



## UNITE SpLD 2021 CONFERENCE

Uniting Ideas in Teaching Excellence:  
Specific Learning Differences 2021  
24 to 25 June 2021

### ONLINE WEBINAR

The UNITE SpLD Conference seeks to bring together parents, teachers and practitioners working with children with specific learning difficulties and special educational needs. This conference will be showcasing research that covers aspects of behavioural, literacy and social emotional support, intervention and assessment for children with special learning needs. Come and listen to our SpLD experts share their research. Research will be presented in short, engaging and entertaining sessions accompanied by poster presentations and the chance to talk directly with researchers who are making a difference in the Asian region.



## Does Developmental Dyslexia Really Exist?

John Stein<sup>1\*</sup>

1. University of Oxford, UK

### Abstract

For most of the 20th C. developmental dyslexia was diagnosed on the basis of finding a discrepancy between normal or high oral and nonverbal reasoning ability, yet unexpectedly low reading and spelling skills. This discrepancy criterion has now been undermined by the claim that dyslexics all suffer a phonological deficit. Hence it is argued that we should measure this to identify dyslexia. However, since grasping the phonological principle is essential for learning to read, this phonological criterion makes it impossible to distinguish developmental dyslexia from any of the many other causes of reading failure. Instead, we need to understand the specific physiological mechanisms that underlie dyslexics' failure to acquire phonological skills. An important cause is probably impaired development of the brain's rapid temporal processing systems; these are required for sequencing accurately the order of the sounds and letters in a word. Such temporal, 'transient', processing is probably carried out in all parts of the brain primarily by a distinct set of 'magnocellular' neurones, and the development of these has been found to be impaired in most people with dyslexia. Therefore, assessing poor readers' auditory and visual temporal processing skills should enable dyslexia to be reliably distinguished from other causes of reading failure and this will suggest principled ways of helping these children to learn to read, such as magnocellular training, blue or yellow filters and omega 3 fatty acid supplements.

**Keywords:** IQ, discrepancy, phonology, temporal processing, magnocellular, visual, auditory, colour filters, rhythm, omega 3.

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## *The Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs in Singapore*

Levan Lim<sup>1\*</sup>

1. *National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore*

### Abstract

There has been much progress achieved towards the inclusion for students with special educational needs in Singapore during the past two decades. There are currently many more students with special educational needs in mainstream schools compared with numbers in the past and in special education schools. This keynote presentation provides a contextual understanding of how the inclusion of students with special educational needs has evolved to become a key educational agenda in Singapore through national initiatives, educational systemic enhancements, and teacher education playing an important role in the preparation of school personnel. This presentation concludes with a discussion of issues, challenges and future directions that are relevant to the evolvement of inclusion for students with special educational needs in Singapore.

Keywords: Inclusion, integration, special educational needs, education in Singapore,

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## Dyslexia, the Whole Picture and the 360 degree Perspective

Geetha Shantha Ram<sup>1\*</sup> and Deborah Hewes<sup>1</sup>

1. *Dyslexia Association of Singapore*

### Abstract

Through an exploration of current literature, various studies by the Dyslexia Association of Singapore such as the 2020 “Part Strong part weak and bullied” and 2019 “High ability and Entrepreneurial success”, we offer ‘Embrace Dyslexia’ as a possible framework for individuals and organisations keen to participate in the global movement highlighting the strengths of people with dyslexia as they urge for change within their communities.

This talk will be framed by the 5 principles under the Embrace dyslexia commitment which are:

1. Educate - raise awareness about dyslexia,
2. Explore opportunities to work with Dyslexia organisations,
3. Champion the strengths of dyslexic individuals,
4. Donate to support low-resourced families and
5. Declare commitment as an Advocate who Embraces Dyslexia.

Through an exploration of current literature, various studies by the Dyslexia Association of Singapore such as the 2020 “Part Strong part weak and bullied” and 2019 “High ability and Entrepreneurial success”, we offer ‘Embrace Dyslexia’ as a possible framework for individuals and organisations keen to participate in the global movement highlighting the strengths of people with dyslexia as they urge for change within their communities.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, dyslexia strengths, inclusion, bullying,

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## *From Helplessness To Empowerment: RE-Engaging Students with Dyslexia*

Dean Bragonier<sup>1\*</sup>

1. NoticeAbility Inc, USA

### Abstract

Students with dyslexia demonstrate paradoxical behaviour in the classroom. At times, they appear withdrawn, insecure, and even cynical. In the blink of an eye, these same students may show moments of enthusiasm, engagement, and an eagerness to learn.

In his talk, Dean shares anecdotes from his academic journey, giving a unique glimpse into the psychological impact of being a student with dyslexia. Dean explores the intersection between classroom instruction and contemporary behavioural theories that underscore strategies and techniques that bolster student self-esteem and academic tenacity.

Keywords: dyslexic strengths, teaching, self-esteem, dyslexia.

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## The Magical World of Technology and Dyslexia

Carol Allen<sup>1\*</sup>

1. Advisor for ICT and Inclusion

### Abstract

We are working in a time of change in education – our buildings; our curriculum and assessments guidance and this combined with the speed of innovation and progress in technology can lead to a feeling of, ‘missing out,’ or, ‘being unsure how to keep up’. In addition, despite the ever-increasing demands being made upon teachers and schools, particularly over the recent world-wide response to the pandemic, resource allocations are often reduced, or tied to ‘projects’. Throughout all of this, the students we teach are the same; their needs, abilities and disabilities remain the same.

For students with Dyslexia, both diagnosed, or those who are experiencing barriers to reading and writing but have not been formally assessed; the use of carefully chosen supports is vital to allow learning to take place with a reduction in the immense effort required if no support is given. This impacts on so many areas beyond accurate academic performance; anxiety, avoidance behaviours, well-being and mental health are all part of the picture for those for whom the educational system presents a daily diet of literary confusion.

Technology has a central role to play in this access to learning; indeed the recent emergency move to remote learning has brought its importance to the fore. When the match between need and technology is perfect, the results are magical, not only for the learning outcome but additionally for the empowerment and wellbeing of the Dyslexic student. This session will look at a range of practical, technological solutions from low to high tech, all of which offer success for our students.

Keywords: dyslexia, inclusion, assistive technology, special needs education

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## Dyslexia: What's the Story?

Carol Allen<sup>1\*</sup>

1. Advisor for ICT and Inclusion

### Abstract

Communication is at the heart of all teaching and learning. For Dyslexic learners, barriers in two of the four communication elements, that is reading and writing, can reduce access to learning and prevent outcomes that reflect ability. As educators, our focus has to be on supporting their development in these areas in order to increase access to the wider curriculum. Evidence-based precision teaching provides a clear, structured approach to learning to read and write and is our essential baseline. To complement this, we need to embed and extend our structured teaching by utilising creative opportunities in order to consolidate and generalise learning; to motivate and engage, and most importantly, to allow creativity to flourish and ideas to be shared.

This session will look at stories and storytelling as vehicles for enhancing communication both in terms of academic activities and additionally, personal growth and wellbeing. Many Dyslexic students restrict their written output to 'safe zone' work based on the words and phrases they feel comfortable with, however, these can be far from the level of writing that they are capable of imagining. We will share a range of online storytelling opportunities that are free to use and that produce excellent learning. From considering how to use sensory elements to create evocative and effective classroom stories, through active learning to using technology to capture and share stories for all, this session will offer practical ideas to take away and use with your students.

Keywords: dyslexia, communication, creativity, storytelling, sensory, technology

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## Bullying and the SEN student

Madinah Begum<sup>1\*</sup>, Sujatha Nair<sup>1</sup> and Geetha Shantha Ram<sup>1</sup>

1. *Dyslexia Association of Singapore*

### Abstract

As part of a parent advocacy initiative by the Dyslexia Association of Singapore's (DAS), a survey of DAS parents was conducted in 2020 to find out about the incident rates of bullying that our students faced. The aim was to analyse the prevalence of the various types of bullying experienced by the students and how bullying affects them. Through this research, we hoped to find out more about how we could mitigate the bullying rates among SEN students. Ultimately, we want to empower both teachers and parents by providing meaningful knowledge on how they can support students to minimise bullying.

A total of 185 parents of students studying at DAS were given online questionnaires, which asked them about their children's prior experiences with bullying and what they felt could be done to eliminate bullying. For qualitative data, we first came up with a group of common responses that parents had for each question, followed by recording the frequency of those responses. Afterwards, we tabulated and analysed both quantitative and qualitative data and charted all data for easier representation. The data was examined in relation to gender and age. The findings indicate that students are most affected by verbal, indirect and peer victimization and the majority of the bullying lasted for years. Findings from this study also advocate that raising awareness and training for parents and schools would help contribute to bullying prevention among SEN students. Moreover, our data show that support from parents and schools were the most important factors to help reduce bullying rates. Lastly, it was found that males experienced higher rates of bullying than females for all types of bullying.

Keywords: bullying, dyslexia, SEN, Special Educational Needs,

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## THE 'word' GAME'S AFOOT! Inductive Approach for Vocabulary Learning and Teaching

Isabelle Shanti Benjamin <sup>1\*</sup>

1. ELCOT Consultants, Singapore

### Abstract

What if Sherlock Holmes decided to teach vocabulary? What teaching approach would he likely use? The answer is obvious - it was the way he solved all his cases - using inductive reasoning. He made observations, noted critical clues and drew conclusions. Traditional vocabulary lessons tend to largely rely on a deductive approach where the meaning of words are provided for students to apply to the interpretation of meaning in texts. The problem with this approach, while seemingly efficient, is that the knowledge of the meanings taught is seldom retained long enough by learners, much less applied spontaneously in production tasks. Sherlock instead, would have used the inductive approach making students figure out the meaning of unknown words through the 'power of observation'. Studies have shown that teaching and learning approaches that involve inductive reasoning lead to better retention of the content delivered, in this case, meanings of words. This approach also helps learners develop higher-order thinking and analysis skills, greatly valued in the competitive economies of today's world. For reading comprehension tests where students often encounter unknown words which they would have to interpret without the help of their 'walking dictionary' teacher or the online dictionary on their smartphones, this capacity to 'guesstimate' meanings of words is not only critical but an expected capacity. This workshop will share techniques teachers can use to help students hone their 'powers of observation' to 'notice' the textual clues that point to the intended meaning of words in a text.

Keywords: inductive learning; vocabulary learning, vocabulary teaching

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## A Comparative Analysis of 7112 Dyslexics to a Population of Dyslexics from A Neuroscientific Study

Angelica Benson<sup>1\*</sup> and Rosie Shand<sup>2</sup>

1. Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes—USA
2. Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes - Hong Kong & Singapore

### Abstract

This investigation evaluates both the behavioral and neurophysiological outcomes of a reading intervention designed to address the symptoms associated with dyslexia. In this post-hoc meta-analysis, a statistically similar population of dyslexic participants from a research collaboration at the University of Washington ILABS (UW) was compared to 7112 dyslexics who attended Lindamood-Bell Learning Centres in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. All subjects were administered pre- and post-test standardized behavioral assessments measuring reading skills in key domains associated with dyslexia. The dyslexic participants from UW also received pre- and posttest neurophysiological measurements. All subjects received one-to-one intensive reading intervention developing mental representations of letters and sounds within words, on average for 120 hours, 2-4 hours daily, 5 days a week.

In the neurophysiological intervention study, significant correlations were found in brain white matter conductivity as related to significant improvements in reading, compared to controls (Huber, Donnelly, Rokem, & Yeatman, 2018). Corresponding to these changes was an increase in reading behaviors for those 7112 dyslexic students in clinics, who showed statistically similar gains in key areas associated with the symptoms of dyslexia. This investigation contributes to a deeper understanding of the cause(es) of dyslexia, its' diagnosis, and the behavioral and neurophysiological results of the intervention protocol developed for individuals who express symptoms of dyslexia. Collectively, these findings offer important insight into the question of whether or not dyslexia can be remediated.

**Key words:** reading intervention, behavioral and neurological research results, sensory-cognitive instruction, imagery-language foundation

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## See Me, Hear Me: Concerns Of Students With Special Educational Needs At University In Singapore

Damaris Carlisle<sup>1\*</sup>

1. LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore

### Abstract

Education in Singapore has been undergoing a gradual shift towards a social model of inclusive education since the Compulsory Education Act came into force in 2003. With the aim of supporting students with disabilities and special educational needs, the Singapore government has increasingly provided resources and facilities in schools, resulting in larger numbers of these students continuing to tertiary education. This presentation discusses the findings of a phenomenological case study, where 26 individual interviews were conducted with students studying at different universities across Singapore as they reflected on their first-year experiences. One area that was discussed was the issues the participants faced as students with varying educational needs. Whilst there have been improvements since the introduction of disability support offices at institutes of higher learning since 2014, challenges still remain ranging from attitudes to academic barriers, from systemic hurdles to concerns about career prospects. The lived experiences of these learners presenting a wide range of differing needs provide insights into their realities and concerns. This, in turn, has possible implications for policy and practice at the tertiary level in Singapore.

Key words: disability support, first-year, special educational needs, transition, university

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## Technology for supporting reading in exams

Jack Churchill<sup>1\*</sup>

### 1. Scanning Pens, UK

#### Abstract

Technology is changing the way we conduct our lives, and it's happening faster than ever. How we test our children in school is thankfully also moving forward.

Examinations present a major obstacle for many young people who struggle with reading difficulties like dyslexia. The objective of most exams is to test the student's knowledge of a given subject, i.e. geography, not to test their reading ability. Reading is a pre-cursor skill. Without it, reading and answering the questions is yet another challenge for the candidate. It is therefore hugely important that all students receive the necessary accommodations to read the exam questions.

Over the last 8 years, I have worked with exam boards around the world to modernise the reading support that children receive. Technology, like pen scanners, means students can be back in the main exam hall, reading on their own and not reliant on another human to sit with them. Technology importantly also prepares them for later life when they will have to work independently.

I was fortunate to get support for my own dyslexia whilst at school. This extra support enabled me to pass my exams, go onto university and now the workplace with the confidence of knowing I had achieved. Breaking down barriers for young struggling readers is an important part of my life mission. My presentation will talk about the importance of a toolbox approach when using assistive technology in everyday education and exams.

**Keywords:** Assistive Technology, Reading in Exams, dyslexia, scanning

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## *The Learning Outcomes of Reader Pens in Supporting Reading for Dyslexic Learners*

Julia Clouter<sup>1\*</sup>

1. *SpLD Specialist, Scanning Pens, UK*

### Abstract

Scanning Pens is a wi-fi free and portable assistive technology tool that supports reading by decoding at both word and sentence level for learners with difficulties such as weak literacy, developing English as a second language (EAL) and SpLD dyslexia. This presentation outlines the research conducted in the United Kingdom by three researchers, Franklin, Mortimore and Coleman, who have each independently corroborated the impact of Scanning Pens to accelerate the reading progress of learners and enable them to achieve accelerated success in examinations.

In the research conducted by Mortimore with 46 Year 11 students, she states that the 83% who made use of the Exam Pen in their examinations achieved a real increase in their results. These learners also agreed that the use of the Scanning Pen supported their emotional well-being and identified that it had improved their confidence and attitude to learning. In addition to exploring and comparing the findings of this study, the key elements of multi-modal learning and multi-sensory teaching methodology will be explored. We will also investigate the views of the learners about the gains made in their confidence and well-being through the ability to learn independently with Scanning Pens assistive technology.

Keywords: Dyslexia, memory, multi-modal, well-being

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## *Leaving nothing to chance: a coaching approach to improving teacher knowledge, skills and understanding of teaching reading.*

Jessica Colleu Terradas<sup>1\*</sup> and Margo Leatch<sup>1</sup>

1. Literacy Guarantee Unit, South Australia Department for Education, Australia

### Abstract

The latest Programmes for International Student Assessment (PISA) results have confirmed that Australian schools are not doing enough to achieve a functional level of literacy and numeracy in at-risk adolescents. From 2000 to 2008, mean reading literacy scores dropped from 528 to 503, the equivalent of a year's learning. This is a wake-up call. In response, a new Literacy Guarantee Unit has been established in the South Australia Education Department, with a focus on improving the achievement of all students through strong foundations in literacy. The 14 literacy coaches support South Australian schools by offering intensive professional learning to primary school teachers as well as direct teacher coaching in the most up-to-date evidence-based methods and practices- including explicit teaching of synthetic phonics. With expertise in phonics and teaching students with dyslexia and other learning difficulties, the unit ensures that schools are well placed to provide quality wave one teaching to support all students to achieve strong literacy outcomes.

In this session, participants will overview the evidence-based recommendations for improving literacy outcomes for primary students (ages 6 to 11). They will learn about the latest global research on what strategies are leading to improved literacy outcomes. This workshop will also provide examples of how these recommendations are being translated into the classroom in South Australian schools. Finally, the participants will explore the use of a coaching model for teachers at school and classroom levels.

**Keywords:** instructional coaching, literacy, reading, building teachers' capacity

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## *Strategies for supporting older struggling readers – how do we ensure the effectiveness of our teaching?*

Jessica Colleu Terradas<sup>1\*</sup>

1. South Australia Department for Education, Australia

### Abstract

If students are not competent readers, they are at risk for academic, behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. There has been a great body of research supporting the Simple of Reading and providing with recommendations to prevent reading difficulties in young learners. However, many students reach upper elementary and middle school without having acquired strategies and skills to become strong, independent readers. This has a cumulative impact on their capacity to both engage with the curriculum and to learn the increasingly vast amount of work that is being presented to them. Teachers can change this trajectory for children at risk for failure in reading by intervening early and providing explicit, intensive and systematic instruction.

In this session, participants will :

- identify the impact of poor reading on older learners
- explore the implications for classroom teachers in designing targeted instructions to meet the individual learning needs of each student

Keywords: Adolescents struggling readers, reading, literacy intervention, instructional strategies

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## Explicit Instruction, Science of Learning and Cognitive Load Theory in practice

Jessica Colleu Terradas<sup>1\*</sup>

1. South Australia Department for Education, Australia

### Abstract

This workshop aims to explore brain research to help teachers determine the most effective strategies to maximise student learning. It will focus on how Explicit Instruction (EI) is informed by the Science of Learning, specifically the impact of Cognitive Load Theory and 'load reduction instruction', and discuss how instructional strategies can impede or enhance learning. Indeed, EI teaching model incorporates a strategic collection of instructional practices that teachers can implement and use in all learning areas. It encourages students to be actively engaged in the lessons and has "engagement norms" to help students process information so that they master the skill.

By the end of the session, participants will have:

- ◆ an understanding of high impact classroom strategies
- ◆ identified the lesson design and delivery components of an EI lesson
- ◆ an increased level of confidence in implementing key instructional strategies

Keywords: Explicit instruction, optimizing work load, classroom strategies, lesson design

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## Multisensory Grammar Instruction

Siti Mariam Binte Daud<sup>1,2\*</sup> and Agaisteen Rebecca Shalinah<sup>1,2\*</sup>

1. Dyslexia Association of Singapore
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### Abstract

Dyslexia is a learning difficulty that primarily affects the skills involved in accurate word reading and spelling. However, writing has been recognized as an area that has not been comprehensively researched. Writing is a multi-faceted task that draws on different skills such as grammar, vocabulary, as well as the organization of words and ideas. As such, learners with dyslexia often struggle with writing. Drawing upon the principles from the Orton-Gillingham approach, research has found that direct, explicit and multisensory instruction is necessary to support learners with dyslexia. Project Read is a curriculum that recognizes these needs and incorporates them in its teaching methodology. One of the key features of this curriculum is to provide explicit grammar instruction through a system of diagrams and distinctive graphic symbols to represent sentence parts. Its structured, cumulative and multisensory approach aims to help learners progress from sentence level to paragraph level and eventually to text level writing.

Keywords: Multisensory, Grammar

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## Procedural Learning, Dyslexia and Maths

Angela Fawcett<sup>1\*</sup>

1. Dyslexia Association of Singapore

### Abstract

In recent research, we have argued that a procedural learning deficit underlies the learning difficulties in dyslexia, and this has been well-supported by ongoing research in the area. This theory suggests that dyslexic children have strengths in declarative learning, that is learning facts, and their performance is most impaired when they are forced to rely on their weaker procedural skills. Procedural and statistical learning also underlies key stages in learning maths, and in this talk I shall consider how far maths learning difficulties could be accounted for by a similar process, emphasising similarities and differences between the two conditions. The impact of anxiety on both conditions can be devastating, causing learners to switch to their least efficient mode. Interestingly, procedural learning deficits can lead to a variety of strengths in dyslexia, but how far does this apply to maths difficulties? Experience suggests that learners with maths difficulties plus anxiety may suffer lifelong struggles, with a tendency to give up hope of ever becoming even marginally successful in this field.

Keywords: procedural learning, anxiety, maths, dyslexia

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## *Trials, tribulation and triumphs: Our son Matt's story...*

David Fawcett<sup>1\*</sup>

1. Parent Advocate, United Kingdom

### Abstract

In this talk, David will outline many of the trials and tribulations that he faced as a parent in trying to obtain help for his dyslexic son, Matthew, who was diagnosed as dyslexic at the unusually early age of 5 and a half. David will recall how difficult it was to fight for his son, given his own negative experiences in school and how the smell of cabbage and distemper would evoke the memory of these dismal childhood school experiences during open nights. The talk will be richly illustrated with examples of Matt's work and moves from pre-school through primary, secondary school and university, culminating in Matt's struggles to achieve and his attempts to deal with the system without enlisting any further support. Despite these many early struggles, once Matt had finished with school and education he was able to come into his own, triumphing in a range of settings. These ranged from the kibbutz to voluntary work with the Peace Brigade International in Guatemala, before working to ignite a passion for sustainability, working with the Kindling Trust, and most recently the Carbon Co-op and leading the campaign against Trident for the North of England for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The talk will emphasise the need for determination from all involved and the importance of having an understanding advocate who believes in you, in order to break through the difficulties of childhood dyslexia and become a successful adult dyslexic in your chosen field.

Keywords: Advocacy, strengths, primary school, secondary school, university, career

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## The Experience of Dyslexia as an Adult

Fong Pei Yi<sup>1\*</sup>

1. Dyslexia Association of Singapore

### Abstract

With increasing awareness of dyslexia and the recognition that it is a life-long difficulty, there has been a focus on the experience of adults who are undergoing tertiary-level education and those who are working. This paper sets out to review the available literature on the subjective experience of adults who struggle with performing literacy tasks. Additionally, two case studies of individuals who were diagnosed with dyslexia in adulthood will be presented. Specifically, the academic and social-emotional impact of their learning difficulties, along with coping strategies they have employed will be explored. It is hoped that findings from this paper can inform further steps in improving the lives of adults seeking further education, as well as those who are working.

Keywords: Adult Dyslexia

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## *Drama Approaches to Enhance Communication Skills in Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)*

Amrit Kaur Gill<sup>1\*</sup> and Muzdalifah Hamzah<sup>1</sup>

1. *Dyslexia Association of Singapore*

### Abstract

Communication is an important aspect of life. Every day we use varied forms of communication to communicate meaning to one another. Whether we are acquiring information or conveying information, communication plays a vital key in education. Many children with special needs may find it extremely difficult to cope in schools for various reasons and one of them is the inability to communicate effectively among their peers and people around them (Flem & Frostad, 2008). This research examines the literature of drama approaches in relation to children with special educational needs (SEN), particularly children diagnosed with dyslexia and Speech and Language Impairment. A child with SEN may require alternative approaches to education that not only accommodate their conditions but also work towards creating ways for them to further develop their own capacity to learn. In instances where a child with SEN has difficulties in communicating, their education may require expertise in addressing such issues and finding methods to connect with them.

Hence, with drama, it does not solely rely on cognitive and verbal skills, but instead comprises other skills such as improvisation, role-play and story-telling. Hence, this research will analyse the difficulties faced by children with SEN and examine how drama can be used to support these difficulties and enhance communication skills with children with SEN, where teachers and educators alike would find drama as the bridge to foster and enhance communications skills among children with SEN.

Keywords: SEN, Dyslexia, SLI, Drama, Communication

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## Perspectives of Trainee Educational Therapists in Singapore

Sathi Menon<sup>1\*</sup>

1. Dyslexia Association of Singapore

### Abstract

Kumar, Muhammad and Nair (2017) did a comparative analysis of two mentoring approaches at the DAS. It examined the perceptions of two groups of trainee educational therapists who received mentoring with two different approaches, with a particular focus on the mentoring approach. However, the experience of an educational therapist does not solely rely on this for there are other factors in play. This article presents findings from a semi-structured interview, questionnaire and diamond ranking activity that explored the trainee educational therapists' perspectives on the initial training and subsequent mentoring support provided. Trainees had a mixture of positive and less positive experiences during their training stint. The positive experiences were related to lectures, mentoring support and the practicum aspect of the training. Most of the less positive experiences were administrative related issues and trainees had even given suggestions on how to enhance the existing training program. This article ends by arguing that trainee educational therapists have positive experiences and they were in agreement on the significance and importance of the initial training and subsequent mentoring support. The findings of this paper would add value and provide further opportunities for research in the area of the professional development of educational therapists. It would also shed light on the important role that educational therapists play in teaching learners with special educational needs and specific learning differences. It may also help to inform future teaching practices at the administrative and management level.

**Keywords:** perspectives, educational therapists, training, teacher's training, mentoring, qualitative research, special education support, coaching

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## Parent-child interactive stress of children with ADHD.

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### Abstract

Parents of children with ADHD often experience high levels of stress. They also experience great difficulties in caring for their children and in their daily interaction with them. However, stress resulting from parent-child interaction is under-explored in literature. The purposes of this study are to explore the current state of stress resulting from parent-child interaction and to make recommendations for future measures to tackle the problem of stress parents experience. The research questions are:

1. What are the characteristics and symptoms of Chinese children with ADHD?
2. What are the characteristics of Chinese parents with children with ADHD?
3. What are the environmental factors such as sociocultural conditions, social support, and children school environment affecting children with ADHD and their parents?
4. What is the current state of research involving stress resulting from parent-child interaction and future measures to tackle the problem of stress parents experience?

Eighteen parents of children formally diagnosed with ADHD in Mainland China were interviewed, and the data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed four categories of causes of parental stress, namely individual, family, social-cultural, and school factors. The findings extend thinking around social and cultural constructions of parental stress, the power, control issues in the school environment, and give social workers new perspectives on how to support these families. It is argued in the discussion that parent-child stress of families of children with ADHD should be investigated in the current context of the social service system and socio-cultural context. This presentation is mainly focused on revealing and understanding stress resulting from parent-child interaction.

**Keywords:** parental stress, parent-child interaction, children with ADHD

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## Taking It Online - The Realities of Online Remediation.

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### Abstract

The rising number of COVID-19 cases in Singapore led to the shift to home-based learning. This affected not only the mainstream schools but almost all educational institutions and services, including the Dyslexia Association of Singapore.

This presentation will cover how the English Language and Literacy Division handled the shift which came with little warning.

- ◆ Preparation and planning for online lessons
- ◆ Trialing online lessons
- ◆ Options when online lessons were not feasible
- ◆ Support provided to educators and students by various ELL Teams
- ◆ Lessons learnt
- ◆ Normalising online lessons and the extended use of online platforms (for parent meetings, as an alternative for students who are on medical leave etc)

Overall, our experience confirms that the quick transition to the online form of education went successful and the gained experience can definitely be used in the future. The experience of the DAS can be useful for other organisations that have not found ways of transition yet.

Keywords: Online Learning, COVID-19, home-based learning

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## Register of Educational Therapists (ASIA) RETA - Case Management Discussion - Supporting Learners with Dyslexia and Language Difficulties

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### Abstract

Dyslexia, characterised by poor decoding abilities, word recognition and spelling, is typically the result of a deficit in the phonological component of language (Lyon et al., 2003). On the other hand, language difficulties manifest when children's language development is deficient (Bishop, 2006). Children diagnosed with both dyslexia and language difficulties face many challenges to sustain language learning although they possess normal intelligence. With phonological difficulties, reading and spelling can be an arduous task. Additionally, despite effective classroom instructions on grammar and vocabulary, these children often struggle with receptive and expressive language skills which can be seen in their poor ability to use the right grammar and vocabulary in their speech and written work. These challenges, when compounded, can impede learning and educational development such that they do unsatisfactorily in school and underachieve in their academic pursuits. At the Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS), such students are given phonics instructions and explicit teaching of language skills to remediate literacy and language difficulties. This presentation will highlight 2-3 case studies on how these students are supported on the Main Literacy Programme and Specialised Educational Services such as Speech and Language Therapy as well as Speech and Drama Arts.

Keywords: dyslexia, language difficulties

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## *Hyperlexia in 3-year-old twins with and without Autistic Spectrum Disorder.*

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1. Society for Reading & Literacy

### Abstract

This article presents a case study on hyperlexia in a pair of non-identical twins of chronological age (CA) 3 years 9 months, with and without Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The aim is to provide a better understanding of the two types of hyperlexia by establishing their profiles using various sources of psycho-educational assessment reports. Results show a word recognition age (WRA) of 5 years 9 months for the ASD male and 8 years 11 months for the neurotypical female. With a verbal functioning estimated at 1 year 6 months, the male twin exhibited an unexpected level of ability that is advanced for his CA in not only literacy skills but in numeracy as well. His hyperlexia is considered a savant ability as his splinter skills are in significant disparity to his overall impairments. Unlike her brother, the female twin has a reading comprehension age (RCA) well above her CA, but her RCA is still lower than her WRA by more than 1.5 years.

**Keywords:** Word recognition, splinter skills, comprehension, Hyperlexia, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Savant Syndrome

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## *Harnessing Growth Mindset Principles in fostering motivation and engagement in lower primary students with SEN in a Singapore mainstream school.*

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1. National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

### Abstract

This qualitative research study serves to analyse and evaluate a programme at a mainstream primary school that aims to promote a growth mindset in students with special educational needs (SEN). The programme was developed through the researcher's collaboration with the school and evaluated over a five-session intervention programme. The research has shown that students who were explicitly encouraged to develop a growth mindset demonstrated significant improvements in their motivation and sense of achievement. These results suggest the importance of inculcating a growth mindset amongst students with SEN given the challenges that they face. This study offers suggested approaches and possible directions for activities and programmes that will aid students with SEN. By leveraging their areas of needs as opportunities for growth, students with SEN can build greater confidence while improving not just in terms of academic achievement but, more importantly, their holistic development.

Keywords: Growth mindset, students with SEN, customised programme

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## *The role of mindfulness and positive psychology in job crafting for educators: A diagnostic and prescriptive approach to supporting educators through mindfulness and positive psychology during a crisis*

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1. *Dyslexia Association of Singapore*

### Abstract

Work is enormously important in our lives, not only because it takes up about half of our waking time, or provides us with a means of existence, but also because of the psychological impact that it has (Boniwell, 2011). As such, well-being at the workplace has become a primary feature in many organisations. The encouraging results from the growing body of research in mindfulness & positive psychology have been pivotal in encouraging the DAS to enrich their approach towards wellness for Educators significantly, through CalmEd, a well-being initiative. In 2019, an 11 months long Mindfulness-Based Intervention & Positive Psychology training curated for 8 Educational Advisors, saw the result of 57% who felt that they were starting to develop mindfulness practices more consistently after 10 weeks into the training, and 43% found themselves to be reaching a good proficiency towards the end of the course of the training. Additionally, from the latest follow-up survey during the Co-Vid 19 pandemic, 100% were more aware of having to practise mindfulness during a crisis, and 60% were able to practise composure during this time. The training intended to improve the responsibility towards the well-being of self, and innovatively improve their approach towards work through job crafting.

Keywords: Mindfulness, Positive Psychology, Job crafting, Professional development, Well-being

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## Occupational Therapy-a supportive structure for children with Specific Learning Difficulties

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1. Madras Dyslexic Association, India

### Abstract

Occupational therapy promotes skill development and independence in daily occupations like play, school, self-care, home-tasks and work. Occupational therapists work collaboratively with family and staff within the school. A child with dyslexia battles difficulties in reading, spelling, writing, and math related skills. These could arise partly due to issues in fine-motor, gross-motor, grapho-motor, sensory integration and other such other areas of development. In this presentation, we will discuss how Occupational Therapy brings direct and indirect benefits to help children with dyslexia to fulfil their role as students by supporting their academic achievement and promoting positive behaviour necessary for learning.

At Madras Dyslexia Association, Occupational Therapy is integrated with the curriculum in the learning centre. This presentation delineates the importance of OT intervention in a learning centre and goes on to describe the systematic process, followed to assess the strengths and needs of a child, followed by planning and implementation of a protocol to promote, maximize and maintain the skills of the child, with a wide range of abilities and disabilities. Finally, a discussion of case studies will be taken up to highlight how Occupational Therapy has empowered children with Dyslexia to gain from remedial teaching.

Occupational Therapy provides the essential buttress readying the child to receive the remediation. Without this peg, even the best remedial methods may not elevate a child with dyslexia.

**Keywords:** Occupational therapy, Dyslexia, Pre academic skills

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## *Student Voice on Teachers' Attributes that Resulted in Positive Learning Outcomes for Students with SEN in Mainstream Schools in Singapore.*

Steven Sim<sup>1\*</sup>

1. *Dyslexia Association of Singapore*

### Abstract

The Singapore mainstream classroom is seeing increasingly diverse learning capabilities. Although there is a growing involvement of students in educational research, there is little done from the perspectives of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Singapore. To bridge this gap, this study investigated the perceptions of students with SEN on teacher attributes and student outcomes in mainstream classrooms in Singapore. In a focus group setting, five students (aged between 13 and 15) were asked to share their opinions and thoughts about their school experiences regarding teacher attributes that led to positive student outcomes in an inclusive mainstream classroom. Pictorial cards and the Diamond 9 ranking approach were used to help the students describe their experiences, as well as rate the teacher attributes and student outcomes. 'Respect', 'caring' and 'patience' were top ranking teacher attributes that the students felt are important to their learning in school. For student outcomes, 'self-concept' in terms of self-awareness, and their 'performance in relation to their peers' were found to be important. These outcomes were ranked higher than 'praise and rewards by teachers' and 'competition with their peers' by the students. The study also raised issues around victimisation and the development of reciprocal friendships, as well as the teacher's role in helping students overcome or enhance such experiences in an inclusive classroom setting. Teacher training was highlighted as well, particularly in developing skills and knowledge to handle a classroom of students with diverse learning abilities.

**Keywords:** student voice, teacher attributes, student outcomes, Singapore, special educational needs (SEN), dyslexia,

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## Constructing the personal Educational Ecology of Children with dyslexia.

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2. Xingmeng- Weining Dyslexia Education Centre, Shenzhen, China

### Abstract

In places with low awareness of dyslexia, children with dyslexia are often misunderstood as stupid, lazy, and so on. Parents and school teachers tend to focus more on the development of children's reading and writing abilities, while neglecting the development of their other abilities. Instead of stripping away the problem of dyslexia from the development of other abilities, we should help children with dyslexia enhance their educational development as a whole. First of all, we should stimulate the children's interest in learning by starting with their advantageous subjects or subjects of interest, which will build their self-confidence. Secondly, we should leverage on their advantageous subjects or subjects of interest to help them improve their reading and writing abilities through professional intervention and subject learning. Finally, we need to develop the abilities that were previously constrained by dyslexia through dynamic observations of their abilities. This will support the children's holistic development and construct positive individual educational ecology.

Keywords: educational ecology; dyslexia children; self-confidence

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## *Relationships between Test Anxiety and Metacognition in Chinese Young Adults with and without Specific Learning Disabilities*

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### Abstract

The influence of test anxiety on academic difficulties has been investigated in typically developing students, but the underlying mechanism of the influence remains unclear, especially for those with specific learning disabilities (SpLD). This study examined the role of metacognition in the relationship between test anxiety and literacy difficulties among Chinese young adults with and without SpLD in Taiwan. A total of 239 first-year undergraduate students were recruited from 11 universities in South Taiwan. Among the 239 students, 105 were identified to have SpLD, and 134 were typically developing students. These students were asked to complete questionnaires on demographics, test anxiety, metacognition, and literacy difficulties (i.e., reading and writing). Structural equation modeling analyses showed that Chinese young adults' test anxieties were linked with literacy difficulties but that only those with SpLD experienced a direct effect (without mediation by other factors). For those without SpLD, the influence of test anxiety on literacy difficulties was not direct but significantly mediated by metacognition. Various components of these students' metacognition had mediating effects on different literacy difficulties. Test anxiety may influence the reading and writing difficulties of students with and without SpLD through different mechanisms. Moreover, teachers at the university level are encouraged to consider students' test anxiety and metacognition in teaching designs, evaluations, or even the setting arrangements.

**Keywords:** test anxiety, metacognition, young adults, specific learning disabilities, Chinese

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