

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

Education Bureau 2022

Introduction

Parents always wish to nurture their children's talents by providing them with a suitable living and learning environment. Early identification and support help children with special educational needs (SEN) adapt to everyday life and the learning environment, and develop their potential.

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
- 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 the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), class teacher, student guidance personnel or school social workers. Teachers can then administer appropriate screening tools to identify the learning needs of the child, 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...

The obstacles that SpLD in reading and writing pose to learning tend to vary from person to person. The learning difficulties that children with SpLD in reading and writing face are not only related to the degree of their cognitive linguistics impairment, but also related to their own personal characteristics, e.g. innate abilities, learning attitude and methods, as well as external factors such as curriculum requirements, teaching methods, parental support and so on. To help children with SpLD in reading and writing overcome obstacles to learning, parents should...

Cooperate with the school to support your child's learning

- Provide the school with the SEN information of your child promptly and proactively, e.g. assessment report
- 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

Help your child develop good study habits and methods

- Enhance his/her reading and writing abilities by multi-sensory approach, teaching him/her explicit 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 etc.

- Help your child understand the purpose of assessment accommodations and encourage him/ her to share his/her views with teachers in the related decision-making process

Guide your child to face learning challenges with a growth mindset

- 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, and help your child find out methods to overcome difficulties
- Guide and encourage your child with patience. Give more recognition and positive feedback on your child's effort and good performance; and encourage your child to face failure with an optimistic and positive attitude and regard setbacks as the experience of growth and learning

Encourage your child to develop his/her potential and plan his/her life

- Let your child know that people with SpLD in reading and writing can make outstanding achievements in their career by making use of their personal talents, such as good visual-spatial ability, multi-dimensional thinking, unique problem-solving views, etc.
- Encourage your child to participate in different extra-curricular activities to help him/her understand and develop his/her interests and potential and enhance his/her sense of achievement and self-confidence
- Be open-minded while discussing further study with your child, help him/her obtain the information needed and explore opportunities and support your child to plan his/her life according to his/her own interests, strengths and aspirations

Early Identification

- Teachers in 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' learning performance after 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 their SENCO or student guidance personnel when necessary

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-1 whole class teaching with diversified and effective 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-2 learning support, or individualized Tier-3 intensive learning support for students whose learning difficulties persist despite the intervention rendered
- Schools will make special arrangements in examinations in accordance with the needs of students with SpLD in reading and writing, such as giving extra time allowance, providing special format of examination papers and making special arrangements for answering questions etc.

Useful Websites and Telephone Numbers for Enquiry

Education Bureau

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

Hong Kong Regional Education Office 2863 4646

Kowloon Regional Education Office 3698 4108

New Territories East Regional Education Office 2639 4876

New Territories West Regional Education Office 2437 7272

General Enquiries on Special Education 3698 3957

Educational Psychology Service Section

- Hong Kong 3695 0486
- Kowloon 3698 4321/ 3907 0949
- New Territories East 3547 2228
- New Territories West 2437 7270

“SENSE” Integrated Education and Special Education Information Online

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/index.html>

- Information about supporting students with SpLD

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/types-of-special-educational-needs/specific-learning-difficulties/index.html>

- “Guidelines on Special Arrangements for Internal Examinations for Students with Special Educational Needs”

https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated-education/guidelines/SpecialExamArrangement_20181210_en.pdf

- “Frequently Asked Questions on Special Examination Arrangements for Students with Special Educational Needs”

https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated-education/learning-and-teaching/sea_faq_e.pdf

- “Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education”

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated-education/guidelines/ieparentguide.pdf>

- “Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education”

https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated_education/landing/ie_guide_en.pdf

Department of Health

Child Assessment Service

<https://www.dhcas.gov.hk/en/>

Student Health Service

<https://www.studenthealth.gov.hk/eindex.html>

Social Welfare Department

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