The Effects of Elementary School Teachers’ Instructional Practices on the Self-Confidence of College Students with Dyslexia

Christina Miceli

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The Effects of Elementary School Teachers’ Instructional Practices on the Self-Confidence of College Students with Dyslexia

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Submitted in Partial Completion of the Requirements for Interdisciplinary Honors in Elementary Education and Special Education

Bridgewater State University

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ABSTRACT

When learning to cope with dyslexia, it is not uncommon for a child to develop a lack of self-confidence when falling behind academically in comparison to his or her same-aged peers. The teaching style and method of instruction in the classroom directly affects a dyslexic student’s self-confidence (Burden, 2009). Teacher responses collected through a questionnaire and voice recorded interviews were compared to college students with dyslexia’s survey and interview responses. This research determined there are discrepancies that exist among students self-identified with dyslexia, their descriptions of the impacts of elementary school teachers, and the perceptions of the strategies, attitudes, and approaches reported by elementary teachers. Results of the investigation bridge the ‘disconnect’ between what adult students with dyslexia, and what elementary teachers of student’s with dyslexia, believes impacts their self-confidence. This investigation proposes recommendations for future practices of elementary teachers that positively enhance student self-esteem.
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For some, conducting research is as simple as wanting to know more about a current interest or hobby. Personally, however, the research I conducted is much more than that. The investigation presented is a reflection of a personal passion and step towards achieving my top educational goal in life: to bring awareness to teachers and other educational personnel about the important role they play in the emotional health of an elementary student with dyslexia.

Dyslexia has been present in my life since the day I was born. Not because it is a disability of my own, but one that runs in my family. Two members of my immediate family, my father and younger brother, have been diagnosed with this learning disability. Throughout my life I have witnessed first-hand the daily struggles and achievements that this disability entails. Watching my brother grow up with dyslexia has triggered a wide variety of emotions for me. When initially watching him struggle I was deeply saddened over his frustrations. However, over the years this sadness turned into inspiration as I witnessed his progression to becoming increasingly more secure in his intellectual abilities. While I credit the focus and determination of my brother for his accomplishments, it is the perseverance and cooperation of each of his elementary school teachers that encouraged him through his academic hardships. They voiced their beliefs that he could achieve the same success as his same-aged typical peers.

For these skilled, kind-hearted teachers I am forever grateful and am inspired by their actions. I aim to remind and inform educators, specifically elementary and special education teachers, of the impact they have on their students’ lives, while presenting the most preferred and self-confiding teaching practices through this proposed thesis.
I. INTRODUCTION

The term *learning disability* currently identifies about, “2.4 million American public school students under the Individuals with Disabilities Act. (IDEA)” (Cortiella, Horowitz, 2014). This phrase was first discussed at, “A 1963 conference with concerned parents and professionals that focused on students who in spite of average or above-average intelligence seemed to be encountering substantial difficulties in school” (Kirk, et al., 2014). *Learning disability* is an umbrella term used to describe those with and without an official diagnosis:

The students we currently identify as having learning disabilities are a very diverse group: They include those with assumed neurologically based learning problems and students who are not performing well for other reasons including poor motivation, problems at home, and challenges faced due to external factors (Kirk et al., 2014).

Many students who are described as having a learning disability do not have a neurological disability. Such children are referred to as having unexplained underachievement, where there is solely a difference in IQ testing vs. achievement testing with no diagnosis. Those representing a discrepancy in achievement are referred to as having a specific learning disability. (Kirk, et al., 2014).

The term *specific learning disability* (SLD) is one of the thirteen legally defined disabilities in the United States. (IDEA, 2004). Other groups include disabilities such as autism, emotional impairment, and physical impairment. Under the U.S Department of Education legal section 602 definition 29, the description of specific learning disabilities is: “A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in the understanding or in using language,
spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations” (Department of Ed., 2004). Specific learning disorders include conditions such as dysgraphia, dyscalculia, language processing disorder, non-verbal learning disabilities, and dyslexia.

The focus of this study concentrates on the specific learning disability of dyslexia. In order to present a clear understanding of the research below, dyslexia must first be defined, and the processes in which it is diagnosed must be explained. The official definition of dyslexia has consistently been edited since the year the name was first coined. However, as of 2013, dyslexia is defined as a:

Dyslexia is a language-based learning disability. Dyslexia refers to a cluster of symptoms, which result in people having difficulties with specific language skills such as spelling, writing, and pronouncing words. Dyslexia affects individuals throughout their lives; however, its impact can change at different stages in a person’s life. It is referred to as a learning disability because dyslexia can make it very difficult for a student to succeed academically in the typical instructional environment, and in its more severe forms will qualify a student for special education, special accommodation, or extra support services (International Dyslexia Association, 2013).

Of people with reading difficulties, 70-80% are likely to have some form of dyslexia. It is estimated that between 5-10% of the population has dyslexia, but this number can also be as high as 17% (University of Michigan). Dyslexia is an individualized disability, meaning that the way in which dyslexia affects each person is different. For example, while one student with dyslexia
could be struggling with phonological awareness and spelling, another could be having
difficulty with depth perception and ‘floating’ words. Due to the language-based nature of
dyslexia, it can be difficult to identify prior to when students learn to read, write, and spell.
However, once entering school there are several specific signs that indicate dyslexia may be
present: “Some specific signs for elementary aged children may include: difficulty with
remembering simple sequences such as counting to 20, naming the days of the week, reciting the
alphabet, and trouble recognizing words that begin with the same sound (such as bird, baby, and
big all start with b)” (International Dyslexia Association, 2013). If such observations are
noticed, educators proceed through a series of steps to further investigate the underlying cause.

“To ‘operationalize’ this definition, most states have developed formulas that hinged on
the discrepancies between intellectual abilities (IQ) and achievement and/or performance” (Kirk
et al., 2014). When assessing the possibility of dyslexia, an IQ and achievement model is
created. To obtain both IQ and achievement scores, a child is given two tests, a general
intelligence test, (e.g., Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Fifth Edition [WISC-IV]), and
an achievement test, (e.g., Woodcock Johnson Tests of Achievement-Fourth Edition [WJ-
IVACH]). The tests are typically categorized into several sections such as mathematics, reading,
writing, etc. “If a student’s score on the IQ test is at least two standard deviations (30 points)
higher than his or her scores on an achievement test, the student is described as having a

significant discrepancy between IQ and achievement
and, therefore, as having a learning disability” (IDEA
Partnership 2013). As seen in figure 1.1, the bell curve
displays a discrepancy in an individual’s reading ability.
As stated previously, there must be at least a 30-point difference between the IQ and achievement score. In this particular example, after subtracting the IQ score of 100, from the reading achievement score of 68, a 32-point reading based discrepancy exists, providing support for the possibility that this individual has a specific reading disability, such as dyslexia.

**IDEA Partnership 2013**

However, there are a few concerns with this model when used to detect a learning disability:

1. Discrepancies between IQ and achievement/performance are often difficult to measure with children in pre-K through third grade.

2. Discrepancies between IQ and achievement/performance may exist for any number or reasons; thus, this approach is really just helping us find children with ‘unexplained underachievement’ that may or may not be due to a learning disability.

3. To find discrepancies we must wait until the gap between IQ and achievement/performance is wide enough to measure, and this means that we must wait until the child has experienced substantial failure with learning.

4. The ‘wait to fail’ model creates a situation in which the primary problems a child is experiencing get worse and are frequently compounded by secondary problems with behavior, self-concept, and academic readiness (Coleman, Buyssee, & Neitzel, 2006b; Kirk et al., 2014).

Due to these issues, the way in which special and general educators serve and meet the learning needs of students, has transitioned into a process referred to as response to intervention (RTI).
In 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized in response to the issues associated with solely using a discrepancy model to provide necessary services to students. “IDEA 2004 includes an RTI approach as one option that schools can use to identify students with learning disabilities” (Kirk et al., 2014). The reevaluated standards for providing additional supports are outlined in detail though the U.S. Department of Education:

…When determining whether a child has a specific learning disability as defined in section 602 (29), a local education agency shall not be required to take into consideration whether a child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability in oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skill, reading comprehension, mathematical calculation, or mathematical reasoning…. (U.S Department of Education, 2014).

This section is a shift in detecting learning disabilities due to the addition of its evidence-based nature in the process of evaluating a student’s education needs. The RtI model emphasizes that, “The need for comprehensive evaluations assessing students’ needs is even more important within an RTI approach because understanding why children are unable to learn is key to reshaping our educational supports” (Kirk et al., 2014). When the reasoning for a student’s struggle is identified, supports can be provided early in his or her educational career, rather than the previous method of depending solely on a discrepancy model to show a student is struggling. With the RTI approach, educators are able to begin to collaborate to set up necessary services with evidence, rather than waiting for the student to display a low score on an achievement test. When an educator obtains evidence a student is struggling, there is a tier of services, known as
the Hierarchy for RTI, in order to meet his or needs. There are three tiers to this pyramid, which are universal, targeted, and intensive (Kirk et al., 2014).

The lowest level of the model, shown in figure 1.2, allows services to be provided in the general education classroom, and are typically provided through universal interventions. The middle level of the pyramid, refers to inclusion classrooms, or classrooms with both students with exceptionalities and typical students where target group interventions are provided. When Tier I supports no longer meet the educational needs of a student, Tier II assistance is implemented. At this level, students are given, “Increased intensity of supports, smaller groups, more explicit instruction, and targeted assessment and more frequent progress monitoring” (Kirk et al., 2014, pp. 130). If a student continues to fall behind his or her same aged peers, despite exhausting all Tier II services, the student will either be transitioned into a separate special education classroom or receive individualized, intensive interventions, and supports in a classroom with typical students. Once the student has been assessed and is in the educational setting he or she learns best, increased individualized supports for academic success can be implemented.

**ALEK Response to Intervention Model**

When the possibility of a specific learning disability of the dyslexic nature arises, there is typically a set of protocols and procedures presented by literary journals that are executed in an
attempt to identify a student’s most prominent academic needs. The popular usage of literary evaluations are “usually accompanied by a test of phonological processing and, possibly, other aspects of cognitive and/or linguistic functioning” (Burden & Burdett, 2007, pp. 100). Although research is beginning to show that there are discrepancies between these IQ tests and students actual academic abilities, theses examinations continue to be performed.

Almost no research appears to have been published, for example, on whether people with a particular type of personality or temperament are better able to deal with and overcome their dyslexic difficulties than others (Scott, 2004). Only recently has research begun to emerge on such issues as self-esteem and motivation in children and young adults with dyslexia (Riddick, Sterling, Farmer & Morgan, 1999; Humphrey, 2002; Burden & Burdett, 2005). However, little research has spoken to students with dyslexia about how they learn best.

Due to the small quantity of recorded, developmental formal research of the thoughts and feelings of students with dyslexia, the literature review presented exemplifies self-identified dyslexic college students’ opinions of preferred teaching styles. This review also focuses on a teacher’s judgment and outlook on how to best accommodate and educate a student with dyslexia.
Can elementary teachers impact the confidence levels of students self-identified with dyslexia?

N = 5 B.S.U college students self-identified with dyslexia

N = 7 Elementary teachers who have experience teaching children with dyslexia

Interviews (audio or videotape)

Guided Question Protocol

Descriptions of teacher behavior

Impact

Levels or measures or descriptions of confidence

- Code
- Aggregate
- Analysis

Conclusions
III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Although research has begun to emerge on the effects dyslexia has on student’s self-esteem and self-confidence, not one individual study has exposed the opinions of dyslexic students themselves. The literature reviewed explains several dynamics of those who influence a dyslexic student’s self-confidence.

Family Perspective

The love and support given by a dyslexic’s family is one of the most crucial aspects to a child in terms of his or her self-esteem and self-worth. While peers play a role in determining a dyslexic child’s self-confidence, the desire to live up to parental expectations is one that begins from a young age. As we grow up, our parents set the standard for our emotional stability and overall capability to love and be loved. Parenting styles vary and the way in which a parent views his or her child’s disability affects the child’s emotional health. For example, Singer suggests the tools parents give their children to ‘grow thick skin’ are addressed:

Parents play a crucial role in the development of global self-worth. The daily experience of being warmly regarded can help students to appropriate their parents’ distinction between global self-worth and poor performance in specific academic domains. Such students are able to internalize firm personal standards with regard to being a good person, and these standards protect them against negative feelings that can arise from academic problems in specific areas (Singer, 2007, p. 317).
It is critical for parents to differentiate between poor academic performances and a dyslexic child’s intelligence. An IQ does not solely determine the overall aptitude of a person to succeed academically and in everyday life; it is simply a number on a scale: “Some researchers have argued that definitions of LD should not be based on a discrepancy between IQ and reading because reading difficulties can contribute to decreases in IQ scores over time” (Flannery, 2005, p.3). While parents cannot protect their child from emotional challenges or hardships it is vital for them to be a steady support system for him or her.

One way in which parents can ensure their child receives services for dyslexia is through actively communicating with teachers. Parent-teacher communication is vital to the academic and social well being of the child to ensure he or she reaches appropriate academic milestones as well as to include parents in the process: “Problems are compounded because parents are sometimes treated like clients rather than partners in the educations process” (Riddick, 1995). Maintaining a level of collaboration between the parties provides the opportunity for the student to receive the most appropriate and fitting interventions. The way in which family members approach and cope with the diagnosis of dyslexia exemplifies to the child how he or she should view him or herself. Support provided from family members when a child is diagnosed with dyslexia directly affects his or her level of self-confidence.

**Family Genes**

Growing up with dyslexia can coincide with a combination of emotions including confusion, frustration, and determination. It can be a time of feeling misunderstood or a feeling of finally having an answer as to why you’re academically falling behind your same aged peers.
While each person copes with dyslexia in a different way, support is often not far. Dyslexia is neurological and often genetic, resulting in immediate and/or extended family members facing similar academic and social obstacles and achievements. This is vital information for teachers because it allows him or her to focus on a particular student’s progress as many children of parents with dyslexia enter school already experiencing language deficiencies:

Reading disability or dyslexia runs in families. Prospective family-risk (FR) studies where the development of children born to families with at least one parent with dyslexia is followed from early on have demonstrated that FR children show a wide range of language and literacy problems, even prior to school entry (Lyytinen, 2011, p.339).

There is great importance when it comes to teacher-parent communication, especially when a child may possibly have a reading disability, such as dyslexia.

Attitude of Peers

While the way in which dyslexia presents itself is different for each person, there is a common factor that unites him or her. School is a place where social and emotional relationships grow and foster. As students continue to mature through the elementary school years, they become more observant. Often times it is common for students with dyslexia to be pulled out of the general education classroom and into a separate classroom with a reading specialist for certain activities (Kirk et al., 2014). During this occurrence both the students in class, as well as the child being pulled out of the room, may begin to notice that he or she is receiving more help than his or her peers. The observable routine occurrence of either receiving extra help in class or traveling to a separate room for instruction, can leave students feeling different than their peers.
and often peers also see them as being unique. The lack of understanding between the parties can leave children with learning difficulties, including dyslexia, as outcasts in a typical classroom. While all children are susceptible to the feeling of being an outsider, the likelihood that a student who possesses unique characteristics will be targeted, is high. Although bullying may appear extreme, it can happen and occurs in many different forms: “A child is being bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students” (Bullies, Targets, and Bystanders, 2015). The overall image a child presents to his or her peers and how they perceive the child, can either make or break his or her self-image and social development: “Peers have been demonstrated to be perhaps the most significant others in a child’s life, often outweighing even parents. Further, they are important sources of self-esteem, particularly after around the age of eight…”(Humphrey,2003,p. 133). The issue of constant taunting or being poked fun at because of an uncontrollable disability can lead to a lack of confidence negatively affecting a child’s academic progress:

Children with special needs have long been over-represented as victims of bullying, usually because they present as an easy target for the cowardly mentality of the bully. As a response to this, children with special needs often attempt to hide their difficulties to divert attention away from themselves. This can be counterproductive, as it can increase the level of isolation a child feels, since his difficulties are ‘known’ only to him/her. It can also make precise identification and intervention a difficult task for the teacher (Humphrey, 2003).
When children with dyslexia feel the need to hide their disability due to being bullied, the consequences can be harmful, both socially and academically. Socially, when being unaccepted by peers, a feeling of vulnerability and self-consciousness is inevitable and traumatic. In the statement above made by Humphrey, a child avoiding talking about his or her disability can only deepen loneliness or feelings of depression. These emotions will ultimately affect the child’s academic progress and hold him or her behind compared to peers. For example, students may fall behind academically in terms of reading out loud, if being taunted by peers for struggling or reading at a slow pace (Humphrey, 2003). Being taunted by children for a disability that cannot be controlled nor changed, can lead to a lack of self-confidence and embarrassment that will be felt years later.

**Teachers**

When learning to cope with this disability, it is not uncommon for a child to develop a lack of self-confidence when falling behind academically in comparison to his or her same-aged peers: “when dyslexics enter school, they enter a world where their abilities and strengths are different from those around them. What may be easy to their peers is very difficult or impossible for them. Thus when they recognize this difference, stress begins” (Larson, 2009, pp. 259). Teacher instruction is a factor in students’ nervousness and lack of self-confidence: “Often the dyslexic withdraws and manifests extreme anxiety, e.g. trembling and sweating when asked to read. These dyslexics have low self-opinions of themselves and generalize every aspect of their life as a failure” (Larson, 2009, pp 260). The connection and influence of a teacher to his or her students is one of the most important relationships experienced during childhood. The way in which a child is viewed in the classroom can either positively or negatively affect a child’s
attitude towards him or herself, peers, and academics. The opinion and attention of the teacher in elementary school classrooms is both desired and essential to a child’s self-esteem and overall well-being: “Students base their attributions for success and failure on cues from the classroom teacher about the students’ competence” (Woodcock, 2011, p.3). Lacking a sense of belonging in the classroom can cause a child to feel isolated and unworthy. It is vital that instructors are informed how to include, motivate, and support dyslexic students prior to entering the classroom in order to be properly prepared to instruct such students: “It is highly likely that teachers’ abilities in dealing with different forms of learning difficulties will be affected by their knowledge about and attitudes towards those difficulties” (Burden, 2011, p.67). The confidence level of a student with dyslexia can be largely influenced by the support, or lack there of, from his or her teacher.

The attitude and approaches of teachers towards the disability of dyslexia, as well as the diagnosed child, is a factor in the child’s measure of self-worth. In a study by Robert L. Burden, it was found that:

The importance of teachers’ beliefs about the children that they teach, especially with regard to manifest learning difficulties has long been well established. What matters most for the learning of children with learning difficulties and disabilities are the commitments and capabilities of their teachers (Burden, 2009, pp. 68).

Children require motivation and admiration from their instructors in order to succeed and view themselves as intelligent and worthy. When this is not the case; however, it is likely that students will ultimately suffer academically and socially.
Coping Mechanisms

When facing the obstacles and challenges dyslexia entails, finding a coping mechanism is essential to the overall good and welfare of the individual. The strenuous amount of effort on the brain of someone who has dyslexia can be exhausting and overwhelming. Similar to how this specific learning disability affects each person in a different way, there are unique approaches to managing dyslexia. In a journal by Elly Singer, a study was to evaluate the ways in which people dealt with academic failure. The study concluded:

Most of the students (59%) reacted to negative evaluations of their performance by pretending that nothing serious had happened. ‘I immediately put the test into my drawer and went on with my math’ (Jeroen, age 12). They tried to hide their feelings and did not want their peers to know that they were angry, sad, or puzzled or that they felt guilty, ashamed, or stupid (59%). Two-fifths of the students reported having taken up the challenge of improving their performance (41%). Three-fourths of the students sought support from adults, either parents (64%) or teachers (32%). One-fourth of the students had shared their disappointment with their peers. Most had sought emotional support, and three students had asked for and received support from their peers for improving their academic skills (Singer, 2007,p.317).

While the results of this study shows that the majority of students choose to ignore the situation of failure at hand, this is neither the most practical, nor best for the emotional health of the individual. Ignorance when dealing with these emotions can lead to serious problems that go
beyond the initial diagnosis and deteriorate a person’s self-concept, self-worth, and self-confidence (Humphrey, 2003; Singer, 2007; Burden, 2009). It is the role of the teacher to ensure that their students with dyslexia maintain a positive sense of self-confidence. However, published research lacks to bring forth the most desired approaches for teachers on how to effectively teach students with dyslexia, from the most knowledge source on this issue, the students themselves. The purpose of this study is to define and identify the best methods of instruction for students with dyslexia based upon the opinions of students with dyslexia.

IV. INVESTIGATION HYPOTHESIS

Is there a disconnect present between students and teachers on how to positively approach teaching students with dyslexia in order to establish and maintain a sense of students’ self-confidence in and out of the classroom? Using positive constructive recommendations from Bridgewater State University students self-identified with dyslexia, this study aims to educate elementary teachers on effective instructional practices.

V. METHODOLOGY

This 12 month, three-phase descriptive study examines self-identified students’ and licensed elementary school teachers’ quantitative and qualitative responses to questions pertaining to dyslexia and self-confidence in the general education elementary classroom.

Figure 5.1 Phases of Methodology
**Phase One**

Phase one of the research cycle focused on the self-identified student with dyslexia’s point of view. First, a target group of participants were determined. For this study 15 self-identified Bridgewater State University (BSU) undergraduate students, all of whom were diagnosed with dyslexia during their elementary school years, were sought to participate. In order to collect responses, all BSU undergraduate students were notified via a school-wide email entitled, *Student Announcements*. The message read, “All undergraduate students with dyslexia are invited to participate in a student research study (IRB case #2014106). If you wish to participate or for further information, please contact Christina Miceli at cmiceli@student.bridgew.edu.” The posting could be viewed various days within the months of March 2014 and April 2014. After the determination of qualified participants, five were selected and collecting responses began. Data was derived by each subject first quantitatively, then qualitatively during a one-on-one private interview. All conversations took place at Bridgewater State University in Hart Hall 247. As shown in figure 5.1, at the beginning of each meeting, a short seven-slide information session was given for the purpose of familiarizing and informing the participant with the purpose and details of this research (Appendix A). After all questions were answered a participant consent form and video and photo release form (Appendix B), were explained, signed, and dated. Next, began the collection of responses. To obtain statistical information a 10-question survey was presented to each interviewee via *SurveyMonkey* on the interviewer’s provided laptop (Appendix C). Once complete, the accumulation of qualitative data began. During each session, 10 pre-determined questions were asked, (Appendix D), as well as a number of questions specific to each given participant. The order in which the questions were
given was unique to each meeting as it was important to keep each interview relaxed and conversational. At the conclusion, each participant was thanked and the responses were replayed from the digital recorder and transcribed onto a word document.

**Phase Two**

Phase two of the research cycle focused on the complementary end of phase one, the teacher perspective. I conducted this phase very similarly to phase one, in order to maintain consistency for more accurate results and conclusions. First, 10 elementary school teachers were recruited to participate in the interview process. Professionals were recruited through word of mouth, by either Dr. Carter’s (full time special education professor and director of graduate studies) peers or teachers the interviewer has had in the past, and through a BSU generated e-mail, similar to the student announcement used to recruit students. This message read,

Dr. Edward Carter is currently mentoring an undergraduate honors student, Ms. Christina Miceli, who is seeking elementary level teachers (K-6) interested in participating in her honors thesis research. Research participants will complete a brief nine-question survey and a short (20-30 minute) interview regarding their practices for supporting their elementary students labeled with dyslexia. If you are willing to participate in Ms. Miceli’s project, please contact me at Edward.carter@bridgew.edu or at 508-531-2507. Your support for this research would be greatly appreciated.

After three weeks of recruiting, seven teachers were chosen and one-on-one interviews began. Each interview took place in the teacher’s lounge at Stoughton Elementary School in Stoughton, Mass. At the start of each meeting, the interviewer took three to five minutes to introduce herself
and explain the research process. Next, statistical data was obtained on the interviewer’s provided laptop, through an eight question demographic survey, on SurveyMonkey.com. (see Appendix E). Once complete, the participant consent form and photo/video release form (shown in Appendix F), was explained, signed, dated, and any questions were answered. Next, the interview process began. Each meeting lasted about 30-40 minutes, consisting of three parts and 14 total questions. Questions were asked in the same order to each participant as the interviewer purposely began with broad questions, and narrowed to more specific ones (see Appendix G). At the conclusion of each meeting the participant was thanked and the data was transcribed.

Phase 3

The final phase of this research consisted of three cycle coding procedures and analyzing the coded data. The interviewer transcriptions were divided into two categories, teachers and students. First, the teacher interviews were each printed in different colors. Next, a 24-inch by 72-inch corkboard was divided into 14 columns, representing the 13 questions asked to each professional during his or her interview. At the top of each column, the questions asked were written on construction paper and tacked to the board. Next, the answers to each question asked during an interview session were cut on the previously printed color paper, and placed in its respectable section on the corkboard. This provided a stacked visualization of each respondent’s answers. Stacked responses were then coded using a three-cycle approach. The first cycle involved paraphrasing each response into coded words, or phases, onto individual sticky notes. Then sticky notes were categorized into common themes or outliers depending on the responses. The second cycle-organized categories of themes into cross subject matrices to assist with the analysis process. The same three-cycle approach was repeated by the student interview
transcriptions. Collectively coded responses were used to make comparisons between student subjects and teacher subjects, and to help formulate conclusions about each group’s perspective.

VI. RESULTS

Five students and seven teacher responses were collected through a one-on-one voice recorded interview. Using a pre-determined set of questions results of the responses of the student subjects and teacher subjects are summarized.

Student Responses

Question: As a college student, do you feel in elementary school your teachers prepared you with basic tips on how to manage your dyslexia? Why or why not?

Across respondents, 75% of students feel their elementary school teachers did not give them proper tips and methods to manage their dyslexia. Of the 75%, the most powerful statement came from one female participant who recalled her first grade teacher telling her, “You are a retard and will be lucky to graduate high school and if you go to college it will be a miracle.” The consensus from the remaining 25% of the students interviewed feel their teacher did prepare them to manage their dyslexia, but did not elaborate.

Question: When you first found out you had dyslexia, what were your initial reactions and emotions about this news?

Across respondents, 40% of students had no reaction towards this news, as they were unaware of the meaning of this term. Another 40% of the interviewees experienced a negative reaction when discovering they had dyslexia. One hundred percent of students who had a
negative reaction to this diagnosis felt so in realization they were different than their peers. The remaining 20% of the student sample had a positive reaction in discovering they were dyslexic as they felt a sense of relief in putting a name to the reason they were academically struggling compared to their classmates.

**Question:** How did your elementary school teacher discover this news? Did you ever have a discussion with them about your diagnosis? If so, how did he or she react?

Across respondents, 80% of the students interviewed reported that someone other than himself or herself shared the news with their elementary school teacher that they had dyslexia. All respondents also voiced that not one of their teachers had a conversation with them about this diagnosis. Twenty percent of students told their elementary school teachers they had dyslexia and had an open conversation about this topic.

**Question:** If you could share with elementary school teachers one suggestion on how to effectively teach students with dyslexia and maintain their self-confidence what would it be?

Responses indicated that 25% of the students feel that teachers should use different approaches and methods when instructing children with dyslexia and 50% of the students feel that creating a bond between the student and teacher is the best way to effectively teach. They felt this was a positive approach because when a student and teacher have a strong relationship, the student feels comfortable approaching the instructor when he or she is in need of academic assistance. Finally, 25% of the students reported that the instructor should use his or her best judgment on appropriate accommodations and modifications for the student through reading literature.
**Question:** What do you wish elementary school teachers knew about students with dyslexia?

Across respondents, 40% of students voiced that they wish elementary school teachers knew more about dyslexia in how to approach the child, accommodate, and instruct the individual so that he or she can learn to the best of his or her ability. Also, 20% of the students surveyed said they wish elementary school teachers knew that dyslexia is unique to each person and no two individuals have the exact same dyslexia. Additionally, they voiced that they felt the public misinterprets people with dyslexia as seeing letters backwards, when that is not always the case. Finally, 20% of students wish teachers knew that dyslexia cannot be ‘fixed’ and 20% of students had no response to this question.

**Question:** What are some positive attributes your previous elementary school teachers had that made you feel included and the same as the rest of your peers?

The responses to this question were evenly divided into two categories. Fifty percent of the students stated that they felt most comfortable when their teacher treated them the same as the rest of their peers. For example, one participant explained that her teacher held her to the same standards and rules as the rest of her class. The remaining 50% of students felt that positive feedback and reinforcement made them feel included the same as the rest of their peers. This is true because as many of the students explained, when the teacher would praise them, they felt as if they were at the same intellectual level as their peers.

**Question:** As an adult do you feel confident in your learning disability why or why not?

The responses collected are of high importance to this study, so it is imperative to interpret them correctly. The graphic below creates a visual display of the percentages described.
Across respondents, 60% of students felt that as an adult they are confident in their learning disability, while 40% report they are not confident with dyslexia. Of those who disclose they are not confident, 33.3% say their lack of confidence stems from teacher interactions. Specifically, 67.7% of these students say their confidence comes from factors such as peers or family. Of the 40% who are not confident, 75% say their confidence come from teacher interactions. The remaining 25% say their lack of confidence come from other factors such as peers.

**Question:** Were there certain activities or lessons during class that made you feel self-conscious about having dyslexia? How would you change these lessons?

All students felt that reading out loud in front of the entire class makes them feel self-conscious about having dyslexia. Also, 40% of students say that even as college students they refuse to read out loud. The remaining 60% report that while reading out loud, they do not make eye contact with others in the room and are very nervous.

**Teacher Responses**

**Question:** Do you feel equally comfortable with all of your students?

Across respondents, 71% of the participants feel they are equally comfortable with all of their students while 29% say that they are not equally comfortable with all of their students. Of those who say they are equally comfortable with all of their students, 14% feel they are
comfortable because services (e.g. peers) are available for assistances if needed. Twenty percent of teachers felt that the amount of comfort they feel with a student pertains to his or her home situation. For example, teachers who feel there is a lack of compatibility with a student’s parents in terms of teaching styles, feel less comfortable than with a student whose home situation is more like-minded. All who reported feeling they are not equally comfortable with their students noted that they are trying several different methods in their classrooms, including whole reading and small group reading, to determine how the students in their class learn best.

**Question:** Are there ways or things that you do to establish a more personal connection with your students?

Across respondents, 71% of teachers create a more personal connection with his or her students by connecting with topics or activities pertaining to school projects or recess. For example, sending home self-information sheets to describe some of their likes and dislikes. Respondents indicated that 29% establish a bond through conversation pertaining to life outside of school. All 29% of these teachers create an association with their students by speaking about his or her children.

**Question:** Do you think having a more personal connection with your students makes a difference to them either academically or emotionally?

All instructors agree that a more personal connection with students makes a positive difference in their academics and emotional state. Of these respondents, 28% of teachers reported that personal connections allow the students to feel comfortable in the classroom, causing them to take more risks, as they are not afraid to make mistakes. Also, 14% of
instructors felt connections allow the students to have a sense of belonging in the classroom. Finally, 42% of teachers answered the question, “yes,” but did not provide clear reasoning.

**Question:** Do you think your students remember you?

All teachers reported that their students remember them. About 86% say they have former students reach out to them either through the internet, visiting, or through family members that currently have him or her. Also, 14% say they think their former students remember them only if they were successful in their class, because they most likely remember the strategies taught to cope with their disability.

**Question:** Please tell me about a situation in which you felt you made a lasting difference in a student’s life.

All instructors could recall a situation in which they felt they made a lasting difference in a student’s life. About 56% reported it were “small moments” that made a long-term difference. Some examples include, staying after school for extra help, recalling moments students told him or her they could read for the first time, or students a teacher was tutoring saying he or she wished they were her teacher. Also, 42% of teachers told stories of students dealing with issues outside of their dyslexia such as depression, anxiety, or ‘bad’ home lives.

**Question:** How do you teach reading?

Three common themes were found in the responses given when asked the question how do you teach reading; small group reading, whole class reading, and ‘popcorn reading.’ About 70% of instructors reported using small group reading based on reading level in their classroom. This was described as dividing the class into three separate reading groups, low readers, middle
readers, and advanced readers. Each were given books based on their level and were called in their group to read along with the instructor. Fifty-six percent of teachers use ‘popcorn reading’ as a method of instruction in their classroom. ‘Popcorn’ or ‘pop’ reading refers to a method of random students reading a passage of literature to the class. For example, the teacher would read one paragraph then call on a student to read the next section. When finished, he or she would call on another student to read and so on. Fifty-six percent of teachers use student read alouds as part of the curriculum. A student read aloud is when the teacher chooses a student to read in front of the entire class.

**Question:** What happens if a student is reluctant, refuses, isn’t very fluent, or stutters when reading out loud? How do you go about handling the situation?

About 42% of teachers agree that he or she would read with the student one-on-one if any of the above situations occurred and 14% of instructors would use positive affirmations or praise to encourage the student through his or her struggle. Also, 28% of professionals report using method based approaches, such as peer mentoring and student choice of when to read out loud. To elaborate, one teacher in particular has a conversation with his or her student at the beginning of the week. During this conversation both agree on how many times the student should read out loud to the class.

**Question:** When you discover a student of yours has dyslexia are there certain strategies you have in order to accommodate that student?

Of respondents, 42% of teachers use multi-sensory strategies to incorporate dyslexic students’ learning needs in the classroom. Examples of multi-sensory learning instructors in this
study use are audio books along with the text, tapping for each letter in a word while decoding, and the use of visualization through pictures. Fifty-eight percent of teachers use additional supports when accommodating a dyslexic student. Examples of additional supports used are reading specialists and/or the use of research through published literature.

**Question:** Do you think they are more vulnerable to negative feedback?

All instructors interviewed agree that students with dyslexia are more vulnerable to negative feedback especially in reading. All teachers reported that students should only be given positive feedback when reading, and encouragement when struggling.

**Question:** What is your favorite part about being a teacher?

Teachers expressed feelings of joy articulating that they chose this career to make a difference in children’s’ lives. Others love the creative aspect of creating lesson plans. During one interview, a teacher cried as she exclaimed, “I just love being a teacher!”
VII. INTERPRETATION

When comparing the statistical data computed based upon responses from questions during the interview, it can be determined that teachers and students have both opposing and similar views on how to positively instruct children with dyslexia in ways that maintain or build their self confidence. Teachers today reported using the same methods that college students voiced negatively affected their self-confidence during their elementary school years. In order to alter or change the strategies that influence a student with dyslexia’s level of self-confidence, it is necessary to recognize these methods and how students are responding to them.

Negative Teaching Strategies

While students reported several strategies that caused them to feel self conscious about their disability, the most intense emotions arose while speaking of reading. Based upon student responses and facial expressions while speaking, three approaches in particular caused students the most stress. The strategies of over positive feedback, individual student read aloud with the whole class, and popcorn reading with the whole class, all received negative connotations (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1 Negative Teaching Strategies
Sixty percent of students experienced over positive feedback and did not find it constructive to their self-confidence. Over positive feedback was described by students to be praised at times the felt unnecessary or given positive affirmations continuously. Students whose response was disapproving felt this action singled them out compared to their classmates, and directed unwanted attention. Students preferred to receive positive feedback at a similar quantity as their classmates.

Unanimously, all students voiced strong opinions against individual student ‘read alouds’ with the whole class. In other words, students with dyslexia did not feel confident while reading in front of their classmates. Students reported feeling uncomfortable reading any literature during
group lessons, including directions. Students very affirmatively voiced their opinions on this method and how it continues to affect them as college students: “I used to hate it (reading out loud). Even now I hate it when they call on me. I don’t have the confidence to talk out loud.” Another interviewee who reported she does not read out loud ever stated, “I don’t read out loud. It doesn’t happen. I say no.” In order for a student to learn at his or her best ability, he or she must feel comfortable in the classroom. Statistics shows students feel uncomfortable when reading out loud for the whole class; therefore, this method of instructor should be revised.

‘Popcorn reading,’ also referred to as ‘pop reading’ is a form of reading out loud to classmates and occurs while reading a piece of literature. For example, the teacher will read the first paragraph or a chapter. Once read, he or she will choose a student to read the next paragraph of the chapter. He or she will choose a classmate to read the third paragraph, and so on. This method received 60% negative feedback from students who participated in this study. Those who were not in favor of ‘popcorn reading,’ reported experiencing emotions similar or identical of those felt while reading out loud. Students recognize this is a modified version of reading out loud and do not feel this strategy allows them to feel confident in their reading abilities.

Positive Teaching Strategies

While students reported several teaching strategies or methods that were unconstructive to their self-confidence, many voiced that instructors maintained or built their self-confidence through three main categories. Figure 7.2 displays these techniques as one-on-one reading with the teacher, small group reading based on reading level, and open communication with students. It is imperative to focus on the practices that enhance a students’ self-esteem.
While students are not comfortable reading to the class as a whole, 100% agree that reading one-on-one with the teacher is beneficial to their academics and emotions. Teachers agree that this method allows student to practice their reading at a pace that is comfortable to him or her, when reading to the teacher whom they are at ease with. Methods discussed by professionals for one-on-one reading included, for example, voice recording students periodically so they can hear for themselves how their reading is improving and giving them a book which is slightly lower than their reading ability so they can, “plow through it and really feel good about themselves.” While students with dyslexia may be nervous to read out loud to the whole class, students in this study agree that reading one-on-one with the teacher is a strategy.
that allows them to gain confidence in their reading, while maintaining or heightening their self-confidence.

While students agree that reading to the whole class is not a favorable activity, it was recognized during the interviews that reading to others is an important skill to acquire. In order to achieve this, 80% of students in this study felt that reading to a small group of classmates who are at or below their reading level, meets this requirement while being sensitive to their self-confidence. Several teachers use this method and agree with student opinions. Several instructors describe setting up this method by first assessing the students reading abilities through one-on-reading with the same piece of literature. Then, the teacher can split the class up into three categories of readers: advanced, moderate, and low. Each group would receive a book that is appropriate for their reading level. During the reading period of class, each group would be called to sit with the teacher and read, each taking a turn. Due to the fact that the students are at similar levels of reading, it creates a sense of unity and patience, ultimately creating a comfortable environment for struggling readers including a student with dyslexia.

As literature explains, the relationship a student has with his or her teacher is one of the most important relationships during childhood (Burden, et. al., 2009). Eighty percent of students in this study feel that open communication and a bond with their teacher is crucial to their level of self-confidence in the classroom. Teachers and students expressed the high level of importance a relationship is to a students’ overall academic experience and emotional state. Instructors feel that students are “much more willing to take risks in the classroom. They are not afraid to raise their hand and possibly make a mistake.” Teachers go about creating this connection in a variation of ways. Some talk about their personal lives, such as children and
interests out of school, some go outside with their students during playtime, and have a morning discussion about how each student’s morning was and what they are looking forward to that day. Students expressed when they feel their teachers enjoy having them in class, they are most apt to ask for assistance or clarification of an assignment, as they are not a nuisance. Open communication between a student and teacher creates a connection essential to achieving a positive level of self-confidence in students with dyslexia.

The strategies and methods teachers choose to utilize in their classrooms have a direct effect on the self-confidence of their students, specifically those with dyslexia. College students vividly remember how their elementary teachers taught, and how it made them feel. Teachers have an enormous impact, and can either positively or negatively affect a student’s level of self-confidence. In order to ensure students with dyslexia feel a sense of self-confidence in their elementary school classroom, they must take into consideration what students with dyslexia feel positively impacts their self-confidence and dismiss the strategies that cause negative emotions.
VIII. CONCLUSION

The research presented has concluded that although elementary school teachers intend to positively impact a dyslexic student’s self-confidence, many teaching methods have resulted in promoting low self-confidence in current university students with dyslexia. My research has concluded that as an educator it is top priority that students are absorbing the skills taught, and that each student feels secure in his or her intellectual abilities. Presented, are six recommendations for elementary school teachers based upon data from student responses, on how to instruct dyslexic students in a manner that maintains and builds self-confidence.

ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF THE STUDENT
USE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH-BASED TEACHING STRATEGIES
PROVIDE MORE EFFECTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR THE STUDENT
HELP THE STUDENT’S PEERS BETTER UNDERSTAND THE STUDENT’S DIFFERENCES
BE PATIENT WHEN TEACHING & BE AVAILABLE TO OFFER ASSISTANCE
PROVIDE HELPFUL LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR THE STUDENT’S PARENTS TO PRACTICE WITH THE STUDENT

Suggestion One: Address the Challenges of the Student

Literature suggests that students who feel a sense of belonging in the classroom, as well as a bond with their classroom teacher, have a higher sense of self-confidence. The data found in this study suggests that same fact, but stronger for students with dyslexia. Students reported feeling confused when diagnosed, as well as unintelligent when compared with their peers. It is important for the classroom teacher to create an open dialog with his her student pertaining to
dyslexia. Not only is this beneficial for the student to be able to have a proper understanding of the disability, but for the instructor to create a bond where he or she can ensure the student is understanding and absorbing the material presented. Having open communication with the student can greatly benefit his or her learning, as the instructor can incorporate how the student learns best into lesson plans. Addressing the challenges with the student is vital to a student with dyslexia maintaining his or her self-confidence.

**Suggestion Two: Use Scientific Research Based Teaching Strategies**

In order to discover teaching strategies best fit for students with dyslexia, a literary investigation must be conducted. It is key for educators to learn about dyslexia through scientific research based teaching strategies, shown to have empirical support to be successful and are reliable methods. When asking students what they wished their elementary school teachers knew about dyslexia, many responded they wished they knew how to properly help them. In order for instructors to learn how to assist students with dyslexia, research based strategies must be applied. Also, when instructors are informed through reliable literature, they in turn have a clear understanding of the disability and can educate the child I ways that fit his or her needs.

**Suggestion Three: Provide More Effective Learning Strategies for the Student**

As results from the study show, 100% of students with dyslexia did not find reading a loud to be a positive experience. While most recognized that reading out loud is a necessary skill to acquire, majority agree that a small group setting or reading one-to-one with the teacher is a method that best fits him or her. Modifying a student read aloud to avoid in front of the whole class, to reading in a small group or one-to-one is just one example of providing an effective
learning strategy for the student. When reading in a comfortable environment, the student is able to better focus and comprehend the literature. When reading a loud to the whole class, the student can become distracted by peer’s perception of him or her, based on slow or below average reading and less on the components of the text. Also, in addition to reading aloud, an effective learning strategy would be to incorporate strategies that use the universal design for learning approach. For example, when reading a story, the teacher would also have the student listen to the book on tape and/or watch a video. By targeting three of the student’s intelligences, he or she is able to grasp the skill of reading, but is also learning through methods he or she learns best.

**Suggestion Four: Help the Student’s Peers Better Understand the Student’s Differences**

As stated in the literature, students base their attitudes towards their academic abilities based upon the teacher’s perceptions of him or her. If the teacher creates an environment where all students are accepting of each other’s strengths and weaknesses, students will ultimately feel confident academically and socially. In terms of informing students with dyslexia’s elementary peers of their disabilities, it is vital inform others of who in the class has this disability, unless the child him or her self voluntarily shares the information with the class. Complete avoidance of being singled out is extremely significant to the students in this study, as it made them feel different when compared to the rest of their peers. One example of how teachers can educate students about dyslexia is through a children’s book. An educator can go about this by selecting a grade appropriate children’s book such as, “My Friend Has Dyslexia” by Amanda Doering Tourville or “The Dyslexic Dalmatian” by Dana Willhite, whose plot encompasses dyslexia. By reading a story about this disability, students in the class are not only becoming informed on the
topic, but accepting that this is an academic difference that some students may posses. Once learning about the disability and the accepting the dyslexic character in the story, they are unknowingly accepting their dyslexic peer as well.

**Suggestion Five: Be Patient When Teaching & Be Available to Offer Assistance**

Research suggests that students with dyslexia learn at a slower pace than their same aged peers. Multiple participants in this study noted a time during their elementary school years where they grasped a concept much slower than others in the class. The way in which students react to this depends upon the classroom teacher. If the instructor is patient with the student, the class will follow his or her example, and also be patient. It is also important for the instructor to be available to offer assistance when needed. Even a simple, ‘I will be at my desk if anyone needs help,’ gives the student the option to approach the instructor’s desk if needed. An example of incorporating both being patient while teaching and being available to offer assistance when needed, is through a technique often referred to in elementary classrooms as the ‘help-rule.’ When reading or processing a thought, a student’s peers are told to count to fifteen in their heads. If the student speaking does not read a specific word or finish a thought by the time the students reach fifteen, he or she is allowed to choose fifteen more seconds or help from the teacher. This rule teaches patience while being available for assistance in one technique, which is a valuable method to use in a classroom.
Suggestion Six: Provide Helpful Learning Strategies for the Student’s Parents To Practice with the Student

In many cases throughout the responses of my student interviews, parents were highly involved in the student’s academics or were their biggest influence in terms of their dyslexia. With parent involvement being so high, it is key that parents are kept informed on their dyslexic child’s school activities and given tips on how to incorporate material taught in school, at home. Parents want the best for their children and they want them to succeed, so staying in contact with the student’s parent can largely influence academic progress. If parents are provided appropriate strategies for students to practice at home, especially in reading their academics may improve, causing them to be closer to their peer’s educational level and consequently maintaining their self-confidence.

The research that was conducted throughout this thesis has outlined and described the similarities and discrepancies that exist between elementary school teaching practices, and their effect on university students who are self-declared with dyslexia. Through this study, I have not only investigated best fit teaching strategies for elementary teachers based upon university student opinions, but I have evolved as a person as well. My appreciation for those with dyslexia, my admiration for the passion expressed by teachers, and the ability to challenge my intellect and broaden my understanding of dyslexia, has been one of the most valuable educational and personal experiences of my life. I can only hope to encounter a comparable evolution as a future elementary school teacher.
IX. References


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Dyslexia: A Teacher’s Impact on Present-day Level of Self-Confidence

By: Christina Miceli
Mentor: Ed Carter

What This Study is About

- A teacher’s relationship with his or her student is one of the most important in a child’s life.
- To better understand how elementary school teachers impact the confidence levels of college students labeled with dyslexia.
- “The importance of teachers’ beliefs about the children that they teach, especially with regard to manifest learning difficulties has long been well established. What matters most for the learning of children with learning difficulties and disabilities are the commitments and capabilities of their teachers” (Gwezeni Jones & Burden, 2009).

Why I am Conducting This Study

- About Me
- Personal Connection to Study

If Participating In This Study Expect….

- Sign Consent Forms
- Complete Short Survey via the internet
- One-on-one interview
  - Recordings
  - Confidentiality

~Survey~

What I Will Be Doing With This Information

- Upload Recordings
- Analyze Responses
- Identify several strategies that dyslexic students feel allowed them to learn and improve their self-confidence

Benefits to Participating In This Study

- Learn that the challenges you face and are currently dealing with others are experiencing similar situations
- Potential for peer support and camaraderie moving forward
- Provide teachers with optimal strategies and affirmations that are effective when working with dyslexic students

APPENDIX B

Student Participant Consent Form
The information provided on this form and the accompanying cover letter is presented to you in order to fulfill legal and ethical requirements for Bridgewater State University (The institution sponsoring this study) and the Department of Health and Human Services regulations for the Protection of Human Research Subjects as amended on March 26, 1989. The wording used in this form is utilized for all types of studies and should not be misinterpreted for this particular study.

The study will be conducted with fifteen Bridgewater State University students self identified with dyslexia. The purpose of this study is to explore common or uncommon themes using the responses to interview questions as well as demographic data collected through a survey to determine student opinions on the supportive or unsupportive characteristics of their elementary teacher interactions and its impact on their subsequent self-confidence.

The purpose of this form is to give your consent to participate in the study activities, and to allow the researcher to use the information obtained from the actual study to analyze the outcomes of the study. Consent for this research study is strictly voluntary without undue influence or penalty. The signatures below also assume that you are supporting your participation in whatever activities that you agree.

Please provide your consent to each of the item below by initializing on the line to the right.

- I have met with the principal investigator (Ms. Miceli) and she has informed me of all elements of this investigation.  
  
- I agree to complete a preliminary questionnaire

- I agree to participate in an individual interview

- I agree to participate in a group interview with other study participants

- I understand that I can immediately drop my participation in this project and any or all of the defined activities described

If you have additional questions regarding the investigation, your rights as the subjects of this investigation, or potential problems, please call the research mentor, Dr. Ed Carter, at Edward.carter@bridgew.edu or the Principal Investigator, Christina Miceli at cmiceli@student.bridgew.edu

Participant Signature ___________________________ Date _________
Video Photo Release

I hereby indicate, as specified below, my consent to use any photos, videotape, or audiotape material taken of myself during this research project. I understand that I may withdraw permission for photographic, video or audio material to be used in this research project at any time. PLEASE CHECK ONE BOX AND SIGN BELOW

☐ I agree to have my audio or visual material available for the research project and presentation of the finished product.

☐ I do not agree to make my audio or visual material available for the research project and presentation of the finished product.

__________________________________________  __________________
Participant’s Signature                      Date

__________________________________________  __________________
Witness Signature                           Date
APPENDIX C

Student SurveyMonkey Questions

1. I am a:
   - o Male
   - o Female

2. I am currently a:
   - o Freshman
   - o Sophomore
   - o Junior
   - o Senior

3. I currently receive academic support from the academic achievement center for my learning disability:
   - o Yes
   - o No

4. I found out I had dyslexia in:
   - o 1st grade
   - o 2nd grade
   - o 3rd grade
   - o 4th grade
   - o 5th grade
   - o 6th grade
   - o other- please specify

5. I feel as if my dyslexia holds me back academically:
   - o Yes
   - o No
6. I felt as if my elementary school teachers expected less of me academically than the rest of my peers because of my learning disability:
   - Yes
   - No

7. I often felt singled out by my elementary school teachers because of my dyslexia:
   - Yes
   - No

8. In elementary school I was pulled out of my general classroom during lessons about (check all that apply):
   - Math
   - Writing
   - Reading
   - Science
   - History
   - Other - please specify

9. My elementary school teachers made fell self-conscious about having a learning disability:
   - Yes
   - No

10. I think my dyslexia impacts my life now:
    - Yes
    - No
APPENDIX D

Voice Recorded Student Interview Questions

1. As a college student, do you feel in elementary school your teachers prepared you with basic tips on how to manage your dyslexia? Why or why not?

2. When you first found out you had dyslexia, what were your initial reactions and emotions about this news?

3. How did your elementary school teacher discover this news? Did you ever have a discussion with them about your diagnosis? If so, how did he or she react?

4. Were there certain activities or lessons during class that made you feel self-conscious about having dyslexia? How would you change these lessons?

5. How did you feel when your teacher called on you to read aloud to the class?

6. If you could share with elementary school teachers one suggestion on how to effectively teach students with dyslexia and maintain their self-confidence what would it be?

7. What do you wish elementary school teachers knew about students with dyslexia?

8. What are some positive attributes your previous elementary school teachers had that made you feel included and the same as the rest of your peers?

9. Who was your favorite elementary school teacher? Tell me about them.

10. As an adult, do you feel confident in your learning disability? Who influenced you the most in terms of your dyslexia?
Appendix E

SurveyMonkey Questions for Teachers

1. What is your gender:
   - Male
   - Female

2. What is your current role? Teacher in grade (choose one):
   - K
   - 1st
   - 2nd
   - 3rd
   - 4th
   - 5th
   - 6th
   - Other

3. How many years have you been teaching as an elementary school teacher?
   - 0-1 years
   - 1-3 years
   - 3-10 years
   - 10-20 years
   - 20 or more years

4. Have you taught at other grade levels and if so, indicate which level for how many years:
   - K
   - 1st
   - 2nd
   - 3rd
5. Are you licensed in special education or any other category?
   - No
   - Moderate PreK-8
   - Moderate 5-12
   - Severe
   - Other (please specify)

6. What is your highest level of education?
   - Bachelors
   - Masters
   - Masters Plus
   - CAES or CAGS
   - Doctorate

7. During your entire tenure as an elementary teachers, how many students in your assigned grade (i.e., on your class roster) were identified with specific learning disabilities, or learning disabilities?

   ............................................

8. Among these students, how many were identified with dyslexia?

   .............................................
Teacher Participant Consent Form

The information provided on this form and the accompanying cover letter is presented to you in order to fulfill legal and ethical requirements for Bridgewater State University (The institution sponsoring this study) and the Department of Health and Human Services regulations for the Protection of Human Research Subjects as amended on March 26, 1989. The wording used in this form is utilized for all types of studies and should not be misinterpreted for this particular study.

The study will be conducted using ten elementary level teachers as respondents. The purpose of this study is to explore teaching practices and its impacts on the subsequent self-confidence of students with learning challenges, more specifically students with dyslexia.

The purpose of this form is to give your consent to participate in the study activities, and to allow the researcher to use the information obtained from the actual study to analyze the outcomes of the study. Consent for this research study is strictly voluntary without undue influence or penalty. The signatures below also assume that you are supporting your participation in whatever activities that you agree.

Please provide your consent to each of the item below by initializing on the line to the right.

• I have met with the principal investigator (Ms. Miceli) and she has informed me of all elements of this investigation.  

  Signature
  
  
  
• I agree to complete a preliminary questionnaire

  

• I agree to participate in an individual interview

  

• I agree to participate in a group interview with other study participants

  

• I understand that I can immediately drop my participation in this project and any or all of the defined activities described

  

If you have additional questions regarding the investigation, your rights as the subjects of this investigation, or potential problems, please call the research mentor, Dr.
Ed Carter, at Edward.carter@bridgew.edu or the Principal Investigator, Christina Miceli at cmiceli@student.bridgew.edu

Participant Signature ___________________________ Date __________

Video Photo Release

I hereby indicate, as specified below, my consent to use any photos, videotape, or audiotape material taken of myself during this research project. I understand that I may withdraw permission for photographic, video or audio material to be used in this research project at any time. PLEASE CHECK ONE BOX AND SIGN BELOW

☐ I agree to have my audio or visual material available for the research project and presentation of the finished product.

☐ I do not agree to make my audio or visual material available for the research project and presentation of the finished product.

__________________________________________  __________________

Participant’s Signature  Date

__________________________________________  __________________

Witness Signature  Date
APPENDIX G

Voice Recorded Teacher Interview Questions

Teacher/Student Connections
1. Do you feel equally comfortable with all of your students?
2. Are there ways or things that establish a more personal connection with your students?
3. Do you think having a more personal connection with your students makes a difference to them either academically or emotionally?
4. Do you think your students remember you?
5. Please tell me about a situation in which you felt you made a lasting difference in a student’s life.

Reading
1. How do you teach reading?
2. Do all teachers at your grade level use the same methodology when teaching reading.
3. Are read alouds apart of that methodology?
   - If so how much/how often?
5. Scenarios: What happens if a student is
   - Reluctant
   - Refuses
   - Isn’t very fluent
   - Stutters
6. Do you ever respond to a student in a way you felt upset the child?
   Did this experience alter the way in which you now approach similar situations?

Dyslexia Protocols
1. When you discover a student of yours has dyslexia are there certain strategies you have in order to accommodate that student?
2. When you know a student has dyslexia do you do anything different with him or her in terms of giving feedback?

3. Do you think they are more vulnerable to negative feedback?

4. Final question: Do you have any advice for teachers about instructing a student with dyslexia?