

Dyslexia WA

harness the gift

NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of Dyslexia WA www.dyslexiawa.com.au Annette Johnston, facilitator Contact email: dyslexiacorrectionwa@gmail.com enquiries: 0439 698 587 December 2018

The Big Debate: Phonics - For and Against

Frank Johnston editor

Some excerpts from the debate which took place between the university teams provides an indication of their arguments.

AGAINST:

Victoria University of Wellington and the University of Otago

Ways of learning to read in phonics and New Zealand text-centred teaching

G. Brian Thompson (adjunct associate, Faculty of Education, Victoria University) and Claire M. Fletcher-Flinn (associate professor, College of Education, Otago)

What are our conclusions? The widely-quoted past research on the effects of starting teaching with explicit phonics has not adequately represented what happens in children's reading of text, where children can take advantage of what they already know of the spoken language. Moreover, it has not taken into account different ways of learning. There is implicit letter-sound knowledge that chil-

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tinuously build up from knowledge acquired in their accumulating reading vocabulary. Also, past research has not examined the long-term effects of teaching phonics on the ways in which adults attempt the reading of new or unfamiliar words. With all this considered, up-to-date theory and research evidence does not show an unequivocal advantage for explicit phonics teaching.

FOR:

Massey University

Theory to practice in reading:



Against: Victoria University of Wellington and the University of Otago.

For: Massey University

Different paths to the same Outcome.

Alison Arrow (Massey University)

A great deal of research has been carried out into the emergent literacy skills children develop prior to learning to read or spell individual words; skills they have mastered before starting formal school education and the basis of the individual differences between children starting in primary school classrooms.

This research has predominantly found that children who are ex-

posed to, and learn about, how print and books work, the letters of the alphabet, the sounds in spoken words, and have good oral vocabularies, are better able to learn to read and spell words once they are taught them. The children who come to school with this pre-existing knowledge will not need phonics instruction, as they have the types of skills and knowledge that will enable them to start recognising words.

However, a number of children beginning school will come with little emergent literacy knowledge. These children require instruction that will 'kick-start' their attention to print and the connections between the sounds in spoken words and letters in print words.

For the complete debate go to: <http://educationreview.co.nz/phonics-is-the-big-debate/>



Dyslexia: not a disability, but a visual-spatial thinking style which succeeds with a visual-spatial teaching style.

The latest Literacy Programs **flogged** off to schools

Frank Johnston

I'm sorry (maybe); over 50 + years I've seen it many times...

Schools (and Admin in particular) jump on the latest bandwagon, the silver bullet about to resolve all their literacy problems in one hit.

Spend thousands, hit the staff with it, insist upon every teacher in each classroom following the same process each day applying the new you-beaut scheme to turn every child into a reading, writing, spelling hero.

Many school cupboards and store rooms are packed with similar programs which have lost favour and been replaced with yet a new fad.

I recently heard of one program which was sold off to the USA from Australia many years ago - now it has resurfaced as a repackaged version of the same thing, renamed and being



The latest 'sugar hit' can create excitement for a few weeks before the effects begin to wear off

sold off to Australian schools! The original texts are stored somewhere in the schools, almost forgotten.

Teaching phonics was a staple of our teachers' college training back in the 60s. Simplicity

itself back then... Each student had a phonics pad, wall charts were in the classroom, plenty of coloured chalk, lots of talk, pictures to illustrate the examples—for those students (for whom phonics was fine), they flourished.

Now, they must have the latest video clips and U-Tube clips, games, new names and other jargon to do the same thing.

IF you are going to buy a phonics program, take some precautions before you spend the money (usually taxpayers') on yet another blast from the past dressed up in new clothes.

Check out this precautionary note - <https://theconversation.com/seven-things-to-consider-before-you-buy-into-phonics-programs-50702?fbclid=IwAR3ViKAN7WweaXEQHATvmTF5av2CKm6R7ho5Txo3RBNvsQoRQOFWuSDz4gk>



A Common Theme - Dyslexia and Low Self Esteem

There are thousands of stories out there about dyslexic students and older people who have been discarded as learners, put aside in the too hard basket. YET they are the more intelligent and creative members of society.

Here is another of those stories:

'For 35 years I didn't know I was dyslexic'

Frankie Allen
BBC Scotland News
November 7, 2018

After constantly being sent out of class for "bad behaviour", John Mclean left school at 14 years old.

More than 20 years later, he was diagnosed with dyslexia.

"I thought that I was just stupid because I couldn't learn and I couldn't read," he says.

"I thought there was something wrong with me."

John, who now works as a barber in Montrose, went on to be named "Student of the Year" at Dundee and Angus College after receiving support for his diagnosis.

He remembers feeling "shocked" when he found out that he had won the award.

John says: "It was the first time I had ever won anything in education before - it was an achievement."

'Nothing to do with intelligence'

Dyslexia is a learning "difference", which means that a person's brain approaches things in a different way.

People with dyslexia can often experience problems with timekeeping, taking notes, remembering numbers, names and details.

The charity, Dyslexia Scotland, says: "It is not just about reading and writing and it has nothing to do with intelligence."

When John was at school, he says he did not receive much support from his teachers. He remembers teachers often took no interest in him and treated him differently to other pupils.

"Everyone just thought I was disruptive, because when I couldn't focus on something I would start fidgeting and get stressed out," he explains.

Dyslexia Scotland states that "unidentified dyslexia can result in high stress, low self-esteem

and low achievement".

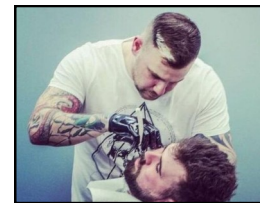
"Dyslexia can affect the way people communicate, and it is different for everyone," it says. Due to the varying nature of dyslexia, it can be difficult for teachers to recognise it in children, especially if they have not been trained in how to spot it.

John's teachers did not recognise what was causing his high levels of stress. They would send him out of the classroom when he appeared to be misbehaving.

He says nobody thought to test him for dyslexia. "I often just mucked about because I couldn't learn anything, which was due to all of the written work they gave us," he says.

At 35, John discovered that he had dyslexia after a tutor at college recommended he take a test.

Read more at <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-46096198>



John Mclean now works as a barber and also as a talented DJ

Dyslexia as a Gift

Frank Johnston



According to Richard Branson people with dyslexia are 'wired differently' and often misunderstood.

They are visual spatial learners (picture thinkers) and are often not given the opportunity in the traditional classroom (of 2-dimensional symbols, phonics and word-based activities) to use their significant talents as tools for learning.

More often than not teachers (mostly word thinkers) because they do not understand the dyslexic brain, resort to putting the blame for failure on the student (too lazy, not trying hard enough, won't listen).

No wonder by the second or third year of school the student's self esteem suffers and they start to really believe they are less able than the other students.

Some of the most intelligent and talented people in our community suffered this fate at school.

It's the tale of common experiences which many famous and highly talented people endured simply because their brains were wired differently yet they had so much to offer.

No doubt you've heard of John Lennon, Tom Cruise, Albert Einstein, Dan Aykroyd, Anne Bancroft, Orlando Bloom...



These brilliant people represent around the 10% of the population who are dyslexic and possess this 3D style of thinking.

Visit: <https://thefrisky.com/6-famous-people-with-learning-disorders-in-schools/> to read a little more about them.

10%?? In a smaller school of, say, 200 students you could probably find around 20 students going through a similar trauma of not being well understood. That is a bit scary.



Defying the odds - Freya Ridings overcame dyslexia to write her own music

Another example of the fine creative talent dyslexics usually possess and who, through tenacity and the right guidance, can reach their significant goals. Visit:

<https://mobile.reuters.com/video/2018/11/23/defying-the-odds-freya-ridings-overcame?videoId=484830596&videoChannel=3>

