

Bulletin



On phonics, phonemic awareness and dyslexia

LDA Council 2019-20

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LDA MISSION

Learning Difficulties Australia is an association of teachers and other professionals dedicated to assisting students with learning difficulties through effective teaching practices based on scientific research, both in the classroom and through individualised instruction.

THE BULLETIN

The Bulletin is published three times a year with support from the Publications Committee and the Bulletin editorial team.

We welcome the submission of articles from LDA members and others with an interest in learning difficulties and effective instruction for possible inclusion in upcoming issues of the Bulletin.

Please submit articles, correspondence about the Bulletin or letters for publication to the Editor (molly.delemos@gmail.com). For questions about content, deadlines, length or style please contact the Editor. Articles in the Bulletin do not necessarily reflect the opinion or carry the endorsement of Learning Difficulties Australia.

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From the President

Lorraine Hammond

In recent times, I have heard a number of references to the impact of individuals on change. They often refer to water: “individually, we are one drop. Together, we are an ocean” and “the fall of dropping water wears away the stone.” Perhaps it’s time to take stock of the reach we are collectively having in promoting evidence-based practice.

In 2019, LDA hosted Dr David Kilpatrick in five Australian states to a total audience of about 1300 participants. David is a conduit of research that can be difficult for teachers to access and which he excels at making understandable. In his talks he explained the importance of ‘sight words’ as a goal, not a strategy and made explicit the precursor skills required to learn to read and how best to teach them.

At the same time Emily Hanford, a senior education correspondent for APM Reports and producer of the audio documentary “*Hard Words: Why Aren’t Kids Being Taught to Read?*” released “*At a Loss for Words: How a flawed idea is teaching millions of kids to be poor readers*”. Emily, who is a member of DDOLL, drew attention to the challenge for teachers whose pre-service training has left them ill-equipped to teach reading. Her easily accessible and engaging podcasts have found their way into many inboxes and raised awareness amongst educators and the wider community about the need to prepare teachers who understand the science of reading.

Last year, *Sharing Successful Practice* conferences took place in Melbourne and Sydney. Hosted by schools who privilege high impact instruction, these low cost events, held during school holidays, were attended by over 500 teachers and featured sessions by researchers, academics,

school administrators and teachers who volunteered their time to share their knowledge and expertise in effective instruction. So far, *Sharing Successful Practice* conferences will go ahead in Perth, Melbourne and Geelong.

Individually, we are one drop. Together, we are an ocean.

Finally, Emeritus Professor of Cognitive Science, Max Coltheart reminded those of us who subscribe to *Developmental Disorders of Language and Literacy* (DDOLL) about growth in membership to this online forum. When it began in 2003, DDOLL had 132 members. As of October 2019, it has 1102. The aim of the DDOLL group is to disseminate information about the investigation and treatment of developmental disorders of language and literacy that uses sound scientific methodology and evidence-based research. Members include teachers, parents, practitioners concerned with children’s reading difficulties, reading scientists and others. There are members in the UK, Canada, New Zealand, Singapore, USA and elsewhere, as well as Australia and many are researchers who willingly explain their work. To subscribe to DDOLL contact: max.coltheart@mq.edu.au.

There is no shortage of evidence-based practice to teach reading, but we need a better marketing campaign. There are so many ways for teachers and those who work with students with literacy based learning difficulties to engage with this research. Please send a link to a colleague and be that drop in the ocean.

LDA’s President, Dr Lorraine Hammond AM, is an Associate Professor at the School of Education at Edith Cowan University.



Lorraine divides her time between research projects on high impact instruction, teaching pre and inservice teachers, supervising higher degree students and writing and delivering professional learning for The Kimberley Schools Project. Lorraine is the Chair, Deputy Chair and Board Member of three high performing schools in WA. Lorraine has been a member of LDA Council since 2010 and has previously served as President and Vice-President.

Emily Hanford’s podcasts are available from: <https://www.apmreports.org/story/2018/09/10/hard-words-why-american-kids-arent-being-taught-to-read>;

<https://www.apmreports.org/story/2018/10/08/what-to-do-if-your-childs-school-isnt-teaching-reading-right>; and

<https://www.npr.org/2019/01/02/67722959/why-millions-of-kids-cant-read-and-what-better-teaching-can-do-about-it>

Welcome to Michael Roberts

LDA welcomes Michael Roberts, LDA's new General Manager..

His appointment follows the review of LDA undertaken last year, which recommended that LDA adopt a growth model that would involve increased turnover through memberships, professional learning and other revenue raising. This model required LDA to seek the services of a General Manager, whose role it would be to guide LDA through this process of change.

Michael comes to LDA with over 23 years of experience as an educational leader. This includes experience as a school principal and as a senior

advisor of a large network of schools across South-East Asia where he led the integration of the Singapore and Australian curriculum across all schools. He was also the Executive Director of the Good to Great Schools program, a program that supported the use of effective teaching through direct instruction, and the Executive Principal of the Arcadia Group of schools which support disengaged youth. In 2017 he was one of only two school principals to serve on the influential *Gonski Review to Achieve Educational Excellence*.

Michael is a strong supporter of evidence-based practice based on the scientific evidence of what works,



particularly in the case of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and we welcome him to LDA.

In this Bulletin

This issue of the Bulletin focuses particularly on issues relating to phonics, phonemic awareness and the use of the term dyslexia. These are all core issues in the debates about how best to teach reading and to monitor reading progress, and how best to support students with reading difficulties. Jennifer Buckingham and Kevin Wheldall argue the case for a national Phonics Check, Stephen Parker argues the case for synthetic phonics versus analytic, analogy and onset-rime phonics, and Ros Neilson looks at the phonics versus phonemic awareness debate. Moving on to the use of the term dyslexia James Chapman and William Tunmer consider the question as to whether the use of this term leads to effective and equitable practices in supporting students with reading difficulties, Steve Dykstra explains why the term dyslexia is not used to identify a specific disorder in the area of reading in the DSM-5, and Peter Westwood reflects on the changes in the terms used to identify students

with various types of learning needs over the years. This issue of the Bulletin also includes the presentations of recipients of the LDA Mona Tobias Award, the Bruce Wicking Award and the Rosemary Carter Award, with Jennifer Buckingham reflecting on the difficulties of bringing about the changes required to implement effective reading instruction for all children, based on the scientific evidence of what works, Stephen Capp outlining the road he followed in adopting evidence based practices in his school, with a particular emphasis on his recognition that catering for learning difficulty is synonymous with what is simply best practice for all children, and Jan Roberts reflecting on life as an LDA Consultant.

We apologise to our members and readers of the LDA Bulletin for the delay in the publication of this issue, which is in fact a combined issue including both Issue 2 and Issue 3 of Volume 51, and will endeavour to maintain our normal schedule of Bulletins for 2020.

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