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FRONT COVER
Tipene Honetana
Waimea Intermediate, Richmond

The artist is Tipene Honetana, of Te Arawa descent. He is 11 years old, year 7, and attends Waimea Intermediate. He completed this painting when he attended Richmond Primary School as a year 6 student. Tipene is an excellent tutor for younger boys who struggle with their reading and writing. He is a top swimmer and won all of his age group events at school last year. He enjoys participating in kapa haka and is skilled in taiaha. Tipene is also a keen basketball and rugby player.

Tipene attends Waimea Intermediate, a school with a roll of 620 students. Many of the school’s students travel by bus from the outlying country areas in Tasman. Waimea Intermediate runs a modules programme which offers a diverse range of options from mountain biking, electronic lego, kapa haka, a rock band and art classes. Waimea Intermediate aims to be inclusive for students by creating a range of opportunities in which students can succeed. RTLBs and MOE:SE work closely with school management and teachers to improve educational outcomes for students. RTLBs have worked at systemic and group levels on mentor programmes, circle of friends, peer tutoring and in behaviour management groups.

GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWS OF TEXTS, RESOURCES AND PROGRAMMES
• Reviewers are asked to submit a 50 word profile of themselves, providing their professional details and affiliations at the end of the review. This information may also be included as part of the review.
• Reviewers will take responsibility for the appropriate and correct use of details pertaining to people, places, companies, publishers, etc.
• Reviews will become the property of Kairaranga.
• Reviews will reach the Kairaranga address by the date published on the letter of invitation.
• Abridgement of the review will be at the discretion of the Editorial Board.
• We are looking to explore many varied and potentially contradictory views on issues relating to educational practice which may be included within the texts, resources or programmes. This could result in views being expressed that do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Editorial Board.
**Submission Guidelines**

**GUIDELINES FOR PAPERS SUBMITTED TO KAIRARANGA**

- Kairaranga considers the following education-related papers as written documents:
  - **Practice Papers** – Papers celebrating effective practice and implementation of programmes. (Up to 2,500 words).
  - **Position Papers** – Papers outlining a writer’s view on a current educational issue. (Up to 2,500 words).
  - **Research** – Papers summarising research studies involving quantitative and/or qualitative analysis of data, or reviews of the literature. (Up to 3,500 words).
  - **Stories Experience** – Papers reporting the experiences of children, parents, caregivers, teachers, support staff and professionals in various learning settings. (Up to 1,500 words).

If you have the kernel of an idea that does not quite fit the above, please email kairaranga@massey.ac.nz and you will be connected with one of our editors who will support you on your road to publication.

- An abstract of not more than 150 words should be submitted with each article.
- Articles sent in hard copy should be on numbered, separate and single sided sheets, with double line spacing. Articles can also be emailed to kairaranga@massey.ac.nz. Figures or graphs, illustrations and diagrams should be sent separately as tiffs, eps or jpeg files, as well as embedded in the text of a word processing document. A disk or email version should be saved in Microsoft Word with the filename extension .doc.
- Authenticity of articles will be the responsibility of the submitting author.
- Minor abridgment of articles will be at the discretion of the editing team. If time allows, authors will be contacted before the publication of edited articles.
- Kairaranga will retain copyright of all articles published.
- Articles submitted to Kairaranga should not have been published with exactly the same format or content elsewhere.
- Authors are asked to submit a 50 word personal profile of themselves, their organisation, and/or other affiliations for reader interest.

**PEER REVIEW PROCESSES AND GUIDELINES**

- Kairaranga is a journal evolving through work submitted across the education sector. Peer review involves constructive feedback on your written contribution. The suggestions made will help you in editing your final piece of work.
- The peer review process for Kairaranga is “blind”. This means that neither the name of the author nor the name of the reviewer will be known to each other.
- Written contributions will be matched to peer reviewers who have topic, professional or cultural strengths in the area of the written work submitted.
- The peer review process is as follows:
  - Papers are submitted to the Editorial Board.
  - A decision is made by the Editorial Board to forward the article through to peer review, with a view to future publication.
  - Papers are returned to the Editorial Board.
  - Feedback is given to the author.
  - This feedback may include an offer of peer support by the Editorial Board for amendments made to the article submitted.
  - The Editorial Board retains the right to decline papers for publication. This will be reflected in the feedback you receive from the peer reviewer.
- Writers will receive feedback which may be:
  a) Accept as is.
  b) Minor editorial revision by the author.
  c) Revision of content by the author and modifications based on this review.
  d) Not accepted for publication.
- When papers are declined reasons will be given and resubmission may be possible.

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EDITORIAL

This issue celebrates 10 years of work for RTLBs within their communities of learning. Congratulations on your contributions to the field of special education in New Zealand. Our interview continues the 10th anniversary celebrations as we look back at the work done for us by Judith Hickman, the stalwart supporter of the RTLB phenomena through her position as coordinator of the first RTLB pilot project in the Wakatipu in July 1998. Judith continues to support the work of RTLBs through her position with the Ministry of Education.

Here at Kairaranga we are also celebrating as we welcome our new partner, the team at Massey University. We thoroughly enjoyed and benefited from our partnership with the Ministry of Education and no doubt as readers you enjoyed the developing and evolving Kairaranga. Kairaranga has enjoyed this on-going weaving of people, skills and talents over its 10 years. Our whaikōrangi has continually been strengthened by white threads by black threads, and by red threats as new partners have joined us, new writers have shared their insights, and our view of the diversity within special education pathways has been illuminated.

Our cover art is from a young artist named Tipene Honetana, completed when he was a year 5 student at Waima Intermediate in Nelson. We move on with articles also from the South Island from Joselyn Spryngthorpe exploring how to support the reading skills of a student with developmental delays. The team at Hopeka in the Hawkes Bay discuss how their use of wide-ranging therapies can support students to engage with their learning more. Libby Clark has us thinking about how useful bad language can be in her work on the history and nature of swearing. Nadine Balam lends a light touch to the complex issue of perfectionism whilst Jan Kerr comes up with an effective practice strategy to get the most out of IEPs in her article about effective tagging. Denise Burrow, a South Island RTLB, explores how letters can become vehicles for change. Sandyia Sebastian provides us with a pathway for assessing professional development workshops to ascertain their usefulness. Finally, Keith Greaney and Alison Arrow discuss the NEMP Probe Study about Spelling.

These articles continue the Kairaranga tradition of weaving the threads, weaving the educational practice as we hope to continue to build the whaikōrangi of evidence-based practice, and strategies to support the learning of all our children.

Cath and Alison

October 2009

Kairaranga

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Two issues per year

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Kairaranga
School of Curriculum and Pedagogy
Massey University PN900
Private Bag 11222
Palmerston North 4442
Email: kairaranga@massey.ac.nz

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ISSN 1175–8232

The Kairaranga Editorial Board has made every effort to ensure that all items in this journal are accurate and culturally appropriate. Views expressed or implied in this journal are not necessarily the views of the Editorial Board, Massey University or the New Zealand RTLB Association.

RECIPROCAL TEACHING: A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS (REVISED MANUAL)

Marie Kelly

There are several useful assessment tools available to teachers to assess reading comprehension but there is a general lack of resources to help teachers to teach effective reading comprehension strategies. According to Kelly (2008) reciprocal teaching is a programme ‘developed by Palinscar & Brown (1984) to provide a simple introduction to group discussion techniques aimed at understanding and remembering text content’ (p. 8). The programme is based on the translational use of four comprehension enhancing strategies: clarifying, questioning, summarising and predicting. A key idea for the successful implementation of the programme is that initially, the teacher leads the discussion and models the various strategies to the group until eventually, the students take over the responsibility for the programme.

In this revised manual the author defines reciprocal teaching and clearly explains the different component strategies including how they are implemented within the programme. There are also sections in the manual that include useful other related activities that could be used within a reciprocal teaching programme. These include an overview (with examples) of what an effective reciprocal teaching lesson might look like. Sample dialogues of a reciprocal teaching lesson are also helpful. Several useful photocopiable task sheets to help the teacher and students to follow the procedures are also included in the appendices section.

In general, this is a useful updated version of the original reciprocal teaching publications (and video) that many schools may be familiar with. Like any programme, reciprocal teaching is not the “silver bullet” and the author correctly notes that it is more suited to older students who may be good decoders but not good comprehenders of text. She also notes that the programme should only be used for short periods of time (e.g. up to 4 weeks). Finally, it is interesting to note that some researchers such as Carver (1987) have argued that the effects of reading comprehension training may be of limited use. This is because (as noted in Nicholson, 2005) these effects tend to extend only to comprehension of the particular passages that are explicitly used for the instruction and so ‘comprehension instruction is very good at producing better comprehension, but only of the material studied’ (p. 241). This could also sometimes be the case following a reciprocal teaching lesson as, the mere explicitness of the component strategies will, by their very presence, enable the students to better understand the particular text being studied. This of course is the aim of a good reciprocal teaching lesson but teachers should also be careful that the text studied (in the reciprocal teaching lesson) is not “washed dry” by having every paragraph “dissected to its last full stop”.

Provided teachers are aware of these concerns, a reciprocal teaching component is still a useful supplement to any middle/senior class teachers’ reading programme and this latest manual should be a helpful resource for those teachers who wish to enhance their teaching of reading comprehension strategy training.

REVIEWER PROFILE

Dr Keith Greaney is a senior lecturer in literacy education at Massey University College of Education, Palmerston North.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Title: Reciprocal teaching: A practical approach to improving reading comprehension skills (Revised Manual)
Author: Marie Kelly
Publication Date: 2008
Publisher: Kids Psychology Education and Learning
Price: $30 + $5 pp from www.kidzpsychology.co.nz
The book is written for an international audience and the author has not only consulted studies and publications from around the world, he has also drawn on his considerable experience working in a number of countries and across a range of cultural groups. The book also has applicability to a wide age range and across educational contexts.

What Really Works in Special Education: Using Evidence–Based Teaching Strategies is a valuable resource and should be part of the professional reading of any person working in special or inclusive education. However, its value is not limited to this group and the publication contains much that is relevant for all teachers.

REVIEWER PROFILE
Roger Mitchell is an Associate Professor and Deputy Dean of the University of Waikato School of Education and has a career-long interest in learners with special needs and learners with special abilities. Roger teaches, researches, publishes, presents and supervises in both inclusive and gifted education. He is co-editor of Learners with special needs in Aotearoa New Zealand and editor of Gifted and talented: New Zealand perspectives. His more recent research has focused on talent development across the lifespan. In 2005 Roger was awarded the Prime Ministers’ Supreme Award for Tertiary Teaching Excellence.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DATA
Title: What really works in special and inclusive education: Using evidence– based teaching strategies
Author: David Mitchell
Publication Date: 2007
Publisher: Routledge
Price: $60

1. What have been the highlights of the Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour Initiative for you?

The fact that we had the prototype in the Waikato and that there are still many of those original RTLBs working in schools is a highlight for me. The first guideline, known as the “blue book” originated out of this region. I was then privileged to lead the team that produced the RTLB Clusters Governance and Management folder which is the foundation for the current Policy and Toolkit.

The RTLB training saw many RTLB become “born again academics” and seems to have provided the starting point and motivation for ongoing academic study.

The New Zealand RTLB Association has been doing excellent work for RTLBs in the first decade and another highlight has certainly been the journal that celebrates RTLB work, Karamanu, which also originated from the Waikato.

2. What have been the surprises?

The continued misunderstanding of the RTLB role in some quarters has been surprising to me. After 10 years, everyone should know the role of the RTLB and how it should be delivered yet there are still people who put barriers in the way.

3. What are the challenges for the RTLB initiative?

Managing RTLB performance to evidence their good work. The Education Review Office showed where a team is managed properly then issues are sorted and don’t get in the way of a good service. RTLB were established with a flat structure and maybe it is a shame that we haven’t got a means for people to advance in their RTLB careers. Mitigating that is the fact that many RTLB have gone on to become deputy principals or principals and this has had a positive impact on schools.

4. How has the climate changed in Special Education and what are the implications for the future of Special Education and RTLB?

When we originally introduced the RTLB service it was to assist students with moderate learning and behaviour needs. The reality is more complex than what we had envisaged at the time and there is wide acceptance that RTLB are working with more severe learning and behaviour needs than was foreseen.

Fortunately, the RTLB knowledge base is huge and is enhanced by their thirst for learning and their commitment to helping teachers meet the needs of the students in their care.

5. What are the strengths of the RTLB service?

I believe that the biggest strength of the service is that it is school-based and that it established clusters of schools. This has enhanced the inter–relationships of schools and helped bridge some of the gaps between primary, intermediate and secondary. There have been good things happen where clusters have used the RTLB cluster as a base for other initiatives, for example, establishing administration networks, combined professional development, even enhancing relationships through sports days and common transition programmes – all based on the RTLB clusters.

6. There is a saying that there is nothing new in education. It has cycles that reflect a community’s perceptions of its immediate need. The RTLB initiative came out of a call for more inclusive education settings and the RTLB training was heavily weighted towards mainstreaming. Special Education 2000 spoke of a choice for parents of mainstreaming their children with special needs, or enrolling in special schools but with an undercurrent, if not fatal flip, of encouragement to mainstream. Do you think this is changing at all?

Parents think long and hard before making decisions about where to send their children to school, particularly when the children have special education needs. The parents of many Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Scheme students choose special education facilities for their children. Sadly, some schools resist having students who are “different”. This is evidenced in the number of students being stood down or excluded. It is hard to manage expectations of schools and parents when these expectations are not aligned. Schools may want many hours of teacher–aide support before they feel able to enrol a student, while some parents want their child to have as few hours as possible to reduce any perception of difference and is changing at all?

7. What do you think special education will look like in New Zealand in 50 years time? What do you think our children and grandchildren will demand of special education that our generation has overlooked?

I hope we are headed towards an era that increasingly recognises challenges and seeks to deal with them early. We should be starting in the early childhood centres and the first two years at school with the very best first learning opportunities we can manage. We should ensure that children have lots of chances to learn if they miss out the first time round. Early literacy and early learning has to be great. Every child needs to know how to read and have strategies for how to manage their behaviour; not remediating or being seen as remediating but giving them the best chance the first time round. I hope we don’t see a time when children miss out on
social interaction because they are solely learning online. I would like to see each school supported by its own resource team, including staff with expertise in literacy and behaviour, so schools can meet the needs of all their children with less need to call on outsiders. This could make for more ownership of problems and solutions. RTLBs are a step in the right direction for this level of school-based expertise.

INTERVIEWER PROFILE

Paul Mitchell

Paul Mitchell has just returned to working as an RTLB in Hamilton’s Fairfield Cluster, in Term three of this year. Prior to this Paul worked for two years for MOE Special Education as a Special Education Adviser in the area of severe behaviour. Paul was formerly an RTLB in the Huntly/Te Kauwhata Cluster and before this a principal in Central Otago and Huntly. Paul has been on the editorial board of Kairaranga since its inception. When he isn’t involved in producing musical theatre, Paul can be found sailing in the Hauraki Gulf.

Email paulrtlb@insoll.schoolzone.net.nz

INTERVIEWEE PROFILE

Judith Hickman

Judith Hickman is the Education Development Officer (Special Education), for the School Support Team at the Ministry of Education, Central North Region. Judith has worked with and for RTLB since the start of the initiative with the Waikato prototype in 1998. She has a passion for special education and RTLB, and her experience with students, families and schools has contributed to her expertise in effective strategies and teaching practices in special education. Judith’s professional background includes working as an Education Officer in the Department of Education, where she was a mother of four and grandmother of eight who spends much of her leisure time either reading or listening to music and is usually engaged in various forms of handwork.

Kairaranga Book Reviews

WHAT REALLY WORKS IN SPECIAL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: USING EVIDENCE–BASED TEACHING STRATEGIES

David Mitchell

In the preface to this book the author suggests that 10–15 percent of children in classrooms face significant barriers to their learning and development. The primary aim of the book is to help educators and the professionals who advise them to become more effective in teaching learners with special educational needs, whether in a special education setting or in a regular classroom (p. x). The publication contains a description and review of 24 teaching strategies, most of which will be very familiar to those working in special and inclusive education.

In this regard the book is not unique and publications in this field offering guidance to teachers and other professionals are numerous. However, what is useful about What Really Works in Special Education: Using Evidence–Based Teaching Strategies is captured in the title. In fact, this is a very clever title because it instantly sets this book apart from the plethora of texts in special and inclusive education. What the title signals, and what is distinctive about the book, is the weaving together of research and practice. Some special education texts are dominated by ideology, theory and research, often with only a gesture towards the application of these ideas into classroom practice. At the other extreme is an array of “how to” guides which present templates for teaching that can appear to offer the busy practitioner a ready–made solution to developing differentiated programmes. These “tools” frequently lack any evidence–based support and can represent crude and simplistic approaches to meeting individual needs.

Unfortunately, the outside cover of this book resembles more an academic text rather than a publication that those working in schools and classrooms might be drawn to peruse or purchase. However, once opened it is immediately apparent that this book is directed towards practitioners.

This book is timely, as the emphasis on evidence–based practice is consistent with international trends in both general and special education. The author defines evidence–based teaching strategies as, “Clearly specified teaching strategies that have been shown in controlled research to be effective in bringing about desired outcomes in a delineated population of learners” (p. 1). To be able to table in a definitive manner the relative merits of a range of strategies was a major undertaking. The author drew on 2,000 research articles from a wide range of countries but also drew on his own research and practice experience.

Special and inclusive education is a minefield philosophically and ideologically and many writers get bogged down here, sometimes to the extent that it constrains their ability to offer useful strategies to those at the “chalkface”. This author puts the learner and learning at the heart of the book, not ideology or theoretical constructs, an approach that will resonate with practitioners.

The introduction to the book provides a rationale for the terminology chosen in the book, an explanation of the criteria used to assess the relative merits of research in this field, an outline of the structure of the book, and some guidance as to how the practitioner–reader might use it. This section includes a very informative table where, on the horizontal axis, each of the 24 strategies is presented. The vertical axis presents outcome areas, such as general achievement, communication skills, self–control, determination and parent–child relationships. The areas where the implementation of a strategy has the potential to impact on the learner are highlighted.

In the first chapter, a learning and teaching model is outlined, which sets the scene for the teaching strategies that follow. The model is presented diagrammatically, which might be a challenge to interpret without the detailed explanation that accompanies it and numerical cross–referencing from the figure to the explanation. This is a distinctive feature of the book that could be considered to be the glue that binds all the strategies together; or the foundation on which all the strategies are built. Some readers might be tempted to pass over this section and go directly to the specific strategies, but this would be a mistake, as this is pivotal.

Chapters 3 to 26 deal with each of the 24 strategies. A real strength of this book is the consistent format across all strategies, which makes for ease of reference, the author’s stated reason for doing it. Each strategy is presented under the following headings:

1. The Strategy (a description and definition of the strategy).
2. The Underlying Idea (the theoretical basis for the strategy and a brief history of its development).
3. The Practice (an outline of its various applications and interpretations of the strategy – with examples).
4. The Evidence (a synopsis of the research into the strategy).
5. Addressing Risks (an indication of any issues associated with implementing the strategy, including ethical considerations).
Helping a Teenage Student with Developmental Delay to Read

Jocelyn Springerthorpe
HOD, Learning Support, Queen's High School, Dunedin

ABSTRACT
The focus of this study was to explore the extent to which electronic books based on personal experience and interest could develop reading skills in a teenage non-verbal student with developmental delay. Beginning with the premise that neurological and speech impairment was not necessarily a barrier to learning to read and by employing a positive belief system in the ability of the student to achieve, coupled with a whole-language approach to the teaching of reading, electronic books were constructed as the basis of the reading programme. Results showed gains in both formal and informal measures, including an increase in sight word recognition, attention to task, and task enjoyment.

Practice paper Keywords Developmental delay, neurological impairment, teenage student, non-verbal, whole-language approach, reading, electronic books

INTRODUCTION
Literacy is one of the greatest tools for successful living in our modern world and the right to be literate could be now argued as a basic human right. If this is true for individuals who have no difficulties can be taught how to improve their reading by using literacy skills are important for disabled students and despite a recommendation as early as 1988 from the New Zealand Department of Education for disabled individuals who are literate benefit over their non-literate peers in four ways (Erickson, Koppenhaver & Yoder, 1994). Firstly, there is a wider range of vocational opportunities for literate individuals with disabilities. Secondly, they are better equipped to engage in face-to-face interactions, particularly individuals who are non-verbal, as they have a means of self-expression. Literate individuals who are disabled are more accepted by their peers both disabled and non-disabled, and lastly, there are increased opportunities and higher expectations for literate individuals with disabilities.

Despite the argument that literacy skills are important for disabled and normally achieving students, the same is true for those with mild to severe intellectual disabilities whose reading skills are not well developed. Literacy is essential for maintaining human dignity in a print-rich society. It is a valuable source of information and imagination, of security and independence. The literate individual is at the mercy of the illiterate... (Smith & Eley, 1994).

Disabled individuals who are literate benefit over their non-literate peers in four ways (Erickson, Koppenhaver & Yoder, 1994). Firstly, there is a wider range of vocational opportunities for literate individuals with disabilities. Secondly, they are better equipped to engage in face-to-face interactions, particularly individuals who are non-verbal, as they have a means of self-expression. Literate individuals who are disabled are more accepted by their peers both disabled and non-disabled, and lastly, there are increased opportunities and higher expectations for literate individuals with disabilities.

Despite the argument that literacy skills are important for disabled students and despite a recommendation as early as 1988 from the New Zealand Department of Education for disabled students that they should be taught functional academic skills – the ability to read, write... (cited in Fraser, Moltzen & Ryba 2005, p. 281), the focus of education for these students is usually on functional life-skills such as self-care skills and social skills. Placing students predominantly in programmes where they have little exposure to written materials or to print-rich environments with no direct literacy instruction compounds the problem. The students' subsequent literacy failure may confirm a belief that literacy instruction for disabled students is pointless.

Kurtz (1995) argues that one of the biggest obstacles in developing literacy skills is the pervasive belief that persons with severe disabilities are incapable of learning to read. (p. 1). This is not new. Educators know the power of Pygmalion in the Classroom, where both improved and decreased intellectual performance was brought about by teacher expectation. Rosenthal and Jacobson’s (1968) closing observation that the teacher is ‘no casual passer-by’ (p. 182) is a moot point. As the students at Oak Hill School received no extra programmes, the research highlights how students can achieve more through teacher expectation alone. With this in mind, how much more could be gained if improvements were also made to teaching techniques? Belief that students with disabilities can learn to read and write underlies and is central to success. A positive belief system is a fundamental quality of educators and professionals working successfully in the literacy area with disabled students (King-DeBau, 2001).

In New Zealand, the teaching of reading uses a whole language approach. The focus is on reading for meaning from the outset and semantics (understanding of language), syntax (grammatical) and grapho-phonic (aspects of print) elements are taught primarily in the context of the text that the student is reading. It is a constructivist, student-centred approach, driven by the student’s interests and students are considered active participants in the learning process.

However, some students do experience difficulty in learning to read and there is not one simple solution that addresses the difficulties. A reading difficulty in itself is not necessarily tied to a neurological impairment. Some students with neurological impairments do successfully become readers (Clay, 1987; Gipe, Duffy & Richards, 1993), Addressing reading difficulties usually follows one of two paradigms: the “deficit”, medical model, or the strengths-based, ecological model. The deficit model begins by considering the skills that are lacking in order to make up the deficit. This type of teaching is driven by the teacher’s concept of what the individual with particular patterns of responding slowly and gradually from where he or she is to towards the fully-operate model of normal reading behaviours which is the goal. The model works on the assumption that strengths must be enlisted to support whatever is difficult and that
what is difficult has to be learned. Teaching ingenuity adapted to pupil peculiarities is called for (p. 167).

Her view is supported by Turner and Chapman (2005), who conclude, “There is some evidence that students who experience unusual difficulties in learning to read … but eventually succeed in reading in a fundamentally different manner than normally developing beginning readers” (pp. 252–253).

Students with speech and communication difficulties are denied the speech practice and experience they need to develop their oral language abilities and engage in conversation with others. Their thoughts and feelings remain internalised with no functional way of expression. Their voice is unheard. For non-speaking individuals, the semantic, syntactic, and grapho- phonetic systems are all underdeveloped (Gipe, et al., 1993). Students with speech impairments in oral language are more likely to have reading problems than those with an adequate command of oral language (Turner & Chapman, 2005). In teaching a non-speaking disabled adult student to read, Gipe et al. (1993) used a strengths-based whole-language approach. Focusing on the interests of the student and using a computer to develop resources, they constructed an individual reading and writing programme for a non-verbal disabled adult with cerebral palsy. For one hour a day over a three year period, and for a total of 180 hours of instruction, the student participated actively in his learning by directing the programme due to the student’s oral language deficits. He displayed a lack of letter and word concepts, and although he successfully learned to read, reading in context remained a more developed skill than reading words in isolation.

His work was truly self-centred. He learnt to read and write using the computer just as a young child learns from interacting with print in his daily environment (p. 38).

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is an effective tool for literacy development. It is not a means of teaching reading or writing skills, but provides a compensatory approach by bypassing the disability and building on strengths. It provides a means of opening the channels of communication for individuals who need help. It helps to provide access to learning through a different medium of presentation and it can be a tool to develop the particular resources needed to suit the individual “peculiarities” of the student’s learning programme, particularly through the use of digital photos. Students of engaged in activities provide a record of authentic learning situations and individual books based on personal experiences and interests, everyday life and communication topics are very powerful tools for learning (Bird, Beadman & Buckley, 2001; Gipe et al., 1993; King-DeBau, 2008).

The overall aim of using ICT in special education is to enhance opportunities for education through participation with others. ICT is a powerful tool in developing the self-esteem of learners with disabilities. ICT can contribute to positive learning opportunities through the use of digital photos. Students of engaged in activities provide a record of authentic learning situations and individual books based on personal experiences and interests, everyday life and communication topics are very powerful tools for learning (Bird, Beadman & Buckley, 2001; Gipe et al., 1993; King-DeBau, 2008).

ICT contributes towards a positive belief system for both student and teacher. By opening the doorway to success in developing the potential of students with disabilities, ICT is a powerful tool in developing the self-esteem of learners with disabilities. ICT can contribute to positive learning opportunities through the use of digital photos. Students of engaged in activities provide a record of authentic learning situations and individual books based on personal experiences and interests, everyday life and communication topics are very powerful tools for learning (Bird, Beadman & Buckley, 2001; Gipe et al., 1993; King-DeBau, 2008).

Yet the use of ICT in enhancing reading performance has a limited research base (Grieb, 2008). More work needs to be done on the conceptual understandings of the role of ICT and the range of technologies available to improve reading ability, in order to better inform policy and practice.

In this study, PowerPoint™ was used to create reading books to help an adolescent student with speech and communication difficulties to read. PowerPoint™ is an easily accessible programme, common on both home and school computers. It is easy to use, can be used and can be successfully navigated by a student with intellectual disabilities.

The second concern related to the low correction rates of the students’ spelling errors made in the stories. Even where the words had been identified as incorrect, many of them were still not corrected even during the final day when they had been specifically asked to check through, identify any errors and to make any changes. Of particular concern were the uncorrected words that had appeared in the Timed Spell–Write test. In the Timed Spell–Write, the number of spelling errors that remained uncorrected demonstrated that an few students had made use of the text to help with the correct spellings.

Finally, the results of this study demonstrate that the students had significant problems with the spelling patterns in the medial parts of words. This is an area for testing as many older students with reading difficulties have problems with the medial sound (Katz, 1990). The students had problems with many of the words had been identified as incorrect, many of them were still not corrected even during the final day when they had been specifically asked to check through, identify any errors and to make any changes. Of particular concern were the uncorrected words that had appeared in the Timed Spell–Write test. In the Timed Spell–Write, the number of spelling errors that remained uncorrected demonstrated that an few students had made use of the text to help with the correct spellings.

While advocates of phonetic spelling programmes would be satisfied with errors that contain phonetically acceptable spellings (and nearly 50% of all the errors fell into this category), the data from this study demonstrates that many students rely heavily on this level of presentation even at year 8 level. It is therefore highly likely that these older students will remain phonetic spellers into adulthood unless they are given effective strategies for overcoming these problems. It is suggested therefore that spelling interventions that focus on the larger unit awareness in words may be more beneficial for students with spelling problems than interventions that don’t focus on such awareness.

This statement suggests that each student’s programme requirements (in terms of learning to spell) should be satisfied through their own writing requirements and nothing else. Teachers who adhere to this rather narrow view of their students’ spelling needs will be less likely to introduce their students to the wide array of spelling problems that would teachers who follow a more explicit and structured phonological-based programme that focuses on introducing students to the issues demonstrated in the current study.

CONCLUSION Students who are learning to spell in English are presented with many challenges. While several researchers argue that the irregularity of the orthography is the main problem, there is an acceptance that there is in fact, a marked orthographic and phonological regularity than was first thought (Keeler & Treiman, 2003). Although the retention of foreign spellings often causes many of the irregularity problems associated with English orthography, Hayes, Kessler and Treiman (2004) maintain that such things as other kinds of regularities in spelling that provide a great deal of information about words (p. 9). Some of these regularities include the vowel blends, digraphs, and trigraphs, however, as Hayes, et al. (2004) further note that if the sounds around the vowel are taken into consideration, the vowel’s spelling often becomes more consistent. If the beginning consonant context is taken into account, average vowel consistency increases from .53 to .65 (p. 9).

A teaching focus that encourages an awareness of larger units (e.g. vowel digraphs, vowel blends, consonant blends) when spelling, is one that would be well suited to the learning needs of this student. This is best complimented when followed by instruction in morphological patterns such as prefixes and suffixes (Henry, 2003).

Finally, if teachers use students’ spelling errors as indicators of larger orthographic unit awareness (or lack of), then they are likely to develop more focused spelling instruction. Conversely, teachers who are only interested in whether the word was spelled correctly, or whether the spelling attempt phonetically acceptable, will be less inclined to develop a spelling intervention that focuses on the relevant components that cause the problems. As Moats (2005) states, “Developmental studies suggest that individual sounds and letters, letter sequences, syllables and their combinations, and knowledge of prefixes, roots, suffixes, are all targets for good spelling instruction” (p. 15). This study demonstrated that the students had problems with many of these particular units within the words that they had spelled incorrectly, and that these errors could use such knowledge as a basis for formulating more focused spelling interventions.

REFERENCES


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Winning educational threads. Winning educational practice.
She independently increased the amount of time she could concentrate on reading activities before requesting a break. A third gain was her increased attention to print and desire to practice the lowercase letter for her name. Over the course of the study she began to independently “write” on her work and “read” her books on the teacher’s laptop and also on the interactive whiteboard. Electronic copies of the books were sent by data stick for home reading as were hard copies. Although attention to task was not monitored, a perseverance in constructing and “reading” her books improved noticeably from the outset. Her teacher had intended to use a series of timers to increase attention span but these were not needed. Sight words of family members’ names and some words from the texts were printed for matching games, but A showed no interest in any attempt to “write” other than to practice the lowercase letter for her name. Over the course of the study she began independently “write” on her work and also gave her teacher “notes” on various occasions.

In order to continue on the journey of helping A to read, the next steps will be to 통해서 more frequent reading sessions and to do this in both group and individual situations. Reading orally is a new and difficult skill for A. Speaking full sentences is not part of her usual language use, and it is not possible to take running records of her reading ability as with a regular student. Therefore, providing a means for A to write would be the most effective way of ascertaining and consolidating her reading skills and an application for a concept keyboard is under way.

The whole-language approach is the most effective means of teaching reading to students like A with a neurological impairment and speech and communication difficulties. As Clay (1987) observes, successful techniques in this approach are more often the result of teacher ingenuity to meet the particularities of the student; rather than following a set programme of skill identification and acquisition. Disabled individuals with speech and communication difficulties must have opportunity to acquire literacy skills in order to lead independent and successful lives in the community. They need opportunities to express their opinions, their imaginations and at the very least, make their needs known to others. Much more work must be done to make this a reality.

Unless more researchers from more disciplines take a greater interest in the pressing problems faced by individuals with developmental disabilities as they attempt to learn to read and write, breakthroughs in understanding and methods are likely to be few and far between (Erickson et al., 1994, p. 1).

REFERENCES
Further analyses of spelling error types were also undertaken to investigate the occurrence of the positional locations of the spelling error patterns and the main categories of recurring spelling errors.

RESULTS

Spelling errors identified and corrected

The data in Table 2 summarise the mean word writing performances and spelling error status by gender and year level for the samples.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean total words</td>
<td>127.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total spelling errors</td>
<td>9.9 (6.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean errors identified</td>
<td>2.5 (2.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean errors corrected</td>
<td>1.4 (1.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As would be expected, the year 8 cohorts (both boys and girls) wrote longer passages of text than the year 4 groups. Furthermore, the girls in both year groups wrote longer stories than the boys. The spelling errors per story ranged from 8.9 for year 4 boys to 5 errors for the year 8 girls. The mean number of these spelling errors that were identified per story ranged from 2.5 for year 4 boys to 1.3 for both year 8 groups. The number of mean total spelling errors that were corrected was similar for all four groups ranging from 1.4 for year 4 boys to 1.0 for both year 8 groups.

Spelling errors of words in Spell–Write

While the students made several different types of errors including the misspelling of place names (e.g., names of countries) and people's names, these particular errors were not subjected to analyses in this study. However, many of the errors were also words that appeared in the Spell–Write text, and these were analysed as a separate sub-set of errors. The results in Table 3 summarise the data from the errors appearing in the Spell–Write text.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total spelling errors</td>
<td>572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total errors</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spell–Write</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total errors</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spell–Write errors</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified</td>
<td>(25.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified errors corrected</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Errors</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Errors corrected</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in Table 3 show that, for all cohorts, most of their spelling errors were words that appeared in the Spell–Write dictionary. This was important because opportunities for these errors to be corrected should/would have been greatly enhanced as each student wrote a personal copy of Spell–Write (and reminded to use it) during the corrections/alterations phase of the writing task. However, before any spelling error is corrected it must first be identified by the writer as an error. If the writer does not identify his/her errors, then it would not be expected that they would be corrected. To assist in this task the students were asked to use a different colour pen (e.g., red) to make any corrections and alterations on the final day of the writing activity. The use of the different coloured pen made the subsequent editing more readily transparent, and it enabled an in-depth analysis of both the level of error identification and the subsequent levels of correction rates (if any).

In all four cohorts, over 80% of the spelling errors were words that also appeared in Spell–Write. This number ranged from 87% for year 4 girls to 81% for year 8 girls. However, the percentage of these words that were corrected ranged from 29% (year 4 girls) to 21% (year 8 boys). Although most of these words were identified as errors (e.g., by being underlined, circled or as second spelling attempts) at the editing stage, this “identification” stage offered no guarantee though the dictionary was available. The results identified many of the spelling errors that were identified and subsequently corrected from the Spell–Write dictionary was available. The results showed that 86% of the identified spelling errors made by the year 8 girls had been subsequently corrected from Spell–Write (versus 62% for year 8 boys). However, this percentage was lower for the year 4 students (62% for year 4 boys versus 53% for year 4 girls). This finding demonstrated that for the older students, their identified spelling errors (that also appeared in Spell–Write), were generally more likely to have been corrected than were the similar errors made by the year 4 students.

Analysis of spelling error types

The analysis of the spelling errors that students make enables teachers to see where particular problems occur. A common practice in many schools is for teachers to assess spelling ability that is based solely on whether words are correctly spelled or not, with no credit given for correct parts or spelling ability that is based solely on whether words are correctly spelled or not, with no credit given for correct parts or spelling patterns. However, if teachers are able to view each error as a common error pattern that exists, they can help the teacher to identify what particular parts of the target words cause problems for the writer. Such information would also assist the teacher to develop more focused spelling interventions. The spelling errors were also analysed to indicate the extent to which the graphemes were positionally correct (for example, in either the initial, medial or final positions). The data in Table 4 presents some representative examples of the different phoneme and grapheme analyses that were used in the study.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This paper was written as part of her course work.
8 students that occurred during a free-writing task given as part of the 2006 NEMP writing assessment cycle.

Procedures of the NEMP task

The Expository Writing Task: A Day I’ll Never Forget

The NEMP administration of this writing task was presented over a three-day period. On Day 1 the students were shown a short video clip of a film called the book before starting an expository writing task. The video clip was used as motivation for the writing task. The following instructions were given for Day 1:

1. Today you are going to think about and plan what you will be writing.
2. We’ll start by watching a video which will help you get started. It shows some times that are special to people, and should help you start thinking about times that are special to you. Your writing is to be about a day you’ll never forget.
3. I’m going to give you your booklets and today you will have time to do your writing (Crooks et al., 2007, p. 16).

The students were allowed 20 minutes to write their accounts for this task.

On the third day the following instructions were given:

1. Yesterday you did some writing. Today you are to check it through very carefully and make any changes or improvements that you think should be made. If you want, you can also use a Spell-Write (Crooks et al., 2007, p. 16).
2. The students were allowed 10 minutes for the completion of this task.

ABSTRACT

This is a two-year journey of action research at Hohepa School from 2006 to 2008. In 2006 we began the task of establishing an action research project. The aim was to provide evidence of positive outcomes of the therapies provided to students at Hohepa. The whole journey unfolded in three main phases. The first phase was the development of the research question and adapting our assessment tools. The second phase involved implementing changes to our assessment methods and monitoring the students and ourselves during four subsequent action research cycles. The third phase was the evaluation of data and anecdotal and observational notes, and evaluating our changes. This journey has become more reflective as practitioners and enhanced our therapeutic skills, thereby improving the learning outcomes of our students.

Research Keywords

Action research, assessment, intellectual disability, Steiner therapies

INTRODUCTION

This article describes a two-year journey of action research at Hohepa School in Aotearoa New Zealand. The school provides residential education and care for children and young people with an intellectual disability. Our programmes are based on the principles of Steiner education, as established by Rudolf Steiner (Trousdel, 2006). Cornerstones of this education are a holistic philosophy of life and a creative artistic approach to teaching and learning (Bemford-Wood, 2005). In addition to the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) and the curriculum followed in Steiner schools in Aotearoa New Zealand. Hohepa students are offered a range of therapies to support their physical, psychological and mental well-being. The ultimate aim of these therapies is to support and promote positive learning outcomes for students in the classroom.

The therapies provided at Hohepa are art, music, speech and communication, nursing therapies and eurythmy (physical movement), and these were the focus of this research. It did not include other therapies such as occupational therapy as the school has only recently introduced such support recently. Each specialist/therapist has considerable experience in their discipline and is recognised both in New Zealand and overseas as leaders in their various therapeutic disciplines. The titles of therapist and specialist are both used at Hohepa as the therapeutic team comprises those with recognised therapist qualifications or professional registration, as well as those with considerable experience as specialists in their fields of therapy.

OUR CHALLENGE

The impetus for beginning the project came initially in 2006 from the Ministry of Education, Group Special Education (GSE). The agency asked the school, as a fund-holder, to provide evidence of outcomes of the therapies at Hohepa. Evidence–based outcomes need to be directly related to the students’ learning goals as recorded in the Individual Educational Plans (IEP). At first this seemed to be a daunting task. Where would we start? How could we produce this evidence? How much extra work would this involve as we were already very busy? At the same time as GSE raised the matter of outcomes with us, our Principal, Gabe Jansen, attended a workshop held by Professor Barry Carpenter, Chief Executive from Sunfield School in Worcester, United Kingdom. Professor Carpenter, who was visiting New Zealand in 2006, ran seminars describing how Sunfield, working with students with disabilities, had built up a culture of research and how evidence-based practice had become their core way of working. Sunfield School teachers make extensive use of action research as well as collecting quantitative data on the progress of their students (Carpenter, 2007).

From the beginning we began to gather evidence from the literature on curative therapeutic practice. Although this has been limited in the past, there is now a growing literature base, much of which is written and published in German, Dutch and English. References to curative therapies research are found in the medical literature as these approaches are increasingly being used in the fields of behaviour and trauma management, and mental health. Examples include: Ostermann, Blaser, Bertram, Mathiessens & Kroll (2008); Huber, Wesscher & Ludlín (2007); Thekelsen (2003); Cysarz, von Bonin, Lackner, Heusser, Moser & Bettmann (2004); Bettmann, von Bonin, Fischer, Cysarz, & Moser (2002); and Harres, Nimmer & Glückmann, Zöllner, Willich & Kene (2007a, 2007b). An international bibliography and annotated bibliography in Harres, Moser & Glückmann (2004) was another useful source. We are fortunate to have several native speakers of German on our team who were able to translate and interpret the literature.

We were challenged to re-examine how we could collect assessment data that could clearly demonstrate our students progress at Hohepa. We were very fortunate that we had the help of an experienced researcher, Dr Diana Mara. We were able to work as a researcher/facilitator. The approach Dr Mara recommended we use to explore our practice has been used successfully in the Ministry of Education’s Centre of Innovation (COI) projects in early childhood education centres (Maede, 2006) and in a Pasifka early childhood centre (Mara & Burgess, 2007).

THE BEGINNINGS

During our first meetings in 2007 with Dr Mara it became clear that we would be able to establish a positive and professional working relationship as a team. She was clear that as a researcher/facilitator she would travel the journey alongside us.
An Analysis of Year 4 and Year 8 Spelling Errors from an Expressive Writing Task in the 2006 National Education Monitoring Project

Dr Keith Grenaney and Dr Alison Arrow
Massey University College of Education, Palmerston North

ABSTRACT

Although the assessment and teaching of specific spelling skills seems to have received less attention than many other aspects of writing. A sample of 116 year 4 and 113 year 8 students was identified that were invited to an on-study writing task in the 2006 National Education Monitoring Project Writing Report were analysed in this study. The analysis included the extent to which the students were able (or prepared) to identify their errors and to subsequently correct them after consulting a Spell-Write dictionary. Analysis was also undertaken to identify the particular spelling units that had caused the most problems for the students. The results from this study suggest that teachers could gain useful knowledge about students’ spelling abilities if they use their error responses as an indicator of future learning needs.

Research Keywords

Spelling, NEMP

INTRODUCTION

Even though spelling is a prerequisite for being a literate person, it has not received much attention as reading, both in terms of research studies and instructional recommendations that follow from research findings. (Joshi & Aaron 2005, p. 1).

Joshi and Aaron (2005) suggest that there are three possible reasons why spelling research has not received much attention. They suggest that correct spelling may be facilitated through such devices as computer spell-checking functions, which don’t require accurate knowledge. The third reason cited for a possible lack of research into spelling issues relates to another erroneous belief that English spelling conventions are based on a chaotic and irregular orthography which makes instruction appear rather pointless. While there may be some elements of truth underlying each of these claims, there is convergent research that provides support for the explicit teaching of spelling skills (Rittle-Johnson & Siegel, 1999; Templeton & Morris, 1999).

Spelling ability development

Several researchers argue that spelling ability is not based entirely on rote visual memory but rather on an understanding of several characteristics of words including the orthographic phoneme–grapheme and syllabic representation, the meaning–based morphemic components, and a general familiarity with the visual representation of the words (Bram, 1996; Bram & Hatte, 1995; Ehri, 1997). On the other hand, to spell irregular words where sounds may be represented by combinations of two or more letters (e.g. h = su or sa for house, n + i + g = for grain) requires lexical knowledge of larger spelling units. However, a compound problem with many irregular spelling patterns is that there is often more than one way to spell a particular sound (e.g. late, wait, weight, great etc) and the writer must be able to recognize which is the correct spelling for the word. Selecting the wrong spelling pattern (e.g. write for wait or great for grains) is a common problem with many spellings. In these particular errors, the spellings may have acceptable phonemic representations but are still incorrect.

Teaching of spelling in New Zealand

Bram and Hatte (1996) argue that much research has demonstrated that while more attention should be given to developing phonological-based spelling programmes, most teachers are reluctant to do so. In their survey of 110 primary school teachers’ perceptions of effective spelling programmes, the authors found that only junior level teachers were likely to incorporate aspects of research-based best practices into their spelling. Bram and Hatte (1996) conclude: The junior teachers were far more aware of the phoneme analyses that underpin successful spelling strategies, whereas their more senior peers tended to believe that spelling was a consequence of storing words from reading, learning from errors, and having visual recognition of spelling words (p. 10).

Teaching strategies based on these latter assumptions usually included the rule learning of lists of morphologically and orthographically unrelated words in preparation for a weekly test. As a result, it may be assumed that there is recognition of the need to assess spelling ability at higher primary school levels.

Assessment of spelling

Teachers are also likely to have used similar assessments of the students’ spelling abilities if they analyze the spelling errors in order to see whether the written spellings are a reasonable and consistent representation of the written spellings. The early spelling attempts of very young children may be rather haphazard and lack consistency. The spelling approximations made by older primary school grade 4 students are seldom so (Steff El, Talkington, Friessen & Treiman, 1991). An analysis of the spelling errors made by older (e.g. year 4 and above) children enables an insight into their particular strengths and weaknesses at the phonemic and morphemic levels of word knowledge. This paper focuses on the spelling errors from a sample of year 4 and year
In cycles three and four we did not change the two rating scales because we were more confident that these were robust enough to show change over time for each of the students in the therapies. Also, our ease of making judgments and our own teaching practice, experience with the assessment tool and students’ responses to our teaching methods, and the recording ratings was improving daily. In the nursing therapies, however, we added measures of changes in pulse rate, physiological indicators, relaxation (instead of achievement), and because we could record and plot quantitative indicators to account for the unique nature of the nursing therapies and because we could record and plot quantitative indicators of progress and change across the school term (Figure 3).

**Student Ratings Scales for Cycle One: Therapies**

Table 1: Rating scale for cycle one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>No engagement with activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Minimal engagement, responding only in response to prompting or modelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Engages actively with activity, responds appropriately, and consistently to instructions, initiates without prompting or modelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Average engagement, responding to therapist instruction, attempts to initiate in response to prompting or modelling, achieves task to a fair level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Increasing periods of meaningful engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Responsive achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Experiences own successful achievement to good level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ratings Scales for Nursing Therapies 2008**

Table 2: Rating scale for cycle one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>No relaxation observed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Brief initial relaxation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Begins to relax minimally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Increasing periods of relaxation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Periods of deeper relaxation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Increasing periods of sustained relaxation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Relaxation achieved to a very good level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Relaxation Response Rating Scale**

<table>
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<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Increasing periods of sustained relaxation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Relaxation achieved to a very good level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Food and Drink**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pulse rate before and after therapy**

Figure 3: Ratings for nursing therapies.

After the fourth cycle, Dr Mara collated and analysed all the data and results for each student within each therapy. Results were graphed and showed that across the therapies all but one of the 30 plus students in the overall research study showed positive progress even though in some cases these were very small gains.

The following graph shows results from two therapies: eurythmy and nursing over a period of one school term for a selection of individual students.
relevant staff and appreciated their contributions to the school and the children.

We have always asserted that quantitative assessment data on its own does not give a full picture of our students. Our research and eager to be involved with language work. Participants did not notice as yet any unintended outcomes of their work with the students as a direct result of the LRC course they attended.

We think that the key elements of the action research method were fully realised by our team. The demands we placed on ourselves over the four school terms to make ratings of each student’s engagement and achievement in each session helped us to perform in different school terms. Disciplined monitoring, documenting, reflecting, then making changes was initially a challenge for our team. We had to reconcile our philosophical, holistic, artistic and aesthetic beliefs about teaching and learning with what we perceived initially as a mechanistic and reductionist approach to the understanding and recording of our students’ overall development and wellbeing.

We have always asserted that quantitative assessment data on its own does not give a full picture of our students. Our research has helped us develop a new assessment tool that supplements the other methods (observational anecdotal notes and the (TP) documentation) we were using previously to collect evidence of learning. Moreover, “fit” us, our students at Hikopa, our professional practice: we “own” it and make it work for our students.

Action research, being a practitioner-led, dynamic, cyclical process had a positive effect on us and our work, including gaining a deeper understanding and appreciation across therapists of what we each contribute to our students. The analysis of our data and reflections after each cycle were used directly to plan and implement the next action research cycle and in some instances to modify our therapeutic practices. This was evidenced in our team meeting notes and in reflective journal entries.

The data showed that participants were generally very satisfied with the quality, usefulness, and organisation of the workshop.

Three participants stated the course did make a difference in their professional practice and in their quality of work, whilst two stated they had been doing many of the activities that were given at the course already and that it was not new.

All participants reported that the course did improve their daily work in the classrooms with their students. Students were more engaged and motivated to interact with the resources/materials and eager to be involved with language work. Participants did not notice as yet any unintended outcomes of their work with the students as a direct result of the LRC course they attended. Two participants reported that a follow-up activity from the course would be useful whilst three others did not think so.

The development of the rating scales also pinpointed differences between the therapies. Although there were common overarching principles of engagement and achievement, we began to see how these could be evidenced differently according to the therapeutic aims and methods.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Quality of feedback | Practice balance | Commitment about right | Relevance and usefulness | Moderate | High-

| Opportunity to lead | Good | Adequate | Inadequate |

Based on Guskey’s (2002) five levels of an effective PD programme, SE’s PD programme on Language–Rich Classrooms appears to comply with four levels but has yet to fully address the fifth level (student outcomes). Guskey (2002) identifies the fifth level as the most important and when planning a PD programme you should start with this level and work backwards.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

LRC course/workshop organized by GSE-Wakatipu as a PD programme appears to have achieved positive results as an effective PD programme for school staff in the Wakatipu. It did create an impact on all the participants of the course, however the outcome of the PD programme based on Guskey’s (2002) fifth critical level has not been sufficiently achieved. As this is the most critical part of any PD programme according to Guskey (1999), the GSE PD planning team could focus more on student outcomes when they start to plan for 2009 PD programmes at GSE Wakatipu. This may be undertaken by consulting school staff through questionnaires and random school visits by SE staff interviewing teachers and by observing student needs/ performance in learning.

REFERENCES

The present study on the PD course conducted by SE Wakato focuses on the impact of the programme on the participants and the outcome of the PD programme on the students. It is important in that the impact of the PD programme guides the improvement on all aspects of the programme including the design, implementation and follow-up (Guiseley, 2002). Student’s outcomes can also be used to measure the aims and objectives of the course and also estimate the cost of effectiveness of the PD. This is referred to as “return on investment” (Ferry, 1996) or ROI evaluation.

 METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

This research involves a mixed-method approach involving quantitative and qualitative analysis of participants’ responses to the PD programme they have attended. Six methods were used to collect data, namely analysing the evaluation sheets, interviewing participants of the course, interviewing the presenters of the course, interviewing the team leader of the PD programme at GSE Waikato, examining the materials provided during the course and brief classroom observations. All interviews were audio-taped with consent. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended. By using a mixed method the likelihood of reliability and validity is enhanced (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

This small piece of research involved triangulation of data by course materials review, face-to-face interviews and analysis of the course evaluation sheets. Up to July 2008, GSE Waikato has conducted 14 PD courses on various topics for staff in the Waikato district.

SUMMARY OF DATA

The results of the outcome measures are as follows:

Analysis of participant evaluation sheets (n=15): There were a total of 15 participants who attended the workshop.

Figure 1. Participants’ overall satisfaction. Participants rated for overall satisfaction of the course an average of 8.3 out of a possible 10.

Figure 1 gives the overall satisfaction rating for the course attended by the participants. The majority of the participants were satisfied with the PD workshop.

The following table summarises 14 participant responses to an evaluation questionnaire after the workshop.

Hence the modifications to the Nursing Therapy Scales and progress data were made:

28/08 (Cycle Three): “Decided to use Daily Assessment Form that the other therapists use. Not really tailor-made for Nursing Therapy but will see how it goes.”

4/2008 (Cycle Three): “Have amended rating scale. A–J (engagement scale) becomes presence/participation (achievement scale). From 1.0 becomes relaxation/response. Will see how it works. Will give overall rating for each session.”

13/2008 (Cycle Three): “Documenting pulse rate pre- and post-therapy. Not so much change. Thought there would be a clearer reduction post-therapy.”

When planning a PD programme to improve student learning Guiseley (2002) suggests that the order of the above levels must be reversed. Student learning outcomes are the start of Guiseley’s “bottom line” of effective professional development approach. The recent best evidence synthesis (BES) document above focuses on this and provides evidence on the need to develop this further.

Brown (2004) and Guiseley (2002) provide good guidelines for effective PD planning and evaluation although Guiseley appears to show more rigor to the process by introducing a clearer framework on the levels of evaluation.

A recent publication from the New Zealand Ministry of Education on Teacher Professional Learning and Development authored by Thompson, Wilson, Barr, and Fung (2007) states that “opportunities for teachers to engage in professional learning and development can have a substantial impact on student learning” (p. vii). This is a positive document highlighting the BES Iteration Programme what works and does not work in professional learning and development. These authors do caution that what is known to be effective may not always be what is practiced, and that extended opportunities to learn may not be more effective than a one-off opportunity.

Guiseley (2003) provides a decisive statement that helping teachers to understand more deeply the content they teach and the ways students learn this content appears to be a crucial dimension of effective PD. To some degree the PD courses conducted at SE Wakato appear to be following this direction (SE PD programme booklet, 2008). For results-oriented PD, Guiseley (1994) suggests the optimal mix of effective practices. This he refers to as the collection of a variety of PD processes and technologies that could work well in different contexts. For best practices he provides some procedural guidelines which are as follows:

• recognise that change is both an individual and organisational process
• think big but start small

work in teams to maintain support
• include processes to help students gather results
• provide continued follow-up and support
• integrate programme.

In May 2008, Alfred presented our paper and PowerPoint™ presentation to the Medical Section at the Goetheanum, Domach, Switzerland, World Conference for Eurythmy Therapy. This enabled us to make some international links and it was interesting to note the growth in evidence-based research including course evaluation sheets. Up to July 2008, GSE Waikato has conducted 14 PD courses on various topics for staff in the Waikato district.

...
Programme Evaluation of Language–Rich Classrooms

Sandyiao Sebastian

ABSTRACT
Ministry of Education/Special Education (MoE/SE) in Hamilton, Waikato has been conducting Professional Development (PD) programmes since 2003. For the purposes of an assignment for Massey University for the Postgraduate Certificate in Educational Psychology, an evaluation was undertaken of a PD programme conducted by MoE/SE Hamilton: Language–Rich Classrooms Workshop was chosen. The work of Guskey (1994) and Brown (2004) on programme evaluation, highlighted the need for a systematic investigation of the value and merit of a PD programme.

Based on the findings it is apparent that the Language–Rich Classrooms Workshop did achieve positive results in the main as an effective PD programme for school staff in the Waikato.

However, the outcome of the programme based on Guskey’s (2002) fifth critical level which was “student outcomes” was not sufficiently achieved. The need to consult school staff adequately and observing student needs and performance in learning appears to be a crucial requirement for effective PD programmes.

The contents of the workshop/programme as indicated in the Group Special Education Waikato courses booklet (2008) and Brown (2004) on programme evaluation, highlighted the need for a systematic investigation of the value and merit of a PD programme.

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The contents of the workshop/programme as indicated in the Group Special Education Waikato courses booklet (2008)
Swearing is an ubiquitous part of our modern world and something we abhor when we hear too much of it, and yet do ourselves! Understanding the evolution of swear words gives useful insights into the way language changes over time. Swearing also reflects important differences between the ways spoken and written texts relate to situational and social contexts. Competence of use of any word, particularly of swear words, involves learning very complex and shifting rules for what words “work” in a particular context and what the social repercussions are for a particular choice of word.

ABSTRACT

Swearing is an ubiquitous part of our modern world and something we abhor when we hear too much of it, and yet do ourselves! Understanding the evolution of swear words gives useful insights into the way language changes over time. Swearing also reflects important differences between the ways spoken and written texts relate to situational and social contexts. Competence of use of any word, particularly of swear words, involves learning very complex and shifting rules for what words “work” in a particular context and what the social repercussions are for a particular choice of word.

INTRODUCTION

Do you love swearing, or do you hate it? More importantly, do you swear? Swear words have the power to shock, to wound, to “push our buttons”, yet surprisingly they can also remind us of some important aspects of how we use words generally in spoken interaction. They can remind us that language is always changing and reflects the cultural mores of an age. Swear words can remind us of the power of context (people, places, circumstances) in shaping how the meaning of words is understood. They also remind us of the vital importance of intonation, timing and volume in shaping word meaning in interaction.

I SWEAR, IT'S A FASCINATION FOR ME

My interest in swearing stems from a fascination for the phonetic aspects of swearing (high proportion of fricatives and velar plosives give swear words plenty of phonetic punch) and from my research interest in spoken interaction.

At a more personal level, I belong to a generation of women born in the 1960s who took to swearing with something approaching relish. Where women of my mother’s generation had very clear ideas about the relationship between swearing and personal character, these boundaries are now much more blurred. Women of all educational and social backgrounds have greater freedom when it comes to swearing than was true even 20 years ago.

At the same time, I get increasingly annoyed at the tedious frequency of swearing in public domains, for example trains, streets, school playgrounds and television! I am concerned about how current rates of swearing in public contexts will impact on the development of important social ideas such as “respect” and “community”, and yet I am forced to reconcile my own, albeit modest, swearing habits with these concerns.

In 2007, we occasionally saw swear words in print, with and without symbols such as “**” that only partially hide the full shape of the word! Swearing is most common in spoken interaction with others, or in talk to oneself. It is one of the very few aspects of language that is so heavily weighted towards the spoken. As such, swearing presents a timely reminder of the multiple ways in which spoken language is shaped by context and by the relationship between speaker and listener.

I SWEAR, THE DEFINITIONS HAVE CHANGED

Most definitions of swearing revolve around the use of taboo words in any given language and culture. Taboos vary between cultures and even between groups within cultures and they are important in defining what sort of behaviour is acceptable within what is considered a swear word also changes. Words that my grandmother would have counted as “swearing” would no longer get much attention. Broadly speaking, swearing relates primarily to three taboo areas in Anglo–Celtic cultures: sexual activity; bodily functions and religious beliefs. As taboos about religious taboos

Religious taboos

The use of religious terms in swearing no longer hold the features of swearing. Another word for swearing is profanity. The word "profane" comes from the Latin word meaning "outside the temple". From a historical perspective, many swear words can be related back to the use of religious terms “outside the temple” or outside of a religious context. When I look, in 2009, at these “profanities”, I wonder at how their use “outside the temple” could ever have shocked anyone. Looking further, I find the sheer creativity of English speakers around the world in devising ways to mask the true nature of the words being used and I see the power of these words in a different way. By subtly changing the sound or shape of the original, the use masks, to some extent, the word’s origin and thus avoids the “taboo” associated with the use of these words outside a religious context.

taboo variation

| Damnation | Damn | Damn (more common in US English) |
| Jesus | Geez | Gee willikers; gee who; crikey; Jiminy Cricket |
| God’s Truth | Sth’ | Bloody “by God’s blood” or “by Our Lady” |

THAT word and its changes through time

A close look at “bloody” shows how the significance of a word can change through time. This word became known as “the great Australian adjective” in the 19th century, mainly through its popularity with bullock drivers who had a great reputation for both swearing and the more colourful cursing (calling for divine punishment). In 1914, the word created a political and social storm in Britain when it was used in a public performance of Pygmalion, by the Eliza Doole character, in the phrase...
...not bloody likely. I’m taking off a taxi.

The “f” in frustration

While words like bloody and damn might be losing their taboo status, the word “f” is definitely still on most people’s register of “swear words.” Even this word, however, has been legally sanctioned as an ordinary response in frustration in today’s society and not necessarily a profanity. This situation arises because of the dual potential of swear words to have referential meanings and emotive meanings. If a word is deemed to be used in a referential way (relying on the term or thing) then it is deemed obscene: using a word in an emotive way is not deemed to be legally obscene. The likelihood of a term being considered “emotive” vs. “referential” also depends on the way such a term is used in the broader community. Hence, in a court case where the defendant called the judge a “wanker” under his breath, he was not deemed to be in contempt of court because the word no longer bears a strong referential meaning in the way it is commonly used in our society.

I SWORE, THE RULES HAVE CHANGED

One of the more fascinating aspects of swearing is the way that current legal and popular referential norms are evolving over time. For example, if you have a certain term about someone or something then that is a referential term. The use of such terms is acceptable in the community and it is considered appropriate for you to use the term. However, if a term is used in an emotive way, then the use of the term is considered to be inappropriate. This situation arises because of the dual potential of swear words to have referential meanings and emotive meanings. If a word is deemed to be used in a referential way (relying on the term or thing) then it is deemed obscene: using a word in an emotive way is not deemed to be legally obscene. The likelihood of a term being considered “emotive” vs. “referential” also depends on the way such a term is used in the broader community. Hence, in a court case where the defendant called the judge a “wanker” under his breath, he was not deemed to be in contempt of court because the word no longer bears a strong referential meaning in the way it is commonly used in our society.

I SWORE, THE INTENT IS NOT ALWAYS THE SAME

The intent behind the use of different swear words is also an important aspect of their power. The “Where the bloody hell are you?” advertising campaign mentioned before is a good example of the way words differ in tone or meaning in different cultures – even cultures that share the same language base. While most countries focused on the fact that a government agency was sanctioning the use of even a mild swear word in a highly public context (advertising one country to another), there was also a difference in perception of. Australians use the word “bloody” as something approaching anger rather than merely, mild frustration. They use the word “bloody” as something approaching anger rather than merely, mild frustration.

Research into swearing

Wajnryb (2004), provides an interesting summary of the different intentions behind swearing:

Summary of the intentions behind swearing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swearing type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obscenely</td>
<td>Referring to sensitive or taboo topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulgarity</td>
<td>Using a swear word in a referential manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profanely</td>
<td>Using a swear word to vilify someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racially</td>
<td>Using a swear word to vilify someone based on race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally</td>
<td>Using a swear word to express emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextually</td>
<td>Using a swear word in a specific context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Swearing is often used as a way to express emotions. It can also be used to express frustration. The key is to understand the context in which the swear word is used. If it is used in a referential way, then it is considered to be appropriate. However, if it is used in an emotive way, then the use of the term is considered to be inappropriate. This situation arises because of the dual potential of swear words to have referential meanings and emotive meanings. If a word is deemed to be used in a referential way (relying on the term or thing) then it is deemed obscene: using a word in an emotive way is not deemed to be legally obscene. The likelihood of a term being considered “emotive” vs. “referential” also depends on the way such a term is used in the broader community. Hence, in a court case where the defendant called the judge a “wanker” under his breath, he was not deemed to be in contempt of court because the word no longer bears a strong referential meaning in the way it is commonly used in our society.

LETTER WRITING: ANY POSITIVES?

Letters are not always successful. An introspective process such as letter writing may not be useful for students who may need a more regulated process (cited in Diamond, 1996). On the other hand, Goldberg (2000) says letter writing can be a way to communicate with adolescents in difficult situations – even over a period of time. Access to a writing tool and something to write on is accessible to most people. People usually have the skills to participate in the exercise. However, what about those who do not have the means to participate in such a form? Those with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, or a low level of education who may lack the confidence to pen pen?

Students may not agree to have a letter sent to them. Wikson (2000) always asked the individual’s permission before he wrote to them about the oral conversations they had shared. Not all letters are successful. Diamond (1996) found initial approaches for a meeting through letters could have a negative effect. He pointed out that people ultimately have the final interpretation (Diamond, 1996, p. 161) about the value of meeting or not.

For example, in 1916, there was an interesting interaction between two readers, a reader and a writer, in relation to books. The writer contends that some of his points are relevant here. He points out that any interpretation is not bloody likely. I’m taking off a taxi. It was an opportunity to notice any positive progress in behaviour or learning. Even secondary students have told us that they liked receiving these. Reference letters to show others, can qualify as letters of celebration. A student can share the letter with others and make changes (White & Murray, 2002). Letters can alter relationships; Diamond (1996) believes that even those clients who publish their letters, can achieve improved open relationships.

LETTER WRITING: ANY POSITIVES?

Time in relation to considerations letter writing has appeal. Letter writing adheres to a linear concept of time. This may help the client see potential for change. It can provide an opportunity to reflect on the changes, they themselves see making to their lives; an opportunity to link the past with the present (Diamond, 1996). Reading or writing a letter is convenient. A letter doesn’t have any constraints on the way such a term is used in the broader community. Hence, in a court case where the defendant called the judge a “wanker” under his breath, he was not deemed to be in contempt of court because the word no longer bears a strong referential meaning in the way it is commonly used in our society.

CONCLUSION

The potential and versatility of letter writing as a tool can’t be denied. Certainly there are positives and negatives about letter writing but the author of this article contends it is a valuable tool that RTBLs need to consider using. Among many uses, letter writing can be an invaluable, supportive, summarising, or celebratory (White & Epstein, 1996). So far my experiences with letter writing have been positive. It may have been a way to convey a message about behaviour worthwhile a meeting. It could have been a small note to a student praising them for keeping on task and ignoring distractions for them. Whatever the reason for a written message, I have found letter writing as a means of communicating a powerful tool in my role as an RTBL.
**Letter Writing: A Vehicle for Change**

Denise Burrow  
RTLB, Mairehau Cluster, Christchurch

**ABSTRACT**

The use of letter writing as a form of intervention between clients and therapists is well-reported in the literature (Epston, 1996; White & Morgan, 2005). This paper proposes the use of letter writing as a tool for RTLB in their work with students and their families/whanau. The potential for letter writing as a tool for RTLB is explored, and some benefits and drawbacks are examined. Some of the different ways letter writing has been used, as one tool in a RTLB toolkit, will be overviewed. Other potential ways this tool could be used will be included also.

Practice paper  
Keywords  
Letter writing, RTLB tool, improving relationships

**INTRODUCTION**

Diamond (1996) points out literacy history is nothing novel with its roots emerging from Greek, Celt and German oral traditions. He contends there are many different pathways that any conversation (written or oral) can take. Just like the storyteller of old, the person who is telling the story takes the leading role. So too the student or teacher talking to RTLB should play a significant part in determining the directions that are taken (Morgan, 2000, p. 4). In Western culture the written tradition, as a visible form, is trusted (White & Epston, 1990). Things uncovered can be recorded, distributed, deliberated and extended (Stabile, 1985).

**THE POTENTIAL OF LETTER WRITING**

The use of letters in therapy/client relationships is a practice that has been reported in literature (White & Epstein, 1995). White and Murray (2002) sorted letters into two groups: between clients and therapists, or a client writing a letter to themselves. I am suggesting that RTLBs could use letters in a similar way, with some of the benefits as reported in literature. This is not to say RTLB replace or take on the roles of counsellors or therapists.

Letters have been used in many different ways. Letters in storied therapy can help mould the student's experiences into a story (White & Epstein, 1995). They may help to externalise the problem – to separate the problem from the person (White & Epstein, 1995). Letters from those who know the student (family, friends or teachers) can be vehicles where the focus is on positive shared experiences (with the student) and strengths (that they have observed in the student). These may help the student construct a different story. The student can emerge weighted with positives as opposed to the negatives which they brought to the pre-data assessment. The student can be the writer as well as the reader (Goldberg, 2000). Letter writing can also work alongside discussion sessions to help “thicken” (Morgan, 2005, p. 3) a new story and also provide space for reflection (and can be referred to as many times as the student feels the need) (Morgan, 2000). Finally, the student and the RTLB can join together to form a collaborative type of interchange where the talking process or, as Morgan (2000, p. 15) contends, “the co-authoring” is in a climate which lessens hierarchical differences (expert/novice) and reflects mutual respect (cited in Diamond, 1996).

The letters themselves

The letters I have read were written by counsellors, therapists, clients, family, teachers to students or co-constructed (White & Epstein, 1995). Each letter was unique, offering ideas about what letter writing is about, and ways the medium of letter writing could be used. Keeping this in mind I have arranged some types of letters under headings similar to White and Epstein (1996) such as invitational, supportive, summarising, and celebratory. Some particular letters will be mentioned here.

Invitational letters

Letters of invitation may be used to encourage future contact. Some examples include pre-meeting letters where the RTLB could introduce themselves and their role, in a letter of introduction, to participants in a future meeting. Morgan (2000) contends this type of letter could set the scene prior to direct dialogue. Another example could be an encouraging letter. Here, a letter could reassure a student, teacher or parent to meet with RTLB. Research has found this form of communication especially relevant for adolescents who may be reticent about attending a meeting (White & Murray, 2002). An invitational letter could update others about a new story (White & Epstein, 1995). It could inform family and teachers about changes a student has decided to make. Family and teachers are then in a better position to support the changes playing a part in the students’ success.

Supportive letters

Supportive letters are letters which may provide a source of strength to an individual. These types of letters endure (Diamond, 1996). I know students who have carried a letter like this around in their pocket. Letters from family members and the RTLB could be supportive and encouraging (cited in Epstein, 1998). I have used this idea in my work. I have asked family members who are living a distance away to write a letter to a student recalling an enjoyable shared experience and how much they value their relationship. Supportive letters could also be used to reach a wider group known to the student. These people’s influence may help to reinforce the new behaviours (cited in Diamond, 1996). Letters can offer support during stressful times; they can be used to communicate when oral words are difficult to say (Epston, 1998).

A student can write their own letter for referring to in times when they are feeling things are not good (White & Murray, 2002). These letters to themselves can be a tool to remind themselves of past successes, their strengths, and the progress they are making (White & Murray, 2002).

1. The history of taboo words shows us that society has changed a lot in the past 20 years particularly with what is ‘allowable’ in spoken interaction, especially relating to swear words. Whereas once it was a blanket ‘rule’ (i.e. never in front of women, children etc.), now the ‘rules’ for swearing are much more flexible – and therefore actually more difficult for a child to learn.

2. Children need experience and reminders of what the ‘rules’ of spoken interaction are in different contexts. Just as students don’t learn to use apostrophes correctly without regular reminders, they won’t learn what is allowable in a spoken text (which always includes the context) without the expectations being made clear, the rules explained and different solutions being offered.

3. We can sometimes have a blanket reaction to the words themselves without taking time to register what ‘action’ those words are doing, or what different kinds of meaning (i.e. anger, frustration, surprise, testing boundaries, etc.) they are carrying in any given instance of use.

The competent use of any word involves learning complex and shifting rules for how that word “works” in different contexts as well as what the social repercussions are for the particular choice of word. Love them or hate them, swear words are part of our language and deserve thoughtful responses from people involved in teaching language skills to children.

**REFERENCES**


**AUTHOR PROFILE**

Libby Clark  
I grew up in rural Victoria and studied speech pathology at La Trobe before working in various rehab facilities across Australia and overseas. I returned to complete a Masters in Applied Linguistics at University of Melbourne because I (don’t feel I know enough about how language “worked” to really help clients communicate in their everyday lives. During this period of study, I had the great fortune to be taught by Rod Gardner, who helped to get me “hooked” on the analysis of everyday talk using conversation analysis. I’m now doing my PhD at ANU looking at professional-client interactions.

Email  
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“Hung out to dry”
The Perplexing World of Perfectionism

Nadine Ballam
University of Waikato at Taumarua

INTRODUCTION

When you hang your washing, is it important that the pegs are the right colour? Is your laundry arranged around the line by size? Are your T-shirts hung inside-out or rightside-in? Do you have a plan B, C, or even D, for when it rains? And what about those “tired” or more “explicit” items – are they aired for all to see, or well hidden behind larger pieces of laundry? The proverbial task of hanging out the washing is enjoyed by some, and abhorred by others, and yet it seems to reveal an innate penchant that many humans appear to possess, which is the need to get things “just right”. It could be argued that the way a person hangs laundry is not exactly a lens through which a great deal can be presumed. However, it may just be that the modest pastime of hanging washing is a pursuit that has an intriguing capacity to show aspects of ourselves that are manifested across other, more significant, areas of our lives.

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

Concepts of perfectionism are difficult to “peg down,” as there is not a consistent or accepted definition (Choy & McHorney, 2009; Hewitt & Flett, 2002; Parker & Atkins, 1995). According to Hewitt and Flett (2002), perfectionism is a multidimensional personality construct, characterised by both positive and negative features, and possessing both intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects. In other words, cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social elements feature in the approaches we might take to fulfill a given task, and these may manifest in constructive or detrimental ways. As well, perfectionism may be established by either the individual (self-prescribed) or others (socially-prescribed), and have implications for other people (other-oriented), as well as for the person themselves (Hewitt & Flett, 2002). Cognitive aspects of perfectionism are evidenced by the person who plans how their load will be hung out before they lift the first item out of the basket. As our discussion has already suggested, there can be plenty to consider. Affective, or emotional expression, is exemplified in the immense satisfaction that comes with folding the last sweet-smelling, crisply-aired piece of clothing, or in the agitation felt when others perform the task half-heartedly. Then there are the many behavioural quirks we exhibit – the careful choice of peg, the matching of colours, and the patterned placing of objects around the line. Finally, it has to be acknowledged that doing the laundry is, in every sense, a social act. Now, consider these dimensions again, as our deeper predispositions are dredged up by the demands of the task. Frankly, it’s a Freudian field-day as our instinctual urges to ignore minor details about the washing collide with the precise and unrelenting demands of our conscience (Sanctrock, 2008).

What exactly is “self-prescribed” perfectionism? These are the people who have determined their own, often elaborate, set of “rules” for how each stage of the task of hanging out the washing should be performed (Hewitt & Flett, 2002). Very probably, these personality features and attitudes have their origin in parental instruction and modelling at some early point in their lives; but then this might be another human development dilemma that has the heredity and environment debate at its core. These individuals believe that their method is decidedly reliable and, unless there is warranted justification to change their habits, these processes are followed through each time the task is carried out. Regardless of whether this perfectionism is internal or external in source, Hewitt and Flett (2002) suggest that self-oriented perfectionists often come burdened with a potentially harmful drive or rationale. Rigid internalised standards can lead to a focus on flaws and shortcomings, and to harsh self-evaluations.

Amongst this group of fussy or meticulous individuals there are also those who may be pressured by others to hang the washing in a particular way. This is “socially-prescribed” perfectionism (Hewitt & Flett, 2002), and it leads to behaviour that will please others, whether these performances “fit” with our own philosophy or not. Consider the person who purposely hangs their shirts on a hanger when the mother-in-law arrives to stay because they know that this is the way she stresses it should be done. Or what about the well-pecked partner who is “forced” to shake every item vigorously before pegging out, and adheres to other peculiarly details that are inescapably impose upon. These individuals temporarily act in ways that they know will be satisfying to significant others but, when these others are not around, shirts will likely be strung up from the bottom, and other washing may suspend from the line creole.

“Other-oriented” perfectionism is observed in the person who has excessively high expectations for the way other people carry out a task (Hewitt & Flett, 2002). This dimension may impact on personal relationships as dissatisfaction with others, and often results in resentment or strained relationships. “Other-oriented” perfectionists could display irrational or heightened degrees of emotion, and may isolate themselves from others.

SUMMARY

Feedback has been very positive with all the centres agreeing that the system is easy to take on board. The results and noticeable changes in the child’s development occur relatively quickly because of the staff’s continued and frequent goal-related input. The “tag” system can be used across a variety of settings. It has been used successfully in pre-schools, home, and the wider community. There is also potential to use the “tag” in the classroom and in other contexts.

AUTHOR PROFILE

Jan Kerr

I am an Early Intervention Teacher, based in Tokoroa as part of the Early Intervention South Waikato Team. I have been with Ministry of Education, Special Education since 1998. I originally trained as a rachographer, however I developed a passion for early childhood education when my children were pre-school aged and attended the local playcentre, where I initially started early childhood training.

I am involved with delivering the Incredible Years programme in the South Waikato.

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INTRODUCTION

When you hang your washing, is it important that the pegs are the right colour? Is your laundry arranged around the line by size? Are your T-shirts hung inside-out or rightside-in? Do you have a plan B, C, or even D, for when it rains? And what about those “tired” or more “explicit” items – are they aired for all to see, or well hidden behind larger pieces of laundry? The proverbial task of hanging out the washing is enjoyed by some, and abhorred by others, and yet it seems to reveal an innate penchant that many humans appear to possess, which is the need to get things “just right”. It could be argued that the way a person hangs laundry is not exactly a lens through which a great deal can be presumed. However, it may just be that the modest pastime of hanging washing is a pursuit that has an intriguing capacity to show aspects of ourselves that are manifested across other, more significant, areas of our lives.

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Two of the tags are attached to lanyards (one is a spare for the centre). The head teacher or supervisor begins each day wearing the lanyard and the tag. It is then passed on to a staff member once the child arrives at the centre. Spare laminated tags are left at the centre office for relevance. They can be given an explanation about the tag from the supervisor and be part of the teaching team making the same strategies for the child. This maintains consistency.

It is an advantage to complete a follow-up visit one to two weeks later to discuss any queries from the staff.

**DISCUSSION**

*Tagging* has been implemented in four centres and one kindergarten.

I have collected feedback from each of the five centres by interviewing the staff after the programme has been running for approximately two months.

I have summarised my feedback under two main areas: benefits for the child, and benefits for the staff.

**Benefits for the child:**

The child is more aware that the adults are there to help them. One child recognised the tag was about him. It made him feel important that the staff were helping him. He said, “You are wearing that thing. That means you have to look after me.”

Quotes from the staff:

- “The child is happier at the centre and has become a more valued member of the group.”
- “He is beginning to use social language and form friendships.”
- “He has extended the skill by supporting his peers in difficult social situations. He is also beginning to acknowledge feelings.”
- “He is relating more positively to other children.”
- “He does not have the reputation of the ‘naughty one’”
- “Other children are inviting him to play.”
- “He appears to be feeling good about himself and wants to be helpful in completing jobs.”
- “Other children are not as good at taking turns.”
- “The behaviour has improved, from six plus incidents a day to almost no incidents.”

The staff were asked what they thought had made the difference. They thought the tag and the words that went with it had helped their children improve in various ways. They felt they were more consistent in their praise and encouragement, commented about their work, and when necessary to say “Stop”.

**Benefits for the staff:**

- Using the words “that, then” to support compliance: When Tricia does not follow through with a request or instruction, say e.g.: “First pick up the trains, then you can go outside.”
- “I spend a full morning on the floor at a centre so I can discuss the programme with the staff individually. This means they are all receiving the same messages. I explain and role model how the tag works and the strategies to be implemented, and give the staff member the opportunity to practice wearing and using the tag with my support. They also receive a laminated tag to keep as a reminder of the goals to be implemented. I have found this is a good way to inform staff as it supports different learning methods (visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic).”
- “The incidents have decreased markedly because we are aware of the child, and are on the spot to step in and prevent the behaviour escalating.”
- “It has raised my awareness of the child’s needs.”
- “The physical tag is a good reminder.”
- “All the staff are taking responsibility, and we are more relaxed because we all know someone else is taking the responsibility.”
- “We are not always worrying about what the child is doing.”
- “If one staff member has not yet turned 5 she would be at school, but now I am really going to miss him.”
- “It is so easy to inform relievers, and they can become part of the team.”

**REFERENCES**


Weaving educational threads. Weaving educational practice.
Reasons for using “tagging”

The Individual Plan is not always shared with all staff.

The Education Support Worker is sometimes left on their own to implement the goals.

The goals are implemented inconsistently and spasmodically.

When sharing goals at a staff meeting, the centre staff are often tired and do not take the goals on board or they may interpret them differently.

Extra work placed upon them when a child with a special need is enrolled in their centre can be overwhelming.

When relievers and casual staff come into an early childhood centre they are unaware of the extra needs of a child or the goals and strategies that have been developed to support a child.

Effective Tagging

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ABSTRACT

This article describes a method of targeting teacher support. It was developed to support the implementation of goals decided at an individual planning meeting. It has been used to address a variety of concerns in early childhood centres. The success in reaching the outcomes of the goals, or maximising their potential, has been relatively rapid due to the consistency of this process. The article talks about how this process began, the reasons for developing this strategy, the method in using the tags, and feedback from the centres that have been using it.

Practice paper

Keywords

Early childhood, implementation of goals, behaviours, shared responsibility

INTRODUCTION

“Tagging” is a strategy to support the implementation of the goals for an individual child, developed at a planning meeting. It consists of a physical resource which informs and reminds the early childhood teachers of the goals and strategies to be implemented, and how to use the tag itself. It provides the child with consistent repetitive feedback.

RATIONALE

The reason I developed the “tag” was my sense of frustration in not being able to implement plans developed at the planning meetings to their full potential. There appeared to be a gap in reaching the outcomes of the goals, or maximising their potential. The “tag” system was developed to address the reasons for this gap.

Rules

– One teacher at a time wears the tag.
– One teacher at a time takes responsibility for the child.
– The length of time can vary (2–30 minutes) according to the situation.
– The tagged teacher is responsible for passing the tag on.