I am writing to alert you to recent developments within LDA, including a few changes within Council. Following the first LDA Council meeting of 2006, in February, Sylvia Byers and Greta Kelly, President and Treasurer of LDA respectively, both decided to resign from their officer positions and from Council. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking both of them most sincerely for their contributions to LDA over so many years. Members of LDA will be relieved to hear that both Sylvia and Greta have generously offered to advise and support the new incumbents of these officer positions on Council.

Prior to her resignation, Sylvia had asked me if I, as President Elect, would be willing to become President in her place, somewhat earlier than I had anticipated, the AGM not taking place until August. The Honorary Secretary of LDA, Dr Molly de Lemos, subsequently organised an email vote of existing Council members to ratify both this appointment and to fill the remaining vacancies on Council (the Treasurer’s position and a continuing vacancy for two Council member positions). We were fortunate in being able to attract Hugh McCusker to the position of Treasurer, given his extensive experience in the treasurer role, and Dr Louise Ellis (who has already been assisting with the LDA Bulletin) and Daina Verbyla as the two new Council members. The appointment of Rosemary Carter to the position of Vice-President was also approved as part of this Council vote and we are very grateful to her for being willing to act in this capacity.

In view of my new responsibilities as President, we have asked Dr Alison Madelaine and Dr Louise Ellis to take over as editors of future LDA Bulletins, to which proposal they have generously consented. I shall continue to act as Executive Editor for LDA Publications, including editing our journal.

A complete listing of the current Council is provided on the inside front cover of this Bulletin.

It only remains to say that I shall be very pleased to hear from any LDA members who have ideas for new developments to assist LDA to fulfil its mission.

Kevin Wheldall
President, LDA and Executive Editor, LDA Publications
Email: kevin.wheldall@mq.edu.au

Learning Difficulties Australia Inc. is a not for profit organisation dedicated to representing, resourcing and promoting professional educators, so that the highest level of service can be provided to individuals experiencing learning difficulties.

For more details of LDA activities, professional development opportunities and for online access to the Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties and LDA Bulletin, visit our website at www.ldaustralia.org
LDA Council 2006 as at April 2006

President
Kevin Wheldall
Vice-President
Rosemary Carter
Treasurer
Hugh McCusker
Secretary
Molly de Lemos

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Norina Buchanan
Sharlene Chimes
Louise Ellis
Ruth Fielding-Barnsley
Jan Heffernan
Elaine McLeish
Alison Madelaine
Jan Roberts
Margaret Sheldon
Daiva Verbyla

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Convenor: Molly de Lemos
Publications Committee
Convenor: Kevin Wheldall
Consultants’ Committee
Convenor: Rosemary Carter
Professional Development Committee
Convenor: Rosemary Carter
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Journal Editor: Kevin Wheldall
Journal Assistant Editor: Alison Madelaine
Bulletin Editors: Alison Madelaine and Louise Ellis

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Website Editor: Jan Heffernan
Webmaster: David Tehan

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Referral Officer, Victoria: Elaine McLeish
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ADMINISTRATION
Administration Officer: Kerrie McMahon

CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS
MULTILIT WORKSHOPS
MULTILIT® Reading Tutor Program Professional Development Workshop
Details: (02) 9886 6600 or www.multilit.com or email multilit@multilit.com

NSW
Friday, 8 September 9.15am-3.30pm
Macquarie Graduate School of Management, Sydney CBD

Friday, 17 November, 9.15am-3.30pm
Macquarie Graduate School of Management, North Ryde

QLD
Friday, 4 August, 9.15am-3.30pm
Cliftons Training Centre, Brisbane
Level 1, 255 Adelaide Street

VIC
Thursday, 8 June, 9.15am-3.30pm
Cliftons Training Centre, Melbourne
Level 1, 440 Collins Street

LDA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TALK
The PD talk on secondary maths scheduled for Saturday 6 May will now be held on Saturday 3 June 2006, from 2-4pm. Rhonda Pincott, head of student studies and specialist maths teacher at a Melbourne catholic college will speak on the topic, ‘Can the mathematical needs of secondary school students be met by differentiating the maths curriculum in the classroom?’. Venue: International House, 241 Royal Parade, Parkville.

Fee: Consultant members – $10; members – $15; non-members – $20

Please send your notices about upcoming conferences and seminars to alison.madelaine@mq.edu.au appear in future editions of LDA Bulletin.

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN MELBOURNE
August 19th - 20th 2006
at Wesley College, Prahran Campus, 577 St Kilda Road

THE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES ARENA
ADDRESSING ALL CHALLENGES
We aim to bring together an array of effective research-based ideas, practices and techniques, in areas of literacy, numeracy, behaviour and social and emotional issues.

For further information and registration form, please visit our website at www.ldaustralia.org, or call Rosemary Carter on (03) 8344 5361

BULLETIN – APRIL 2006
LDA Awards 2006

Nominations for Learning Difficulties Australia awards close on Wednesday 31 May 2006. The LDA website gives further information and guidelines for you to follow if you wish to nominate someone for an LDA Award.

The Mona Tobias Award 2006

The Mona Tobias Award will be awarded to a person in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the field of learning difficulties in Australia. This contribution may be in the area of leadership, research, practice or teacher and community education.

Emily Mona Tobias, B.E.M., died in 1980 at the age of 74 years. She was acknowledged for her exceptional skills as a teacher and her devotion to children with learning difficulties. Mona took early retirement from the Victorian Education Department to study learning disabilities under Sam Clements at the University of Arkansas. This led to her second career where she influenced many teachers and parents of students with learning difficulties. The Mona Tobias Award commemorates the pioneering work of Mona Tobias in helping children and adults with learning difficulties.

The Bruce Wicking Award

The Bruce Wicking Award is presented in recognition of innovative programs or practices relating to the teaching of children with learning difficulties. The recipient is normally a practicing teacher or professional. Bruce Wicking established the Currajong School in 1974, and was committed to the provision of programs which catered for the individual needs of children with learning difficulties.

For further information on nomination procedures and to download the nomination form, see the LDA website at www.ldaustralia.org

New Books

Molly de Lemos

Hot off the press are two new books relating to the initial teaching of reading – Yola Center’s book, Beginning Reading: A balanced approach to reading instruction in the first three years at school, and Tom Nicholson’s Phonics Handbook. Both books are essential reading for teachers who are concerned not only with the initial teaching of reading, but with helping students who are having difficulties in learning to read.

Yola Center’s book introduces the classroom teacher to the research evidence on how children learn to read. It identifies the specific skills that children need to achieve in order to read effectively, and presents strategies that can be used to develop these skills, in the context of a program that values exposure to a wide variety of literacy activities. It is recommended not only for teachers of initial literacy, but also for parents who would like to know more about how their children learn to read, and for educational administrators and policy makers who would like to be better informed of the research evidence on reading and the practical implications of this for the implementation of effective programs of reading instruction in our schools.

Tom Nicholson’s book is directed specifically to teachers who are working with students with reading difficulties. The book takes a phonological approach, and is set out in the form of lesson plans that can be used by teachers with little prior preparation. It includes lesson plans for every phonics skill, from the basic alphabet sounds to blends, digraphs and syllable breaking, Each lesson is followed by a work sheet for students. There are also diagnostic assessments of phoneme awareness, basic decoding skills, invented spelling, writing, and attitudes to reading. There is a test of word reading and an informal reading inventory. The book offers a range of alternative teaching strategies and includes advice on helping students with English as a second language, as well as those with difficulties ranging from dyslexia to motivation and attention problems. The Phonics Handbook was developed as the teaching manual for a project in Auckland to improve the reading achievement of children who are not responding to normal school interventions through reading clinics attached to schools.

The Books

Beginning Reading: A balanced approach to reading instruction during the first three years at school, by Yola Center, published by Allen and Unwin, 2005. Australian price: AU$39.95. Can be ordered through your local bookseller or direct from Allen and Unwin, email academic@allenandunwin.com

Phonics Handbook, by Tom Nicholson, published by Whurr Publishers, a subsidiary of John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 2005, Australian price: AU$110.95. Can be ordered through your local bookseller or direct from John Wiley and Sons Australia Ltd, phone (02) 9856 0200 (with $7.50 handling charge when ordered direct).

The Authors

Yola Center is Associate Professor in the School of Education at Macquarie University, and was instrumental in setting up the Schoolwide Early Language and Literacy Program (SWELL) in NSW, based on Robert Slavin’s Success for All program in the United States.

Tom Nicholson is a Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Auckland, and director of a long-term research project to improve the reading skills of children with reading difficulties.

Contact Molly de Lemos at delemos@acer.edu.au
Balanced approach needed for students with learning difficulties

The latest Australian Education Review, ‘Balancing approaches: Revisiting the educational psychology research on teaching students with learning difficulties’ was released in October. The review’s author, Louise Ellis, explains what contemporary research says about the often controversial subject of how best to teach basic skills to students with learning difficulties.

A

s Professor Peter Freebody says in the foreword to the review, the issue of how we should teach entry-level literacy and numeracy is perhaps one of the most divisive topics in education. There are similar heated debates about the education of students with learning disabilities or difficulties. This review deals with both issues. Concerns regarding the most appropriate methods to address the educational needs of students with learning difficulties are widespread among teachers. The Commonwealth Government has a major policy objective to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of all Australian children. Its National Literacy and Numeracy Plan exposes the need for early identification of, and adoption of intervention strategies for, students with learning difficulties in order to improve their literacy and numeracy outcomes.

This review examines research, drawn largely from the field of educational psychology, in an attempt to identify methods that are effective for a wide range of students in mainstream classrooms, but are especially powerful for students with learning difficulties. The review provides detailed information on a range of teaching methods that have been used extensively and have been judged to be effective by research.

Instructional methods have generated much interest and heated controversy for several decades, particularly in the area of literacy. There has been much debate among professionals regarding the most effective instruction techniques for both mainstream students and for those with learning difficulties. Two prominent psychological theories, the behavioural and cognitive perspectives, have heavily influenced much classroom teaching practice. During the 1970s and throughout the early 1980s, behavioural approaches provided a structure and an optimum that were of immense influence on teachers. Two popular methods derived from this perspective include direct instruction and precision teaching. However, an increasing number of people began to criticise, either directly or by implication, the exclusive use of behavioural methods. As such, cognitive approaches have gained widespread use over the past 20 years; particularly by way of constructivism.

This review focuses largely on meta-analyses, many of which were undertaken in the United States of America. The intent was to identify the relative effectiveness of various teaching approaches. Meta-analysis is a research procedure used to aggregate findings across many studies. Unlike traditional reviews, meta-analyses can synthesise larger quantities of research findings and quantify the outcomes of, and make judgements about, the effectiveness of the strategy being researched. Meta-analyses are seen as providing a more objective, quantifiable summary of the evidence than individual research studies are able to provide. The number of meta-analyses published in education research has increased markedly over the past ten years.

Direct and Strategy Instruction

Direct instruction (sometimes referred to as explicit instruction) is a teacher-centred approach. Key features of direct instruction programs include: scripted presentation, teaching the essentials, small group teaching, rapid pacing and practice and drill. An example of a direct instruction program designed for Australian schools is Elementary Math Mastery (EMM). EMM is a powerful diagnostic tool which clearly maps student progress, and can be used with both mainstream students and those with learning difficulties. EMM enables teachers to identify exactly where and when students experience difficulty in their learning. The daily incremental portions learned are small, and because they are reinforced and built upon in subsequent lessons they are more easily retained.

The teacher models each scripted lesson in the prescribed format with whiteboard presentations being an integral component. Everything taught is revisited, developed further, and gradually integrated into the whole mathematical scheme.

Strategy instruction has usually been associated with constructivist models. However, proponents of strategy instruction do not assume that students with learning difficulties will independently discover effective learning strategies, nor do they believe that direct teaching is irrelevant. Learning strategies are tactics used by students to enhance their performance on a given task or tasks. Strategies are broadly classified as cognitive, metacognitive or self-regulatory. Cognitive strategies focus on developing or enhancing particular task-related skills such as underlining, note-taking, rehearsing and summarising. Meta-cognitive strategies are those that focus on the self management of learning – planning, implementing, and monitoring one’s own efforts, and on the conditional knowledge of when, where, why and how to use particular strategies. Self-regulation strategies have been defined in terms of self-generated thoughts, feelings and actions, which are systematically oriented toward the attainment of students’ own
goals. The balanced approach can generally be described as a combination or alternation of various aspects of the curriculum and/or instruction. Balanced approaches can be applied to both what is taught (the curriculum) and how it is taught (the method of instruction). ‘Best practice’ is now generally recognised by classroom practitioners as the combination of instructional approaches which best fits the students being taught. Moreover, advocates of balanced programs do not endorse a laissez faire combination of approaches, but rather a thoughtful, carefully integrated selection of validated instructional components. Many researchers believe that effective balance is achieved through the selection of methods of instruction that best suit the types of learning involved in a lesson, and that in deciding such matters the age, ability, and aptitude of the individual students should have been taken into account.

What is best practice for students with learning difficulties? Essentially the research reviewed in this publication suggests that firstly, teaching approaches based on models of direct instruction and strategy instruction produce higher positive effects for students with learning difficulties than other approaches. Secondly, when a balanced approach is adopted, the outcomes for students are most positive. Thirdly, teachers need to have the necessary theoretical and pedagogical knowledge and skills to combine essential elements of both approaches. Fourthly, teachers need to have the attitude that all students can learn, even those who experience difficulties in learning.

The review emphasises that there is not one single instructional method that deserves sole claim to being ‘best practice’. Of course this will come as no surprise to teaching practitioners operating in the real worlds of their classrooms. Rather than single strategy solutions, the common wisdom of research in the field currently points to the need for balanced approaches, also known as ‘eclectic’ and ‘combined’ approaches, to accommodate the diverse needs of students.

The meta-analytic research reviewed in this publication, derived largely from the field of educational psychology, is described and analysed in considerable detail in the review. The findings are strongly supportive of the view that a combination of direct instruction and strategy instruction has a greater and more long-lasting impact in dealing with the academic problems of those with learning difficulties than any single-focused approach. The review calls for an end to the continuing contest between the instructivist and constructivist teaching ‘camps’. The best research avoids the adoption of either/or positions. Such a contest limits the professional consideration by practitioners of the possibility of balancing instruction and it blinds educators to the value of different perspectives.

What are the implications for teacher training? Most Australian university departments currently base their teacher education programs on constructivist views of learning and do not expose their students to a wide range of methods, including teacher-directed instruction. In view of the findings presented in this review, it is worrying that significant numbers of teachers in Australia are not being exposed to training and research that emphasises the importance of direct instruction. In order to move closer towards the adoption of the ‘best practice’ for students with learning difficulties, it is critical that teachers be trained in the use of practices that have been shown to be effective. Thus, tertiary teacher-training courses and in-service professional development programs must incorporate training in the use of direct instruction and strategy instruction, as well as the training in constructivist methods currently provided. This will provide teachers with the skills/competencies in the pedagogic/teaching practices most necessary for those with learning difficulties. Only then will they be provided with a conceptual understanding, attitude and level of competence that will enable them to freely exercise the choices associated with best practice.

Future research
The review urges an end to the either/or debate regarding teaching methodology. In Australia, direct instruction is the under-researched and under-resourced half of the balanced approaches equation. Since this review has established its important role in the effective teaching for students with learning difficulties, more research into its effectiveness should be undertaken. Currently there have been few Australian studies specifically designed to compare the effectiveness of direct instruction with constructivist instruction. In order to move forward, further research comparing the effectiveness of the different methods of instruction in Australian classrooms is necessary.

The evidence presented in the review also casts light on the relative neglect of numeracy research in comparison with literacy research in Australia and other Western countries. Further research into the numeracy field is required to obtain a clearer picture of ‘best practice’ for teaching literacy and numeracy. If such work was undertaken, it may be found that much of the research findings in literacy are replicated, but there may also be unique characteristics to numeracy learning. Research that would enable the research community to determine the extent to which Australian teachers implement integrated approaches when teaching students with learning difficulties should also be conducted. Findings from such research would enable teachers of students with learning difficulties to be more confident about what constitutes ‘best practice’ with these students.

An evaluation of what is currently taught in teacher-training courses is vital. It is critical that teachers be trained in the use of all teaching practices that have been shown to be effective, so they will be able to exercise the choices associated with best practice.

Further information
‘Balancing approaches: Revisiting the educational psychology research on teaching students with learning difficulties’, by Louise Ellis was published by ACER in October 2005 as Australian Educational Review Number 45. The review can be purchased from ACER Press or downloaded from the ACER web site at www.acer.edu.au.

Contact Louise Ellis at Louise. ellis@multilit.com
A Check on Look, Cover, Write, Check

With some teaching methods being endorsed through practice without sufficient evidence of their efficacy, Greta Kelly urges another examination of the Look, Cover, Write, Check method of teaching spelling, particularly for low progress learners.

Kerry Hempenstall pointed out in the October edition of the Bulletin that, unlike other professions, teaching does not have a strong tradition of research-based practice. As a result, we can be prey to ‘good ideas’ that may not stand up to the cold light of research, or perhaps even to logic.

Such ideas are often conveyed in pithy phrases, making them easy to describe, share and spread. They may even be shown to parents for home use. Eventually their publication in workbooks gives them a certain surface validity, and they become entrenched as practice. Such has been the history of the ‘Look, Cover, Write, Check’ method for spelling. Working with individual low progress students, one becomes aware of the futility of this strategy.

It has been my common experience, and no doubt that of others engaged in similar work, that faith in this method can have unexpected and unfortunate effects for some students and their families. Parent and child feel their ears boxed and she is likely to respond to language literally. Tell her to look, cover, write, check, and she is likely to do just that. Unless other cognitive and memory strategies are associated with the process, the chances of remembering the spelling skills for future use are reduced, because of the fragility of the visual memory.

The value of Look, Cover, Write, Check is that it gives students a formula for learning their spelling lists – a task easily overlooked. If their knowledge of our complex version of the alphabetic principle is developing normally, they add the second step themselves and thus also add to their general ability to spell.

An individual student may combine one or more skills of visual memory, phonemic awareness, articulation, cognition, semantics and experience, depending on his developing system of preferred strategies. In the normally developing reader, this process takes place rapidly, but is grounded in previous experience (Snow, 1998; Share & Stanovich, 1995).

However, Look, Cover, Write, Check assumes the second part of the process. The close examination, learning strategies and comparisons are omitted by low progress students. Their awareness of letter/sound mapping is already weak, so they fail to note oddities and comparisons, thus failing to learn irregularities.

While skilled spellers implicitly increase their general spelling ability with the mastery of each additional word, low progress spellers are using a futile, one-off strategy, which is highly forgettable. Without the second step, the method is incapable of being transferred to other words. Unless reinforced with accompanying strategies the system does not benefit to visualise someone with a box on each ear. Tell her to look, cover, write, check, and she is likely to do just that. Unless other cognitive and memory strategies are associated with the process, the chances of remembering the spelling skills for future use are reduced, because of the fragility of the visual memory.

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low progress learners and may limit the progress of others.

Spelling development cannot be left to chance. I believe that the Look, Cover, Write, Check method does leave it to chance. It is a useful, though not complete, strategy for the competent learner of literacy, and of little real help to those who require teaching.

A vigorous classroom spelling program will give advanced students opportunities to offer ideas for remembering spelling, thus accelerating each other’s learning. It will include experience and instruction in letter/sound matching, syllabification, word comparisons, word oddities, morphemic structure and memory strategies.

As a professional group, we have the benefit of increasingly sophisticated research to refine our practice skills. We have an obligation to be aware of the research of the last two decades and to be prepared to implement its findings in planning for and teaching literacy. The teaching of spelling is one of the skills that have been shown to contribute to improvements in literacy (Hammill, 2004).

References

Contact Greta Kelly at g.kelly@griffith.edu.au

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Making Up Lost Time in Literacy

APRIL 2006 – BULLETIN
Words in my ear

Kevin Wheldall

I think I must have been about ten or eleven years old when I developed an interest in what we would now call self-sufficiency. This was many years before Felicity Rendall and Richard Briers popularised the concept on television in The Good Life.

I had acquired, at a church jumble sale, a quantity of old copies of magazines with names like The Home Moneymaker and The Smallholder. The more I read, the more convinced I became that my parents should acquire a smallholding of land and rear pigs or goats, “for pleasure and profit”. The fact that we did not even own our own home and lived in a ‘council house’ (a housing commission home) did not strike me then as a necessary impediment to my plans for a country lifestyle.

Whatever else it may have done for my education, it improved my vocabulary as I came across words like ‘legume’ and ‘cloche’ for the first time, although their place in my vocabulary was still a little uncertain. Having tried and failed miserably in my endeavours to persuade my parents to buy a pig, “just to get us started”, I searched frantically for another proposition that might offer more success.

Perhaps we could grow things, I ventured. “Like what?” said my parents, doubtless humouring me. Wanting to impress with something more exotic than peas or beans, I searched a bit further across my vocabulary for legumes, a word that was still linked to cloches in my mind. “We could grow kloshes”, I proclaimed.

Whatever else it may have done for my vocabulary, this passage scheme for migrants” passed me – what a bargain! The bit about “assisted travel to Australia for only ten pounds” also meant the opportunity to re-read The Chronicles of Narnia, for example, Danny, the Champion of the World by Roald Dahl was another great favourite. And then there are the wonderful Adventure series of books by the much-maligned Enid Blyton – pure joy.

Parents (and teachers) should also discuss what they are reading with their children and ask lots of questions about the plot and the characters and, of course, explain and define words as they crop up in the story.

Like Mem Fox, the celebrated children’s author, I believe passionately in parents reading aloud to their children, Where I am in total disagreement with Mem Fox is in her ignorant insistence that this is all that children need to learn to read. This is quite simply nonsense – and dangerous nonsense at that. The vast majority of children need a sound phonics program if they are going to learn to read easily and quickly in their first few years of schooling. I am delighted that the (now former) Federal Minister for Education Dr Brendan Nelson agrees with me and that the Report of the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy entitled Teaching Reading (indeed, last year) advocates intensive systematic phonics instruction.

Before I close, all this talk of kids and vocabulary puts me in mind of the story about the boy reading a book who comes across the word ‘altercation’ and asks his father what it means. “I’ve no idea about that word, son,” says Dad.

A little while later the boy asks his dad to explain ‘subterfuge’ to him. “Subterfuge?” says Dad, a little bit exasperated by now. “You’ve got me beat on that one, mate.”

So the boy says, “Dad, you don’t mind me asking all these questions, do you?” “Of course not,” replies Dad. “If you don’t ask, you’ll never learn.”
Notice of LDA Annual General Meeting 2006
The Annual General Meeting of Learning Difficulties Australia will take place on Saturday 19 August, 2006 at Wesley College, St Kilda Road, Melbourne. This meeting will be held in conjunction with the LDA National Conference, as advertised on page 2 of this Bulletin. All members of LDA are invited to attend the AGM and the National Conference.

Call for Nominations – LDA Council 2006/2007
Nominations for the 2006/2007 LDA Council are now being called for. Information relating to the call for nominations and nomination forms can be downloaded from the website at www.ldaustralia.org. The closing date for nominations is Friday 16 June 2006.

Form for Nomination to LDA Council 2006/2007

Position for which nominated (mark one):
- ☐ President-elect
- ☐ Treasurer
- ☐ Secretary
- ☐ Ordinary member

Nominations close: 16 June 2006

Details of Nominee
Name __________________________________________ Ph (Wk) ________________ Ph (After hours) ________________

Details of Proposer
Name __________________________________________ Ph (Wk) ________________ Ph (After hours) ________________
Signed: ________________________________________________________________________________________________

Details of Seconder
Name __________________________________________ Ph (Wk) ________________ Ph (After hours) ________________
Signed: ________________________________________________________________________________________________

Acceptance by Nominee
I accept the nomination:
Signed: ________________________________________________________________________________________________

Curriculum Vitae of Nominee
Please include a brief CV of the nominee, to be used in case of a postal ballot, and/or for publication in the LDA Bulletin and on the LDA website if the nominee is elected to Council. This CV may be included in this nomination form, or may be attached as a separate Word document.

_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________________________________

Procedure for forwarding Nomination
Completed nomination forms should be signed by the nominee and forwarded by mail to:
The Secretary, LDA, PO Box 249 Carlton South, VIC 3053, to reach the Secretary no later than 16 June 2006.
Note that proposers, seconders and nominees must be financial members of LDA.
An Evening to Celebrate the Contribution of Chris Davidson to Learning Difficulties Australia, Friday 17 February, 2006

A Tribute to Chris and Dick

To celebrate the thirty-six years of voluntary editorship by Chris Davidson and the almost-as-long period of editorial support given by Dick Weigall to the Australian Journal of Learning Disabilities and its predecessors, LDA members gathered for dinner at University House in the grounds of Melbourne University.

The signatures of the twenty-six present were inscribed on thank you cards, along with the names of those who were unable to attend, but sent tributes and donations towards a presentation. Dr Daryl Greaves, the Master of Ceremonies, ensured that everyone had the opportunity to voice their tributes to Chris and Dick and to Chris’ wife Mim for her unfailing support of Chris and the Journal. It was a happy evening, with much laughter and many reminiscences from local and interstate friends and colleagues.

It was a disappointment to all that Dick and his wife could not be present at the dinner. However, Dick’s contribution to the Journal over many years was acknowledged by all present.

We all wish Chris and Dick and their families good health and happiness in whatever enterprises they undertake in the future.

LDA Council and members
1. Daryl Greaves pays tribute to Chris's contributions to LDA.

2. Chris Davidson.

3. Former LDA President Sylvia Byers (centre) enjoys a joke flanked by Michele Hutchison (left), Nola Firth (near right) and former LDA Treasurer Greta Kelly (far right).

4. Rosemary Carter makes the presentation to Chris.

5. (front row) Anne Pringle, Ruth Jeffrey and Heather Ronngard; (middle row) Greta Kelly, Nola Firth, Sylvia Byers and Michelle Hutchison; (back row) Jo Rogers, Joan Pilbeam and Rosemary Carter.

6. Chris and his wife Mim.

7. Chris with LDA Honorary Secretary, Molly de Lemos.

Photographs: Peter Jeffrey.
Rapid Automatised Naming (RAN): a separate influence on literacy outcomes

The Catch Them Before They Fall Project is a joint initiative of the Child Study Centre at the University of Western Australia and the WA Department of Education and Training to develop a cost-effective and teacher-friendly screening procedure that will identify children at risk for literacy failure in the middle of their pre-primary year. Screening at this time makes it possible to provide prophylactic intervention through enhancement of identified children’s oral language and their phonological processing (i.e., use of information about speech sounds) (see Bulletin, October 2005; Heath & Hogben, 2004). Our current longitudinal follow-up (pre-primary to Year 2) of nearly 200 children from 10 schools in metropolitan Perth will validate in metropolitan Perth will validate and hopefully simplify our screening procedure.

We present an update on our data for rapid automatised naming (RAN), which is emerging in the current literature as a powerful influence on literacy development that may show up later than the other aspects of phonological processing.

Aspects of phonological processing

Phonological processing is usually thought to include three principal components (Wagner, Torgesen & Rashotte, 1999):

1) Phonological awareness (PA) involves awareness of the speech sounds themselves. Children show this awareness when they learn to recognise and make rhymes, when they can count and blend syllables and later the sounds of words, and when eventually they can identify and manipulate the single sounds or phonemes. For most children this awareness typically unfolds during the years before children start literacy education. Awareness of individual speech sounds is now thought to be critical for developing literacy (Snowling, 2000).

2) Phonological short-term memory refers to a child’s immediate recall of information coded in speech sounds (aka auditory short-term memory; verbal short-term memory) and is mostly tested by repetition of digits, sentences or nonsense words.

3) Phonological retrieval is tested by naming tasks including RAN. It is assumed that RAN captures the speed of retrieval of speech sound information stored in long-term memory. A typical RAN task presents a child with a chart comprising rows of six highly familiar objects (boat, chair, star, pencil, fish, key) repeated six times (= 36 objects). The child has to name the objects as quickly as possible. We also measure RAN of colours and in older children, naming of letters and digits.

Growing research interest in RAN

Our current screen was based on early identification research during the 1990s which suggested that PA was the strongest predictor of early literacy development. Hence, we have emphasised PA and oral language so far, but recently our interest has extended to RAN as well.

It has also been shown in many studies that RAN is a strong predictor of reading outcomes (e.g., Felton & Brown, 1991). In some studies RAN has seemed to approach PA in importance as a predictor of literacy outcomes, but the two variables have appeared to overlap in their influence on literacy (e.g., Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashotte, 1994). More recently, overseas data began to point towards a group of children with slow RAN but no deficits in phonological awareness (e.g., Wolf & Bowers, 1999). Studies in European languages suggested that PA and RAN might evolve differently as children developed. For example, Wimmer, Mayringer, and Landerl (2000) suggested that PA may be a more important predictor of early literacy development, but that later poor readers are better identified by slow RAN. Wolf and Bowers (1999) argued that PA and RAN are separate sources of deficits in reading and that if children have both these problems they are extremely vulnerable to literacy problems because they have a “double deficit”. However, children with a single deficit in RAN would not be clearly identified in any screening procedure which emphasised only PA.

Unresolved issues in RAN

It is not yet clear why some children require much longer to retrieve speech sound information and exactly how this might affect reading and spelling. It has been suggested that slow RAN may result from poorly defined or ‘fuzzy’ mental representations of phonological information (Snowling, 2000), or alternatively they may simply access this information more slowly (Wolf & Bowers, 1999).

The Catch Them Before They Fall Project has collaborated with the School of Human Communication Sciences at Curtin University to further explore the influence of RAN on literacy development and extend possibilities for early identification of children with slow RAN. Questions we have been asking include: Can we identify pre-primary children who have single deficits (i.e., slow RAN but
deficits in PA or deficits in both PA and RAN were looking different in non-representations (QPR task) and the young children’s phonological task to measure the quality of representations or to processing speed be related to fuzzy phonological representations. To explore whether slow RAN might differ from other children? We divided our children into four groups: children with no problems in RAN (objects and colours) or PA (No Problem group), those with slow RAN (Slow RAN group), those with Poor PA (Poor PA group), and those with both problems (Both Problems group). We found that slow RAN children in pre-primary strikingly resembled No Problem children in performance IQ, receptive language, and knowledge of letter names or sounds, although they were somewhat weaker than No Problem children in expressive language and phonological short-term memory. In contrast, both the Poor PA or Both Problems groups mostly did differ significantly from the children with No Problems. The Poor PA group was weaker than the Slow RAN group on average, but not as weak as the Both Problems children. In emergent reading (single word identification in Term 4 pre-primary), Slow RAN children were significantly poorer than the No Problem group, but were not significantly stronger than the other two problem groups. So, already children with only a single deficit in RAN were looking different in non-reading variables from those with deficits in PA or deficits in both PA and RAN, but were not significantly different in reading.

What might be going on with RAN? To explore whether slow RAN might be related to fuzzy phonological representations or to processing speed, we developed a computer task to measure the quality of young children’s phonological representations (QPR task) and the speed with which they appear to access these representations. ‘Katy’ the computer presents 10 images of multisyllabic words which small children typically struggle with (e.g., crocodile, rhinoceros). Katy says each word 10 times and each time the child has to give her a tick or a cross on the screen to say whether she has got the word correct or not. Katy says the word correctly four times out of ten and gets it wrong six times out of ten. We systematically varied either a consonant or a vowel to create the incorrect words. On any given trial, the child might see a crocodile and Katy would ask ‘Is this a crocodile?’. As this is an incorrect pronunciation, the child would be expected to click on the cross. We also measured how accurately the children themselves could pronounce the words.

We hypothesised that if slow RAN and poor PA both result from fuzzy phonological representations, then the slow RAN, poor PA and Both Problem groups should all perform significantly worse on the QPR task. They would also be expected to pronounce the words less accurately than the No Problem children. However, if slow RAN results from slower speed of processing, then the Slow RAN group should not show deficits in accuracy on the QPR task or in pronouncing the multisyllabic words, but they should be significantly slower to perform the QPR task than the other three groups, regardless of whether the judgement is difficult (i.e., when children have to reject an incorrect pronunciation by Katy) or easy (when the judgement is to accept a correct pronunciation).

We found that in rejecting incorrect pronunciations by Katy, the slow RAN children as a group were actually more accurate than the No Problem children. The poor PA or Both Problems children on the other hand, performed significantly worse than both slow RAN and No Problem children. We found similar patterns in pronunciation of the multisyllabic words: the Slow RAN group equalled No Problem children, and both groups did very much better on average than the Poor PA and Both Problems groups. In the simpler judgment of accepting correct pronunciations, only the Both Problems children were significantly less accurate than all the other groups. Thus, Slow RAN children did not appear to have problems with performing accurately on this task which we think forces children to access their mental representations of phonological information.

In contrast, when we looked at time taken to make these judgements, for even the easy judgement of accepting correct pronunciations by Katy, the Slow RAN students required significantly longer than the No Problem and Poor PA groups. The Slow RAN children even took longer on average than the Both Problems group. However, when making the more difficult judgement (i.e., rejecting Katy’s incorrect pronunciations) none of the groups was significantly faster than any other. It seemed that the level of difficulty might constrain the speed with which children without slow RAN could complete the judgement.

These results strongly suggested that slow RAN was not related to quality of children’s phonological representations but rather to the time required to access these representations. This was evident when children had only a single deficit in RAN. The problems of children with a single deficit in PA appeared to involve quality of phonological representations. It seemed possible that students with double deficits in both PA and RAN struggled because of fuzzy representations and speed of accessing these representations, but these students also exhibited a pattern of pervasive weakness which appeared to extend across other aspects of cognitive and linguistic processing. We have much more analysis still to complete, but our findings to date strongly suggest that poor PA and slow RAN are separate and separable phenomena when measured before children commence formal literacy.
Literacy outcomes for children with slow RAN compared to those with poor PA and those with both problems

Interim analysis of our follow-up data from the end of Year 2 suggests that as a group, children who were identified with Slow RAN in pre-primary were lagging behind the No Problem children in both reading and spelling, but their difficulties were not as pronounced as those of either of the other problem groups. Also, the Slow RAN children were not significantly over-represented in the bottom quarter of the sample on a word identification and spelling measure. On these measures at the end of Year 2, only the Poor PA and Both Problem groups were significantly weaker than the No Problem children. Children from both these groups were very much over-represented in the bottom 25 per cent of the reading and spelling scores. Thus, Slow RAN children now look different on these two Year 2 literacy measures from those with a single deficit in PA or a double deficit, but this difference is not yet significant and at this stage the children are not particularly weak.

Conclusions

In summary, there is a strong inference from our results so far that there is something happening in children with slow RAN that looks like the single deficit suggested by Wolf and Bowers (1999). Children with only slow RAN do not appear to be as weak in oral language or phonological short-term memory as those with a PA deficit (whether poor PA only, or poor PA in the presence of slow RAN). Their RAN deficits appear to be related to speed of accessing phonological representations rather than to the quality of the representations themselves. Although these children have also begun to lag behind in reading and spelling by the end of Year 2, they are less far behind than children with PA deficits and those with both deficits seem worst of all. Indeed, matters do not seem as straightforward as Wolf and Bowers have suggested, because a double deficit in PA and RAN does not appear to be simply additive: these children showed patterns reminiscent of students with specific language impairment and it is possible that students in this group may contribute substantially to the large proportion of disabled readers identified by McArthur, Hogben, Edwards, Heath and Mengler (2000) as having co-existing deficits in both language and literacy.

Implications for early identification and intervention

Our data so far strongly suggest that RAN is separate risk factor from PA for literacy problems, but that these difficulties do not show up strongly before the end of Year 2. It appears that these may be the children identified by Wimmer et al. (2000) as older dysfluent readers. It is possible that these may be the students we see clinically who fail to develop fluent reading even when they have learned to decode accurately. Wolf and Katzir-Cohen (2001) strongly suggest that slow RAN children will benefit from early intervention. They need enhancement activities which target fluent use of phonological information and then later fluency in use of letter-sound links for reading. Wolf and colleagues are developing the RAVE-O programme to target the problems faced by children with slow RAN (Wolf & Katzir-Cohen, 2001). We have also found good success clinically with the Intensive Reading Programme (Harvey, 1998) which is already available in Australia. Our data also suggest that children with both poor PA and slow RAN are likely to respond less well to intervention and may need a referral to a speech pathologist specialising in literacy to provide support for their language as well as their literacy development.
What brain research can tell us about reading instruction

Kerry Hempenstall

Brain-imaging techniques such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) have been shedding light recently on how our brain adapts optimally to the tasks of reading and spelling.

When good readers confront text, they can be seen to rely heavily on separate areas in the left side of the brain. These areas are employed cooperatively to convert letters into sounds, fit the sounds together to make words, and to do so fluently. Flourishing students have learned the letters of the alphabet, the sounds that the letters represent, and how the sounds are blended to build words. In the brain images, the three areas light up quite clearly while such students are reading.

With this capacity, the left brain’s parieto-temporal region becomes primed to decode (sound out) words, whether they be known or novel words. Progressively, as the readers see words in print, they start to build a neural model of that word. After they’ve correctly decoded a word a number of times, their neural model is an exact replica of the printed word. It specifies the way the word is pronounced, the way it’s spelled, and what it means. In an accurate neural model, all these features are bonded together.

They clarify and store these new internal representations in the occipito-temporal region. When that word becomes represented in the occipito-temporal region, its recognition subsequently becomes automatic and instant – in about one sixth of a second. This is faster than one can predict the upcoming word. When this process occurs, students begin to display rapid, effortless word recognition rather than the slower sounding-out strategy.

It’s tempting of course to suggest that children not be taught to sound out because it isn’t the way skilled readers are seen to respond to print. However, you can’t access the occipito-temporal region without first building up the parieto-temporal region. On average, from 4-14 accurate soundings outs will create the firm links necessary. For some children, it may take many times that number – not all children have strong phonological skills (a talent for discerning small units of sound). Either a genetic component or an instructional component may be involved in their lack of progress.

Those who struggle to read do not use the same brain regions for reading. Instead, they create an alternative neural pathway, reading mostly with regions on the right side of the brain – areas not well suited for reading. It is purely a compensatory strategy involving the visual centres of the right hemisphere – looking at words as if they were pictures. Little activity is observed in the phonological areas of the left hemisphere where capable readers’ activity is dominant. The brains of people who can’t sound out words look different – there is less blood flow to the language centres of the brain.

If this sequential developmental process (from sounding-out to whole word recognition) does not occur, then children will be forced to employ less rapid and accurate systems such as prediction from context, guessing from pictures, and guessing from the first letter. Up to 40 per cent of children will discover the alphabetic principle for themselves quite readily – regardless of instruction. About 30 per cent will get there, but slowly, and about 20-30 per cent will not achieve it without intensive, appropriate direct teaching. We now understand that the brain has the quality of plasticity. It responds to experiences that stimulate activity in particular areas of the brain, thereby facilitating the growth of neural connections in and between those active regions. That is why practice makes permanent. Practising productive reading strategies forms and strengthens task-optimal neural connections that enhance subsequent reading development. In the same way, routinely engaging in ineffective strategies similarly builds circuits in the brain not optimal to the task. These routines are not easy to break as students grow older, perhaps because between ages five to 10 there’s a pruning process that erases the neural cells in the brain that remain under-utilised and unconnected. Forming neural links for language is relatively easy up to about age six, and achievable though more effortful after that time.

The good news is that certain teaching strategies can alter this pattern of brain activation. A number of recent studies have indicated that about 60 hours of structured intensive daily phonics teaching alters the way the brain responds to print. Less right hemisphere involvement occurs, accompanied by more left hemisphere phonologically-based activity as reading improves. These new MRI images now correspond more closely to the pattern displayed by good readers.

Importantly, in a study in 2004, the occipito-temporal region continued to develop one year after the intervention had ended. The outcomes included increased fluency, accuracy, and reading comprehension.

A recent MRI study of spelling produced similar outcomes. The brain activity of struggling spellers was discernibly different to that of competent spellers. However, when systematic spelling instruction was...
...continued from page 15

provided, spelling improved and the MRI profiles altered, becoming more like those of good spellers. Beginning with a need for phonological knowledge, the brain of the emergent speller (given adequate practice opportunities) establishes a new organisational pattern known as an autonomous orthographic lexicon. It enables automatic, rapid responses, without the phonological encoding previously necessary. However, English is a morphophonemic language, and expert spelling encompasses a further knowledge form. It involves an understanding of root words, affixes, and how they are assembled. This third interrelated level is morphological.

These interventions require work and practice to achieve such positive outcomes, but many skills are hard won in our lives. Why should we expect these crucial abilities to arrive incidentally?

The brain imaging studies have also shown how difficult and exhausting is the task of reading for struggling students. These students have been shown to use up to five times as much energy as do fluent readers when reading. It is unsurprising then that they do not choose to read, and may become actively resistant to the task. Unfortunately, slow early progress predicts a decline in academic progress generally across their primary and, even more dramatically, in their secondary career, as they increasingly lose access to the curriculum.

The brain imaging research is fascinating, perhaps because it offers a glimpse of what appears to be happening when we teach effectively, and students learn something new. However, we don’t actually need this information about which areas of the brain tend to be active when most people engage skilfully or otherwise in a task. We can always assess their competence directly using behavioural assessments, such as with reading tests. Observing changed brain function consequent upon effective instruction can be affirming to the teacher, but really, what did we think was happening during learning? Was it the kidneys we thought we were affecting?

Another interesting brain imaging issue relates to the oft-heard comment, “all children learn differently”. It is difficult to argue with such an assertion, partly because it is difficult to operationalise it. However, it is usually presented as though it were self-evidently true, despite a lack of supporting evidence. In similar vein, there is a whole industry devoted to the need to attend to children’s learning styles, again a notion lacking in empirical support. Within the broader context of whether humans’ uniqueness or commonality truly defines them, it would appear that, at least for literacy skills, competence arises for each of us in much the same manner:

The National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy has directed our attention toward the findings of scientific research. These findings can make a huge difference to the many students for whom the reading task is made unnecessarily difficult, whether the cause is due to brain anomalies (very few) or instructional inadequacy (the vast majority).

At such a time when real reform is possible, it is unfortunate that some politicians and teacher organisations decry both the need for change and the strong evidence upon which the recommendations are based. It is our children’s future at stake. Time to move on this.

References


Contact Kerry Hempenstall at kerry.hempenstall@rmit.edu.au
MUSEC Briefing No. 5: BrainGym®

Jennifer Stephenson and Kevin Wheldall

Statement of the Problem
Many young students experience difficulties in developing academic skills such as reading, writing, and spelling. Some of these students may also present as clumsy and uncoordinated.

Proposed Solution/Intervention
BrainGym® (also known as educational kinesiology or Edu-K) was originally developed by Dr Paul Dennison and his wife to help students with learning disabilities but it is now claimed to benefit his wife to help students with learning develop by Dr Paul Dennison and kinesiology or Edu-K) was originally developed by Dr Paul Dennison and his wife to help students with learning disabilities but it is now claimed to benefit anyone by improving concentration, memory, reading, writing, organizing, listening and motor co-ordination. It is also claimed to reduce stress and anxiety and to improve behaviour and emotional balance. There are 26 movements or exercises (such as standing on one leg with eyes shut while chanting) that are to be learned and practised.

Theoretical rationale – how does it work?
BrainGym® is a variant of the perceptual motor programs that have a long and controversial history in special education. Dennison claims that his movement activities work by integrating and improving connections within the brain and through integrating the brain, the senses and the body. The ability to coordinate the two sides of the brain, or laterality, is claimed to be particularly important for the development of reading and writing. It is claimed that the prescribed movements will remediate and develop the basic processes and functions within the brain required for learning.

What does the research say? What is the evidence for its efficacy?
The lack of evidence for the effect of perceptual motor programs like BrainGym® on academic skills has been well documented since the 1980s. Many BrainGym® websites claim a research base testifying to the efficacy of the activities, but most of the studies cited have been published in BrainGym®'s own non-refereed house journal. There appear to be no experimental studies based testifying to the efficacy of the activities. It is also important to note that the research on BrainGym® has been largely confined to anecdotal reports and case studies, and there is little research on the impact of BrainGym® on academic performance.

Conclusions
Given the lack of credible supporting evidence for the efficacy of BrainGym® activities and other perceptual motor programs in bringing about improvement in academic performance, there is little to recommend this approach.

Alternative options
Teacher time devoted to these activities would be better spent specifically targeting the academic skill deficits of low-progress students with appropriate instruction, using methods of proven efficacy.

The MUSEC Verdict
Not proven.

Key references may be found at: www.muses.mq.edu.au/musec_co_brief.asp

MUSEC Briefing No. 6: Knowing what works

Jennifer Stephenson and Kevin Wheldall

Statement of the Problem
Teachers should make decisions about the teaching strategies they use. These decisions may be based on intuition, the latest fad or government initiative or on scientific evidence about a practice’s effectiveness.

Proposed Solution
Teachers should take into consideration the scientific evidence on the effectiveness of teaching strategies and curricula. Scientific evidence can take several forms – large scale studies of groups of students (the focus of this briefing), studies of individual students, or a convergence of evidence from various sources.

How does it work?
Studies of a new educational practice have to demonstrate not only that it works, but that it also works better or more efficiently than existing practices. Studies must thus compare the new treatment with existing or alternative treatments. It is also important to show that student learning and progress is the result of the intervention being examined, not to other changes such as teacher or location variables.

The ‘gold standard’ is research where participants are randomly assigned to treatment or control groups, and where the data gatherers are unaware of the group to which students have been allocated. Information on outcomes should be collected and evaluated without the researcher knowing which treatment the participant has received. Then the outcomes of the different groups can be compared to identify the most effective treatment. This is obviously difficult where educational researchers have to work within existing structures of schools and classes. It is also difficult to keep students and teachers ignorant of which treatment is new. It should be possible, however, for those who gather and interpret the data to be unaware of the group to which a particular student, school or teacher belongs.

Good quality studies will be made available for scrutiny in peer-refereed scientific research journals where other researchers have judged the research to be sound and appropriate for public dissemination. Ideally, any new practice will be supported by more than one study and will have a sound theoretical model.

What should teachers look for?
Are there research studies supporting its efficacy published in peer-reviewed journals? Is there more than one study, and do the studies support one another? Is there an accepted, coherent theory to support the practice? Is there converging evidence from research and theory, perhaps from different fields?
Consultants’ Corner

This year shows promise for good times ahead for LDA, after the rocky period experienced in 2005, when a skeleton staff of seven had to manage the areas normally covered by 14. Now, with a full Council of dedicated workers to steer the ship on calmer waters, hopefully progress will be made and even some regaining of lost ground. Membership has fallen a little though very few say why they haven’t renewed. The reasons are many, I guess – increased hours of work, or decreased hours leading to less money, increased work commitment or extra study involvement. It would be helpful if those wishing to discontinue would make their reasons known to any member of Council.

Keep in touch with what is happening by reading the Bulletin and Journal and clicking on to the website, which, by the way, is currently being revamped to make it more user-friendly and efficient. There you will find information about LDA and details of the National Conference as they develop as well as other PD events. It may be helpful for some of us to re-read the ‘Guidelines for LDA Consultants’ to avoid awkward situations like having to face parents who feel outraged over the request for a minor fee for a broken appointment. Number 10 on the back page clearly sets out what should be done to avoid such eventualities.

From time to time consultants have made suggestions that an LDA ID card or badge would facilitate their bona fides when visiting schools, institutions and other places. Council has sanctioned this notion and preliminary investigations regarding the dynamics and costs of such a scheme have been carried out. Now we want to know what you think about it. Zone Leaders could initiate discussions on this topic and let me know the general feeling. Communication is so important in any organisation, or indeed, in any democratic group of people.

Parents continue to enquire anxiously if the consultants who may teach their child have been police checked, so if there are any of the earlier consultants who are not covered, please comply and send a copy of the document to me.

On another commitment, if you haven’t so far this year sent your PD Summary to Jane McClure at 42 Vincent St, Glen Iris VIC 3146, please complete it and post as soon as possible.

Several consultants who are contemplating retirement in a few years’ time have queried outcomes if, hypothetically, a retrospective claim is made against them when they are no longer consulting. Discussion with AHL (LDA’s insurance brokers) revealed that with public liability, there is no problem – the claim would be covered. With professional indemnity however, there are differences. Before retiring, the insured person would have to inform the broker that retirement was imminent and would ask for ‘run-off cover’ – a lesser amount than the normal cover, which decreases as each year passes and which could be maintained for a ‘safe’ period. Further investigations are ongoing.

I hope to catch up with all our consultants at the Conference in August, if not before.

Rosemary Carter
Convenor

Report from Victorian Referral Officer (Nov to Dec 2005)

Requests for referrals in 2005 were the lowest since I took over as Referral Officer from Rosemary Carter in 2002. Looking back at the records kept by Rosemary (from 1992), the 2005 referrals were the lowest since 1998. The reason for the decline is unclear.

We are planning to circulate LDA Referral Service flyers to schools and other professionals who refer their clients to LDA. Another suggestion is to leave information about our service in places such as libraries and educational suppliers. If consultants wish to assist in advertising in their area please contact me on 03 9482 1031 or Rosemary Carter on 03 9435 8034.

Once again thank you to consultants who let me know when referrals are taken up. Also a reminder that to receive referrals, consultants must be financial, have a current police check and provide annual Professional Development summaries.

Elaine McLeish
Referral Officer Victoria
Tel: 03 9482 1031

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LDA Referrals, Victoria: Source of Referrals
November to December 2005

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Referrals, Victoria: Referrals by Year Level, November to December 2002 – 2005

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Postgraduate Studies in Special Education Macquarie University Special Education Centre (MUSEC)

Are you interested in teaching students with special education needs?
Macquarie University is a leading provider of quality training in Special Education in New South Wales. Macquarie University Special Education Centre (MUSEC) is renowned nationally and internationally for research and postgraduate teaching in special education.

The academics at MUSEC are at the leading edge of their fields and this is reflected in the quality of their teaching and the postgraduate courses offered. If you would like to develop both strong practical skills and a broad understanding of special education, consider a postgraduate program at MUSEC. All postgraduate programs are offered in both internal and distance modes.

Distance students are encouraged to apply.
The distance programs at Macquarie are ideally suited to part-time students who need to be able to study when and where they like. MUSEC is committed to providing rigorous, high quality distance education programs with high levels of individualised student support. A combination of interactive video and internet technologies are employed to provide flexibility of distance learning without the disadvantages associated with many traditional distance programs. For further detail about our distance programs visit http://www.aces.mq.edu.au/musec_st_pg_dist.asp

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- **Postgraduate Diploma in Special Education** (Six units)
  Students may upgrade from a certificate by completing three additional coursework units. The Postgraduate Diploma in Special Education offers a comprehensive professional teaching qualification in Special Education.
- **Master of Special Education** (Eight units)
  Students may apply directly or may upgrade from the Postgraduate Diploma in Special Education to the Master of Special Education by Coursework by completing two additional specialist units.
- **Fees** – All courses are HECS based

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AUSTRALIA’S INNOVATIVE UNIVERSITY

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☐ Student Member $49.50 (proof of full time status required)  ☐ Corporate Member Schools $165.00  ☐ Other $215.00

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