



Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

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Summary

Change the curriculum in early Years literacy to reflect EBP

Skill up the teachers

Provide appropriate resources

Main submission

When government institutions- the Victorian Department of Education- set out a curriculum for Early Years Literacy which is rife with non-evidence based practice there is little hope of any positive change for our students.

Mark Seidenberg states in his book, *Language at the Speed of Sight*

“For reading scientists the evidence that the phonological pathway is used in reading and especially important in beginning reading is about as close to conclusive as research on complex human behaviour can get.”

And from Macmillan, in an evaluation of the UK Government’s Early Literacy Intervention Initiative:

“Pictures and guessing play no part in any of the word reading processes that occur. Nor is the use of context among the processes that occurs during an initial eye fixation. Only after an initial eye fixation occurs, and only on the occasions where word meaning is in doubt, do the eyes regress back over the preceding text to use context as an aid to meaning. These particular regressions constitute a post reading strategy that may occur afterwards: in effect, a non-reading strategy used to confirm meaning, not to extract it in the first place”.

Synthetic Phonics is a way of teaching children to read. It has been identified both here and overseas as the most successful approach to the teaching of reading and spelling. The 'synthetic' component reflects the practice of 'synthesising', or blending together. The 'phonic' part reflects the process of linking individual speech sounds (phonemes) to written symbols (graphemes). Essentially, when a child learns to read

using Synthetic Phonics they learn to link letters to speech sounds and then blend these sounds together to read words. They also learn to separate (segment) words into their constituent sounds and link these

Yet for some reason this curriculum has been hijacked by people who hold fast to the mistaken belief that phonology is an inefficient strategy.

Researchers from St Andrew's University found that one method of learning to read produced much better results than the other methods they looked at. This method was called Synthetic Phonics. This success has since been replicated in numerous studies world-wide

And yet teachers across the country are being given advice like this:

For Foundation year In Reading and Viewing:

Indicators of progress

- Students combine letter sound knowledge for reading simple, regular, one-syllable, 2–4 letter words with short vowels in various ways. For example, pin, egg, hop, either: (1) by recoding each letter to its matching sound and then blending the sounds; or (2) by selecting one or more first letters and quickly guessing the word.
- Students combine a knowledge of context (meaning, sentence structure and letters) to read or predict words. For example, they use the context and the initial sounds of a word to predict it when reading aloud. For example, they predict 'house' in Sam ran into the house.

And in the Reading Difficulties and Dyslexia section under Focussed Teaching..

"These activities can be repeated to allow students to practise predicting a word in a sentence by using its first letter.

Instructions

1. Ask the student to read and complete sentences using the meaning and structure of the sentence and the first letter of the last word as a prompt. For example: 'The cat was chasing the m_____.'

Increasing complexity and practice

This activity provides additional opportunities for students to practise predicting a word in a sentence by using the meaning and structure of the sentence and the first letter of the word.

- Change the position of the missing word in the sentence. For example: 'I r_____ my bike to school.'

As well, the three cueing system of reading is strongly recommended in the Early Years curriculum document.

This advocating a method of reading that only poor readers use.

The evidence on how the brain learns to read and what is the most effective way to teach it has been settled for years yet the authorities have chosen to with hold it from their teachers and so every year a significant number of children are doomed to failure and for some, a downward spiral into unemployment, depression and jail..

Nothing will change until:

1. All teachers are skilled up in the best practice for teaching reading and spelling-as outlined above
2. Early Years students are instructed using the Synthetic Phonics method
3. The curriculums are changed to reflect this
4. Resources are provided that give every child the best chance to reach their full potential in literacy.
5. The damaging 3 cueing system of reading-guessing words from context and syntax is banned