The Writing Dilemma
Understanding Dysgraphia

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THE PERSON WHO CAN MAKE HARD THINGS EASY IS THE EDUCATOR

Eli, The Boy Who Hated To Write

www.retctrpress.com

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What’s the deal with this writing dilemma?

- Lack of practice
- Poor knowledge/understanding of necessary skills
- Students belong to “sesame street generation”
- Might be dysgraphia
The awesome juggling act

Mel Levine
Dysgraphia ....

• Characterized by substantial effort
• Interferes with ability to convert ideas
• Basic prerequisite skills inefficient

• Causes great energy drain
• Interferes with the higher level performances
Dysgraphia ....

• Difficulty automatically
  ➔ Remembering & mastering
  ➔ Sequence of muscle motor movements

• Out of harmony with
  ➔ Intelligence
  ➔ Regular teaching
  ➔ Use of pencil in non-learning tasks

• Unexpected underachievement
  ➔ Other strong skills
We can observe dysgraphia in:

- Letter inconsistencies & irregularities
- Unfinished letters
- Struggles
- Poor fluency – of letter form, expressing content
Dysgraphia is NOT.....

- Laziness
- Not trying
- Not caring
- Sloppy writing
- General sloppiness
- Careless writing
- Visual-motor delay
EXCUSE
Recognizing & Diagnosing Dysgraphia

Symptoms
- Processing
- Fatigue
- Communication
- Organization

Must have difficulties in both areas

Reciprocity*
- Sequencing
- Motor memory

*Reciprocity
Discussed in detail in The Source For Dyslexia & Dysgraphia by Linguisystems
Similarities between dyslexia & dysgraphia

- Sequencing
- Automaticity
- Visual recognition
- Similar strategies
- Similar compensations
Critical issues in both dyslexia & dysgraphia

- Preserve self-esteem
- Develop strategies & skills to automatize
- Develop and use appropriate compensations
A thorough description leads to the appropriate prescription.

Melvin D. Levine, MD
Activity

- Please don’t use your pencils
- You are a student!
3 lessons

- How difficult it is to develop patterns without practice ---- our brain needs practice to develop the automaticity.

- Different people use different strategies for eidetics (recall of visual images).

- Lack of automatic letter form interferes greatly with spelling.
Learning problems affecting writing

Peanuts  See “Peanuts” online at www.press-enterprise.com/comics

“INDICATIONS OF POSSIBLE LEARNING DISABILITY. HAS A SLOW RECALL OF FACTS. MAKES SPELLING ERRORS. HAS AN UNSTABLE PENCIL GRIP...”
Specific symptoms

Cramped fingers & awkward pencil grasp
To observe pencil grip

- Consistency of grip usage
- Distance from finger to pencil point (should be consistently between \( \frac{3}{4} \) to 1 inch)
- Pressure on pencil (not too light nor too heavy)
- Angle of pencil (approximately 45° with page)
- Finger control and anchoring of pencil
Specific symptoms

Odd positions

L.E.A.R.N.
By R. Richards
www.retctrpress.com
Specific symptoms of dysgraphia

- Inconsistencies
- General illegibility
- Heavy reliance on visual
- Inefficient speed in copying
- Decreased speed of writing
- Excessive speed when writing
- Slow implementation of verbal directions (involving sequencing & planning)
- Concurrent sequencing issues
Inattentiveness to details in writing

Awh geez!!
(3) What is the main function of the Executive office of the President? The President's executive main function is the office.
The Writing Road

From www.ldonline.org
The Writing Road:
Reinvigorate Your Students’ Enthusiasm for Writing

Regina G. Richards

www.LDonline.org
Path of enthusiasm

- Background experience
- Vocabulary
- Concepts
- Fun
- Chunking
- Feedback

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Background knowledge

➢ It is critical to get students “on the same track”
  ➢ Their understanding of the relevant words and basic issues or concepts regarding the content

➢ Provide hands-on & interactive experiences
  ➢ Enhances students’ background knowledge &
  ➢ Enables them to learn from each other

➢ Use pre-reading activities to preview content & concepts
  ➢ Provides background experiences and expands relevant vocabulary
Can’t write or even summarize if you don’t know the words!!

Examples

- Semantics
- Derivations
- Multiple meaning
- Movement
Breadth of oral language

Some references for vocabulary:
L.E.A.R.N. (R. Richards) - www.retctrpress.com
Source books by R. Richards - www.linguisystems.com
Bringing Words to Life (I. Beck) Guilford Press
Active listening

- Students listen actively as you read the passage
- Develop activities to encourage students to do something as they listen to the text you’re reading
Active listening

Follow up with

- Show me
- Questions
- Summaries
Questions and summaries

- You ask questions about the text and students answer
- Students generate questions and ask each other
- Students state verbal summary
- NOW, students write their own summary
The Writing Road

www.ldonline.org
Source for Dyslexia & Dysgraphia
R. Richards, p 241
www.linguisystems.com
Another organizer

topping

filling

ending
Things that are living

- bee
- tree
- dog
- girl

Things that are not living

- crab

Things that are not living

- ice cream
- school bus
- boots
- book

Things that are living

- eat
- grow
- need air
Venn diagram

- Visual organizer to help students analyze and concretely represent similarities and differences between two or three concepts or words.

- Another way to develop comparing/contrasting skills as prerequisites to inferential thinking.
Venn diagram - relating 2 words

**President**
- Elected by the people
- Is responsible & considerate of others’ needs
- Has restricted power

**Dictator**
- Seizes power
- Is oppressive & imposes own will on others

Leaders of countries
Types of leaders
Absolute power
Venn diagrams - relate 2 concepts

Land animals

Water animals
Venn diagram – 2 seemingly dissimilar concepts

Beatles

Mozart
Frames

- Chunking
- Organizing
- Metacognitive awareness – self-feedback
Primary organizer

Did I use correct: spacing? capitalization? punctuation? spelling?

Do I have my name, date, and title?
Did I write neatly?
Do my sentences make sense?
Did I stick to the topic?
Another option for self-feedback

Did I use correct:

- □ capitalization?
- □ punctuation?
- □ spelling?

√ I made ______ changes/corrections!

- □ Did I write neatly?
- □ Do my subject & verb agree?
Descriptive organizer

Title:

Hook

Topic

Details

Body
- Magic Boxes
- Magic Boxes
- Magic Boxes

Conclusion
Response to literature

Introduction:
Hook
Resource (title, author, genre)
Quick summary
Topic

Body:
Ideas
Supporting details

Conclusion:
Restate the topic
Theme
Interpretation
Concluding thought
Personal narrative

Personal Narrative 3

- Hook
- Setting
- Characters
- Topic

Did I use correct:
- capitalization?
- punctuation?
- Did I use a variety of sentence patterns?

I made ____ changes/corrections!
Personal narrative - body, conclusion
Vocabulary

➢ Can’t write without words

➢ Need
  ➢ Patterns
  ➢ Word parts
Vocabulary knowledge

• Vocabulary knowledge provides the key to deep comprehension

• Active involvement provides the key to vocabulary development
Basic meanings

milk

good for you
common drink
Basic meaning map (semantic map)

longitude

- reference
- distance
- measurement
- degrees
- meridian *
- earth
- latitude
- length *
Multiple meanings

- run
  - a fast way of moving
  - flow of sap in trees
  - something that melts or gets like liquid
  - a fast gallop of a horse
  - a path for skiers
  - a baseball score

- to print or include a story in a newspaper
Multiple meanings

Is the magician losing his hair or his hare or both?
Semantic web

versatile, a describing word (adjective)

From Latin – to turn, able to

synonyms

antonyms

Something described as versatile

Something else described as versatile
Multiple meanings

trunk
Patterns & connections

Mapping

- Provides connections
- Helps students organize patterns
- Develops categorization

- Maps & visual organizers are enhanced by
  - Color -- graphics
  - Discussion -- social interaction
Using mapping

Enhance vocabulary meaning

Learning a new vocabulary word as an isolated unit hampers students’ attempts to perceive the patterns, similarities and differences that contribute to the word’s meaning.
When students actively **interact** with the word and with their peers, they develop a deeper understanding of the word and begin to appreciate the **network** of meaning that surrounds each word.

Louisa Moats
IF IT’S NOT IN YOUR BODY, YOU DON’T KNOW IT.
## Angles - a multisensory activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Angle</th>
<th>Form shape</th>
<th>Say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right angle</td>
<td>Index finger &amp; thumb</td>
<td><strong>Right on</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acute angle</td>
<td>1st 2 fingers spread in a “v”</td>
<td><strong>That’s a cute angle</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtuse angle</td>
<td>Hang loose</td>
<td><strong>Hang loose obtuse</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using movement

Gestures provide a tag or hook we can use to help retrieve a word’s meaning. The gesture helps trigger our brain’s indexing system.

Practice words:

- castle
- dragon
- princess
- sleep
- prince
- marry
- carry
Movement

Your brain gets a thrill when your body's not still.
Movement engages our cerebellar learning system

The cerebellum
Deep processing

To engage in deep processing about words, students need to:

❖ Grasp the relationship of words within text

❖ Generate information that ties the new word to already known information

❖ To experience multiple and varied exposures to each word
Using gestures as “hook”

- Previously – concrete words:
  - Castle
  - Princess

- Now – higher level words*
  - Resolute
  - Infallible
  - Extolled
  - Furled

* from, *Beowulf*, Holt Senior Anthology
Word imaging - using gestures

- Slumbering
- Brilliant
- Might
- Wait
- Dedication

Legend of Sleeping
Bear Dunes
Long ago, in the land that is today Wisconsin, Mother Bear and her two cubs were *slumbering* peacefully. Suddenly, a *brilliant* light appeared and woke up Mother Bear from her *slumber*. The *brilliant* light came closer. With a start, she realized that it was a raging forest fire. She quickly awoke her cubs from their *slumbering*. They ran into Lake Michigan. The cubs swam and swam with all their *might*. However, the distance and the water proved too much for them. They fell further and further behind and ultimately slipped beneath the waves.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>angiocentesis</th>
<th>craniotomy</th>
<th>cardioplasty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*What do these words mean?*
### Value of Morphology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nouns</th>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angio-</td>
<td>-centesis</td>
<td>-tomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vessel)</td>
<td>(puncture)</td>
<td>(incision)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranio-</td>
<td>angiocentesis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skull)</td>
<td></td>
<td>cranietomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardio-</td>
<td>cardioplasty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(heart)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Value of morphology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Nouns</th>
<th>Angio- (vessel)</th>
<th>Cranio- (skull)</th>
<th>Cardio- (heart)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-centisis</td>
<td>(puncture)</td>
<td>angiocentesis</td>
<td>craniocentesis</td>
<td>cardiocentesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tomy</td>
<td>(incision)</td>
<td>angiotomy</td>
<td>craniotomy</td>
<td>cardiotomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-plasty</td>
<td>(surgical repair)</td>
<td>angioplasty</td>
<td>cranioplasty</td>
<td>cardioplasty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Word parts - Greek origin

- saurus  lizard
pod  foot
-cera  horn
tops  face

tyranno-  tyrant
brachio-  arm
brachy  short
stego  roof / cover

How many real or fictional dinosaur names can you create by combining these word parts?
Name these dinosaurs based on pictures
Extension

- How is a triceratops like a brachyceratops?
- How is a triceratops different from a brachyceratops?
A source for dinosaur roots

An intriguing reference for word parts of dinosaur names is

http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/dinosaurs/questions/faq/names.shtml

((c)Enchanted Learning, 1996-2004)
The theme of semantics

- Verbal knowledge
- Words & concepts
- New verbal information
- Effective teaching
- Elaborating connections
IF YOU’RE NOT MODELING
WHAT YOU’RE TEACHING,
YOU’RE TEACHING
SOMETHING ELSE.

YOU NEED TO
PRACTICE AND BE
PROUD OF YOUR
FROG SKILLS!

DRIED FLY
SNACKS

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Auditory recognition
Syllable types
Syllable division
Syllables

- Auditory recognition of word parts
  - Clapping
  - Chin
  - Humming

- Counting board

- Syllable war
Syllable types - 6 patterns

- Teach closed and open early

- Closed syllable: *not*
  - Closed in by a consonant: the vowel makes its short sound

- Open syllable: *no*
  - Ends in a vowel: the vowel makes its long sound
### Decision-making = metacognition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Closed</th>
<th>Open</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>not</em></td>
<td><em>no</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Decision-making with CLOVER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Closed</th>
<th>L - consonant ending</th>
<th>Open</th>
<th>Vowel comb.</th>
<th>Silent-e</th>
<th>R-controlled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>not</td>
<td>not</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>make</td>
<td>sir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Memory hooks

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The brain

I like patterns

I need patterns to grow
Teaching tips

Recognition retrieval

Too much too fast,
It won’t last!!!

Neurons that fire together, Wire together
So, how do we help reluctant writers?

- Fun
- Enthusiasm
- Semantics: breadth & depth
- Skills
- Movement!!
- Mapping and frames
- Self-feedback
- External feedback
- Technology
Once upon a time the animals decided they must do something heroic to meet the problems of a “new world”.

So, they organized a school.
They adopted an activity curriculum consisting of running, climbing, swimming, and flying.

And, to make it easier to administer, all the animals took all the subjects.
The duck was excellent in swimming, better in fact than his instructor, and made passing grades in flying, but he was very poor in running.

Since he was so slow in running, he had to stay after school and also drop swimming to practice running.
This was kept up until his web feet were badly worn and he was only average in swimming.

But average was acceptable in school, so nobody worried about that except the duck.
One size fits all ???

The rabbit........
The squirrel........
The eagle...........

At the end of the year, an abnormal eel that could swim exceedingly well, and also run, climb and fly a little had the highest average & was valedictorian.
One size fits all???

How many of us are like the duck who is excellent at swimming and good at flying,

But we spend a lifetime running only to wear out our feet and in so doing, we neglect our true gifts?
Thank you for coming!

Enjoy the rest of your day!

Help your kids enjoy writing.

Lysdexia is no joek.