



THE DYSLEXIC LEARNER AT TITAHI BAY SCHOOL

At Titahi Bay School we recognise and celebrate uniqueness of all our students.

This year we are starting to explore the world of the dyslexic child and the implications this has for how we teach.

4D (For Dyslexia)

In 2007 the New Zealand Ministry of Education **FINALLY** recognised dyslexia for the first time.

In 2008 the Dyslexia Foundation of NZ launched its 4D/For Dyslexia programme to empower schools to take their own action and positive changes for children in their classrooms.

Our school is now a registered school with 4D. We have recognised dyslexia as a learning difference and are committed to taking action to address this through a three-step approach:

1. Producing a policy statement setting out our approach to dyslexia
2. Outlining a strategy for addressing dyslexia in the classroom
3. Implementing the strategy, including making adjustments to the classroom environment and assessment methods

We will monitor these changes through the 4D audit.

These changes will help make a difference for dyslexic students by:

- Demonstrating empathy, respect and understanding for these students
- Keeping these children at school happy and connected
- Personalising learning – identifying the specific learning needs of each child
- Building home and school partnerships
- Ensuring the transition from primary to intermediate is as successful for the child as possible

- Changing benchmarks and expectations for these children to take the stress out of learning for children and their families

This term

This term Tanya Balfour is working on setting up systems for

- Identifying children who display dyslexic type learning difficulties
- Screening these children to identify their strengths and weaknesses
- Contacting parents to discuss next steps
- Implementing strategies in the classroom to support children with dyslexic type learning difficulties
- Up-skilling teachers in recognising signs of dyslexia

We are not experts in this area but we have made a start.

What do I do if I think my child is dyslexic?

If you have concerns about your child's learning, **the first port of call must be your child's teacher.**

It is useful to have a discussion about what you have noticed at home and what the teacher has noticed at school.

We can then take the child through a Dyslexia Screening Assessment. This is a computerised assessment that identifies strengths and weaknesses and indicates whether a child is *likely* to be dyslexic or not.

We cannot / will not label a child as dyslexic as only a psychologist can do this.

We can however, refer parents to a psychologist or an agency such as SPELD which will be able to officially diagnose dyslexia, should parents wish to go down this path.

If it is identified that a child has dyslexic type learning difficulties, we will work together, home and school, to implement strategies in the classroom that will support the individual child's needs.

A bit about Dyslexia

Defining dyslexia is a complex and contested area and there are no internationally agreed definitions.

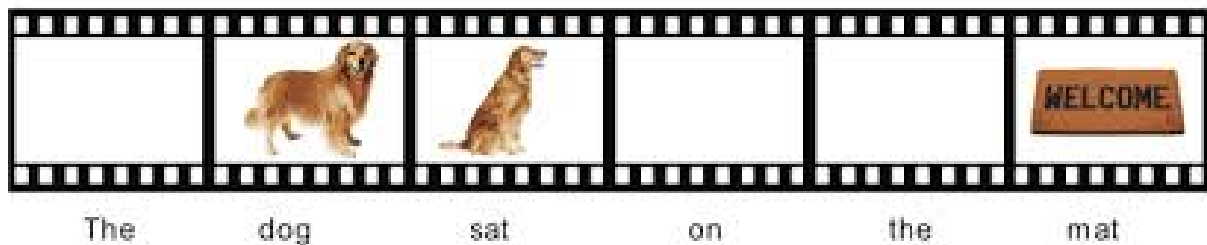
The underlying theme throughout definitions is that **dyslexia involves an unexpected and persistent difficulty in learning to read, write and spell that cannot be explained by other factors.**

The difficulties relate specifically to **decoding and print.** They do not usually affect a person's ability to understand what is read to or formulate text that others can write down for them.

Dyslexia is an alternative way of thinking, primarily using pictures or images that enables individuals to view the world from many different perspectives and in creative ways. It is this ability that can cause both great talents and great difficulties.

Difficulties arise when the picture thinker encounters a world of words.

DIFFICULTIES ARISE WHEN THE PICTURE THINKER ENCOUNTERS THE WORLD OF WORDS



Dyslexic learners are particularly vulnerable when a classroom-based preoccupation with reading and spelling accuracy is allowed to detract from information processing, core thinking skills and knowledge gained.

Learning problems often occur despite the adequate opportunity to learn and are highlighted against the background of the child appropriately acquiring skills in other areas. Dyslexic learners are usually as good as their peers in many things and are fine until, for example, they have to write it down.

Dyslexia is not due to either lack of intelligence or desire to learn; with appropriate teaching methods, dyslexics can learn successfully.

Is my child Dyslexic?

The **Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand** lists the following indicators:

(Children may display all or only some of these)

- Problems with labels, rhymes, sequences
- Letters or numbers reversed or confused b/d/p/q, n/u, 13/31
- Being slower to process and needing repeated exposures to retain learning



- Retrieval issues – learns something one moment, gone the next
- Large gap between oral and written capabilities
- Poor sense of direction – difficulty telling left from right
- Reluctance, embarrassment or avoidance around reading out loud
- Frequent misspelling of words and mixing up words which sound similar in speech or written work
- Poor handwriting, punctuation and grammar
- Misunderstanding or misinterpretation of instructions
- Problems meeting deadlines, despite working hard
- Fine motor coordination may be problematic, e.g. tying laces, doing up buttons

Useful websites

Below are links to websites that you may find useful if you are interested in finding out more about dyslexia.

<http://www.dyslexiafoundation.org.nz>

<http://www.4d.org.nz>

<http://www.daviddyslexia.co.nz>

The Davis Dyslexia website has an 'Online Dyslexia Assessment' that you may find useful to do if you suspect your child may be dyslexic. It has 41 questions that cover a range of contexts (including home). This information would be very helpful to have when you meet with your child's teacher.