

NEWSLETTER

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Dyslexic Advantage with Shilpa Rao – Head, AI Platforms, Tata Consultancy Services



YouTube

What is Dysgraphia?



YouTube

Dysgraphia

Dysgraphia is a learning difference characterised by problems with writing and spelling in someone of normal or above-average intelligence. It is not a mental health disorder, but a neurological disorder manifested as a brain-based learning difference marked by difficulty in forming letters, spelling words correctly, staying within lines, writing legibly, organising and expressing one's ideas on paper and a tendency to use the wrong word in communication.

Dysgraphia is most often identified in early elementary school, when children first learn to write. However, it is possible for the disorder to be identified later on, or even to remain undiagnosed until adulthood.

There being no single test for dysgraphia, the condition is typically diagnosed using a battery of assessments, which may include tests of fine motor skills, spatial processing, and general writing ability, including word/letter formation and written expression. Past writing assignments, school records, and teacher/parent input may also be factored into the evaluation.

Dysgraphia is nearly always accompanied by other learning disabilities and neuro-developmental disorders like dyslexia, attention deficit disorder (ADHD), dyspraxia or oral and written language learning disability (OWLLD) and this can impact the type of dysgraphia a person has.

Dysgraphia and dyslexia are sometimes confused for one another—a problem compounded by the fact that they often co-occur, even when they are two distinct conditions. Dysgraphia is specifically a problem with the physical act of writing, most often the motor skills and spatial processing involved in the process. Dyslexia, by contrast, is characterised by difficulties in reading

Occupational therapy and motor skills training can help improve writing ability. Instructional therapy to better organise and express thoughts more clearly, can help individuals with dysgraphia also lessen the impact of dysgraphia.

Use of pencil grips, allowing typing whenever possible, and providing written copies of notes—rather than asking a child to take notes themselves during class—can all be helpful accommodations for students with dysgraphia. Assistive technology, such as speech-to-text software, can be useful as well. Allowing extra time on tests, reducing the amount of written homework can help students learn without excessive stress and pressure.

Dysgraphia can be frustrating and can cause great emotional difficulty and distress. Psychotherapy is beneficial to tackle issues with low self esteem, in confidence building and to strategise how to best cope with their challenges.

Dysgraphia, like other learning differences, cannot be outgrown or cured, but individuals with dysgraphia can be very well taught and trained to cope with this challenge with early identification, proper diagnosis and appropriate handling strategies.

The Editors

Dyslexic Advantage Makes Me...



AD Achuthakumar,
Drummer/Percussionist

10th standard - MDA (Madras Dyslexia Association)
11th and 12th standard - M.C.T.M School, Alwarpet
B.Com - University of Madras
M.B.A - Chennai Business School
Music - 8th Grade on drums with merit at Trinity College of Music, London

At a very tender age, AD Achutha Kumar started holding the drumsticks with as much love as that of a child holding a candy bar. Ever since then, there has been no looking back. This gifted drummer and percussionist from Chennai, now shy of 30 years of age, has a lot of experience and numerous concerts to his credit. He is one of the few in Asia to have completed 8th grade in drumming with merit from Trinity College of Music London, and one of the very few solo artists in the country.

His musical journey began in a children's band called "Isaithuligal". He often credits his current success to the children's band as it gave him the mental stability and physical stamina to keep drumming for hours from a very early stage in his life. His career touched a different milestone when he started working in AR Rahman's concerts at the age of 10. From then till now, he has worked with a number of renowned musicians like KS Chitra, SP Balasubrahmanyam, Hariharan, Anuradha Sriram, Pop Shalini, Drums Sivamani, Stephen Devassy to name a few. Achutha has performed in more than 1000 concerts across the globe in a diverse array of events like the Times of India concert, Indian Premier League, Rotaract-hearts, Sangarsh, Chennai Sangamam, Vijay awards, Filmfare, etc.

Achutha has very good experience in working with various instruments including those from Pearl, Zildjian, Roland, Yamaha, Boss, Korg. He is also adept at playing the Zendrum - a very rare and unique percussion instrument. His acoustic specialties include instruments like the udu, duff, timbales, chendai, and ulukai while his electronic gear includes instruments like wavedrum, zendrum, iPad Midi Controller etc.

Having worked with top entertainment companies like John Britto and top DJs and artists across the country, Achutha has also shown his prowess as a global artist by performing at world fusion concerts and global jazz festivals. He has also collaborated with many global bands, international event management companies and performed in many countries, thereby widening his horizon and sharpening his axe simultaneously.

Being an artist of such high calibre, he is often the choice of top cultural fests in Chennai like the IIT Sarang, Techofes both for pro-show performances as well as judging the competitions, etc.

AD Achutha Kumar is the founder of three top bands in the city.

"Pranetra" - A Chennai-based multi-genre band, which predominantly performs classical and world fusion music. The band has performed in numerous occasions including "Idhayam Thotta Isaighani", a tribute show for Isaighani Illayaraja telecast by Star Vijay television.

"AD and the Band" - which is one of the busiest bands in Chennai that never ceases to enthrall you with their incredibly classy performances which strongly appeals to the common masses as well. This band is known for its collaboration with renowned musicians from the industry. Most of their performances feature reality show performers and playback singers.

"Project Triple" - is a three-piece band that proves to the listeners that one can create great music with just three people. This band performs only western music. The band features Vandana Mazan, one of the best western vocalists and a voice coach from Chennai; Vagu Mazan, a sound engineer cum multi-instrumentalist from Chennai, along with the ace drummer AD Achutha Kumar himself.

Awards and accolades

- Dr Umayalpuram K Sivaraman Award for excellence in percussion
- Young Icon 2014 Award from The Rotract Club, Chennai
- Young Achiever's Award from "Chennai live"
- Cool Performer Award from the Pune jazz festival 2013
- Best Solo Artist from Indian fusion festival, Bangalore 2016

Dyslexic Advantage Makes Me...



Ranjitha Janakiraman
Interior Designer, Rig Architects

I am Ranjitha Janakiraman, from the Ananya family. I have gone through a lot in my life when it comes to academics. It was when I was studying in 8th std. that my difficulty in studies was discovered. My parents decided to enrol me in Ananya. I studied 9th and 10th there. Ananya had other children like me studying there, so it was easy for me to adapt. I learned to read and write without any spelling errors. My teachers at Ananya were there for me whenever I needed them. I completed 11th and 12th in Good Shepherd School.

After my schooling, I did BA (Hons) in Interior Design from Birmingham City University, followed by a post graduate diploma in Human Resources from Loyola College. After completing my PGDM, I was working in Barclays for 6 months. Then with my sister I started a business in interior design. My firm's name is Rig Architects. I have achieved this much in my life only because my foundation was at Ananya. I am always proud and grateful to be part of the Ananya family.

How to Tell if Your Child Might Have Dysgraphia



Kelly Bijay
Manager, Preschool Early Literacy
Programme, Dyslexia Association
Singapore

Most children enjoy colouring with colour pencils, but writing is usually a different matter altogether. But if your child shows disinterest in writing tasks, is painfully slow when doing it and tries to avoid writing when possible, there is a chance that he or she may be struggling with or is at risk of dysgraphia.

Dysgraphia is a neurological-based condition that causes difficulty with written expression. The term comes from the Greek words dys (meaning 'impaired') and graphia (meaning 'making letter forms by hand'). It is also known as 'an impairment in the written expression' – this is the phrase that doctors and psychologists use.

How to tell if your child may be struggling with dysgraphia? Children who have dysgraphia often exhibit the following signs:

- Inability to write letters accurately
- Slow, laboured writing
- Unreadable handwriting
- Dislike for colouring and any writing tasks
- Holding the wrist, arm, fingers or paper in an awkward position when writing
- Lagging behind in writing skills compared to peers

Being mindful that child development is dynamic, the Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS) usually considers a formal diagnosis by a psychologist for any specific learning difficulty after a child has turned six years of age. However, unusually slow or laborious writing when compared to same-age peers is usually a sign that your child is at risk of learning difficulty and it is a call for you to take action.

Writing requires a complex set of fine-motor, mental and linguistics skills. For children with dysgraphia, the writing process is harder and slower. Without help, a child with dysgraphia may have a difficult time in school, which will affect their self-esteem and academic success. Waiting too long to get help only makes matters worse.

Children with dysgraphia struggle with the simple task of holding a pencil such as using a tripod grasp, let alone forming letters and keeping those letters on a line. Thus, even if they produce messy handwriting, you should praise and appreciate them for their effort. Many children also struggle with putting their thoughts on paper concisely as they have difficulty in spelling, word retrieval, organising thoughts and putting words into writing.

It is crucial that you seek professional advice and early intervention to help your child if they have dysgraphia.

If you suspect your child has dysgraphia or any other specific learning difficulties, do take your child to the child development clinic (CDC) for consultation. CDCs usually collaborate with primary healthcare and community services for early identification of children with developmental delay and learning difficulties so as to facilitate early intervention. Children with dysgraphia usually require multi-disciplinary intervention services such as occupational therapy, guided targeted support at home, along with other services such as early literacy intervention, which are available at DAS. Additional services such as speech and language therapy may also be necessary if other co-occurring difficulties are evident. The doctors and paediatricians at the CDC will be in the best position to point you in the right direction.

What can be done at home for dysgraphia?

Here are some strategies to consider when helping your young hesitant writer. Don't try several strategies

at once, but instead, use one strategy at a time and take note of their individual effectiveness.

Here's what you can do:

- Start with games that strengthen fine motor skills. For example, use their hands and tools such as tongs, spades, chopsticks and cutters, to play with clay, play dough and kinaesthetic sand to strengthen their hand muscles.
- Let them use a squeeze ball to improve hand and wrist muscles and coordination. Other activities such as tracing, beading, lacing and using scissors to cut along lines are great for fine motor development.
- Doing some hand exercises before writing activities can help your child relieve tension. These exercises include shaking hands in the air, stretching out all the fingers in a cracking knuckles motion and doing the 'okay' sign in pinching motions, alternating one finger at a time rhythmically.
- Fill a cream piping bag with shaving cream, glitter glue, play dough or other materials to practise forming letters in a creative way.
- Provide opportunities for your child to express himself in other ways when possible to take the pressure off writing.
- With guidance and advice from professionals, you can also try the following strategies:
- Use short and fat pencils or pencil grips for writing
- Use suitable writing paper for your child to practise handwriting.
- Get your child to start writing letters in large fonts, move to medium and gradually shrink letter sizes further to help with the formation of appropriate letter sizes consistently.

Your child needs explicit writing instructions on where to write, where to start, where to stop and how to write. When they are forming letters of the alphabet, talking through movements and letter strokes clarify confusions and acts as a cue and memory anchor that facilitates automaticity. For example, when they make the letter 'P', tell them to draw the princess' long straight hair, and then her pretty face.

Even with these strategies, it is best that they are carried out with the guidance and advice of a professional who is well aware of the specific needs of your child such as an educational therapist and an occupational therapist, who will help build fine motor skills and dexterity.

It is best to keep an open communication based on trust, peace and non-judgement with your child. This will help you understand what your child is going through and get the needed help. Many children have managed to overcome and work around their writing difficulties, so, with the right support, your child can do so too.

Dyspraxia and Dysgraphia



Dr Vani Sivaji
Paediatric Neurologist

Dyspraxia, otherwise called developmental co-ordination disorder (DCD), is a common disorder that affects movement and co-ordination. It affects the co-ordination skills – such as tasks requiring balance, playing sports, riding a bike or driving a car, etc. Intelligence is not impaired but cognitive and learning difficulties are common with dyspraxia.

Dysgraphia is a term that refers to trouble with writing. Dysgraphia affects skills that produce handwriting, typing, and spelling that allow us to produce writing. This is a nervous system problem that affects the fine motor skills needed to write. It makes it hard for a child to do handwriting tasks and assignments in school.

	Dyspraxia	Dysgraphia
General	Children with dyspraxia can have other learning and thinking differences, such as dysgraphia, <i>dyscalculia</i> and <i>ADHD</i> , but dyspraxia is not the cause for these.	Children with dysgraphia can have other learning differences. The two that co-exist most often with dysgraphia are dyslexia and dyspraxia.
Signs of the problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delayed development of right or left hand dominance. Trouble riding a bike or throwing a ball. A tendency to bump into and drop things. Trouble grasping a pencil correctly. Poor letter formation. Slow and messy handwriting. Trouble using buttons, snaps, zippers, utensils – anything that needs hand-eye coordination is challenging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trouble organising thoughts and putting them into writing. Unreadable handwriting Slow, laboured writing. Odd spacing of words and letters. Poor spelling and grammar. Trouble with grasping a pencil correctly. Poor punctuation skills. Run-on sentences and lack of paragraph breaks.

Possible emotional and social impact	Children with dyspraxia may avoid games and sports that call attention to their physical awkwardness. They may also experience anxiety at a higher rate than other children, for unknown reasons.	As can happen with any learning difference, children with dysgraphia may feel frustrated or angry about their challenges. They can also have trouble with self-esteem.
Adjustments in school	<p>Teaching physical skills in small parts before they are taught to the rest of class.</p> <p>Repeating activities to help develop motor pathways, which can help children get better at carrying out specific movements.</p> <p>Multisensory instruction to help students remember the steps for motor actions.</p> <p>Use of a keyboard for taking notes in class; use of a word processor in school.</p> <p>Keyboarding instruction.</p> <p>Extended time on tests and assignments that involve writing.</p> <p>Permission to record class lectures.</p> <p>Access to another student's or the teacher's notes.</p> <p>Option to respond in alternative ways rather than writing.</p> <p>Sentence starters to show how to begin a writing assignment.</p> <p>Breaking writing assignments into steps.</p> <p>Worksheets, notes and textbooks with larger print.</p>	<p>Option to respond in alternative ways rather than writing.</p> <p>Sentence starters to show how to begin a writing assignment.</p> <p>Breaking writing assignments into steps.</p> <p>Use of a keyboard for taking notes in class; use of a word processor in school.</p> <p>Keyboarding instruction.</p> <p>Extended time on tests and assignments that involve writing.</p> <p>Permission to record class lectures.</p> <p>Access to another student's or the teacher's notes.</p>
Parents' role	<p>Provide lots of opportunities for physical activity like running or swimming to develop gross motor skills, muscle strength, coordination and "muscle memory." You can even turn your living room into an obstacle course using pillows or wastebaskets to help with motor planning.</p> <p>Have your child play with jigsaw puzzles to help with visual and spatial perception.</p> <p>Toss beanbags and balls to practice hand-eye coordination.</p> <p>Have your child work on keyboarding skills.</p> <p>Use speech-to-text tools to translate your child's speech into writing.</p> <p>Provide many opportunities for practice and repetition.</p>	<p>Have your child work on keyboarding skills.</p> <p>Use speech-to-text tools to translate your child's speech into writing.</p> <p>Use clay, shaving cream and other materials to practice forming letters at home.</p> <p>Have your child shake or rub their hands to relieve tension before writing or as a break while writing.</p>

Dysgraphia and Classroom Dynamics



Lalitha Ramanujam
Director, Alpha to Omega Learning
Centre

Dysgraphia is one of the learning differences we see commonly in students with specific learning difficulties. Like dyslexia, it hinders academic progress. Students in a classroom spend 50 to 60 percent of their time in some form of written expression activities. Hence, it is important that they have to put down their mental thoughts and inner ideas in a coherent manner to achieve academic success. Proficiency in written expression does indicate grade-level competency. As educators, let us remember this proficiency is a tool that will help them achieve heights not only in the classroom but in the school of life.

The term dysgraphia often refers to a visual-motor integration, wherein we see the student has difficulty in recalling letters, poor memory for the form of the letter and sequencing of letters. Hand writing is a core component that involves fine motor skills, memory and letter formation. This is the fine skill used to put our thoughts down in a comfortable, rapid and legible manner. The characteristics of legible handwriting are letter formation,

size and proportion of upper and lower case letters, spacing, slant, alignment and line quality.

Dysgraphia can also be further classified as grapho-motor dysgraphia, dyslexic dysgraphia and executive dysgraphia. This classification is from how we see it in our classrooms.

- Grapho-motor difficulties are manifested as visual motor integration difficulties, slow writing speed, poor penmanship, faulty pencil grip.
- Dyslexic dysgraphia is seen in poor spelling, phonological and orthographic deficits, poor memory skills, limited vocabulary.
- Lastly executive dysgraphia characteristics are poor executive functioning skills, inconsistent attention, poor retrieval, limited vocabulary and inadequate sentence formation.

Proficiency in written language depends upon oral language, formulating words into sentences. The skills needed would be spoken language, legible handwriting, rules of writing, and cognitive strategies to organise and plan the writing. Further, the student needs adequate visual-motor memory to assimilate the eye-hand relationships.

Writing is an active thinking process. Areas of difficulties could be in spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, handwriting. In the writing intervention process, the focus should be on what is the thinking that goes on during writing. The cognitive process

makes the writer go back and forth in the thinking.

In a classroom, the student could be achieving below their potential due to one or more of the above components. Labels are only broad terms to describe a condition, and the role of classroom instructor is to understand the specific area that could be the contributing factor.

Steven G Feifer has identified the cognitive constructs that need to be addressed in helping a student who faces written language issues.

1. Intelligence - probe the verbal ability and working memory.
2. Visual-Motor Integration - how is the pencil grip, pace of writing and processing speed?
3. Attention - involves three aspects namely, attention to inner thoughts and ideas, sustained attention and ability to curb distractions.
4. Working Memory - ability to recall spelling rules, grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, spacing of letters and retain thoughts long enough to complete the task with appropriate word order.
5. Executive Functions - help the student in the process of planning, monitoring, revision and following a strategy.
6. Writing and Spelling skills - Phonological and syntactical awareness, grammar rules, sentence structure.
7. Phonological Awareness - possess adequate

mastery for the various aspects of this skill.

8. Retrieval and Fluency Measures - Recalling of facts or letter forms may not be in sequence. May lack sequence in recalling fact or letter forms.

Building Blocks of Learning model, developed by Dr. Nancy Mather, discusses processing as one of the blocks critical to creating efficiency and automaticity in the process of learning. The individual components in the processing block are phonological, orthographic, motor and memory. Teachers will relate to how each of this plays a role in building written expression skills in the classroom.

Guidelines to Create a Nurturing Classroom

- Positive language with praise and implied commands
- Behaviour specific praise
- Praise the effort
- Classroom routines and rituals that give them a sense of belonging
- Acknowledge an emotional event that has or had happened
- Peer tutoring and cooperative learning opportunity

Implementing a positive emotional climate for learning is important to foster an enriched classroom.

- Positive emotions do influence cognitive connections, enhance the thinking ability and build motivation. The material needs to be meaningful so that the student can get an insight into it.
- Social and emotional learning are highly interconnected, for these create awareness for emotions, teach empathy, self-regulation and are responsible for decision making.
- Mindfulness and self-reflection are important for a healthy emotional climate.
- Including activities into classroom teaching that connect the emotional level to content material can be done in more than one way. This helps in building language to express their thoughts and ideas in a meaningful way. Recognising the specific area or the islet of difficulty that dampens the learning process, instruction can be modified with a multisensory teaching modality. Heal the islet of difficulty and let the student bloom should be the goal as teachers.

Dysgraphia – An Impairment or A Disability Approaching it from a Bio-Psycho-Social Perspective



**Dr Sureshkumar
Kamalakannan**



Murali Krishnan S

What is Dysgraphia?

The term used to describe challenges in writing is dysgraphia, a learning disability characterised by problems in this area which can be a huge hurdle for a child in participating in academic tasks. It is a neurological disorder that can affect both children and adults. In addition to writing words that are difficult to read, people with dysgraphia tend to use the wrong word for what they are trying to communicate. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th edition (DSM-5) includes dysgraphia under the

Specific Learning Disorder (SLD) category, but does not define it as a separate disorder. Though other aspects of development seem to be developmentally appropriate in an individual experiencing dysgraphia, this needs to be identified, assessed and remediated to improve the individual's written expression for any form of communication.

Conceptualising Dysgraphia

The best start point to help someone with dysgraphia is to conceptualise the problem. In a context like India, where we still stick to the medical model for rehabilitation, dysgraphia is most commonly conceptualised as impairment. Even with this conceptualisation, there are several unforeseen issues predisposed by how one defines dysgraphia. While some rehabilitation providers understand it from a pure clinical perspective, some others do so from an academic perspective. Where one specialist might look at the exact issue in writing or written expression such as the legibility, spatial presentation or cognitive capacities, another might look at all

these three issues together holistically. Hence, the strategies for management become extensively clinical, resource intensive and time consuming.

Although the clinical conceptualisation is very pertinent, rehabilitation service providers must not conceptualise dysgraphia just based on DSM-V or as impairment. It must be understood based on the context of experience and needs. Dysgraphia must be understood as a disability where the disability in written expressions creates activity limitations and participation restrictions on an individual in a particular physical and psychosocial environment. This conceptualisation can provide an inclusive perspective for rehabilitation of dysgraphia with the affected individual and their caregivers as a primary centre for their therapeutic plans and goals. See Figure-1 depicting the conceptualisation from an ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health) Perspective.

Bio-psycho-social Model of Functioning, Disability and Health

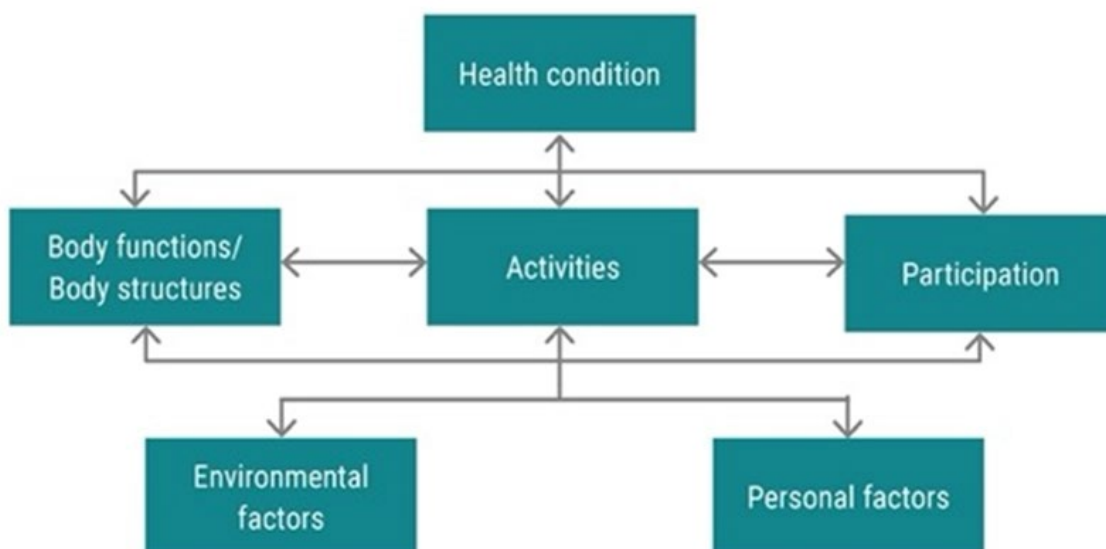


Figure 1: Bio-psycho-social model of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)

Remediating Dysgraphia through a Bio-Psycho-Social Model

The Bio-Psycho-Social approach for dysgraphia rehabilitation includes overall addressing of the issue in terms of the actual presenting of problem in written expression as well as the impact of this difficulty on one's everyday activities of daily living (ADL) and their individual, family and social roles. A bottom-up approach could be an effective as well as an efficient strategy.

The Bottom-up Approach

As depicted in the figure, if the rehabilitation service provider starts or initiates rehabilitation from the bottom which is related to the environment and personal factors, it will provide an extremely need-driven overview of the problem. Starting with a comprehensive understanding of the needs and environment of an individual experiencing dysgraphia would enable the rehabilitation service providers to systematically plan goals and organise resources.

This does not mean that dysgraphia needs to be taken lightly. For a condition like dysgraphia, an extensive understanding of the physical, cognitive and emotional aspects that impact on an individual's ability to expressing in writing must be thoroughly understood. Some of the physical aspects include proximal stability, gross motor and fine motor skills especially concerning the hand function and hand dexterity. Similarly, cognitive capacities such as the concept formation, spatial orientation, concentration and emotional or behavioural aspects such as frustration tolerance, values and beliefs must all be considered for rehabilitation. However, the outcome of impairment-based rehabilitation should reflect on the alleviation of one's activity limitation and participation restriction.

If, for instance, an individual with dysgraphia prioritises social participation, the rehabilitation could

focus on methods that can result in enabling the individual to use effective strategies to independently express themselves what they need in writing. This could involve remedial strategies such as pre-writing skills training, educational support from school as well as compensatory strategies such as the use of voice-text converters or training to type in keyboards or touch-pads. This multi-dimensional combined approach could potentially enable the affected individual to express through writing.

Who is the Best to do This?

One must understand that rehabilitation primarily is teamwork and not one expert or individual can remediate disability. Experts like Occupational Therapist, Special Educator, Teachers, Psychologists and Speech Therapists are crucial for dysgraphia and SLD rehabilitation. It would be a perfect team with all their inputs collectively and synergistically impacting on alleviating the difficulties caused by dysgraphia. The best rehabilitation is multi-disciplinary and functionally oriented therapy with the primary conceptualisation of dysgraphia as a disability as defined by the ICF.

The Way Forward

Dysgraphia is an impairment that could cause disability biologically, psychologically and socially. The way forward is to improve awareness of the limitation and possibilities of persons with dysgraphia. Improvement in the acceptance and awareness among the individual and every stakeholder – the school teachers, therapists and parents, will bring in a positive attitude change towards the individuals with dysgraphia to engage independently in their individual, family and social roles. This could potentially empower people with dysgraphia to be a productive member of the family and community at large.

My Experience with Dysgraphia

Lathaa Bhat

It has been several years since my son (B) entered school, but the memories of those days remain fresh. Much as I try to avoid them, my stereotypical human mind clings to these negative thoughts very dearly.

During those initial years, I used to love picking him up from school. I loved to hear his excited chatter on the way back. On one such day, a little girl walked up to me and greeted me, "Hi Aunty!" I was thrilled to hear a cute voice come up to me and address me. My happiness was short lived, though. She continued, "Aunty, B's handwriting is very bad! Please ask him to write neatly." Before I could recover and respond to her words, she had disappeared. I looked around to see if my son had heard her and thanked my stars when I saw that he was quite far away. The joy in picking him up turned out to be a kind of suspense thriller, wondering which tiny face would pop-up with problems about B.

However, over time, I learnt to handle them casually, though not easily. I explained to a couple of them who were able to understand, that he had some issues with his fingers that prevented him from writing very well or fast. I continued to interact with these kids rather than hiding from them. I also realised that there were a few of them who would go out of their way to help with notes, inform about assignments and give me feedback about his day at school, which would not always be very forthcoming from him. They were also the ones who showered him with compliments every time he did well – even before I got to know them from him. Of course, such occasions would not be very often.

Months went by trying various permutations and combinations. I had assumed that my happy-go-lucky child was not bothered by all these "petty issues" of reports about handwriting and grades. But I was proved wrong. His laughter and smiles could hide a lot!

There were days when he hated doing things alone. On one such day, the kids in our neighbourhood were waiting for him to come over and play while he had quite a bit of writing work to complete. I planned a surprise study time together with them. I presumed he would enjoy their company and complete his work too. I invited them over. It was agonising to see what happened after that. B moved to the farthest end of the small table that they writing on, bent over his books, cupped his hands around his notebook and refused to lift his head up. He made me dictate the lines for him to write, with the "why did you have to

do this?" look in his eyes. He finally encouraged them to go and play and promised that he would join them in a short while. I resumed this experiment only after years, during the lock down, when children would be maintaining social distancing anyway.

Years went by. We were busy juggling between classes, occupational therapy, special education, sports.... he had mastered several skills, but writing was not one of them. A handwriting class was added on. I had identified a teacher who tried to help him patiently. His handwriting was looking very neat. I was exalted, but my happiness was short lived. She wanted to give a break of about three months and resume. We had just attended two sessions in the second phase, when the pandemic broke out. The handwriting classes could not be conducted online. After school started online classes, it was quite neat initially. As the academic volume increased, boredom set in. The changeover to single-ruled from double-ruled notebooks and from pencil to pen have had a big impact on the handwriting. Yet, it is much better than how it was two years ago.

As I write this piece, I also cannot help reflecting on the effects of the pandemic on our child's education. It has helped us, B and me, in several ways. With less time spent on travelling to all the classes, I got to spend more time talking to him. Earlier I used to visit the school several times to apprise the management and teachers about his issues so that they could be considerate with him. I planned one such visit even during the time when online classes were being held. That was the time he opened up and told me that such visits were usually followed by general announcements in the class that made him feel awkward. He requested me to refrain from it. I explained to him that talking to the concerned authorities had been beneficial too. Some of the teachers had helped a lot. His volume of writing used to be reduced, for instance when other kids had to write three times, he had to write only once, spelling errors arising from interchanging letters were ignored, he was given notes to copy or read from and many more such accommodations were extended. Everything we did had both good and bad outcomes, we had to choose and decide the best option available. He learnt some important life lessons.

Online classes have turned out to be a blessing in disguise for B in more than one way. No continuous end-to-end classes. With more time to do what he liked, he has picked up reading. He is currently reading 'A Journey to the Centre of the Earth'. His speaking skills have improved – with no stage fear. He is engaged in more online projects. As class notes are sent online, announcements for assignments and their deadlines are sent by emails, there is more acceptance of MS Word documents and PowerPoint projects, more objective type questions.

On the whole, there is less worry about dysgraphia. In the years that have gone by and by the time school resumes its offline classes, I hope the unpleasant memories associated with dysgraphia fade away from the minds of all concerned. The pandemic has been a game changer for us!

Our Donors



Shyam Shekar

The need to make a meaningful contribution to the cause of educating children with learning disabilities is growing only now. While the engagement needs to happen at several levels, it is very important for an organised initiative to facilitate it seamlessly. MDA fulfils this need for the cause of Dyslexia. Further, MDA is making a sustained impact for improving societal response to the needs of children with dyslexia. The sustained social impact made by MDA is indeed significant and remarkable. This aspect was my inspiration to make a financial contribution to MDA and to participate in the cause of making children with dyslexia experience the right learning.

செய்தித் துளிகள்

பயிற்சிகள்

2022 வருடத்தின் தொடக்கத்தில் அனைத்து பயிற்சிகளும் கோவிட் காரணமாக ஆன்லைன் மூலமாக மட்டுமே நடத்தப்பட்டது. பின்பு கோவிடின் தீவிரம் சற்றே குறைந்த காரணத்தால் நேரடி பயிற்சிகள் தொடங்கப்பட்டன.

கற்றலில் குறைபாடு பற்றிய விழிப்புணர்வு பயிற்சிகள் நடைபெற்ற இடங்களின் பட்டியல்

1. ஆல்பா குழுவில் உள்ள பள்ளிகள்
2. KRM குழுவில் உள்ள பள்ளிகள்
3. அரவிந்தா மாடல் பள்ளி - மங்களகிரி

மழலையர் பள்ளி ஆசிரியர்களுக்கான பயிற்சிகள் நடைபெற்ற இடங்களின் பட்டியல்

1. VES குழுவில் உள்ள பள்ளிகள்
2. வித்யாநிகேதன் பள்ளி - பெங்களூரு

ஆரம்ப பள்ளி ஆசிரியர்களுக்கான 6 நாள் பயிற்சிகள் நடைபெற்ற இடங்களின் பட்டியல்

1. புனித கிறிஸ்டோபர் அகாடெமி ஆப் எடுகேஷனில் B.ed பயிலும் மாணவர்களுக்கு
2. SBOA பள்ளி & ஜூனியர் காலேஜ்
3. ராஜேந்திரா மெட்ரிக் மேல்நிலை பள்ளி
4. அரவிந்தா உயர்நிலை பள்ளி - குண்டூர்
5. சுஷ்வானி மாதா ஜெயின் பள்ளி
6. நம்ம ஊரு கிளோபல் பள்ளி - திருநெல்வேலி

நடுநிலை பள்ளி ஆசிரியர்களுக்கான பயிற்சிகள் நடைபெற்ற இடங்களின் பட்டியல்

1. மஹாத்மா காந்தி வித்யாலயா
2. ஓமியாட் (ஆர்கனைசேஷன் ஆப் முஸ்லிம் எடுகேஷன் மற்றும் அஸோசியேஷன் ஆப் தமிழ்நாடு)
3. TI மெட்ரிகுலேஷன் மேல்நிலை பள்ளி.

கணக்கு பாடத்தை கற்றலில் குறைபாடுள்ள மாணவர்களுக்கு கற்று கொடுக்கக்கூடிய முறைகள் பற்றிய பயிற்சி - ரீயூசிர் டிரஸ்ட் - பெங்களுரு.

வள அறை

மதராஸ் டிஸ்லெக்சியா அசோசியேஷனுடன் சேர்ந்து கற்றலில் குறைபாடுள்ள மாணவர்களுக்கான வள அறை அமைத்த பள்ளிகளின் பட்டியல் பின் வருமாறு.

1. வித்யாநிகேதன் பள்ளி - பெங்களுரு
2. ஸ்ரீ நிகேதன் மெட்ரிகுலேஷன் பள்ளி
3. RKM மெட்ரிகுலேஷன் பள்ளி

பகுதி நேர மாற்று போதனை மையம்:

பொங்கல் பண்டிகை கொண்டாட்டங்கள்

பொங்கல் பண்டிகை கொண்டாட்டங்கள் ஆன்லைன் மூலம் நடைபெற்றது. இதில் மாணவர்கள் மிக உற்சாகமாக கலந்து கொண்டனர். ஒன்றரை மணி நேரம் நடந்த இந்நிகழ்ச்சியில், பண்டிகை என்னும் தலைப்பில் வண்ணக்கோலம், எழுதுதல், பேச்சு மற்றும் மாதிரிகள் உருவாக்குதல் என நான்கு பிரிவுகளில் போட்டிகள் நடத்தப்பட்டன. வண்ணக்கோலம் பிரிவில் மாணவர்கள் மிக நேர்த்தியாக கோலங்களை வரைந்து, அதில் அழகான வண்ணங்களை கொண்டு நிரப்பி அழகு படுத்தினர். மாதிரிகள் உருவாக்கும் பிரிவில் தங்களது புதுமையான, ஆக்கப்பூர்வமான சிந்தனைகளை பிரதிபலிக்கும் விதத்தில், வீட்டில் இருக்கும் பொருட்களை உபயோகித்து, பல மாதிரிகளை உருவாக்கியிருந்தனர். எழுதுதல் பிரிவில் ஒவ்வொரு மாணவனும் தங்கள் வீட்டில் செய்யும் பொங்கலின் செய்முறையை விளக்கிக் கூறியிருந்தனர். பேச்சுப் பிரிவில் மாணவர்கள் பொங்கல் திருநாளை பற்றிய சுவையான பல செய்திகளை பகிர்ந்தனர். அனைத்து மாணவர்களுக்கும் சான்றிதழ்கள் வழங்கப்பட்டது.

ப்ராஜக்ட் தினம்:

கோவிடின் ஆரம்பம் முதல் மதராஸ் டிஸ்லெக்சியா அசோசியேஷன் ஆன்லைன் மூலம் செயல்பட்டு வந்துள்ளது. கோவிட் குறைந்துள்ள நிலையில் சில நிகழ்ச்சிகள் ஆன்லைன் மூலமாகவும் சில நிகழ்ச்சிகள் நேரடியாகவும் நடைபெறுகின்றன. ஆன்லைன் மூலம்நடைபெறும் நிகழ்ச்சிகள் மாணவர்களிடையே ஒரு விதமான உற்சாகமின்மையை தோற்றுவித்துள்ளது. இதை தகர்த்து, உற்சாகத்தை மீண்டும் நிலையுறுத்த கடந்த பிப்ரவரி மாதம் 26 ஆம் தேதி ப்ராஜக்ட் தினமாக அமைக்கப்பட்டது. “சர்வரோக நிவாரணியாக தண்ணீர்” என்பதே தலைப்பாக எடுத்துக்கொள்ளப்பட்டது. “தண்ணீர்” என்னும் தலைப்புடன் சம்பந்தமுள்ள பல்வேறு தலைப்புகளை மாணவர்களுக்கு அளித்து, அதை பற்றிய கருத்துக்களை தங்கள் விருப்பப்படி வெளிப்படுத்துமாறு கூறப்பட்டது. மாணவர்கள் தண்ணீரின்

பயன்கள், தண்ணீரின் நிலைகள் போன்ற தலைப்புகளில், கணினியில் விளக்கக் காட்சிகளாகவும், பரிசோதனைகள் மூலமாகவும், நாட்டிய வடிவத்திலும் மற்றும் பல புதுவிதமான முறைகளிலும் தங்கள் கருத்துகளை வெளிப்படுத்தினர். அவர்கள் மிக உற்சாகமாக காணப்பட்டனர். இதில் பங்குபெற்ற 26 மாணவர்களின் அறிவுத்திறனையும், ஆக்கபூர்வமான சிந்தனைகளையும் வெளிப்படுத்தும் விதமாக இந்நிகழ்ச்சி அமைந்தது. நடனக்கலை வல்லுநர், திருமதி. மீனாட்சி சித்தரஞ்சன் அவர்கள் இந்நிகழ்ச்சிக்கு தலைமை தாங்கினார்.

அனன்யா லேர்னிங் அண்ட் ரீசேர்ச் சென்டர்

கோவிட் குறைந்த நிலையில் நேரடி வகுப்புகள் தொடங்கப்பட்டது. மாணவர்கள் மிக்க ஆர்வத்துடன் வகுப்புகளுக்கு வர தொடங்கினர். ப்ராஜெக்ட் தினமானது பன்முகத்திறனின் அடிப்படையில் அமைக்கப்பட்டது. அனன்யாவில் கொடுக்கப்பட்ட பயிற்சியால் மாணவர்களின் திறன்கள் மேம்பட்டுள்ளதை வெளி உலகுக்கு தெரிவிப்பதே இதன் நோக்கம் ஆகும். மாணவர்கள் பல புதிய சிந்தனைகளை பிரதிபலிக்கும் விதத்தில் பல புதியனவற்றை உருவாக்கினர். அதுமட்டுமல்லாமல் மிக தெளிவாக விளக்கவும் செய்தனர். அங்கு வருகை தந்த அனைவர் முன்னிலையிலும் தங்களது திறமைகளை வெளிப்படுத்த ஓர் வாய்ப்பாக இது அமைந்தது.

Happenings in MDA

Training

The beginning of the year 2022 was dotted with online training programmes in alignment with Covid 19 advisory. As the situation got better, we resumed in-person classes for many of the programmes.

Awareness programmes for

- Alpha group of schools
- KRM group of schools
- Aravinda Model School-Mangalgi

Pre-Primary programme for the pre-primary teachers of:

- VES group of schools
- Vidyaniketan-Bangalore

6 day-programme for primary school teachers of:

- B.Ed students of St. Christopher's academy of Education
- SBOA School & Junior College
- Rajendra Matric Hr. Sec. School
- Aravinda High School-Guntur
- Sushwani Matha Jain School
- NammaOru Global-Tirunelveli

Effective Learning Programmes for the middle school teachers of:

- Mahatma Gandhi Vidyalaya, Chennai
- OMEIAT (Organisation of Muslim Educational Institutions and Associations of Tamil Nadu)
- TI Matriculation Higher Secondary School

Workshop on Maths for Reussir Trust-Bangalore Resource Rooms

The following schools associated themselves with MDA and went ahead with setting up of Resource Rooms in their schools:

- Vidyaniketan
- Shreeniketan Matriculation
- RKM

After School Remedial Center

Pongal Celebrations

Pongal was celebrated online with gusto. An hour and a half long programme, covering four events, each with a theme related to the festival was organised to enable the children to share their stories and events associated with this festival. The events were rangoli contest, model making, process writing and speech competition.

The rangoli competition saw children draw intricate rangolis in vivid colours. As a part of the model making competition children exhibited their creativity by making models using materials available at home. For the event on process writing, the children wrote the unique recipe practised in their respective homes to make sweet pongal. In the speech competition, the children gave well researched and interesting speeches. All winners and participants were given online certificates.

Ananya Learning & Research Center

The children were very glad to return to in-person classes. Multiple Intelligences Project Day was organised in the physical mode. It aimed at showcasing the talents of the children which were honed at Ananya and effectively used to build and enhance their academic skills. The children not only displayed their creations, they also give lucid explanation for the activity performed by them, giving them an opportunity to express themselves to a live audience.

Project - After School-Remedial Centre



The children of the Remedial Centre presented the Project, Water - A Precious Resource, on 26th February 2022 at 2 P.M.

Since MDA has been functioning online due to the pandemic, the whole event had to be conducted online. With ennui setting in, we realised that the children needed something challenging that would kindle their interest in learning.

As we wished to involve each and every child in the project, we covered all aspects of water. Water allowed us to deal with a wide range of sub-topics. We covered sources, uses, properties, pollution, conservation, dangers of water, city water

supply, forms of water, sensation - covering all 5 senses, rivers - north India and south India, civilizations that happened near river valleys, water as a holy liquid among religions, waterfalls, animals and plants that grow in water and water sports. A water dance by one of the students was a befitting end to the event.

Each child was assigned a topic and was given the freedom to present it in their unique way. We value their talents and allowed them to explore and share their work. The little ones sang a song on the sources of water. Many others presented the topic with the help of charts, model and explanation. Two children explained with the help of experiments. The older children presented it in the form of PPTs.

The whole event was pre-recorded to avoid connectivity issues.

The chief guest of the function was Mrs Meenakshi Chitharanjan, a renowned Bharatanatyam dancer and teacher. She appreciated the children, parents and teachers for their work. The event was well attended.

The untiring efforts of the students, parents and teachers in putting together the project resulted in yet another successful programme which is a trademark of MDA.

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