

Dyslexia/learning
differences/Neurodiversity at
Primary ITO

Meeting the needs of all trainees
- and their employers

So – what is dyslexia and what are learning differences and neurodiversity?

- How we define then depends on: -
- what sort of day we are having.
- Whether we see the glass as half full or half empty.

Definition of dyslexia on a good day

- Dyslexia is the collective name for a group of skills and talents stemming from a different brain configuration that results in superior spatial awareness, creativity, innovation skills, heightened empathy and entrepreneurship.
 - Dyslexia is what gives Bill Gates, Richard Branson and Warren Buffett their edge

Dyslexia – on a bad day

- Dyslexia is a condition whereby some people struggle with text. They find reading, writing and – in particular – spelling very challenging.
- Dyslexia is not an indicator of inferior intellect

Some figures for you

- Population of New Zealand = 4,794,000
- Dyslexia affects 10% of the population = 479,400.
- This equates to 43,000 approx. in the wider primary sector. (6.64% of the workforce.)
- For the 28,000 (approx.) Primary ITO trainees this equates to around 5600 trainees likely to have learning differences

Some basic facts

- An inherited condition.
- Lasts a lifetime.
- Dyslexic children grow up to be dyslexic adults
- Affects males and females equally.
- Not linked to intellect.
- Best thought of as a difference – not a disability.
- Affects all languages, cultures and ethnicities
- Not picked up or supported in the NZ education system

Primary ITO led project to discover how best to support trainees with dyslexia

- Primary ITO developed a bespoke support package to support our trainees – based on the limited international knowledge available.
- We then led a group of 5 partners to test the model to see if it was effective in supporting adults to achieve to their potential.
- The partners were: -
 - Primary ITO
 - The Skills Organisation (another ITO)
 - Service IQ
 - Whitireia Polytechnic
 - Capital Training (a Wellington based PTE)

The Wrap-around Support Package

1. We provide a screening to identify the presence (or not) of dyslexia
2. We provide the subject the latest empirical information about dyslexia – both the challenges and the positive features
3. We encourage and support them to own their own condition – as opposed to hiding it.
4. We provide information about dyslexia – to all those people who interact with the dyslexic person. Tutors, employers, colleagues and often family members as well.
5. We access human and technological supports for the dyslexic subjects.

What we found

1. Wrap around support works.
2. Screening and quality information are paramount
3. The best outcomes involve actions by all parties – not just the dyslexic person.
4. A key ingredient for sustainable improvement is “significant others”. These people may be mentors, parents, spouses, partners or colleagues.
5. Strong leadership is required if New Zealand is to significantly improve the outcomes for adults with dyslexia.
6. Learning differences should be approached as a **strength-based** as opposed to a **deficit-based** issue.

What we found

7. There is some amazing technology available to level the playing field for dyslexic adults
8. Money is not the big deal breaker to address this situation. A lot can be achieved for very little money.
9. Central to any improvement for those with learning differences is training for employers, managers and tutors.
10. Any effective intervention for adults with dyslexia needs to fit around their already busy lives.

- Why should we bother?

The Skills of the 21st Century

- Depending on where you look, and who you ask, the following skills are those likely to be in demand in the medium term future.
 - Complex problem solving *
 - Creativity *
 - Co-ordinating with others, teamwork, empathy *
 - Emotional Intelligence. *
 - Service orientation
 - Cognitive flexibility/curiosity *
 - Critical thinking
 - People management skills
 - Judgement and decision making *
 - Negotiation
 - Entrepreneurship *
- The items above with an asterisk next to them are the skills most often demonstrated by adults with dyslexia

In conclusion

- If we want to make the best use of the workforce available to us – we should allow for those who have learning differences/neurodiverse conditions like dyslexia.
- Failure to do would be a waste of talented people.