

Literacy and numeracy difficulties



As stated by Robinson (Foreman, P. 2008), Difficulties with Literacy and Numeracy affect and influence all aspects of school achievement. It is the largest disability in the community. Literacy and Numeracy problems are not always visible. Intervention is needed earlier to ensure the learning gap is not enhanced. Children with learning difficulties need to be identified in the foundation years to enable early intervention. Learning difficulties in Literacy and Numeracy leads to a downward learning cycle; as a lack of achievement causes a lack of motivation and confidence, which causes a further lack of achievement (Hunter-Carsch 2001).

Teachers need to recognise and respond by tailoring instruction to the student's interests, put in the time to motivate students to read, by developing the student's confidence and commitment. Teachers need to understand how students feel and how to support them. The interactive model approach is becoming increasingly accepted, as it uses both the whole word/stories and letter-sound association in learning to read. This enables all students to learn reading strategies in the learning environment, with the effective intervention using phonological, semantic and syntactic cues.

Literacy difficulties affect numeracy learning. Students need to learn basic mathematics for sufficient skills to survive in daily living. This is an essential component of the NCLB Act. Students must understand the language and concepts of mathematics, along with the processes of basic problem solving. Mathematics requires a detailed word-by-word approach, (Henderson 2001; Jitendra et al. 1998), to ensure a student builds an understanding of basic mathematical language and concepts.

To achieve the understanding of basic mathematics language and concepts emphasis needs to be placed on doing things that relate to the students life and everyday activities, using concrete materials that reflect this. Students with learning difficulties have memory deficits which impair their ability to memorise information, therefore instruction should focus on the 'figuring out the number facts' (Ginsburge 1997). Early intervention can also come from parental input using resources such as 'Tool kits for Parents'. Students need to see that tasks are meaningful and be able to be confident to complete tasks.

To do this activities and resources used are to be specific to the students' needs and interests and be clearly demonstrated to them. Identifying materials and resources to their local community would enable this. This is backed by McMillan (2011) and Rief, S. F & Heimburge, J. A. (2006) Ch. 3 Understanding and Reaching Special Populations of Students. Reference list Carnellor, Y (2004) Teaching Mathematics to Children with Learning Disabilities, Encouraging Mathematical Success to Children with Learning Difficulties, 2004. Ch. 1 pp. 1-10. SocialSciencePress, Australia.

McMillan, J (2011) Classroom Assessment – Principles and Practice for Effective Standards-Based Instruction, 5th Ed, Boston, M. A: Pearson. Rief, S. F & Heimburge, J. A, (2006). How to reach and teach all children in the inclusive classroom (2nd Ed.). San Francisco: Wiley. Pp. 36-40. Robinson 'Understanding Literacy and Numeracy' Ch. 7, pp. 247-254; 285-289. Foreman, P. (2008) Inclusion in action. Cengage Learning. Robinson 'Developing Literacy and Numeracy Skills' Ch. 8, pp. 303-308. Foreman, P. (2008) Inclusion in action. Cengage Learning.