

## WHAT IS DYSPRAXIA/DCD?

Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), commonly known as Dyspraxia, is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects fine and/or gross motor skills, including motor planning and execution. Dyspraxia/DCD does not affect intelligence, but it can affect the ability to keep up in school and make learning more challenging compared to peers. Students with Dyspraxia/DCD work hard both physically and cognitively to accomplish tasks, and often take longer than their peers to master new skills. This may lead to frustration, fatigue, irritability, anxiety, and/or acting out.

## HOW COMMON IS DYSPRAXIA/DCD?

Dyspraxia/DCD affects **5 to 6%** of the population (Blank et al., 2019). This means that Dyspraxia/DCD impacts almost 20 million people in the United States.

**Every classroom is likely to have at least one student coping with Dyspraxia/DCD.**

### PRIMARY SYMPTOMS

**Difficulty learning and/or performing skills that require:**

- Movement
- Coordination
- Motor Planning

### OTHER SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Dyspraxia/DCD can present as an isolated disorder; however other conditions often **co-occur**:

- **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**
- **Dyslexia**
- **Dyscalculia**
- **Apraxia of Speech** (Cleaton & Kirby, 2018).

*“Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and DCD co-occur in approximately 50% of cases” (Pranjic et al., 2023).*



### POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL DOMAINS

- Focus
- Speech & Language
- Sensory Processing
- Visual Spatial Processing
- Executive Function
- Working Memory

## COMMON CHALLENGES AT SCHOOL

- Cutting, drawing, writing
- Unwrapping or opening lunch items (milk cartons, snack packs, straws, etc.)
- Unpacking or packing a backpack
- Following more than one direction at a time
- Staying organized or keeping track of belongings
- Completing tasks
- Moving around desks or other objects in the classroom
- Walking up and down stairs
- Playground or Physical Education activities (running, jumping, climbing, catching or throwing)
- Quickly changing clothing or shoes for recess or physical education
- Difficulties in noisy environments (cafeteria, assemblies, group projects)



## STUDENTS WITH DYSPRAXIA/DCD MAY HAVE SOME OF THE FOLLOWING BEHAVIORS:

- Accident proneness (bumping into people or things)
- Poor posture or slumping
- Lack of spatial awareness
- Limited understanding of personal space
- Difficulty following more than one direction at a time
- Disorganization
- Long pauses when answering a question
- Mask, camouflage, or suppress behaviors to blend in with others
- Anxiety and/or stress
- Fatigue and/or exhaustion
- Avoid engaging in activities with other students
- Avoid tasks that are difficult
- Be excluded by peers, especially on the playground or during physical education

## STRATEGIES FOR STUDENT SUPPORT

- Clear, explicit instructions & feedback
- Instructions broken down into smaller steps or “chunks”
- Written directions
- Peer to assist when multi-step directions are given
- Visual aides: Photo charts showing steps in common routines
- Increased wait time for responses
- Additional work time & desk space
- Whole body listening
- Brain & movement breaks/rest breaks
- Laptop, tablet, or voice-to-text software for written tasks
- Seating or work space near the front of the room
- Flexible seating options (supports for floor sitting)
- Clearly labeled & designated space for resources
- Scaffolding: I do, We do, You do



## OTHER THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Dyspraxia/DCD affects each individual differently**
- No two people experience Dyspraxia/DCD the exact same way.
- Symptoms and experiences vary from student to student, day to day, and over time.
- A helpful strategy one day may not be helpful to that same student on a different day.

- Build a meaningful relationship for **more effective** support of the student.
- Talk with the student about individual goals and develop a plan together for meeting the goals.
- Talk with parents & caregivers about the student's experiences and any concerns.

## References:

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