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SPELD NSW Position Statement

Selecting a successful intervention program

The Australian Federation of SPELD Associations (AUSPELD) distributes a valuable reference book entitled *Understanding Learning Difficulties – A Guide for Parents* which includes a section outlining the criteria associated with successful intervention programs.

For students with Specific Learning Disabilities, extra support and remediation targeting their specific areas of need are often required to ensure they have the best chance of developing appropriate skills. There are many intervention programs available for teachers and tutors to use, some of these are produced commercially and others are freely available on the internet. It is important to note that the cost of a program does not necessarily determine its effectiveness.

One of the most important criteria linked to successful outcomes relates to whether or not the program is **evidence –based**. It is important that the program is based on current research evidence and that its effectiveness is supported by independent reviews (i.e. not evaluated solely by the program manufacturers).

The *Parent Guide* reviews the current research evidence available in relation to a wide number of intervention programs and products. The decision to recommend or not recommend particular programs has been based on the current evidence available linking particular programs and instructional approaches to improved results in specific academic areas. This evidence has been collated by independent university-based research teams*

Direct Instruction and Structured Synthetic Phonics programs are strongly recommended for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. A sample of the programs listed under these headings includes : Sounds-Write; MultiLit; MiniLit; Reading and Spelling Mastery.

Some of the programs and resources that have been reviewed in terms of both evidence and cost-effectiveness and as a consequence **ARE NOT RECOMMENDED** are:

- Reading Recovery
- Arrowsmith
- Brain Gym
- Cellfield
- Cogmed
- Fast ForWord
- Coloured Glasses & Overlays
- Davis Dyslexia
- Exercise-Based Programs (e.g. DORE/DDAT)
- Lumosity
- Tomatis Method for Auditory Retraining

Reference: AUSPELD – *Understanding Learning Difficulties – A Guide for parents*.

* Reference: Dawson, G, & D'Souza, S. *Behavioural Interventions to Remediate Learning Disorders: A technical report* (2015), Centre for Brain Research and School of Psychology, The University of Auckland / MUSEC briefings – located at http://www.musec.mq.edu.au/community_outreach/musec_briefings - Macquarie University Special Education Centre.

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Position Statement on approaches to reading instruction supported by LDA

LDA supports approaches to reading instruction that adopt an explicit structured approach to the teaching of reading and are consistent with the scientific evidence as to how children learn to read and how best to teach them. This approach is important for all children, but is particularly important for children who have difficulty in learning to read. Programs that follow an explicit structured approach to the teaching of reading include as an integral part of the teaching program specific instruction in phonology (phonological and phonemic awareness), sound-symbol associations (letter-sound correspondences), as well as syllable structures, morphology, syntax and semantics (the structure, use and meaning of words) as a basis for developing accurate and fluent reading and reading comprehension. Such programs conform to the definition of 'structured literacy programs' as adopted by the International Dyslexia Association in July 2014, and place emphasis on the importance of learning the alphabetic code and the twin processes of blending and segmenting as the basis of learning to read. They do not include programs that follow a whole language or 'balanced literacy' approach, which place emphasis on the three cueing system and guessing from context as acceptable strategies for identifying words.

Examples of programs that follow an explicit structured approach to the teaching of reading include but are not limited to programs such as Jolly Phonics, Read Write Inc., Sounds-Write, Get Reading Right, MultiLit programs, and the various programs based on the Orton-Gillingham approach. Examples of programs that follow a whole language or 'balanced literacy' approach include but are not limited to programs such as Reading Recovery and the literacy approaches developed by Fountas and Pinnell, including Levelled Literacy Intervention and Guided Reading. LDA does not support or endorse programs that place emphasis on the exercise or training of underlying brain processes including working memory as the basis for improving reading or other academic skills. Such programs include Brain Gym, Fast ForWord, CogMed and the Arrowsmith program.

For further information on the IDA definition of structured literacy and recommendations for effective reading instruction see <http://dyslexia-ncbida.org/2014/09/09/ida-introduces-structured-literacy/> and <http://eida.org/effective-reading-instruction/>. For an Australian guide to recommended reading strategies used in Australia see the AUSPELD publication, *Understanding Learning Difficulties: A practical guide*. For a more detailed overview of the knowledge required by teachers for effective teaching of reading see Louisa C. Moats, *Speech to Print: Language Essentials for Teachers (second edition)*. For a discussion of the use of the term 'balanced literacy' in relation to programs that do not provide an explicit structured approach to the teaching of reading, see Louisa Moats paper, *Whole Language Lives On: The Illusion of Balanced Reading Instruction*.

For information about "explicit" and Direct Instruction see Exploring the Foundations of Explicit Instruction at: <http://www.explicitinstruction.org/download/sample-chapter.pdf> and, <http://www.evidencebasedteaching.org.au/direct-instruction-facts-myths/>

For information about the synthetic phonics approach to teaching reading see Dr Louisa Moats seminal paper **Teaching Reading is Rocket Science** – What Expert Teachers of Reading Should Know and Be Able To Do (at: <https://www.ldaustralia.org/client/documents/Teaching%20Reading%20is%20Rocket%20Science%20-%20Moats.pdf>) To see other Dr Louisa Moats resources in relation to teaching decoding, how spelling supports reading, How Whole Language Lives On, The Illusion of Balanced Reading Instruction and more, go to: <https://www.ldaustralia.org/moats.html>