

## Recipient Details

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Reference Type: Teacher - School

State or territory: Qld

Serial Identification Number: 473751

## Responses

### Curriculum and assessment

1. I refer to recent statistics regarding the following:

- Parents delaying their child's entry to formal schooling;
- High levels of anxiety displayed by very young students;
- More parents dealing with "school refusals" and increased participation of students in home-schooling;
- NAPLAN results not meeting expectations;
- Increased time spent by teachers dealing with student behaviours and resultant exclusions for some.

That National Curriculum, in the early years particularly, seems to be having a detrimental effect on society. My view is that "too much, too soon" is being imposed on young children, some of whom develop neurological maturity later than others. The play-based activities of previous years need to be returned with lots of oral language development to prepare for the formal learning that follows.

With regard to assessment, of far more importance is the ability of teachers to recognize different learning styles (e.g., dyslexia) through the analysis of students' reading, spelling and writing samples from Year 1 onwards. Parents have told me that they recognized a learning difference from this age but teachers have told them not to worry. Hence, in Year 6, a student may then be formally identified as dyslexic. Parents have been frustrated by this situation. Early intervention could have been introduced with a lot less frustration displayed by both parents and student concerned.

For youngest students to be given an E on a report card for English is detrimental to their mental well-being and is not a necessary predictor of their future success as a citizen. The different learning style that is dyslexia is not related to intelligence yet it is the dyslexic students who seem to suffer mentally because of their struggles to read and write as others do. "Teach them as they learn best" is not put into practice effectively in the early years. Time (in an overcrowded curriculum) for children to absorb the fundamentals of language at an age-appropriate pace is not afforded.

Rating: 7

### Teachers and teaching

2. I refer to Recommendations 15 and 17 of the Students First document: Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group. Preservice teachers need more exposure to error analysis skills in reading to be able to detect a child's learning difficulties (be it dyslexia, poor memory or both). The notion of "one size fits all" prevails in the teaching of reading – i.e., the phonics only approach – and,

while it works for most children, it is the dyslexic child who gets left behind. When a Prep student insists to his father that the word of is spelled as ov (heard via a parent-teacher interview), one knows that there is something missing from this approach. When a student sounds out w-a-s (pronouncing the letter a as in apple) before pronouncing the word as one does, there is indeed something missing. When a Year 3 child is still sounding out every individual letter in a word and then not blending those letters into a real word, there is again something missing. The phonics approach only is not translating into effective reading skills for all children.

Rating: 7

#### Leaders and leadership

3. Personally I had a wonderful Principal who supported me to learn new ways to help dyslexic students become much better readers (e.g., a Year 3 dyslexic student starting the year at Level 3 and ending the year at level 19). A colleague tells me she now teaches to the regular “tick and flick” criteria sheet - a demoralising process that goes against her beliefs about how children learn best and that flies in the face of her vast years of experience, especially as the inspection process is conducted by less-experienced teaching practitioners. Practitioners as leaders need the freedom to explore new approaches with their students rather than be constrained by the biased professional development restrictions imposed by a system that may be ignorant of other possibilities. Quantitative data produced as evidence based programs can be fudged, in that the relevant organization does not say who the promoted strategies do not reach. Empirical evidence comes from the heart.

Rating: 5

#### School and Community

6. Schools do provide training for parents and their teacher aides to supplement the work of teachers now. For example, the much earlier “Pause, Prompt, Praise” training was updated with the “Support-a-reader” program many years ago. As a support teacher, I trained aides and parents in these programs. So the same can happen for any new strategies introduced once a Lead teacher is trained. Parents of Distance Education students are used to coming together for inservice at intervals throughout the year, so they would respond well to being given strategies that are more effective – ones that fill the gap for dyslexic students – and benefit all young students, in fact. In promoting the alternative strategies for dyslexic students in a one-on-one situation, I have worked with dyslexic students from afar throughout Queensland - some home-schooled, some in remote and regional areas, some in cities. The strategies I have used have benefited these students and enhanced their self-esteem as they understand their particular learning style. It has been great to see them “blossom”.

Rating: 5

#### Information and Communication Technology

Information and communication technology is here to stay. I see it used and abused for younger students. Its place is for older students adapting to the demands of society. The fundamentals of literacy and numeracy in the early years needs to be multi-sensory and happen as the child is neurologically ready.

Rating: 2

## Entrepreneurship and schools

I refer again to the young learners – some dyslexic. Research into alternative strategies for reading skill development and mastering sight words is found at:

- [www.dyslexia.com](http://www.dyslexia.com) (international website)
- [www.davislearn.com](http://www.davislearn.com) (research based on work with classroom teachers in USA)
- [www.waihaodowns.nz](http://www.waihaodowns.nz) (latest research on the New Zealand scene)
- <http://www.tvnz.co.nz> (news item featuring the NZ school)
- [www.dyslexiaqueensland.com](http://www.dyslexiaqueensland.com) (testimonials on my website from happy parents and students)

Early intervention is most important for long-term benefits to society.

Rating: 6

Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

7. When an education system can adopt new strategies for learning-challenged students, enrolments will surely follow. Many parents I know have changed their child from one school to another to seek a better service for their dyslexic child. They have told me that phonics only did not work for their child.

Teachers working across clusters of schools need the appropriate professional development in effective strategies and can be supported to share these strategies with their colleagues in co-ordinated PD sessions as happened with the Appraisal Process in Queensland that is now obsolete.

Parents of Distance Education students (city and regional alike) would not hesitate to engage in effective training for their child as it is often the dyslexic students who opt out of attending a school because of stress and frustration. A child with renewed self-esteem is likely to return to a school in time.

Boarding school in the early years is not something I am familiar with.

Rating for enrolments: 2

Rating for clusters: 4

Rating for distance education: 6

Rating for boarding: 2

Diversity

Never before has the diversity within a classroom been greater. Why not adopt a method that works for the well-being of all students. I refer again to research results at the websites mentioned earlier (Key Issue 5). “Teach them how they learn best” versus “one size fits all” comes to mind again and may best be achieved by further reducing class sizes in the early years.

Rating: 7

## Transitioning beyond school

Referring again to the young learner, early intervention that is effective for all students can improve the long-term benefits for society as a whole. If teachers are allowed flexibility in providing for all learning styles in learning and assessments tasks, students are more likely to seek their desired choice of occupations according to their interests and strengths with confidence and enhanced self-esteem. I believe that transitioning beyond school happens best when a person

- has had a positive school experience;
- has a good sense of well-being (feels successful) ;
- has been allowed to learn according to his learning style;
- has been supported to be the best he can be in whatever occupation he chooses.

It is important for the education system to get it right at the start - in the early years - for long-term benefits for society.

Rating: 2

## Additional Comments

A colleague handed me a book by Ron Davis called "The Gift of Dyslexia". Through a period of self-discovery, Davis described dyslexia as a cognitive function and a "picture-thinker" learning style. Having followed this lead, Davis learning strategies provided the missing piece of the puzzle in terms of helping me to help dyslexic students become better readers and writers. Having worked with these strategies both in a school/small-group situation and one-on-one, it has certainly filled that gap.

A prominent educator in the UK, Richard Whitehead, has just produced a book relating his success with dyslexic students. The following words have been provided just this week (26/07/17) by Abigail Marshall, Internet Information Services Director of Davis Dyslexia Association International.

"I am delighted to announce that Richard Whitehead has just released a new book geared to educators called "Why Tyrannosaurus But Not If". Richard is a highly experienced Davis Workshop Presenter and Specialist, as well as a Davis Learning Strategies workshop presenter and mentor and has been the director of Davis Learning Founding for many years. He is also a teacher with impressive educational credentials including a SpLD certificate, and holds a position as the Special Education Co-ordinator for an independent secondary school in the UK."

It was suggested that this book will also provide a bridge to understanding with educators who are sceptical of Davis methods, but may be more receptive to a book written by a person with the sort of credentials and teaching experience they value.

An email inquiry from a teacher to me also this week says:

"Hi Anne, my name is Susie and I am a Special Ed teacher at Delaneys Creek school. I have just been chatting to Austin Price's Mum about the work you did with Austin and I want to know more! Firstly, I'd like some info I can give to parents on how to access your services. Secondly, Austin's Mum has so inspired me, I'd love to know about Davis facilitator training (the how, when, where and how much). Could you forward me some info via email when you can please."

I trust you will investigate the information on the Davis approach to learning thoroughly - as it is spreading throughout the world - for its long-term benefits to all students.

