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EDITORIAL

As always I am delighted to introduce our first issue of the journal for 2005. I know you will find it a stimulating and diverse addition to your professional library.

To begin with, you will enjoy reading continuing dialogue around the topic of Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome and Dyslexia. Thank you to Kristen Pammer and Greg Robinson for their thoughtful conversation and contributions to our understanding of this complex area.

It is terrific to see that we have three very relevant topics covered in our Practically Speaking section. Continuing thanks to Jennifer Stephenson for leading in this area, and a request that you consider making a contribution.

Gwyn Symonds describes a practical tool for supporting student engagement and learning, centred on time as a critical but often neglected variable in our teaching day. Tony Thomas then gives us a terrific overview of outdoor education programs in Victoria, with special attention to the potential benefits for individuals with disabilities and other challenges to learning. In another valuable contribution, Paul Sleishman describes his work with schools and families in developing positive relationships that target pro-social behaviour, based on the 5R framework.

It is a particular pleasure to introduce the 2003 Winner of the Lee Mills Teacher Education Award by Criss Moore, David Evans and Martin Dowson, our sole Refereed Paper for this issue. Papers that analyse how best to maximise early reading skills in our young learners are always especially welcome.

Finally, Judy Neilands has supplied an excellent review of a new title that deals with family perspectives on life with children who experience disability: thank you Judy.

Enjoy!!

Best regards

Michael Arthur-Kelly
Editor
Letters to the Editor

1 February 2005

Dr Michael Arthur-Kelly
Editor
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Dear Dr Arthur-Kelly

What’s in a name?
I am writing with regard to a letter written by Dr Greg Robinson (Special Education Perspectives, Volume 13, Number 2, 2004), that has recently been brought to my attention. I would like the opportunity to clarify some points made. As indicated by Dr Robinson, independent research has now been conducted demonstrating the efficacy of coloured lenses, or overlays in reading. However, what is rarely made explicit in these discussions is the distinction between Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome, also known as visual discomfort (VDS) (e.g., Conlon & Humphreys, 2001; Conlon, Lovegrove, Barker, & Chekaluk, 2001; Evans & Joseph, 2002), and dyslexia. Dyslexic children consistently demonstrate problems in the coding, manipulation and production of the sounds of language. Indeed, this is one of the strongest and most enduring themes in dyslexia research (refer to Snowling, 2000; Vellutino, Fletcher, Snowling, & Scanlon, 2004) for a full discussion). VDS, on the other hand, is exclusively a visual disorder characterised by distracting, uncomfortable, perceptual distortions, such as illusions of flicker, fading, movement, colour, bending, or figure-ground distortion (e.g., Irlen & Lass, 1989). Dyslexic individuals rarely report such visual disturbances. Individuals who suffer from VDS have difficulties reading because of the patterns text makes on the page (Wilkins, 1995) and, for physiological reasons as yet unknown, coloured lenses or overlays help reduce the discomfort induced by the visual patterns. Coloured lenses or overlays, however, appear to make no practical difference to phonological sensitivity or the synthesis of graphemic and phonemic representations. Almost all the studies that have demonstrated an improvement in
reading ability have selectively targeted individuals who suffer from some form of VDS (e.g., Conlon & Humphreys, 2001; Simmers, Bex, Smith, & Wilkins, 2001), or reading ability was measured using visually demanding text (e.g., Bouldoukian, Wilkins, & Evans, 2002; Evans & Joseph, 2002; Lightstone, Lightstone, & Wilkins, 1999; Wilkins, 2002). Studies that include measures such as reading accuracy or phonological awareness as their index of reading ability, fail to show a relationship between coloured lenses and reading skills (e.g., Martin, Mackenzie, Lovegrove, & McNicol, 1993). There is no evidence to indicate that dyslexia and VDS are concomitant disorders, or indeed share a common aetiology. Dr Robinson describes the magno deficit theory of dyslexia as the link between visual processing and VDS. There is certainly a large amount of evidence suggesting that dyslexic readers perform differently to normal readers on visual tasks that tap into the magnocellular visual system (e.g., Chase & Jenner, 1993; Cornelissen, Richardson, Mason, & Stein, 1995; Hansen, Stein, Orde, Winter, & Talcott, 2001; Pammer & Kevan, 2005; Pammer & Wheatley 2001; Slaghuis, Twell, & Kingstone, 1996; Vidyasagar & Pammer, 1999). These differences have been confirmed anatomically (Livingstone, Rosen, Drislane, & Galaburda, 1991), electrophysiologically (Lehmkuhle, Garzia, Turner, Hash, & Baro, 1993) and using functional MRI (Eden et al., 1996), and suggest that the functioning of the magnocellular system may be compromised in dyslexic readers. However, the theoretical link between how a magnocellular link may result in a reading deficit is still unclear. Certainly it is not the result of sacaddic suppression (Burr, Morrone, & Ross, 1994; Morris, Rayner, & Pollatsek, 1990; Rayner, 1985; Vidyasagar, 1999). A recent explanation is that the magnocellular-dominated dorsal pathway provides a mechanism for pre-attentive spatial sequencing when reading words and text (Vidyasagar, 1999, 2001; Vidyasagar & Pammer, 1999). More importantly, there is substantial evidence to link a magnocellular deficit with dyslexia, but no evidence specifically linking a magnocellular deficit with VDS (Conlon et al., 2001; Lee, 1998; Simmers et al., 2001). It would appear therefore that dyslexia and VDS are two different types of reading impairment, and coloured glasses appear to be useful in alleviating the symptoms of one, but not the other.

Why is this important? This is important for a number of reasons: desperate parents are investing in very expensive coloured lenses to “cure” their child’s dyslexia, when, in fact, unless the child does suffer from VDS, such intervention is likely to be useless. But more importantly, we can do something about VDS—the use of coloured lenses or overlays appears to provide fast and convenient relief for
sufferers of VDS. Individuals who suffer from dyslexia, however, have no such easy relief. Controlled research needs to be done to address both VDS and dyslexia, however, while we continue to amalgamate these two reading disorders, research into both dyslexia and VDS will suffer. In 1996 Hogben made his “Plea for Purity” in dyslexia research, suggesting that differences in research outcomes and conclusions are likely to be dependent upon heterogeneity between participants used in different studies. We need to embrace this heterogeneity, and understand what characterises the different reading disorders, and how best they can be addressed. Remedial strategies and early intervention—be it coloured glasses or “Jolly Phonics”—can then be best directed to the children who will most benefit.

Regards

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REFERENCES


6 March 2005

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Dear Dr Arthur-Kelly

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond to the letter by Dr Kristen Pammer.

I certainly agree with Dr Pammer’s claim that we need to be able to clearly distinguish people who have Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome from people who have phonological processing problems. These different forms of disability have been clearly and consistently identified in the literature. Wilkins, Lewis, Smith, Rowland, and Tweedie (2001), for example, found that phonological reading strategies were not related to the visual distortion symptoms of Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome, or to the benefit received from the use of coloured overlays.

Dr Pammer makes the very important point that parents need to be clear about this distinction, to ensure that they invest their time, money and effort wisely and effectively. It is also important that this distinction is clearly understood by schools when undertaking intervention programs. If the underlying processing problems affecting learning to read are not correctly identified, then the effectiveness of any remedial intervention could be compromised (Vellutino, Scanlon, & Lyon, 2000), resulting in less efficient use of educational personnel (Hatcher, Hulme, & Snowling, 2004) and less economic allocation of scarce resources. Smart, Prior, Sanson, and Oberklaid (2001) found that 65% of children with early reading difficulties who had assistance still had troubles with reading at age 13–14.

There is also the important issue raised by Dr Pammer that if this distinction is not made, it could lead to confused results from research. If auditory and visual processing disorders, such as Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome and phonological problems, are not clearly identified and separated in the study sample, it would be difficult to effectively evaluate treatment strategies, as both types of disability might be present in any study population (Farmer & Klein, 1995; Torgesen, 1998). Attempts to compare findings between studies are likely to be conflicting due to the heterogeneity of study
samples, as clearly stated by Dr. Pammer. Klassen (2002) found little consensus in the definition of learning difficulties for 36 research articles, which made comparison of findings very difficult.

There are a couple of minor issues I wish to raise from the letter by Dr. Pammer, but these issues do not detract from the validity of the concerns she raises. One issue is the claim that studies that included measures of reading accuracy failed to show a relationship between coloured lenses and reading skills. While this statement is generally true, there are exceptions (e.g., Robinson & Conway, 1990, 2000; Robinson & Foreman, 1999). Another minor issue relates to the statement that the theoretical link between a magnocellular deficit and reading disability is unclear, with no specific evidence linking a magnocellular deficit with Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome. I certainly agree that the relationship is unclear, but there is evidence to suggest that colour filtering may influence the function ability of the M-pathway (Chase, Ashourzadeh, Kelly, Monfette, & Kinsey, 2003; Edwards, Hogben, Clark, & Pratt, 1996; Lehmkuhle, 1993; Michimata, Okubo, & Mugishima, 1999; Stromeyer, Chaparro, Tolias, & Kronauer, 1997).

While I agree with the need to clearly distinguish between Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome and problems with phonological processing, I am not sure whether the best way to distinguish them is through the terms Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome and dyslexia. In my opinion, dyslexia is a global term, more appropriately used to denote an innate reading disability whatever the cause (visual or auditory), with the term Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome used to identify a visual processing cause (or sub-type) for this reading disability, and the term phonological or phonemic awareness problems used to denote an auditory processing cause (or sub-type) for this reading disability. The concept of a dual route model of reading, which emphasises both lexical (visual) and auditory skills, has been well developed by Coltheart and colleagues (e.g., Coltheart, Rastle, Perry, Zeigler, & Langdon, 2001), as has the notion of sub-types of reading disability (e.g., Rourke & Fuerst, 1991).

I feel our first priority in avoiding unnecessary confusion is to agree on a single term to identify people with literacy problems. At the moment, a number of terms are used to describe such people, with dyslexia and learning disabilities being most common. In the US you have groups such as the Learning Disability Association and the International Dyslexia Association who would both claim to be involved with people who have reading/literacy problems. In the UK, it would seem that the term dyslexia has become more prominent, possibly because the term learning disabilities is increasingly being used to describe people with intellectual or developmental delays. If
one common term can be agreed upon, the notion of sub-categories could then be used to clearly identify likely underlying causal mechanisms and to recommend effective intervention strategies.

There is certainly a need to provide more clarity about the different causal mechanisms for literacy problems. By not doing so, we are causing confusion among parents and professionals, as well as increasing the likelihood of confused or conflicting research results. As Dr Pammer emphasises, the value of specific intervention strategies will only be fully established if we can clearly identify the type of reading disorders that respond to these specific intervention strategies.

Regards

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REFERENCES


One of the roles of AASE, and thus of this journal, is to disseminate information about good practice in special education. One way we do this is by publishing research and review articles about special education in Australia. However, many practitioners have asked for more practical information, as well as these academic articles.

PRACTICALLY SPEAKING is a new part of Special Education Perspectives. It includes descriptions of programs, teaching resources and strategies, curricula, technology, school or classroom organisation, or other aspects of educational services to students with special education needs that illustrate good practice. We are looking for descriptions from practitioners about how they implement good practice. These contributions will not be formally refereed in the same way as the more academic content, however, they will be reviewed by the editor and others to ensure they do reflect good, research-based practice. As with refereed contributions, writers may be asked to make revisions to their contributions.

We are now calling for contributions to this section. Its success obviously depends on readers who are prepared to describe their experiences. Contributions may be of any length, from a short description of a useful resource to an article length description of a program. Detailed referencing is not required, although for some descriptions writers might like to indicate one or two sources from the research literature that supports the practices or procedures described. Support will be available to help with writing if you have a good idea, but are unsure about how to go about contributing it to the journal.

WHO TO CONTACT
If you would like to discuss a contribution, please contact Jennifer Stephenson at the Macquarie University Special Education Centre (MUSEC), Macquarie University, North Ryde, NSW, 2109. Phone: (02) 9850 8694. Email: jennifer.stephenson@speced.sed.mq.edu.au
THE 5R FRAMEWORK: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND MANAGING BEHAVIOUR

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The 5R Framework provides a way for clear understandings and agreed positions concerning behaviour and relationships to be established within the school community. The framework is built through facilitated conversations involving teachers, parents and students. Through these conversations, legitimate benchmarks are established that assist in defining community agreed values, principles and expectations concerning behaviour and relationships within the school.

The ground has been shifting for sometime in schools as to how the behaviour of students is to be managed. As Bill Rogers has pointed out in his book Behaviour management: A whole school approach, the language of punishment has been replaced by the language of consequence. The language of consequence itself has been broadened to include such notions as choice being linked to responsible action, relationships as being central to the core teaching and learning functions of a school, and restitution and inclusion as being essential to the support and well-being of all members of the school community. Although the ground may have shifted, what people who work within schools have always known is that in order to grow and sustain a healthy social environment, members of the school community need to be in agreement with how they interact with each other.

This paper reports on a professional development activity that assists a school community to build agreement concerning the expectations and management of behaviour and social interactions. The professional development has been conducted in a number of schools of the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.

The 5Rs
There is nothing especially new about the 5Rs. The basis of the concept lies with Bill...
Rogers through his articulation of the first three Rs, *Rights, Responsibilities* and *Rules*, in his book *Making a discipline plan*. Some years later, Rogers broadened these to include the fourth R, *Routines* (in his book *Behaviour management: A whole school approach*). How consequences are formed, selected and applied to both appropriate and inappropriate behaviours has also been given lengthy consideration by Rogers. Importantly, Rogers has placed continuing emphasis on the need for repairing and rebuilding when responding to inappropriate and disruptive behaviours.

It is within this context that I have added a fifth R, *Response*, to round out the 5R Framework. I have hoped that this has not been too presumptuous because I am certain that Rogers would have considered such a scenario. In adding the fifth R to the initial set of four, I have, however, been further influenced by my experiences with Restorative Justice. Restorative Justice provides a set of strategies grounded in the use of respectful communication for building healthy relationships within communities. At the heart of this is a consistent emphasis on reparation of the harm caused to relationships by inappropriate behaviour. Over the past five years or so, the Restorative Justice movement has given rise to the use of restorative practices in schools through such organisations as RealJustice Australia and Marist Youth Care. I shall return to the idea of Restorative Justice a little later in this paper, however, I hope for the time being that you will find its connection with the language of consequence and, in particular, the ideas of repair and rebuild to be self-evident.

**The first two Rs: Rights and Responsibilities**

Rights and responsibilities are considered as being inseparable and are therefore dealt with as “two sides of the one coin”. An example of this is that where we have a right to be heard, we have a corresponding responsibility to listen. Responsibilities can be defined as the obligations that a person holds to oneself, to others and to the community. I have found the following observations concerning rights made by Rogers (1989) to be helpful:

- A right is an expression of what we value. Values are essential to describing who we are, both individually and collectively.
- A right is an expression of how things ought to be.
- Rights gain meaning in the context of responsible behaviour and respectful relationships.
- Rights exist within a context of respect and fair process.
- Respect is at the heart of rights. Respect is made manifest by action. Teachers, for example, are in an ideal position to both model respectful behaviour and to promote and protect the rights and responsibilities of others.
The third R: Routines

Routines are those activities that members of the school community engage in on a regular, ongoing basis. These activities define the school day, week and term. They ensure the smooth running of the whole school, the classroom and the playground. They often need to be modelled and practised until they become a part of the fabric of the school community. Routines often express, for example, well-mannered behaviour, time markers in the day, dealing with litter, ways of moving around the playground, ways of entering and leaving the classroom and waiting at the bus stop, as well as ways of engaging with the broader community. Similar to rules, I have found that the trick is not to express in policy too many routines but enough to promote and ensure good organisation and responsible behaviour.

The fourth R: Rules

Much has been written about rules, their formation and their place within the school community. Very few classrooms or schools do not have sets of rules to be followed. In my experience, however, it is not the lack of rules that presents as a difficulty, rather it is how these rules are interpreted and applied across the school community. During the professional development activity I request participants to consider the following propositions concerning rules:

- Rules, like routines, provide the framework for desirable social behaviour.
- Rules need to be established on an agreed basis and applied within a context of consistency and fairness.
- Rules protect rights and invoke responsibilities (Rogers, 1989).
- Rules make expectations concerning behaviour explicit and set reasonable limits to that behaviour.
- Students will challenge rules, therefore, expectations concerning accountability need to be directly connected to rules, and consequences for breaking rules need to be both obvious and understood.

I also consider the following two comments to be worthwhile:

*Rules are very helpful and important since they help everyone to know what behaviour is acceptable within the school community. A problem arises, however, when the primary focus of a school discipline program is placed upon the rule violation, and because of that, the human violation is ignored or minimised. Since the purpose of establishing rules is to provide for a safe, fair, just and orderly community, it is important that the underlying human dimension is not lost in our effort to be sure to follow the rules.* (Classen, 2001, available at www.fesno.edu/dept/pacs)
All rules occur within relationships. Behaviour is relational. While rules can provide acceptable limits to unacceptable behaviour, as well as focussing on the behaviour, they cannot create the behaviour. Rules can give some protection for rights, but they cannot guarantee rights. Human fallibility, human ignorance and wilful wrongdoing will always compete with what the school community says is right. At the very least, rules give a yardstick within which ‘the right’ can be explained and enforced, but responsibility will always need to be taught, supported and encouraged. (Rogers, 1995)

The fifth R: Response
Managing inappropriate and disruptive behaviours is consistently reported by teachers as an area of high concern. One consequence of this is that a school community’s focus can be distracted from all of the good things that students do. With this acknowledged, I have found it helpful during the professional development activity to discuss the following:

- Consider the concept of a “response continuum triangle”. The base level of the triangle identifies what students in the school community do well and the ways in which they are and can be affirmed for this. The remaining levels of the triangle deal with inappropriate behaviours organised according to degree of seriousness and identification of the types of responses that are acceptable to all members of the school community.
- Disruptive behaviour can be measured by its effect on mutual rights, safety, fair treatment of others and learning (Rogers, 1995).
- Consequences should be developed for inappropriate and disruptive behaviours that are reasonable, relate to the behaviour concerned, respect the dignity of involved persons and have degrees of seriousness built in.
- Response and the application of consequences need to be guided by the principles of procedural fairness.
- Response to inappropriate behaviour can be thought of as occurring in a continuum of retributive (punitive) to restorative (relational) action.
- Repair of inappropriate behaviour should focus on the harm caused rather than the rule broken. Rebuilding of relationships should be viewed as being more important than applying a consequence.

The overarching purpose of responding to inappropriate behaviour is for learning to occur. If a positive change in behaviour does not result from a particular response, then the response needs to be rethought. Relevant questions to consider are: Has punishment stopped a student from breaking the rules or engaging in disruptive behaviour? What can we do as
teachers that will actively teach appropriate behaviour? How can we better interact with students in order to ensure that learning and change in behaviour will occur?

Establishing the 5R Framework

The framework is established within the school community through a series of steps, most often initiated by the school contacting the St Laurence Centre. Usually, this contact involves a direct request for professional development in the 5R Framework or a request for assistance in reviewing the school’s discipline and welfare policies. Schools are motivated to make this contact for a range of reasons. Three that are commonly stated by school personnel are (1) school policies and practices have grown stale and are not achieving desired outcomes in student behaviour; (2) a lack of understanding across the school community of behavioural expectations and procedures for dealing with both appropriate and inappropriate behaviours; and (3) a recognition that ad hoc and isolated management of student behaviour by individual teachers does not readily translate into a culture of consistency in managing behaviours. Table 1 provides a brief summary of the six steps taken in establishing the framework within a school.

At the end of this article there is an example of a 5R Framework for a diocesan primary school (see Appendix 1). Please note, however, that the preamble, stated links to the Diocesan Pastoral Care Policy and relevant support documents have not been included in this example.

The professional development 5R workshop

This workshop is attended by all teaching and administrative staff, as well as representatives from the parent body. In my experience, schools invite anywhere from one to five parents to attend the day. The attendance of parents has usually proved to be invaluable. The day is grounded in facilitated conversations and exchanges of views between staff and parents; this is seen as being essential to building community understandings concerning the management of behaviour and relationships within the school.

One week prior to the workshop, I request the principal to send to all participants a pre-workshop thinking sheet. This thinking sheet briefly introduces the 5Rs and poses a number of thinking points concerning how members of the school community might like the 5Rs to look within their school. The following statement is highlighted:

*The 5Rs need to be built and agreed to by all community members within a context of clearly articulated values and beliefs.*
### Table 1: Establishing the 5R Framework within the school community

| Step 1 | Contact between the school and St Laurence Centre  
|        | Date for Professional Development 5R Workshop set (whole staff and parent representatives attend) |
| Step 2 | Pre-workshop Thinking Sheet distributed by principal to all workshop participants one week prior to the workshop |
| Step 3 | Professional Development 5R Workshop held (9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.)  
|        | Working party established to manage the follow-up process |
| Step 4 | Draft of new policy, inclusive of processes and procedures and any related support documents, distributed to staff for comment  
|        | Draft policy and support documents tabled at the school’s Parents and Friends Association for comment  
|        | Purpose and contents of draft policy discussed and/or presented to Student Representative Council for comment |
| Step 5 | Amendments, where identified, made to draft policy  
|        | Completed document entered into school policy |
| Step 6 | Family 5R Workshop offered to all parents in the school community (2 hour workshop, 7.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.) |

The thinking sheet also introduces the following six key principles of the 5R Framework:

**Consistent emphasis on:**

1. **Togetherness**
2. **Clear expectations**
3. **Trust**
4. **Celebration of right action**
5. **Positive communication**
6. **Restitution and reintegration**
The workshop itself is presented across three sessions, a brief summary of which follows:

**Session 1: Rights, Responsibilities, Routines and Rules**
The first session deals with the Rights, Responsibilities, Routines and Rules of the school community. The early part of this session spends some time in discussion concerning the nature of the behavioural landscape current within the school. Conversations are facilitated around the topics of strengths, weaknesses, and what needs fixing and what doesn’t. Following this, time is spent in conversation concerning the values and beliefs present within the school community. It is prompted by the question, *What connects and binds us together?* This conversation provides a point of entry into discussion directed at establishing agreement on the rights, responsibilities, rules and routines for the school. I have found that as long as the conversation concerning values and beliefs has focused on the principle of connection, and participants have sought to be accommodating of each other’s views, the first four Rs are usually established quite quickly and with little difficulty.

**Session 2: Managing student behaviour**
The second session departs from the framework to some extent. It asks participants to consider the nature of behaviour and to focus on particular strategies for managing student behaviour. In regard to the nature of behaviour, I request participants to consider the following two propositions:

- Behaviour is essentially an act of communication—when we behave in a certain way, we communicate something.
- Behaviour is an act of choice—it results from the choices we make.

In considering these propositions, I refer to Dreikurs’ argument (in his book *Maintaining sanity in the classroom: Classroom management techniques*) that behaviour can be described by looking to the particular goal that it is attempting to achieve—is it attention, power, revenge or dependency and escape? I also refer to Glasser’s argument that behaviour is motivated by needs satisfaction—survival, belonging, power, freedom and fun (from his book *Control theory in the classroom*). Participants are often quick to identify these motivations in the behaviour of their students (and in more reflective moments, themselves!).

This session is really more one of show and tell than facilitated discussion, the content of which is directed by the presenting needs of the school. I rely on the executive of the school to inform me of these prior to the workshop. As might be expected, these tend to fall broadly into classroom and/or playground management issues. At times broader community
issues are also of a concern (examples of which include student behaviour on buses and in shopping malls). Over the past few years, strategies presented have included:

- an introduction to Lindy Peterson’s *Stop Think Do* program;
- Christine Richmond’s *Ten Micro-Skills for Managing Behaviour in the Classroom*;
- various behaviour modification and reinforcement techniques, such as response-cost scheduling;
- the St Laurence Centre’s Behaviour Support Instrument;
- the language of choice;
- responsible thinking space and reflection sheets;
- peer mediation;
- and various ways of negotiating with adolescents, including Glasser’s *Seven Step Problem-Solving Method* and adaptations of Fisher, Ury and Paton’s method of *Principled Negotiation* (in their book *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreements without giving in*).

More recently, I have included Restorative Justice strategies, such as circles and affective questioning.

**Session 3: Response**

The third session returns to the framework and deals solely with the fifth R, Response. Care is taken to point out that, in keeping with the principle of celebration of right action, as much, if not more, thought and effort needs to be given within the school community to responding to appropriate behaviours as it is to those that are considered to be inappropriate. Time is spent on identifying how appropriate student behaviours can be consistently noticed and affirmed. The use of consequences and strategies for responding to inappropriate student behaviour is discussed within an authoritative (relational, “control with support”) rather than authoritarian (coercive, “command and control”) context and specifically through the paradigm of social control windows, as adapted from Glasser by McCold and Wachtel (in *The new real justice training manual*). This paradigm seeks to describe the interaction between adults and students as occurring within four modalities or windows: punitive (doing to students), neglectful (*not* doing for students), permissive (doing *for* students) and restorative (doing *with* students).

Discussion within the third session is linked backed to the various strategies covered in the second session, with emphasis given to the building of a consistent culture that is characterised by respectful communication and positive relationships. Time is also given within the session to discuss how the school community might respond to highly challenging student behaviour. The more traditionally used strategies of cool-off time,
time-out, in-school and out-of-school suspension, behaviour contracts and expulsion are discussed within a proposed continuum of response (the continuum triangle) and alongside the Restorative Justice processes of restorative meetings and conferencing.

**Restorative practices within schools**

A Restorative Justice approach to inappropriate behaviour differs from more traditional approaches in the following ways:
- Inappropriate behaviour is defined as the harm that is done to a person or the community rather than a violation of a rule or the system.
- The focus is placed on solving problems and repairing harm rather than establishing blame or guilt; the consequences of an offender’s behaviour takes precedence over the behaviour itself.
- Accountability is described as taking responsibility, apologising and helping to repair the harm rather than defined as punishment.

Restorative practices in schools emphasise the accountability that students have for their behaviour, and provide ways for a student who has behaved inappropriately to actively participate in meeting the obligation that he or she holds for repairing the harm caused. Central to restorative practices is the idea that students need to be provided with opportunities for learning how to behave appropriately and in accordance with the expectations of the school community. The obligation held by the school community is to provide these opportunities and to actively embrace the principles of reintegration and inclusion.

Wachtel (in a conference paper in 1999) described the fundamental elements of restorative practice as:
- Fostering awareness of how others have been affected by wrongdoing.
- Avoiding scolding and lecturing. This prompts the student to react defensively and distracts the student from understanding the impact of inappropriate behaviour on others.
- Involving students actively. Students are challenged to face and listen to the people that they have harmed, they are asked to participate in making decisions about how to make reparation, and they are held accountable to their commitments.
- Accepting ambiguity. Sometimes fault is difficult to establish; placing a focus on the consequences of behaviour and remaining solution focused helps those involved to move forward.
- Separating the deed from the doer helps all involved to recognise the worth of each other whilst at the same time emphasising disapproval of the wrongdoing.
• Seeing every instance of wrongdoing and conflict as an opportunity for learning. The use of restorative practices can turn negative events into constructive events, building empathy and a sense of community.

Restorative practices in schools are evidenced across a range of strategies and processes. The most widely recognised Restorative Justice process is family group or youth conferencing, used extensively in the juvenile justice system. In schools this type of process is referred to as restorative conferencing, and there are a number of adapted versions of the process. Whilst restorative conferencing is a somewhat specialised process, there are a number of restorative strategies based on positive communication and conflict resolution techniques that can be used across the school community in both a preventative and corrective way. These include the use of the language of choice (drawn from the work of Glasser), the use of affective statements and questioning (drawn from Shame and pride: Affect, sex, and the birth of the self by Nathanson and the Conferencing handbook produced by RealJustice) and the implementation of brief, structured meetings between persons involved in an incident of inappropriate behaviour or conflict. In the 5R professional development day, I illustrate the broad use of the strategies through a “pyramid of restorative practices”, where the more frequently used strategies comprise the base of the pyramid, the less frequently used the remainder, and where restorative conferencing is located at the apex.

Students with special needs
The use of restorative practices in schools is increasingly being reported on both here within Australia and overseas. Many of these reports speak positively of the impact restorative practices have across a school community, however, there appears to be little specific reporting of the use of restorative practices with students with special needs. One potential difficulty that might arise with students with special needs extends from the emphasis that restorative practices place upon language competence. The potential risks that this poses for students with language and intellectual disabilities would be immediately obvious to special education teachers and school counsellors who work with these students. It could be that restorative practices with particular students with special needs may need to be considered in conjunction with other strategies that have historically been proven to work. It would, for instance, be interesting to evaluate the success of social stories constructed on restorative justice principles and also its use with augmented systems of communication.

Specific questions concerning the management of the behaviour of students with special needs occasionally arise during the 5R professional development day. At times, these questions relate to particular disabilities, and at other times are more general in their nature.
In response, I emphasise the relevance that the 5R Framework has for building positive relationships and managing the behaviour of all students, inclusive of those who experience special needs. Similar to the issue noted above concerning the use of restorative practices with students with special needs, I emphasise the use of additional behaviour strategies that have been proven in both research and practice to be effective for managing the behaviour of students with disabilities and special needs. Usually, this leads to discussion concerning a case management approach and, in particular, the place of Individual Education/Behaviour Plans within the broader 5R Framework. I have found it helpful on these occasions to refer to a number of the strategies presented within the second session of the day, in particular those which more carefully describe the antecedents and purpose of a student’s behaviour, and those that consider the impact of the curriculum and specific teaching and classroom management strategies on behaviour. Infrequently, strategies that carefully describe actions to be taken in instances where a student’s behaviour is becoming potentially harmful have also been discussed.

Managing the behaviour of students who experience special needs is an area that often, but not always, requires specialist support. Whether or not specialist support is called upon, the likelihood of achieving success with a student is greatly enhanced by the presence of a well articulated and well accepted whole school community approach to behaviour management.

**The Family 5R Workshop**

The Family 5R Workshop is offered as the final step in establishing the 5R Framework within the school community. It is presented as a two hour evening session after the draft 5R school document has been consulted on, agreed to and published within the school community. The workshop provides an opportunity for teachers and parents to strengthen their partnership in education and to build understandings and affirm agreements as to how relationships are built and behaviour is best managed within the school. Additionally, the workshop provides an opportunity for parents to begin developing a 5R Framework within their own family.

The workshop begins by reviewing the 5R Framework for the school with emphasis given to its six key principles (togetherness, clear expectations, trust, celebration of right action, positive communication, restitution and reintegration). Conversation is built around the following six questions:

- What values and beliefs connect and bind us together as a family?
- What rights do we have as a member of the family?
- What responsibilities do we have as a member of the family?
• What routines do we engage in that help to organise our day/week as a family?
• What are the rules that we, as a family, accept and live by?
• What response do we, as a family, make to both appropriate and inappropriate actions and behaviours?

The social control window of McCold and Wachtel (1995) that is referenced in the third session of the school’s 5R professional development day is used here to describe four different parenting styles (to, not, for, with children). Limit setting, use of consequences and ways of achieving negotiated outcomes are also discussed. I also spend some time discussing restorative practices and how these, in particular the use of affective questioning, might be used in the home. On occasions, I have found that some parents come to the workshop with a view that restorative practices provide a child with a “soft option” and that punishment is the most appropriate way of dealing with a child’s misbehaviour. I attempt to disarm this view by emphasising the high levels of accountability that restorative practices place upon a child for his or her inappropriate behaviour. I also try to make it clear how consequences can be more effective in changing behaviour when they are directly linked to the wrongdoing and when the ongoing focus within the family is on reparation of harm caused to relationships rather than on the act of wrongdoing itself or the breaking of a rule.

The workshop ends with an activity that asks parents to form small groups to develop a brief 5R family plan that reflects the 5R Framework of the school. Parents are usually quick to identify the similarities inherent between the school and family settings. Parents also readily agree that positive outcomes have a better chance of being achieved for their children when the school and home reflect a consistent approach and are supportive of each other in managing behaviour and building relationships.

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Resources


Marist Youth Care (PO Box 589, Seven Hills, NSW, 1730): offering consultancy, mentoring and professional development in the use of restorative practices in schools.


RealJustice Australia (PO Box 95, Springwood, NSW, 2777): offering consultancy, mentoring and professional development in the use of restorative practices in schools.


St Laurence Centre (2002). *Behaviour support instrument*. Available from the St Laurence Centre, PO Box 250, Broadmeadow, NSW, 2292.

Appendix 1. A typical primary school’s 5r Framework

Rights
• To learn, grow and develop in faith
• To be able to have a fair go
• To feel safe and happy
• To teach and learn in a peaceful school
• To be valued and respected

Responsibilities
• To be a kind, caring and sharing person
• To be peaceful, faithful and respectful
• To learn and allow others to learn
• To be honest
• To celebrate efforts and achievements
• To let others have a fair go

Routines
• We say “Good Morning” or “Good Afternoon” to teachers and adults
• We always say morning and afternoon prayer
• We attend weekly Mass
• We always pick up litter when we see it
• We enter classrooms only with permission
• We move to class when we hear the second bell after play
• We wait quietly in class for our teacher
• We stay in our own playing area
**Rules**

- CARE (Care Always and Respect Everyone)
- Safe Hands, Safe Feet
- Stop, Think, Do
- Sunsmart

**Response**

*Beliefs*

- We will celebrate right choices and behaviours
- We will be accountable for the choices we make
- We will be accountable for the behaviours we engage in
- We will be supported to do the right thing
- There will always be fair consequences for what we do and how we do it
- We will seek to repair any harm done if we make choices and engage in behaviours that do not help us to meet our responsibilities and support the rights of others

*Strategies*

- Celebration activities (e.g., school assemblies, award systems and ceremonies, special privileges)
- Language of choice
- Affective questioning
- Planned consequences (e.g., time-out, loss of privileges, suspension, community restitution activities)
- Responsible thinking (reflections room/affective questions sheet)
- Circles
- Restorative meetings
- Restorative conferences
Practically Speaking

CLOCKING ON:
USING A TIMER AS A BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT TOOL

Gwyn Symonds
Rowland Hassall SSP
NSW Department of Education and Training

When I mention that I use an electronic timer to set up a timetable for positive reinforcement in my classroom I have, on occasion, found that colleagues feel this is too artificial or rigid, and they express concerns about its compatibility with spontaneity in student/teacher interaction. I have heard it described, variously, as too structured, mechanistic, and reductionist. I have also been asked, “Isn’t the timer going off all the time annoying?” While these are understandable initial responses, having used a timer as a behaviour management tool for many years, I find exactly the opposite to be true. Integrating its use into a timetable for positive reinforcement of students, for example, ensures that crucial feedback to improve student motivation occurs consistently. Research tells us that teachers, when left to their own devices, are more likely to respond to negative behaviours while neglecting to reinforce positive behaviours at anything like the same rate. Use of a timer can be a helpful counter measure to this tendency. In addition, its use frees teachers to reinforce with spontaneity outside the timer framework, secure in the knowledge that they are not being random in their responses over time. It goes without saying that the teacher is not limited to reinforcing only at the intervals set. The interval is only the guaranteed baseline reinforcement rate.

As a rule, I set the timer for 15-minutes, though this can be varied depending on the age and individual needs of the students, as well as specific instructional goals. I have, generally, found that anything less than that can interrupt the flow of group instruction if the timer is used all day. However, for students who need more frequent positive reinforcement, I

1 Such legitimate concerns are, of course, a part of the larger debate in special education about the degree of structure that is appropriate when compared to the more self-directed instruction emphasised in mainstream education.
have used it successfully on 5- or 10-minute intervals for parts of a day. I announce when I am setting the timer at the start of the morning program. This announcement is a useful way of signalling that the class should settle as we are now beginning the business of learning. As the timetable of the day progresses, at 15-minute intervals when the timer sounds, students are rewarded with a token system according to whatever criteria have been set. The criteria can be task specific or cover a range of behaviours—from staying in one’s seat to following all instructions given in the interval timed. When the timer rings the students are informed as to whether they have met the criteria and are reinforced for this, or shown how they can improve their performance and earn reinforcement in the next 15-minute period. Tokens can be converted to tangibles or other delayed rewards, as desired, at any later stage—at recess breaks, the end of the day or the week.

The benefits of timer use to the teacher include:
1. Consistent positive reinforcement of students is delivered throughout the day.
2. Consistent attention is given to behaviour management as the promotion of positive behaviour rather than simply singling out negative behaviour for instructional attention.
3. Stress reduction is achieved from having reinforcement in the form of a programmed reminder rather than having to remember to do it. This is particularly valuable in a class where students display challenging behaviours that can distract teachers from their daily behaviour management routines.

The benefits of timer use to the student include:
1. Continuity of positive feedback on their behaviour and classroom skills.
2. A clear expectation of a time frame for achievable goals for behaviour that promotes success. Fifteen minutes (or shorter if a student can only progress in smaller steps) is a manageable amount of time for most students to achieve success in a behaviour goal. If not, the student knows that he or she has an immediate chance to try again in the next time period. This is particularly important to students who have difficulty managing long-term behaviour goals or delaying reward gratification.
3. Indirect reinforcement of the concepts of time, the duration of the day, time management, the relation of time taken for tasks to the timetable, etc. The indirect impact of the use of the timer in these areas can be formally linked to programming for improving student organisational skills—assigning tasks to be completed in 15-minutes, or encouraging students to plan how to divide larger tasks into 15-minute stages, for example. These tasks can be linked to logs or written and visual timetables. When this is done, the timer can be used to signal both reinforcement feedback and the beginning and end of each activity.
4. Increased self-assessment and self-management of tasks and behaviour. I have found that students very quickly begin to monitor their own success as they become comfortable with the presence of the timer and its role as a reminder of what they are achieving.

The degree to which the use of a timer can become an unobtrusive behaviour management tool was highlighted for me on one occasion after my absence for a day. On my return, the casual teacher who replaced me told me that the students informed her of the timer’s use, obtained her agreement to continuing its use in my absence, took turns to reset the timer and, as a group, solicited her feedback when the timer sounded. As a casual teacher coming to the class for the first time, she felt like the system “ran itself” and freed her to focus on instruction and becoming quickly familiar with student needs. After setting the timer at the start of the day, I have often assigned re-setting it as a student duty, using the job itself as a reward, or a sign of increased student responsibility. It is, of course, possible to fade the timer’s use as students become more self-motivated, by lengthening the intervals. Once the timer’s use is routine, far from being a mechanical imposition on class interaction, it is integrated seamlessly into classroom management and valued as a way of measuring their success by the students. The use of a timer is, ostensibly, an intervention that adds to structure in a classroom for students who require it, making expectations and reinforcement clear to students. However, paradoxically, it is also a frame of reference that unobtrusively embeds the integration of behaviour management strategies into student/teacher interactions once it is used routinely. Far from being mechanistic, using the timer is a form of programming liberation in this context.

An awareness of time running out in a period allotted to complete an assigned activity, the process of time elapsing, is a concept that is not easy for some students to use as a practical part of their organisational skills. If the student cannot yet tell analog or digital time the difficulty is compounded. As a corollary, mastering time management for task completion, pacing oneself through a task, is critical to classroom success and to the efficient use of time as a life skill outside of school. Sand timers on a desk can provide a visual for time elapsing to task completion. Timers of all varieties are also extremely useful for structuring transitions, or activity change, in that context. Telling students that there are 3 more minutes until it is time to correct a task can be visually signalled with a sand timer, for example, or aurally, by setting a timer to sound every minute until 3 minutes are counted. If a class is disruptive (“The timer is on, you have (insert time) minutes to drop the noise level”), recording the amount of time taken to comply over a week gives students a clear expectation that they will manage their own compliance. Positive reinforcement
can be given on a daily or weekly basis for the class consistently keeping to this time limit. Any time that is saved by settling in less than the designated time can also be returned to the class as an accumulated reward for activities of choice. Students who have trouble managing time when out of seat, moving around the room to use equipment, or leaving class to access the toilet, for example, can self-monitor with the use of a timer. Giving such students the timer and directing them to return to the seat or the classroom when the timer sounds can help them to comply with class rules. Use of a timer in these ways gives the student control of time and pacing. Timers also encourage independent monitoring of time wasters, like chatting, lessening the frustration of students who are easily distracted from routines. The timer can also be used to allow students who take longer to respond to questions in class some extra time to think without singling them out. The teacher simply sets the timer to an interval and says that answers will be called for after everyone has thought about it for whatever interval of time is chosen.

Finally, just about any instructional activity can be timed as a motivational tool for recording improvement for feedback to students. Students often respond to it, much as athletes do against a stopwatch, as a way of recording personal bests in any activity. I have found even the most mundane class activity becomes a learning sport or game when a timer is used, with students competing safely against their own best score rather than the scores of others. I am still discovering ways in which timers can be used to enhance student independence and motivation in the classroom and smooth the implementation of instruction for students with learning and behavioural difficulties. Research, other teachers and the students themselves are a valuable source for collecting creative ideas for timer use. It is an extremely versatile behaviour management tool.
The Victorian Department of Education and Training has over 16,000 students with special needs in its Program for Students with Disabilities. About a third of these students attend one of the State’s 82 special schools. In my 40 years in the Department, much of my time was spent in these schools, with 18 years as principal of four special schools. Many of the most rewarding and fulfilling times during this teaching career were involved in the provision of outdoor education for students with special needs.

At my last school, Berendale School in Hampton East, a south-eastern suburb of Melbourne, we had an extensive outdoor education program for the 140 students aged from 13 to 18 years, all with a mild intellectual disability and a number with additional disabilities. Having such an outdoor education program is the norm for many of Victoria’s special schools, though few were as extensive as Berendale’s. Each Berendale student attended at least one school camp during the year and some students attended as many as five. Every staff member attended at least one camp a year.

Central to the program were the outdoor education centres at Blackwood and Garfield North, cooperatively owned by the school along with a number of other special schools. Also used were the Victorian Department of Education and Training’s secondary schools outdoor adventure camps at Rubicon and Bogong in the north-east of the state, as well as the National Sailing School at Geelong. We also had students attending camps based in national parks and at youth hostels.

Every student over 15 years of age at the school was enrolled in the Duke of Edinburgh’s Awards Scheme, and between six and 14 students a year were also enrolled in Victorian Certificate of Education Unit 1 Outdoor Education. Some of these students, as well as participating in the other regular curriculum programs during the year, completed bush walks, some of which included a three-day hike with full packs. They may have camped,
mountain biked, sailed, canoed, climbed and abseiled, white water rafted, skied, been on high and/or low rope courses, and participated in initiative games.

Victoria began a concerted and practical approach towards providing viable and appropriate outdoor education programs for students with special needs with the establishment in 1969 of the Blackwood School Camp by a number of special schools based in Melbourne suburbs. Since then, the programs and facilities available have increased and developed to offer a diverse and exciting range of outdoor education programs for students in special schools in the State, unmatched in any other Australian State or Territory and equal to the best in the world. Allied with this has been a comprehensive professional development program for school staff to properly provide appropriate educational programs for the students attending these camps. As noted before, a wide range of facilities and destinations are used in the outdoor education programs. Many special schools have extensive resources in outdoor education program equipment, such as camping equipment, mountain bikes and trailers, as well as owning at least one mini-bus. A number of schools have melded these programs into other school offerings, such as the Duke of Edinburgh’s Awards and/or Victorian Certificate of Education Outdoor Education subjects, to further enhance student self-esteem.

Thirty-two of Victoria’s special schools are very fortunate in that they are a member of the Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre and/or the Garfield North Outdoor Education Centre. These two camps in their own way have facilities equal to or better than many school-owned camps, and they are fully accredited by the Camping Association of Victoria. A committee of staff from the 24 member schools manages the facilities on a non-profit basis. Member schools pay an annual administration fee (which these days does not even cover insurance) and are rostered for camp weeks, each school having between three and five camps a year. Each participant (student or staff) is charged $30.00 for a school week for the use of the facilities. All camps are self-catering. To survive and prosper, Blackwood and Garfield North both rely on input from the member schools. For committee members, this will usually mean one day a month and for school representatives two to three days a year.

Blackwood is located adjacent to the Wombat State Forest, about 90 kilometers north-west of Melbourne. The camp began in the old rural school building that had had to close in 1967 due to lack of student numbers. This original school building, which volunteers had converted into a fairly utilitarian school camp, was unfortunately burnt down in 1981. However, a new purpose-built facility costing $180,000.00 replaced it two years
later. Called the School, in recognition of the original building, it has three bunkrooms accommodating 16 campers, two rooms for four staff, excellent toilet and shower facilities, a large well-equipped kitchen and dining room, and a lounge.

The Residence, the former teacher’s residence and before that the police station, is the second facility. It has been converted with two bunkrooms for 16 students, a staff room for three, two shower rooms and toilets, a dining room/kitchen and a lounge. The Residence is centrally heated. The third facility, the Shelter, caters for tent campers with a covered recreation area, showers and toilets, and a wash-up area. Tents are available for the campers. Cooking is done by campfire.

Blackwood has two teachers attached to the centre, who assist the visiting teachers in running their programs. The surrounding area is renowned for its bush walks, many of which are suitable for students with disabilities as they follow old gold mining water races, meaning there is little gradient change. Within the camp grounds is a low rope course, a dam in which to try yabbying skills, and 20 mountain bikes available. The Blackwood staff has information on many activities that can be undertaken in the surrounding areas, such as at Ballarat, Bendigo, and Daylesford. There is also a four-wheel drive available as a back-up vehicle.

Each November, Blackwood conducts its Super Ride in which over 100 students and 40 staff from about 16 schools participate, the major component being a 40-kilometre ride on mainly dirt roads through the Wombat State Forest as a whole-day activity during a three-day camp. This very well planned and managed bike riding camp is a highlight for many students in their school lives as they have achieved something they probably did not think they were capable of.

So successful has the Blackwood Super Ride been in its 13 years, that another ride was added to the offerings in 2002. This was the Alpine Bike Ride, which consisted of a 90-
kilometre ride over three days in a five-day camp. Forty students participated from eight schools in the first year, and it is now part of many schools’ outdoor education calendar.

Garfield North is located in west Gippsland, about 80 kilometres east of Melbourne. With 17 member schools, it has a similar management structure as Blackwood. The camp is set in a delightful treed block of five hectares surrounded by farmland, and has two dormitories for 15 students, two staff rooms for four, excellent shower and toilet facilities, a combined dining, lounge area and kitchen with modern appliances. A new large recreation building was opened in 2001. As well as offering very good walking and bike riding country, there are a number of other attractions within easy driving distance. Garfield does not have resident teaching staff.

Both Blackwood and Garfield North run annual residential professional development courses. While designed particularly for the venue, they deal with many general aspects of successful and safe outdoor education program planning. The participants always rate these programs as very informative and enjoyable.

Why is there so much effort put into these facilities? It is because the schools see the enormous benefits for their students with special needs attending the camps. They are not just used for physical, fitness and leisure activities, but are planned to cover many other aspects of the students’ programs. Some schools run camps based on a particular subject area—music, art or science. The largest gains are often in the personal development areas, especially self-confidence and self-esteem. Neither should the social aspects be forgotten. Students often really enjoy the quieter times on a camp when they can play a table game with others or just talk together. Other very important areas that are covered are the practical teaching and application of daily living skills, such as cooking, bathing, bed making and clothes care.
School camps also provide parents and carers with an often rare opportunity to be without their son or daughter—a peripheral, but not inconsiderable, point—while knowing they can relax because they can trust the standard of care to be high. It can also be an opportunity for the over-protected child to develop wings. A school camp may be one of the few times in their life when they have not lived at home.

Over the many years I have been attending school camps with students with special needs, I have seen so many students gain in their skills—practical, educational, physical, personal and social—as well as having an enjoyable and exciting time. It is an experience I would recommend to all teachers of all students no matter the level of their disability, as while it can be demanding on staff, this is more than outweighed by the gains for the students if the experience is well planned.

The essential ingredient to a successful outdoor education experience is planning. Good camp experiences do not just happen. Planning should cover areas such as the educational aims, implementation, and organisation of the activity. Specific attention needs to be paid to issues, such as the features of the venue, transport, staff, itinerary, finance, health and emergency issues, supervision, care, and risk and safety. To assist those planning outdoor education activities, all States have an organisation affiliated with the Australian Camping Association (www.auscamps.asn.au) and also the Australian Outdoor Education Council. (State links can be found at www.bendigo.latrobe.edu.au/ae/aoec/assocs.html)

So, successful camps require planning. They also require work. They require enthusiasm. But if those ingredients are there, the camp itself should be a positive experience for all participants, including the planners, the workers and the enthusiasts.

Outdoor experiences can be developed that stimulate and involve all children and all adults. The experiences may be more physical and adventuresome, or may be simple sharing and caring interactions between people. In any case, the outdoor experience can provide the participant with opportunity to become more self-aware, to take a risk—be it over the side of a cliff or simply into the woods with eyes closed—, to discover person, feelings about the cycles and rhythms of life, and assume responsibility for self. (Smith, 1982, p. 13, available at www.indiana.edu/~outdoor/bponline/bp1982/bp82smit.doc)

Tony would welcome contact from people who may wish for more information. He is contactable by email: tony.thomas@bigpond.com
THE INTRICATE NATURE OF PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS INSTRUCTION

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David Evans
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Martin Dowson
Institute of Christian Tertiary Education

ABSTRACT
The purpose of this paper is to discuss the role of phonological awareness as an essential element in helping newly enrolled Kindergarten children achieve early success in learning to read. An outline of the essential elements of a balanced early reading program shows that careful attention to the role of phonological awareness is required. Examples were used from a project conducted in three Kindergarten classes, where attributes of three programs were examined in regards to the emphasis placed on phonological awareness. The programs separately stressed: (a) no explicit teaching of phonological awareness elements, (b) blending, and (c) blending and segmenting. Results showed that the amount of progress made by children in each of the three classes reflected the level of phonological awareness training available in each classroom. Implications are provided for teachers to consider when designing early reading programs that cater for a range of student needs.

INTRODUCTION
One of the most sobering findings from research in reading is that children who get off to a poor start rarely catch up. These students fall further behind and the effects are cumulative over time. Students who read poorly in Year 1, for example, will
often still be experiencing difficulty in Year 3, and difficulties remain throughout their schooling unless intensive intervention takes place (Chall & Jacobson, 2003; Grossen, 1997; Jenkins, Vadas, Firebaugh, & Profillet, 2000; Juel, 1988; Musti-Rao & Cartledge, 2004; Ritchey & Speece, 2004; Stanovich, 1986; Torgesen, 2004; Vadas, Jenkins, & Pool, 2000).

Provision of effective reading programs is important to ensure that all students learn to read. Kameenui (1999) claims that five per cent of beginning Kindergarten students in the United States of America start school with some understandings and knowledge needed for reading, and become skilled and proficient readers with minimal instruction. The remaining 95 per cent of students require access to a reading program that clearly articulates interaction of skills in decoding and comprehension for students to become skilled readers.

Classroom teachers can bring about significant progress in students’ reading through careful planning and explicit instruction in early reading skills and strategies (Beringer et al., 2002; Bursuck et al., 2004; Carnine, Silbert, & Kameenui, 1997; Juel & Minden-Cupp, 2000; Pressley et al., 2001; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Carefully planned instruction in letter-sound correspondences and phonological awareness skills, practice in recognising and using the major spelling patterns of the language, experiences in broader aspects of language use, and continuous practice in decoding connected text, brings about automaticity of the code. Students who receive this carefully planned instruction benefit through achieving early reading skills, and are likely to make strong growth in their reading and associated skills that permit life-long learning through obtaining meaning from text (Carnine et al., 1997; Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001; Jitendra, Edwards, Sacks, & Jacobson, 2004; Juel & Minden-Cupp, 2000; Shankweiler, Lundquist, Dreyer, & Dickinson, 1996; Swanson, Hoskyn, & Lee, 1999).

Achieving a balance between word recognition, decoding and linguistic variables is a challenging task for teachers (Pressley, Roehrig, Bogner, Raphael, & Dolezal, 2002). In the past, discussion has been around whether a bottom-up or a top-down approach provides students with the best start to reading. Kameenui (1993) challenged educators to move away from feuding about which approach to take when providing quality research-based reading programs. Snow et al. (1998) analysed a wide research base and reported that quality reading programs involve the interaction of a number of elements (e.g., alphabetic knowledge, orthographic understanding, phonological awareness, fluent decoding, comprehension of text, vocabulary and language knowledge).
The idea of balance within a reading program applies not only to what is taught (e.g., skills and strategies), but also to how it is taught (Bohn, Roehrig, & Pressley, 2004; Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999; Westwood, 2001). Swanson (2005) outlined instructional features of effective interventions for students experiencing difficulties learning basic skills. Two models of instruction posed by Swanson included a direct teaching model and strategy instruction model. Together these two models of instruction provided strong benefits for students experiencing difficulties learning. The combined instructional model was shown to be superior to the two instructional models individually. The combined instructional model highlighted the importance of providing instruction that segmented and sequenced tasks into component parts, delivered direct and explicit instruction in word recognition skills, gave regular feedback to students about how they were progressing, used step by step prompts, and faded cues and prompts.

The combination of well-designed reading programs, as well as the use of effective instructional strategies provides a strong basis for an early reading program. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the importance of including these two features in an early reading program. In particular, this paper will focus on the importance of teaching a range of phonological awareness skills explicitly, to ensure sound reading development with newly enrolled Kindergarten students. It will also promote the research-based finding of including a rich program of language development, vocabulary development, and access to challenging and stimulating literature (Adams, 1990; Pressley et al., 2002; Snow et al., 1998).

**Early reading programs: Learning to read**

In most schools, the question of “what is taught” is dictated by the syllabus. The syllabus provides a broad overview of the content and sequence through which students will pass to become skilled readers. As students progress from one stage of the syllabus to another, more and more features of learning to read are encountered. The specific sequence and organisation of skills, knowledge and understanding in reading is the responsibility of individual teachers. A comprehensive and effective early reading program requires deliberate and thoughtful selection of reading components that, when fitted together, provides students with the power to access the benefits of reading proficiently.

Analysis and interpretation of the syllabus is dependent on the knowledge that teachers bring to the planning of a reading program. For students who experience difficulty learning to read, or who are at-risk of not developing proficient reading skills in a
timely manner, the knowledge brought to the planning stage is critical. This knowledge, when integrated with the outcomes articulated in the syllabus, highlights a number of key elements that students need if they are to become skilled readers.

Burns et al. (1999) discussed a number of key elements that should be part of an early reading program to assist young students to become skilled readers. In particular, students need to become proficient in:

- language and literacy foundations: oral language skills, phonological awareness, print awareness, letter knowledge and motivation to read and literature appreciation.
- identifying printed words: use of spelling connections, sight word repertoire.
- reading fluently: identify words quickly and effortlessly.
- obtaining meaning: through use of previous knowledge, vocabulary and comprehension strategies. (p. 7)

Quality reading programs integrate components of these concepts, skills and strategies to assist students learn to read. Syllabus documents focus on differing components of these elements, but may not provide direct insight into how they link and connect. Table 1 shows an overview of how these components can come together to form a research-based early reading program. These components, taken from work completed at the Texas Education Agency (TEA) (2002), are shown in the left-hand column of Table 1.

In the right hand column of Table 1 is a list of instructional activities that could be implemented to promote proficiency in the components outlined by Burns et al. (1999). The components and activities are often used in Kindergarten classrooms, and promote active participation by all students. The balance between the program components is important to consider on an ongoing basis.

Balance in reading programs is often discussed in terms of taking elements from “bottom-up” and “top-down” approaches. Center and Freeman (1997) have written about an interactions approach that recognises the need for systematic and explicit instruction of phonological processing, alphabetic awareness (bottom-up) and semantic and systematic skills (top-down) that are taught simultaneously and complement each other. Pressley et al. (2002) addressed this dichotomy stating:

...balanced instruction requires knowledge of how to carry out effective skills instruction as well as high awareness of how to teach holistic reading and writing. Balanced classrooms reveal both forms of instruction, teaching that is both complicated and coherent, as well as tailored to the needs of the individual students. (p. 2)
### Table 1. Overview of components for a research-based early reading program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical components of research-based beginning reading programs*</th>
<th>Intentional manipulation of curriculum content through activities arranged by the teacher</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Opportunities to expand use and appreciation for oral language.</td>
<td>• Discussions about Big Book topics.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Directions for activities and written work.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>•Explanations of meaning of unknown words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Opportunities to expand use and appreciation of printed language.</td>
<td>• Visual flashcards of word and illustration of the item the picture represents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conventions of reading (e.g., holding book right way up, help to turn pages).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher pointing under the words (Big Book) as read in story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Opportunities to hear stories read everyday.</td>
<td>• Model reading to the student daily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Think aloud for decoding and vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conventions of print modelled and explained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Opportunities to understand and manipulate sounds in spoken language (phonological awareness activities).</td>
<td>• Alliteration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Blending letter-sounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Telescoping words.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rhyming.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Onset and rime.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Phoneme counting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Opportunities to learn the relationship between the sounds of spoken language and the letters to text.</td>
<td>• Sequences, explicit and systematic teaching of letter-sounds (a, m, t, s, i, d).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Read through sight words list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Opportunities to relate their letter-sound knowledge to writing to spelling and writing.</td>
<td>• Practise in tracing and writing letters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reinforce letter-sound knowledge during formal writing experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Opportunities to read and listen to a wide assortment of books and other texts.</td>
<td>• Listened to a range of stories being read to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Opportunities to develop new vocabulary through reading and direct vocabulary instruction.</td>
<td>• Students heard a range of new words while listening to a different story read each day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Word meanings explicitly taught as part of story reading and incidental teaching sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Opportunities to practise accurate and fluent reading in decodable phrases and stories.</td>
<td>• Decode sight words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Decode blended words created by learned letter-sounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Read simple sentences made up from words created by learned letter-sounds and sight words (e.g., I sat on the mat).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Source: Texas Education Agency (2002)
Balancing elements from within each component in Table 1 is also an important consideration of the quality reading program. Phonological awareness, for example, is an important skill for students to acquire during the early stages of learning to read (O’Conner, Jenkins, & Slocum, 1995). Phonological awareness includes a number of skills that must be considered in terms of difficulty, and how the skills interact with each other. The following discussion will focus on the balance of components required for a reading program of instruction that best assists students to master the complex skills and knowledge for reading.

**Phonological awareness**

Phonological awareness is “knowing that oral language has structure that is separate from meaning; attending to the sub-lexical structure of oral language …” (Burns et al., 1999, p.150). This definition utilises the notion of students recognising the sounds or phonemes within a word. Further, it recognises the importance of students being able to manipulate the sounds within a word. This active manipulation of sounds is evidence of a working knowledge of phonological awareness beyond the rudimentary level (Ehri & Soffer, 1999).

Within phonological awareness there are a number of differing features that can be ordered from easier to more difficult. O’Connor, Notari-Syverson, and Vadasy (1998a) in their book *Ladders to literacy* outlined a program of phonological awareness based on empirical studies conducted with students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the United States of America. The program outlines a number of phonological awareness concepts, including:

- **Rhyming:** use of common rhymes, recognition of rhyming words, stating rhyming words.
- **Alliteration:** articulating words or pseudo-words that start with the same sound.
- **Blending:** combining sounds to make a word from onset-rime format, two syllables, three and four phonemes.
- **Segmenting:** breaking words into segments, including first sound only, onset-rime, individual phonemes.

These four concepts of phonological awareness are listed from easy to more difficult. Within each of these concepts, there are also progressively difficult skills and knowledge. Further, there are more areas of phonological awareness that are more complex that can be added to this list provided by O’Connor et al. (1998a). These skills can include deleting and adding sounds to words, and sound manipulation to change words. The ability to focus and manipulate these small units of oral language is a special case of phonological awareness (Ehri et al., 2001), and this will be the focus of the instruction conducted in this paper.
Organising phonological skills in a beginning reading program requires careful consideration. Omitting one skill to focus on another, or altering the mix in favour of one skill over another, can have noticeable influence on how students learn to read. The work of Torgesen, Morgen, and Davis (1992) and Stanovich (1986) highlights the importance of ensuring that blending and segmenting are included as part of phonological awareness instruction. Teaching both types of tasks promotes a more complete, decontextualised concept of the phonological structure of words than teaching only one task. The failure to do so can result in students who do not have a strong understanding of the phonological processing tasks, and may have trouble with reading as the text become more complex (Spear-Swerling & Sternberg, 1994).

The following project will highlight the effect of differing the level of phonological awareness skills on word reading. The programs developed adhere to the need for early reading programs to be balanced (Pressley et al., 2002). The programs differ, however, in the mix of phonological awareness skills they address. Some students were provided the opportunity to learn complex synthesis and analysis skills of phonological awareness, while other students were provided with activities that leave this learning to chance.

**Three classes, three programs**

A Kindergarten class from three schools, each within close proximity to the Sydney metropolitan area, took part in a study to examine the effects of differential implementation of phonological awareness skills in reading programs. Each school received additional funding due to socio-economic disadvantage of students attending the school. Each class was comprised of students from a range of cultural backgrounds.

During the first term of school, 49 students across the three classes received a total of 24 lessons that were about 30 to 40 minutes in length. Lessons were developed to address syllabus outcomes in the New South Wales (NSW) *English K-6 Syllabus*. The lessons designed by the first author followed a similar format, with lessons in each class comprising the following sections:

(a) **Print awareness**: orientation to a text through models using a big book.

(b) **Oral language**: engaging students in discussion of the big book, vocabulary, and everyday experiences.

(c) **Letter-sound knowledge**: introduction of letter-sound correspondences following the order a, m, t, s, i, f, and d, as recommended by Carnine et al. (1997), and identifying the same letter-sound at the beginning words (e.g., apple, ant, alligator).

(d) **Sight word recognition**: introduction of five sight words commonly used in simple sentences.

(e) **Practice sheet**: the students completed
a worksheet that required students to provide the beginning sound of the word for a given article and identify the symbol for the learned letter-sound.

While one class (LS) received a program containing these elements across the 24 lessons, the other two classes received an additional component of phonological awareness instruction. The BL class received the following element:
(f) Blending: students listened to a sequence of sounds for a commonly sounding word (e.g., /mmm/ /aaa/ /t/) modelled by the teacher, and repeated the word at speaking pace.

The PA class also received the blending instruction and a further element:
(g) Segmenting: breaking a common sounding word into its component sounds.

Prior to commencing the program, and after the 24 lessons, a number of measures were administered to each student. These measures used were selected on the basis that they permitted data to be collected in a cost and time efficient manner. These measures linked into the skills being taught, and had been identified in the literature as dynamic indicators of progress in learning to read (Kaminski & Good, 1998).

Three measures from the Beginning Reading Assessment or BRA (Evans, 1999) were used in this study. Based on the work of Kaminski and Good (1998), these measures examined elements of phonological awareness using principles of curriculum-based measurement (Good, Simmons, & Kameenui, 2001; Howell & Nolet, 2000).

**Blending fluency.** Students were asked to listen to the sounds given to them by the researcher. On hearing the sounds twice, they were asked to say the word the sounds made (e.g., mmm...aaaa...t is the word “mat”). Students were given three items to practice on, then tested on progressively more difficult regular sounding words. If they could not respond within five seconds, they were asked to try the next example. Testing stopped after one minute, and the number of correct responses tallied.

**Segmenting fluency.** Students were given a word and asked to say the sounds they heard in the word. Following three practice items, the students were then given the test items. If students could not respond within five seconds they were asked to try the next item. Scoring was worked out on a partial credit model; that is, students were given credit for any response that contained all or some of the sounds within a word. A word like “mat” can be given three sounds, but students who gave an answer of “maaaa” – “t” were given two credits in comparison to a student who would receive three credits for “mmm” – “aaa” – “t”.
Letter-sound fluency. Students were given a sheet with eight rows of eight letters in lower case. They were asked to say the sound of each of the letters as quickly and as well as they could. If they could not provide a sound after three seconds they were asked to try the next letter. After one minute, students were asked to stop.

The other two measures examined word reading skills of students. The word reading tasks included a list of words that contained common sound patterns, and a list of nonsense words. The lists were provided to the students on an A4 sheet of paper in a column. The lists graduated from easy to more difficult (e.g., VC, CVC, CCVC), and were word-processed using the New South Wales foundation font.

Three sets of results
The three programs comprised of the essential elements of effective early reading programs (i.e., phonological awareness, print awareness, oral language and vocabulary instruction). The one element that differed amongst the programs was the complexity and extent to which phonological awareness was covered. An examination of data collected on early reading skills and word reading showed that there was a differential level of outcomes across the classes.

At the completion of their respective program, each class showed evidence of improvement in each of the three early reading skills. Figure 1 shows the increase in letter-sound knowledge from the pre-
test to the post-test. This result showed that students from each program benefited from instruction in letter-sound identification.

A visual analysis of the data for blending and segmenting provided evidence that all students benefited from their instructional program. Figure 2 shows that students in each class improved in the number of correct responses to tasks that required them to blend sounds to make a word (e.g., sh……o……p is “shop”). This improvement across the BL and PA classes was expected as they received the instruction in this element of phonological awareness. The LS class, however, appeared to improve as well as the other classes in the number of correct responses.

Results for segmenting words into component elements (e.g., phonemes, syllables) are shown in Figure 3. The PA class improved over the term, while the LS made a smaller level of progress on this measure. The improvement of the BL class is tempered by the knowledge that most growth could be attributed to two students, while other students made minimal progress. The relatively small amount of progress made by all students may reflect the difficulty in acquiring this skill by early readers. Further instruction in this skill will be required if they are to achieve levels reported by Good et al. (2001) as optimal (i.e., 30 segments per minute).

While the three classes made similar levels of improvement on the three measures...
Figure 3. Number of segments correct per minute for each class before and after the project (n=49).

Figure 4. Number of regular words read correctly per minute for each class before and after the project (n=49).
of early reading, the results for decoding regular and nonsense words differentiated classes to a greater extent. The results in Figure 4, for example, show that the class that received instruction in the broader range of phonological skills made the greatest improvement. The mean number of words read correctly by the PA class was double that of the other two classes. This result did not provide conclusive evidence that students had developed a greater level of decoding words, as words may have been known by sight. Therefore, a set of nonsense words was presented to students to examine the level of decoding.

The results for decoding nonsense words provides evidence that students in the PA group had advanced levels of decoding knowledge over students in the other two groups. Figure 5 shows that the PA class who received a broader range of phonological instruction scored well beyond the other two classes on this measure. This outcome shows that all students in Kindergarten classes will benefit from an early reading program that integrates a full range of phonological skills (Torgesen, 2004). Future research could usefully examine the impact of adding further elements of instruction in phonological awareness to the intervention.

**Conclusion**

The results of this study provide ongoing support for early reading programs to include a fine balance of phonological awareness instruction (Kameenui, Carnine, Dixon, Simmons, & Coyne, 2002). It
provides strong support that blending and segmenting instruction facilitates and accelerates access to reading words and nonsense words. The regular and nonsense word results also indicate the power of integrating blending and segmenting for greater decoding success. The difference between classes was considered an exciting result, reinforcing the findings of recent research studies and syntheses of beginning reading research (Adams, 1990; Chard, 1999; O’Shaughnessy & Swanson, 2000; National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow et al., 1998).

The results reported in this paper are descriptive in nature. A systematic analysis of data using inferential statistical methods would provide greater insight into the outcomes from this study. The results of these analyses, while not reported in this study, do support the general findings reported in this study (Moore, 2004). Further research would also address other limitations of this study, including the need for a larger number of students, a longer period of time to conduct the study, and the involvement of a broader aspect of literacy (e.g., spelling, writing, oral language).

This study examined phonological awareness instruction as part of whole class instruction. Every attempt was made to accommodate all students during group instruction and individual work. A further study may wish to examine in close detail the impact of instruction that focuses on individualising phonological awareness. For example, examining how teachers accommodate the needs of students with differing levels of phonological awareness knowledge, as outlined by O’Connor et al. (1998a). How do teachers accommodate learners who recognise differing units of sound, including syllables, onset rime and phonemes?

In this study it was clear that young students provided with an early reading program that integrates a range of phonological awareness skills, are well placed to benefit in terms of accessing reading material. The experience of accessing reading materials through rapid and accurate recognition of words has distinct advantages. Early access to decoding print provides students with the opportunity to engage in connected text during the early stages of schooling. This access to print provides these students with the opportunity to access the hidden treasures of the written word. These students, through a sustained effective reading program, engaged in a range of texts resulting in more expansive and rich vocabularies (Jitendra et al., 2004; Snow et al., 1998; Stahl, 2003), broader reading comprehension skills (Gersten et al., 2001) and the “ability to think critically and broadly” (Chall & Jacobson, 2003).

In contrast, those students who take the path least travelled (Spear-Swerling & Sternberg, 1994) become literacy poor (Stanovich, 1986). Through providing
Kindergarten students with an early reading program that addresses all components of the phonological awareness, the chances of them lagging behind from Year 1 and beyond are significantly reduced (Chall & Jacobson, 2003; Grossen, 1997; Juel, 1988; O’Shaughnessy & Swanson, 2000; Parrila, Kirby, & McQuarrie, 2004).

The elements addressed within the reading programs applied in this classroom-based study were deliberately selected on recommendations made from the literature (Juel, 1988; O’Conner et al., 1995; O’Connor, Notari-Syverson, & Vadasy, 1998b). The specific sequence and integration of skills, knowledge and understanding was planned and explicitly taught to provide maximum opportunity for every student within the classrooms to gain full access and benefit in learning to read. This study showed, however, that the exclusion of even the smallest elements of phonological awareness could lead to reduced levels of decoding.

This classroom study has highlighted the need for careful planning and explicit instruction in a full range of phonological skills, whilst taking the needs of all students into consideration. In achieving this outcome, the idea of balance needs to be carefully considered. It requires teachers to be fully aware of how all the elements come together, and how these elements are integrated or woven together to promote skilled readers for the future.

REFERENCES


This is a book firmly based in the era when parents, hearing a diagnosis of a serious and life-affecting disability in their child, can go to the world wide web and be overwhelmed with information, contacts, support groups, therapies, advice and personal stories.

The three Australians, Dowling, Nicoll and Thomas, who put this book together, used the web to call for contributions from parents, and were surprised at the slow response; but after two years they had over 50 stories they wanted to use in a compilation. Using chapter headings of Grief, Denial, Anger, Depression, Acceptance, Empowerment, Marriage, Family and Friends, Love and Joy, Spirituality and Laughter, the structure of the book provides a way for readers to understand there is a way forward through the maelstrom of emotions they will inevitably feel, and it will help put in perspective the plethora of information and advice.

The authors acknowledge that the act of sitting down to write on aspects of life with a child with a disability can be challenging, confronting and painful, and have sought to publish a full range of parents’ reflections of negative and positive emotions. The net result, slowly gathered as it was, shows us that the book form is not out of date yet.

Parents, grandparents, siblings, friends, teachers and so on, will pass this around and go through their own range of emotions—understanding, fear, empathy, recognition, horror, acceptance, celebration, tears and laughter—and value the honesty and directness of the writing.

The focus and tone gradually changes as the book’s main message of lessons learned is reflected in the strength, confidence and humour in the voices of the parents as they tell their stories.

The value to readers is the affirmation of change, growth, empowerment, revising of outlook and priorities in life, and an abiding love of children whatever the challenges. Our children teach us so much, it’s true, but so do others who have been where we are going.

Judy Neilands
NSW Department of Education and Training