

Using I.C.T. to support Dyslexic Pupils, (I.C.T. Suppt 07)

The **BDA Computer Committee** (BDACC) has been renamed the **BDA New Technologies Committee** (BDANTC). Part of their role is to raise the profile of the use of ICT in schools to support Dyslexic learners. They have put together an ICT supplement to complement the existing Dyslexia Friendly Schools pack.

Using ICT to support Dyslexic pupils

ICT is recognised as a key tool to help Dyslexic learners in the classroom in both learning and teaching experiences, as well as accessing or recording written information.

When ICT is used effectively, many of the barriers to and differences in learning can be reduced or overcome. These may include reading, writing, spelling, accessing the curriculum, learning vocabulary, improving phonic skills and assisting planning, recording and presenting information. This may be a result of using appropriate speech supported software, selected hardware, or specific programs to support and improve memory skills, planning and organisation, including Maths.

Some dyslexic learners also have co-ordination, sequencing and organisational difficulties. These may affect their handwriting, cause learners to produce less work or take a lot longer than expected. Once they have mastered the keyboard efficiently, a portable hand-writing device can often liberate them, allowing them to concentrate on content, rather than process.

ICT can provide the necessary risk taking, patient, multi sensory environment many Dyslexic learners need. This can result in increased confidence and self esteem, enabling users to:

- see and hear written text on screen;
- repeat and review information as and when they need to;
- try out actions first, then make an informed choice;
- practise skills that meet their needs, in both pace and content;
- overcome barriers such as slow typing or writing speed and spelling;
- record and edit ideas easily using ordinary word processing, word banks, predictive and planning tools, as well as digital and video technologies;
- plan work before starting to write and review output prior to completion;
- demonstrate their knowledge and ability;
- work more independently.

Many popular programs used in today's classrooms were written originally with Dyslexic learners' needs in mind. They have specific pupil or teacher options, including the essential speech support. As with many strategies and resources designed to support Dyslexia, these will benefit many pupils in today's inclusive classroom, enabling independent working and access to the curriculum for all.

There are several ICT assessment tools available to help teachers identify pupils who may be Dyslexic and enable early intervention. These programs are designed specifically to use in schools, and may support and / or confirm other assessments or concerns.

An audit of the provision, access to and current use of ICT in the classroom is recommended by all teachers supporting Dyslexic learners.

A suggested set of focussed questions, (see below), is offered to help enable this process of provision.

The additional table (separate document), demonstrates some of the key areas for such a focus when using ICT and the benefits for Dyslexic learners. Such provision mapping when planning to meet diverse learning needs will ensure Dyslexic learners can take full advantage of the power of ICT to overcome barriers to learning, access the curriculum, work independently and demonstrate their true ability.

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Some Suggestions for Audit Questions

What hardware and software tools are offered **in classrooms** to support Dyslexic pupils with:

- Reading text
- Improving phonic and spelling skills
- Planning and recording written text
- Accessing high frequency spellings and subject vocabulary
- Accessing other areas of the curriculum
- Accessing information on WWW

Is access to ICT support, as described above, offered in the classroom:

- When requested by pupil(s)
 - Only if it is available
 - At certain timetabled occasions e.g. Weekly, Daily
 - Always where possible,
 - Rarely
 - Not at all
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- Do all programs used have speech options?
 - Can any existing programs be enhanced to offer speech by using additional software?
 - Do existing programs have many of the features suggested in the list (see below) on choosing software.
 - If yes, are they being used to meet individual needs, assessment for learning and personal learning goals?
 - Are headphones available to enable discreet speech support?
 - Can digital cameras, video or recorders be used as an alternative form of writing text?
 - Are there portable writing aids or word processors available if required?
 - Are there printers available for printing hardcopies of tasks or annotations from interactive boards?
 - Are talking texts available to support reading and curriculum topics?
 - Are screen settings adapted on desktop, personal or interactive boards to improve visual comfort and clarity?
 - Are teaching staff and practitioners aware of the importance of using format options and screen tools to reduce glare and improve visual clarity when using interactive boards?
 - What other low tech solutions are available?
E.g. Handheld spell checkers, scanning pens, digital/ cassette recorders, language masters etc

Hints on features to look for when choosing software to support pupils with Dyslexia

- ✓ Options of full speech support on content, menus and help features
- ✓ Clear, spoken instructions that can be repeated or paused
- ✓ Opportunities to review and repeat
- ✓ Options to alter format - background, font, colour, font size
- ✓ Clear uncluttered screens
- ✓ Written text in a clear readable format and font
- ✓ Clear images that can be easily identified
- ✓ Easy to navigate with clear icons for accessing tools, menus or onscreen help
- ✓ Pupil tracking where appropriate - time taken, tasks attempted or completed
- ✓ Pupil / teacher options to meet individual learning preferences
- ✓ Options for differentiated levels or activities, where appropriate
- ✓ Full speech support for word processed text, spellcheckers and word banks
- ✓ Option of printed reports where appropriate
- ✓ Spellcheckers with speech support and displayed definitions, also spoken.
- ✓ Text highlighted when spoken or text spoken when selected
- ✓ Additional access options if required (e.g. switch control)