

Parents' Guide

Relationship between school/family



COMENIUS
Discovery I: discovering and supporting dyslexia in the early years
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*La Città del Sole
Italy*

Bulgaria
Resource Center for Supporting the Integrated Education and Training of Children and Students with Special Educational Needs.

Cyprus
New Hope Special School





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ABOUT THIS GUIDE (MANUAL)

The idea of creating Parents' Guide came by a group of professionals from Italy, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Romania and Turkey, working in the field of Dyslexia, specifically in Learning Disabilities (LD). Our wish is to help both children with Dyslexia and their parents.

This Guide is a result of the shared experience and effort of professionals from Italy, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Romania and Turkey.

Italy - Scuola dell'Infanzia Paritaria "La Città del Sole.Vasto"

Bulgaria - Resource Center for Supporting the Integrated Education and Training of Children and Students with Special Educational Needs.

Romania - Gradinita cu program normal Gornet, judetul Prahova

Turkey - Özel Isikkent Anaokulu

Cyprus - New Hope Special School

The main goal is searching for, discovering and helping students with dyslexia in the ages between 3 and 6 and providing a smooth transition from early years to Elementary school. The project Comenius has given us the opportunity to create and publish this book as part of the “ Life long learning” program.



Introduction

The message this book wants to conduct, to send is that our efforts are directed towards supporting children with dyslexia, their parents in overcoming fear and supporting the smooth transition from early years to Elementary school.

The book is aimed at creating opportunities for each child to develop and reach their potentials in the new educational conditions and circumstances.

As follows:

- Increasing the independence of students
- Understanding how necessary is teachers to recognize individual problems
- The need for radical change in the orientation of the new school /educational/ environment
- Students' difficulties in understanding and learning the new educational setting and it's requirements
- Overcoming fear and insecurity in the new environment.
- How parents could help their child

First section:

What is dyslexia?

OCCURRENCE & PREVALENCE

Definition

Dyslexia is a neurologically-based, often familial, disorder which interferes with the acquisition and processing of language. Varying in degrees of severity, it is manifested by difficulties in receptive and expressive language, including phonological processing, in reading, writing, spelling, handwriting, and sometimes in arithmetic.

Dyslexia is not the result of lack of motivation, cognitive and sensory impairment, inadequate instructional or environmental opportunities, or other limiting conditions, but may occur together with these conditions.

Although dyslexia is lifelong, individuals with dyslexia frequently respond successfully to timely and appropriate intervention.

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin.

It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition, and by poor spelling and decoding abilities.

These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction.

Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

Learning Disability is not a specific term; it is a category containing many specific disabilities, all of which cause learning to be difficult. The following definition of "learning disability" is used for legislative, financial, and educational purposes only. It is NOT a definition of dyslexia, which is one specific learning disability.



MY THOUGHTS.....

- I'm clumsy! I'm always last.....
- I'm afraid to play with my friends
- I don't understand what are the games, I can't follow the rules...
- I often confuse directions in time and space: above / below; now/ tomorrow/yesterday ...
- I don't know how to ride a bike like the others
- I'm slow in undressing and dressing
- I am clumsy and I often bump into objects
- I don't know how to paint and I can't follow outlines
- I don't remember names and I confuse simple concepts
- Nobody loves me, as I always do something wrong ...



Thoughts of the parent.....What should I do?

- ✓ He / she is restless
- ✓ He / she doesn't show interest.....
- ✓ He / she doesn't complete tasks, and carries things
- ✓ He / she has problems interacting and isolates from peers....

- ✓ He / she is often aggressive or sad, timid or nervous....
- ✓ He / she doesn't have self confidence
- ✓ He / she behaves inadequate.....
- ✓ He / she forgets what to do or makes it the wrong way.....
- ✓ He / she hardly speaks and never initiates conversation.....
- ✓ He / she doesn't listen, attend.....
- ✓ He / she constantly moves, stirs
- ✓ Something is wrong

Second section:

Typical characteristics of students of age 3 – 6

How do I get to know that my child has difficulties, a disability?

Signs in the ages between 3 - 6:

- Poor pre-school setting adaptation
- Poor concentration in cognitive activities
- They can't participate actively in games, for they can't grasp the rules of the game, and can't manage their behavior or they can't play according to the rules.
- Difficulties in left-right direction orientation, gross and fine motor skills
- The clumsiness, lack of skills, inability to perform/ complete certain tasks leads to increased strain, insecurity or lack of/ decreased attention and at the same time doubt and withdrawal from participation in the group activities and games.

Early signs of SLD are observed in:

1. MOTOR SKILLS

- Problems in gross motor skills – too much stumbling, bumping into objects, falling for no apparent reason, clumsiness and awkwardness are often to be observed in games involving movement, and other motor activities (difficulties when playing with a ball or riding a bike, inability to jump on one foot, difficulties in balance and body posture, clumsiness when undressing and dressing)
- Problems in fine motor skills referring to self-help abilities, and other activities involving the use of finer motor skills (when washing, eating - using spoon and fork, zipping, buttoning, threading, cutting- using scissors, sketching -holding properly a pencil)
- Problems in drawing, painting and keeping within the outlines, considerable errors in keeping to outline.
- Problems in constructive skills, affecting the integration of geometric figures, playing with blocks, playing with constructors and puzzles

2. COGNITIVE SKILLS

- Problems in attention concentration- distraction, inability to concentrate on concrete objects, tasks, even in activities that engage the child's interest;
- Problems in activities - the child cannot keep still, constantly switches between activities, doesn't stand in one place are much stronger expressed compared to other children.
- Problems in spatial orientation and in determining left-right, forward-backwards, up – down, the child doesn't have preference for left or right hand, but uses both purposelessly in diverse activities.
- Difficulties in perceiving sequences of objects, pictures and events;
- Difficulties in memorizing verses or songs;
- Difficulties in grasping and following the rules of games;
- Difficulties in remembering places, faces, their own names and address
- Difficulties in time-orientation and understanding of concepts like “morning”, “evening”, “now”, “later”, “today”, “yesterday”, “tomorrow”.

3. LANGUAGE SKILLS

- Children have difficulties in expressing themselves, compared to other children;
- They can't grasp some basic episodes in a story like fairy-tale or cartoon, and can't remember the sequence of episodes;
- Have difficulties in speaking coherently, and telling the sequence of acts in events of their own life or stories – both heard and pictorial;
- Pronounce words wrong or doesn't order them properly in the sentence
- Confuse or substitute words like: up/down, front/back, in/out, now/ later
- Lack the ability to tell the initial sound in a word
- Children have difficulties remembering the names of things they know, often confuse them, have difficulties recognizing or replace letters and numbers;



- **Specialist:** Makes assessment and he defines the scope of work with the child
- **Parent:** Watching, supporting and assisting the child and constant connection with the specialists and teachers
- **Teacher:** Provides help to the child in the games, in the learning and the participate

Third section:

Assessment of dyslexia. How is it performed and who performs it?

Child Neuro-psychiatric, Psychologist, The Process of Assessment

- I. Should I take my child to a psychologist, speech therapist or other professional?
- There are many and different reasons to visit a psychologist practice, ranging from consulting on a minor problem (mostly behavioral) to regular therapy.
- II. Concerns and prejudice about consulting a psychologist:
 - 1. Would my child be assessed to be normal?
 - 2. Would my child start feeling changed, different?
 - 3. How to prepare my child for consulting?
- III. What should I do at the psychologists practice?
- Often when there is a problem with the child in the family , children are taken to a psychologist , speech-therapist and a team of professionals, and all the care and attention is concentrated on them. Parents themselves might also need help and support in coping with the new situation. Coping with a problem like dyslexia often costs the parents a lot of efforts both for understanding and acceptance of the problem, and for the increased engagement of the child.
- How can the psychologist and speech-therapist help you:
 -
 - 1. They help you cope with the sense of guilt, coming from the child's problem;
 - 2. They support you in the process of accepting your child's differences;
 - 3. Psychologist and Speech-therapist Practices provide a secure place, where you can share your concerns (directly or indirectly related to the child's problem) that you have difficulties in discussing at home;



Fourth section:

What can the parent do?

Don't panic, dear parents!

Dyslexia is neither a disease, nor a defect or any other kind of shocking concept. What you should remember is, that your child probably perceives things differently than most of the other children. Each child is unique and has their unique way to communicate, express themselves, play, learn, etc.

What should you do if you notice signs of dyslexia?

1. Talk to the class/group teacher.
2. Turn to a professional- psychologist, speech-therapist.

How should you approach your child?

He/ she doesn't have self-esteem, isolates from others; Doesn't show interest, doesn't complete tasks, tends to delay them; He/ she is unorganized, forgets what to do, or does it wrong...

Don't compare the child to other children!

It is easy to say, but practically you should always encourage and foster your child in their activities, should not expect them to have the same achievements as their peers do, direct them to activities that would turn to be successful for them.

Several types of mistakes exist:

The first is expecting and requiring too much, second comes underestimating child's abilities, another possible mistake is overlooking- not paying enough attention to the child's problems or delaying the solution until problems have gone aggravated.

MG, mother of AG - 5,6 y.o.: He is quite lazy, doesn't want to write his home-works. I try to discipline him, but he wouldn't listen... refuses to work, explaining that it's hard and he can't. There is nothing I could do to make him listen...and he can't even tie his shoelaces!

Mistakes of the mother are: scolding the child for he can't do something, thinking that he doesn't make enough effort, that he is

lazy; Initially she is strict and exacting, but after that just gives up, thinking it is not in her powers.

Alternative approach: is to understand what exactly the child is having difficulties in, help him and not stigmatize him as lazy and incapable, to direct him to things that he is capable of and likes to do, to coordinate her actions with those of the class teacher and the professional working with the child.

An example is : when the child can't copy elements – the parent helps by initially taking the child's hand and they write together, than the child whites on their own strikes, dashes, lines, then elements get more complex. It is important that the parent is patient and keeps in mind that what is easy for him/her is actually something new and hard for the child.

S.A.mother of V. A.-6 y.o.: *“ V. is very careful and trying, he wants to succeed, but doesn't always manage and then he gets upset...he is often worried...he is actually very smart, grasps everything, but still confuses sounds...perhaps when he grows up this will go...he is quite clumsy and awkward..he is just so...”*

Mistake: The mother underestimates her child's problems , as she sees that he is smart and making effort, but as it was already stated dyslexia and intelligence are not interrelated.

Alternative approach: To support her child in his activities, to work towards decreasing his anxiety, to encourage him and not compare him to others; not to delay the solution of the problem, the earlier work on it has begun the more effective it would be.

Realizing and having a correct understanding of the problem “dyslexia” by parents is a crucial part of solving the problem. The family has a key role in this process, being a factor that can mobilize the child's potentials, especially in the home background. It is important that parents share understanding of the professionals' conceptions and approaches and provide conditions in the family for the child's education and development.

In order to solve the problems a parent should find the answer to the following questions:

1. What are my child's strengths and interests ?

How to prepare my child for a smooth transition between Pre-school and School?

FIFTH SECTION

Good practices:



Training in:

- Movement
- Activities / drawing, music, sport, arts, modeling ,etc./
- Use of additional and technical resources/ illustration, pictorial cards ,etc. /
- Use of pointers of direction for orientation in space, at home, games, tasks
- Games/ repeating speech , rhyme, riddles, sayings, talking books ,etc./



It includes:

- - clear and concrete goals and objectives
- - activities for achieving them
- - terms/ as short as possible/
- - distributed tasks
- - accent on strengths

Individual supporting plan is orientated to:

Development of:

- - gross and fine motor skills
- - coordination
- - attention, memory, thinking
- - cognitive development/ shapes, sizes, space orientation, characteristics, object properties , building notions /
- - passive and active vocabulary
- - correct form and usage of language

Sixth section:

A glimpse into the future/ Perspectives

