Members Voices :

A Parent’s View on RACE 2017

A few of my main concerns regarding the new RACE accommodations for 2017 Certificate Exams

The application form instructs people very clearly to apply for reasonable accommodations under **the specific difficulty sections- this is not appropriate**. When you ring the department you are told that it’s okay to apply under the physical section instead. Many LS teachers would neglect to apply for accommodations when they see the student would not be eligible under the Specific Learning Difficulty section.

There is a strong link implied that Dyspraxia is inevitably linked with Reading and/ or spelling issues. This is not the case. There are many people who are diagnosed as dual exceptional- i.e. they may be gifted and also have dyspraxia. This new system will impact most strongly and negatively on them as they **may not be able to show off what they know in the given time**. In my experience students like this do not complete the exam paper as they do not have enough time. This is evidenced by the fact that maybe the first 70% of the paper is completed perfectly with no or little attempt made at the final 30%. Typing uses less muscles and is quicker , with practice , than handwriting.

Students with a writing speed of 12 words per minute or below are granted a word processor. The three tests that are suggested to use are **very short tests**- **not indicative of writing for a 2 ½ hour exam.**

Using a word processor takes time to become **familiar** with- many students start using one in Primary school, most before the end of first year. They then become used to this method. If in third year they write too fast in a ten minute test they cannot use the word processor- almost always one that has been suggested by an OT. The laptop that has been approved for daily use by the SENO after checking the appropriateness of the assistive technology and paid for by the department is then not allowed be used by the student by Reasonable Accommodations- no joined up thinking. The student finds out just a few months before the exam that they cannot use the system of communication that is practiced and that they are accustomed to. This will lead to needless anxiety.

**Pain**- there does not seem to be provision for students who experience pain after writing for a long time. This is particularly common for children with dyspraxia.

I’m very concerned at the new approach to illegible handwriting also. Students whose handwriting is illegible at the speed needed during an exam will **need to write much slower in order to maintain legibility** therefore not produce as much work. This is a hugely unfair disadvantage. There is no provision for students with illegible handwriting. There is no distinction made by the department between bad handwriting and illegible handwriting. Many students have bad handwriting- a few however have illegible handwriting and provision should be made for these. As an examiner myself I find bad handwriting difficult to correct but illegible handwriting is almost and sometimes impossible. Using a word processor removes the anxiety around writing and the potential issues without giving an unfair advantage.