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Erasmus+

# A practical handbook for inclusion of students in high school education

# IDEAS

Inclusion, Differentiation,  
Empowerment,  
Acceptance, Solutions



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## Introduction

### **Embracing diversity: A practical handbook for inclusion of students in high school education**

One quarter into the 21st century, what unites European students at high-school level is that they are all different. Ethnically, many live in other places than their countries of origin while others remain close to home. Psychologically, some are stronger and more self-confident than any previous generation, but at the same time social media and the after-effects of Covid-19 have created a rapid increase in misery and mental health issues among others. Moreover, while some students are goal-oriented and able to navigate through their ever-changing realities expertly, others feel a lack of motivation – whether this is because they are exceptionally gifted and do not have enough challenges in their everyday lives at school or because in the age of the attention economy, social media have ruined their ability to concentrate for any great length of time. Finally, while the number of dyslexic students may be fairly constant, the introduction of testing has meant that many more students are now diagnosed as such. Research shows that with the proper help from teachers and the many digital and non-digital tools now available, dyslexic students are fully able to pursue a high-school education.

The lack of a common student profile poses challenges for us teachers, who want to ensure that each and every student in our classroom grows to their full potential. Teaching a diverse group calls for a wide range of methods, but how can we manage that in practice within the limited time of a teaching module?

This practical handbook is the result of the Erasmus+ project, IDEAS (Inclusion, Differentiation, Empowerment, Acceptance and Solutions), which ran between April 2024 and March 2025. During this period, teachers from IES Xesús Taboada Chivite in Verin, Spain; High School Orce Nikolov in Skopje, North Macedonia; and VUC Lyngby in Lyngby, Denmark worked together to address this issue and find solutions. For inspiration, the entire group attended two six-day seminars in Skopje in May 2024 and Lyngby in September 2024, where we received lectures from external experts, engaged in discussions, and laid the groundwork for our handbook. Back home in the classroom, sub-groups then began to experiment with teaching methods for our various target groups, exchanging ideas and suggestions in online meetings.

In Chapter One, Soraya Suárez Quintas, Ivana Lazeska, and Colleen Calhoun present the methods they have developed for inclusion of students with psychological issues. In Chapter Two, Josefina Pérez Rolán, Lucia Rúa López, Marija Velevska, and Tobias Johansson present their methods for dealing with students who need extra motivation. In Chapter Three, M<sup>a</sup> del Puy Goyache Pais, Nadica Arangjelovikj, and Pia Arnmark share their suggestions for teaching talented and gifted students. In Chapter Four, Juan de Dios Liria Marrero, Jasmina Ivkovska, Sanja

Shankovska, and Katrine Dalsgård share their methods for addressing students in the multicultural classroom. In Chapter Five, Eva Belén Permuy Rodríguez, Sanja Shankovska, Biljana Jovancheva, and Mette Bjerg offer methods for teaching dyslexic students. Special thanks to Katerina Nikolovska, ET (NILD 1&2 Educational Therapist), for her contribution to this part.

Our work has provided fresh inspiration for our own teaching. We hope that our colleagues elsewhere in Europe can use our work as well.

Verin, Skopje, and Lyngby, March 2025

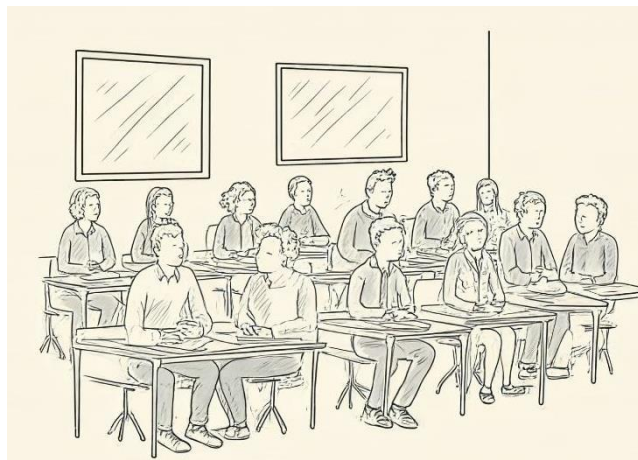
Josefina Pérez Rolán (IES Xesús Taboada Chivite), Sanja Shankovska (High School Orce Nikolov), Biljana Jovancheva (High School Orce Nikolov), Tobias Johansson (VUC Lyngby), and Katrine Dalsgård (VUC Lyngby).

## Chapter 1: Psychological issues

### Intention

The intention with teaching students with psychological issues is to make the learning experience more accessible and inclusive for students who have psychological issues. While teachers find themselves constantly searching for new ways to make the lessons more interesting, the students themselves are trying to find their role, i.e. their place in the classroom.

#### A) Safe space speed dating



This is an idea for when the teacher meets her/his students for the first time.

Divide the class into pairs. Ask them to speak to each other about what makes a classroom a safe place. Assign a period of 3 minutes, after which one of the partners switches to a different pair. The students who switch places can use sticky notes to jot down prompts for what they have talked about.

In the end, the class gets together and shares their thoughts.

This exercise is for co-creating a safe space. It is likely that the answers are going to vary greatly but will likely be more honest when first shared in pairs and the students will feel included in the classroom management process.

**B) Music as a motivator for written work**

Use this as a free-writing activity whenever you want.

It is a good exercise to stretch the students' minds. It gives them the freedom to choose what they would like to write about while listening to whatever they would like.

Ask students to bring their earphones and their favourite music. The point is to give the students a safe space inside their music while expressing their inner thoughts.

This is an exercise which can satisfy each student's psychological issue and is especially helpful with reserved students.



### C) Group Reading



This is a way to keep all four students in a group active as each has her/his own role to play. Divide the class into groups of 4 without attributing roles to them. Leave the students to decide for themselves which role they are going to undertake.

The roles are:

- The first student reads aloud a part of the text (a paragraph, for example).
- The second student finds words which are difficult to pronounce and looks up the pronunciation.
- The third student explains the definitions of the words that people in the group may not know.
- The fourth student summarizes the main points of that paragraph.

The students switch roles after each paragraph within the group. Thus, by the end of the text each student has participated in all the roles.

This exercise is especially helpful for those students who have difficulty in finding their role in group work and for those who have difficulty concentrating for a relatively long-time span.

**D) The cliff-hanger**

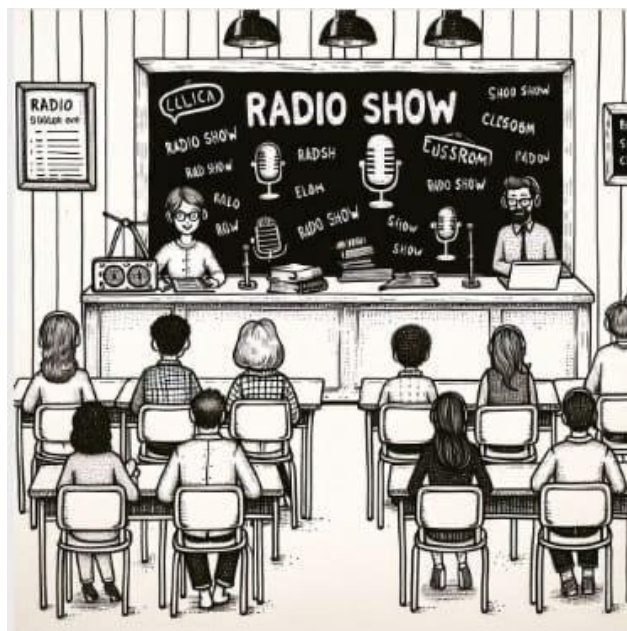
The point of this activity is to create a mini movie after watching a TV-series/movie/short which ends with a cliffhanger. The students' assignment is to continue the story in the direction that they would like it to go.

The students would participate in different activities for example:

- some students would create the dialogue,
  - some students would search for/create background music,
  - some would act out the parts,
  - some students could work on the artistic process involved
- and some would film the mini-movie.

This exercise is a creative task that can be used in motivating students to find out which part of the creative process they are best at.

### E) A radio show



This activity is to create a radio show.

- First divide the class into groups of 4 students
- They need to choose a topic such as a social issue, let's say drugs or crime in a big city.
- Based on internet research they can find out more about the issue including searching for news articles which deal with this subject.
- The students assume different roles, for example one in the group will be the radio journalist.
- Another student may be a mother/father who is being interviewed about their son or daughter with a drug problem. Another student could be an expert in the area like a social worker or a doctor.
- Then the students are to write a dialogue for their roles and practice speaking.
- When they have formulated and recorded their show-play it for class.
- If students are shy, they can play their radio show for just the teacher.

This exercise is an opportunity for students to find the role they enjoy the most.

## **Chapter 2: Lacking motivation**

### **Intention**

Lacking motivation is a problem that all students can encounter for longer or shorter periods. It is a challenge that transcends both subject, age, IQ, diagnosis and more. It is important to address it in order to keep students engaged and open minded to gaining new knowledge. There are many different ways to address the challenge of lacking motivation. In the following section we will list some different hands-on activities. Some activities are described from the viewpoint of a specific subject, but all of them can easily be adapted to other subjects. The main point is to do something different. Vary your teaching methods, play games, make students active, nourish the students' curiosity. In summary the important thing is to do something about it, and the good news is it will be more fun going to class both for the students and the teacher.

**A) Motivating students through trust and personal connection**

When teachers focus on positive feedback, such as acknowledging effort and improvement, students are more likely to persevere in their learning. Also, when students are trusted with autonomy, they feel motivated to meet these expectations and can develop motivation skills

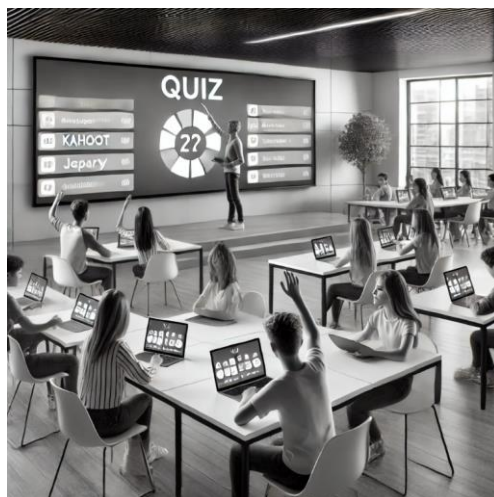
Example 1: When giving feedback, remember to focus more on the positive things.

Example 2: Let students go out into the hallway to work. By this, the teacher will show trust in the students. They will then have to show that they can live up to this.

In today's digital world, students need safe spaces to share feelings and connect with others. Quick check-ins at the start of class—like a rating system for emotions—can foster empathy, creating an environment where students feel supported.

Example: Start each lesson with a quick round where each student shares a number on a 1-to-5 scale to reflect how they feel. This routine helps students feel acknowledged and reinforces a sense of community. The teacher can then take special care of the students who said a low number. E.g. by talking to them or by not challenging them too much in today's lesson.

## B) Learning by playing



Students learn best when actively participating. Play-based learning keeps students engaged, often without realizing they're working. This approach is highly effective because it engages students emotionally and cognitively, encouraging creativity, collaboration, and curiosity. Here are some ideas:

- **Role-playing activities:** Let students step into roles related to the subject. In history, they could reenact historical events, in languages they can simulate scenarios like ordering a meal at a restaurant, and in literature they can take roles in the drama they studied.
- **Game show format:** Use quiz-style games like “Kahoot” (<https://kahoot.com/>), “Jeopardy” (<https://jeopardylabs.com/>) or “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?” to review topics. Organize questions into levels of increasing difficulty. Start with basic facts and build up to complex concepts. Play individually or in teams, depending on class size. After the game, discuss any challenging questions and explain answers in detail. Ask students how the game helped them understand the material and what they found most engaging.
- **Gamified quests:** Turn lessons into adventure-style quests where students complete missions related to the subject. For example, it could involve a treasure hunt where solving equations unlocks clues or it could be an “escape room” challenge where students should solve problems in order to “escape”.
- **Puzzles:** creating puzzles on Tarsia (<https://www.tarsiamaker.co.uk/>). Either the teacher prepares them or the students make them for each other.
- **Team challenges and competitions:** Divide students into small groups to work on a problem. Competition can encourage teamwork. Solve a mystery with a cryptex.
- **Game preparation:** Let the students prepare a game themselves. By creating the game themselves they will be forced to review the curriculum related to that specific topic. They will feel ownership of and responsibility for the game and be motivated to do a good job.



**C) Make learning relevant**

Students sometimes think that the subject they are studying is unrelated to real life and their interests. Show students how the subject matter relates to their lives, interests, or future goals. By connecting what they are learning to the real world they can see how these subjects build skills that help them pursue their passions, make their choices in life, and prepare them for future opportunities. So, every subject has value beyond the classroom. Also, you can encourage students to think about how they could create a business using what they are learning in class.

Examples from physics:

- Students can use their smartphones to analyse their surroundings e.g. using the phyphox app (<https://phyphox.org/>)
- Students can analyse the forces and trajectories involved in their favourite sports
- Students can explore the physics behind different instruments

### D) Starting each lesson with a curious question and making learning visible



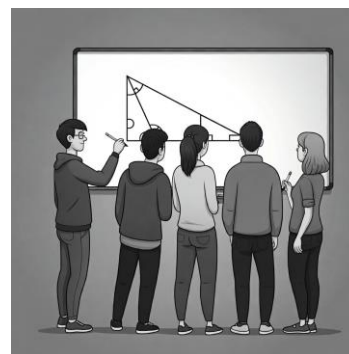
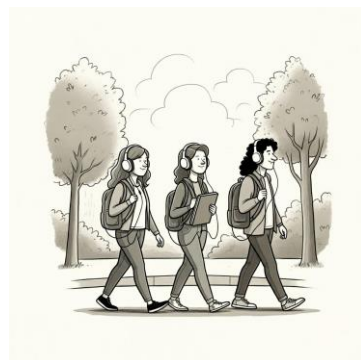
In the beginning of the lesson always start with a curious question. This will clearly mark the beginning of the class and students will be motivated to learn the answer to the question.

Example 1: In a physics lesson, start the lesson by a small demonstration experiment that makes the students wonder. E.g. Holding a paper on top of a full glass of water and turning the glass upside down, observing that the water stays in the cup.

Example 2: Mathematics lesson: Bring a dice to the class. Throw it 10 times and see how many 6 you get. How can we know if a dice is rigged? The lesson then deals with theory for determining this (binomial test)

After that, in the beginning of each lesson the teacher writes today's "learning menu". As each topic is addressed, it is crossed out. By this method, learning progress is made visible, and this will improve motivation (cf. Hattie, J., *Visible learning*, Routledge, 2008.)



**E) Let the students choose what they want to work with**

For the lesson, make e.g. three different tasks students can choose to work with. By actively choosing their tasks, the students become motivated, and they are able to choose a task that fits their taxonomic level.

Example: A math lesson dealing with Pythagoras' theorem

Group 1: Work with solving specific trigonometric assignments using Pythagoras' theorem. e.g. the legs (catheti) of a triangle are 3 and 4. Determine the hypotenuse. Draw the triangle in GeoGebra. Make a problem for the other students in the class to solve

Group 2: Team up two and two. Put on headphones and go for a walk while listening to a short podcast about Pythagoras' theorem. When the podcast finishes, take off the headphones, and while walking back to the school discuss what you just listened to with your partner. When back in school, prepare three points you want to share with the rest of the class.

Group 3: Work with proving Pythagoras' theorem. Study the proof in the textbook. Team up two and two and find a whiteboard. Take turns writing the proof for each other. Use the textbook for help in the beginning; do not use it at the end. When returning to the class, present the proof for the rest.

## **Chapter 3: Talented and gifted students**

### **Intention**

Gifted children have natural abilities that are well above the average for their age. Children can be gifted in one or more areas. But children can be gifted in some areas and struggle in others.

Children can be gifted at different levels too. That is, some gifted children have more highly advanced abilities than others. And some gifted children also have disabilities. These children are often called ‘twice exceptional’.

Advanced natural abilities often run in families. And there are gifted children in all cultures and from all family backgrounds. Gifted students tend to show their natural abilities in the preschool or early primary school years. For example, a gifted child might teach him or herself to read, ask deep questions, or show advanced understanding of numbers before starting school.

When gifted children are identified early and get support, their gifts can develop into talents. Gifts become talents when they’re developed and nurtured.

This means that gifted children become talented when they are supported and encouraged to use their natural abilities to learn, concentrate and practise.

Many things influence whether a gifted child’s natural ability becomes a talent. These things include family values, educational opportunities, personality, motivation, health and opportunities.

Gifted children and talented children can have abilities and skills in many areas, and they can be gifted or talented in one or more areas. These areas include:

- academic learning – for example, language or maths
- social relationships – for example, the ability to make friends
- technology – for example, electronics or coding
- arts – for example, music or drama
- sport – for example, athletics or dance.

Signs that children might be gifted or talented

- Advanced development is one of the signs that your child might be gifted.
- You can often tell if a child is more advanced than other children the same age. For example, some intellectually gifted children teach themselves to read at a young age, like 3 years old. Some physically advanced children might excel early in junior sports or physical activities.

- Another sign is that the child might prefer to talk with older children or adults.
- The child might also learn differently from other children. For example, they might be able to concentrate and focus well on tasks, be intensely curious and ask challenging questions, very quickly, have an extremely good memory, be very imaginative and creative, have advanced speech...
- Gifted older children and teenagers might show their advanced natural abilities when they start a new subject.

We teachers know that in spite of their obvious strengths as learners, such students often languish in school unless we can provide them with more than the challenges of the usual curriculum. Without accommodation to their unusual level of skill or knowledge, students who are gifted or talented can become bored by school, and eventually the boredom can even turn into behaviour problems.

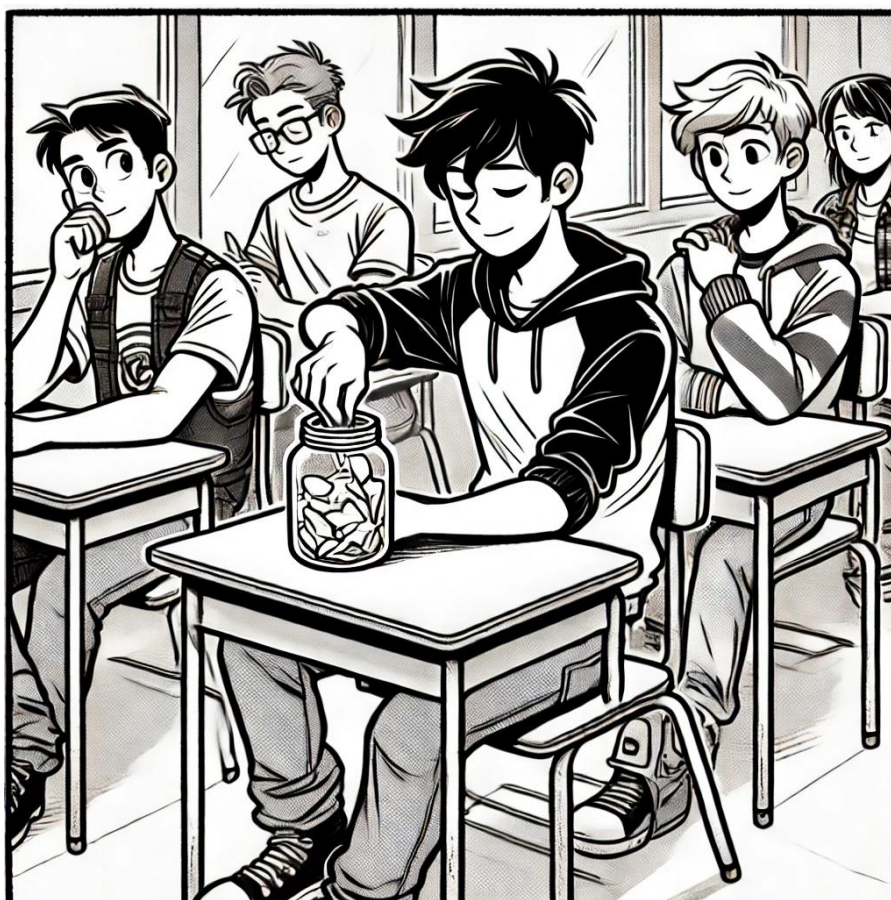
Enrichment involves providing additional or different instruction added on to the usual curriculum goals and activities.

For a teacher with a student who is gifted or talented, the real challenge is to observe the student, get to know him or her as a unique individual, and offer activities and support based on that knowledge.

## PROCEDURES AND TOOLS THAT CAN USUALLY BENEFIT OUR STUDENTS

- Peer teaching
- Problem solving activities
- Encouraging creativity (letting them express their passion or knowledge)
- Providing opportunities to engage in social activities (Using mixed group activities)

### A) Just one minute



Students sit in a circle, take one statement from the box and pass the box to the student sitting next to them. In turn, the students will give a speech related to the given statements written on a piece of paper.

After that, a discussion: Is it difficult to give a speech without preparation? Which was the most difficult statement for discussion and why?



**B) Make a choice**

Teachers stick two signs (I AGREE/I DON'T AGREE) on the walls and read a statement aloud. The students make up their minds and move to either one or another place in the room, depending on their opinion. Divided into two groups, they will write down their arguments for or against. The winner is the group with the strongest arguments.

**C) True False Run**

The group stands in the middle of a room (or if outside, between two markers e.g. cones). One wall/marker is nominated 'true' and the other 'false'.

The leader reads a statement, e.g. 'bats aren't actually blind'. On 'Run!' the students must run for whichever side they think is correct (true or false) and whoever reaches the correct wall/marker first wins. **STAYING IN THE CENTRE IS NOT AN OPTION.**

Alternatively, those who choose the wrong answer are eliminated, and only the correct side continues to the next round.

**D) Compromise**

Students work in groups. They are given a problem-based scenario, to which they are asked to find solutions. They are then asked to role-play the scenario. In the end, they have a discussion based on the way the problem was solved and whether there was a difficulty in solving it.

Aim: To raise awareness about the need for compromise and to find possible solutions to scenarios with opposing attitudes.

Questions: How did you reach the compromise?

How did you find a solution to the problem, when you had opposing views?

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**E) Exercises with a focus on Bloom's taxonomy****✓ A hierarchy of questions made according to Bloom's taxonomy:**

When working with a text in English language classes (fiction or non-fiction), the teacher makes the questions to the text in relation to Bloom's taxonomy. Hence, there should be a number of questions focusing on comprehension, analysis/synthesis and putting the issues into perspective. The gifted and talented students should especially focus on the questions in relation to analysis/synthesis and putting it into perspective.

**✓ Role play – Bloom's taxonomy**

The students are asked to make a role play based on a scene in a short story. If the dialogue is not already present in the text, they would have to make it up. This exercise will give the talented and gifted students a chance to work with their imagination and to include Bloom's hierarchy of educational goals, specifically analysis and perspective, in the role play.

**✓ Write a sequence to a short story**

In the same vein, the students might be asked to write a sequence to a short story. This exercise will again give the talented and gifted students a chance to work with their imagination and to work with issues in relation to Bloom's hierarchy of educational goals, specifically analysis and putting the story into perspective.

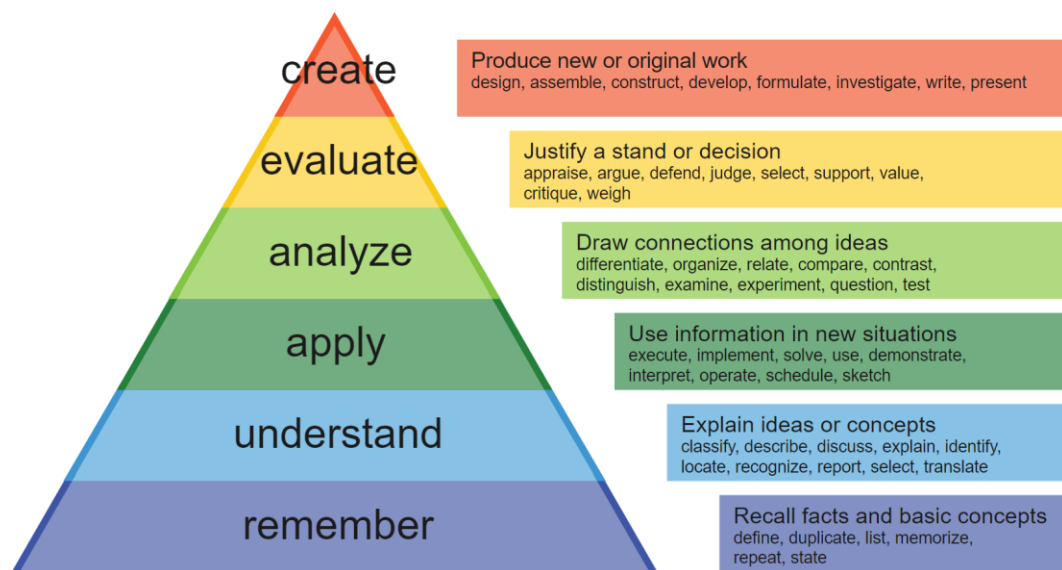


**✓ Matrix groups:**

The students are divided into matrix groups. The talented and gifted students will work with and present the questions at the higher taxonomic levels to each other in said matrix groups.

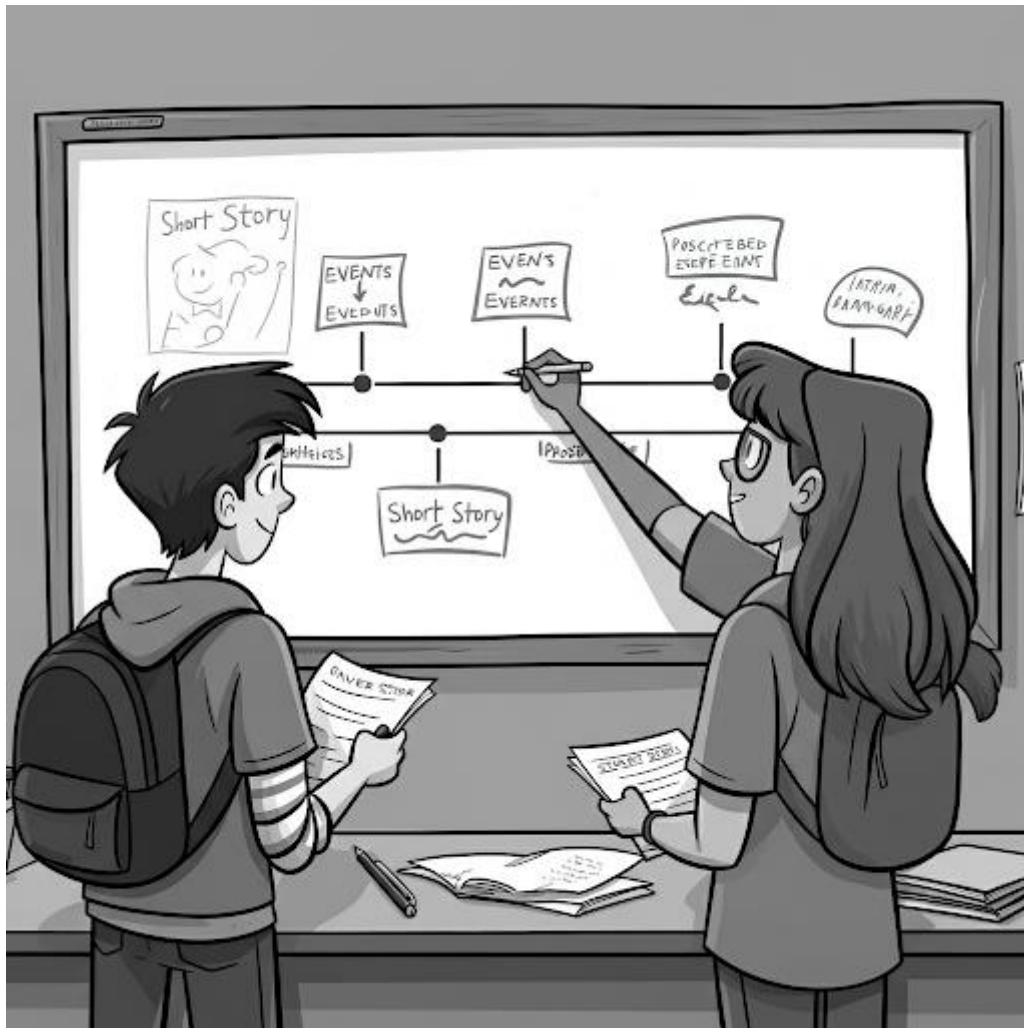
**✓ Differentiation:**

The teacher will divide the class into two (or more) groups of students – and the talented and gifted students will make up one group. The groups will take turns presenting and discussing their work with the teacher in class. In this way, the focus of the talented and gifted students may be on Bloom's higher taxonomic levels.



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## F) Timeline



The students are asked to draw a timeline on a whiteboard in relation to a short story. They must select and put important quotes from the short story above and below the timeline.

They can work with different timelines focusing on: a) comprehension (what happens and the structure of the story), b) analysis of setting, c) analysis of character(s)/development of a character(s) d) analysis of relationships e) theme.

The talented and gifted students will primarily work with b), c), d), and e).

## Chapter 4: The multicultural classroom

### Intention

The following activities help students of all backgrounds appreciate differences in other students which make us all unique. These exercises can be used to create opportunities in the classroom to promote diversity, offering a safe space where all students can express themselves.

#### A) Celebrate Holidays



- Each month, sit down with a calendar and look at the global holidays taking place. Creating a short activity around a few holidays will increase interest and appreciation for other cultures.



**B) Title: Mirror, Mirror**

Themes: Racism, Identity, Prejudice, Self-image, Self-esteem

Age Range: Pre-teens, Teenagers, Young Adults, Adult students

Duration: Minimum of 2 class periods (60 minutes each), but more, depending on the number of students and complexity of the assignment

Materials: 1 piece of blank paper per person, a notebook or extra paper for notes, pens/pencils, colour pencils or colouring materials; copy or projection of the identity wheel for older students

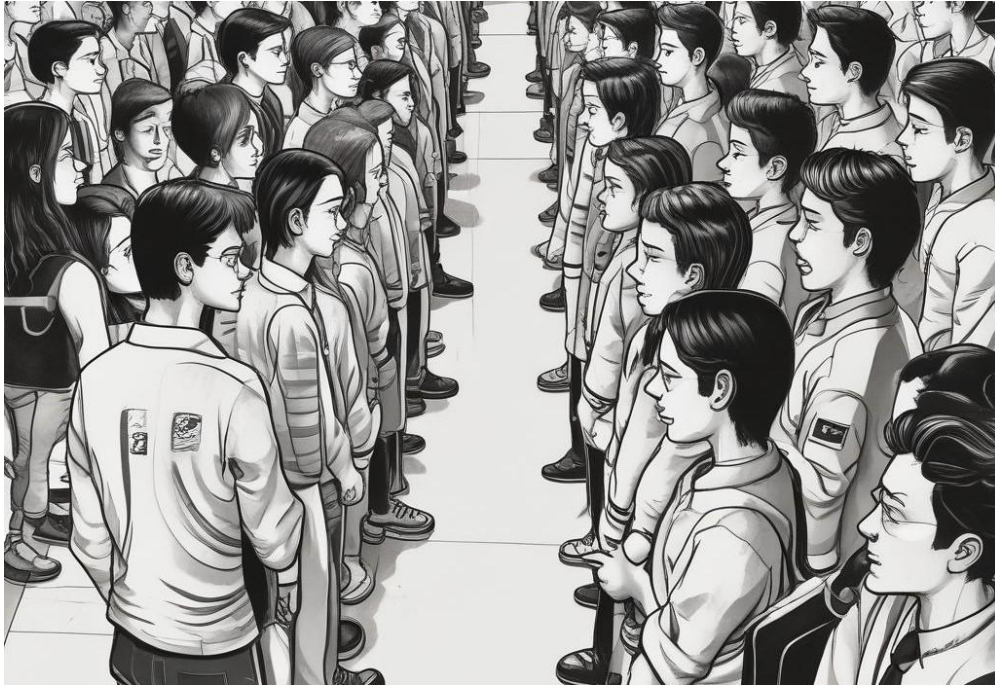
Have each person in class draw a circle on each side of the blank paper. Alternatively, print a copy of a paper with a circle on each side for every member of the class. Each circle is a “mirror”. Instruct each student to write “You-Me” on one side and “Me-Me” on the other. Next, instruct the students to take their notebooks and divide a page into two columns.

In one column, corresponding to the “You-Me” circle, students should think about and write down what they think people around them/their classmates think about them based on their external characteristics (age, skin colour, ethnic background, religion, clothing style, etc.). In the other column, they should think about and write down how they see themselves, based on internal characteristics (personality, life experiences, values, self-image, internalized thoughts, etc.). Finally, have students pick a symbol or other visual means of expressing each of the things they wrote and draw those things onto their “mirrors”. Give students enough time to colour in and decorate their mirrors with as much detail as possible.

When the mirrors are complete, arrange the seats in a circle so that all students face each other and have each one share their mirrors with their peers.

This activity can serve as a general introduction in a class where students come from different backgrounds and don't know each other (ice breaker), or as a first step for a more detailed discussion about racism and prejudice. It also functions as a self-esteem building exercise, by allowing students to question what and why they think others think of them as well as focus more strongly on how they see themselves.

For older students (young adults with a higher maturity level, or adult students) the activity may be broadened by the inclusion of the social identity wheel (<https://www.bu.edu/diversity/resource-toolkit/social-identity-wheel-activity/>) which may be printed out or projected and which might replace the drawing/colouring done by younger students. The participants should be asked to think about the different internal and external aspects that make up their identities and how these aspects impact them as individuals. They should also be asked to consider how society responds to these identities for a class discussion or debate about racism, prejudice and inclusivity.

**C) Title: Coming Together**

Themes: Identifying Common Values, Recognizing and Respecting Opinions, Debate;  
Age Range: Pre-teens, Teenagers, Young Adults, Older Adults;

Duration: Minimum of 1 class period (50 to 60 minutes), or more, depending on the number of prompts and organization;

Materials: A spacious room or outdoor area where students can move. Previously chosen prompts;

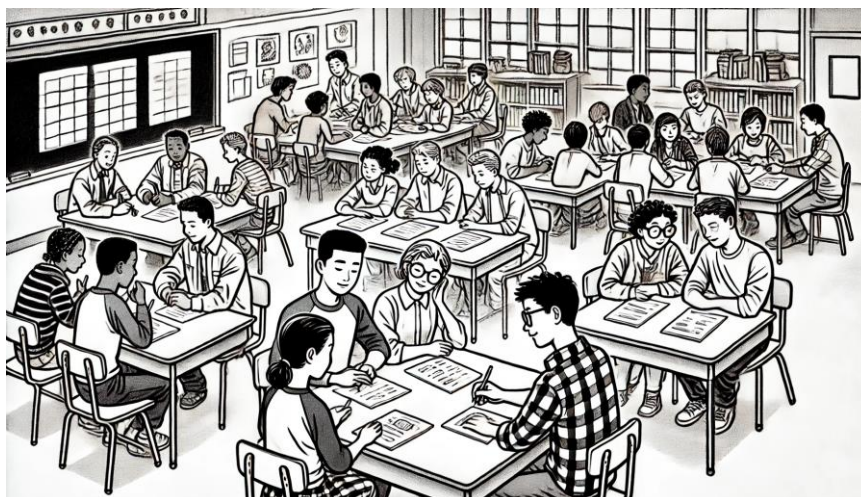
Divide students into two rows and have them stand facing each other, but at a distance of at least a meter. Alternatively, if there is enough space, all students can face the same direction (a mirror, perhaps). If done in rows, the exercise works best when each pair contains students whose identities are markedly different in some way, but these differences don't have to be physical or ethnic; they can also be ideological if said ideologies have been previously identified. Regardless, previous steps are unnecessary and the activity can be allowed to proceed, often with surprising results.

The teacher or speaker should inform students that they will read a set of *I-statements*, prompts in the affirmative or negative that begin with the pronoun "I". They may be written out with verbs of perception, belief, like, dislike, approval, disapproval, etc. (I think, I believe, I hate when...). If a student agrees with any of the statements, they should take a small step forward. If they disagree, they should take a step back. If they don't know or don't care, they should stay where they are.

This activity helps students identify common values, points of interest, beliefs, etc. The teacher can make a note of these commonalities to focus on them further at a later date, or simply allow students to realize all the things they have in common. After each prompt, there can be a short pause during which students may be allowed to share their thoughts about why they moved as they did, if they wish. After this discussion, students can be asked if they would like to change their position.

This type of exercise also works very well to iron out differences and have controlled discussions/debate on controversial topics without directly setting up opposing sides.

### D) Common and unique



In a unit on cultural encounters, create groups of 4-5 people with as wide a spread of ethnicities as possible.

Give each group two sheets of paper and a pencil or pen. The first part of the activity is commonalities, where each subgroup compiles a list of the things they have in common. The commonalities must apply to everyone in the subgroup. You want to avoid things that people can see (e.g. “everyone has hair,” or “we are all wearing clothes”). Try to get them to dig deeper. After about 5 minutes, have a spokesperson from each subgroup read their list.

Then, depending on your goals for the session, you can have half of each subgroup rotate to another group, or you can leave everyone in the same group. On the second sheet of paper have them record unquities, meaning that each item applies to only one person in the group. The group tries to find at least 2 unquities for each person. After 5-7 minutes, you can have each person say one of their unquities aloud or have a person read them one by one, having others try to guess who it was. (Again, you want to go beyond superficial aspects, avoiding things that people can readily see).

Alternatively, ask all students to bring an object to class that represents something they consider important from their home country, for instance a piece of clothing, some food, or a toy. In groups of 4-5, have the students take turns presenting their objects and why the objects are important to them. Then ask the rest of the group to make comparisons to their own countries.

The exercise promotes unity as it gets people to realize that they have more common ground with their peers than they first might realize. As people become aware of their own unique characteristics, they can also help people feel empowered to offer the group something unique.



### E) April Fools' Day



On April 1 (or any other day when the class needs a brain break), ask a student to write 3 statements about their country on the board. Two statements are false; one is true.

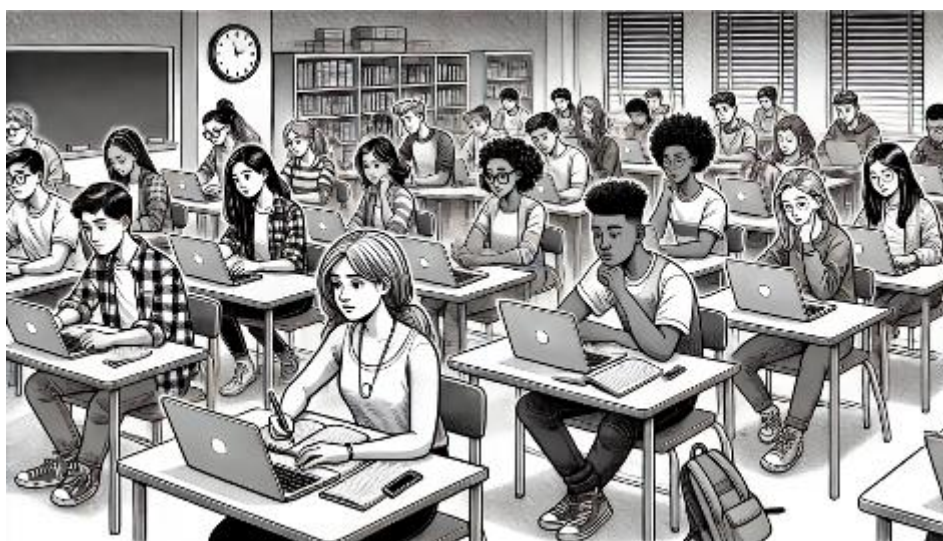
The other students will then ask the student at the board questions that can help them figure out which statement is correct. The student who eventually comes up with the correct answer is the winner. If no one has guessed the right answer after, say, 15 questions, the student at the board is the winner.

In language classes, this exercise can be used to work with question formation in a playful way.

The advantage of having one student do the exercise at the board is that everyone else will get to know more about that student.

Alternatively, you can do the exercise in groups, where all group members put down lies and truths and then take turns guessing. In this way, more students will get to speak.

In addition to helping teams to improve communication and get to know one another better, the exercise gives introverts a chance to share facts about themselves that others may have been unaware of.

**F) Personal story-writing**

Ask the students to write an authentic story from their own childhood.

In language and literature classes, a requirement can be that the story has a pyramid structure with an exposition, rising action, a climax, falling action, and a resolution.

Depending on how sensitive the stories turn out, and how well the students generally get along with each other, the teacher can then ask the students to present their stories in groups. The groups can be asked to turn one of the stories into a play, which they perform for the rest of the class.

## Chapter 5: Dyslexia

### Intention

Dyslexia is a cognitive variation of the brain. The Danish Ministry of Education's website states that approximately every 8th student or 12% of 9th grade students were tested dyslexic in 2021-22. Furthermore, another 4% of 9th grade students have phonological difficulties, the same kind of difficulties as the 12% dyslexic students, but to a lesser degree.

Denmark has had a national digital dyslexia test since 2015. The test is available from the age of 10 and throughout life.

Danish professor emeritus Carsten Elbro defines dyslexia as follows: dyslexia is a major difficulty in learning to read and write due to difficulties in connecting letters and letter sequences with language sounds and sound sequences.

([https://laes.hum.ku.dk/om\\_ordblindhed/](https://laes.hum.ku.dk/om_ordblindhed/), accessed October 9, 2021).



The dyslexic brain cannot recode between sound and letter to the same degree as the non-dyslexic brain.

This means that reading and spelling are challenging. The problems can be as follows:

- The dyslexic has to remember how to spell whole words
- It takes a long time to read
- Writing/spelling takes time
- Texts must be read several times to be stored in memory
- The dyslexic has limited opportunities to take notes during reading or lessons

Dyslexics often encounter prejudices, such as the following:

- 1) Dyslexics are less intelligent than others
- 2) Dyslexics cannot get an education

The first prejudice can be completely dismissed: there is no correlation between dyslexia and intelligence.

The second prejudice can also be dismissed: dyslexics can easily get an education. But it requires perseverance and assistive technology.

Dyslexia education is very language-specific. At a very basic level, it is fundamentally about identifying connections between sounds and letters (phonetic and conditional) that cause particular problems. These transcriptions need to be trained thoroughly, e.g. intonations need to be trained in order for digital spelling programs to be as good as possible.

Explicit instruction in morphological regularities, grammar, syntax, text structure, etc. is also important for dyslexics.

## **Strategies and aids for dyslexics - in general<sup>1</sup>**

### **Dyslexics need time**

1. Distribute material well ahead of class.

Teachers cannot hand out texts in class and expect dyslexics to read and understand the text at the same pace as the rest of the class.

2. Make sure the dyslexic student has some quiet and extra time - for preparation, schoolwork and exams.

### **Dyslexics need repetition**

1. Have students photograph the board so they have the opportunity to read the teacher's notes at home
2. Create a vocabulary list for dyslexic students, preferably with definitions and clear references to texts.

### **Dyslexics need clear skill objectives**

1. State learning objectives explicitly
2. Give explicit instructions.

### **Alternative delivery formats**

1. If possible, let students submit a video instead of a text
2. Let dyslexic students use a genre template, i.e. a graphical representation of submission requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> Special thanks to Katerina Nikolovska, ET (NILD 1&2 Educational Therapist), for her contribution to this part.



**Work organization: Dyslexics need phased work processes even more than others**

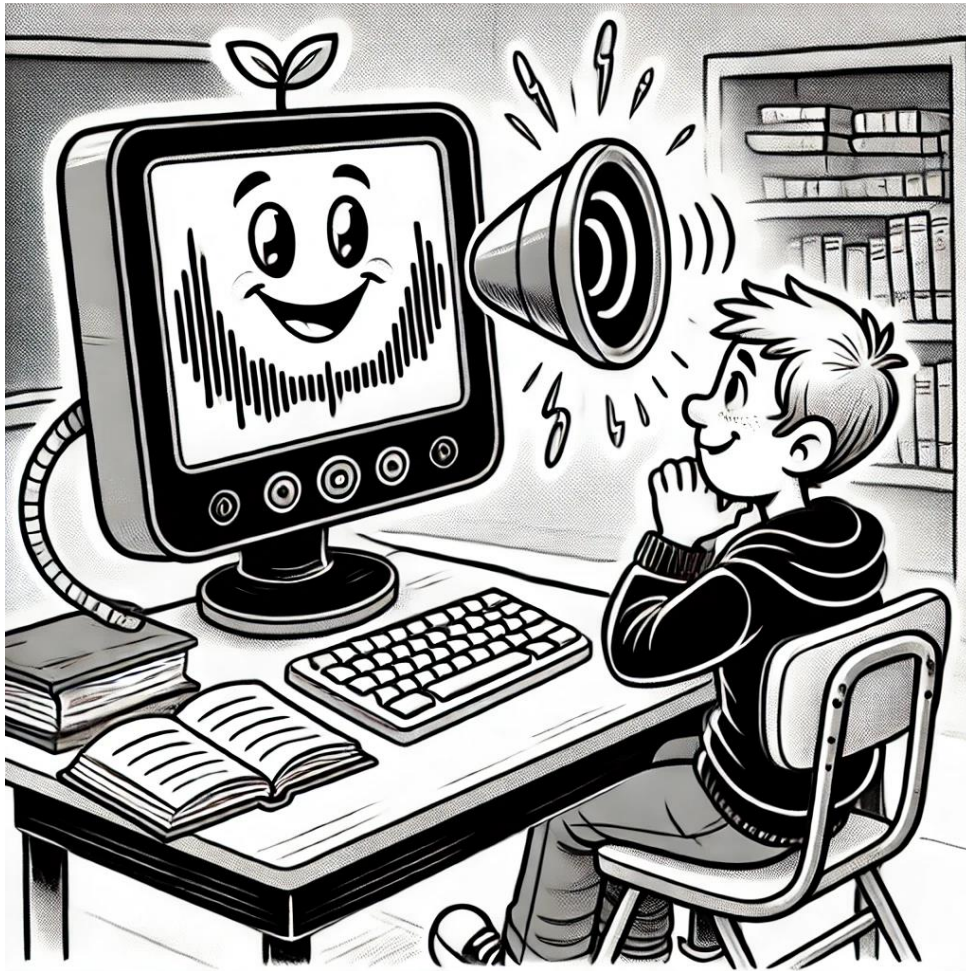
- Pre-assignments (what do I know, what vocabulary do I need to know, what genre should I work with and what format should I submit in?)
- Assignments (working with the syllabus)
- Post-tasks (checklists to tick off, listening to drafts, linguistic corrections, etc.)
- All three phases should be supported by reading and writing technology.

**Also, remember the following:**

- Dyslexia cannot be paused; dyslexics are dyslexic in all school subjects and in all private literacy activities.
- Some dyslexics are so good at finding their own strategies to compensate for their difficulties that they don't even realize they are dyslexic. After all, they don't know how others read and spell.

### A) OCR processing and reading tools

Dyslexics can have texts read aloud so they don't have to spend energy decoding. This requires the teacher to be knowledgeable about reading technology options. Most programs are available in free versions that can be searched online.



1) Optical Character Recognition or OCR can make a text (PDF) ready to be read aloud. Find an OCR processing program. Scan texts so that students receive them electronically and OCR-processed.

2) Find a program that can read aloud OCR-processed texts. Reading programs can be used to mark individual words or parts of texts for reading. It is also possible to search OCR-processed electronic texts.

3) Let the dyslexic use the reading program to have texts read aloud.

4) Combine this option with subject word lists that are also electronically readable.

**B) Speech to text**

Spelling can be very time-consuming for dyslexics and therefore slow down a workflow. Dyslexics can get help with spelling by saying particularly difficult words out loud during typing.

There are free word processing programs that allow you to read text aloud.

- Instruct the dyslexic to read particularly difficult words aloud during the text
- Also, instruct the dyslexic to listen to what he/she is writing with a reading program. Many errors can be caught by ear.

**C) Subject word lists or cards**

Subject words, for example in biology, can be very challenging for dyslexics. They are often long, foreign and low in frequency.

- Make a list of technical words, preferably one that the dyslexic can read aloud with their reading program.
- There are also groups of low-frequency words that relate to specific subjects - pre-subject words. These words can also be collected and explained in lists
- It's also a good idea to make subject word cards on cardboard. There should be space for the concept on one side and an explanation on the other. This gives the dyslexic person the opportunity to practice the vocabulary.

**D) Word suggestions and spelling help**

Dyslexics can benefit from having a spelling program that provides spelling suggestions open for use when writing.

- The dyslexic can see spelling suggestions, listen to them and choose the right ones
- Full utilization of spelling suggestions requires knowledge of the following:
- Sounds (in the word psychologist you write p, but hear an s)
- whether the program allows for special characters when the dyslexic student is in doubt about sounds, whether they are initial, middle or final in words.



**E) Use AI to prepare work with texts**

AI opens up opportunities to create an overview of texts in the preparation phase. For example, the program, ChatPDF can be used to generate subject word lists, questions, summaries, analyses and much more.

- Students can get a great overview that benefits further work with the texts
- Students can get direct text references that benefit precision and written work
- Students will work on creating relevant prompts
- Students need to learn where AI programs fall short or make mistakes.

**F) Two hands-on exercises for inclusion of dyslexic students****Activity Fa - belonging and acceptance**

We (students as well as teachers) tend to separate and classify students with dyslexia rather than help them feel safe.

If we encourage belonging and acceptance, they can decide whether to remain in their bubble or not.

This activity aims at making all students realize how diverse we are.

Move the tables and chairs away from the centre of the classroom. Place the students on the four sides of the room.

Make statements like the ones below. Each time a student identifies with one of the phrases, he or she should move four steps towards the centre of the classroom.



At the end of the exercise, all the students will likely have moved to the centre. In this way, the exercise highlights the unity of the diverse group.

Suggestions for statements:

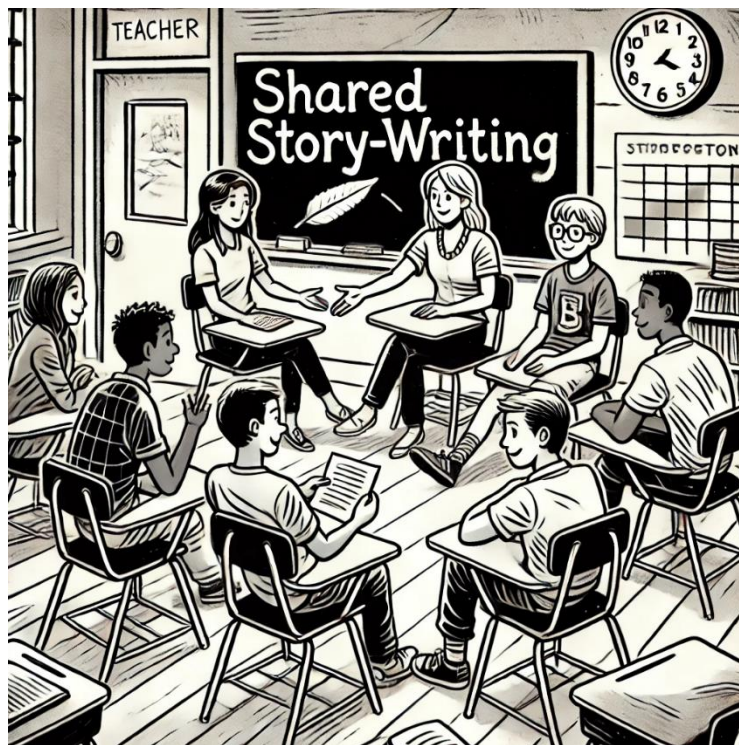
- you are the class clown
- you like cats
- you have problems with maths
- you are very fast eating
- you are often late

- you like chocolate
- you have long hair
- you like pizza
- you have sometimes been lonely
- you like history
- you think that you are making a change one step at a time

### **ACTIVITY Fb - FEEL IN SOMEONE ELSE'S SKIN**

This activity addresses the problem of dysnomia, which means word-finding problem and word-on-the-tip-of-the-tongue problem.

The brain has two functions: storage & retrieval. When asked a question, retrieval goes into storage to get the answer. A student with a learning disability will have a problem between storage and retrieval. When they go to get the info, they can't get it out. Many times, they will get the info out, use it, and then put it back in the wrong place. When they need that info again, retrieval goes into storage, but they can't find the info again.



This activity is useful both for students in class and for teachers. It is a practical exercise that puts us in the difficult position of having to speak fluently while we have to look for words. Something that many of us are not used to.

**1st ROUND:**

Step 1: One student should begin a story with a sentence.

Step 2: The next student should continue the story with a sentence.

Each student has to contribute a sentence.

**2nd ROUND:**

Do the same exercise without using the letter "n".

Step 1: One student should begin a story with a sentence without using the letter "n".

Step 2: The next student should continue the story on the same terms.

Each student should contribute a sentence.

At the end, the teacher will have a dialogue with the students about how they felt and what difficulties they encountered.



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1. SUGSG Orce Nikolov, Skopje, N.Macedonia
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