Motivating the dyslexic learner: ideas and resources for busy teachers (KS2 and 3)

Presented by
Lesley Burnett
Dyslexia specialist and consultant

lburnett_dyslexia@btinternet.com
“Do not train children to learning by force and harshness, but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each.”

Plato
Marathon Motivation!

I want to get started!

ACTIVATION

Can I keep going to the end if things go wrong?

PERSISTENCE

Have I got enough energy to get there?

INTENSITY
Learning motivation

ACTIVATION
Deciding to work towards a goal and getting started

“I can do this.” or “Can I do this?” (SELF EFFICACY)

“I will work as hard as I can.” or “I can’t be bothered.”

PERSISTENCE
Keeping going despite difficulties and failure

“If I fail, I will pick myself up and try again.” or “I know I will fail, so I won’t try.” (LEARNED HELPlessness)

INTENSITY
Concentration and energy in pursuing goals
Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation:
I want to learn this because:
• It is interesting.
• I will get a sense of achievement.
• It is enjoyable/fun.
• I want to know about this.

Extrinsic motivation:
I want to learn this because:
• I need to pass this exam.
• I will get a reward if I do.
• My teacher has told me to.
• I will get into trouble if I don’t.
• My friends are doing it.
• I will look stupid if I don’t.

Intrinsic motivation is best for the learner, but extrinsic motivation is still important. It is a question of balance.
What is the reason why dyslexic learners become demotivated?

1. Failure in literacy or some other activity
2. Learner recognises his/her limitations
3. Confidence to succeed is reduced
4. Less practice
5. Less achievement
6. Less motivation to try
7. Self-esteem adversely affected
8. Comparison with others

Why do dyslexic learners become de-motivated?
Motivation through self efficacy and confidence

Goals must be achievable and meaningful for the learner.

Support the learner in setting their own goals. This is motivating and gives them more of a vested interest in their attainment.

LEARNER-CENTRED GOALS

Talk about earlier successes and progress.

Make link between previous learning and a new task.

Focus on the end goal and encourage comparison with own targets rather than comparison with others. (Criterion referenced evaluation)

Give specific and constructive praise for both achievement and effort.
Many dyslexic learners are wary of challenge; they are afraid to take risks. One of the greatest challenges for dyslexic learners is accepting that they will sometimes fail or experience difficulty.

The challenge for teachers is to motivate dyslexic learners to move out of their comfort zone.

This can be achieved through:
- Scaffolding
- Modelling
- Moving forward in small steps
- Helping dyslexic learners to develop a repertoire of strategies for learning
- Supporting them in experimenting with different ways of processing and presenting information
- Drawing on evidence of previous success
- Celebrating achievements, however small.
Motivation is developed through supportive relationships

‘Significant others’: TEACHERS and TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Learner is at the centre

It’s good to talk! Teachers need make time for talking with dyslexic learners, to discover strengths and weaknesses, self efficacy and MOTIVATION

Teacher is a facilitator who understands the process of learning and can provide the right kind of instruction and support.
Motivation and teacher talk

‘The mediocre teacher tells The good teacher explains The superior teacher demonstrates The great teacher inspires.’

William Arthur Ward

- Use positive language (avoid ‘don’t’)
- Reward for effort and achievement
- Create an environment where errors are seen as learning opportunities
- Avoid negative over-marking – perhaps only mark what is correct in red!
- Involve the learner in marking and evaluating their work

Taken from ‘Removing Dyslexia as a Barrier to Achievement’ by Neil Mackay (2005)
Motivation is developed through positive relationships

‘Significant others’: PARENTS and PEERS

Research shows that collaborative working with carefully chosen peers can be motivating.

Parents may need guidance and support in understanding how to motivate their children.
Developing independence and autonomy

- Be flexible and build choices into how learning goals are achieved: “Use a method that works for you.”
- Allow alternative methods of recording information
- Pre-teach difficult spellings and vocabulary so the learner is ready for the lesson
- Teach meta-cognitive strategies and study skills
- Help the learner to develop problem solving strategies
- Use resources that are self-checking
- Support the learner in developing a toolkit of useful supportive resources
Motivating learners to read—
“What’s in it for me?”

| Low level/high interest texts such as Barrington Stoke and Rising Stars, which are at instructional level. |
| Make ‘tailored texts’ relating to learner’s interests. These can be compiled into a book and used to stimulate writing. |

| Choose texts related to hobbies or interests. Use to practise reading strategies with small chunks of text. Magazines and the internet are good sources, but will need editing. |
| Practise recording reading into a phone or computer. |

| Comprehension monitoring: Use mind maps or post-it notes to record key points |
| Shared reading of more difficult texts and/or audio books. |

| Paired reading with a chosen buddy for support. |
“I don’t know what to write about.”
“I don’t know how to start”

**Getting started:**
- Verbalise ideas
- Post-its
- Mind maps
- Paragraph starters

**Writing about interests:**
- Make a manual or brochure
- Write instructions
- Emails and texts!

‘Writer’s block’:
- Sue Palmer writing skeletons
- Post-its…paragraph for each one
- Visualisation

**IT support:**
- Voice recognition software
- Clicker 6
- WriteOnline
### Heads or Tails?

- Toss a coin to choose Heads or Tails for each pair.
- Circle the word.
- Now draw your character on the poster.
- Make up a name and describe him or her.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Heads</th>
<th>Tails</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hair</td>
<td>long</td>
<td>short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dark</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>curly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyes</td>
<td>blue</td>
<td>brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>small</td>
<td>large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nose</td>
<td>pointed</td>
<td>rounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mouth</td>
<td>wide</td>
<td>narrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>friendly</td>
<td>unfriendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>easygoing</td>
<td>cowardly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hard-working</td>
<td>calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build</td>
<td>tall</td>
<td>short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>thin</td>
<td>plump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoulders</td>
<td>broad</td>
<td>narrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin</td>
<td>pale</td>
<td>dark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>smooth</td>
<td>unusual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Take it further!**

- Write some more pairs of adjectives.
- Toss a coin to choose one word from each pair.
- Describe your character to a friend.

---

**Making writing fun!**

Taken from ‘What’s the Story? (2001) By Steve Bowkett
Visual support for goal setting, planning and self evaluation

Over-learning: what did we do last time?

The structure of a short story.
Planning a short story using a story hump: great ideas last time 😊
Review the post it notes: put them in order.

Writing

- Add more post-its to the plan
- Begin writing the short story:
- Paragraph for each post-it note

Visual learning strategies and memory

Proof read own writing using GAPS method.
Work on visual strategies to help with any spelling errors made.

Review:
What did I do well?
What do I need to work on next time?

Lesley Burnett 2012
Self-checking resources

Tutor pack
Make a ‘sleeve’ for a self checking sheet with a notch to cover the centre space. Learner writes answer in RH column and checks if correct by sliding the sheet up the sleeve to reveal the answer.

Sequencing cards
Print a picture on one side of the card. Print words to be sequenced on the other. Cut up. Learner sequences words and turns over cards to reveal completed picture.
Using games to motivate learners

- Games, rely on intrinsic, not extrinsic motivation.
- This places the learner at the centre.
- Games are fun and enjoyable.
- Games can also be challenging and harness the learner’s competitive spirit, while also encouraging them to learn and practise new skills.
- Games are social and encourage peer working.
Top 5 games and activities

- **Generic games:**
  Use any game, make reading or spelling cards. Read or spell the word on the card before each turn.

- **Smart Chute Learner:**
  Posts self-checking cards into a chute.

- **Gamz Swap and Fix:**
  Reasonably priced card games to reinforce teaching of word families and affixes. For age 5 to adult.

- **Free online interactive literacy games:**
  www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk

- **KS2 and KS3 BBC Bitesize games website**
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Computers
Portable media players
Tablets
Mobile phones

Recording own voice
Predictive text, grammar and spellchecking
Teaching programmes
Writing emails

Audio books
Text-to-speech
Speech-to-text

Support for writing and vocabulary
Web page design
Games to support and reinforce learning
Research and study skills
Your ideas and questions.