

SPELD BULLETIN

Official Organ of the
**SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
(INC.)**

(Formerly DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION OF W.A.)

Affiliated with SPELD ASSOCIATIONS THROUGHOUT Australia.

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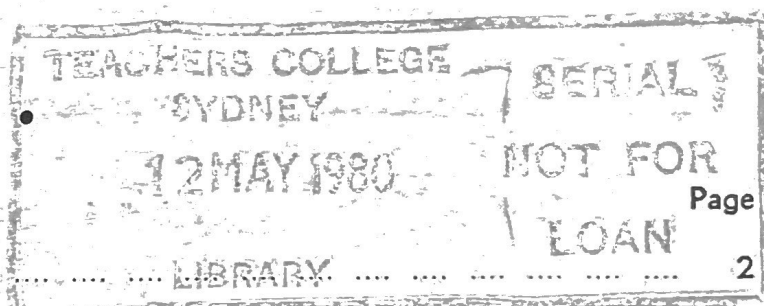
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Quoted from W.A. 25/10/74

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

1980 is the start of a new decade for SPELD. We have all just come through State elections with promises that more will be done for children with learning difficulties and now it is time to see that these promises are translated into action. You will all be familiar with the continuing debate which comes from the Williams Report and on the problems of literacy and numeracy in school leavers — it is up to us to ensure that positive action results from this debate.

Every day the SPELD office receives calls from concerned parents. Inevitably parents are worried about the unsatisfactory progress of their child at school, and whether or not there is a specific learning difficulty involved and in what way SPELD can help. To this and our office staff, professional members and others give all the assistance and back-up possible, devoting many hours of their own time during weekends and after office hours. However, they cannot be expected to keep up this kind of pace and pressure indefinitely. Our task for this year, therefore, must be to develop further ways of directly assisting such parents. This will require new means of fund raising and ways of making the public more aware about SPELD and its functions.

Later this year there will be two reports presented on teacher education. The Auchmuty Report is expected to look at the content of teacher education in a national context, while the Vickery Committee should be reporting on teacher education in this State. SPELD must be actively concerned that the needs of the learning disabled child are not overlooked. Undoubtedly these reports will feature in the press and it is important that each SPELD member is aware of what they say and what they mean for our children.

Elsewhere in our journal there is information about the SPELD Quiz Night. It is important that this night is successful and that all who are involved in SPELD make an attempt to attend.

If you are able to offer voluntary help, we are particularly in need of people to help in the Library. If you are in need of assistance from SPELD please contact the office.

For all members of SPELD the Eighties is a time of challenge. If you have not been active, NOW is the time to renew your level of activity. An organisation is only as strong as the support it receives from its members.

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FROM THE SECRETARY

1979, the International Year of the Child, saw the advent of a number of long-term initiatives arising out of the Cadman Report of 1976, which has since been studied and accepted by the Australian Education Council which met in Perth last October for its 40th Conference.

The recommendations were mainly directed towards:

- Improving information available about the incidence of learning difficulties and effectiveness of Australian schooling;
- development of appropriate programmes for the handicapped and for educationally disadvantaged groups;
- increased opportunities for early childhood education;
- better diagnostic and treatment services;
- improved support services for teachers;
- further research into materials suitable for retarded readers;
- improvement of opportunities and facilities for adults wishing to overcome literary problems;
- and development in teacher education programmes, including the preparation of teacher educators, to better prepare teachers for their task.

In a position paper recently received from Mr. Cadman, M.P., who continues to interest himself in this area in a determined effort to see that the Report does not just languish on a shelf, he details action which has been taken. Briefly, this is as follows:

Consistent with the Committee's recommendation that a regular nationwide survey to monitor incidence of learning difficulties and effectiveness of schooling, the Education Research and Development Committee commissioned a study group to report on the feasibility of instituting a regular programme of national assessment of educational standards and progress. The outcome has been that a series of tests, including a National Monitoring Programme are to be conducted over the next five years. These tests will be developed at several levels—

- Progress tests would be for use by teachers within classrooms to help them diagnose problems individual children might have in reading, writing and number work.
- Review tests would be used by teachers and principals to summarise children's achievements in certain areas.
- State Departments of Education will continue with their present testing programmes.
- The National Monitoring Programme will consist of sample survey tests to be conducted in co-operation with State Departments of Education and those responsible for running the non-government education system.

It is estimated that testings will begin in October, 1980, and that about one thousand students aged 10 and 14 would be tested in about 25 schools

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in each State. Let us hope that this will put an end to the continued and childish debate about standards which has served only to obscure the real issues and to put off the day when those areas of responsibility will have to make some radical changes.

The ERDC is continuing to support research in the area of specific learning difficulties including aspects of screening, diagnosis and remediation. Furthermore, ERDC and the Australian Council for Educational Research are jointly sponsoring a research project "A Survey of School Leavers" which is making a follow-up study of that same sample of students who were involved in the ACER Literacy and Numeracy Study in 1975. This will focus on the transition from school to work and the effectiveness of schooling.

I am afraid that I find it ironical that, having accepted the recommendations of the Galbally Report for additional funding for migrant and multicultural education, the Government has, since 1978, provided through Schools Commission funds, increased amounts for the teaching of English language in schools and for fostering development of the teaching of community languages in schools. One could wish that the necessity to **teach** English to English-speaking children was as readily recognised! Though, to be fair, the statement does say that the Curriculum Development Committee is seeking to foster the linguistic abilities of Australian children, including those in need of special assistance, through its Language Development Project which is giving particular attention to development reading and other language capacities in school years 5 - 8. Increased numbers of speech pathologists are now also being trained.

However, to my mind, the most promising developments lies in the area of Teacher Education, the general concern for the quality of teacher education reflected in the Select Committee's recommendations (Cadman Report) having been taken up by the Commonwealth in the establishment of the National Inquiry into Teacher Education. The Report from this Inquiry is expected within the next few months. Similar inquiries have been conducted by each State and a copy of our submission to the Western Australian Inquiry is available for perusal in the office should any member wish to read it in full.

Briefly we urged that:

- teachers need to know HOW a child learns and Why a significant proportion of children fail to learn;
- it is necessary to include in any teacher training programme a great deal more about child development; what is normal functioning; and when this is not evident in a particular child what steps to take to correct it;
- teachers need to be trained to recognise the total functional development of the child, which includes maturational, neuro-muscular, fine and gross motor, sight, hearing, social and emotional factors, (all components of intellectual development,) from which emerges the child's self-image;

- insights into deviance in development;
- an understanding of how children learn and the factors which inhibit and promote learning.
- an understanding of different learning styles;
- teaching strategies and techniques which promote optimal learning;
- conceptual framework embodying the various content areas of reading, maths, etc.;
- that they should receive guided teaching practice in getting together all these factors.

We also stressed the need for training in better communication skills and their relevance to the attitude of the teacher toward the parents of a child with a specific learning difficulty; the overwhelming need to recognise the parent as the primary educator of the child; to encourage teachers to consult and **give credence** to the opinions and information offered by parents.

Space precludes my enlarging on this theme but world-wide trends are to recognise and emphasise the importance of the parent as a major resource in the multi-disciplinary team for assessment but it is, of course, another matter to have this translated into every classroom.

COMMUNICATION within disciplines, across disciplines and including parents must be one of our primary goals if outcomes for our children are to be other than indifferent.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING was another important area of our submission. We would wonder if there is any other profession wherein those qualities are allowed to perform with so little practical experience and continuous in-service training. Findings of recent surveys highlight the fact that neglect in this area can be no less drastic than the ineptitude of a surgeon or an engineer.

Last year also proved an extremely busy one for us all involved as we were in various IYC committees and projects; continuing our classes for adults who wish to improve their basic skills; conducting a special course for unemployed youth; another specially devised course, the Coolbellup Disadvantaged Women's Programme; Assessment days for lower primary children and others for adults. Calls for speakers were also very heavy both in the metropolitan area and in the country: indeed in November, Joyce Rushton and I went to Esperance for three days for a Seminar and were barely home before we were off to Bridgetown for another Seminar. Joyce has only just returned from another full week in Esperance where a tightly packed schedule ensured that she spoke to all the service organisations; conducted workshops for teachers; assessed some children and so on. This will no doubt be reported more fully elsewhere. And we have also made a start on Advocacy for certain young adults whose misfortunes have ended in infringement of the Law. Altogether a very satisfying year's effort, if an exhausting one, with 1980 showing promise of even bigger and better things to come.

BEGINNING READING THROUGH LANGUAGE-EXPERIENCE

Mary Scouler, South Thornlie Primary School, W.A.

What is reading?

Perhaps, like me, you believe that reading is the search for meaning to which the reader must make a very significant contribution in the form of his knowledge of the world. If this is so, you will be interested in reading my approach to beginning reading through language-experience.

Having taught Year 1 reading for many years, I had become somewhat disenchanted, firstly with my less-than-one-hundred-per-cent success rate and, secondly, and more importantly, because a number of children left my Year 1 class not really excited about reading. I felt that there had to be a better way of helping children gain control over this wonderful tool called reading.

At the outset I should state that I do not consider myself an expert in reading education. However, I do believe that in all teaching, and in the teaching of reading especially, the most important factor is the presence of an enthusiastic, understanding, sympathetic and supportive teacher.

Below I have set down some of the practical things I have tried in my three years of following a language-experience approach to the teaching of beginning reading. Perhaps the best way for me to present these ideas is in the form of answers to the questions which I am most frequently asked.

What do you do on the first day of school?

When children first come to school, what they expect to do and want to do most is to learn to read. To capitalise on the magic of this tremendous motivation to read, I make it possible for the children to participate in pseudo-reading right from the first day.

At the end of the previous year, I prepare a small illustrated booklet for each child using three or four familiar animals, for example, a black cat, a white dog, a red bird, a grey mouse.

These are presented in the booklet so that the first page depicts the black cat and the text below it states: **Black cat, black cat, what can you see?** The second page shows a white dog and the text says: **I see a white dog looking at me. White dog, white dog, what can you see?** The remaining pages use the other animals until the last animal is used and the text on this page states: **I see Billy Jones looking at me. Billy Jones, Billy Jones, what can you see?** The next page shows all the other animals and the text says: **I see a black cat, a white dog, a red bird, a grey mouse looking at me.**

The **Billy Jones** page has on it a polaroid picture of Billy Jones and the last page of every child's book has a picture of him. It has been my

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experience that all children can **read** their own book by the end of the first day. You are right, it is not **real** reading, but the child thinks it is and I am convinced that this experience lays the foundation for the promotion of an extremely healthy attitude to reading and, at the same time, it captures parent interest in the most dramatic way.

By the second day, parents want to know what you are on about and so the way is prepared for a meeting with parents on the Thursday or Friday. The purpose of the meeting is to explain the language-experience approach and the role of parents whose children are being exposed to it.

As teachers, it is absolutely crucial that we respect the language that children bring to school and the experiences they convey by means of that language. It is equally important that we **sell** this idea to the parents of our children. It is also vital that the child who brings the experiences to school captured in **unconventional** or **ungrammatical** structures should not be permitted to feel that **his** form of language is unacceptable.

What happens on the second day?

On the second day the real adventure starts. Having tried various forms, we now use an Activity Book where the children can illustrate on one page and the teacher prints the story on the lined page. Getting the children to talk about their picture is usually not difficult and a few well directed questions will, in most cases, get some response from even the shyest child. Having the child close where he can clearly see you printing is vital. Explain that you have written exactly what he said. Get him to repeat it, read it to him and then, if he will, read it to you. As the year progresses, you can introduce punctuation, grammar, phonics, from the child's own story. **Tremendous, you're an author. You've written your very first story.**

I have found that at this stage, motor control is generally not good. Tracing over the words that comprise the texts in the child's book help establish this desirable control but, of course, tends to spoil the book. This has been overcome by using pieces of lunch wrap to trace over the words. This leads at a later stage to copying on to pieces of paper. At a later stage still, I start omitting words like **the, and, I, it**. For example, **I can ride . . . bike**. This comes at varying stages with each child, some early in April, some in August! When this happens, each child is given **My Personal Dictionary** (half a pad with pages labelled in alphabetical order).

Suddenly, one day, you find that some children want to write their whole story using, of course, their personal dictionary into which the words are put as they are required — this is where someone else comes into the picture. A teacher-aide or a mum can take this over for you.

What do you do with the rest of the class while you're writing the stories?

Come on! You are much more imaginative than I am. Where are all those manual activities you have or jigsaws, beads, building bricks? Generally, I find it is best to avoid those that are too messy or dangerous. The teacher-

aide or a mum could be used in this situation also but I have found it is best for both me and each child if I write their story at least in each term. The writing of the story continues daily either from spontaneous or structured experiences.

What about a story for the whole class?

On the first day a topic is introduced and discussion takes place, for example, about a coin, an animal, cooking — the list is endless. On the next day comes the recording. The story is given by the children and written in their actual words. (This point must be made clear to parents who perhaps would cast doubts on your grammar or sentence structure.) The next step is to have the story typed, preferably on a large-type typewriter, duplicated and given to each child to have. My children use files in which to keep these. From the story come all the associated activities such as close activities, sentence restructuring, word matching phonics, and so on. The last of these leads to a major question — Phonics?

There are three clue-giving information systems used in the art of reading:

- semantic — meaning
- syntactic — grammar
- graphophonic — symbol-sound relationships.

The child comes to school with an amazing degree of control over the first two systems. It is the task of the teacher to help the child to use this syntactic and semantic information to come to grips with the way of the system of sounds is presented in the writing system. Let me emphasise that the teacher does need to impart this **phonic information**. What better place to introduce **d** than when the story is about **Brett's Dog**? In this context, do not avoid presenting the lowercase **b** and **d** together. If they are not treated together, however, will the child **decide for himself** how they differ? All the single sounds can be presented in the same way. The initial consonant clusters and the vowel sequences can also be treated in the same way. The following chart pinned on the wall is a great help to my children.

Initial Consonant Clusters

Those with	Those with	Starting with		Others
l	r	s	st	dw
bl	br	sc	str	tw
cl	cr	scr	sp	qu
fl	dr	sch	spl	
gl	fr	sl	squ	
pl	gr	sm	sw	
sl	pr	sn		
	tr			
	thr			

Vowels						
Short	Long			Others		
i	ite	ie	y	igh	oi/oy	ow/ou
e	ele	ea	ee	y	er	or
o	ote	ow	oa	oe	ir	au
a	ate	al	ay	eigh	ur	augh
u	ute	ui	ua	oo	or	ough
						aw
						a(lk)
						a(II)

The important point to realise is that the phonics come from the reading, not reading from phonics.

When do I introduce basal texts?

Basal texts are introduced just as late as I feel the child is ready. Try not to let outside pressures influence you. I am convinced that when the child tackles a basal text, he will do it with confidence and a great deal of ease. The confidence children gain from this reading for meaning by language-experience is difficult to measure but it is a joy to behold. The important point here is that even the most difficult basal text seems easier when the child's journey into reading is begun with a good, long tour of language-experience country!

Good Luck

Good luck with your foray into language-experience and I hope it brings your children and as much fun as it has to my classes and me. We are still having that fun. Incidentally, displayed in our room in large letters is the sign:

We can do anything if we try.

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READING AT HOME

Reading is a behaviour just like any other behaviour.

Reading is a learned behaviour and the way we react to a child's reading has a lot to do with how this reading behaviour develops.

Be positive. A positive reinforcer will strengthen the behaviour it immediately follows and make that behaviour more likely to happen again.

Any sign of approval or affection are positive reinforcers for kids.

We often forget to notice when a child is doing well.

Positive reinforcement is vital to the reluctant reader.

Some examples of positive reinforcement:

- a wink
- a smile
- a cuddle
- "good"
- "that's right"
- "very good"

Kids learn to avoid people/activities associated with punishment/stress. Hence they could avoid reading.

Any sign of disapproval is a punisher.

- frown
- "no"
- "do it again"
- "you can do better"

REMEMBER

Reading aloud is punishing even for us, never mind the reluctant reader, so give plenty of positive reinforcement.

Extinguish unwanted behaviour by ignoring it.

Keep the whole session fairly short (15 minutes?).

Don't encourage tracing with a finger, this encourages jerky reading.

Keep it relaxed, and as much fun as you possibly can.

Talk, discuss, chat about the story ideas and things in it relevant to the child.

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Dear Dr. Lee,

I would like to thank your organisation for the help you are giving to people like myself who were not able to get full education.

I first heard of SPELD from the programme "Puzzle Children". I then went to your office to get more information as my oldest boy was very much like the children on this programme. I was given a lot of help from the ladies in the office. They showed me around, explained how the adult and children's classes work and showed the things that are available to aid people like us to learn more. I now attend adult classes, and my son is being taught by the same teacher.

I would like again to thank you and say I hope your organisation continues as it is much needed and appreciated by all who come to you for help. I therefore wish to thank all the staff of SPELD.

Yours sincerely,

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to express my thanks that there is an organisation like SPELD which is willing to give time to educate people like myself, who for some reason or another find that they are lacking.

I would therefore be very disappointed if this service were to be withdrawn. I feel there is a demand and necessity for such a service, and the dedicated people that run it.

I remain, yours,

STUDENT OF SPELD.

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REPORT FROM THE SPELD AUXILIARY

The first meeting for the year of the Auxiliary was held on Monday, 25th February at the home of the President, Mrs. Kay Brockway.

It was voted that another \$200 donation be sent to the Management Council.

Fund raising being a priority, plans were made to help with the Quiz Night on Tuesday, 15th April, at 7.30 p.m. in the Subiaco Football Club. It was decided that we supply cheese and biscuits for each table.

We are to run another Raffle. The selling of tickets to begin in April. Previous raffles have all been very successful, both financially and "Public Relations" wise.

Arrangements have begun for another "Afternoon of Music" for the middle of the year. Those who attended last year will remember what a delightful musical treat Miss Valerie Melrose arranged for us, and will be anxious to attend again. The presence of our President, Dr. Lee and his wife added to the good public relations that was created.

Miss Joy McLeod is continuing to keep a sharp eye open for reports and articles to do with, or of interest to, SPELD. With these she is filling a well-kept scrapbook.

We are very much indebted to Mr. John Barrymore, Mrs. Sadie Williams' son, for keeping us constantly supplied with teatowels. The sale of these has been a very profitable source of income.

The Auxiliary welcomes new members.

Best Wishes from . . .

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As mentioned in the Presidential Report the office and professional staff of SPELD are under a great deal of pressure. If anyone could spare the odd day to help in the office or the library they should contact Jean Meikle or Mrs. M. Taylor by phoning 384 1299.

SPELD'S PUBLICITY DISPLAY

The display collection of photographs, charts and other printed material which has been circulating among Public Libraries in the metropolitan area, and has been taken to several country centres, is now back at SPELD Centre, Curtin Avenue, Mosman Park.

This display collection which illustrates the problems of those with specific learning difficulties can easily be transported in the average car. We would like to have it displayed in libraries, banks, shopping centres, medical centres, etc.

If you can help us in this aspect of our public relations, please contact SPELD Office, phone 384 1299.

SPELD AUXILIARY RAFFLE

FIRST PRIZE	\$500
SECOND PRIZE	\$100
THIRD PRIZE	\$25

The Auxiliary raffle is coming up soon. Tickets are 50c each and will be available now, with the prizes being drawn on or before 31st July, 1980. The results will be announced in the "West Australian" on Saturday, 2nd August, 1980.

ARE YOU ABLE TO SELL TICKETS?

If so, contact the SPELD OFFICE.

Best Wishes to SPELD from . . .

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**Specific Learning Difficulties Association of Western
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53 CURTIN AVENUE, MOSMAN PARK. PHONE 384 1299

Membership Form

NAME (Mr./Mrs./Miss)

ADDRESS

PHONE No. Private Business

INTEREST IN ASSOCIATION

(e.g. Parent, Doctor, Teacher)

*I/We agree to abide by the Objects and the Constitution of this Association and enclose \$6.00 as my/our annual subscription.

Signed Date/...../.....

Please return this form with remittance to the Hon. Secretary at the above address.

**This Association is non-sectarian and non-party political.
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