Learning Difficulties Australia

BULLETIN

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Contents

From the President

Assessment: public vs private

Assessment is a dirty word for some, especially for teachers, principals and education unions worrying about league tables. Their worry is that if student abilities are compulsorily assessed in every school and the results made public, such publicly-available tables would, in the words of Mr Angelo Gavrielatos, federal president of the Australian Education Union, "increase inequality as parents deserted schools that were seen as low-quality and high-scoring schools took only the best-performing students" (quoted in *The Age*, March 23).

This is an understandable worry. But it should not be a worry about the practice of assessment in schools; it is only a worry about the results of such assessments being made publicly available. Wouldn't we hope that every teacher who is teaching a class of children to read would care about which children in the class are progressing well in learning to read and which ones are struggling? If so, how can teachers be sure about this except by objectively assessing each child's level of reading ability? I say 'objectively' because subjective impressions here can be very misleading. It is easy to notice the poor progress of the hyperactive child given to zooming around the classroom; a lot harder to notice that the quiet child sitting up the back and not causing any problems still can't read at all.

And yet appropriate assessment of basic reading abilities in children who are in the first year or two of learning to read is quick, easy and requires very little training. All it really requires is an appreciation that reading is not a single skill, but a collection of skills, each requiring separate assessment.

Take 'sounding out' using letter-sound rules, for example. We know that how well young children can sound out a word that they have never seen before is a strong predictor of how well they will progress in learning to read, and we know why. Seven-year-old children will have at least 10,000 words that they can recognise by ear, but only a few hundred or fewer that they can recognise by eye from the printed page. So they will constantly come across words on the page that they would recognise if only they could hear them. The ability to sound out never-before-seen words allows them to use their large auditory vocabularies as a way

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LDA Mission Statement

Learning Difficulties Australia is an association of teachers and other professionals dedicated to improving the performance of underachieving students through effective teaching practices based on scientific research both in the classroom and through individualised instruction.

For more details of LDA activities, professional development opportunities and publications, visit our website at www.ldaustralia.org

LDA NOTICES

Sir Jim Rose Visit, September 2009

Adelaide, 12 September

Reading: Getting It Right from the Start

Seminar by Sir Jim Rose, presented jointly by LDA, AASE, and SPELD SA
Saturday 12 September, 9:30am – 1pm
Allan Scott Auditorium, City West Campus, UniSA, Adelaide
For further information and registration details, see www.speld-sa.org.au or email info@speld-sa.org.au

Perth, 14 and 15 September

Learn to Read, Read to Learn

Seminar with Sir Jim Rose and John Fleming,
presented by the WA Dyslexia SPELD Foundation
Monday 14 September, 8:30am – 12:30pm
For teachers, education professionals and psychologists
Tuesday 15 September, 8:30am – 12:30pm
For school principals and early childhood and literacy staff
Duxton Hotel, Perth
For further information and registration details, see the DSF website at www.dsf.net.au or phone DSF on (08) 9217 2500

Brisbane, 18-19 September

Joint LDA, SPELD Qld and RSTAQ Biennial Conference: Consult and Collaborate

Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre
South Bank, Brisbane
With keynote speakers Professors Maggie Snowling and Charles Hulme and a special presentation by Sir Jim Rose.
For further information and registration details see www.speld.org.au/?q=node/37, or contact the Conference Organiser at conference@rstaq.asn.au

Melbourne, 23 September

LDA Seminar on Effective Reading Instruction for All: National and International Perspectives

Wednesday 23 September, 9:00am to 5:00pm
Camberwell Centre, 340 Camberwell Road, Camberwell
With speakers Sir Jim Rose, Professor Barry McGaw, Dr Kerry Hempenstall and Mr John Fleming, chaired by LDA President Professor Max Coltheart
For details of the program, speakers and abstracts of papers see the LDA website at www.ldaustralia.org. For queries phone Kerrie McMahon on (03) 9890 6138 or email ldaquery.bigpond.net.au

Victorian Program of Workshops

The following workshops have been organised by the LDA Consultants' Committee. All members of LDA, as well as non-LDA members, are welcome to attend.

Saturday 15 August, 10:00am to 12:00pm

Health-related issues and their impact on learning, with specific reference to diabetes, asthma and anaphylaxis

Speaker: Heather MacLachlan, Health Centre Nurse
Venue: International House, 241 Royal Parade, Parkville

Saturday 24 October, 10:00am to 12:00pm

Behavioural optometry and its links to learning difficulties

Speaker: Anne Pezzimenti, Behavioural Optometrist
Venue: International House, 241 Royal Parade, Parkville
Fees for the above workshops
Cost: $20 for members of LDA; $40 for non-members of LDA
For bookings, contact Joan Cooper at jjagcooper@optusnet.com.au or Kerrie McMahon at ldaquery@bigpond.net.au

Advance Notice of 2009 AGM

The 2009 LDA Annual General meeting will be held in Melbourne on Saturday 7 November at the Hawthorn Campus of the University of Melbourne, 442 Auburn Road, Hawthorn. Further details in the next issue of the *Bulletin*, and on the website.

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of working out what word this is that they are looking at. That way they can learn to recognise the word next time they see it in print. So a child who hasn't learned how to sound out will struggle to learn to read. That means it is crucial to assess sounding-out ability frequently. How? By giving children a task that can only be accomplished by sounding out, and the only such task is reading aloud nonsense words such as 'ree' or 'byrcal'. There are standardised tests of reading that include nonsense-word reading subtests, but even if teachers made up their own nonsense words and got children to read these aloud, they would find the children in their class who did not know how to sound out.

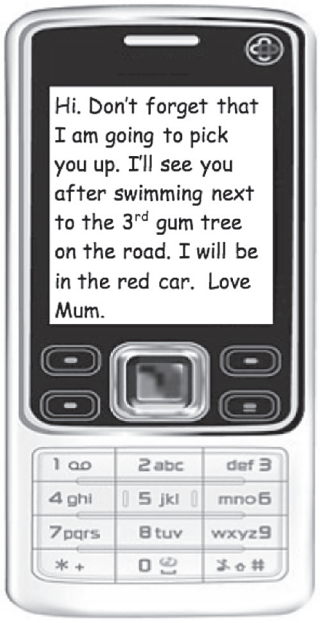
Sounding out is critical as an aid to learning to read but children must eventually move on from using it to recognise printed words to a subsequent stage where they can recognise printed words quickly and directly without needing to sound them out. How can one assess how well a child can do this? By giving children a task that cannot be accomplished by sounding out, and can only be done by immediate visual recognition of words. This task is reading aloud words that disobey the sounding-out rules, exception words like 'yacht' and 'have'. A child who can correctly read such words aloud is not doing this by sounding out by letter-sound rules, because this would get the word wrong. Only recognising the word as a familiar whole will allow correct response. So this is the method for assessing how good the child's visual word recognition is.

Finally there is comprehension. There are many standardised tests that teachers can use if they are willing to assess the reading of the children they are teaching, so I needn't mention these. Instead, I will describe the TERC (Test of Everyday Reading Comprehension) being developed at Macquarie University by Genevieve McArthur, Anne Castles and Linda Larsen. Their idea is to think up examples in the everyday life of children of situations where they need to be able to understand text, and then to test whether the child succeeds in comprehension. In this example, for instance, the child is shown the picture of the text message on the mobile phone and asked a question like: "Where will the mother's car be after swimming?"

Other examples in the TERC include understanding printed bus timetables, understanding instructions on medicine bottles, working out where to go from a birthday card, instructions for making instant noodles, and so on.

A nice thing about this test is that if a child does badly on it, it is easy to convey the problem to parents. Instead of saying, "Your child has a Reading Comprehension Age of 7 years and 5 months", you can say to the parent, "Your child wasn't able to work out when the pills should be taken when reading this instruction from the medicine bottle".

But it isn't easy to think up suitable



examples. Here we appeal to LDA members for help. Can you think of some examples of everyday situations that children aged between eight and 12 come across where they are confronted with the task of needing to understand simple text, like the examples I have given above? Please send these to me and I will pass them on to Genevieve, Anne and Linda so that they can expand the scope of the TERC. This test is going to be made publicly available, and we hope that it will eventually be used by classroom teachers to assess the progress in everyday reading comprehension of the children they are teaching to read.

Professor Max Coltheart

Mona Tobias Award 2008

The 2008 Mona Tobias Award was presented to Professor Kevin Wheldall in Sydney on 28 March. This followed the cancellation of the planned Mona Tobias Award lecture in early March, due to Kevin's illness. However, with the Council meeting in Sydney on 28 March, the opportunity presented itself for the President of LDA, Professor Max Coltheart, to make this award to Kevin in person.

Kevin Wheldall, the recipient of the 2008 Mona Tobias Award, receiving the award from the President of LDA, Professor Max Coltheart, in Sydney on 28 March.

Festschrift in Honour of Professor Max Coltheart

Lyndsey Nickels

In academia, the term *Festschrift* is borrowed from German. It originally referred to a book honouring a respected academic and presented to them during his or her lifetime (*Fest*=celebration; *Schrift*=Writing). More recently, the term has often been used to refer to a celebratory event where speakers honour the academic. As Wikipedia notes, "A Festschrift contains original contributions by the honoured academic's close colleagues, often including his or her former doctoral students. It is typically published on the occasion of the honoree's retirement, sixtieth or sixty-fifth birthday, or other notable career anniversary."

On 20-22 March 2009, Macquarie University hosted a Festschrift to recognise Max Coltheart's enormous contribution to cognitive science in Australia and internationally. This event brought together many of Max's colleagues, friends and students, past and present to celebrate Max's influence, intellect and innovation, his friendship and foresight, his mentoring and his methods. The weekend reflected the many facets of this complex man: there was a high academic content, stimulating debate, gourmet food, fine wine, music and humour, all in a friendly and supportive environment.

This was not Max's retirement, but did mark perhaps the beginning of the next phase in Max's academic career. For example, Max noted that he will no longer be taking on any new PhD students as principal supervisor (although we know that he has already found himself unable to keep this pledge and has taken on one further student!). His first and his last PhD students were both present in the Festschrift audience (and many of those in between). All told, Max has been primary supervisor for 56 doctoral students so far – averaging one every nine months!

The Festschrift began on Friday 20 March with a public event attended by over 150 of Max's friends, colleagues and past students. There were opening addresses from Professor Janet Greeley (dean of Human Sciences, Macquarie University) and Professor Stephen Schwartz (vice-chancellor, Macquarie University). These were followed by a keynote address by Andy Young (professor of Neuropsychology, University of York, UK) entitled 'The seven ages of Max'. This lively and informative address reinforced the breadth and depth of Max's achievements. 'MiniMax', the child and youth, became 'EyeMax', when, for example, he investigated and solved the problem of how the size of an image on the retina is used to determine the distance of an object from the viewer. As 'LogoMax', in Canada and the UK, he embarked on the study of reading and the dual route model. Then as 'NeuroMax', he delved into acquired disorders of reading (acquired dyslexias), taking an approach whereby the impairments following brain damage were examined using theories derived from cognitive psychology, and in turn, the impairments could be used to inform the theories. This led to the founding of a journal named after, and dedicated to this approach – *Cognitive Neuropsychology*. Returning to Australia, he became 'ModelMax', developing a computer program which would allow the dual-route model of reading to simulate the reading process. At this time he also began investigating developmental dyslexia within the same framework that he had earlier used for acquired dyslexia. Then there was 'MadMax', with the use of the logic of cognitive neuropsychology to further understand delusions and hallucinations – 'cognitive neuropsychiatry'. Andy Young's final age of Max, 'DoubleMax', marvelled at Max's many facets. How many other psychologists have won an international wine-tasting competition? How is it that no matter when an email is sent, he responds almost immediately?

This entertaining keynote was followed by a brief reply by Max. In a typically modest address, he attributed many of his achievements and research directions to happy accidents. For example, he told the tale of how having failed to complete his PhD (or even, he says, having done any work towards it), he was nonetheless asked whether he would take on a lectureship when another academic left. Similarly, he attributed to others his ventures into dyslexia and, more recently,

Festschrift speakers (l-r): David Howard, Robyn Langdon, John Morton, Max Coltheart, Michael Corballis, Ken Forster, Anne Castles, Margot Prior, Taeko Wydell, Andy Young.

into delusional beliefs. Throughout the evening there had been discussion of the fact that the acronym for the centre Max founded and directs (Macquarie Centre for Cognitive Science, MACCS), and his name are homophones. [In fact, more precisely, they are heterographic homophones, being spelled differently while sounding the same.] Max enlightened the audience that in fact he had wanted the centre to be abbreviated to MCC (like the world's oldest and most famous cricket club). As a huge cricket fan, he said it would have given him enormous pleasure to be able say he was a member of the MCC. However, he was overruled with others insisting that the centre would be more fittingly abbreviated to MACCS, leading to the constant need to distinguish /maks/ the centre, and /maks/ the man!

The evening concluded with a reception where friends and colleagues mingled, exchanged anecdotes and enjoyed the creative posters that the current postgraduate and postdoctoral students at MACCS had produced. These posters showcased the work currently being carried out at MACCS, but many also cleverly incorporated references to Max into the research reported: there were examples of Max, MACCS, and macs in studies of homophone processing, Max's face in face processing studies, and even a new model, 'the jewel route model'. The time and imagination that went into these posters were yet another testament to the warmth and respect afforded to Max by those lucky enough to work with him.

The weekend continued with two days of presentations by eminent researchers from around the world, all of whom had worked with or been inspired by Max. These presentations were set with the backdrop of Sydney Harbour Bridge but unfortunately attendance had to be restricted to 40.

On Saturday night, in an excellent tapas restaurant, a small group informally celebrated other important aspects of Max's life – his love of fine food, fine wine and music. When Max was awarded an Australian Research Council Federation Fellowship, at the celebratory dinner some MACCS members performed a musical tribute: Smooth Simulator and the Modules performed 'The Monster Max' (hear it at: http://www.maccs.mq.edu.au/~max/). At the Festschrift dinner, the Monster Max was once again performed with updated lyrics (this version can be found at the Festschrift website listed below). In a similar musical vein, there was an animation and video presentation to the tune of 'You're too sexy for your shirt', produced and sung by Andy Young. There was also a display of the many tributes to Max that had been posted by those unable to attend the Festschrift. This included Margot Prior reading Ruth Campbell's creative poem composed for the occasion, based on an original by T.S. Eliot. Max himself demonstrated his other love – playing the guitar, showcasing his relatively new acquisition – a resonator acoustic guitar[1].

Anne Castles and Lisa Yen, who headed the Festschrift organising team, are to be congratulated on a tribute to Max which successfully captured the spirit of Max's life and celebrated it in a fitting range of styles.

For further details of the Festschrift, including some of the entertainment and tributes to Max, see www.maccs.mq.edu.au/news/conferences/2009/festschrift/index.php

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Footnote

1 A resonator guitar or resophonic guitar is an acoustic guitar whose sound is produced by one or more metal cones (resonators) instead of the wooden soundboard (guitar top/face). Resonator guitars were originally designed to be louder than conventional acoustic guitars which were overwhelmed by horns and percussion instruments in dance orchestras. They became prized for their distinctive sound, however, and found life with several musical styles (most notably bluegrass and also blues) well after electric amplification solved the issue of inadequate guitar sound levels (Wikipedia).

Kevin Wheldall inducted into the Macquarie University Innovators' Hall of Fame

At the 5th Annual Macquarie University Innovations Awards, held at Macquarie University on 6 May, the most coveted award, the induction into the Innovators' Hall of Fame, was awarded to Kevin Wheldall, in recognition of his lifetime work in improving educational outcomes for children with learning difficulties.

Professor Kevin Wheldall's induction into the Innovators' Hall of Fame was the first to occur in three years, and was based on the success of his Making Up Lost Time In Literacy (MULTILIT) initiative, developed in 1995.

In presenting the award, Professor Steven Schwartz, Macquarie University vice-chancellor, praised Kevin Wheldall's work, saying: "For more than a decade, Kevin and his team have been helping children who have struggled to learn to read. Without MULTILIT's intervention, many of them would have fallen by the wayside. In particular, whole communities – such as remote Indigenous townships in Cape York – will benefit from Kevin's knowledge and passion for generations to come. I cannot think of a more deserving recipient of this honour."

A number of other awards were presented at this ceremony, with many of the top prizes going to researchers in laser technology. The 2009 winners each received a unique bronze sculpture by renowned sculptor Linda Klarfeld and a cash prize.

Short video clips of each of the highly commended and winning innovations can be viewed at www.mq.edu.au/innovationawards/winners.htm and www.mq.edu.au/innovationawards/highly-commended.htm.

Dr Brendan Nelson, Iain Rothwell, Professor Kevin Wheldall, Robyn Beaman, and Professor Steven Schwartz

Response to the *Shape of the National Curriculum: English*

The following letter, signed by a group of reading researchers, specialist remedial teachers and members of organisations representing the interests of students who experience difficulties in literacy and learning to read, was sent on 26 May 2009 to the Federal Education Minister Julia Gillard and to Professor Barry McGaw, the Chairman of the National Curriculum, in response to the recently released *Shape of the National Curriculum: English*. Signatories to the letter included Professor Max Coltheart, president of Learning Difficulties Australia; Professor Kevin Wheldall, director of the Macquarie University Special Education Centre and MULTILIT, and ex-president of Learning Difficulties Australia; Angela Weeks, president of AUSPELD; Mandy Naylor, executive officer, Dyslexia/SPELD Foundation, WA, and Yvonne Meyer, parent representative on the Committee of the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy. This letter attracted some media attention, as well as responses to the media from Professor Barry McGaw (see links given at the end of this article). In responding to the media reports, Professor McGaw assured the education community that the Board's position had not shifted from its initial advice that students had to be taught explicitly and systematically the letter-sound relationships when learning to read, and that this will be reflected in the syllabus and in the instructions to the curriculum writers.

Having previously expressed her deep concern over Australian students' poor performance in basic literacy and numeracy skills, Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister, the Hon. Julia Gillard MP, when announcing the National Curriculum, stated that it would be a rigorous, world-class document underpinned by a renewed focus on literacy and numeracy.

Ms Gillard's National Curriculum media release stated that: "... the new national curriculum is being developed transparently and in consultation with government and non-government education authorities, teachers, parents, students, academics, professional organisations and business groups."

Unfortunately, the process of developing the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: English* was not followed correctly and has resulted in a flawed guide for writing the Australian English Curriculum for the Primary years, particularly K-2 Literacy. This contradicts the publicly stated intention of both Ms Gillard and the National Curriculum Board.

1. The National Curriculum Board's own Initial Advice is not reflected in the *Shape* paper.
2. Despite claiming that the *Shape* paper was prepared following extensive consultation with all stakeholders, no recognised reading researcher was consulted, and requests that recognised reading researchers should be consulted were ignored.
3. No genuine consultation took place with K-2 primary classroom teachers, classroom teachers using evidence-based proven effective initial or remedial reading teaching strategies, or Special Education teachers with proven success in helping struggling readers. Despite Ms Gillard's statement that there would be a "transparent" process, the contents of the *Shape* paper were developed after private consultation with a very narrow group of individuals who did not represent the range of views on how best to teach initial reading.
4. Despite claiming rigorous and world class status, the document does not reflect the findings and recommendations of the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy which were accepted by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), and does not reflect the findings of internationally accepted best practice in curriculum content for K-2 English Curriculum.
5. Important recommendations and strong comments about critical wording in the *Shape* document that were verbally expressed during the Forums have been disregarded.
6. Despite the National Curriculum Board's repeated assurances that the Board welcomes and encourages all stakeholders, including the wider community, to participate, the *Shape* paper uses phrases that would confuse, mislead and alienate the ordinary person.

1. The National Curriculum Board's own Initial Advice is not reflected in the 'Shape' paper.

The National English Curriculum: Initial Advice, Beginnings and Basics makes a very clear and unambiguous statement that: "The explicit and systematic teaching of sound-script correspondences is important, and not just for students who are in their first year or so of schooling, or for whom English is not a first language."

And continues with:

"The explicit teaching of decoding, grammar, spelling and other aspects of the basic codes of written English will be an important and routine aspect of the national English curriculum. It should be planned, put into practice and consolidated as part of a program in English education, and it should be available to students throughout the

school years."

However, the *Shape* document does not follow the Initial Advice in that reading is only referred to in the general context of "listening, speaking, viewing, reading, writing and creating activities". There is only one sentence in the document that refers to the link between letters and sounds; (and this is in reference to writing, not reading), and this sentence can be construed as endorsing a 'student-responsibility' model of reading development which is contrary to the intention of the Initial Advice document.

There is a further reference to sound-letter correspondences (5.2.2) which invites confusion as it can be read as supporting the debunked three cueing system which confuses the skills needed for reading/decoding and the skills needed for comprehension.

Also contrary to the Initial Advice paper is the suggestion in the *Shape* paper that systematic teaching of sound-letter correspondences is of benefit to some but not to all children. This raises the question of who decides and on what bases is the decision made that one particular child requires systematic teaching while another child does not require systematic teaching?

The *Shape* paper does not reflect Ms Gillard's announcement that the National Curriculum would be "underpinned by a renewed focus on literacy and numeracy".

2. Despite claiming that the *Shape* paper was prepared following extensive consultation with all stakeholders, no recognised reading researcher was consulted, and requests that recognised reading researchers should be consulted were ignored.

Any individual who can read themselves can claim to be a reading researcher, but the term 'recognised' reading researcher refers to those academics who have undertaken evidence-based research in the area of learning to read and write and how these skills are best taught, have published their research papers in peer-reviewed scientific journals, and have been recognised for the merit of their body of work by, for example, being elected as a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia or the Australian Academy of Science. None of the numerous individuals who are considered recognised reading researchers in Australia was consulted during the development of the *Shape* document despite written requests which included the names and contact details of recognised reading researchers.

3. No genuine consultation took place with K-2 primary classroom teachers, classroom teachers using evidence-based proven effective initial or remedial reading teaching strategies, or Special Education teachers with proven success in helping struggling readers. Despite Ms Gillard's statement that there would be a "transparent" process, the contents of the *Shape* paper were developed after private consultation with a very narrow group of individuals who did not represent the range of views on how best to teach initial reading.

According to the National Curriculum Board's published information about the consultation process:

"… a small group of nominees from the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE), Australian Literacy Educators' Association (ALEA), e:lit – the Primary English Teaching Association and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) met with the writer to discuss the feedback from the forum and its implications for developing the curriculum."

The teacher professional associations, AATE, ALEA, and PETA have very limited membership among classroom teachers. According to their own published Annual General Reports, these associations are better known to politicians and the media than to classroom teachers and their membership base amongst classroom teachers is so low that their existence is threatened. Executive positions on these associations are mostly held by academics from Schools and Faculties of Education or by individuals with no expertise in basic research on learning to read and write and how these skills are best taught.

For example, AATE has traditionally been controlled by University Professors of Literature, or academics from University Schools and Faculties of Education, and only recently by practising secondary school teachers. The AATE, while not claiming any expertise in the teaching of beginning reading, advises its members to reject the evidence-based findings of the National Reading Panel and the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy. The AATE is a member of the international Whole Language Umbrella group of associations.

ALEA president Jan Turbill is an academic from the Wollongong University School of Education with expertise in Language and Linguistics, and is a close associate of past ALEA president Professor Brian Cambourne, who is also an Executive Board Member of the Whole Language Umbrella. ALEA advisers its members to reject the National Reading Panel (NRP) and National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (NITL) findings and this association is a member of the Whole Language Umbrella.

PETA – now known as e:lit – president Dr Margery Hertzberg is an academic from the University of Western Sydney School of Education who lectures in English as a Second Language, Drama and Literacy. Past office holders of PETA include Jan Turbill, currently president of ALEA and Robyn Ewing from the University Of Sydney School Of Education. PETA/e:lit advises its members to reject the

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findings of the National Reading Panel and the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy and is a member of the Whole Language Umbrella.

The focus of TESOL teachers is teaching spoken English to non-English speaking students and not in teaching all children to read and write. TESOL executive positions are held by academics with interests in areas like linguistics and 'functional' grammar.

Special arrangements were made so that the writer of the *Shape* paper could meet privately with individuals from AATE, ALEA, PETA and TESOL, despite these individuals having little or no classroom experience in teaching students to read, but the professional associations with demonstrated expertise in teaching and learning beginning reader and remedial reading, were not invited to meet with the writer of the *Shape* paper.

The professional associations excluded from the consultation process includes the Developmental Disorders of Language and Literacy (DDOLL) network which represents researchers and research-oriented practitioners investigating and treating disorders of the production and comprehension of spoken and written language skills. This association has a particular focus on teaching beginning reading to all children and its members include Australia's foremost recognised researchers on learning to read and reading difficulties.

Learning Difficulties Australia (LDA) is an association of teachers and other professionals dedicated to improving the performance of underachieving students through effective teaching practices based on scientific research.

AUSPELD, the Australian Federation of SPELD Associations, responds to the needs of children and adults with Specific Learning Difficulties/Disabilities, such as the learning disability dyslexia, and those who care for, teach, and work with them.

LDA and AUSPELD are the professional associations for Special Education teachers who are the 'front-line' teachers for children struggling to learn to read.

4. Despite claiming rigorous and world class status, the document does not reflect the findings and recommendations of the NITL which were accepted by COAG, and does not reflect the findings of internationally accepted best practice in curriculum content for K-2 English Curriculum.

While claiming to be informed by the findings of the Australian National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy, Paris 2005, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the National Reading Panel 2000, the *Shape* paper makes no mention of the central and most significant finding: that the most effective way to teach all students to read and write is direct, explicit, intensive and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension and that 'synthetic' phonics is the most effective form of phonics instruction.

Furthermore, by endorsing the 'play-based', child-centred approach to Early Years, the *Shape* paper ignores the fact that real learning requires real work and that a 'play-based' approach contradicts the Board's stated claim that their intention is to develop a "rigorous, world class" Curriculum.

5. Important recommendations and strong comments about critical wording in the *Shape* document that was verbally expressed during the Forums have been disregarded.

While all stakeholders were invited to attend Forums and contribute to discussion, strong recommendations from forum participants at the Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth Forums for clear statements that all students benefit from explicit and systematic instruction in the complex code of sound/letter correspondences have been disregarded. As a result, the *Shape* paper assumes children can read, lacks focus on the specific skills of initial reading, and provides ambiguous and confusing guidelines for teachers of initial reading.

6. Despite the National Curriculum Board's mission statement to produce an 'inclusive' Curriculum, and repeated assurances that the Board welcomes and encourages all stakeholders, including the wider community, to participate, the *Shape* paper uses phrases that would confuse, mislead and alienate the ordinary person.

The *Shape* paper uses many terms that have one meaning in Plain English and a different, sometimes contradictory, meaning when used by Educators. Therefore, before any claim that the Board has fulfilled its obligation to welcome and encourage all stakeholders to participate; the Board should require clarification of terms such as 'literacy', 'authentic', 'purposeful', 'embedded', 'semantic and syntactic clues', and 'make meaning'.

The Shape of the National Curriculum: English *can be downloaded from the website of the National Curriculum Board at www.ncb.org.au/verve/_resources/Australian_Curriculum_-_English.pdf. Media reports on this response can be found at www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25544345-601,00.html, www.theage.com.au/national/agent-of-change-20090529-bpw6.html?page=-1, and www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,25549159-13881,00.html. This response, together with the list of signatories, can be downloaded from the LDA website at www. ldaustralia.org.*

Reviewing the primary curriculum in England: the Rose and the Cambridge Reviews

Rhona Stainthorpe, Institute of Education, University of Reading

England has had a National Curriculum for just over 20 years. In the primary years it is made up of 10 compulsory subjects: English, Maths, Science, Design and Technology, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), History, Geography, Art and Design, Music and Physical Education. Additionally schools also have to teach Religious Education, although parents have the right to withdraw children from this. On top of this schools are advised to teach Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Citizenship, together with at least one modern foreign language. This is an entitlement curriculum. Policy determines that all children, regardless of ability, have the right to an education in all these subjects.

A simple listing of all these subjects leads to a sense of an overcrowded curriculum. Indeed most primary teachers would attest to this, and they also have the impression that the whole curriculum is 'top down' driven. Not just from central government to the individual schools, but driven by the secondary school subject specialists. It is probably true to say that for the past 20 years the primary curriculum has not really been an integrated whole based on an understanding of the nature of the child, but a whole set of individual curriculums.

It was definitely time to take stock and, just like queuing for London buses, one waits for ages and then two come along at once. We now have the Cambridge Primary Review (the Cambridge Review) and the Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum (the Rose Review) both published in 2009.

The Cambridge Review has been led by Sir Robin Alexander, who is now an academic at Cambridge University. It was funded by the Esme Fairbairn Foundation, a charitable organisation, and has taken three years to write. It includes many extensive briefing documents which were published in advance of the final report. A major purpose of the review was:

The Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading resulted in all children receiving systematic phonics teaching as the first approach to learning to read words within a balanced literacy environment…

> *With respect to public provision in England, the Review will seek to identify the purposes which the primary phase of education should serve, the values which it should espouse, the curriculum and learning environment which it should provide, and the conditions which are necessary in order both that these are of the highest and most consistent quality possible, and that they address the needs of children and society over the coming decades.*

The Rose Review has been led by Sir Jim Rose, who has now retired as the chief Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) for primary education. This review was commissioned by the Secretary of State for Education and sought to answer the questions:

What should a broad and balanced curriculum contain to ensure that children receive a well-rounded education?

and

How should the curriculum change to meet children's different but developing abilities as they progress through the primary years?

Sir Robin and Sir Jim had worked together in a previous life as two of the authors of a 1992 government document *Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools: a discussion paper*. This report came to be known as the "Three wise men report" (the third author being Sir Chris Woodhead who became notorious as the Ofsted Chief Inspector). Both have a wealth of experience to draw on in directing these two different reviews.

As is the way with the English press

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the two reviews have been pitted against one another, but in reality they share much in common and feed nicely into each other. The Rose Review is less extensive and had a narrower remit than the Cambridge Review, but is no less thoughtful for that.

The headline that both grabbed was the issue of discrete curriculum subjects.

The Cambridge Review recommends that the curriculum be composed of eight domains. These they suggest should be: Arts and Creativity; Citizenship and Ethics; Faith and Belief; Language, Oracy and Literacy; Mathematics; Physical and Emotional Health; Place and Time; and Science and Technology. Oh dear – history and geography have been abolished!

The Rose Review recommends six areas of learning. These they suggest should be Understanding English, Communication and Languages; Mathematical Understanding; Scientific and Technological Understanding; Historical, Geographical and Social Understanding; Understanding Physical Development, Health and Wellbeing; and Understanding the Arts. Oh dear – there goes proper history and geography again!

Choice of words is important but there would seem to be a direct mapping of Place and time onto Historical, geographical and social understanding; and Language, oracy and literacy onto English communication and languages.

A difference between the potential impacts of the two reviews is that the Rose Review will feed directly into changes in the primary curriculum, not least because it was commissioned by the Secretary of State. This means that it will have an immediate direct impact on the education of children. In the longer term it is likely that both the reviews will have an impact on primary education as a whole, because both will become essential reading for teachers in training. Indeed both reviews recognise that education reform cannot be driven forward without high quality education for teachers.

Though theoretically retired, Sir Jim's work is still having a profound impact on education. His 'first' Rose Review, the Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading, resulted in all children receiving systematic phonics teaching as the first approach to learning to read words within a balanced literacy environment. No matter what one may think about too much government interference in education, teachers are reporting that high quality discrete teaching of systematic phonics within a broad and rich language curriculum is having a significant positive effect on performance. Not surprisingly, this second Rose Review endorses the new early reading teaching but enlarges on the need for more speaking and listening to develop understanding. Both the Cambridge Review and the Rose Review recognise the need for speaking and listening and reading and writing to permeate the curriculum.

No matter what one may think about too much government interference in education, teachers are reporting that high quality discrete teaching of systematic phonics within a broad and rich language curriculum is having a significant positive effect on performance.

Given the importance of reading and writing to the educational progress of children, the question of quality provision for children with dyslexia is now being more overtly addressed by the UK Government. It is no coincidence that the person leading the review is Rose. He has been developing recommendations on the identification and teaching of children with dyslexia. A third Rose Review is on the way.

Such important developments in primary education make for stimulating debate within the profession, but we live in strange times. The financial depression dominates the media. Paradoxically, this could have the beneficial effect of the reviews being debated quietly and influencing the thinking of young teachers out of the glare of tabloid cries against "abolishing history and geography".

What is needed is for professionals to interrogate both reviews with an objective reflective approach, but in my opinion the three Rose Reviews make a very positive bunch.

The Cambridge Primary Review can be accessed from www.primaryreview.org.uk. The Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum can be accessed from www.dcsf.gov.uk/primarycurriculumreview.

Professor Rhona Stainthorp is the director of Postgraduate Professional Development in the Institute of Education at the University of Reading, UK.

From the UK: the Rose Report on Dyslexia just released

Sir Jim Rose's report on *Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties* was released on 22 June. It has been well received by teachers and by key dyslexia organisations in the UK, and Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, Ed Balls, has accepted all the recommendations of the report, with £20 million committed to funding specialist teaching and support for schools and parents. Under this funding program, 4000 teachers will be funded to train in specialist dyslexia teaching over the next two years.

The review accepted the view that dyslexia is identifiable as a developmental difficulty of language learning and cognition, that is, that it exists as an identifiable condition, but at the same time described it as best thought of as a continuum, with no clear cut-off points.

The working definition of dyslexia adopted by the review was as follows:

- Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling.
- Characteristic features of dyslexia are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory and verbal processing speed.
- Dyslexia occurs across the range of intellectual abilities.
- It is best thought of as a continuum, not a distinct category, and there are no clear cut-off points.
- Co-occurring difficulties may be seen in aspects of language, motor coordination, mental calculation, concentration and personal organisation, but these are not, by themselves, markers of dyslexia.
- A good indication of the severity and persistence of dyslexic difficulties can be gained by examining how the individual responds or has responded to well founded intervention.

Prevalence of dyslexia was estimated at between 4 and 8 per cent of children, based on a recent report by Snowling.

The review recognises that early identification of children with dyslexia is important, but at the same time it notes that blanket screening is questionable due to the lack of reliable screening tests. Instead, it recommends that the best approach is to monitor children's progress and assess their responses to pre and early reading activities, with the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile providing an important source of information to Year 1 teachers. This approach is consistent with the Response to Intervention model.

Effective intervention is seen as based on matching provision to meet children's individual needs, with a strong emphasis on phonological skills within a highly structured systematic approach presented on a regular and continuing basis, allowing time for reinforcement and consolidation of learning. However, the review recognises that some children with dyslexia will respond very slowly even to the most effective teaching approaches.

The review does not support the proposed Children's Plan pilot scheme in which children with dyslexia were to receive Reading Recovery support from specialist teachers on a one-to-one basis, on the grounds that it would not be possible to identify with any certainty those children in Years 1 and 2 whose reading difficulties were due to dyslexia from those children whose reading difficulties were not due to dyslexia. It therefore recommends that this pilot scheme should not go ahead.

Particular emphasis is placed in the report on the need for specialist training of teachers, the development of clear guidance for parents and schools on the use and availability of literacy help, and the role of schools to evaluate their programs and to ensure that they have the expertise to deliver the extra help required.

This is a landmark report in recognising the need for a fundamental change in the approach to providing for students with dyslexia and reading difficulties in the school system, and could serve as a model to how the needs of students with reading difficulties might be addressed in Australia.

The Rose report on Dyslexia is available at http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/00659-2009DOM-EN.pdf

LDA Website Report

The LDA website has recently undergone some exciting changes, and there are more to come. A major innovation already in place is the addition of the LDA Book Shop, which is open and at your service. The catalogue (organised in several categories), and the order form are accessible through the website. Orders and payment can be processed as directed on the form.

LDA is very pleased to announce the recent appointment of Yvonne Meyer to help with the preparation of new content for the website. Yvonne will be monitoring current publications, resources and research in the learning difficulties area from across the world to identify relevant links and articles to put up on the website. Yvonne was the parent representative on the 2005 Committee of the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy, and since this time has been active in promoting effective teaching practices through parent and teacher contacts and discussion forums.

The website also features up to date information about coming conferences and events, along with regularly updated news items. The Resources section has been expanded and will continue to grow with Yvonne's input. This is also the section where you will find the Discussion Forum, and the NAPLAN result tables mentioned in the last issue of the *Bulletin*. There is also information for Consultant members of LDA and the ongoing Consultants' PD program. Articles of topical interest are also featured.

See the LDA website at www.ldaustralia.org. We welcome your feedback and suggestions.

Conference Report: Response to Intervention from very early childhood

Pye Twaddell

Increasing emphasis on accountability in early child care and education has generated a need to rethink assessment systems relevant to the development of child standards, or outcomes, for children from birth. In April this year, the Children and Families Research Centre, at the Macquarie University Institute of Early Childhood, sponsored a Conference on Evidence-based Practice in Early Childhood. The premise of the conference was that effective intervention in early childhood requires models and tools that enable the making of clear connections between practices employed and changes in outcomes for children 0-8.[1]

The speakers, co-principal investigators and director of the Juniper Gardens Children's Project (JGCP), University of Kansas, were Professors Judith Carta and Charles Greenwood. The JGCP began in the mid-1960s to address concerns about child development in a low-income community. Since its inception, its mission has been to improve children's developmental and educational experiences by improving parenting, care and instruction, and thus their academic and social achievements.

Professors Greenwood and Carta presented a Response to Intervention (RtI) program with assessment and evidence-based practices designed to improve outcomes for infants and young children, especially in language and literacy. They spoke of the role of progressive monitoring and decision-making in relation to children's responses in tiered programs of intervention. They detailed the development and validation of their RtI approach using Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs), in single child and/or group research designs underpinning their program, with multiple levels of support for children's early learning (see www.jgcp.ku.edu).

Their philosophy is simple – "don't wait for a delay to become a disability" (thus beating the discrepancy model), and use evidence-based practice for reliable, transparent, and accountable results.

The speakers said advantages of an early childhood RtI problem-solving process to assess, evaluate and monitor young children's development and learning needs, with its three-tiered systematic design of intervention, include:

- Earlier identification of children not making progress, especially those who may be experiencing categorical difficulties such as developmental delay[2];
- A data-driven method for evaluating and monitoring the effectiveness of instructional approaches to inform changing and improving them, with more frequent assessment to match the level of instructional intensity to children's demonstrated RtI;
- Providing families with initial information about their child and their child's progress – see www.rtinetwork.org/parents-and-families; and,
- Reducing the need for special education by improving and providing services based upon individualised need and evidence-based strategies.

(For further information, see www.crtiec.org – a consortium of professionals committed to advancing early intervening services based on RTI and evidence-based practices in early childhood education.)

The Juniper Gardens Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs) are validated, benchmarked assessment checklists in the domains of Communication, Movement, Social, Problem Solving and Parent-Child Interaction, based upon typical child growth and development. Although the individual infant/toddler IGDIs were said to be brief and quick to administer, each assessment domain takes six minutes and requires some specific materials. They usually take place in the child's home with a trained 'play partner' for the child, and responses either recorded live by another home-visitor, or videotaped. If a child's assessment results are thought to be invalid, the recommendation is that it be repeated within two weeks.

The Juniper Gardens Project has developed, and provides for free, online resources and services such as assessment and administration forms, evaluator training, scoring, data collection and storage capable of charting individual progress (for those registered in the program), instructional advice, and information and forms for accountably reporting the required quantitatively measured evidence of children's need and progress to governments.[3]

To date, the Juniper Gardens Project's norming sample includes 8000 children. They would like to build an Australian cohort. However, it must be remembered the Juniper Gardens Project is financially supported by federal funding. For example, additional to current funding, Professors Greenwood and Carta will direct a new research project identifying and intervening for potential reading problems in very young children, funded by the U.S. Department of Education for $10 million over five years.

Professor Greenwood said all children are tier 1 participants, where the expectation is that 80 per cent will achieve, while 15 per cent of children will need tier 2 support.

Tier 2 support was said to be more intensified, with more opportunities to practice. An example of a tier 2 phonemic awareness intervention for children aged four is a listening station using electronic interactive story books to teach letter sounds (such as spider to teach the single 's' sound) – however, while there is no check on the appropriateness of the child's response, there is a quantitative standardised benchmarked test each Friday to monitor and chart progress.

Tier 3 interventions are more intensified, focused and explicit, with direct teacher involvement. However, Professor Greenwood said that the RtI approach is not about streaming children. The process is individualised. A child can be in different tiers in different domains at the same time.

Professor Carta concentrated more on describing evidence-based practices (EBPs) using interventions, practices and strategies founded in research, documenting their effectiveness, not only to maximise the likelihood of positive outcomes and to expand one's own skill and competence, but to be able to respond to the demands of accountability, to enhance political and fiscal support. Two EBPs she talked about were dialogic reading (actually based on the time-honoured scaffolding strategies of shared reading), and milieu teaching, to promote communication. The three best known milieu teaching procedures are incidental teaching, mand-model teaching and time delay. An abundance of further information about milieu teaching is available on the internet.

These practices, often known by other names in different times, seem to have gained their current evidence-based status because they have been identified as the intervention used in specific research studies demonstrating children's measured outcome gains, using tools such as IGDIs. In some cases, this quantitative evidence verifies what had been understood about these practices for a long time. A child's initial assessment results start below the relevant benchmarks for age and stage, an expected or typical trajectory of development is identified and then periodically the child's actual progress trajectory is monitored and recorded. As evidence shows that many children's progress is greater than expected, one can then say: "Dialogic reading works! Children who have been read to dialogically are substantially ahead of children who have been read to traditionally on tests of language development. Children can jump ahead by several months in just a few weeks of dialogic reading"

Don't wait for a delay to become a disability... use evidence-based practice for reliable, transparent, and accountable results…

(see www.multcolib.org/birthtosix/elitdialogic.html).

Professor Carta said finding evidence-based practices is easy now because of the internet, providing consumers (families and agencies) with the best available evidence. A website referred to by both speakers is the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), where curricula practices for children age three to five are available, for example in relation to cognitive, language and literacy development, including skills such as phonological processing. Pre-school practices can be as simple as the tier 1 strategy using coloured floor dots to promote the learning of socially acceptable 'lining up', a skill children will need when they enter school.[4]

The WWC was established in 2002 by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences in response to requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Law* (2001), requiring schools using federal funds to adopt educational interventions that provide scientifically-based evidence of their validity and applicability.[5] The WWC was funded with $435 million over five years, to provide a central and trusted source of scientific evidence of what works in education. The WWC reviews available research studies about the effectiveness of interventions (programs, products, practices and policies), against the set of WWC standards.

Three other sites mentioned by the speakers are:

- The independent Early Childhood Research and Practice site is a peer-reviewed electronic journal at http://ecrp.uiuc.edu (birth to age eight), reporting on practice-related research and development, and parent participation.
- The Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL), at www.earlyliteracylearning.org. CELL is a research to practice technical assistance centre funded by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education,

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to promote the adoption and sustained use of evidence-based early literacy learning of young children identified with disabilities, developmental delays, and those at risk for poor outcomes.

- The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning at www.venderbilt.edu/csfel/index.html. This is a national resource centre funded by the Office of Head Start and Child Care Bureau, focused on promoting the social emotional development and school readiness of young children, birth to age five.

As you will have gathered from this report, the place of RtI within American early child care and education has been financially underpinned and sustained by substantial government funding. How this could or should translate into the Australian sector, especially in the light of the Australian National Curriculum and the National Early Years Learning Framework currently being developed, as well as the recommendations from the Australian National Inquiry into the Teaching of Reading and the prevalence of the use of an emergent curriculum in early child care and education across Australia, remains to be seen.

Footnotes

1. See a research synthesis and recommendations about the Pre-K RTI model Recognition and Response, at 'Recognition and Response: An Early Intervening System for Young Children At-Risk for Learning Disabilities'. For other empirical articles about RtI see www.rtinetwork.org/Learn/Research/ar/Abstracts Also see www.recognitionandresponse.org.
2. Developmental delay is a qualifying disability within the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (2008) and the American 2004 reauthorised *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). States can use this category for children aged three through nine as a way to provide early services for those suspected of having a disability. This category, with IGDI measurement coupled with an RtI approach to intervention, is used in Federal programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start in Kansas. For further information see www.ncld.org/content/view/921/450699 and www.ncld.org/content/view/294.
3. The www.igdi.ku.edu/measures website focuses on IGDI measures for initial assessment to identify delay and then to monitor the progress from early intervention services of infant/toddler development from birth to 36 months. For information and tools to measure later development, see preschool IGDIs, e.g., for letter naming, alliteration, rhyming and picture naming at http://ggg.umn.edu. For K-3 language and literacy skills such as oral reading, nonsense word, phoneme segmentation, initial sounds and letter naming see DIBELS at https://dibels.uoregon.edu. Professor Greenwood said the DIBELS database includes results from 1,000,000 children.
4. See the What Works Clearinghouse at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/ and its early childhood section at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/topic.aspx?tid=13.
5. For a review of RtI and multi-tiered instruction in primary schools by the US Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences (a funding partner of JDCP), see www.crtiec.org/RTI/documents/rti_reading_pg_021809.pdf. The Institute of Education Sciences is said to reflect the government's intent to advance the field of education research, making it more rigorous in support of evidence-based education.

Dr Pye Twaddell's primary interest is in identification and intervention for children experiencing learning difficulties in early childhood. Her doctoral research involved the longitudinal validation of The Kindergarten Screening*, an in-school assessment tool to identify children's developmental and learning needs, in five affecting domains, to inform instruction and direct intervention. Email: thelearn@bigpond.net.au.*

Early intervention in Singapore

Alison Cannon, Singapore American School

Singapore is an island nation that has transformed itself from a collection of small fishing villages at Independence in 1965 to a modern day metropolis with a greater population density per square kilometre than Monaco. Exploiting its position as a shipping port and more recently as a business hub, the Republic has developed a first world economy. Education of the population has been a government priority since Independence, with efforts being made to develop a curriculum and select a language of instruction that meets the needs of a globalised workforce but preserves – as far as possible – the languages and cultures of the various ethnicities from which the island's main population is drawn. Singapore has been remarkably successful in developing an education system that meets the needs of the mainstream population and >60% of students who begin Primary 1 (Year 1) will enter a tertiary education facility either at home or abroad (Ministry of Education, 2000).

The pressure to produce a workforce able to operate in an industrialised and tech-savvy environment has meant that the main thrust of education policy has been the delivery of core academic material to the largest number of students in the most resource efficient manner possible. This, and the economic necessity for a two-parent income that faces many first world nations, has had implications for service delivery in the special needs sector however.

The economic reality of living in an expensive city means that in many families – as in Australia – both parents work. Unlike Australia, regulated childcare settings are not the norm and a range of informal childcare settings operate, from private centres with a structured or a Montessori focus, to (more commonly) home-based care provided by relatives, grandparents or live-in domestic helpers (maids). This presents the first barrier to early identification of struggling children. It is not uncommon for a grandparent (who may have been a first generation migrant speaking Hokkien, Teochew or another regional dialect from China or India) to have a different primary language to the parents (who, if middle class, are likely to be English medium educated and English or Mandarin speaking or who, regardless of social status, may each come from different dialect backgrounds) or for the maid/helper to speak Indonesian or – from the Philippines – Tagalog. Children may be in care only during the day, with their parents returning in the evenings, or they may be in the care of their grandparent, relative or maid almost without interruption from Monday to Friday if parental working hours are very lengthy. In many societies, including Australia, the first indicators of early learning difficulties are noted by parents in their daily interactions with their children. In Singapore however, the early recognition of markers such as delayed speech or motor skills can be missed due to frequent carer changes, or simple unfamiliarity between parent and child due to long working hours and restricted interaction.

Although school attendance in Singapore has been comparatively high over the years since Independence, compulsory education was introduced only relatively recently (for the school year commencing 2003, applying to all children born from 2 January 1996) and only for primary education from 1st to 6th grade. This means that there is no mandated education for children below the age of six and as a result, a range of different programs operate. Early stimulation programs – including early phonics – are offered by a range of providers at community centres and childhood education foundations to children as young as two and 'school readiness' programs are offered by individuals and centres with variable qualifications and experience. Many children complete Kindergarten 1 (K1: for children four years) and Kindergarten 2 (K2: for children five years) in a range of privately operated kindergartens. Other children – often those with very low income parents who cannot afford even basic Kindergarten costs, or whose parents have limited recognition of the value of early childhood education – receive no formal educational input until commencing grade schooling, which gives a very wide range of performances at intake. Separating issues of developmental readiness/skill difference from lack of prior schooling exposure presents difficulties for the teacher attempting to identify children with learning disabilities.

Throughout the 60s and 70s, schools in Singapore were conducted in English or one of three 'vernacular' language systems (Mandarin, Tamil, Malay) until falling numbers in the vernacular systems resulted in English being instituted as the language of instruction in all government schools from 1988. Study of a 'mother tongue' (Mandarin, Tamil or Malay depending on ethnicity) is still a requirement but today Education Ministry policy is that all children are educated in English. This presents a third barrier to early identification as not all teachers are fluent in standard English as their first language, and pupils arrive to commence formal schooling with a range of English competencies themselves. This complicates the identification of learning disabilities (particularly language based learning disabilities) as it is difficult to compare a child's performance with established "norms" (Lew & Cannon, forthcoming). There is also no guarantee that once they have arrived at school, children

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will be exposed to a language model that closely matches an expected standard form of English and so ongoing difficulties with vocabulary, grammar and sentence construction can be missed or assumed to be developmental for an extended period.

At the current time, the majority of schools in Singapore are dual-session, which means one cohort of students attends from 8am to 1pm, and a second cohort (with a second set of teaching staff) attend on the same campus from 1pm to 6pm. The large number of students therefore accommodated in one facility and the large number of staff covering the needs of each setting makes it difficult to track individual students and to provide in-school staff training to the whole faculty. School class size is an additional difficulty in identification at any age. For the past two years, the Ministry has endeavoured to ensure that all Primary 1 and 2 (Year 1-2) classes contain no more than 30 children. Prior to this – and in all classes from Primary 3 and up – the typical class size is 40 children, and there is no selection for, or assistance with management of, behaviour or learning difficulties. This can make the straightforward issue of behavioural management quite a challenge for many teachers and the limited time available to be spent with each child can impact on the likelihood of problems being spotted early. Clearly there are also implications for the amount of individual attention each professional is able to give the children in their care. Time to spend with each child is limited and issues that cause the child to fail to perform, to omit or avoid work, or to act out behaviourally, are often not investigated simply because of the time pressure involved in communicating the curriculum to so many students in the time available.

At the present time, students commencing Primary 1 are given a school readiness test (SRT) in the first months of school. Conducted by the school's Learning Support Coordinator (a teacher who has had completed a two-week training program in literacy and language), the readiness test aims identify the lowest 20 per cent of performers in oral language, who are then directed into the Learning Support Program. Run by the Learning Support Coordinator (LSC), the Learning Support Program provides for 30 minutes a day of pullout group instruction in English.

Within the primary setting, two other occupational groups have been introduced in the past few years to support the needs of teachers and students. The first of these – Special Needs Officers – are non-teaching professionals (for example, banking or administrative professionals seeking a career change) who complete a one-year diploma in special needs teaching through the National Institute of Education (NIE). This has a general special needs grounding but also focuses on the two types of learning disabilities recognised in Singapore – 'dyslexia' and 'autism'. Professionals trained in this program are generally very committed and capable people who have actively chosen this work (as opposed to other special needs providers within the education system who may have been assigned to their role regardless of whether they have an interest or enthusiasm for the field) and the Ministry aims to have a SNO in all schools by 2011. Beyond the diagnoses of 'dyslexia' or 'autism' however, there is no education regarding learning disabilities, which means that many children receive the diagnosis and interventions for one of the two categories, regardless of whether it meets their needs (if, for example, the student has a language-based learning disability or specific language impairment).

In many societies... the first indicators of early learning difficulties are noted by parents in their daily interactions with their children.

The second of these groups – Teachers of Special Needs (TSNs) are practising teachers who have completed three modules (1½ years) of study to improve their awareness for special needs support. Within the school they may be referred to support students, teachers or both and their large workload can mean that in practice they are not able to give a great deal of 1:1 time to any particular group.

Children with more significant intellectual difficulties are not necessarily identified prior to school age. If the parent is proactive and the child has attended an early childhood setting where a carer or teacher has noted an issue related to behaviour, speech/language development or delayed personal/social skills, the child may receive outpatient therapy intervention through the main hospital servicing paediatrics (Kandang Kerbau Women's and Children's Hospital) which maintains a Child Development Unit (CDU). The National University Hospital maintains a similar CDU with a focus on early intervention therapy services. As is the case in virtually all public hospital systems in any country however, the demand for services (even without universal screening) far outstrips supply and reliance on parents to support intermittent clinic visits is essential. If the parent falls into the earlier described categories of working long hours, or themselves experiencing social-economic difficulties and/or learning problems of their own, then the child may enter Primary 1 unidentified. Such children

may be passed through the schooling system for a year or two (children are seldom retained a grade in Singapore) until a teacher or parent raises concerns and a visiting psychologist supplied by the Ministry carries out the identification.

Children with mild to moderate intellectual difficulties often remain in the mainstream system, supported where possible – if identified – by voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) including the Asian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA) and the Association for Persons with Special Needs (APSN). APSN clients typically have formal I.Q ascertainments in the 50-70 range. For those with moderate to severe intellectual difficulties, the Movement for Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS) provides schooling. Again, as is the case in many school systems, services for those with moderate to severe cognitive impairments is over-subscribed and can be stretched for resources such as therapists (many centres have no therapy intervention or a visiting service only).

While children from Primary 1 onwards take part in high-stakes end-of-year testing, at the end of year 6, children take the Primary School Leaving Examination (PLSE) to gain admission to high school. The PLSE is similar to the older '11-plus' system of England and the pass/fail mark for this significant milestone in a students' life has a big bearing on where they can study and what subjects they are likely to access. As Singapore aims to be a merit-based system, students who score outstanding marks can gain admission to selective entry schools. Pupils failing the PLSE however, repeat their 6th grade year (and the PLSE) but it is not until they have failed a second time – for many children – that any assessment is undertaken to establish the reasons for school failure, if indeed this is done at all. A single school continues to offer education to those students who have failed their PLSE twice and personal meetings with the dedicated but overworked staff at this location confirmed again that there is often a lack of understanding of the various learning disabilities that may be contributing to school failure, due to limited information being available in training programs. Limited resource provision (no visiting therapy services, no dedicated educational psychologist) ensures that the hardworking teachers in this setting give a lot of themselves to support their children.

At this point, a lack of government provided services exists in all fields. There are no Speech Language Pathologists or Occupational Therapists employed by the Ministry of Education, nor official recognition of any of the conditions (beyond autism or dyslexia) that they may be involved in supporting. For proactive or vocal parents – or those who have been advised by a visiting Ministry psychologist – language intervention services and Occupational Therapy are offered through government hospitals (which, as discussed above, are oversubscribed) or through private practitioners if families can afford to pay.

Due to its large expatriate population, Singapore has a range of international schools (schools established by not-for-profit trusts or private profit making enterprises) that offer curricula from various countries. There is an Australian International School offering the curriculum of NSW (owned by the private for-profit company Cognita) and Canadian, French, German, Swiss and Japanese schools offering systems of education similar to those from nationals' home countries. There are multiple British Curriculum or IB Primary Years Program international schools, one not-for-profit American system school (a second, for-profit, American curriculum company opens in late 2009) and two schools for expatriate children with special needs (ranging from specific to severe cognitive impairments). These schools serve mainly the expatriate population as Singaporean government policy is that Singaporean students should attend Singaporean schools, however local families can apply to exempt their children from the Singaporean system (for a range of reasons) and if successful, they can enrol at an international school to access learning support services through that avenue. This is a costly and extremely difficult-to-access avenue of support for Singaporean families.

Within the teaching profession in Singapore, there is as yet scant training in special needs and early identification...

Within the teaching profession in Singapore, there is as yet scant training in special needs and early identification, which is not an issue unique to Singapore. Through sustained lobbying by vocal parents and dedicated practitioners, children with autism are often identified early and services are available – including a dedicated school to meet the needs of this population. All other learning difficulties are typically diagnosed as 'dyslexia' and as a result, services mainly targeting phonics or decoding are taught to children regardless of their symptoms and in many cases, without formal assessment preceding intervention.

These barriers can make it seem that Singapore services its learning disabled students poorly – and by

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modern standards in Australia, the UK or the US, that is so. In effect however, the government has sought to develop an education system that will meet the needs of the 'many' and is only now beginning to extend services to meet the needs of the 'few'. One of the most remarkable features of the government in Singapore is that because the country is small, changes – when introduced – take effect relatively quickly and systematically and Singapore is in the process of beginning these changes to support the learning disabled population.

To improve services, the government has recently introduced the occupational categories discussed above. These individuals are not always professionals who have expressed an interest in the field of special needs (they may be selected for training without consultation) so their commitment to the job can vary from person to person, but it is a useful starting point to have staff other than class teachers to support the faculty and/or students in some way.

The curriculum division of the Ministry of Education is in the process of developing and rolling out a completely new early literacy curriculum – the STELLAR program – that will prioritise oral language development, early phonological awareness and the enjoyment of shared reading to establish good foundational skills, in place of the older drill-and-practice rote memorisation approach to spelling and reading development that is still the mainstay in most schools. The Ministry has sought community input from professions such as speech language pathology in refining these programs and has provided isolated training programs (for example, in specific language impairment) for teaching staff nominated for attendance by their schools to assist with in-school support for the learning disabled population.

The increasing need to equip all learners with the skills to cope in a knowledge-based economy is pressing the general public to become better acquainted with the concept of learning disability, whereas before issues were often attributed to a lack of intelligence or lack of application. Singapore has no natural resources and reliance on imported labour from Bangladesh, India and Indonesia for manual jobs such as building and roadwork means few if any jobs are available to Singaporeans outside the skilled employment sector, increasing the need to provide an education that more fully meets the needs of the whole population (including the learning disabled members).

Given the rapid progress Singapore has made in bringing its general education sector to first world standards in only three to four decades, those of us working in special needs in the country have hopes that within the next 10-15 years, services for Singaporean children with learning disabilities will match or rival those of the US, UK or Australia for community awareness, parent advocacy, range of services and early identification. For this to happen, a wider commitment to education of teachers during their training would be valuable, as would a commitment to selecting teachers who have interest and passion for the field (as opposed to nominating staff who may or may not be interested), community and parent education and the provision of a support network of professionals such as therapists and specialist trainers within the education system, rather than as 'separate hospital or private consultants. With Singapore's history, there is every reason to hope that if genuine commitment to change is present within the Ministry, actual change on the ground will happen with greater speed than may have been the case in countries where the needs of learning disabled students are now well recognised.

The government... is only now beginning to extend services to meet the needs of the 'few'.

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Alison Cannon holds Science and Speech Pathology degrees from the University of Queensland and completed her Masters in Communication Disorders through Macquarie University's Department of Linguistics. Alison also holds a B.Ed and a postgraduate diploma in Special Education from LaTrobe University. Over the past 20 years she has worked in Australia, the UK, the West Indies and in Singapore, and for the past 12 years she has been involved in supporting local and expatriate children in Singapore, predominantly those with specific learning and language disorders. Alison co-chairs a Singaporean focus group working to improve the provision of services to children with learning disabilities in mainstream.

Browsing the web: three useful publications

Peter Westwood

The Institute for Education Sciences (IES) in the United States now produces what are termed 'practice guides in education'. These are easy-to-read peer-reviewed summaries of instructional practices that research has shown to be effective in various areas of the curriculum. IES uses the standards established by the What Works Clearinghouse to identify appropriate valid and reliable research studies for this purpose. Each guide contains a set of recommendations and practical advice for action at whole school and classroom levels. The purpose of the guides is to make widely available the evidence concerning methods and strategies that really do produce the best outcomes for students. The target audience is teachers and other personnel in direct contact with students (e.g., classroom assistants, tutors, guidance officers, and school counsellors). These publications are freely available for downloading from the URLs indicated below.

Improving adolescent literacy: Effective classroom and intervention practices

In August 2008, IES published a guide titled *Improving adolescent literacy: Effective classroom and intervention practices* (59 pages). This document acknowledges the unique challenges that face all secondary school teachers when their students exhibit weaknesses in literacy. For example, in the US, some 69 per cent of Grade 8 students are reported to fall below the expected level in reading comprehension, with 26 per cent rated as extremely weak. These struggling readers cannot fully understand and learn from text materials, so their progress is seriously impeded in almost all school subjects. Unfortunately, the majority of subject specialist teachers (including many English language teachers) feel inadequately prepared to teach basic reading skills to adolescents. The guide addresses this problem in practical ways by describing methods and activities that all teachers can use to develop students' vocabulary, to teach comprehension strategies, to use discussion around a text to aid understanding, to motivate and engage students, and to provide intensive individualised tutoring when needed. Teachers wishing to delve more deeply into these areas can make use of the comprehensive list of references.

This very helpful guide can be downloaded from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/adlit_pg_082608.pdf.

Assisting students strugglingwith reading: Response to Intervention and multi-tier intervention in the primary grades

The needs of primary schools and their teachers have not been neglected. In February 2009 IES published the guide, *Assisting students struggling with reading: Response to Intervention and multi-tier intervention in the primary grades* (54 pages). This guide describes in detail how Response to Intervention (RtI) operates with different intensity and with different emphases at each tier level. In Australia we tend to speak of 'waves' of intervention rather than 'tiers', but the model is basically the same. The guide indicates that screening of all children's reading ability should take place at the beginning of the school year and again in the middle of the year, with ongoing monitoring of progress to identify students at risk and to match instruction to students' abilities. Within RtI, teachers are urged to employ evidence-based methods that cover such areas as phoneme awareness, letter sounds, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. The guide also discusses appropriate methods to use with struggling readers at tier three.

This practical guide can be downloaded from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/rti_reading_pg_021809.pdf.

Assisting students struggling with mathematics: Response to Intervention (RtI) for elementary and middle schools

April 2009 saw the publication of the latest guide titled *Assisting students struggling with mathematics: Response to Intervention (RtI) for elementary and middle schools* (98 pages). This guide is extremely comprehensive and helps to fill the gap that has always existed between the large amount of research conducted on learning difficulties in the literacy domain and the relatively small amount of research covering difficulties in learning number skills and mathematics. The document gives strong support for explicit and systematic instruction, with clear modelling by the teacher, verbalising of thought processes while problem solving, guided practice, corrective feedback, and frequent review and revision.

This guide can be downloaded from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides/#rti_math_pg.

Details of all other practice guides can be located at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides/.

Peter Westwood is an education consultant and freelance writer currently working in Macau. Previously he was an associate professor at Flinders University, and more recently at the University of Hong Kong.

See the LDA website at www.ldaustralia.org for further useful internet links – go to Resources on the side menu, and then click on Useful Internet Links.

Book reviews

Phonics Handbook

Tom Nicholson
John Wiley and Sons, 2005, $115
Paperback, 434 pages
Reviewed by Fiona Walker

Every so often I find a teaching resource that I am so pleased to discover that I just want to carry it around under my arm all day. Tom Nicholson's *Phonics Handbook* is such an item – a book that should be presented to every primary school teacher on graduation before they hit the classroom. The result of five years' research trials by the author, finally, here is a book that tells teachers exactly what to do with those students who can't make sense of the whole reading thing, and is also a salutary reminder of sound reading instruction for all – teaching people to read need not be a mystery.

Following an interesting introduction, 'Part 1: Assessment and Reporting Strategies', is a one-stop-shop providing a series of individual chapters on carefully selected, complete, diagnostic tests, along with clear information on how to interpret the results. These tests are easy to administer and include alphabet assessment, the Gough-Kastler-Roper Phonemic Awareness Test, the Bryant Decoding Test (50 nonsense words), a series of graduated running record passages, an invented spelling test and a story writing test. The end result is a fantastically informative profile on the child that provides accurate (and sometimes surprising) needs assessment, as well as baseline data on which to gauge improvement. The case studies were useful illustrations and I was happy to see a chapter on reporting to parents at the end of this section.

This intensely practical handbook acknowledges that students will probably need to access school books that are not 100 per cent decodable and provides a range of additional strategies to enable students to enjoy books as soon as possible. Far from being all drills and practice, 'Part 2: Teaching Strategies', is a series of chapters giving research-based advice and information on the teaching of phonics, spelling, syllabification and comprehension including basics like lists of spelling and syllabification rules and specific comprehension strategies. There is guidance for the ESL scenario and for students who lack motivation and concentration, and the last chapter is a very practical guide to lesson planning and design.

'Part 3: Lesson Plans to Teach Basic Decoding Skills' will excite teachers as it is a complete series of lessons needed for the teaching of systematic phonics. Starting with alphabet sounds, it moves upwards passing 14 milestones such as consonant blends, long and short vowels, vowel digraphs, silent letters and syllable breaking, up to Latin and Greek words. Each lesson plan has an accompanying student worksheet that can be photocopied from the book. The lesson plans are practical, easy to use and can easily be supplemented with outside resources and activities for consolidation.

'Part 4: Appendices', is an extremely useful set of charts to do with sight words and decoding such as the Little Dictionary of Frequent Words, First, Second and Third 100 Words chart, Advanced Words chart, Blends, Digraphs, Prefixes and Suffixes. These charts are referred to throughout the book, are used in the lesson plans and play an important part in the Nicholson system.

What I appreciate most about this book is that it makes no assumptions about the person reading it. Being neither wordy nor simplistic, it explains everything clearly and from the beginning but without being patronising. It is set out in an easily navigable chapter format that makes sense both for reference purposes and as a linear course in reading instruction.

Phonics Handbook is an incredibly valuable, comprehensive and complete hands-on tool for anyone, parent, tutor or teacher, who is faced with the important task of reading instruction and intervention, and who needs an immediate, successfully proven, research-based action plan in order to achieve maximum improvement in minimal time.

Highly recommended.

Tom Nicholson is Professor of Literacy Education at the University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Fiona Walker has been teaching for 25 years. Originally a secondary English teacher and Head of Department, she made the move to primary after having children of her own and is currently a literacy specialist teacher at Armadale Primary School in WA. She is particularly interested in the identification and comprehensive diagnosis of students with reading difficulties in the mainstream schooling system and works with teachers and students to design and implement targeted programs to help such students. She is a Board member of the WA College of Teaching and is actively involved with the development of the National English Curriculum.

LDA welcomes contributions to the *Bulletin* from our members in the form of articles, book reviews or news items. Please note that back issues of the *Bulletin* are available, either singly or in the form of multiple copies for schools or teacher training institutions. Please email delemos@pacific.net.au for further information.

What teachers need to know about reading and writing difficulties

Peter Westwood
ACER Press, 2008, $24.95
Reviewed by Alison Madelaine

In his book, *What teachers need to know about reading and writing difficulties*, Westwood presents a concise text addressing the main issues to do with teaching students with literacy problems. The book covers two main areas: reading and writing, and although there is a separate book in this series on spelling (previously reviewed in the *LDA Bulletin*), there is some good information on spelling in this book too.

In the chapters on reading, Westwood covers the five main areas identified as reflecting best practice in reading instruction by the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000):

1. Phonological awareness. The importance of phonological awareness is discussed and Westwood explains some specific phonological skills like blending and segmenting.
2. Phonics. Synthetic phonics is recommended for beginning readers.
3. Fluency. Westwood states that, "Most dysfluency is caused by lack of reading practice, inefficient word recognition skills, and trying to read books that are too difficult" (p. 40). Repeated reading is recommended as a strategy for addressing fluency problems, but interestingly, there is no mention of any of the more recent contradictory findings on this (Chard, Ketterlin-Geller, Baker, Doabler, & Apichatabutra, 2009).
4. Vocabulary. Westwood suggests that more class time should be devoted to vocabulary development (p. 34).
5. Text comprehension. Explicit teaching of comprehension skills is advocated (p. 30). There is an entire chapter devoted to reading comprehension in which good and poor comprehenders are described and the most common causes of poor reading comprehension are discussed.

Westwood does give some examples of reading interventions (both Australian and American), for example, SWELL, Reading Recovery, MULTILIT, and Success for All, but there does not appear to be any indication of whether some interventions are better than others. On page 54, Westwood outlines the features of an effective reading program. In addition to specific interventions, more general strategies are presented, for example, guided reading and peer tutoring (including Pause, Prompt, and Praise).

In the chapters on writing, Westwood describes the simple view of writing, made up of lower order transcription skills (like handwriting and punctuation) and higher order thinking processes (like planning and sequencing content). The point is made that lower order skills need to be automatic in order to devote more working memory capacity to higher order skills (p. 57).

In this book, Westwood highlights many of the most current (and in some cases controversial) issues relating to literacy teaching, including:

1. Literacy teaching methods. Westwood suggests that schools don't necessarily use the most effective teaching methods, and identifies teaching methods as "one of the most powerful causes of literacy problems" (p. 4).
2. Approaches to teaching literacy. Westwood discusses various approaches to teaching, including the use of a 'balanced' approach. He also recognises that there are problems with the term 'balanced'. The Four Blocks Program is cited as an example of a 'balanced' program. This is an interesting choice, but one which is perhaps better placed closer to the whole language end of the continuum.
3. Instructional time devoted to literacy. This is identified as another reason for literacy problems.
4. Teacher training in literacy. Several times in his book, Westwood mentions teacher training in literacy. On page 11, he questions whether teachers are receiving adequate instruction in literacy in their initial teacher training. Teachers' own literacy skills are also questioned. On page 65, Westwood refers to the lack of professional training in the teaching of spelling, and on page 66, he refers to the lack of teacher training in how to teach handwriting.
5. The research to practice gap. "There appears to be a very large gap between what research has revealed about learning to read and what beginning teachers are taught to believe" (p. 12). I believe this paints a very realistic picture about the state of reading instruction in Australia.

One very useful feature of this book is the lists of links at the end of each chapter. Here, Westwood points the reader to useful websites and online links to documents and resources that support each chapter. Also, in support of his recommendations, Westwood has used current, appropriate, empirical references, including Australian references where possible. This book is a very readable text, which would be suitable for both practising teachers and pre-service teachers as it gives a good overview of the relevant issues to do with teaching students with reading and writing difficulties.

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Consultants' Corner

One of the roles of the Consultant Policy Committee is to plan PD. We try hard to find topics of interest, which will increase members' knowledge of research or add to their bank of teaching strategies. The hope is that, although these PD sessions are planned with Consultants in mind, they will be of interest to all members. Apologies to those of you not in the Melbourne area. Thank you for some suggestions for topics. As the planning for 2010 has started, more ideas would be welcome, please.

The first professional development event for this year was titled 'How to Run a Successful Private Practice' and was capably delivered by Joan Pilbeam. Joan has been running her own private practice for many years and was an ideal candidate to deal with this topic. After a brief mention of her teaching background, she spoke on the various aspects of managing a practice, from the physical requirements of equipping an office to managing students with LD and communicating with parents and schools. This communication is vital in the partnership that surrounds learning.

The second of the 2009 LDA professional development series was conducted by Mary Delahunty. Mary is able to bridge the gap between the conceptual view of mathematics and the needs of students with learning difficulties. Her theoretical points were always supported with many practical examples of hands-on activities and games.

See the PD section in this *Bulletin* for information about the next two PD sessions. They are both about the impacts on learning of chronic illness and more specialised vision difficulties.

Of interest to all is the fact that a new, more streamlined set of forms for applying for Consultant membership and for recording attendance at PD has been developed. I know this will be welcome news as this latter has been an issue recently. These forms will be ready for 2010.

My thanks to Jan Roberts and Rosemary Carter for their PD reviews.

Joan Cooper
Convenor, Consultants' Committee
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Report from Victorian Referral Officer – January to March 2009

February and March were busy months. The total referrals for the first quarter show an improvement on last year. Many Consultants' schedules are full already so I'm having some problems matching families with a Consultant in their geographic area.

The Referral Confirmation Form I send out to Consultants when a referral is taken up is out of date and an updated version will be available soon. It will include the options of receiving referral details via email and of making payments via direct payment into my account. Please email me if you would prefer to receive your referral information via email.

We are also in the process of getting new Referral Service flyers printed. If you could use some, please let me know. I will be sending them out to professionals and schools who regularly refer to us to update their information and possibly to some who do not refer to us. I don't want to be recruiting new people to refer to us if I'll be unable to satisfy any increase in demand for our services.

Thanks to all Consultants for their cooperation regarding the changed fee structure and the increased documentation required to officially register with the Referral Service. Please continue to keep me updated about new referrals taken up and about any vacancies. If you prefer, you can email me instead of phoning. Thanks again for all your support.

Elaine McLeish
Referral Officer, Victoria
ehmcleish@iinet.net.au

Summary of Referrals: January to March 2005 – 2009

Period	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
January	46	43	34	45	40
February	89	79	81	74	82
March	77	70	64	45	80
Total January to March	212	192	179	164	202

Source of Referrals: July 2008 to March 2009

Source of Referrals	July to September 2008	October to December 2008	January to March 2009
SPELD	32	26	39
Independent Schools	12	12	19
Paediatricians	13	11	22
Psychologists	16	14	21
Word of Mouth	10	8	14
Consultants	13	16	14
Government schools	8	9	12
Used before	5	7	9
Agencies	8	5	9
Yellow pages	14	7	8
R.C.H.	8	5	9
Internet	5	10	8
Optometrists	4	7	8
Audiologists	3	6	5
Speech pathologists	1	3	5
TOTAL	152	146	202

Referrals by Year Level: July 2008 to March 2009

Year level	July to September 2008	October to December 2008	January to March 2009
Prep	8	6	4
Year 1	12	10	9
Year 2	19	14	16
Year 3	16	14	22
Year 4	21	17	31
Year 5	20	18	23
Year 6	12	18	21
Year 7	16	11	20
Year 8	10	14	10
Year 9	6	13	6
Year 10	6	3	11
VCE	1	2	14
Adult	5	6	15

Total for Primary	108	97	126
Total for Secondary	39	43	61
Total for Adult	5	6	15
TOTAL	152	146	202

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Membership Application Form 2009

Membership is for the period 1 January to 31 December 2009
Pro rata membership subscriptions are not available. The annual membership fee entitles members to four issues of the Bulletin and two issues of the Journal for the calendar year. Back issues are supplied to members joining during the year.

Name _____ **Title** _____
(Individual membership)

Organisation _____
(Institutional membership)

Type of organisation _____
(Indicate whether school, or if other institution, please describe nature of institution)

Name of contact person _____
(Institutional membership)

Address _____

Email _____

Tel _____ **Mobile** _____

Degree/Qualification _____
(Individual membership)

Current Occupation/Area of Interest _____
(Individual membership)

Membership Categories

☐ **Member $93.50** ☐ **Consultant Member $148.50** (subject to accreditation)

☐ **Student Member $49.50** (student ID required) ☐ **Institutional Member (includes schools) $165.00**

☐ **Please find my cheque attached for $**_____

Payments by EFT can be made to:
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When using EFT please include your name in the transfer information fields, and send completed application form to LDA by mail, fax or email, giving date and reference of EFT payment.
or

Charge my ☐ **VISA** ☐ **Mastercard**

Card No ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ **Expiry** ____ /____ / ____

Name on Card _____

Signature _____ **Date** ____ / ____ / ____

☐ **Please tick if a receipt is required**

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