

The DASS Insider

A newsletter for SMU Faculty

Information on disability services and access issues affecting your students and classes



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Managing Dyslexia Impacts in the Classroom

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Increasing numbers of high school graduates with learning disabilities are enrolling in colleges and universities each year. Students with disabilities make up about 8 – 10% of the undergraduate population at SMU, and dyslexia is the most common learning disability reported by first-year college students. The primary deficit for students with dyslexia is weak phonemic decoding skills, or a breakdown in the association between sounds and letters. Students with dyslexia experience difficulties with poor reading fluency and accuracy, inconsistent comprehension and retention of texts, differentiating main ideas and details in readings, and following written directions.

Dyslexia can also contribute to poor spelling and writing skills and impaired sequencing of writing tasks. Above-average intelligence allows these students to develop coping strategies in earlier school settings which often prove inadequate to manage the intensity, format and amount of college reading and writing.

The most common accommodation for these students is extra time which helps bridge the gap between text and meaning created by poor decoding skills. With extra time, students can re-read passages, and apply multisensory reading techniques to make sense out of print. Other areas of classroom performance which can be affected by dyslexia include note taking, listening, auditory comprehension, and writing organization. Multiple choice exams can be particularly difficult for these students, as the lack of contextual information eliminates a reliable compensation strategy.

Here are some suggestions to keep in mind as ways to support these students:

*Provide detailed syllabi with reading selections confirmed at the beginning of class. This enables students with dyslexia to spread out their reading load and begin early. Additionally, post your syllabi online so these students can order alternative texts prior to the start of class. Select texts that are available in digital formats (see pg.3).

*If reading aloud in class is part of your classroom, post this in your syllabus and consider how to make this amenable to the students who may have difficulty with this task. When discussing the accommodation letter with DASS students, you can bring up this topic, and pursue alternatives, such as giving advanced notice to the DASS student with the passage they will read.

*If you notice unusual deficits in written assignments, discuss these with your student and suggest they reach out to campus services for help, including the Writing Center and DASS. If it appears their difficulty is disability-based, we can assist in helping them start the DASS process for accommodations.

*Help students with dyslexia spread courses with heavy reading requirements across their entire educational careers.

*Take into account the extra time spent reading that students with dyslexia will spend in college when setting up their weekly schedule. Evening classes followed by early morning classes leaves little time for these students to get reading and assignments completed. More than two classes without a break makes extended testing time difficult to use.

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In the News



To learn more about this innovative project, visit:

<https://www.dallasnews.com/business/health-care/2018/01/31/north-texas-academy-people-autism-seeks-first-students>

www.29acres.org

Service Dog or ESA?

Do you know there is an Animals on Campus policy at SMU? Do you know what questions can be asked to

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