

Overcoming the Obstacles

As a 12-year-old, Nick Calder struggled to write. But SPELD NZ teaching helped him learn to work around his dyslexia and dysgraphia. In 2017, Nick moved to China, learnt a new language and began doing his master's degree in Mandarin. He shares his inspiring story.



"Last year, I decided on a radical change. I moved to China and I'm currently living in the city of Xuzhou in Jiangsu province, where I have been studying Mandarin in preparation for my Master of Public Administration degree.

"Before I moved to China I knew absolutely no Mandarin whatsoever, but five months after I arrived, I completed my Chinese proficiency exam, the HSK4, which is required to enter university. The HSK4 is a vocabulary of at least 1200 Hanzi (characters) and involves reading, writing and listening. The biggest challenge for me has been the

grammar and writing the characters with my terribly dyspraxic handwriting. Fortunately, there aren't many different sounds in Chinese, just tonal differences, so writing on a computer can be quite easy. Also, reading Chinese doesn't require you to sound things out, just to remember the meaning of each character.

"There is very little awareness of dyslexia in China. Most people here have never heard of it, or they just think it means you're bad at reading. Generally speaking, you are not allowed any special conditions at university in China, which is why I entered my studies here at the master's level where there are no exams. Instead, everything is based on written essays, which are much easier for me to cope with. I'll be writing my entire dissertation in Mandarin.

"Dyslexia still mainly affects my ability in academia. I always have to proofread my work and edit heavily from my original writing style. This can be challenging and frustrating at times, as I truly love research.

"Without that first assessment by SPELD and all the help since, I don't know if I could have achieved the way I have. To this day, I still use the tools my SPELD tutor, Iris, taught me. I recently contacted her to say thank you and tell her what I was now doing. She really appreciated that and showed my email to one of her students to help motivate them and show them that there is light at the end of the tunnel."

Read more about how Nick worked through his challenges on page 5.



Find us on Facebook and share inspiring stories, news and information with your friends and colleagues. **Search under 'SPELD New Zealand'**

Our People

Message from the Chairperson



Kia ora tatou,
I hope you all had a restful summer break and are ready for another busy year in the SPELD NZ whanau. Firstly, the Board wishes to congratulate SPELD NZ's Executive Officer Jeremy Drummond for her well-deserved award of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to early childhood education. We are very proud of Jeremy's achievements and the work she does for SPELD NZ. You can read more about her accomplishments on page 4.

Plans are now well under way for SPELD NZ's next conference. We have booked a venue in Auckland for 28 and 29 September 2019. We are now working towards finalising conference themes and guest speakers. As with our previous conferences, this will be a fantastic opportunity to learn from world leaders in the field of dyslexia and other specific learning disabilities, and a great way for our professionals to earn credits towards their registration renewals.

Arrangements are also in place for this year's SPELD NZ AGM in Wellington on 22 September. We plan to host a professional development workshop on the same day and will post details on the Events page of our website.

The Board remains very grateful for the work of the Professional Standards Committee (PSC), particularly for its superb contribution to the new Level 5 qualification that will replace SPELD NZ's current Certificate Course in Specific Learning Disabilities. PSC is now preparing documentation to apply for NZQA approval. SPELD NZ is also preparing for its upcoming External Evaluation and Review by NZQA. We currently have the best rating possible as a Category 1 provider, with a "highly confident" approval from NZQA. I am certain we will maintain this outstanding rating in 2018. We can remain proud that SPELD NZ aspires to the highest of standards as it continues to provide critical support to some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

Peter Scanlan - SPELD NZ Chairperson

SPELD NZ PSC Profile



I first heard of SPELD in 1980 while completing a paper 'Atypical Children'. My professor talked about this 'new' organisation, established in Christchurch. Fast forward 30-plus years and I finally connected with SPELD when I applied for the Certificate Course in Specific Learning Disabilities training. Professionally, this was my 'aha' moment. How I wish I'd done the study decades earlier.

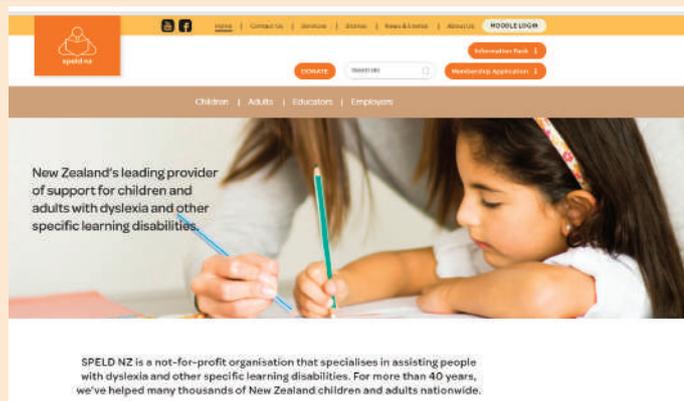
Eleanor Boyce

During my time with SPELD Auckland, Canterbury and now SPELD NZ, I have had the good fortune to meet many inspirational and knowledgeable people in the context of SLD, professional colleagues and parents. I've worn a few hats during this time. Currently, I'm the Convenor of the Professional Standards Committee (PSC), and also the Teacher and Director Reps. The term 'lifelong learning' certainly applies as I constantly encounter new scenarios requiring me to develop and expand my skills. There's always some wonderful person happy to assist and advise - one of the joys of being part of the SPELD NZ whanau.

I continue to love working with my students. Over the past 18 months, my focus has been partly on maths/dyscalculia, and I'm enjoying the chance to hone my teaching skills in this area. As a director of the ISLD (Introduction to Specific Learning Disabilities Course), I also get to work in the adult arena with parents and educationalists. This too is really rewarding work.

My personal life is a happy one, here in Auckland with my husband, Glenn. My son, daughter and son-in-law also live close by, which is an added bonus. Downtime is spent enjoying the sparkling waters of the Hauraki Gulf, walking and gardening.

SPELD NZ launches new website!



Please check out SPELD NZ's new website and encourage others to as well. Our website is our 'shop front' and it is essential in reaching struggling families who need help. The new site is a far more user-friendly, visual experience, designed to work efficiently on all devices. Some of the content is still being developed - particularly new sections to support adults, educators and employers. We have also included many personal stories to inspire and encourage others.

Courses

SPELD NZ Introduction to Specific Learning Disabilities

Are you a parent or caregiver concerned about your child's learning journey?
Are you a teacher aide working with a child who is bright but not achieving?



These courses are a great way to learn insights into why specific learning disabilities (SLD) gain and what it is like to have dyslexia or other SLD. They also offer constructive, practical strategies to help these learners in the classroom and home.

The Level 3 NZQA-approved courses are held over two days and are suitable for anyone with little or no prior knowledge about specific learning disabilities. Parents, grandparents, teacher aides and teachers are all invited to attend. If you would like to have a course arranged in your area, please contact SPELD NZ and we'll do our best to organise this.

Upcoming 2018 Introductory Courses:

Christchurch: 23 & 24 August; 1 & 2 November
Havelock North: 24 & 25 May
Hamilton: 14 & 15 June
Auckland: 31 August & 1 September
Invercargill: 6 & 7 September

For more information and dates for other 2018 Introductory Courses, see the Training page of our website www.speld.org.nz or call 0800 773 536.

New SPELD NZ Teachers and Assessors needed

Please consider becoming a SPELD NZ Teacher or Assessor – both are needed in many parts of New Zealand. See our website for more details on SPELD NZ training options and scholarships.

Children with dyslexia and other specific learning disabilities often suffer years of failure and despondency at school. You could be the one to nurture them to success.

NZ Certificate in Teaching Individuals with Specific Learning Disabilities

This new Level 5 course is the pathway for those interested in becoming a SPELD NZ Teacher. It is also open to others who wish to extend their knowledge and expertise in teaching, or learning about, people with specific learning disabilities (SLD). The course requires 600 hours' participation/study activity. It is delivered online but there will be a face-to-face workshop component during the July school holidays.

Enrolments are accepted from New Zealand-certificated secondary, primary, and early childhood teachers, or those with a tertiary qualification and experience in working with learning. Following successful course completion, those who hold a teaching qualification and have a minimum of one year's classroom teaching experience can apply to become a SPELD NZ Teacher working one-to-one with students with SLD, referred by SPELD NZ.

Course dates and fees TBC. SPELD NZ scholarships may be available for teachers in some parts of New Zealand. For further information, see the Training page at www.speld.org.nz, call 0800 773 536 Ext 5 or email southern@speld.org.nz

SPELD NZ Assessor Course 2018



"Judith's knowledge is impressive and her passion engages the learner."

This training is in two parts. Part A provides training in the administration and interpretation of the Woodcock-Johnson IV test batteries and the assessment of those with specific learning disabilities. Applicants must have NZCER Level C grading. Those wishing to become a SPELD NZ Assessor may be invited into the Part B mentored programme. For more information, see the Training page on the SPELD NZ website www.speld.org.nz or email eo@speld.org.nz or call 0800 773 536 Ext 5. Scholarships may be available to subsidise the cost of training. (This training is not an NZQA-approved course.)

SPELD NZ's Executive Officer Jeremy Drummond was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the New Year's Honours. Jeremy received her award for services to Early Childhood Education, with special mention also of her outstanding contribution to SPELD NZ.



Jeremy's involvement in education began in the early 1990s when her eldest son was a pre-schooler and she chaired the Parnell Kindergarten Committee. She went on to serve on the board of the Auckland Kindergarten Association (AKA) for almost two decades, including nine years as board chair. The AKA has an annual turnover of over \$50 million and employs 1200 staff. Jeremy also served on the board of its subsidiary, Kindergarten New Zealand. For 16 years, she was also its president and vice president. As a qualified commercial lawyer, Jeremy provided her legal skills pro bono to both organisations. She was also actively involved as a school parent volunteer and board of trustee member at Victoria Avenue School.

"When you get involved in your children's education, you get to see what treasures some of the teachers are in awakening their learning," says Jeremy. "I wanted to work with others to provide fabulous opportunities for all

children, whatever their background. It's always been a passion of mine.

"How lucky I've been with the committees and boards I've been on. I've had the good fortune to work alongside some fantastic people, who have shared the dream. I feel embarrassed that they have received no recognition, while I am taking all the glory!"

SPELD NZ Involvement

In 1998, Jeremy joined the SPELD Auckland Committee, working as a volunteer and taking on the role of vice-president. When SPELD Auckland merged with SPELD NZ, she became its executive officer in 2012.

In that position, Jeremy has been instrumental in helping transform SPELD NZ into the leading nationwide provider of support for those who struggle with literacy and numeracy through dyslexia and other specific learning disabilities (SLD).

"One of SPELD NZ's key goals now is to help upskill as many educators as possible," says Jeremy. "We get calls from parents in despair. While we can certainly provide our students with highly individualised assessment and support, significant widespread improvement will only come when more educators learn how to identify, accommodate and support those with dyslexia and other SLD in the classroom as well. Another key goal is to train more educators who work in our prison system since such a large proportion of our prison population have learning disabilities."

As if this were not enough, Jeremy has extended her volunteer work to sport as well. Over the years she has given her time to supporting skiing and karate clubs, as well as the United Swimming Club, taking children to swim camp and competitions around the country.

"These have been really fun ways to help children, especially with the swimming," she says. "It's great exercise for people who have specific learning disabilities to help them with their coordination."

Jeremy believes volunteers in both education and sport play an important role. "Often people can't afford to pay so if you don't have the volunteers to do it, it's not going to happen."



We always welcome SPELD NZ student contributions! Please keep sending us your stories, poems, photos and art work for future issues. You can post or email them to us at: The Record, SPELD NZ, PO Box 24-617, Royal Oak, Auckland 1345 or nationaloffice@speld.org.nz (If it's a long story, please ensure you email it to us in Word format.)

Despite his struggles to write as a child, help through SPELD NZ put Nick Calder on track for success. He now lives in China and studies in Mandarin. Here's how it all unfolded.



"I always struggled with getting things down on paper. I knew from a young age that my spelling, writing speed and legibility weren't as good as they should be. I had the most difficulty during high school. At that time computers were not widespread in the classroom, so I still had to write most assignments by hand. I would see my brother and sister writing, and compare their work to my own.

Needless to say, the comparison was less than flattering. I think the funniest memory was of me aged 22 and my father at the age of 49, comparing the legibility of our hand writing to my 9-year-old brother's. My father and I looked at each other, laughed and said, 'Well, we won't be doing that again, will we?'

"I first went to SPELD when I was 12. After having a full diagnostic assessment, I finally understood that my issues were very specific and my wonderful SPELD teacher, Iris Hambling, taught me coping strategies, such as phonics and better hand positioning, to improve my handwriting so I could work around my difficulties. These strategies have become second nature now, and to this day I see any academic issue through this lens. How can I work around

the issue I have or learn more efficiently?

"After leaving school, I studied political science and economics at the University of Auckland. I got help from the University's Disability Services department. They would arrange note-takers for me – this was before laptops were as portable as they are today – and organise any special conditions required for tests or exams. They also encouraged me to go to Student Services seminars on essay writing and reading, which helped me make my essay writing more formal and coherent.

"Thanks to this support, I graduated with a BA in Political Science, and a Postgraduate Diploma (with Merit) in Political Science. I wrote my thesis on political communication during the global financial crisis.

"When I was 20, I worked as a reporter for the Helensville Community News. I applied for the job to challenge myself to overcome my weakness in writing. I put extra care into my grammar and spelling, and proofread my work multiple times. Nowadays I use the Grammarly app to help get me thinking more about grammar while I write. Since then, I've worked in the IT department of one of the largest media companies in New Zealand, helping drive technology change within the business. This role required a lot of writing, including business communications and support documentation. While it could have been a struggle, I had a very supportive manager who was willing to pay for professional writing courses and proofread my work.

"Last year I decided on a radical change and I'm now in China studying for my Master of Political Science at the Chinese University of Mining and Technology. All classes are in Mandarin. My dyslexia and dyspraxia mean I still face many challenges, but my SPELD tutor, Iris, taught me lifelong skills to cope. I really do think that without her tutoring I wouldn't be where I am today and have achieved the way I have."

Celebrating a student's success

SPELD NZ teacher Iris Hambling tutored Nick in Auckland when he was 12 and 13. She remembers him fondly as a dedicated and highly intelligent student, and was delighted to hear about his successes as an adult.

"Nicholas had slow processing speed with his writing, and spelling issues, but he had a keen desire to understand his learning and was ready to focus," says Iris. "At that time I was teaching four gifted 12- to 14-year-old pupils so I included him in a test of general knowledge. He scored exceptionally, and when I asked him how he knew so much, he told me that he listened to the BBC every night.

"I was absolutely delighted to hear from Nicholas. I had wondered what had become of him. I never doubted his intelligence, his innate sense of decency, his goodness and his desire to learn. Stories like his are like a reward for those of us who work with special students. Nicholas deserves a gold medal for what he has achieved and for what he will undoubtedly do for others in his life ahead."

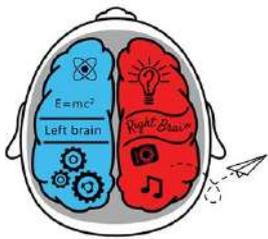
Iris recently retired after 32 years as a SPELD NZ Teacher and 49 years in speech and language therapy.



Specific Learning Difficulties – What Teachers Need to Know – By Diana Hudson

Specific Learning Difficulties

What Teachers Need to Know



This is the first text I have seen on the topic of specific learning difficulties that is written specifically for secondary school teachers. In the words of the author, “It aims to give an insight into the minds, strengths and weaknesses of students who have specific learning difficulties, and to provide an armoury of practical ideas to teach them more effectively.” In the first chapter, Hudson gives a brief overview of specific learning difficulties, cognitive functions that affect learning, and some explanations of other issues which affect learning, including vision and hearing. This chapter is followed by others on: dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia, ADHD, autism spectrum disorder and obsessive compulsive disorder. The last two chapters are on organisation skills, exams and revision.

It is very easy to read individual chapters and not at all necessary to read from beginning to end. Each chapter includes a brief definition, ways to spot a student with the particular difficulty, sections called “downsides” and “upsides”, and ways to support these students in the classroom.

As a small book covering a wide spectrum of issues, one would not read it to gain an in-depth understanding or to learn about research in the field. However, it is a very handy quick reference that could help a classroom teacher to understand students and be able to adapt programmes and methods to support them.

Reviewed by SPELD NZ Teacher Marion Fairbrass

A Mind at a Time – By Mel Levine, M.D.

A Mind at a Time provides insight into eight neurodevelopmental systems that are key to student learning. These include attention control, memory, language, spatial and sequential ordering, the motor system, and higher and social thinking.

The book begins by examining how a mind’s profile comes to be. It considers genes, family life and stress levels, cultural factors, friends, health, emotions and educational experience as well as how lifestyles may affect learning styles. According to Dr Levine, kids have more differences than similarities. Our role is to understand their special wiring and its implications, and to identify and celebrate their strengths in order to help them to find their niche so their minds can thrive. He believes that difficulties can crop up in all levels of a student’s education, from preschool through to their last year at university, so detection in the early years may not always be possible. Nevertheless, he says it’s never too late to understand and strengthen a mind.

In many ways Dr Levine endorses SPELD NZ principles. Firstly, he believes that in addressing student difficulties, it’s important to construct a neurodevelopmental profile. This should include: the current stage of a student’s academic skills and knowledge; highly specific strengths and weaknesses; integrating specific tests with the observations of parents and teachers’ reports; direct discussion with the student; and close analysis of samples of their schoolwork. In doing this, we can identify recurring themes that reveal which neurodevelopmental dysfunctions are getting in the way.

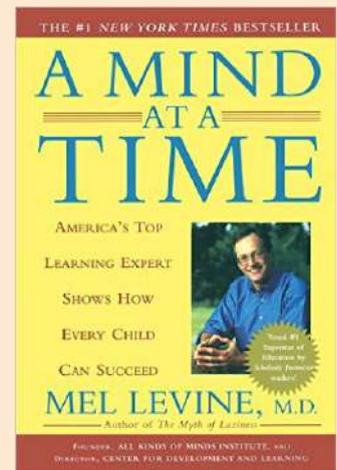
Levine then suggests strategies to help. These include teaching students clever tactics to overcome their

difficulties; adjusting the rate and reducing the volume of work by breaking it down into manageable chunks; and never losing sight of the child’s notable strengths and special knacks that can help them succeed in school and beyond.

Four states of mind are especially susceptible to harm in the face of academic frustration: motivation, feelings and moods, self-esteem and behaviour. He says students should have the opportunity to discover what they need to work on to help themselves, the reason for their academic problems, and their personal strengths and weaknesses. Dr Levine endorses the use of accommodations, interventions, and protection from humiliation as key elements in a student’s education. He also recommends the use of special services provided within the school setting.

As you read, you can’t help but feel affirmed in your role as a SPELD NZ Teacher and what we work so hard to uphold. As Mel Levine writes, “Many students can benefit from an intervention with a professional who can offer them ongoing advice and advocacy. The alliance can provide a source of security, coaching in troubleshooting problems that come up and plain old praise and encouragement.”

Reviewed by SPELD NZ Teacher Philippa Winch



Writing Frames and Mind Mapping - Dr Tilly Mortimore

To coin a phrase from this webinar, the greatest fear for students is the 'fear of the blank page'. Getting thoughts down on paper is especially hard for those with learning and writing difficulties. How can we as teachers make it more achievable?



Students with dyslexia and dyspraxia can have many difficulties in areas such as working memory, organisation and planning, processing speed, phonological processing, sequencing, automaticity, spelling, visual and

auditory perception, handwriting and written expression, to name a few. Learning in the classroom can be limited and requires a lot of extra effort from these students.

The 'Writing Frames and Mind Mapping' webinar is about helping students learn, helping them to find their strengths, finding out how they learn best, encouraging teachers to teach to those strengths, and making learning fun. Dr Tilly discusses difficulties dyslexic students have, things schools and all teachers need to consider for these students, and she gives practical examples of frameworks

and mind maps for creating success with writing. These include using mind maps and frameworks for the three phases of learning: Stage 1 – to get information; Stage 2 – planning/working on it; and Stage 3 – self-expression of what is learnt and getting the information out to an acceptable standard that fulfils educational requirements.

Our role as teachers is to give children a chance, and to enhance their strengths such as being problem solvers, creative thinkers, resourceful, resilient and articulate. This would help prevent students from becoming sad and angry, and from mistrusting teachers and the education system.

I found Dr Tilly's webinar informative and interesting. The different types of frames are particularly useful, especially the narrative, timeline, report, recount and discussion grids. For our students with learning difficulties, having the one-on-one time to teach these techniques would work better than in the classroom, where I think many of them would flounder.

By SPELD NZ Teacher Frances Hogg

Understanding and Treating Auditory Processing Disorders

I am amazed at how many of my SPELD NZ students have difficulty with auditory processing. I was therefore excited to take part in this webinar offered by Sonic Learning. It provided a useful insight into symptoms, diagnosis, intervention and useful strategies related to auditory processing disorders (APD). It also looked at the neuroscience and causes of APD and how it fits into the bigger picture of specific learning disabilities.

Students can have APD even if there is nothing wrong with their hearing. The difficulty lies in the student being able to process, comprehend, interpret and remember what they have heard. Students may therefore misunderstand what is said, ask for repetition and have trouble following instructions. In the classroom situation it can often be apparent that the student has tuned out, is reluctant to engage in conversation, and when asked a question may have a slow or delayed response. These students are also likely to have difficulty with phonics, reading and spelling.

The best person to diagnose APD is an audiologist or doctor of audiology. Their tests will include sound discrimination, separating sounds from background noise, ordering the sequence of sounds and being able to process sounds quickly.

In the classroom, environmental changes can be made such as preferential seating, minimising background noise, improving classroom acoustics and using an amplification



system. It is also important that the teacher gains the student's attention prior to giving instructions; uses repetition and rephrasing; provides visual aids and written information especially to help the student understand new concepts being taught, and keeps instructions short and simple. Further assistance can include helping the student to become familiar with vocabulary to improve their listening comprehension and taking the time to check for understanding.

As SPELD NZ teachers, we can help by using some of these compensatory strategies and assisting with comprehension, phonological awareness, listening and memory.

By SPELD NZ Teacher, Philippa Winch

In a SPELD NZ exclusive interview, we find out how working to overcome his dyslexia has helped drive the shot put world champion's sporting success



Our newly crowned Commonwealth Games men's shot put champion is at the top of his game. After bringing home an Olympic bronze medal from the 2016 Games in Rio, he's now number one in the world, holding both the current indoor (2018) and outdoor (2017) world shot put titles. In February, Tom was named New Zealand's Sportsman of the Year at the 2018 Halberg Awards, and he's capped off a stellar season with gold on the Gold Coast.

You don't achieve success without grit and hard work, and these are traits Tom (26) has exhibited throughout his life, both in the shot put circle and in the classroom. His parents, Peter and Karen, believe managing the challenges of dyslexia have contributed to Tom's determination, toughness and self-belief.

Dyslexia has definitely made him stronger, says Peter. "His primary school at Waihi was fantastic. They recognised that he was dyslexic early on and taught him that it wasn't a disease. It didn't mean he was stupid – he was simply dyslexic and found reading harder than most students."

Karen remembers Tom's early years at school. "I watched him one night with his school reading book and realised that he wasn't actually reading the words; he had memorised them. He has a tremendous memory."

Having discovered that Tom was dyslexic, Karen was determined to help him succeed at school. She sought advice from the special education teacher at Waihi Primary School, educated herself about dyslexia, and put significant time and effort into supporting his learning. Teachers advised them that what Tom read wasn't nearly as important as the fact that he could enjoy reading what he liked.

"Every morning we'd get up at 6am, have breakfast together and do some learning," says Karen. "Tom didn't have a choice. Sometimes he'd get frustrated and we'd both cry, but we stuck to it. I'm very stubborn. The only thing I could do was give him my time."

It's something for which Tom is hugely grateful, once telling a teacher 'If it wasn't for my mother, I wouldn't be where I am.'

Tom's resilience has also helped him manage challenges of all kinds. "He recovers from disappointments very quickly," says Karen. "He's able to move on and put things behind him."

Karen and Peter say it was important to instill a sense of confidence in Tom so that he recognised that he wasn't 'dumb', he just wasn't that great at reading.

He might have found reading, spelling and writing challenging, but Tom excelled at sport and that bolstered his self confidence. Karen jokes that he signed up for every sport on offer so he could spend time out of class at competitions and events. At age 14, he was in both the First XV and First XI at Timaru Boys' High. He represented Canterbury in age-group cricket teams, and in rugby he represented both South Canterbury and played in the Hanan Shield. To add to the mix, he was also a South Canterbury representative hockey player. And by 18, having rediscovered shot put, Tom was making his own way around the world competing at international events.

At high school, his parents had arranged for Tom to have help in the classroom and after school with his homework.

"At secondary school, I thought 'you're not giving up now'," says Karen. "He couldn't read the questions in maths so I spoke to the headmaster at Timaru Boys' High about employing a teacher to help Tom in class. He was only entitled to six sessions a week, so we made a donation to the school each year to cover the cost of assistance in every class."

Tom enjoyed and was good at maths. He did NCEA Level 1 in Year 10, a year earlier than normal. Through hard work, he gained university entrance, including NCEA Level 2 English, although he jokes that the only thing he passed in English was public speaking. It's something he does a lot of now, particularly for media interviews and at schools, where he loves answering the kids' questions. Tom has returned to his old schools and talked about dyslexia, a conversation that had a huge impact on the students there.

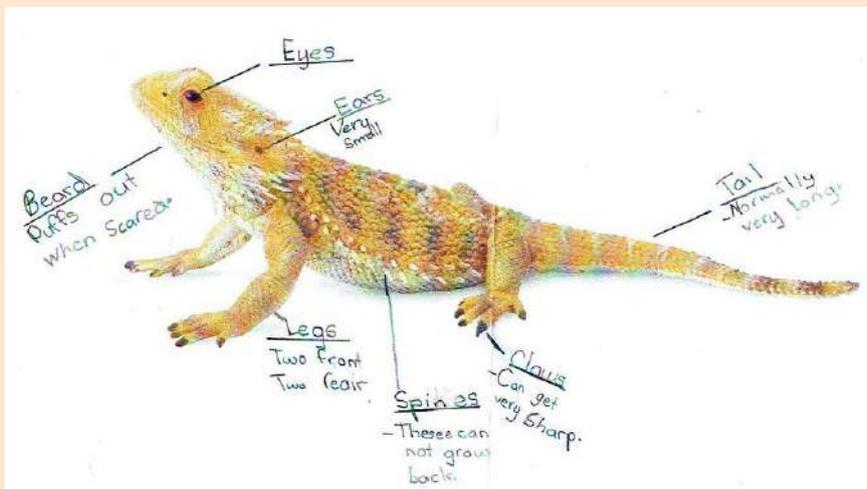
He encourages anyone with a learning disability not to be ashamed. "Don't try and hide it," he says. "It doesn't close many doors. If I'd had it my way when I was younger I would have gone to school just to play games and eat lunch, but then I came to realise I needed to do all right in school to get by."



Tom Walsh and partner Dana Mulcahy

Student Contributions

Excerpt from a report on Bearded Dragons by Tara Kelly-Hulse (9)



DIET: Have you ever wondered what a lizard eats? My Bearded Dragon, Lucius's favourite food is mealworms. But he also likes large crickets, watermelon, and other fruits. He can only have fruit occasionally because too much sweet food will make him sick. Sometimes, we make him a veggie burger. To do this, I mix 2 teaspoons of Veggie Burger powder with hot water. Then I pour the mixture into shapes, and wait 2 – 4 minutes until it is spongy. To keep Lucius healthy, we need to give him special powders. These include calcium with vitamin D, and reptile vitamins. Bearded Dragons are omnivorous. This means that they eat meat and plants. They also must have water to survive. Lucius gets water through his food, and by being misted. He also enjoys being in the bath and licking up the water.

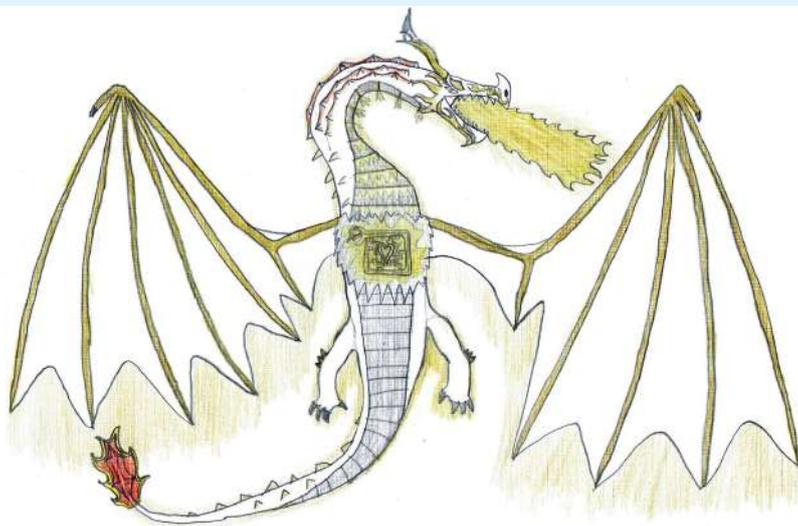
Dragon Report – Illustration and story by Lennix Allan (10)

My dragon's name is Voonding. He lived in the dark ages on a sky island, in a castle called Drakon Castle. This castle was the home of all dragons. Voonding's heart can be seen by all. It is made up of fire that gives him strength and the power to live.

Voonding is eight times taller than a full grown man. He stands on two muscular legs that are short compared to the rest of his body. At the end of his legs he has powerful talons like an eagle. He uses his legs, wings, and his tail to get a running start to fly. His wings are made of sturdy webbing, separated by long, thin bones. They are similar to a bat's wings but colossal. On the tip of Voonding's tail you will see orangey, red flames. These only burn when he is awake. But they cannot burn skin. Although his skin is actually rough, when you touch it, it feels soft. Just like a fish's scales, Voonding's scales are also smooth. The scales are a cloud white colour. There are three rows of pointed spikes that run the full length of his body. The spikes are there to make him look terrifying. On the back of Voonding's head you will see five horns on either side. The two at the top are the longest. There is also a horn on the end of his snout. The horns all feel bony. Voonding's head is like a crocodile's head. His eyes glow gold when he is most powerful. His mouth is filled with triangular, pointed teeth. The muscles of his mouth have great strength. He breathes the eternal flame from his heart. When he exhales, the breath smells like smoke. He only uses this in battle or when necessary, to protect his kingdom.

Voonding is precious to me because he is the king of dragons. Without a king there would be confusion. He is a good, kind ruler.

Lennix read *Dragons* by Tessa Duder. He brainstormed, drafted and edited the report with his SPELD NZ Teacher Eleanor Boyce acting as his scribe. Ideas came from his reading, his illustration, and his imagination. He has a love for expressive words like 'eternal, sturdy and muscular' and was very specific about expressing ideas accurately.



Student Contributions

Excellence award



Hi my name is Nathan and I'm 14 years old. I started high school this year and found it was way harder than primary or intermediate school. There is so much writing to do and we have to use a laptop lots. My teachers have said I've worked really hard, and I get real tired at the end of the school day, so at the end of the year it was awesome to go on stage at the end of my first year at high school and receive an Excellence award in Design and Visual Communication. I also got a Merit Certificate, getting 89% across all subjects. I missed out by 1% to get Excellence! Design and Visual Communication is my favourite subject. I get to design, be creative and draw, and I don't have to do much writing and spelling, which I find real hard. There isn't much reading either. My other favourite subject is Art as I love doing art and being creative in this too. At school for sport I do climbing and love it. I love the challenge of climbing and the great view when you get to the top.

I see my SPELD tutor, Isobel, once a week at her house and she is awesome – she has really helped me. Isobel has been great in starting with the basics, using visual stuff, breaking things down for me and coaching me on writing skills. Also heaps of work on spelling. SPELD has helped me heaps.

By Nathan Moore (14)

Aerobatics in N1817WA (with Tom Richards)

The SNJ-T6 (Texan) is an advanced aerobatic trainer which was used by the U.S. military in WW2 because the plane, for a 2.5 tonne plane, is extremely agile. On day five of our Florida trip I had a flight booked for midday with Tom Richards (in the blue circle), one of the top pilots in the U.S.

I climbed in and after the briefing I noticed a little button labelled 'cowl guns'. Looking up, sure enough there were two Browning .50 cal machine guns on the cowling. Tom climbed in, the engine started and soon we were taxiing. We had to do an S-turn to see where we were going. Soon we were ready to take off. The tower cleared us. We took only 250 feet to take off.

After reaching our cruising altitude, we started our aerobatic manoeuvres. This was done in an 'I show and then you have a go' fashion and consisted of:

1. Imbleman roll. A half loop and then when you're inverted you turn to level the plane out.
2. Barrel roll. In a display, if the pilot has turned on the aerobatic smoke, you will notice that it kind of looks like a barrel.
3. Wing drop stall. You stall, kick the rudder to the right/left and the wing drops.
4. Then, at last, an eight point demonstration roll. This is for photographers to get a 'good angle' on the plane in flight. (Even though any aircraft looks great from any angle.)

Then on the way back we had to stall as a very annoying United Airlines 789 (yes, the new Dreamliner series 900) was about five nautical miles in front of us and controllers have to keep a five mile, or 500 feet clearance between all aircraft. So after we stalled down to 3,000 feet we headed back for a very weird landing where I lined up with the wrong runway.

To clarify, there are six (yes, SIX) runways at the same airport. Case closed. We went around again and landed and taxied back. Overall it was a fantastic day: flying with Tom Richard, flying the warbird and doing aerobatics in a warbird.

By Ben Marling (15)



Student Contributions

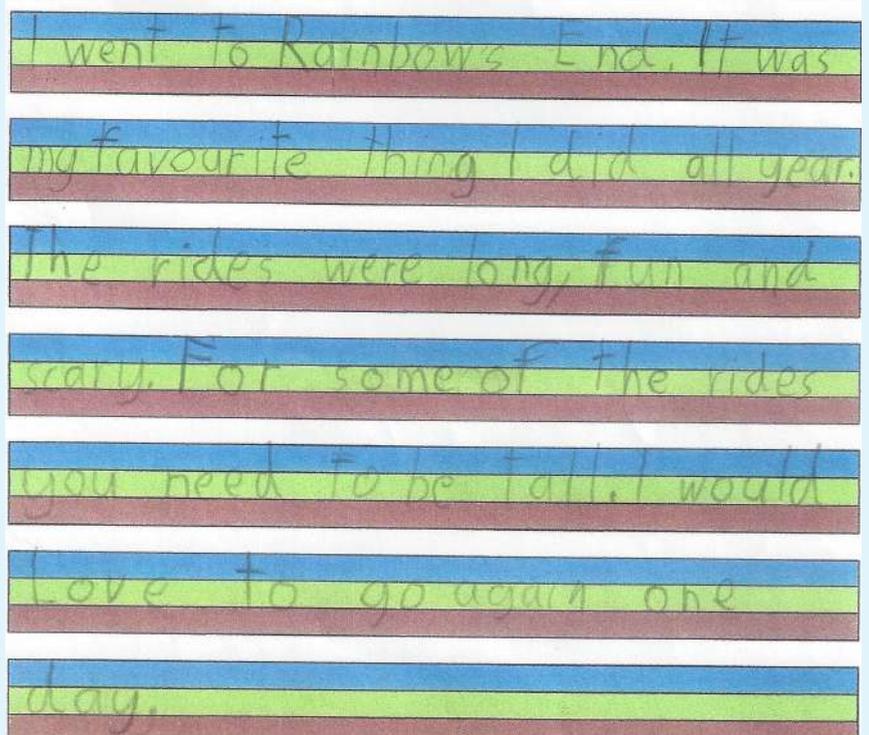
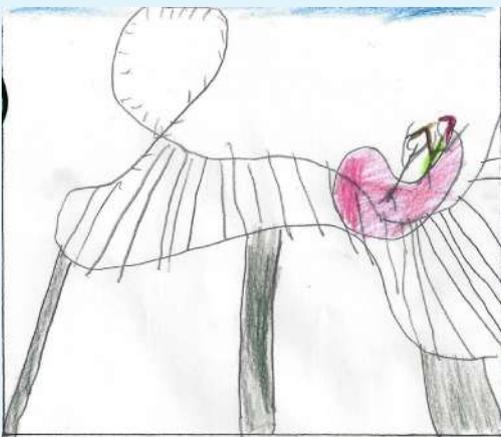
Unleashing potential



Here are two stories by Campbell Blundell aged 10. His SPELD NZ Teacher, Roz Edwards, writes:

“Campbell has orthographic dyslexia and has had significant difficulty with his handwriting, which he worked hard on developing as part of his SPELD NZ tuition. Campbell made an outstanding effort with his handwriting for his final copy of *Rainbow's End*, which he also illustrated. *Worst Halloween Ever* is a story Campbell dictated to me without his orthographic dyslexia and difficulty with handwriting holding him back. The quality, depth and humour of his story is evident when Campbell's written expression is not limited by his specific learning disability.”

Rainbow's End



Worst Halloween Ever

Billy's eyes started closing with pain as he saw his blood pouring out on the floor. The demented old man who had cut off his hand and stabbed him in the back was staggering down the steps to the door. He had dropped Billy's hand in the doorway, blocking the door.

Billy felt something touching his cheek. He heard a bark and realised it was his dog Sabre. Sabre kept barking and Billy's mum came running up the stairs. She said, "Talk to me, talk to me. It's going to be okay honey! I'm getting you out of this horrible place!" Billy's pain was too much and he passed out. She carried Billy back to his home and helped him.

Police searched everywhere for the man but there was no trace of him. People set up a fund for Billy. It was called the 'Help Billy Foundation'. Billy ended up with lots of hands he could choose from. He had a robotic hand, a hand that could hold a pencil, a knife hand, a spade hand, a candle hand with a lighter underneath, a dog paw hand, a spray can hand and a fork hand.

Next Halloween, Billy went out with friends. They dared him to go to the house where it all started, but he said "No." So they left him, and then Billy saw someone dressed up in a Halloween costume. It was a surgeon costume and he had syringes taped to his fingers. There was a machete strapped to his back. There was something familiar about him that Billy couldn't understand. The surgeon slowly and carefully walked up to Billy, and said, "Do you remember me?"

Billy recognized that voice. He couldn't see his face but Billy didn't stay to find out. He ran like his life depended on it. But the man was too fast and he cut Billy's heel with his machete. Billy tripped screaming and the man grabbed him and dragged him slowly to his car. The man drove off to his house and pulled Billy up to the attic, in an old house by the water. Billy was scared and in agonizing pain. Billy saw the old man's face and realised it was someone he knew. He remembered his stepfather had gone missing after a voluntary drug test which changed him drastically. Could it be...?

Thanks!

Thank you to our sponsors for 2017-18



From everyone involved with SPELD NZ, we'd like to express our thanks and appreciation for the grants, donations or other assistance we have received over the past 12 months.

As a not-for-profit, SPELD NZ tries to keep all fees for families as low as possible to make our services accessible. We receive no government funding, so grant money is essential to help cover our operating expenses and ensure the continuation of SPELD NZ's work. Our heartfelt thanks to:

Antis Garland Charitable Trust, Betty Campbell Trust, COGs, Community Trust of Southland, DV Bryant Trust, Estate of Gordon Issacs, Eastern and Central Community Trust, Foundation North, Hawkes Bay Foundation, Hutt Mana Charitable Trust, L W Nelson Charitable Trust, Hutt Valley Freemasons, Invercargill Licensing Trust, IRD staff Book Club, John Ilot Charitable Trust, Julie Goodyer, Kings College Trust, Len Reynolds Trust, Lion Foundation, Lottery Grants Board, L W Nelson Trust, Mary Lloyd SPELD Auckland Trust, Mr and Mrs George Denton Trust, Network Tasman Trust, Nikau Foundation, Norah Howell Trust, NZ Community Post, Otago Community Trust, Philip Dallow Trust, Rata Foundation Canterbury, Redwood Trust, Remuera Lodge, Riccarton Youth Trust, SkyCity Auckland, SkyCity Hamilton, Soroptimist International of Wellington, Stevenson Village Trust, TG McCarthy Trust, The W Duncan Bickley Trust Fund, Wellington Children's Foundation, Winton and Margaret Bear Charitable Trust, J N Williams Memorial Trust/HB Williams Turanga Trust, Waikouaiti Petanque Club, WelEnergy Trust, West Coast Community Trust and the many others who have given donations or volunteered their time.

Give the gift of reading to a child in need

SPELD NZ believes that all children deserve the chance to read and succeed at school, and we are continually fundraising to help subsidise our services for low income families. We desperately need donations to meet the demand. Please consider assisting children who would otherwise not have an opportunity to be assessed and receive the one-on-one tuition that could transform their lives. Here's what one mum wrote:

"A big thank you to the donor who provided my son's SPELD NZ assessment... Following his assessment, he has now been allowed the use of a reader/writer for NCEA. His attitude towards his learning is improving all the time and he is more confident when approaching his writing."



Our new website makes it easier than ever to make a donation. Just click on the 'Donate' button located at the top of every page. Every little bit makes a difference and don't forget that donations over \$5 are eligible for a tax rebate. You are also welcome to make payment directly into SPELD NZ's account 12-3061-0395660-00 and email accounts@speld.org.nz with details to request a receipt.

Assessing learning needs – What's it all about?



When an assessor is working with a child, they are looking for pieces of the puzzle that don't fit. They are looking for patterns and they want to know WHY. Recently, Kidslink invited SPELD NZ assessor Judith Alexander to demystify the assessment process at a seminar for teachers and families in Auckland. Judith explained what was involved in

a diagnostic assessment for learning difficulties and why it is an essential first step for any parent concerned about their child's learning abilities. Judith brings a wealth of knowledge to events like this. She has been a primary teacher, lecturer in a teacher training college, learning support teacher and a teacher in a centre for students with learning, behaviour or emotional difficulties. She also has a Master of Educational Psychology specialising in behaviour modification, reading difficulties and assessment. In addition to her role as an assessor, she is SPELD NZ's Professional Standards Committee Assessor Rep and Director of SPELD NZ Assessor Training.

KidsLink is an online resource aimed at connecting teachers and families with quality local experts on children's learning and development. Kidslink also runs seminars and conferences in Auckland and Hamilton. For more information see www.kidslink.co.nz