



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

Submitter: Ms Margaret Ryan
Submitting as a: Parent/ career/ guardian
State: Vic.

Summary

1. Change teacher and speech pathologist training to provide greater emphasis on evidence based teaching methods such as synthetic phonics to assist dyslexic and non-dyslexic students, as well as information about dyslexia and other learning difficulties so that these professionals can be sufficiently aware of these conditions that they can give guidance to parents as to when a student may need to be tested.
2. Give free training to current teachers and speech pathologists (who work in this area) in the areas referred to above.

Main submission

Response to third bullet point - teacher (and speech pathologist) qualifications

My submission relates to improved training of teachers and speech pathologists. My daughter is dyslexic. She was only diagnosed in Year 5 and not as a result of anything said by any school teacher. Dyslexia is a learning difficulty and is classified as a disability under the Disability Discrimination Act.

At a meeting with the school Vice Principal of her primary school, her teacher and the speech pathologist from the Catholic Education Office, after she was diagnosed, it was revealed that at least the Vice Principal and the speech pathologist knew very little about dyslexia. This is despite the fact that a speech pathologist from the CEO (a different one I believe) diagnosed my daughter with problems with phonemic awareness (a symptom of dyslexia) and this CEO speech pathologist was endeavouring to assist my daughter including providing activities on improving phonemic awareness.

I have since learnt that both teachers and speech pathologists do not receive any significant training on dyslexia or how to help sufferers in their professional training. I understand that teachers would have to do a Masters degree to receive any significant training on dyslexia. Parents look to the teachers if their children are

struggling at school and, if the teachers are unable to solve the problem, would expect guidance as to where to go to seek help.

Teachers should have sufficient familiarity with dyslexia and other learning difficulties so as to be able to give this guidance to parents, for example to seek appropriate testing for their children. My daughter was behind in reading in Prep and yet no teacher ever suggested that she be tested for anything.

I understand that evidence based teaching methods, such as synthetic phonics, can assist both dyslexic and non-dyslexic children in learning English. However, I understand that this is also not taught at teaching schools. Teachers cannot teach what they do not know themselves. It is no point increasing funding to identify children who may have difficulties with English if teachers do not know how to help them once identified.

I strongly recommend the following:

- Change the curriculum of teaching schools (and speech pathology training) to give much greater emphasis to teaching methods that have evidenced based records of success, including synthetic phonics, as well as providing these professionals with a working knowledge of learning difficulties, including dyslexia, so that they may be aware of when a student may have such a problem so that this concern can be raised with the parents;
- Provide free training to existing teachers in the areas above (and any speech pathologists working with children in this area).