

OUR SAY IN OUR SCHOOLS

A resource for schools for working with young people with
Dyspraxia
(Developed by young people with Dyspraxia)



“Don’t worry about walking a day in our shoes, just try a day thinking in our heads”

Facilitated by: Stephen Hodnett
MSc Occupational Therapy & B.Ed.

PREFACE

My name is Stephen Hodnett; I am a qualified Occupational Therapist and primary school teacher. I was lucky enough to work with Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland during this year. My initial idea for this project was to create a document advising schools on best practice when working with children with Dyspraxia or Developmental Co-Ordination Disorder (DCD). This was to be from my point of view, as someone who has experience of being both a teacher and a therapist.

Though, working with the children and teenagers during my time with Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland was a real eye-opener. It is clear that I am not the expert. I am merely an outsider looking into their world.

The true experts on these matters are the individuals living their lives with dyspraxia each day in these schools. Individuals; who may not ordinarily be given an opportunity for their voices to be heard.

These children and teenagers offer amazing insight into their lives, their interactions with others and their experiences both as students and as people.

They have taken a hold of this project and with the support of their ever-helpful families, they have created this resource. I have merely been a facilitator, funnelling their creativity, views and insights into this final resource.

From here on in, that is all I will have to say. The following pages of the resource contain only the children and teenager's work and their voices on their lives.

INTRODUCTION

Our Goals
are to...

1. Help other children with Dyspraxia
2. Have our voices heard
3. Help schools and teachers to understand us and our lives

We think
that...

- People don't know enough about Dyspraxia
- It would be great if our teachers knew a bit more about our lives with dyspraxia

We don't
want...

To be treated differently

We just want teachers to appreciate that we all learn differently and have different learning styles, the same as every other child

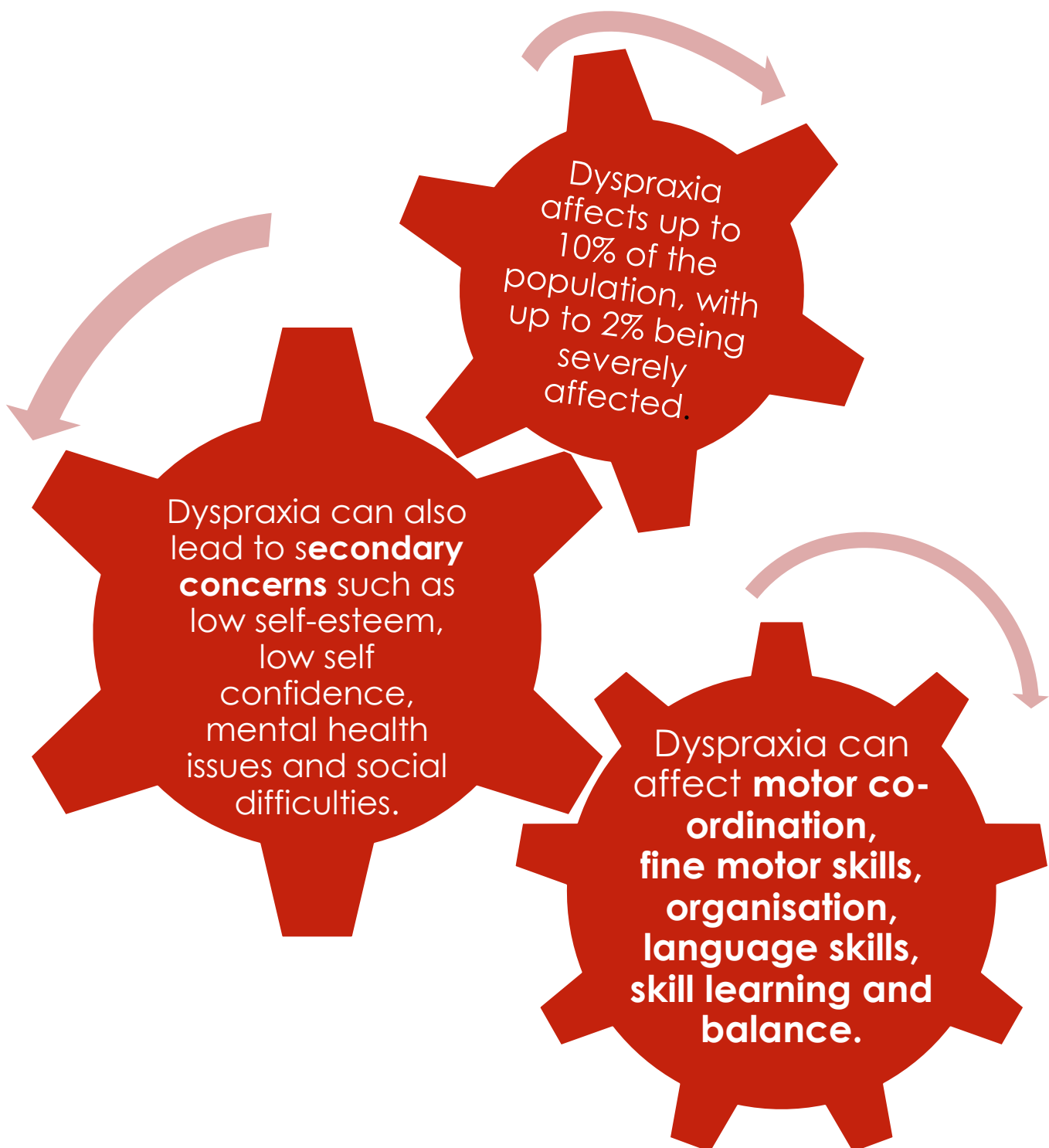
What are
we going to
talk about?

- Definition of Dyspraxia
- How every person with dyspraxia is different
- Our personal profiles
- Our daily lives in schools
- Our advice for schools and teachers

WHAT IS DYSPRAXIA (IN BOOKS)?

Definition:

Dyspraxia is a development disorder of the brain in childhood causing difficulty in activities, concentration and movement.



Dyspraxia does not impact on Intelligence!!!

WHAT IS DYSPRAXIA (TO US)?

Noah

- “To me Dyspraxia is like a filter on my learning and thinking. A filter to what I can and can't learn, to what I can and can't understand. When I'm in class one day we could be doing long multiplication and understand it fully, yet the next day I can become completely lost doing the same sums”.

Ryan

- “Dyspraxia is like having a superpower, because I am good at Art and I am a wonderful person”.

Chloe

- “I like having dyspraxia because I learn something new about myself every day”.
- “Sometimes, I don't like having dyspraxia because you always stress about something and your anxiety does be through the roof, no matter what you do nothing helps until you get whatever you need to get done, done

IS IT JUST ME THAT HAS DYSPRAXIA?

*“Dyspraxia is not the end of the world . It is
the beginning of a whole new world”*

Many famous and successful people have lived with dyspraxia. Some reporting that dyspraxia enabled them to be more creative. Here are some of the more famous people with dyspraxia:



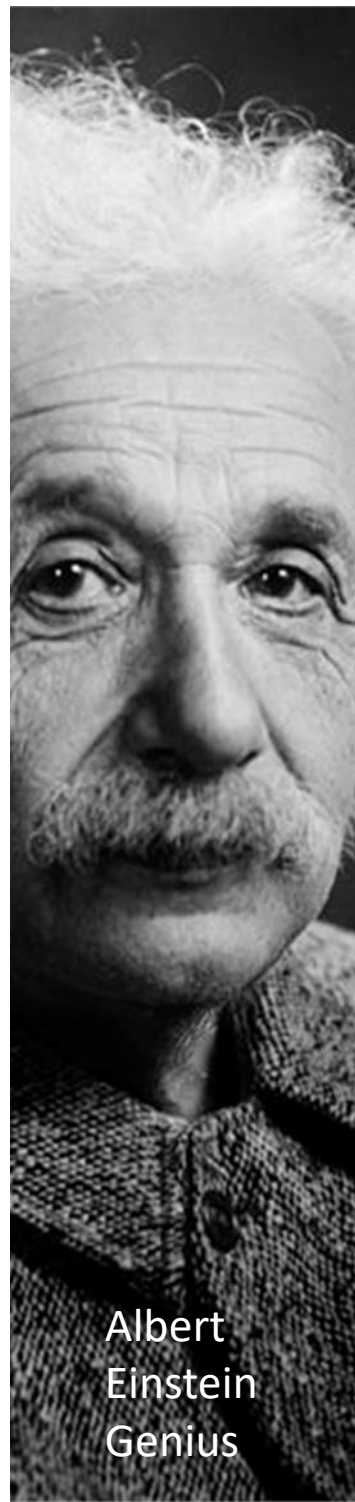
Cara
Delevingne –
Supermodel
& Actor



Florence
Welch-
Singer



Daniel Radcliffe
Actor



Albert
Einstein
Genius

DYSPRAXIA AFFECTS ALL PEOPLE DIFFERENTLY WITH NO TWO PEOPLE EXPERIENCING THE EXACT SAME WAY

Just because you are familiar with one person or child's experience of dyspraxia you do not know how it affects another



A child with dyspraxia is not like a child with a cut finger

- There is not a one size fits all intervention
- There is not a manual with correct procedures for all
- There is not common symptoms and experiences between all children
- Many other considerations such as how children with DCD experience the world differently through their senses and sensory processing issues may also impact on children with Dyspraxia.



We want our teachers to see that we are all unique and that we have all our own talents, not just difficulties or needs.

We want to be seen as people first with a diagnosis, rather than being defined by our diagnosis.

“DYSPRAXIA WILL ALWAYS BE THERE, BUT IT COMES WITH DIFFERENT CHALLENGES OVER TIME”

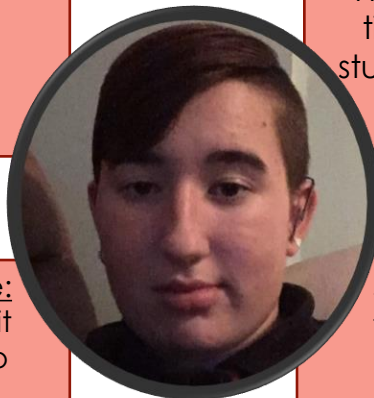
We felt that showing you our personal profiles (including strengths and challenges as well our ideas) would help you to see us more as people and get a better picture of our personalities.

My Strengths:

Timekeeping, helpful, very polite, technology, dedicated to things I like

What I would like schools to do:

Have quiet places, dedicate time for teachers to listen to student's challenges they face every day



Chloe

Something special about me:

I have verbal Dyspraxia also it took my parents four years to get me diagnosed and I couldn't talk now I do speeches and presentations for Dyspraxia Ireland

Things I find challenging:

Art, noisy places, school, public toilets e.g. hand dryers, hand writing, bright lights

My Strengths:

Technology, martial arts, swimming, cycling.

What would I like schools to do:

Give me more time to organize myself



Conor

Something special about me:

I'm really enjoy cycling

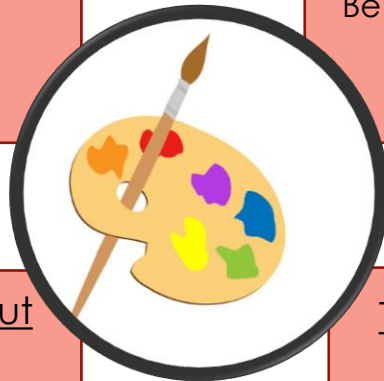
Things I find challenging:

Writing, organising, hard to concentrate, pouring drinks into cups, opening lids etc.

“DYSPRAXIA WILL ALWAYS BE THERE, BUT IT COMES WITH DIFFERENT CHALLENGES OVER TIME”

My Strengths:
Writing, art, drama,
singing.

Things I would like schools
to do:
Be more aware of children
having dyspraxia



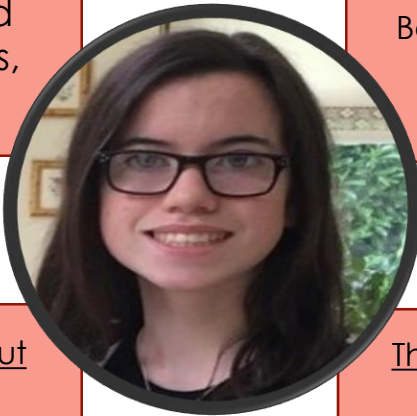
Gabi

Something special about
me:
I am very creative and
have a lot of empathy

Things I find challenging:
Routine, morning
routine, getting places
on time, being
organised.

My strengths:
Drawing, painting and
colouring, baking and
cooking, eating cakes,
colouring apps

Things I would like schools to
do:
Be more aware of children
having dyspraxia



Keiana

Something special about
me:
I'm kind, very helpful and
have great empathy

Things I find challenging:
Doing tests (time), moving to
a new secondary school,
wearing masks all the time

“DYSPRAXIA WILL ALWAYS BE THERE, BUT IT COMES WITH DIFFERENT CHALLENGES OVER TIME”

My strengths:

Golf, persistent, good under pressure, always good for a laugh, never complains, hard working when I am interested!
Technology / PC work.

What I would like schools to do:

Be understanding and aware of Dyspraxia – I might look like every other kid but I am not!



Something special about me:

I am ranked one of the top ten golfers in my local club, including all adult members.

Noah

Things I find challenging:

Writing for long periods of time, concentration, motivation at times, fine motor skills (I am improving), directions / instructions – find it hard to follow sequence

My strengths:

Drawing, painting and colouring, basketball, cycling, colouring apps

What would I like schools to do:

Schools to know more about dyspraxia More time for tests, when I know the information but I just don't have the time



Something special about me :

I'm really good at catching balls one handed

Riane

Things I find challenging:

Doing tests (time), making new friends in a new school, organising schoolbooks in a locker, wearing glasses and masks together

ALL ABOUT US

My strengths:
Basketball, Football
and Art

What I would like schools to do:
I would like for schools to know
everything about dyspraxia and I
think my mum can help



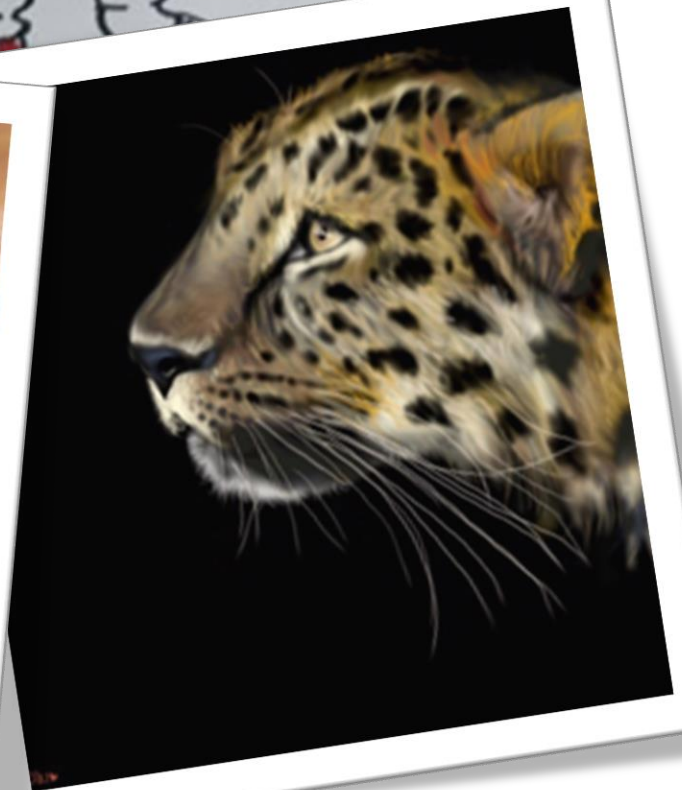
Something special about
me:
I am kind, helpful and
strong. I care and I am a
great artist.

Ryan

Things I find challenging:
I find Maths and Irish
Hard

OUR SKILLS AND TALENTS

A drawing of Sonic by Ryan



Pictures designed and coloured by Keiana and Riane using an Art therapy app

Our lives in school

“I’m not clumsy. It’s just the floor hates me, the tables and chairs are bullies and the walls get in the way”

We included some pieces from our daily experiences in school to help you understand our lives and our challenges:

Keiana and Riane:

What works well in school for us:

- Meeting new people and making new friends
- Teachers who communicate information well and are willing to repeat information
- Making subjects interactive and interesting

What doesn’t work well in school for us:

- Being rushed, especially during tests
- Unclear intercom messages
- Teachers who are not discreet when asked questions
(Make you ask in front of everyone else)
- Expecting too much without providing support to complete tasks

Our lives in school

Ryan:

I find maths and following instructions difficult.

I like it when I am praised for my effort and my teacher tells me that they are proud of me.

I want teachers to know more about Dyspraxia

Noah:

My daily school life consists of constantly forgetting books, copies, P.E gear, T.G equipment and all of the other items associated with school and then rushing around trying to problem solve around many of those mistakes and forgotten gear.

Then getting in trouble to for making those many mistakes because I have something I cant help having, essentially being treated unfairly. However, thankfully I have many wonderful people in my life such as my family and great friends to support and stick up for me.

Our lives in school

Chloe:

- In primary school, I didn't get any help at all and it was very hard trying to organize my bag, lunch and get ready for next task. I got break cards to show teachers when things got too much for me and they really helped. I got a laptop in sixth class and I really felt so much better as my hands didn't hurt as much and I got really fast at typing.
- I found it hard in school because I stutter when I'm really nervous or under pressure and it was also very hard growing up and not being able to tie my own shoelace until 2nd year.
- In school, I get movement breaks and help with cooking activities and in certain other subjects like science, business and maths the SNAs are amazing, as is our teachers who help me also. I find it so hard packing my bag in school as I'm rushing myself because I see everyone else packing the bag and it looks so easy and their bags look so nice but my bag is so messy and everything is everywhere. I find it hard with change so if my timetable changes throughout the day that would drive me mad. I find it extremely hard to concentrate even though I look like I'm concentrated, I'm probably not.

OUR THOUGHTS AND ADVICE FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOLS

A good teacher:

- Has patience
- Is a good listener
- Takes time to understand children
- Appreciates that all children are different

What teachers can do to help children with DCD:

- Give time to children to complete work
- Listen to us
- Help with what I find hard
- Try to meet all children's learning styles as best as possible

What I want my teacher to know:

- I can learn but in a different way
- I have lots of strength's, not just weaknesses
- Who I am as a person, not just in school
- Somethings are tough for me, but I can find other ways if helped

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Participants

- Chloe, Conor, Gabi, Keiana, Noah, Riane and Ryan
- The true authors of this resource
- All of you deserve tremendous credit for the hard work you have put in and for all of your amazing talents you utilised throughout the process

Parents

- You put in more work than anyone else and this would have not been possible without your time support

All of the people working hard with Dyspraxia Ireland, including Harry, Fay and Sharon

- We were never left wanting either time, advice or resources and could not have been more supportive or positive throughout

Tanya McGarry from the University of Limerick for her guidance and support from start to finish

Sharon Drew for her guidance and expertise in developing ideas and direction of the resource

Avril Hearne for her consultation and guidance in planning, organisation and visual design throughout the process



Dyspraxia
DCD Ireland

Dyspraxia/DCD Ireland 2020

Carmichael House, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7

T 018747085 E info@dyspraxia.ie W www.dyspraxia.ie