



SPELD NZ: 55 years of seeing what happens when learners' needs are not met

SPELD NZ is New Zealand's largest and longest-standing provider of specialist support for people with dyslexia and other specific learning disabilities (SLD). Since 1971, we have worked nationwide to transform the lives of thousands of children and adults through specialist assessment and one-to-one tuition.

SPELD NZ has also trained many thousands of parents, whānau and education professionals – including principals, teachers, teacher aides, Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour, Resource Teachers: Literacy, Special Education Coordinators and Learning Support Coordinators.

We know what works

For more than five decades, SPELD NZ has advocated for structured, systematic and explicit approaches to literacy teaching, including evidence-based phonics instruction. We therefore welcome the mandated introduction of Structured Literacy in public schools, alongside Structured Maths. Evidence-based, explicit teaching now needs to be embedded throughout initial teacher education and ongoing professional learning, so that every teacher is equipped to recognise and support learners with SLD.

Why this matters

SPELD NZ had hoped that by now we would be redundant. Sadly, more than 50 years on, we continue to be inundated with children and young people who have fallen through the gaps in our broken education system. Many have completed the Reading Recovery programme but remain unable to decode words independently. For many, the underlying problem is that they have not been explicitly taught the skills and strategies needed for accurate, automatic word reading.

The equity issue

SPELD NZ can help close the gaps for learners who need more specialist intervention. But this highlights a significant inequity: **access to specialist assessment and tuition can depend on a family's ability to pay.**

We provide financial assistance to families experiencing hardship, but a charitable organisation cannot be expected to fill systemic gaps in education provision.

Every child should have the opportunity to learn to read, write and do mathematics using approaches that reflect what we know about how the brain learns – regardless of their family’s circumstances or where they live.

What we would like to see

SPELD NZ would welcome the opportunity to talk with Ginny Andersen about what we have learned from more than five decades of working alongside learners, whānau and educators.

We believe there is an opportunity to build on the move towards Structured Literacy and Structured Maths by ensuring that:

- Evidence-based, explicit approaches are consistently implemented across schools;
- Initial teacher education adequately prepares teachers to teach literacy and numeracy using evidence-based approaches;
- Teachers are equipped to recognise and support students with specific learning disabilities;
- Learners who require specialist intervention can access it regardless of their family’s financial circumstances;
- The voices and expertise of organisations working directly with learners with SLD are included in the development of education policy.

We encourage Ginny Andersen to contact our CEO Jeremy Drummond:

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For more information about SPELD NZ, visit www.speld.org.nz

Further reading & viewing

- [SPELD NZ’s 2023 submission to select committee at Parliament](#)
- [SPELD NZ’s 2020 call for a sea change in the way literacy is taught in New Zealand](#)