



**Submission from the Board of
SPELD New Zealand Inc
Te Rōpū Whakaoho Matauranga**

Relating to

The Petition of Mike Styles: A government inquiry into and support for dyslexia and neurodiversity including the impact on society and the economy, consider legislation to cover their rights, and ensure that best practice in education for dyslexic/neurodiverse learners.

Ko te ahurei o te tamaiti arahia o tatou mahi
Let the uniqueness of the child guide our work.

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Executive Summary

SPELD NZ was pleased to be invited to support the petition of Mike Styles, as part of our role supporting and advocating for those with dyslexia and other neurodiversity since the 1970s.

- SPELD New Zealand (SPELD NZ) is a not-for-profit incorporated society 212626, registered with the Charities Commission CC46602 (SPELD is an acronym for **Specific Learning Disabilities**.)
- We were founded in 1971 to address the needs of those with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), which were not officially recognised by the New Zealand government at that time
- For the past 50 plus years, SPELD NZ has provided diagnostic assessment, one on one specialised tuition, training, advocacy and support for children and adults with SLD, their families/whanau and educators of Aotearoa New Zealand
- We constantly fundraise to help subsidise our services nationwide to those who can least afford them. At no stage have we received any government funding
- For over half a century SPELD NZ has been advocating for change to the education system in New Zealand
- In an ideal world, SPELD NZ would be redundant by now. Unfortunately, we have never been busier
- The significant challenges of dyslexia/SLD have a huge impact on many Kiwis over the course of their lives. Neglecting their needs results in dramatic fiscal and social fallout
- SPELD NZ is willing to assist and support any further enquiry or working party and is available for further conversation.



Dale Bailey
Chairperson
SPELD NZ Inc

Petition of Mike Styles: A government inquiry into and support for dyslexia and neurodiversity including the impact on society and the economy, consider legislation to cover their rights, and ensure that best practice in education for dyslexic/neurodiverse learners.

SPELD New Zealand makes this submission supporting the petition of Mike Styles calling for an inquiry and a review of current resourcing in education for dyslexic/neurodiverse learners.

About SPELD New Zealand

1.1 SPELD New Zealand (SPELD NZ) is a not-for-profit incorporated society 212626, registered with the Charities Commission CC46602 (SPELD is an acronym for **S**pecific **L**earning **D**isabilities.)

1.2 We were founded in 1971 to address the needs of those with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), which were not officially recognised by the New Zealand government at that time.

1.3 For the past 50 plus years, SPELD NZ has provided diagnostic assessment, one on one specialised tuition, training, advocacy and support for many thousands of children and adults with SLD, their families/whanau and educators of New Zealand.

1.4 Since inception, we have also trained many thousands of parents/whanau, and education professionals: principals, deputy principals, teacher aides, teachers, Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour, Resource Teachers: Literacy, Special Education Coordinators, and Learning Support Coordinators.

1.5 We were part of lobbying that brought about the New Zealand Government's official recognition of dyslexia in 2007 (By way of comparison, dyslexia was recognised by federal law in the United States in 1969 and it became mandatory to support school children for dyslexia (Morin, 2016).

1.6 For more than 50 years we have advocated for teaching of reading using structured, systematic, and phonological-based programmes.

1.7 Our practices are research-based, and methods are proven to be successful (Waldie et al). In our Pilot study, cognitive functions of the brain as well as ability to read and write showed vast improvements after SPELD NZ remediation.

1.8 We are a Private Training Enterprise registered with NZQA as a Category 1 provider (with Excellence in all areas reviewed). We are accredited to host a Level 5 NZ Certificate in Teaching Individuals with SLD. (Ministry of Education registration number 7670).

1.9 Our Assessor training (not an NZQA-approved programme) is recognised by NZ Council for Educational Research (distributors of the diagnostic assessment tool Woodcock-Johnson IV).

1.10 Our Assessors have postgraduate qualifications in psychology and have completed our Diagnostic Certificate to specialise in SLD; our teachers all have NZ recognised teaching qualifications, classroom teaching experience and hold the Level 5 NZ Certificate in Teaching Individuals with SLD.

1.11 Our assessments are recognised by New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) for Special Assessment Conditions for NCEA.

1.12 Our practice is to work with diagnostic testing (rather than generalised screening), and targeted, individualised one to one tuition.

1.13 In recent years we have contributed to several working groups e.g. with Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education Commission, Ako Aotearoa and NZQA, and have made many submissions to Select Committees, Members of Parliament and their Advisors.

1.14 We collect anonymised data from our new members, and regularly share that data with Ministry of Education.

1.15 At any time, we have about 3,000 members receiving some form of assistance from us. Of that number annually about 1000 are new members seeking diagnosis and tuition.

1.16 We receive over 20,000 phone enquiries each year.

1.17 Demand for our services and programmes outstrips our supply. In parts of New Zealand students may be on a 12 month (or more) waiting list. Home-schooling during Covid-19 lockdowns, highlighted for parents their children's learning issues, and we have never been busier. Many parents are unable to engage with our programmes due to:

1.17.1 The cost

1.17.2 Their geographic location (Zoom assessment and tuition may not be appropriate for some learners because of their age, behaviour, nature of their SLD/neurodiversity)

1.17.3 Their work commitments, which mean they can only have their child assessed or taught during the school day, at the child's school

1.17.4 Appropriate space not being available at the child's school

1.17.5 The school not being willing for the SPELD NZ Teacher to work on-site, or not being willing for the child to be released for SPELD NZ lesson off-site, during the school day.

1.18 In the last year we allocated over \$42,000 for training subsidies, and allocated over \$57,000 in subsidies to low-income families to assist with costs of assessment and tuition. These subsidies are sourced from grants and donations.

1.19 We survive on income from member subscriptions, grants, and any profit from training. As a not for profit, our aim is to keep our services affordable, however many who seek help from us cannot afford our services, even with SPELD NZ's subsidy. (73% of new members who shared information earned over \$71,000 (SPELD NZ Annual Statistics 2021)).

1.20 A number of funders continue to reject our applications, deeming our work to be 'core education' that is already provided for by the Ministry of Education.

1.21 We receive referrals from Oranga Tamariki, Ministry of Social Development, Accident Compensation Commission, who pay the client's SPELD NZ membership fee.

1.22 We receive no other Government funding.

Definition: What are Specific Learning Disabilities and ‘Neurodiversity’?

2.1 SPELD NZ’s focus area is specific learning disabilities (SLD) in reading, writing and maths. (more commonly known as dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia).

The American Psychiatric Association’s ‘Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders’ (2022) sets out the definitions of SLD and the other disorders loosely called Neurodiversity.

SLD (simplified) are:

- Persistent disorders in one or more basic psychological learning processes that involves difficulties in understanding or using language, spoken or written.
- Reflected predominantly in difficulties in listening, thinking, speaking, reading, handwriting, written language, spelling, and/or number sense, facts, calculation, and reasoning.
- Do not include learning difficulties that result from visual, hearing or motor impairment, intellectual disability, economic cultural or environmental issues or inadequate educational instruction.

Neurodiversity collectively describes:

- Other neurological disorders referred to in the Petition i.e. dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, ADHD, dyspraxia (also referred to as Developmental Co-ordination Disorder), and autism spectrum disorder.
- We would also add the condition of being twice exceptional (having SLD and being gifted)

The SLD/neurodiverse difficulties may vary from mild, moderate to severe.

They may overlap to varying degrees.

SLD is life-long, genetic, and inter-generational.

While SPELD NZ makes this submission from the perspective of specific learning disabilities, our teachers work with many students who have SLD and high-functioning autism spectrum disorder, ADHD and dyspraxia.

2.2 SPELD NZ is sometimes challenged for using the term **Disability** and not Disorder, Difficulty or Difference. These are all ways of referring to a specific learning condition where an individual is not making expected academic progress. The ‘D’ word is often linked to the context in which it is used, the philosophy of the user, and/or the purpose of use. We recognise that an individual with SLD has a range of strengths and weaknesses, however SLD is a life-long disability, especially while an individual is in the education system.

This does not mean we are 'deficit-based': We recognise the individual's strengths and interests and use them to create an individualised teaching programme to address their learning weakness.

We believe in the importance of a label for an individual's condition, so the individual can receive the appropriate support. If not given that label, they may well already be labelled stupid, lazy or dumb. They may adopt avoidance strategies in the classroom, they may become invisible and overlooked by the teacher, they may become badly behaved, which may be their way of compensating for failing to learn.

It is easier to be removed from the room and the work, rather than to try and fail yet again. Sadly, the school's attention often becomes focussed on the behaviour rather than on the learning disability - the reason for the deteriorating behaviour.

2.3 Incidence of dyslexia: It is difficult to assess the occurrence of SLD or neurodiversity due to the different definitions used, and lack of recent data available in NZ. A 1972 figure based on the Otago University Longitudinal Study (DMHDRU) estimated that 7% of the school-aged population had some form of SLD.

The British Dyslexia Association website gives figures of 10% of the population having dyslexia, (60% of individuals with dyslexia also have maths difficulties), 6% of population having dyscalculia (25% of those have math learning difficulties that could be caused by dyslexia or maths anxiety).

From our own members' statistics we know that:

- 77% have difficulty in reading
- 72% difficulty in handwriting
- 84% difficulty in spelling
- 37% difficulty in written expression
- 50% had difficulty in maths
- 52% lack concentration.

"I have discovered that I have a recognised learning disability and can explain why I couldn't read or write as well as everyone else. My wife, Heather, now gets birthday cards written inside by me - this has never happened before in the 40 years of our married life, and that brings great joy to us both."

*(62-year-old SPELD NZ student H S)
(SPELD NZ's The Record magazine, 2017)*

The positive side of dyslexia

We support the comments in this section of the Petition and add the following:

3.1 Individuals with SLD/neurodiversity are at least average in intelligence and many are gifted. Often, the giftedness is masked by the effect of their SLD. (These are 'twice exceptional' or '2e' individuals). Without the right support from school and whanau, this potential may not be realised.

3.2 Many talk about the 'gift of dyslexia' and quote the names of the scores of individuals and celebrities world-wide who have achieved greatness in their field despite (or because of), their dyslexia but the reality for many individuals is that life outcomes for people with SLD/neurodiversity are negatively impacted.

Implications of New Zealand's minimal response to dyslexia

We support the points raised in this section of the Petition and add:

4.1 Children with SLD/Neurodiversity typically do not reach their potential within the education system. Many disengage with school education and become involved in anti-social behaviour in or out of the classroom.

"I couldn't understand how I could not learn. I was called lazy and disruptive and got tremendously bullied. I carefully tailored my life to avoid situations where I had to demonstrate reading and writing. I couldn't even read a board pass."
(R C, a SPELD NZ student in his 70s) (The Record, November 2014)

"They said I was in fact just a lazy kid who needed to try harder and to stop misbehaving in class. I was given numerous detentions for not completing work. It was clear that the school system on its own wouldn't be of any help. I don't think I would have made it through without the help of my tutors."
(Former SPELD NZ student A. M., now a geologist)
(The Record, September 2016)

4.2 Information from the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Disability Study (DMHDRU 2016) (which is ongoing) shows the lifelong effects of un-remediated SLD on the individual and society:

- 4.2.1 23.5% of 'normal readers' in the Study attained bachelor's degree compared with 2.7% of dyslexic readers.
- 4.2.2 'Normal readers in the study had a median income before tax of \$30k - \$40k compared with dyslexic readers in the study with a median income before tax of \$20k-30k.

- 4.2.3 Scores for stress/alienation/aggression/socialised aggression/conduct/mental health disorders, divorce, and anxiety for individuals with dyslexics were significantly higher than for those without dyslexia.

“He developed anxiety and a fear of school. There were tears, tantrums, pain, and anger. Rio had almost lost hope and self-belief, and as a family it was breaking us. But mainly it was breaking our son.”

*(Mother Katie Knight, who came to SPELD NZ for help)
(The Record, March 2020)*

- 4.3 Many academic papers have been generated by the Study, linking dyslexia and negative behaviour characteristics:
- 4.3.1 Sex differences in reading disability where 22% are boys compared to 8% in girls. (Rutter et al., 2004)
 - 4.3.2 Linking language development in boys to reading disability where a correlation was observed between language development and reading difficulties. (Share, D.L. & Silva, P.A., 1987)
 - 4.3.3 Linking reading and spelling disabilities with poor speech articulation, but no significant language, motor or neurological dysfunction. (Share, D.L., Silva, P.A., Adler, C.J., 1987)
 - 4.3.4 The relationship between specific reading and behavioural problems in boys aged between 5 and 11. (McGee, R., et al., 1986)
 - 4.3.5 A significant association between reading disability and aggressive-hyperactive behaviour in boys at age 7. (McGee, R., Williams, S.M., & Silva, P.A., 1984)
 - 4.3.6 A significant link between 7-year-old boys and specific reading difficulties. (McGee, R., Silva, P.A., & Williams, S.M., 1984)
 - 4.3.7 The link between language delay from age 3 to 7 and reading difficulties at age 7. (Silva, P.A., McGee, R., Williams, S.M., 1983)
- 4.4 International studies into offending over the years, add some sobering statistics:
- 4.4.1 In their article An Examination of the Relationship between Dyslexia and Offending in Young People and the Implications for the Training System Kirk and Reid (2001) noted that in the population as a whole, between 4 and 10 per cent of people are affected by the range of learning difficulties classified as dyslexia. Of the young male inmates screened in the Polmont prison study, half of them showed indicators of dyslexia.
 - 4.4.2 Criminal Offending and Learning Disability in New Zealand Youth – Does reading comprehension predict Recidivism? Rucklidge & McLean Crime & Delinquency 2009. 60 young people from two youth prison sites were assessed,

with 91% having a learning disability. Four years after assessment, recidivism rates showed that poor reading comprehension predicts future offending, with poorer reading comprehension being linked to more serious offending.

- 4.4.3 Criminal offending in the US. Dyslexia in the Prison Population notes that while the prevalence of dyslexia in the general population is up to 20%, the prevalence of dyslexia in prisons is more than twice that: 48%, according to a scientific study conducted at the University of Texas Medical Branch in conjunction with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (published 2000)."
- 4.4.4 The link between dyslexic traits, executive functioning, impulsivity and social self-esteem among an offender and non-offender sample. Baker & Ireland International Journal of Law and Psychiatry vol 30 2007. Offenders presented with more dyslexic traits than non-offenders.

"I'd been heartbroken over this child. Tearing my hair out. I used to dread he would end up in prison. Tadhg got into SPELD and suddenly realised he could be taught the techniques to read and write and he actually started believing in himself. It was a turning point in his life. The change in him has been unbelievable." (Mother of former SPELD NZ student Tadhg Norgrove, now training to become a clinical psychologist.) (The Record, May 2015)

4.4.5 The UK Office of the Children's Commissioner, in 2012, made the connection between the considerable number of young people in custody with undiagnosed neurodevelopmental disabilities, which contributed to the behaviours that led them to offend. In the report titled "Nobody made the connection: The prevalence of neuro-disability in young people who offend", the Commissioner noted that the failure to identify these disorders "is a tragedy in many ways. It directly, certainly negatively, affects the lives of the victims of these children's crimes, of the children themselves, their families, the services seeking to change offenders' lives for the better, and wider society." (Hughes, et al. 2012)

4.4.6 In a UK study of the link between dyslexic traits, executive functioning, impulsivity and social self-esteem among an offender and non-offender sample (Baker & Ireland, 2007), offenders presented with more dyslexic traits than non-offenders, and the more violent offenders presented great dyslexic traits.

4.5 NZQA allows Special Accommodation Conditions (SAC) (like a reader and/or writer, extra time, computer), for students sitting NCEA assessments.

4.5.1 To successfully apply for SAC, schools must provide evidence demonstrating the need.

4.5.2 In some schools, parents can afford to pay for a diagnostic assessment which makes it much easier for the school to apply – the evidential data is provided in the assessment report. In other schools, especially where the families can't afford a diagnostic assessment, staff must gather their own evidential data of the student's needs.

4.5.3 If the school's learning support staff are under-resourced and time-poor (or the students haven't been identified for learning support) many students are not able to access SAC which impacts on their performance.

4.5.4 NZQA tries to make the process as equitable as possible, and it is reassuring to see in 2020 and 2021 an increase in demand for reader/writer assistance in exams. However, there is a significant difference between the numbers applying from low decile and high decile schools. Equity could be achieved for children in low decile schools if appropriate interventions been in place at primary school level. (Figures taken from NZQA's 2020 and 2021 annual reports).

4.6 The Education Hub research report 2022 "Now I don't know by ABC" explored the crisis in literacy in New Zealand. The year-long investigation was prompted by a 2020 UNICEF report (UNICEF 2020) which found only 64.6% of 15-year-olds in NZ have more than a basic proficiency in reading and maths. The Education Hub's report also pulls together data from international studies on literacy and numeracy. PISA 2018 research (published September 2021) shows a significant drop in NZ learners' reading, maths and writing in the last decade. Education Hub poses several possible reasons why this has happened and the significant gaps between socio-economic, ethnic and gender groups.

Among those reasons:

4.6.1 the lack of high quality, systematic support, including effective literacy interventions at all levels of schooling,

4.6.2 High levels of absenteeism and transience, particularly among certain groups of students, is limiting the amount of [literacy] instruction some students receive.

4.6.3 The number of young people not reading for enjoyment.

4.6.4 We would like to suggest a further reason: that many of the 35.4% of 15-year-olds with basic proficiency in reading and maths, may have undiagnosed or unidentified SLD/neurodiversity, were taught reading with a Balanced Literacy rather than Structured Literacy approach, received little or ineffective remediation, and disengaged with learning before they had left primary school.

4.7 Fewer students with SLD/neurodiversity successfully complete school and engage in tertiary education (DMHDRU). Completing a vocational or professional qualification early in adult life has a higher return for both the individual and society. Those who enrol in tertiary education directly from school are more likely to complete a qualification than students who enter from the workforce or unemployment, largely because school leavers are more likely to study full time and have fewer other commitments. Targeting young people can therefore improve the return on public funding.

Dyslexia in the workplace

We support the points raised in the Petition.

What should change?

We support the points raised in the Petition and add:

6.1 Petitioner's point 1: **A Public Education Program**: SLD/neurodiversity impacts on every aspect of an individual's life, and on every aspect of society. Yet society is barely aware of SLD/neurodiversity can barely recognise symptoms and barely understand the implications on an individual's life. How can parent/caregivers recognise that their child is not just being lazy, dumb or why they may be badly behaved or need specialised help?

How can teachers, other school staff and educators recognise the common indicators of SLD/neurodiversity if there is insufficient Initial Teacher in-service Teacher, and whole school training or professional development?

How can employers recognise the potential in job applicants with SLD/neurodiversity, that those employees are not thick or being insolent when they act contrary to written or lengthy verbal instruction?

A public education programme is long overdue.

6.1.1 Among the primary functions of the Human Rights Commission (Section 5 (1) Human Rights Act 1993) are the functions to:

- Section 5 (1)(a) advocate and promote respect for, and an understanding and appreciation of, human rights in New Zealand society,
- Section 5 (1)(d) promote equal employment opportunities
- Section 5 (1)(e) to promote and protect the full and equal enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities.

In meeting its duty, the Commission has the function to:

- Section 5 (2) (m) develop a national plan of action, in consultation with interested parties, for the promotion and protection of human rights in New Zealand, and
- Section 5(n)(ii) lead the development of guidelines and voluntary codes of practice to facilitate and promote best practice in equal employment opportunities.

Has the Human Rights Commission failed to identify SLD/neurodiversity as a disability with Rights that should be protected?

"I could not advance in one company from a Service Foreman position to a Service Manager or any other roles I had applied for. Because of my [dyslexia] problems, management would hold me back."
(Adult SPELD NZ student) (The Record, May 2010)

6.1.2 We are aware that many adults who have been diagnosed with SLD/neurodiversity are:

6.1.2.1 Reluctant to disclose this to prospective employers in case they won't be employed.

6.1.2.2 Fearful that if they are 'found out' once they are employed, it will give their employer reason to terminate their employment or otherwise discriminate against them. This fear may be irrational but may be ingrained after years of failure or struggle in the education system.

Anecdotally, SPELD NZ has encountered some smaller businesses whose practices have been to discriminate against employees with SLD/neurodiversity. However, we have also engaged with several large corporations who have very positive employment processes and practices, and support employees with SLD/neurodiversity. How much better life would be for all employers had "guidelines and voluntary codes of practice to facilitate and promote best practice in equal employment opportunities"?

6.2 Petition point 3: Make Changes to Education Legislation

6.2.1 Historically, we have advocated for teacher education in SLD/neurodiversity at

"The school model as it stands does not serve my very capable, hard-working and problem solver son at all. It has been totally heart breaking. I don't understand why schools have not adapted and changed based on the facts."

"It is deeply distressing to have a child with dyslexia and to watch him continue to struggle through a basic day at school despite being a very bright and articulate boy. Despite all the evidence about the benefit of early intervention there is NO help available. I know that there are MANY children in my son's position, many undiagnosed who will just withdraw or drop out or believe the lie that they are stupid or lazy. Many who have parents who are unable to pay for the support they need even if it is identified that they need it. What a terrible waste of precious human potential. THANK you for caring, thank you for advocacy - we need change. Our Kiwi kids deserve a chance to thrive."

(Excerpts from parent emails to SPELD NZ, included in our 2020 call to action to Hon. Chris Hipkins Minister of Education)

undergraduate level and for professional development for in-service teachers. We have been invited by tertiary providers to give short workshops for their learning support teams, and for their classes in education, psychology and Health Services. We have given professional development to Corrections staff. We have fully funded Corrections learning support staff member for our Level 5 course. We have given time to doctors taking general practice qualifications. The Education and Training Act 2020 must provide that tertiary learners and their instructors receive training in SLD/neurodiversity.

6.2.2 The United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child was ratified by New Zealand in 1993.

Article 28 of the Convention provides that every child has a right to education, and that measures should be taken to encourage regular attendance at school and to reduce drop-out rates.

Article 29 provides that education shall be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

6.2.3 In 2018 the Ministry of Education promised change within the school system. The Learning Support Action Plan 2019 -2025 stated that:

“New Zealanders want an education system where all children and young people can take part in education and can learn and achieve, whatever their needs or differences”.

“One in five children and young people need some kind of learning support.”

“The Learning Support Delivery Model is being rolled out across New Zealand. The model will be in all communities at various stages of implementation by the end of 2019.”

6.2.4 Objective Two of the National Education and Learning Priorities (Ministry of Education 2023) promised “Barrier free access - great education opportunities and outcomes are within reach for every learner”. “Education must be available to, and deliver for, all. Barriers that stop learners/ākonga from fully participating in education, including financial and physical barriers, need to be reduced, so all learners/ākonga have access to equitable opportunities and outcomes.”

6.2.5 It is commendable that the Ministry of Education's Statement of Intent 2021-2026 announces the purpose of:

- Shaping “an education system that delivers equitable and excellent outcomes”
- Providing important services such as specialised learning support
- Improving student attendance and engagement
- Tackling barriers to educational success
- Implementing the Learning Support Action Plan 2019-2025 “so that children and young people with learning support needs and disabilities are welcome and where their achievement, progress, wellbeing and participation are valued and supported”.

However, the Statement of Intent's worthy objects acknowledge the information gaps which would help measure the extent to which learners experience barriers to accessing education.

Sadly, we are entering our 16th year since dyslexia was recognised in by the Government. The fulfilment of the promise is too slow in coming. Many of the members joining SPELD NZ have had little or no access to a Learning Support Coordinator. Learning Support Coordinators tell us that they still feel ill-prepared for their roles. In-service Teachers tell us that they have had little or no professional learning and development in SLD/dyslexia/neurodiversity. Beginning Teachers are

still telling us that they received very little instruction at initial teacher training level, in recognising signs of SLD/neurodiversity or preparation to teach literacy and numeracy.

6.2.6 For years we have been advocating for effective literacy teaching which includes evidence-based programmes that teach coding and decoding, focussing on the sounds in language (phonemic and phonological awareness) and the ability to connect sounds to written text.

Many schools are now using Structured Literacy as the basis of teaching reading. Some are using the Ministry of Education's newly developed Phonics Plus readers. A Structured Literacy approach (sequential and systematic) is essential in the early years of education, rather than the Balanced Literacy (Three Cueing) approach, which involves much guessing. Learners with SLD/neurodiversity typically struggle with the Balanced Literacy approach. The next step offered them is Reading Recovery, which may help learners who have fallen behind for other reasons, but which is proven not to be effective for learners with SLD. There seems to be no guidance for schools or consistency in other remedial interventions offered those children.

Instead of leaving it up to primary schools to elect whether to use Balanced Literacy or Structured Literacy for early instruction in teaching literacy, we believe Structured Literacy should be compulsory.

6.2.7 We have consistently advocated for the following:

- Ministry of Education to improve the ratio of Learning Support Coordinators to Learner ratio, rolling out further tranches, to ensure adequate coverage and timely response in service delivery
- Teaching Council of New Zealand, Ministry of Education and Tertiary training providers to incorporate meaningful instruction on SLD / neurodiversity at undergraduate teacher education stage
- Ministry of Education to provide professional learning and development for in-service teachers, on SLD / neurodiversity, understanding of and implementation of structured literacy programmes, and the impacts of SLD on all aspects of learning
- Members of Parliament to focus on provision of community education to recognise the early indicators of SLD/neurodiversity: education for parents, Plunket nurses, medical practice nurses, general practitioners
- Members of Parliament to focus on introduction of standardised early screening tools (at Plunket, ECE, B4School check) and share the information with the next stage in the child's development. Screening can be teacher observations of basic literacy and numeracy, oral language and social skills, motor coordination, balance, proprioception (body awareness), auditory and visual discrimination skills. This would indicate which learners are most at risk of learning, social and language delays

- Schools and Early Learning providers to focus on developing phonological skills (e.g. initial sounds, recognition of rhyme, clapping syllables etc) at Early Learning centres and into early primary years
- Schools to provide and Education Review Office to monitor consistency in screening at school, especially for phonological awareness
 - For new entrants, as phonological awareness is an essential building block for literacy
 - At different ‘checkpoints’ in the learner’s journey through school
 - At 6-year-old stage where literacy and numeracy skills should have been established
 - Where the learner has fallen inexplicably behind their peers
 - Where “slower literacy progress” is being made by learners in Years 4-8. The drop off is seen in many students whose reading skills no longer cope with the higher literacy demands and comprehension is weakened. It is not just confined to those from low socio-economic status (SES) communities or Māori and Pasifika students, and it is unrelated to any summer slump
- Ministry of Education to require and Education Review Office to monitor consistency amongst schools, in relation to selected evidence-based early literacy programmes (based on phonemic and phonological awareness and phonics - as opposed to Balanced Literacy), so that there is a seamless evidence-based system that meets the needs of all early literacy learners
- Ministry of Education to action SLD/neurodiversity identification and remediation at all stages of the education system, from ECE to Tertiary: the less damage to the learner’s self-esteem and engagement with learning.
- Employers to provide appropriate accommodations for vocational learners and workers with SLD/neurodiversity
- Ministry of Education to consider the adverse effect for learners with SLD/neurodiversity in a modern learning environment. What robust evidence is there that the learner’s academic gains are significantly larger than those in traditional spaces, and that the environment is beneficial to learners with SLD/neurodiversity? (Alansari 2018)
- Tertiary providers and employers to provide age-appropriate resources (easy to read text, speech-to-text, etc.), coupled with effective teaching
- All schools and other educators recognise the impact low literacy and numeracy has on all areas of an individual’s life, and that they take responsibility to provide evidence-based and relevant intervention programmes in order to remove any barriers to learning
- Ministry of Education for funding for extra support for learners, for assessment and specialised tuition. School learners with SLD/neurodiversity

generally do not receive Ministry Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) funding. Where the Ministry has failed the learner's literacy and numeracy progress, for whatever reason, families should not bear the financial burden of assessment and remedial tuition

- Ministry of Education to work with aligned government agencies to have appropriate awareness and knowledge of SLD/neurodiversity. Who will benefit from best practice in education for dyslexic/neurodiverse learners?

Who will benefit from Government accepting the Recommendations of the Petition?

- 7.1 Society will benefit due to a greater level of work and education participation, reducing the number of those not in education, employment or training (NEETs), and increasing nationwide productivity
- 7.2 Employers will benefit by having a more literate workforce
- 7.3 Schools will benefit through teachers at schools bringing the specialist knowledge and experience that is not currently provided within existing teaching degree programmes (at undergraduate level), and to disseminate this knowledge to other colleagues
- 7.4 Individuals with SLD will have a greater opportunity to succeed at school and in education and work, bringing the additional benefits thorough:
 - 7.4.1 Increased academic success
 - 7.4.2 Reduced need to access general health and mental health services
 - 7.4.3 Increased self-esteem
 - 7.4.4 Improved life skills and ability to work and engage in further study
 - 7.4.5 Reduced risk of offending.

Recommendations

The impact of SLD pervades every aspect of society. The recommendations in the Petition should be acted upon.

A multidisciplinary collaborative approach is needed amongst the key Ministries and Crown agencies, including (but not limited to):

- Accident Compensation Commission
- Education
- Business
- Children and Children's Commission
- Corrections
- Disability Issues

- Diversity, Inclusion and Ethnic Communities
- Health
- Justice
- Māori Development
- Pacific Peoples
- Social Development
- Statistics
- Workplace Relations and Safety
- Youth

People with SLD have a right to access education pursuant to the Human Rights Act 1993. NZ needs to meet its obligations under the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

If those with SLD are not adequately supported, the consequences are devastating and far reaching. There is a moral imperative here which we should be ashamed to ignore.

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