SUPPORTING STRUGGLING LEARNERS

By Meetal Madia, Senior Specialist Tutor
DAS International

Language and Literacy Support for those who learn differently

Profile of struggling learner:

My student Jake (not his real name) is 12 years old and attends Specialist tutoring (one to one) under DAS International. Through my work with Jake in supporting his literacy, I have observed he displays challenges with his of working memory; however, he has not had a formal diagnosis for a learning difference.

For instance, during an English lesson, I have observed, that he does better, when the instructions are firstly modelled by myself, and paired with written and visual instructions. He is able to cope with one instruction at a time as opposed to two to three instructions. He also has the tendency to forget new words learnt and may confuse the usage of it in the context of a sentence or a gap in a fill in cloze passage. If instructed to read more than one paragraph without pausing to check for understanding, he may lose track of the plot and have difficulty with the sequence of the text or story.

Support strategies for the learner:

As a flexible educator with curriculum and grade level appropriate knowledge and skills, we are well equipped to provide better support and access to learning. In the area of English language and literacy, I would usually present information clearly, with varying colours, offering repetition, and use different mediums to give more exposure to variety. For instance, using news articles magazine articles, postcards, infographics, fact files, flowcharts, Web pages and pamphlets. The list goes on, but one should not be limited to just a few resources.

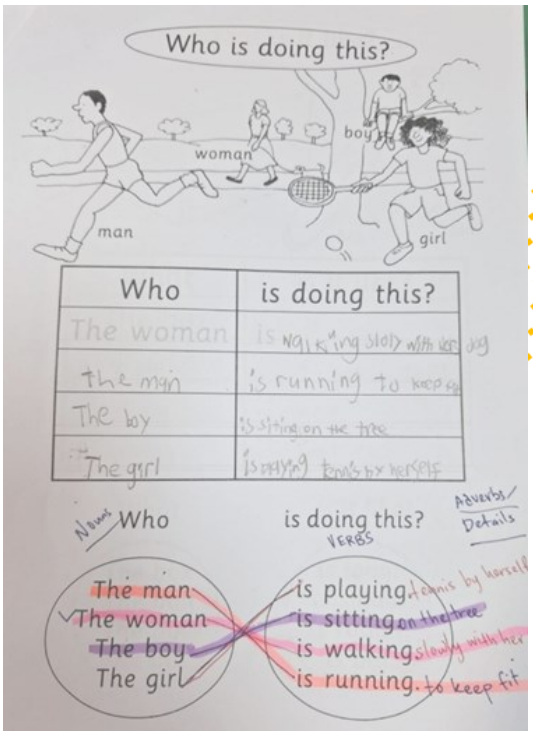
Using these materials, I would sift out vocabulary that matches the grade and reading level of the child and get the child to complete a vocabulary bank, matching synonyms or meanings activity. During reading fluency practice, the child would pick up keywords or phrases and highlight

them, and I would get them to pause so I can question their understanding of it within the context of the sentence or paragraph. Words are also taught by dividing into syllables or word parts (suffix/ prefix) along with drawings/ visuals.

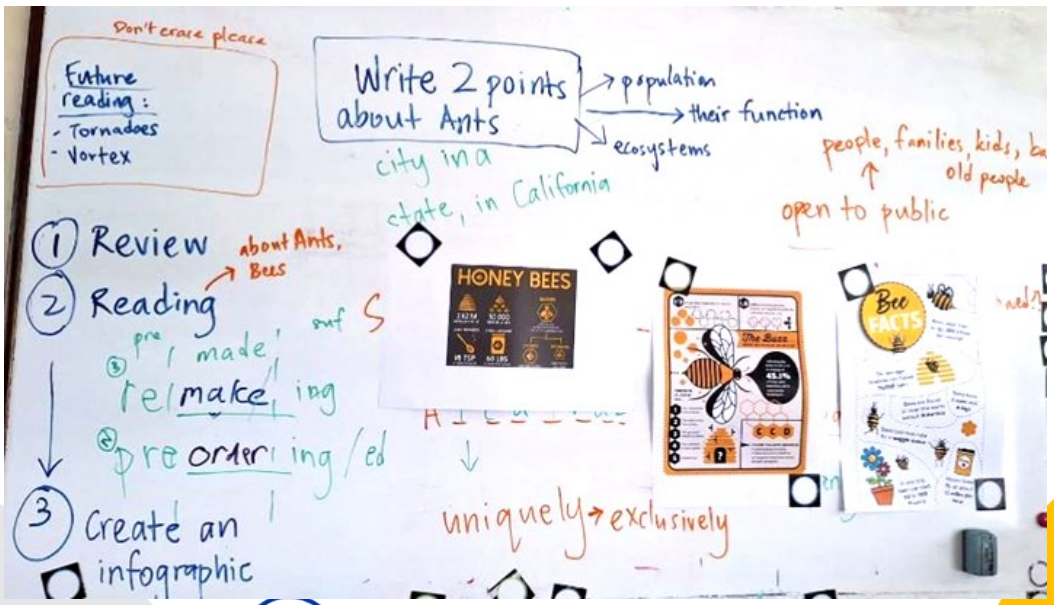
Repetition of learnt keywords/ phrases occur over the next few lessons to reinforce the memory and usage in the context of a sentence, paragraph or story.

Depending on the child's level, we can differentiate the given text to purely short or long sentences, paragraphs and expand it further to a few more paragraphs so as not to overwhelm the child.

It helps to pause and reflect after reading an easy or a particularly hard sentence/ paragraph to aid the learner with comprehension and working memory of content they have read.
To work on sentence writing skills, it is important to identify parts of speech and practice writing simple sentences, attempt sentence sequencing activities (hands on with movable cards or worksheet based) to be more confident with sentence building skills.



Supporting students who learn differently, starts with the teacher understand the learning styles of her student so that she/ he can then bring the best out in the child in order to access the curriculum. Whether the child has a learning difficulty such as Dyslexia or is undiagnosed, I hope through my personal strategies I have successfully used with my student Jake we are able to support our students who learn differently more effectively.



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