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## LEARNING DISABILITIES: DYSGRAPHIA

### STRATEGIES FOR ASSISTING WITH ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES

#### What is a writing disability (dysgraphia)?

Difficulties with:

- Handwriting
- Organizing thoughts on paper
- Spelling and/or grammar

Students may also have physical difficulties with writing (e.g., shapes of letters, eye-hand coordination and/or fine motor skills)

#### What are the warning signs?

- Tight pencil grip
- Unreadable handwriting
- Avoiding tasks that involve writing or drawing
- Fatigue while writing
- Missing words in sentences
- Difficulty with syntax and structure
- Inability to write down a concept one can explain verbally

#### How might we help children and adolescents experiencing dysgraphia?

Strategies fall under three main categories:

- Accommodation: giving students alternatives to written expression
- Modifications: changing tasks to avoid area(s) of weakness by
- Remediation: giving students instructions on how they can develop skills

Teachers and parents can also offer strategies for:

- Organization (e.g., how to think about the story)



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- Self-questioning (e.g., asking questions of what may happen next)

In some cases, it may be beneficial for students to use assistive technology (e.g., software that turns written word to text) to complete assignments on time

### **What online resources are available?**

Educational research newsletters & webinars:

- <http://www.ernweb.com/educational-research-articles/learning-disabilities-writing-strategies/>

12-page PDF file explaining the six foundational principles for improvement in literacy k-12:

- <http://www.edugains.ca/resourcesLIT/PayingAttentiontoLiteracy.pdf>

59-page PDF that provides an overview of writing strategies used in schools:

- <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/studentsuccess/thinkliteracy/files/Writing.pdf>

### **Are there any local resources available for help?**

Different organizations hold conferences and presentations for specific learning disabilities; more information can be found by searching sites like Google, Twitter, and The Cannon for community events

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