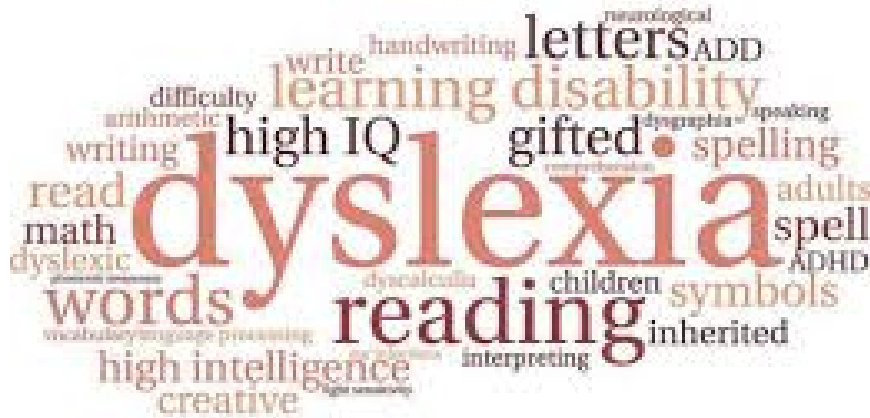


SENIA Brasil

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The Dyslexic Superpower

I have started this article at least twenty times and then deleted it, but that is normal if you're dyslexic. It was not easy growing up with bad spelling, horrible grammar, and chicken scratch for handwriting. I loved getting lost in books and could tell you about any story. I spoke easily with a rich vocabulary, but putting my thoughts on paper was always a disaster. I had difficulty remembering instructions and always made silly mistakes when copying from the board. Primary School was not fun, and what I remember most is constantly getting in trouble for failing every spelling test and the punishments at home.

Once I was in high school, I knew something was not right. I would get tutoring after school to help me memorize simple grammar, but after a few days of no tutoring, I would forget it again. At seventeen, I decided to take myself to the school's Special Education Unit and asked to get tested. The result was conclusive: I was dyslexic with an audio processing disorder, which came with a lovely spelling age of ten years and two months. Finally, I had all my answers, or so I thought.

Back then, we didn't know as much as we do now about dyslexia. This diagnosis gave me extra time for exams, and a copy of all lecture notes from my professors before they presented, and that was all. This was helpful, but I still found it hard to concentrate when reading. Writing long papers was a nightmare, and I knew I was dumbing down my vocabulary to match my spelling, which didn't help with good grades. Luckily, teaching is a natural talent for me, and I was able to use my oral strengths as well as practical knowledge to make up marks.

Fast forward twelve years, and I am a 30-year-old qualified teacher who has worked in two countries loving what I do. I moved to a small rural town in Australia, and this was where my next huge adjustment came. The school I was in tested every student for Irlen's. I had never heard of this and was so surprised when the symptoms matched so many things that I had thought were just my dyslexia. The words would move around the page while I concentrated on one line, the white spaces between the words would lift off from the page and look like rivers, and I was always tired and rubbing my eyes after having read for a short time. I discovered that with the use of a simple color overlay, everything stopped and reading became easier. It didn't help my spelling or being able to remember more than three numbers when recited, but it showed me how many strategies I had developed as a child to compensate for my Irlen's disorder, not my dyslexia. (Continue on page 4)

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Student perspective:

An interview with a middle school student about their experience with dyslexia.

What do you wish that your teachers knew about your learning experience?

I wish they understood that my brain doesn't always work the same way every day; some days are just harder than others. Reading and writing take me a lot of effort, and if I misread even one word, it can throw me off completely. It often feels like I'm lagging behind, even though I'm trying my hardest. I also find it tough to keep track of instructions, especially when they're long or delivered too quickly. Reading out loud in front of the class makes me nervous, and I get embarrassed when I make a mistake.

Are there specific subjects or tasks that are harder for you because of dyslexia? How do you manage those challenges?

Subjects like English and History are challenging because they involve a lot of reading and writing. Spelling and grammar are tough for me, so essays can be difficult. Math isn't easy either, especially when it involves word problems—understanding what's being asked takes extra time. I manage by using tools like audiobooks, text-to-speech programs, and by breaking assignments down into smaller steps to make them less overwhelming.

Do you feel like teachers and classmates understand dyslexia? In what ways does that affect your experience?

When teachers understand, it makes a huge difference—they give me extra time or explain things in a way that works better for me. But when people don't get it, I feel embarrassed or like I'm not capable. It's frustrating when classmates don't understand why I need extra help. Sometimes, I'd rather not ask for help just so I don't stand out or show my difficulties.

What types of support or accommodations (if any) do you receive in school? How helpful have they been for you?

I receive extra time for tests and sometimes assignments, and I use audiobooks for reading. These accommodations are really helpful because they take away the pressure of being rushed. I also get notes from teachers in advance, which allows me to go through the material at my own pace. Without these, I'd feel much more overwhelmed.

Are there any strategies or tools that have made a big difference in your ability to learn? How did you discover these?

Audiobooks and text-to-speech tools have really helped me. Listening allows me to understand the content without focusing so much on decoding the words. I learned about these tools from a learning specialist at school. Breaking down tasks into smaller pieces also helps me manage things better, so I don't get too overwhelmed.

Is there anything more you wish the school could do to support you better?

I wish there was more recognition that dyslexia affects more than just reading. It can make it difficult to follow instructions or stay organized as well. Schools could do a better job of training teachers to support students with dyslexia in all aspects of learning, not just reading and writing. Please don't call me to read out loud if I don't raise my hands.

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Looking ahead, how do you feel about the future—whether it's the next school year or after graduation?

I feel both hopeful and a little nervous. I know I'll need to keep working hard, but I'm learning strategies that help me manage my dyslexia more effectively. I hope to find a career that allows me to use my strengths, like creativity or problem-solving, without being limited by my reading and writing difficulties.

If you could change one thing about how schools work for students with dyslexia, what would it be?

I'd change the overemphasis on reading and writing as the primary way to demonstrate understanding. There should be more options, like projects, presentations, or oral tests, so students with dyslexia can show what they know without being held back by their challenges.

What advice would you give to a student who has just found out they have dyslexia and might be worried about school?

Don't hesitate to ask for help or accommodations, whether it's audiobooks, extra time, or something else.

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience that you think people should know?

Dyslexia doesn't disappear, but it doesn't have to prevent you from succeeding, you will just have to put in a lot more effort than others. With the right support, students with dyslexia can do just as well as anyone else. It's important to focus on our strengths and not just the difficulties we face.



Paris Paralympic Games

Guess what was taking place in Paris between August 28–September 8th? The Paris 2024 Paralympic Games! Athletes competed in 22 sporting events: Para Archery; Boccia; Goalball; Shooting Para Sport; Para Taekwondo; Wheelchair Rugby; Para Athletics; Para Canoe; Para Judo; Sitting Volleyball; Para Triathlon; Wheelchair Tennis; Para Badminton; Para Cycling; Para Powerlifting; Para Swimming; Wheelchair Basketball; Blind Football; Para Equestrian; Para Rowing; Para Table Tennis; and Wheelchair Fencing. Our very own beloved Brazil won an incredible 89 medals: 25 gold, 26 silver and 38 bronze! Way to go, Brazil!

Now it's time for an interesting fun fact! Did you know that the Paris Paralympic Games' mascot, The Phryge, is representative of the Phrygian cap which celebrates liberty and freedom? It is also being referred to as the 'ultimate cheerleader' to honor all of the athletes who inspire us with their talent and love for their chosen sport. We hope that you had the opportunity to view some of the events and enjoy the excitement! From all of us here at SENIA Brazil, a hearty congratulations to all of the athletes! Continue to shine and inspire!

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The Dyslexic Superpower continued

In recent years, a lot more research has come out about dyslexia and Irlens. I have found comfort in knowing that many issues I have, like balance, spelling, analog time, basic recall, thinking one word but saying another, and handwriting, were not my laziness but a symptom. I have also learned that being dyslexic is my superpower. I think more in concepts and big-picture ideas, which means I can solve problems creatively, and I make connections easily between knowledge to come up with solutions. I am very visual, which makes me great at directions and reading body language.

Now, I am proud to be dyslexic and will talk about it to anyone. The response I normally get is surprise because I am a teacher, and they are surprised that I could be both. Learning strategies young to compensate for the lows of dyslexia and leaning into my strengths from the highs of dyslexia is the life lesson I share with others. Two years ago, I went back to university and got my Masters. Something that I thought impossible in my youth, but now I know my strengths, and nothing can stop me.



4 Tips for Using Artificial Intelligence FOR DYSLEXIA

- 1 Gemini by Google**
This chat can be used to change the lexile level of a text, generate individualized comprehension questions, summarize a text, highlight key vocabulary and generate differentiation ideas based on an individual students' profile. Gemini can read a text aloud and can provide individual feedback on writing. Students can use Gemini to answer questions and check their work.
- 2 Mizu**
Mizu is a chatbot that can be programmed with a student's profile to ask him or her individualized questions based on lesson objectives. Mizu can also be used to chat with a teacher to generate ideas for differentiation and scaffolding based on individual student needs.
- 3 Brisk Teaching**
Brisk is an add-on to Chrome that can be used to give individualized feedback on writing. Students can be more independent in getting immediate feedback that is tailored to their unique skills so that teachers can focus on helping them polish their writing.
- 4 Goblin Tools**
This program is a magic to-do list maker. A teacher or a student can input any task that needs to be accomplished, and the program will break this task down into steps. These steps can then be checked off by students. This helps students with executive functioning challenges regain control of their work flow.

