Understanding Student Challenges

Paraprofessional Conference

August 14, 2019

Thoughts and Perspectives

1. What is the first thought that comes to your mind when you hear the word disability?
2. What has influenced your thoughts about the word disability?

Disability Definition

**noun*

a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities.

a disadvantage or handicap, especially one imposed or recognized by the law.

Disability is Natural

- People with disabilities make up the largest group in the United States
- 1 in every 5 Americans is a person with a disability
- Disabilities can be visible or invisible
- A group that anyone can join at any time
- Disability does not discriminate

A DAY IN THE LIFE

OF A STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY

A Day in the Life….

For students with a learning disability, every class can be a struggle because they all involve some aspect of reading and spelling. A learning disability can also be connected to some social, emotional, and behavioral issues.

A Day in the Life….

Meet Jacob, a 6th grader with dyslexia. He's a smart kid, but his reading issues affect nearly every aspect of his day.

A Day in the Life….

<u>6:15 am</u>

Jacob turns off the alarm, but he doesn't want to get out of bed. After years of being stared at and overhearing comments about how slow and painful his reading is, he dreads the thought of going to school. He faked a stomachache a few days ago, and he's already looking forward to the next time he can stay home and de-stress.

A Day in the Life….

<u>6:15 am</u>

Disability-related issues:

-low self esteem

-school avoidance

A Day in the Life….

<u>9:30 am</u>

Jacob isn't prepared for today's language arts lesson. He tried to finish his homework, but reading takes so much time and effort that he only got through a few paragraphs. And because it took him so long to read each sentence, he had trouble understanding how those sentences fit together. He's listening carefully to the teacher and struggling to take a few messy notes. The test on Thursday is going to be rough.

A Day in the Life….

<u>9:30 am</u>

Disability-related issues:

-reading comprehension

-poor handwriting

A Day in the Life….

<u>10:45 am</u>

Jacob enjoys math except for the word problems. They take forever to read. That makes it hard for him to remember the details and decide what to do with them. He often makes a simple error--like switching two numbers or mixing up the sequence of steps. So he gets the wrong answer even though he understands the concepts.

A Day in the Life….

10:45 am

Disability-related issues:

-decoding

-working memory

A Day in the Life….

<u>12:15 pm</u>

It is hard for Jacob to relax during lunch. While his peers get a short recess period, he must meet with his teacher to review flashcards for a vocabulary test. He can drill and drill, but somehow it still feels like he's looking at these words for the first time. The same thing happens when he studies for other classes. Why won't these words "stick" in his memory?

A Day in the Life….

12:15 pm

Disability-related issues:

-recognizing sight words

-building vocabulary

-phonological awareness

A Day in the Life….

<u>2:10 pm</u>
Social Studies class is the worst! The teacher makes everyone read out loud. When Jacob senses he's about to be called upon, he figures out a way to leave class. He's learned that it is better to hide out in the restroom than to read in front of his peers who ridicule him.

A Day in the Life….

2:10 pm

Disability-related issues:

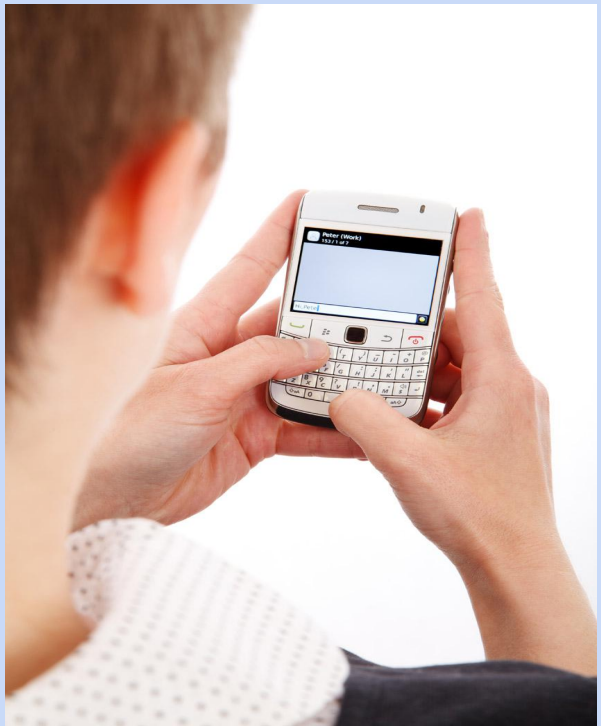
-anxiety

-task avoidance

A Day in the Life….

<u>4:45 pm</u>

Texting is stressful! It takes Jacob a long time to figure out which words his friends are abbreviating. His reading and spelling issues make it hard for him to be a part of the conversation.



A Day in the Life….

<u>4:45 pm</u>

Disability-related issues:

- -decoding
- -spelling
- -interacting with peers

A Day in the Life….

<u>8:00 pm</u>

Jacob's parents keep nagging him to finish his essay. His spelling is so bad that sometimes the autocorrect can't figure out what he is trying to say. Proofreading is hard for him too---he doesn't notice his errors so he needs his parents to look his essay over to be sure it makes sense. They're trying to be helpful, but he can tell that they don't always understand how hard he tries. Sometimes they think he's being lazy. But homework just takes him a lot longer than it takes other kids.

A Day in the Life….

8:00 pm

Disability-related issues:

-writing
-spelling
-proofreading

A Day in the Life….

<u>11:00 pm</u>

Jacob's main way of "escaping" his learning disability is by playing video games. It is late and he is tired, but he needs to unwind. Tomorrow will be another long day!

A Day in the Life….

11:00 pm

Disability-related issues:

-general stress about school

Reading Simulation

https://www.understood.org/en/tools/through-your-childs-eyes/player?simq=c07181bd-05a5-466c-aaa0-f54146a9d844&gradeId=cc2b7fda-9a44-4dc7-8dd4-cc310f9ccba1&personalized=true

Strategies for Reading Challenges

- Talk briefly with a partner about frustrations experienced.
- What strategies did you use to assist you in completing the assignment?

Go into Detail

Students with reading difficulties may need help noticing all the details in a new word.

Teach your student by first showing the word and then reading it out loud. Next, ask your student to say the letters in the word. Ask what vowels they see. What letters are at the beginning, middle, and end of the word? This helps them analyze the word and process it in detail.

Create a memory aid

Sometimes students can find a trick to help them remember troublesome words. These memory aids are called mnemonics. They might come up with a rhyme that includes the word, or something they associate with that word.

Add artistic flair

For some, remembering a sight word is easier if they connect it to a picture.

Write a practice word on two sides of an index card. On one side, you or your student can draw a picture right into the word (like drawing eyes inside the double o in the word look) Introduce the practice words using the illustrated side of the cards. When the student begins to read these words quickly and easily, switch to the “print only” side of the card.

Use multisensory techniques

Research shows that students with reading disabilities learn best when they engage many senses. Activate their sense of touch by having them trace letters on unknown words with their finger. Younger students may like writing words in sand or in shaving cream.

Get students moving by having them “write” the word in the air with their finger as they say it out loud.

Take a mental picture

Tell your student to get a good look at a word, and try to picture it and keep it in their mind.

Cover the word and ask the student what letters they see in their mind. What letters are first, second, and last or what vowel(s) are in the word? Practicing visualizing can help them remember, read, and spell new words.

Make connections

Connecting what the student already knows while they read sharpens their focus and deepens understanding. Show them how to make connections by sharing your own connections as you read.

Make inferences

We “infer” by combining what we already know with clues from a story. For example, when we read “her eyes were red and her nose was runny” we can infer that she has a cold or allergies.

You can assist your student with this reading skill by predicting what might happen in the story as you read aloud. Invite the student to do the same.

Monitor comprehension

Readers who monitor their own reading use strategies to help them when they don’t understand something. Teach them to use some of the following strategies when the story is not making sense.

Re-read
Read on--now does it make sense?
Read out loud
Read more slowly
Look at illustrations
Identify confusing words

Math Simulation

https://www.understood.org/en/tools/through-your-childs-eyes/player?simq=d7e339d7-7c55-4fd0-bef6-94b1a640d9dc&gradeId=9f2dc7e9-f5f4-466c-9474-dd12215662fc&personalized=true

Math Challenges

- Talk briefly with a partner about frustrations experienced.
- What strategies did you use to assist you in completing the assignment?

Math Challenges

- What strategies have you shared within the classroom to assist students with learning math?

Who is affected?

MANY people have gone on to accomplish amazing and incredible feats in just about every arena. The fields of acting, music, politics, and science have all been conquered by people with a learning disability.

How many do you know?

Celebrities with a Disability

Which funny celebrity has both dyslexia and a degree in speech therapy?

- Conan O’Brien
- Jay Leno
- Tina Fey
- Whoopi Goldberg

Jay Leno

This comedian and former *Tonight Show* host has a bachelor's degree in Speech Therapy. He chose to go in a different direction and found success as an entertainer.

"My mother always said to me, since I was dyslexic, 'You're going to have to work twice as hard as the other kids to get the same thing.' I said, 'OK. That seems fair.' And I *did* work twice as hard to get the same thing."

Celebrities with a Disability

Which former Mickey Mouse Club Mouseketeer-turned-pop-sensation has ADHD?

- Christina Aguilera
- JC Chasez
- Justin Timberlake
- Keri Russell

Justin Timberlake

He has come a long ways from his *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse* days! He has done it all while coping with significant ADHD issues.

Celebrities with a Disability

Which well known film director was not diagnosed with dyslexia until well into adulthood?

- Penny Marshall
- Ron Howard
- Steven Spielberg
- Woody Allen

Steven Spielberg

He wasn’t diagnosed with dyslexia until he was in his 60’s, but says his learning issues are what prompted him to take up movie acting in the first place.

Celebrities with a Disability

Which famous athlete has ADHD and credits the love of his sport for helping him focus?

- Alex Rodriguez
- David Beckham
- Michael Phelps
- Tim Tebow

Michael Phelps

This olympic medalist's mother started him in swimming as a way to channel some of his overactivity. Swimming helped him learn ways to manage his ADHD. And it grew to be a passion!

Celebrities with a Disability

Which multi-talented celebrity with dyslexia is one of only 12 people who have won a Grammy, an Academy Award, an Emmy and a Tony Award?

- Cher
- Liv Tyler
- Rita Moreno
- Whoopi Goldberg

Whoopi Goldberg

Despite other kids calling her “dumb,” Whoopi pursued her dreams and has won numerous awards for her talents.

Celebrities with a Disability

Which former NFL quarterback needed to learn plays differently than teammates because of his dyslexia?

- Brett Favre
- John Elway
- Peyton Manning
- Tim Tebow

Tim Tebow

This NFL quarterback has a learning disability. He used flashcards to help him learn the plays...and clearly it worked!

Closing thoughts…..

- Every person has the right to determine for themselves their path in life and to be empowered to achieve independence, integration and inclusion to the greatest extent possible.
- Everyone should be provided opportunities to learn the skills needed and the chance to put those skills into action.

Closing thoughts…..

- One person cannot help eliminate barriers confronting people with disabilities.
- EVERYONE can contribute to change!

Resources

www.understood.com
https://nau.edu/ihd/disability-experience

QUESTIONS??