

How to Support Children with Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing

Education Bureau 2015

Introduction

Parents always wish to provide their children with the best living and learning environment in order to nurture them to achieve success in future. With early identification and support, children with special educational needs (SEN) may adapt to everyday life and the learning environment, and develop their potentials.

What is Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) in Reading and Writing?

SpLD in reading and writing, also known as dyslexia, is the most common type of SpLD. Children with SpLD in reading and writing, despite having normal intelligence and formal learning experiences, are unable to read, spell and dictate words accurately and fluently. Such conditions are severe and persistent. Generally speaking, they have poorer literacy skills and weaker cognitive abilities in relation to reading and writing.

Characteristics

- Express better in oral than written means;
- Cannot read fluently, often mispronounce words or forget the pronunciations;
- Have difficulty with spelling/word dictation despite having made considerable efforts to learn;
- Often omit strokes or add unnecessary ones when copying Chinese characters; and
- Get tired easily and need extra effort to concentrate in order to complete reading and writing assignments.

Roles of Parents

I Suspect that My Child may have SpLD in Reading and Writing...

- Initiate contact with his/her teachers or the student guidance personnel of the school. Teachers can administer appropriate screening tools to identify the learning needs of the child, and make referral for further assessment and provide appropriate support according to the needs of the child.
- My Child is Assessed to have SpLD in Reading and Writing...
- Inform the school the SEN of your child promptly and proactively;
- Maintain communication with the school's student support team, class teacher and subject teachers to understand your child's learning in school and discuss appropriate support strategies with them when necessary;
- Watch out for any sign of stress in daily life and learning your child may have as he/she needs extra time to consolidate what has been learned;
- Be optimistic and positive. Many successful people are known to have SpLD in reading and writing. Parents should help their children recognise and develop their potentials;
- Encourage your child to participate in healthy extra- curricular activities to enhance

- his/her sense of achievement and self-confidence;
- Guide and encourage your child with patience. Give more positive feedback on your child's good performance;
 - Help your child develop good study habits, and enhance his/her reading and writing abilities by multi-sensory approach, teaching him/her explicitly word decoding strategies, paired-reading with him/her, daily training on reading and spelling/word dictation (about 15 minutes every day), making use of interactive educational software, surfing educational websites, etc.; and
 - Help your child understand the purpose of assessment accommodations and encourage him/her to share his/her views with teachers in the decision-making process.

For further information on supporting children with SEN, parents may refer to the "Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education" on the Education Bureau (EDB) website (please see the back page for the website).

Early Identification

Teachers in Hong Kong public sector schools normally complete screening checklists for Primary One students suspected with learning difficulties between December and January each year so as to arrange early intervention for students with difficulties. Based on students' responses to the intervention, those with unsatisfactory progress or showing severe difficulties are referred to educational psychologists (EPs) for further assessment.

Most students with SpLD in reading and writing are identified in their early primary levels. For students who show difficulties in reading and writing only after they have progressed to higher levels, teachers can use the behaviour checklist to examine their learning difficulties, and refer them to EPs for assessment via the student guidance personnel or teacher-in-charge of the student support team.

Support Services and Strategies

In general, schools implement the tiered intervention model on learning and teaching and provide support services to students with SpLD in reading and writing according to their needs:

- Provide quality Tier One whole class teaching with effective evidence-based teaching methods and resources. Help students build up their basic literacy skills with structured teaching and multi-sensory teaching methods, enhancing their reading fluency and mastery of effective learning strategies;
- Adjust teaching strategies and provide additional support according to the needs of students, such as giving them additional attention and instructions in class, arranging for them support from peers or parent volunteers;
- Conduct continuous assessments on students' learning progress. Provide small-group Tier Two learning support to them, or individualized Tier Three intensive learning support for students whose learning difficulties persist despite the intervention rendered; and
- Schools will make special arrangements in examinations in accordance with the needs of students, such as giving extra time allowance, providing special format of examination papers or making special arrangements for answering questions.

For details, please refer to the “Special Arrangements for Internal Examinations for Students with Special Educational Needs”

<http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/special/resources/serc/link.html>

Useful Websites and Telephone Numbers for Enquiry

Education Bureau

<http://www.edb.gov.hk>

Hong Kong Regional Education Office (Tel: 2863 4646)

Kowloon Regional Education Office (Tel: 3698 4108)

New Territories East Regional Education Office (Tel: 2639 4876)

New Territories West Regional Education Office (Tel: 2437 7272)

General Enquiries on Special Education (Tel: 3698 3957)

Educational Psychology Service Section

- Hong Kong (Tel: 3695 0486)
- Kowloon (Tel: 3698 4321)
- New Territories East (Tel: 3547 2228)
- New Territories West (Tel: 2437 7270)

Special Education Resource Centre (Tel: 3698 3900)

<http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/special/resources/serc/index.html>

Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education

<http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/special/resources/serc/download/ieparentguide.pdf>

Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education

http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/special/support/wsa/ie%20guide_en.pdf

Department of Health

Child Assessment Service (Tel: 2246 6659)

<http://www.dhcas.gov.hk/eindex.html>

Social Welfare Department

<http://www.swd.gov.hk>

The Hong Kong Council of Social Service

<http://hkcss.org.hk/e>

OneClick

<http://oneclick.hku.hk/en>