the life of their students.

Occupational Therapy (OT) Centre

MDA has been having a part time OT centre and this academic year has started its full time OT centre. The therapist apart from providing sessions at Sambasivam Street visits Ananya Learning Centre and observes the students in class as well. This service is now being offered to children, who need OT, from outside as well.

Premises Shifted

MDA has shifted its Office premises as well as the OT Centre to the building across the old premises on Sambasivam Street. The assessments and remedial classes continue in the other building.

Soroptimist Competition

Students of Ananya Learning Centre took part in the annual SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL competition which is for children with learning difficulties. Our students bagged prizes in many of the categories and displayed their talent. The skit they put up for the theme "Dependence, Interdependence and Independence" based on "Lion King" was beautifully enacted and won the first prize.

Mainstream Teacher Training

MDA normally offers a 6-day mainstream teachers programme in April for teachers to gain awareness on dyslexia and how to help the child within the classroom. Since many of the schools are nowadays working in April, many teachers have shown interest in weekend programmes. So for the first time, MDA is offering Saturday classes starting from October 13th. Hands on teaching is also built into the course. The group would be smaller and the training would be for a longer period.

Sports Day

Ananya celebrated its Annual Sports Day at the Ramakrishna Playground on GN Chetty Road. Pleasant weather added to the fantastic performance by both the Senior and Junior students. The Juniors performed the "Braingym" to music and the Seniors, a drill. Their energy and competitive spirit was at its peak and each one of them was a winner in his or her own way. The Chief Guest, Mr. Ramkumar, spoke a few inspirational words and his wife, Mrs. Vijaya gave away the medals and certificates.

Announcement

A Weekend Teacher Training Programme for Mainstream Teachers

October 13 to Dec. 15, 2012

Don't miss this opportunity!

Registration Is on.

Contact MDA office

Tel: 2815 6697, 2815 7908

MDA News Snippets

16.4.and 30.4.12	One-week Summer workshops conducted at Ananya and MDA
23.4. to 28.04.12	One-week Mainstream Teacher Training Course conducted at MDA
26 & 27 .04 .12	Two-day workshop at Primrose School, Injambakkam, conducted by Sujatha R
6,7 and 8.04.12	Teacher Orientation programmes for Ananya teachers, NLP conducted by Magimai Prakasam and Understanding Children and Transactional Analysis conducted by Mrs. Usha Ramakrishnan, Chairperson, Vidya Sagar
09.06.12	One-day workshop for Veda Nikethan, Arcot conducted by Geetha Raghavan and Visalakshi Iyer
12.06.12	One-day workshop and awareness of Dyslexia for Akashara Vidyshram, Nellore by Geetha Raghavan, Sujatha R and Visalakshi Iyer
11.07.12	Dyslexia unit, KG teachers training, Pon Vidyashram conducted by Subha.V
28.07.12	Soroptomist Competition held at C.P. Arts Centre
28.07.12	USEFI conducted a programme on Initiating Differentiated Teacher: Focus on Grammar attended by Janaki Ramanathan and Sujatha R
04.08.12	Workshop at RM Jain Vidyalaya, conducted by Geetha Raghavan
21,22 & 23.08.12	3-day workshop for Government school teachers in 3 districts of Salem, Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, by Subha Vaidyanathan and Geetha Raghavan, organized by UNICEF and Indian Academy of Pediatricians
28.08.12	Awareness for teachers of Anjuman School conducted by Geetha Raghavan and Harini Ramanujam
31.08.12	Ananya Annual Sports Day presided by Mr. Ramkumar, Director, Shivram Auxilliary Services Pvt Ltd .

Our editorial team - Indu Ramesh, Kamala Ramaraj, Geetha Raghavan and Vilasini Diwakar

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