

I am trying to teach a six year old boy who knows individual sounds but cannot blend them together. I think he might be dyslexic. Are there any suitable tests I can do?

Answer 1.

It sounds as if he is not ready to blend the sounds together. I know this is very frustrating but he probably needs lots of phonological awareness work first. I would also work on teaching him to write the sounds. He needs multi-sensory work - so put the sound on a card, get him to say the sound, trace over it, then take it away and he has to write it. Give him kinesthetic experience in lots of media – e.g. writing in the air, writing in sand, on the table, sandpaper etc Just introduce a few sounds at a time and work on them until he is secure with them - then move on. He can build up a sound pack. If you e.g. taught him a, b, t, s, r you could then try at sat bat rat cat.

Answer 2

Synthetic phonics has many advocates and I am one of them. They can be taught relatively quickly -especially if there is strong parental involvement - and are the watershed between illiteracy and literacy for most of our students.

One recent case illustrating this was a yr6 very bright boy, diagnosed dyslexic late, who did not read for pleasure. A few (and I mean a few) lessons where he learned ee for tree etc and how to build words and non-words with these vowel blends and his mother could not get the books off him. As she said, "Some system you have here." It was synthetic phonics.

I do still include onset and rime in my dyslexia syllabus but only under two circumstances:

If the kid's short term memory can only hold two chunks and cannot therefore attack c...a...t = cat we teach c...at = cat.

If a kid cannot discriminate rhyme and therefore has to reinvent the wheel to decode and encode at, cat, sat, fat etc (believe it happens!) then we teach onset and rime because if you cannot segment the rime then you cannot discriminate rhyme.

If these two things are not happening for kids I have found they do not need onset and rime teaching.

(Rime is the part of a syllable from the vowel onwards. Onset is what is in front of that - so op in stop is the rime and st is the onset).

BTW - I taught synthetic phonics to our two non-dyslexic kids too. Both became avid readers very fast indeed - in fact our daughter completely bypassed the need for a reading scheme as her reading scores were so good they were off the scale of standard scores. I could not find out about my son as he hid his reading ability from me so I left him alone.

I have a Y7 girl who is very reluctant to read aloud. I am hesitant about letting her off as this may lead other pupils to refuse also. I wonder if 'there is any valid educational reason' why she should not be asked to do so.

Be aware of why you are asking her to read aloud. READING ALOUD (often confused by teachers with reading) is the opposite of reading. It has nothing to do with the assimilation of the intellectual content of a piece of text - it is the communication of the intellectual content of a piece of text. Reading aloud is not a receptive activity - it is quite the opposite - it is an expressive activity. Reading is a solo, anti-social activity - reading aloud is a socially interactive activity

-
you always read aloud to an audience - even if that audience is yourself.

For some dyslexia makes personal reading a chore, because reading is very slow a book has to be really gripping to keep attention. On the other hand some dyslexics delight in reading aloud to a class. It's a performance where he/she can indulge in noises, silly voices, loud and soft etc. The audience may laugh, are captivated by the story, enjoying the story.

Self-confidence is a three legged stool ,its three legs are skilful, responsibility and praise. A child who has been taught the skill of reading aloud, is given the opportunity to exercise that skill (chosen carefully by the teacher to ensure the child wont fail) and then receives the adoration of their peers will grow in confidence. The converse is of course equally true.

Answer 2

It is true that you will get a number of students who will develop avoidance strategies.

However - you will also get those who "won't be beaten by it" too!

And it all depends on what they have to do - who they have to do it with and all those other factors.

And you "read the child" - and teach them to cope with it - and the rest of the class how to help. For example - we read "out loud" - I read most - and we try to do it like the BBC - with no pauses - and if a pause comes up - I expect the whole group to chime in loud and clear with their version of the word.

Children have to learn to cope with areas of the curriculum – and activities they do not like. And that's what we are for. School should be a place for gaining these skills before they have to face the worldoutside - much less comfortable and supportive than we are.

Answer 3

In my opinion, no one should be asked to read aloud unprepared unless they volunteer.

I do make sure every pupil I teach (11-16) reads aloud to the class and makes at least one speech a year to the class but never unprepared. Why would you want anyone to read anything so it is boring?? Good reading aloud is a pleasure to listen to.

Answer 4

Forcing this child to read aloud is a terrible thought. Would your colleague ask a one-armed person to stand on their hands? If he or she did, they would expect the child to be distraught and to avoid PE lessons in the future. What is the point of reading aloud anyway unless its a playscript or poetry which has to be performed?

Surely one of the first methods of obtaining a 'Dyslexia-friendly' school is NOT to force these children to read aloud in class

Answer 5

I have always dealt with this by allowing children to volunteer to read. I tell kids that if they are sitting next to someone who is struggling to read something aloud, if they can, they should help them by giving them a word, or whatever. Once a cooperative atmosphere has been developed many poor readers will happily volunteer. This approach also helps to bring together groups of kids and make them interdependent as well as independent. Reading plays can also help - if the poorer readers are given just small pieces to say they will usually cope well - again with the support of those around them. Working like this I have never had anyone who has not offered to read.

Answer 6

What we are talking about here, though, is the reluctant reader, the sensitive type of child who could, with prompting and confidence be a good reader and performer. He/she needs to be allowed the time and the support to get her to the stage where he/she actually feels able to do the reading in public.

A lot of this is to do with what is being read/spoken/performed and how confident the individual is with that particular piece. There is a lot to do with confidence generally and the ability to perform generally. Both aspects need to be taught.