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Job Corps Accommodation Support Newsletter

Summer 2024

Accommodating and Supporting Reading Disabilities

Reading Disabilities Defined

Depending on cognitive abilities and/or disabilities, some students may not be able to access written information in the school and work environments. Cognitive and processing limitations may make it difficult to understand, recognize, and visually discern letters, numbers, signs, and symbols. Entire words or strings of letters may also be unrecognizable. Cognitive and processing limitations refer to limitations in recognizing and taking in information through the senses (i.e., auditory and visual). Students with severe cognitive and processing limitations that impact their ability to read are often identified as having a learning disability.

Other conditions that may impact reading can go beyond learning disabilities such as large gaps in instruction, speech and language disorders, anxiety disorders, attention disorders, and even misuse of technology. Students frequently mask their inability to read and write by avoiding any activities or assignments that involve printed materials. In part, the challenge is to help students overcome the fear of reading by providing safe reading experiences coupled with research-based instructional strategies and accommodations.

Functional Limitations and Accommodations

The impact that functional limitations can have due to reading deficiencies and/or disabilities can range from mild to severe. A mild impact can include students who have difficulty reading, comprehending, and summarizing longer passages or text. A severe impact may include students who have great difficulty decoding and comprehending or students who cannot read at all. These students often have severe processing deficits, as well as difficulties with written and verbal expression. Therefore, it is critical to consider accommodations and strategies that are flexible and able to address all levels of functioning.

Goals When Considering Reading Accommodations/Strategies

➢ **Building Independence**: What accommodations promote independence/lessen dependency on others?

➢ **Accessibility**: How can we best provide access to all areas of the Job Corps program?

➢ **Employability**: What accommodations translate well into the workplace if needed?

Accommodating Reading Disabilities (cont'd)

The following table outlines some common functional limitations and possible accommodations or strategies to support students with reading deficiencies, including specific learning disabilities in reading.

Functional Limitation Comprehension Difficulties **Accommodations** ➢ Peer tutor or mentors ➢ Graphic organizer ➢ Check for understanding (who, what, where, when, why, how) ➢ Videos or other visual representations ➢ Connect printed materials to life experiences or prior knowledge	**Functional Limitation** Decoding Difficulties **Accommodations** ➢ Assistive technology ➢ Screen readers ➢ Decoding programs ➢ Reading pens ➢ Model "good reader" strategies (look at pictures, table of contents, chapter headings, maps, diagrams, and bold print words)
Functional Limitation Fluency Issues **Accommodations** ➢ Provide guided, repeated oral reading ➢ Provide opportunities for independent silient reading ➢ Use highlighers, colored overlays, large print, and tracking tools	**Functional Limitation** Visual Processing Deficits **Accommodations** ➢ Use audio input (players and recorders) while reading the same information ➢ Use reading guides (tools to help track and stay focused on the page) ➢ Provide quiet space to minimize distractions
Functional Limitation Memory Difficulties **Accommodations** ➢ Provide memory devices (mnemonics, visualization) ➢ Allow the use of graphic organizers	**Functional Limitation** Writing Difficulties **Accommodations** ➢ Allow verbal responses ➢ Use of reference materials (dictionary, word prediction software)
Functional Limitation Difficulty Tracking **Accommodations** ➢ Provide reading rulers and/or colored overlay guides ➢ Allow the use of finger to guide	**Functional Limitation** Auditory Processing **Accommodations** ➢ Provide visual cues ➢ Allow extended time ➢ Provide a quiet reading environment

Accommodating Reading Disabilities (cont'd)

Providing Compensatory Reading Support

One commonly used support for assisting students with reading disabilities is Text to Speech (TTS) assistive technology. The efficacy of TTS is broadly based on multiple cognitive theories including the Cognitive Load Theory, which purports that information should be delivered in a way that reduces unnecessary load on working memory[1] since struggling readers often have challenges with working memory.[2] Although the research is unclear related to the features of TTS that best benefit students with reading difficulties, the use of TTS is a valid strategy for augmenting the reading comprehension of children with reading difficulties.[3]

There are a wide variety of read aloud apps, software, and online tools to assist students who have reading difficulties that may require read aloud support. Technology can help students work around their reading challenges and can be used on computers, smartphones, and other devices. A few of those tools include:

➢ **Audiobooks and digital TTS books** allow the user to hear books read aloud. Some people like to read along with the book so they can see the words at the same time.

➢ **Applications (apps)** allow the user to download specific tools to a mobile device increasing independence and accessibility.

   ➢ **Text Grabber and Translator:** Text Grabber quickly scans, translates, and saves chosen text from virtually any printed material. The app includes text recognition in more than 60 languages. Text can be spoken aloud and translated via Voice Over feature.

   ➢ **Voice Dream Reader:** Voice Dream Reader has a highly configurable screen layout that suits every reading style from completely auditory to completely visual, plus a synchronized combination of both. Text is easy to rewind and fast forward by sentence, paragraph, page, and chapter. The app has a built-in dictionary and keeps track of where the user stopped in each book or article.

   ➢ **Go Read:** Go Read is an accessible e-book reader for people with print disabilities. Go Read is linked to the Bookshare library, letting you find, download, and read Bookshare books within seconds. You can use Go Read with or without talk back and enjoy reading Bookshare books with useful features that make reading accessible to people with visual, physical, and learning disabilities.

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[1] Chandler, P., & Sweller, J. (1991). Cognitive load theory and the format of instruction. *Cognition and Instruction, 84*, 293-332.

[2] Swanson, H. L., & Siegel, L. (2001). Learning disabilities as a working memory deficit. *Issues in Education: Contributions of Educational Psychology, 7,* 1048.

[3] Keelor, J. L., Creaghead, N., Silbert, N., & Horowitz-Kraus, T. (2020) Text-to-Speech Technology: Enhancing Reading Comprehension for Students with Reading Difficulty. *Assistive Technology Outcomes and Benefits*. Retrieved May 10, 2024, from https://www.atia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ATOB-V14-FV.pdf

Accommodating Reading Disabilities (cont'd)

Featured TTS Platform: Clusive (clusive.cast.org)

Clusive is a free, flexible, adaptive, and accessible web-based reader that was developed by the Center on Inclusive Software for Learning. Based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning, Clusive is designed to support the needs of diverse learners. It is open-source software so others may freely use it. Clusive has an online library of books and articles, but it also allows the upload of WORD documents, EPub documents and more.

Highlights of Clusive

➢ You can sign into Clusive with Google and Google classroom, create classes and groups, and instructors can upload class and student accounts via Google classroom.

➢ When you select a Clusive title, the activities begin! The "just-right challenge" asks learners to rate their knowledge of a few vocabulary words to get their recommended version of the reading. Learner ratings help Clusive to recommend a personalized version of the article, build each learner's personal Word Bank, and help Clusive identify other vocabulary that may be familiar or unfamiliar for the learner.

➢ Teachers and instructors can add comprehension questions throughout the uploaded content.

➢ Learners can adjust the font sizes, line spacing, background color and there are translation features available as well.

Best of all? Clusive has partnered with Bookshare, which opens the full library of Bookshare for use within the Clusive TTS platform.

Center Highlight: Talking Leaves

Talking Leaves Job Corps Center Disability Awareness Activities

Talking Leaves' Disability Coordinators (DCs) Glenda Anderson and Jacqueline Jenkins coordinate monthly disability awareness activities. The activities are posted in the student newsletter along with a disability related question. Students who respond with a correct answer are provided with goodie bags. Activities vary each month and have included:

➢ Disability-related puzzles with secret messages

➢ Dyscalculia puzzles

➢ Tongue twisters

➢ Screenings of disability-related movies

➢ Lunchtime events with disability-related displays

Talking Leaves Disability Awareness Bulletin Board

The DCs also pick a different disability each month to highlight on a bulletin board with fun facts and encouraging quotes. As a result of creating an inclusive and disability-sensitive climate on center, some students have reported feeling more accepted, understood, and confident in their ability to advocate for their needs.

Disability Resources

CAST

Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) is a nonprofit education, research, and development organization that created the Universal Design for Learning framework and UDL Guidelines. The CAST resources include free online courses, consultation, curriculum design, technical assistance for accessibility, learning resources, and universally designed online tools.

Bookshare

Bookshare is the world's largest online library of copyrighted content for people with qualified print disabilities. Bookshare provides access to a large and diverse collection of titles for school or pleasure reading and has a dedicated Job Corps library with commonly used textbooks. *Please note: if there is a change in the staff member who is on the Bookshare account (almost every Job Corps Center has an account), please email Lara Rondberg at larar@benetech.org with the updated contact information.*

Edutopia

Created by the George Lucas Educational Foundation, Edutopia is a free source for information, inspiration, and practical strategies for learning and teaching. Edutopia has resources for various topics including social-emotional learning, supporting students with special needs, including videos that showcase evidence-based learning practices, and tools and strategies for technology integration.

Understood

Understood is a free online resource that provides practical tools and support for students' academic, social, and emotional needs associated with learning and attention issues. Resources are available on topics such as reading and writing difficulties, dyslexia, ADHD, and language disorders.

Have a topic idea or want to highlight your center activity? Submit content or suggestions to Alyssa Purificacion Olivas (purificacion.alyssa@jobcorps.org).

Regional Disability Coordinators

- Boston: Kristen Philbrook (philbrook.kristen@jobcorps.org)
- Philadelphia: Angela Jenkins (jenkins.angelak@jobcorps.org)
- Atlanta and San Francisco: Stephanie Karras (karras.stephanie@jobcorps.org)
- Dallas: Alyssa Purificacion Olivas (purificacion.alyssa@jobcorps.org)
- Chicago: Sharon Hong (hong.sharon@jobcorps.org)