

Lisa Archibald

Welcome to the SAC Shining Lights, S-LP Schools podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Lisa Archibald from Western University. As you know, many speech-language pathologists in Canada are employed in schools. Their job is to support children with communication disabilities in accessing the curriculum and achieving their academic and personal potential. It's a challenging job. So many schools, so many students, and not many S-LPs across the country, S-LPs are finding unique solutions to providing the best possible services to the students and school teams with whom they work. In this podcast, our guests describe their innovations in school-based speech language pathology. Thanks for listening as we shine a light on some brilliant projects.

Hello and welcome to the SAC Shining Lights, S-LP Schools podcast. I'm so pleased today to have Milena as my guest. Miliana, will you introduce yourself please?

Miliana

Yes. Hi, my name is Miliana. I am in sixth grade and I have a mom, a dad, a little sister and a dog. Something about me: when I was born, I had a diagnosed thing that's called DLD. Usually, we had its own names, but now we were certain to call it DLD.

Lisa Archibald

All right, thank you. So, when did you first learn about DLD?

Miliana

I learned it in third grade.

Lisa Archibald

I see. So, Miliana, how did you find out? Tell me what happened when you learned about DLD, developmental language disorder.

Miliana

I [was] about six or seven when I learned I had a DLD. It also helped me when I saw my mom's friend – she is a specialist – to help me say words because when I was little, I couldn't talk. I used to say weird stuff (I still do) but I get better every day. So DLD is when you can't say something right or understand something, right?

If I say this thing is very hard, “blah, blah, blah, blah, blah,” It's very hard to understand sometimes. So, you have to repeat it and repeat and repeat it. And it's annoying for me to ask, but I do it anyways. And sometimes when I say a word, they have to tell me when it's wrong and that's annoying, too.

Lisa Archibald

So, I'm hearing you tell some really interesting things about your DLD. I think sometimes you're trying to find the words that you want and maybe sometimes you think you've said what you want to say, but maybe people have trouble understanding or they think it should be something different. And then sometimes when people tell you something, you might not always get what they're saying.

Miliana

Yeah.

Lisa Archibald

And so, what happens at school? What's that like?

Miliana

[In] school, it's pretty tough because sometimes with DLD you have also more to it, so I have more stuff to it like dyspraxia, DLD, ADHD, dyslexia; so, it's hard to study and read because of sometimes DLD and dyslexia. Because the dyslexia mixes the words and DLD is we're talking and hearing properly. So, sometimes I'm saying, "oh, what do I do? Do this or do this or do this, or do I have to take up?" I need ask a lot of times. And teachers sometimes get [annoyed] with it. I use my laptop to help my writing and sometimes I talk into the special mic.

Lisa Archibald

I'm hearing about some of the struggles that you have at school, right? So, learning to read I think was a thing you were talking about that was difficult for you.

Miliana

It was very, very difficult.

Lisa Archibald

Yeah. Do you remember some of the things that were the hardest or some of the things?

Miliana

The only thing is that was really frustrating me was all these little kids. I couldn't talk since I was five years old. So, I always encouraged myself. People were making fun of me and stuff like that. I was really – back then – really sad and I'm saying, "mommy, why they not talk?" Sometimes I panicked. Sometimes I want to say something properly, but I want the person who understand me, but it's hard. I have to do whatever they say and I don't understand sometimes.

Lisa Archibald

Yeah, that would be frustrating. But, I think you were telling me there about how you kept on trying.

Miliana

Yeah, I kept on trying a lot of times and I finally got to talk, but I still mixed up some words.

Lisa Archibald

Sometimes. So, were you about to tell me about all the young kids around you who could talk so easily? Maybe?

Miliana

Yeah, so these young kids – I think so. A lot of people don't know about DLD. I'm thinking 10,000 people or less because when I always ask to my friends or my family members, I say, "what is DLD?" They say, "what is DLD?" I say, "how do they don't know that they know what's a DLD? How [come] they don't know DLD?" So that made me very, very angry because very – and one day a little boy, he asked me why I have a computer. Ever since then (I started in grade four) we had to do a project about ourselves. So, I decided to do a project about DLD and dyslexia.

Since that day, I really like expressing DLD, I think. So, it's the most because I hate projects in front of people, but I think so it's the most understanding because I have it ever since then. I did in grade five, grade four, and grade six – the DLD presentation – I did it two times in grade six, one time in grade five, and one time in grade four. Ever since then, I love talking about DLD.

Lisa Archibald

Nice, so I think you've hit on something so important there, Miliana, that people don't know about DLD and they know about other disorders that are common in children, but they don't know about DLD. And you've been working hard to try to get people to know about it with your presentations in school, you're

describing those presentations. I think they've gone quite well. They helped people to understand about DLD. How did they respond when you gave those presentations?

Miliana

So, the first time I did it, people were asking a lot of questions, but the second time I did it, not that much because some people were still in my class, but some people raised their hands because they didn't know. And this year's, some people didn't know also, but a lot of people understand and they didn't ask me a lot of questions. But the fun thing is I made another one in front of my teachers on Monday for summer in front of my teachers. And the hilarious thing, they didn't know I was going to quiz them. So, it was really funny.

Lisa Archibald

Did they pass the quiz?

Miliana

Yeah.

Lisa Archibald

Well good for you. So maybe that just shows how great your presentation is that each year you've done it, more people in the class seem to know about DLD. It shows that you're really having an impact.

Miliana

Yep.

Lisa Archibald

Yeah. How do you think it helps people when you give those presentations? Do you think that they might do something differently or understand differently? How do you think it helps them?

Miliana

They're going to stop. They're going to understand why I have – to me, I feel like I don't have enough help, but they're going to understand. Some people say “why do get help with tests?” Why do I get a laptop? So, they don't ask me those questions because now they know about DLD.

Lisa Archibald

Yeah, I see what you mean; helps them to understand what the supports that you're receiving. Is there any way that they help you themselves – the people that you're talking to – do you think that it's anything about the way they talk with you that is helpful because they know about DLD?

Miliana

Some people have more difficulties in the class and I don't get enough help that I need.

Lisa Archibald

I see what you mean, and you were talking about school with your reading and your writing; are there other areas in school that you struggle with? Is there anything in school that you find very easy?

Miliana

The only thing, I think, so it's easy – it's art. Art, yeah.

Lisa Archibald

Art class, yes. But a lot of the other parts like math or science. How does your DLD affect how you're learning in math or science, do you think?

Miliana

I love science, but it's hard with tests. But usually she writes it on the board for me to copy. So, it's not that hard. Science, math – I know some things about math, but over the summers, I don't remember anything because I have a very, very, very, very bad memory. But if it's a very, very really, really, really, really good memory or a really, really bad memory, I remember it. But when I – for school these, I have 10 – I have this bubble of school, but when it's summer, it goes down and after it's five.

Lisa Archibald

Right, so some things you can remember well, but some other things, especially school when you're not in school, it's hard to remember.

Miliana

Yeah.

Lisa Archibald

Yeah, I see what you mean. What about outside of school? What's life like for you with DLD outside of school?

Miliana

Outside of school? You mean at home?

Lisa Archibald

Sure.

Miliana

I feel like outside of school I don't get that much pressure because it's a little bit fresher because at home I can relax and a TV and play with my friends or with my mom to watch a movie. But no, at home, I feel like it's okay and I don't have to get pressured on anything.

Lisa Archibald

Do you work on your schoolwork at home? Do you have homework?

Miliana

Yeah, sometimes I do that, but sometimes I always get frustrated and saying, I give up. I don't want to do this, and I just put it in my bag and throw it.

Lisa Archibald

Who helps you at home with your homework?

Miliana

My mom.

Lisa Archibald

And what are some of the ways that you guys work together on your homework that does help?

Miliana

Step by step by step.

Lisa Archibald

Oh, that's a great suggestion. That helps to give you only a little bit at a time and that makes it a little bit easier.

Miliana

Yeah.

Lisa Archibald

Have you ever told your teachers about what helps you the most at school?

Miliana

No.

Lisa Archibald

Or talk to your teachers about what helps the most?

Miliana

I usually don't talk to my teachers because I feel like they would get angry if I asked so many questions because they repeated it and they don't want to repeat it again. So, I just go with the flow. And some people sometimes are angry when we ask two times because they think we're not listening, but I am listening, it's just because I don't understand and they get angry. So, I just go do it by myself for something like that.

Lisa Archibald

I see what you mean. So sometimes if you ask someone to repeat themselves, they might lose their patience and they might say that might make you feel like they're angry. Is there any one of your friends that you can ask for them to repeat some of the information if you need to? Does that ever work?

Miliana

I used to have friends in my class, but this year I have no friends in my class, so I don't know what to do. I just do it by myself or because my friends are not in my class here, I have zero friends in any class.

Lisa Archibald

So right now, you haven't been able to identify anyone who can give you a little bit of extra support when you need it on those things? Instructions? You said that you don't have enough support in school. What support do you have? Do you have some extra help? Opportunities?

Miliana

Like my laptop music to calm me down when I get stretched widgets, like those things

Lisa Archibald

I see. So, you can go and listen to music?

Miliana

I can because my teachers are saying, "oh no, don't put singing anywhere like this." But instead, I'm just hiding it from the teacher and listening to music if I get really stressed or anything.

Lisa Archibald

All right. You have a device that lets you listen to music, put on your headphones, do you?

Miliana

Yeah, I have these little headphones connected to my laptop.

Lisa Archibald

And so, you find that if you listen to music that helps to calm you down. And what about the laptop helps you? What are the kinds of things that the laptop can do?

Miliana

It can read on a work queue. It can help. I can talk to it.

Lisa Archibald

And it'll write out what you've said?

Miliana

Yeah. And I can – yeah, I think so. Those are the things that – I don't know that much things yet, but I do know those things.

Lisa Archibald

And what about at home? If you wanted to read something at home, what kind of strategies for that do you have at home?

Miliana

My mom reads the book. If an easy book, I can read by myself or I have in my iPad or my laptop from home.

Lisa Archibald

I see, right. And the laptop could read something for you? Have you listened to books with your head? Have an audiobook? Have you ever done that? Do you like doing that?

Miliana

Yeah, I do. But I usually go on YouTube with little books at school.

Lisa Archibald

Ah, yes. Yeah. Pretty nice. Nice. Yeah. Are there any good parts about having DLD? What do you think is a good part about having DLD?

Miliana

Nothing, it's frustrating. The only thing that's good is telling the people that's nothing's good about DLD.

Lisa Archibald

Yes, you feel the frustration, but having the chance to talk about it to others so that they know is something that you like doing. And we need people like you Miliana, who can tell people about DLD because it's so important. And if more people know than other kids maybe can get the support that they need.

If someone was just finding out about DLD, just hearing it for the first time, maybe that they have DLD, what would you tell them? What would be your advice to your friend if they were just finding out they had DLD?

Miliana

They had it or I had in it?

Lisa Archibald

No, that they're finding out that they had it. What would you tell them about it?

Miliana

I would bring them to a special organization to help them talk better and I would tell the teachers and do a meeting to tell them about DLD and I will help them with the studies and stuff like that.

Lisa Archibald

Nice, yes. So, you mentioned a couple of times about getting help with your talking and you were just saying that that would be part of your advice to your friend. What do you remember from when you've

gone for help with your talking with someone? What has that been like? Can you tell me a little bit about what that's been like? What's your memory of this?

Miliana

It was so fun because we had this exercise ball to play with. I had to put my hand in spaghetti and find the word and I had to read it – try to read it – and I had to say words I had to write because I couldn't write. Now I can write, but I couldn't write, so I also was writing. It was so much fun. I love those activities, but now I'm older so I stopped it. Now I just need to speech-language reading person to help me.

Lisa Archibald

And you have a speech-language pathologist or not yet, but you might have one or you can't get one at school anymore?

Miliana

Oh yes, I do have one. Actually, I do have one. I have two of them.

Lisa Archibald

And so, what are they helping you with at school right now?

Miliana

Right now, we don't know because they're still getting ready with all the names, so they're not really helping. They're just writing down all the reading sites. They have to do Raz-Kids and I think their charts. So, it's not right now, it's going to be like maybe in August, I think. January or August; I don't know.

Lisa Archibald

What do you hope they'll help you with when it's time for them to start helping you?

Miliana

I don't know. Last year, [REDACTED] used to do these words with me to help me still talk. I still made mistakes when I'm reading. So, we've been doing a lot of reading, I think. So that's it. We're going to do the same thing this year, but that's the only thing. I know this now.

Lisa Archibald

Is there anything that you do right now to help with your own talking? Mariana, if you want to be sure that you're talking just the best you can. Is there anything that you do to help yourself be to do your best talking?

Miliana

No.

Lisa Archibald

No? When you gave your presentation, for example, was there anything that –

Miliana

No.

Lisa Archibald

No, all right. And what about with your reading or your writing; is there anything that you are doing yourself to make sure to help yourself do those things?

Miliana

I usually do homework with my mom.

Lisa Archibald

Oh yeah.

Miliana

I don't know.

Lisa Archibald

You're doing your homework. Well that's good. That helps you with your learning for sure. What do you think your goals are for the future? Do you have any ideas about what kinds of things you want to work on or keep learning more about?

Miliana

I want to keep learning about a little bit more [about] DLD, dyslexia, dysphagia and ADHD. I would like that a lot.

Lisa Archibald

Yeah, you said about how earlier you said the presentation was so important to you because you had DLD. What are some of the questions you have about DLD or that you want to learn about DLD?

Miliana

I already know a lot of things about DLD. I would just like to know more on ADHD, dyspraxia and yeah.

Lisa Archibald

Yeah, I see. Right, what are some of those things that you know about DLD?

Miliana

These are the only things I know because this is it. You just have two things; it's the words that come out of your mouth, you don't understand from the brain that comes to the ear. And when you're a little girl, you couldn't talk.

Lisa Archibald

Yeah. It starts early and it stays with you, which you've already said, right? So even though you mentioned earlier about how it was really difficult for you to talk when you were young, right? But you're talking now with me. Is there anything that's still hard about your talking right now?

Miliana

It's when I make a mistake. That's when I give up and get very angry.

Lisa Archibald

And have you been making any mistakes tonight or with your talking?

Miliana

No, I don't think so.

Lisa Archibald

So, when do those mistakes happen, do you think?

Miliana

When I say something wrong or something like that.

Lisa Archibald

I see, and you notice them or someone says them points out to you that there's a mistake?

Miliana

I don't know. Someone points out to me.

Lisa Archibald

Someone points it out. Right, and so that makes you feel frustrated or angry when that happens?

Miliana

Definitely.

Lisa Archibald

Yeah. All right, is there anything else that you want to tell us about DLD?

Miliana

No, the only thing that I wish to do is be run my own company, [be] a famous chef, and help little kids with DLD.

Lisa Archibald

Well, that's an interesting one. I was just about to come to our final question and ask you about your hobbies and interests. So, being a chef, are you interested in cooking right now?

Miliana

I cook when I'm bored. I cook when I want to. I [make] my mom breakfast or make her a coffee or stuff like that.

Lisa Archibald

What's your favorite thing to cook?

Miliana

Cookies.

Lisa Archibald

Cookies? And what kind of cookies?

Miliana

Chocolate chip.

Lisa Archibald

Oh yeah, those are the best. Do you have a special recipe that you use for your chocolate chip cookies?

Miliana

No, I just search it up.

Lisa Archibald

Yeah, very nice. Well Mariana, I want to thank you so very much for talking to me today and for telling us about DLD and what DLD is like for you.

Miliana

Thank you.

Lisa Archibald

Thank you, Miliana!