



South East Surrey Dyslexia Association

Affiliated to the British Dyslexia Association Reg. Charity No. 281076

Newsletter Articles – September 2005

‘The Myth of Dyslexia’ Channel Four - 8th September

I wonder how many of you watched this programme and were angered by the references to dyslexia. The impression given was that dyslexia is only a reading problem. Despite the misleading information about dyslexia there was a positive side - a reading scheme used in Cumbria which will benefit all children when they start school.

This scheme has been thoroughly researched by York University and those involved say that it has been proved to work. It seems to be a very sensible and common sense approach. Professor Hatcher of York University started his research by looking at Reading Recovery, a scheme of help for failing readers, which has been available in this country for many years. He added activities aimed at helping children distinguish the tiniest differences in sound.

All children are introduced to a method which seems to be very similar to Synthetic Phonics. Most children learn to read easily. For those who don't, there is a second wave of teaching when the children are put into small groups and then, if necessary, there is a third wave when children with the greatest difficulty are given one to one tuition. No one slips through the net. Children who need intervention because they are failing at reading have their progress monitored so that all mistakes are recorded, then addressed. These sounds are then reinforced in 'every way possible' – a multisensory approach which dyslexia tutors have been recommending for years.

The reading books used are graded into 44 levels of difficulty. One Committee member says that her school uses some of the books shown on the programme and her children love them. A stimulating choice of books encourage the children to read more and more. According to Professor Hatcher the most important part of intervention is the way it is administered. "If it is to be successful an intervention programme must be delivered well." There is a 12 week intensive training for classroom assistants with further monitoring to make sure they are delivering the programme correctly.

The narrator said, "Instead of providing special help for those diagnosed as dyslexic those running the strategy want to shift policy away from them and instead give it to all children with reading problems." I agree that help should be available for all children with reading

problems but we must remember that dyslexic children have other difficulties, caused by their dyslexia, which must be addressed. They should all get help according to their needs. Kevan Collins, Director, Primary National Strategy said, "All parents have the right to demand that schools provide everything their children need to learn to read."

We were told that the new reading strategy in Cumbria has had a big influence on the Government's Literacy Strategy. Will the Government introduce a strategy for reading, that really works, into Reception classes in **all** schools?

Reading is the most important skill a child will learn in school. If he cannot read he cannot access all the other subjects in the curriculum. We must get our intervention strategies right so that all children who need help, get help. **NOW!**

When will we be able to say, in this country, that all 16 year olds leaving school are able to read well? I wonder!

Sheena

"The Myth of Dyslexia" BDA Statement 14th September 2005

From the beginning of this spurious debate the BDA has vigorously defended the reality of dyslexia. <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/news.html>

We have been overwhelmed by the prompt and forthright support from academics, from our membership and from members of the public. Individuals from all level of the dyslexia community have phoned, emailed, written to national newspapers and spoken on national and local radio and it has been heartwarming to have such consensus support.

However we are very aware that there are many people who have been extremely distressed and frustrated at the disparaging language used in regard to dyslexia – a condition with which they lived and of which they have daily proof. We are, of course, very sympathetic and emphasise that, even when not in the public eye in the news, on TV and radio, the BDA continues to be responsive to all issues concerning dyslexia.

The BDA calls itself the Voice of Dyslexia. Under a new constitution it is now possible for individuals to join the BDA as members to help make that voice louder, to respond to debate, to lobby government, and to feel part of the wider dyslexia community.

<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/extra410.html>

BDA's Chief Executive is in continuous contact with the producer of the Channel Four programme looking for a televised public debate. We hope that this will take place some time in the near future.

Thank you for your support. Please keep visiting the BDA website for updates.

Susan Tresman

BDA Chief Executive

Achieving Dyslexia Friendly Schools

These packs have now been updated 5 times. They contain very interesting information for teachers and parents. They will be available at all our open meetings and they are free. If you would like one sent to you please send me 60 pence in stamps and I will send you a copy. Don't forget your name and address. Copies can be ordered from:
Sheena Heppenstall, Dingley, Outwood Lane, Chipstead, Coulsdon, Surrey. CR5 3NG

Touch Type, Read and Spell

Valerie Giles runs a Touch Type, Read and Spell Course at St. Mary's School in Oxted. This Course is based on the book Alpha to Omega which is widely used by Special Needs and Dyslexia teachers. The typing course is fun, and regular attendance keeps the child interested and motivated.

If you want to know more, pick up a leaflet at one of our Open Meetings or ring Valerie.
Tel: 01883 712 442.

Useful telephone numbers in SESDA

Helplines: Hermione Puzey Tel: 01737 763 888
Sheena Heppenstall Tel: 01737 556 173

Adult Support
Group: Michelle Phillipson Tel: 01737 766 456