

Consultants' Report

From the Consultants' Committee Convenor, Ann Ryan

As I sit and ponder where to start, my eyes are drawn to the flickering sunlight on the gum leaves, the soft late-winter light and the first shy head-raising of jonquils. Even though my garden has been sorely neglected during this very busy winter, it bounces back. There seem to have been many challenges on the LDA front recently, but looking out the window, I am reminded that it is all a part of the natural order – we have bursts of growth, time to enjoy our achievements, time to consider better ways, time to reflect and plan for further growth.

The specialist teacher consultant team welcomes two new members from Western Australia: Roslyn Tuia and Priscilla Carlisle. Our consultant numbers from states other than Victoria are growing steadily, increasing the reach of LDA practitioners across Australia.

Our challenge? We have a massive task ahead if we are to go anywhere near meeting the need for experienced specialist teachers across all cities and country areas. It is a daunting but exciting challenge – we welcome contact from any passionate educator, experienced with working with students with learning difficulties, armed with post-graduate qualifications in the field, with a penchant for evidence-based practice and a strong understanding of systematic phonic programs.

And yet we still ask for more! LDA Specialist Teacher Consultants recognise that literacy development is much more than phonics – we do hope you have had a chance to watch our President, Professor Anne Castles and Councillor, Dr Jenny Buckingham join with Mr Troy Verey to argue the affirmative side in a recent debate, Phonics in context is not enough:

synthetic phonics and learning to read. Watching from home, I felt like cheering when Anne commented that 'phonics is the great equaliser'. But of course there is more to reading than phonics, and as a part of our daily work we are busy developing oral language, vocabulary, phonology, fluency, comprehension, attention and more, depending on specific areas of student need.

LDA Consultants know that numeracy difficulties can only be effectively remedied with the carefully guided use of concrete materials, that writing skill development is best addressed with a skill-based qualitative rather than a quantitative approach, and that any teaching needs to be carefully monitored for cognitive load if attention is to be maintained and learning is to occur. In a nutshell, LDA Specialist Teacher Consultants have a broad range of skills. But we are just a small group of many and we would like to grow our team. Thinking of applying? Please go to the LDA website and follow the links. Or ring our Consultant Administrative Officer, Elaine McLeish 0406 388 325, if you would like further information.

We celebrate our achievements, learn from each other (and sometimes guest speakers) and share collegiate support by participating in network groups. I was delighted to attend a recent Geelong network and to be inspired by this vibrant group of consultants, to hear new strategies of 'what works', to share in reviewing favourite apps, to be reminded of LDA practices and mission. Best of all, I was able to see inside Fay Tran's tutoring room! Fay is to be the inaugural recipient of the Rosemary Carter Award. This room reminded me of a Van Gogh painting with its calming blue walls, lively shelves of colourful resources, centrally positioned table, and a designated chair for the parent – yes, in the corner! Fay's focus is on the child, who has the most important seat in the room, directly opposite Fay. Such a simple plan, but such an important way to keep a child engaged while modelling best practice for parents. Rosemary Carter must be smiling from above. We value network meetings highly so that all consultant specialist teachers will be required to

attend at least two network meetings to meet requirements to renew registration following the 2018/2019 year.

The new consultants page on the LDA website is another place to share consultant business. Minutes of Consultant Committee, the Consultant Support Group and network group minutes can be found here. The Consultant Support Group will meet on the 9th September, bringing together leaders from each network:

1. Beaumaris Shared leadership
2. Canterbury/Kew Leader: Diane Barwood.
3. Geelong Leader: Candice Macqueen
4. Glen Waverley Leader: Maureen Wickham-Kennedy
5. Ivanhoe Leader: Gerard Barry
6. Lower Templestowe Leader: Jan Roberts
7. Distance Network Leader: Ann Ryan

Most networks will be discussing the newly established Institute of Special Education (InSpEd) which aims to improve the quality of special education provision in Australia. You may like to explore this new initiative at <https://www.insped.org.au/our-vision/>. While many LDA Consultants may seek to become certified with InSpEd, as I have done, and work shoulder to shoulder with allied health professionals, LDA specialist teacher consultants will retain their position as leaders in the field of teaching students with specific learning difficulties.



For details about the process and requirements for becoming an LDA Specialist Teacher Consultant, please refer to the website www.ldaustralia.org