



## Pupils with Learning Difficulties

### Written Language Deficits



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### Classroom-based tips (focus on instructional methods)

To help pupils develop their writing skills you can use the following techniques:

1. **Use ICT with individuals or groups** (e.g. the pupils read a text as a group, and then each pupil individually prepares a short story based on this text using digital storytelling).
2. **Use visual prompts like flash cards/multimedia and other applications** to enhance pupils' spelling skills and vocabulary (Chera & Wood, 2003)
3. **Let your pupils be creative and use their imagination during the writing process.** Show them that writing constitutes an important part of our lives (Troia, 2006). Some examples that could be adapted based on your class's needs may include assisting pupils to write different kinds of letters, or even shopping lists.
4. **Create activities that are relevant to your pupils' experiences and interests** (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006) and ask them to prepare stories in different formats, for example drawings, or photos taken on their phones that they can use in their writing assignments.
5. **Build on your pupils' interests and provide them with material that motivates them** to learn new vocabulary and engage in the writing process, such as comics and super-heroes with related vocabulary development (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006)
6. **Provide your pupils with feedback;** for example, you may ask your pupils what they consider important and produce a feedback document form together (Genlott, & Grönlund, 2013; Lieneman, Graham, Leader- Janssen & Reid, 2006).
7. **Check that pupils are attentive and not just sitting passively during shared reading and writing times.**
8. **Give pupils the books or text to be used in shared reading the week before,** so that they can practice.



### School-based practical tips (focus on instructional methods)

#### Community

1. **Arrange regular meetings between the parents and the staff to discuss pupils' progress and to enhance the home-school collaboration.** This will help to monitor progress and to discuss other issues related to the social-emotional needs of the pupil, such as, social skills,

social interactions with peers and adults within the school setting, marginalisation, behaviour at home, special areas of interest, and self-esteem. (McCaleb, 2013).

2. **Promote the notion that writing constitutes an important part of our lives in conjunction with other modes of communication.** Organise exhibitions and other events which could be attended by famous authors who can engage pupils in different activities.

## Curricular Adaptations

1. **Arrange co-teaching activities among colleagues** that may be able to assist individual teachers in implementing additional activities/methods to further support their teaching. Invite researchers or educational psychologists to conduct clinical observations and provide feedback, including suggestions on support strategies.
2. **Invest in ongoing training in the form of workshops and seminars provided by educational professionals or educational psychologists** on aspects of differentiated teaching and strategies that may better assist the needs of pupils presenting with specific learning difficulties. (Rose review, 2009)
3. **Make specific adaptations to the material given to these pupils.** For example:
  - Use a plain, evenly spaced sans serif font such as Arial and Comic Sans
  - Use cream or soft- pastel- coloured paper instead of white paper to print the activities given to the pupils. (Hall, Meyer and Rose, 2012)
4. **Make curricular adaptations in terms of differentiating to the task.** Ensure you inform the teachers to make necessary adaptations to the tasks based on individual learning objectives in the curriculum and in response to the various learning needs of the pupils and the severity of the case (Hall, Meyer and Rose, 2012).
5. **Make curricular adaptations in terms of resources.** If feasible, equip the classrooms in which there are pupils exhibiting specific learning difficulties with different and adapted materials such as sand, magnetic letters and board games, and advanced technology, such as tablets and projectors, so as to attain a single learning outcome. (BDA, 2012)

## Other (External Expertise)

**Provide training for teachers and SEN teachers from external agencies like educational psychologist services and dyslexia organisations,** related to pupils' main areas of difficulty. They can also advise on the signs for early identification and assessment, and practical tips for the teachers in order to support those pupils in the class (Armstrong & Squires, 2014).

## Parents / Parents' Associations

**Arrange regular meetings between the parents and the staff to discuss pupils' progress and to enhance the home-school collaboration.** This will help to monitor progress and to discuss other issues related to the social-emotional needs of the pupil, such as, social skills, social interactions with peers and adults within the school setting, marginalisation, behaviour at home, special areas of interest, and self-esteem. (McCaleb, 2013).

## School Purchases

**Make curricular adaptations in terms of resources.** If feasible, equip the classrooms in which there are pupils exhibiting specific learning difficulties with different and adapted materials such as sand, magnetic letters and board games, and advanced technology, such as tablets and projectors, so as to attain a single learning outcome. (BDA, 2012)

## Pupil Support

**Where possible, provide additional class support,** such as the presence of a teaching assistant, for pupils presenting with writing difficulties (BDA, 2012).

## Teacher Professional Development

1. **Provide training for teachers and SEN teachers from external agencies like educational psychologist services and dyslexia organisations,** related to pupils' main areas of difficulty. They can also advise on the signs for early identification and assessment, and practical tips for the teachers in order to support those pupils in the class (Armstrong & Squires, 2014).
2. **Arrange co-teaching activities among colleagues** that may be able to assist individual teachers in implementing additional activities/methods to further support their teaching. Invite researchers or educational psychologists to conduct clinical observations and provide feedback, including suggestions on support strategies.
3. **Invest in ongoing training in the form of workshops and seminars provided by educational professionals or educational psychologists** on aspects of differentiated teaching and strategies that may better assist the needs of pupils presenting with specific learning difficulties. (Rose review, 2009)

## Technology

**Make curricular adaptations in terms of resources.** If feasible, equip the classrooms in which there are pupils exhibiting specific learning difficulties with different and adapted materials such as sand, magnetic letters and board games, and advanced technology, such as tablets and projectors, so as to attain a single learning outcome. (BDA, 2012)

## Supportive Literature

**Definition:** Pupils with learning disabilities perform significantly lower than their age-matched peers without disabilities on all written expression tasks, including the transcription of handwriting, spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, grammar, and expository writing (De La Paz and Graham 1997; Englert, Wu and Zhao, 2005).

## Characteristics:

- Pupils with written language deficits tend to demonstrate minimal planning, effort and meta-cognitive control in terms of writing.
- Pupils with writing deficits also experience difficulties with spelling, grammar and punctuation
- Pupils with written language deficits produce poorly organised compositions containing a poorly developed ideas. (Heward, 2013)

## Websites and EU Reports

[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key\\_data\\_series/129en.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/129en.pdf)

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