

literacy. This includes (iv) Early intervention programs.

Section 3. Spelling as disabling. Research and Development is needed for the English writing system.

Section 4 Brief notes following the sequence of the terms of reference.

(a) adequacy of current policies and programs:

(i) criteria for learning disability in literacy. (ii) assessment (iii) handicaps from low socio-economic, non-English speaking, Indigenous and rural backgrounds (v) Support and funding in public and private sectors. (vii) Teacher training and professional development ((viii) Current government legislation is not included.)

(b) Role of government in supporting the education of students with learning disabilities in literacy.

5 Appendices i. References and Web Pages ii. Qualifications of the writer.

Summary of major recommendations:

1. Ensuring that no classroom practices or the form of educational materials are barriers to literacy for vulnerable students.
2. That innovations that are based on theory and research be investigated and tested even though they may be 'not in line with current thinking' (i.e. they are innovations).

There may be some repetition so that each section can be coherent in itself.

It is inevitable that with so many recommendations, some may not be approved, but that should not detract from the possible value of others.

The writer draws on experience and research as a clinical child psychologist, schools psychologist, academic teacher and researcher, including teacher-education, and work in the fields of literacy, spelling and imagination. (Further details of qualifications in Appendix 4. ii)

**A simple test for teachers and parents to check
Every one of these barriers can be removed with little or no
expense.**

Education budgets for literacy are increasingly costly, but unnecessary barriers to literacy may prevent success.

*Secondary as well as primary teachers can think about how their pupils may have got lost or alienated along the way. (Some of the many possible solutions are starred. *)*

** All teachers, schools and teacher-education institutions should have permanent access to a document like this, reviewed annually.*

INDEX

1. Ways to lose interest and increase confusion
2. Learning poor reading habits
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I strongly recommend revival of Arthur Mee's *Children's Encyclopedia* with its original glories of binding, fine paper, very readable print, and organization of knowledge, art, ideas, literature and poetry. Old editions prior to the late 1960s should be treasured, and available in libraries and occasionally in classrooms from Prep upwards, for children to browse carefully, especially very bright children who can be enthused to read by it, but might otherwise become 'learning disabled'. Its indexes are often more useful and faster than the Internet. See

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/arthurmee.htm>

- **Lost children.** If children are away, or change schools, or have not paid attention, and there is no way for them to catch up, then they are lost. * Permanent 'catch-up' kits in the classroom, including on the walls.
- **'Individual teaching'** When teachers do not give classroom teaching and teach every child or group the same thing separately, it is easy for some children to miss out on some critical teaching, or to think they have. * As above - wall charts of the essentials.
- **Preventing fast-track chances for bright children.** When there is no way a bright child can learn to read in the first week of school - as many could, given a chance. Bright children get fed up with the slow dripping over several terms of the know-how that they should have been given quickly and systematically. * All the recommendations above, and 'fast-track' reading materials (qv). On the very first day of school, children should be told that they will become able to learn to read, and include learning how letters can make sounds which can make words, demonstrated from an alfabet frieze and starting to learn the alfabet song. 'You will be learning this' but some children will be starting to learn on the spot.

answer must be found in reading the book, not pre-empted with guesses.

2. Learning poor reading practices

- **Barking at print.** Children with no interest in the story may end up barking at print, whether guessing 'whole language' or decoding 'phonics'. * Children selecting what they want to read from a wide range of types of book, and having a chance to try to read it to themselves, with help if necessary, before reading it aloud.
- **Inaccurate reading habits** can result when it is acceptable practice in 'hearing reading' to ask children to predict what will happen in a story, and to guess words they do not know. This is meant to encourage them to 'read for meaning' not just 'bark at print' but it can make them into bad and inaccurate readers, who only see what they expect to see. Newspaper sub-editors who often write headings contrary to the text are examples of this common habit in adults. * There should be videos and tapes to help teachers know ways to help children read accurately without feeling they are failing at every error 'corrected'.

3 Books for reading, especially for beginners, should not have

- **Sales appeal at the cost of reader appeal.** Print too small, fonts too fancy. Letters that are easily confused and cause bdpq confusions that will handicap some learners permanently, even as adults. Print for beginners should be clear, beautiful and *interesting*.
- **Obscuring the print.** Bright coloured or picture backgrounds that obscure the print, Pictures that tell all the story so that there is no reason to bother reading the print, Pictures so crude or silly that no child wants to look at them more than once. * Observe what sort of pictures children look at more than once, and what they just flip past.

through their daily reading and do not develop fluency.

- **No re-reading of beloved books.** When beginners get no practice and experience in re-reading and re-reading a book that they like that they want to re-read, they never get the experience of fluent reading, so they can concentrate on learning from the content, and they retain stumbling habits in reading. This is especially a problem for children from bookless homes.

- **Rubbishy appearance of the book-shelves** because all the books are different shapes and sizes. This is the wrong sort of novelty to go for - the novelty should be in the stories and the pictures. Children can learn to look out for tatty books - because these will be the ones that other children have liked - but tatty-looking bookshelves only encourage disinterest and careless treatment of books. When books they like have similar formats, they look out for more of the same. (cf with the old Golden Books and Puffins.)

- **Careless treatment of books.** * When children are shown as a group activity how to care for books, and turn the pages carefully, etc. it helps to reinforce the message that books have value.

* Publishers need to pull their socks up and teachers and parents selecting books should pay careful attention to all these features

4. Handwriting - and the writing-disabled.

- Small children should be able to choose pencils and pens that are comfortable for little hands, or handwriting habits suffer from **large and long instruments** that are as difficult for them to manoeuvre as thick dowelling would be for us.

- Children should be helped to learn **comfortable pencil-holds** that will allow them to develop fast, small and comfortable handwriting. Even many adults still have awkward holds and cannot write easily, fast, or legibly.

- **Posture.** Good posture encourages good handwriting and is desirable for health. A cute child on the cover of some Australian Education Union

getting attention or teaching, and burn-out potentially fine young teachers. This is a soluble problem, and it is a disgrace that any teachers and students should be forced to put up with so much wasted time and unhappiness at the taxpayers' expense.

- **Inadequate teaching of how to care.** In some places equipment gets lost, broken or will not work. Failure in learning to care also causes problems in students' own future lives. It is also intolerable they have not been taught - only scolded.

- **Too much trashing.** When children from bookless homes are not shown in group lessons how to care for books and materials, these are soon wrecked and go in the bin, which is bad psychologically as well as expensive.

- **Persecution from school-mates for learning.** Too many children play stupid in order to keep in with the anti-school culture of the area or their class-mates. There are now active efforts to prevent bullying in schools, but a lot more can be done to change the peer culture to seek and approve learning.
* Recommendations are available, including how whole classes can benefit from academic achievement, and schools keep proud records of their former students.

- **Persecution for failure or difference** discourages children from even trying. * More recommendations are available, to prevent real and perceived persecution from others, to allow 'different' children to find acceptable roles they can succeed in, and help them develop personal resources to be resilient. Especially important is to have one adult who will not betray them, and who will continue in their lives as family or friend.

6 Other unintentional discouragements

- **Teachers doing the questioning.** Only the bright children like being asked specific questions constantly. Small children learn by asking questions - yet from the minute a child starts school, it may be the teacher who asks the

busy and that children do not mind doing them. Interactive CD and computers and black-line masters are full of 'activities' - which may be time-wasters, taking time away from the real literacy business of learning to read, enjoy and understand books, to write competently, and to learn and think about the world. Children can learn to play many games - but not what the games are supposed to be teaching. * There is a time for purposeless play as recreation, but 'hard work' should be presented as rewarding as 'hard sport', and let's have this too. When children dislike and are not interested in trivial 'busywork' it is time to give them work that they can see has a long-term or immediate purpose.

- **When teachers are hassled** with far too many clerical and administrative responsibilities and boring meetings apart from teaching, without informal friendly support

7. The content of books

Psychologists express concern that a surfeit of fiction about harsh, bleak and sordid reality can reinforce young people's ideas about the world and how to behave in it, without giving them resources to help cope in it as active and resourceful citizens. Books can influence lives for the worse as well as the better. Young readers identify with the characters in books - to what effect?

This is particularly serious for vulnerable children and teenagers - both psychologically and in turning them off reading as adults.

As one referred 'reading-disabled' teenager told me, *'I always read the first three pages of my English books, and then if they are too grisly I stop.'* * A balance is needed, and more account taken of the psychological levels and experiences of the children, let alone of the teachers, who often need increasing resources in order to be able to understand and teach some of the fiction set in the ways set down to teach it. Teachers need to know more about

sophisticated, from their superficial acquaintance with their students. Psychologists who have close knowledge of vulnerable and damaged children and teenagers know how mistaken that surface appearance can be.

8. Specific teaching disabilities

'There are more cases of dysteachia than dyslexia.'

Marcia Henry, Past President, Orton Dyslexia Society

- When teachers have no expertise or training in **public speaking**, and the children are bored, restless and uncomprehending. When incompetent teachers are not helped to improve the clarity and interest of their speech, or how to hold a class without shouting - as many could be helped.
- When remarkably few teachers have ever **seen a brilliant teacher teaching**, to help them raise their own sights. *This could be remedied - even by video and TV - with many brilliant examples of different personal teaching styles.
- When primary teachers have no **idea of the English spelling system**, and so cannot teach spelling except in lists or word by word, or hope for 'absorption'.
- Phonics and Whole Language done badly. **Anything can be done badly.**
- **Poor listening to children read.** It is an art to listen so that children enjoy the attention - yet this art is not taught and children can hate 'reading out' because it is made a trial - - so that some teachers avoid listening to oral reading in order 'not to stress the children'.
- One-to-one **remedial teaching** has a bad record for lasting success unless teachers are first class. The evidence is that many learners progress as long as they are pushed - and slide back as soon as pushing stops. Teenagers and

'literacies' should not mean a free hand to spend time in class for poor readers to watch TV shows, or cavalier claims that print literacy is now not that important. The two most important things for all students to learn from Media Studies are how to resist advertising, and to realise that television is more about feeling than thinking. Schooling has a purpose in learning what you did not know before - it should not spend time in re-inculcating what comes over on screens, and teachers should not imagine that discussing or analysing shows formally will counter rather than reinforce those messages for the majority of the class.

Overall comment and recommendation. Many of the problems of gaps, confusions and lost morale could be prevented, lessened or cleared up if learners - children, teenagers and adults - could take home a **short cartoon overview video of the English writing system** and what it helps to know to read it, to watch and enjoy in their own time. Then the Great Lottery in a child's life need no longer be the teacher who takes their class in learning to read.

1. Take home cartoon literacy video for use as an advanced organizer, standby reference, diagnostic tool, clearing up confusions and gaps - and first-class quality home viewing.

in a multimedia kit to prevent and clear up confusions and gaps for learners of literacy

For teenagers and adults to watch and re-watch - and the children watch too.

1. Aims:

- a) To give an overview of the English writing system, demonstrate ways of learning to read and spell, and to make print interesting for learners.
- b) To identify and clear up learners' confusions, gaps and emotional blocks.
- c) To provide initial access to literacy to adults and teenagers unable or unwilling to attend courses, who may then be encouraged to do so.
- d) To pioneer a series of innovative literacy cartoon videos tailored for a variety of needs and cultures, that encourage independent learning and self-help.
- e) An exportable and profitable innovative Australian product.
- f) Intrinsic quality that could 'win an award at Cannes' as a work of art in its own right.

2. Methodology: The video is half-completed. The final kit is to consist of video with animated text, illustrated manual that follows and complements the script, check-sheets, audio-tape of 20 English-language verses of songs from Australia's multicultural communities, with booklet of the lyrics to read set out in innovative ways to make print easier to learn to read, plus the learners' own choice of what they want to learn to read. Individuals borrow or buy the video to watch and re-watch at home from courses, libraries and shops, and are encouraged. Learners and tutors can then know where teaching help is needed.

3. Research base. Long-term research in literacy - doctoral studies, my academic research, clinical and schools-based professional work including

The video medium has a tremendous capacity to convey clear understanding and How-To-Do-It for cognitive skills, from learning Russian to brain surgery. Educators should not be so taken up with computer technology as to overlook the fact that video can be easier and more attractive to many learning-disabled children, teenagers and adults, who do not or cannot yet respond to courses or computer 'activities'. Cartoon video with animated text has unique advantages in linking the spoken and written language and explaining complex concepts in graphics that are intrinsically fascinating. Now quality video for children using similar principles is proving highly successful in UK, as demonstrated by official research. Previous instructional literacy cartoon videos have been commercial products of poor quality, designed badly, used wrongly and ended up in cupboards.

One version planned with an indigenous colleague is **"Dreamtime Dillybag"** co-produced with other indigenous teachers and artists and incorporating aboriginal culture.

4 Proposed dissemination strategies. Market research with the experimental version 1993 showed potential demand from municipal libraries, video-libraries, bookshops, educational distributors, and some adult literacy centres and tutors (the last-named were more aware of how the experimental version could be improved, although students were enthusiastic). Further possible dissemination strategies: - Free or at cost downloading from the web, with copyright proviso that it must not be used for commercial profit.

Government organisations could enable courses and schools to obtain this resource. Organisations expressing interest in using a final product include the British Council, Rotary and social welfare organisations. Any profits could be plowed back into more specifically-targeted version.

5. How this Australian cartoon literacy video is innovative

- **Content.** Innovative ways to demonstrate memorably in a concise overview form the relation of the written and spoken language, how to hear sounds in

and teenagers who do not like courses, computers, or 'activities' on CDs. This is quite a large and intractable group.

- **Since the video gives an overview from scratch** of the whole process of learning to read for meaning, even adults enrolled in courses may discover and clear up undiagnosed gaps and confusions that hold them back. (e.g. "*Only 26 letters! I thought there were thousands!*" is not rare, but is often an unsuspected problem.)
- **Designed for adults**, whose ways of learning are not identical to those of children. Adults are more capable of learning by cognitive understanding, and from an overview, top-down, as well as bottom-up. The video uses both. Learning is both 'organic' network and step-by-step.
- **Tactics.** It avoids methods that have failed older learners and so can bypass the emotional blocks they often acquire. It is short, surprising, entertaining, and sets none of the clerical work many dislike, that even interactive CDs require. Instead, 'learning to read by reading' at home, is under the learner's control, to be used as the viewer desires, with no social embarrassment or reinforced feelings of failure. 'Learning by doing' is by applying video-learning directly to practising reading, not the disliked 'activities' and 'exercises' they cannot transfer to reading.
- **Innovatory method of use.** It is designed to be watched several times, *informally at home*, so that the compact, concise teaching content is unpacked further each time, using 'chunking' and 'advance-organiser' learning principles. As it becomes more familiar, the learner understands and links more of it. It is essential that each learner can watch it independently for their own needs.
- **Independence and self-help.** Learners can think about what they are doing and find out them-selves where they need more help from tutors. The

of which is the only one containing (a) single materials). Progress is both subjective and can be objectively monitored.

- **Openness to future developments.** a). Expansion into CD, DVD and TV series that give explicit teaching, and books with innovative ways of 'making print more interesting' and readable. (Details available) b) Other versions.
- **As a research tool** into literacy and adult learning.

Expressions of interest

The British Council, Rotary and Adult Literacy Centres and teachers who have seen/used the pilot/experimental versions are interested in using a professional version in their programs, although they have not been able to fund its production. Market-research with the experimental video in video-libraries, literacy centres, a municipal library, a bookshop and students show the considerable potential demand from learners and teachers.

Concluding comment on the video project: There has been little if any research interest in how the potential of video could be used for adult literacy, as distinct from television, computers and CDs. The field has been left to mediocre commercial productions for children. Yet this is an innovation with the potential for development to 'help learners to help themselves' at the critical stages.

2. PREPARING TO READ THROUGH PLAY - video

(Terms of reference (iv) Early intervention programs.)

Kindergartens, preschools and homes can Prepare to Read through Play', with games, free play and materials and books such as demonstrated in this video of that title. These are not the endless clerical 'activities' and

anyone to use except for commercial purposes. Some can be made inexpensively yourself from the instructions how to.

Innovative types of reading books that make print more interesting and easier to read, and facilitate faster independent reading progress:

DOUBLE-DECKER © and **MULTI-LEVEL** © **books** have the same text at different levels of difficulty on the same page, so a mixed ability class can all use the same book, avoiding invidious distinctions of who is 'backward', making it easier to catch up, and allowing the readers ahead to regress to what is easier when they want a crib.

FAST-TRACK © **books** increase slightly in difficulty on each page, apart from 'regression' pages every now and then which give a break for free-wheeling. These are like some maths books which can be like a happy challenge for bright but otherwise reluctant students.

TURN-ABOUT © **stories** are reading books which alternate simple sentences for the learner to read, with more complex sentences read by the more skilled partner - encouraging the learner to pick up more and progress faster, as well as making possible much more interesting stories.

SPELLING BRAIN-GAMES

BABL © word game for adults and learners teaches how to segment long words and decode vocabulary from its classical roots. Some people like it better than SCRABBLE.

ALADDIN'S WONDERFUL GRAMMAR © - teaching grammar by a series of exercises on the story of Aladdin

'HELP YOURSELF TO READ' COMIC-BOOK. © Draft version.
(Storyboard for the video)

WALL CHARTS and teachers' materials

Make your own School Literacy Cartoon Video - using all the resources in the school - including the help of the learners who are failing.
Guide available.

CURRENT WEB PAGES on literacy and teaching materials

LITERACY PAGES (as completed to date)

Index page for literacy ideas: <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/litpage.html>

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Classroom barriers to literacy:

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/litbar.html>

Learning styles of older failing learners:

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/lernstyl.htm> -

Paired reading - how to really help learners by reading with them - 'how' is important: - <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/lpaired.htm>

Print to help learners - making print more interesting: -

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/lprinth.htm> -

**21 LESSONS TO GIVE AN OVERVIEW OF WHAT IT HELPS TO
KNOW TO READ AND SPELL**

(These come up well on some browsers but not others.)

An account of the video and its lessons

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/tytr.htm>

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/v01acover.htm>

Contents of the lessons. 1 <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/v02content1.htm>

- <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/v05switch.htm>
06. The vowel sounds. <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/v06vowels.htm>
07. The primary vowel sounds a e i o u
<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/v07aeiou.htm>
08. The 'long' vowel sounds as in A E I O U
<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/v08longv.htm>
09. The most common words.
<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/v09comon.htm>
10. How to look at spellings. <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/v10look.htm>
11. Where English spelling comes from.
<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/v11maps.htm>
12. Spellings from Old English and French.
<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/v12oefrench.htm>
13. Spellings from Greek <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/v13greek.htm>
14. Spellings from Latin. <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/v14latin.htm>
15. How to play the word-root game BABL
<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/v15babl.htm>
16. Reading another song. <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/v16parlour.htm>
17. Vowel sounds as in ar er air or/ aw
<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/v17arar.htm>
18. Vowel sounds as in ow oy oo (moon) oo (look)
<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/v18owoy.htm>

assumption that any reform must be a radical change or consist of lists. Yet it would be possible to simply clean up the basic system that we have, which represents more than just the sounds of the language, because its alphabetic principle is modified by the representation of grammar and morphemes - to the benefit of learners as well as readers.

Australia has been and is a world leader in so many fields - and here is another opportunity.

RECOMMENDATIONS are followed by notes.

NOTE 1 lists a series of web pages that set out information about the nature of English spelling, other writing systems of the world, how most other major languages have had reforms of their writing systems in the past 150 years, and research and experiment into the possibilities of improved English spelling.

NOTE 2 comments briefly on the English writing system and how it has prevented effective teaching methods for literacy.

NOTE 3 describes some possible experiments in practical help in spelling for the learning disabled in particular, but which would help all learners.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. Know your spelling.

Education of teachers and the public, through information on the Web and through publication of what is not generally known.

The first step could be a 100 copies of a 100-page monograph in desk-top publishing format, to set off discussion and thinking, with possibly a book publication following if sufficient interest was generated.

Most people, including educators, generally know very little about the nature of English spelling as a part of modern information technology, subject to

Experiments in interim measures to help disabled learners in particular, but also all learners now. Many of these can be inexpensive and on-the-spot. Note 3 describes briefly some possible directions.

NOTE 1. FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET

a. **Writing systems:** How most other major languages have improved their writing systems within the last 150 years. A series of web-pages are linked to

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/writintro.htm>

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/writref.htm>

b. **English spelling:** A series of web-pages are linked to

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas> and

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/spelling.htm>

1. Introduction to spelling improvement.

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/spockham.htm>(text of a radio broadcast)

Rationale. How assumptions and barriers against improving the writing system do not hold. Answering the common objections to spelling improvement.

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/sration.htm>

2 Needs and abilities of readers, writers, learners, internationally and for the Internet

i. <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/sreadsp.htm>

ii. <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/swritsp.htm>

iv. Streamlining - the first step in updating spelling. Cut out surplus letters in words.

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/ssurplu.htm>

v. FASTER Spelling - possible guidelines for a further step.

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/sfastrs.htm>

vi. The future of English spelling. What can be done?

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/sfutspe.htm>

4. References. A short list of references up to 1991 that are still relevant.

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/srefrens.htm>

5. Spelling Games and curiosities -

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/spgames.htm>

6. A. 16-word Spelling Test of 16 common words that few experts can get all right .

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/16sp.htm>

7. International English Spelling Day, October 9

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/spday.html>

8. How people spelled as they liked before the 18th century dictionaries

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/spfree17c.htm>

9 Richard Wade's Freespelling page - (when you can't think how to spell a word, spell it as you would like it to be spelled) <http://www.freespelling.com>

10. Another general page on spelling improvement includes some other web links.

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/spelimp.html>

it then becomes recognised automatically without requiring decoding again. Skilled readers then skim along the page; skilled spellers aid recall by visual memory - but this first step still remains their basic resource for new vocabulary.

The 'Whole Language' approach has now proved its limitations, especially for disabled learners who cannot visually recall more than about 40 whole words without confusion, or guess unknown words from context with accuracy once reading matter is beyond a very childish and guessable level, unless they have some phonic skills, to relate letters to sounds.

The key problem in using the alphabetic principle for literacy in English is the unpredictability of English spelling, which can rattle children even at the beginning stage of trying to relate sounds to letters. 'Look,' said my grandson Patrick aged seven at a Mobil service station, 'That sign says OIL and it has two silent letters!'

Anyone who can use the spoken language has intuitive phonic awareness.

At a certain level of verbal skills (normally at ages 3 to 5) this can be made conscious, through simple strategies such as singing slowly, and stories and games in which sounds are exaggerated, such as 'What should come along but a great big Kkkkaaangggaaa - .rr-oo!' and 'D for Drum goes dddddddd-rum!' and 'I spy with my little eye', and in reading and spelling, speaking new words with great emphasis on their elements - such as 'hippp-oh-pot-a-mus' and 'in-con-sis-tEnt'.

Other programs to teach auditory or phonic awareness are liable to complicate matters and can get failing learners completely muddled with it all. (I can remember a school spending a term on a program to teach Prep. graders their colors - and at the end of it, more children were muddled than knew them in the beginning. This can happen with programs to teach 'phonic

John Henry Martin's in the IBM-supported Writing to Read program modified the long vowels in English spelling with macrons beneath, and allowed young writers to spell phonetically while also reading present spelling and simultaneously transferring to it. However, other factors handicapped its success, however.

However, the prime call at present is for research and development that really investigates how spelling could be improved to better meet the needs of all - especially all those who in this day and age, and at tremendous cost in money, materials and effort, still cannot become adequate sharers in English literacy.

Investigation and experiment is desirable and possible, that could meet ethical considerations. Research designs could be posted on the web and discussed in the mailing lists run by ALEA (Australian Literacy Educators' Association).

- 1 It would be possible to help disabled learners by assuming that some improvement in English spelling was imminent, and could be initially eased in by adding to the existing **thousands of words which already have optional alternative spellings in dictionaries** - eg jail/gaol, judgment/judgement accommodate/acomodate
- 2 Pronunciation keys are often absent in children's dictionaries (because they chicken out!) or are very clumsy. Pronunciation keys could be given that were actually in English spelling cleaned up fonemically, and so were a lead-in to improved spelling generally.
- 3 Provide learners from the start with a chart of the basic English spelling patterns, which can then be extended to include the exceptions. A chart of the basic English spelling patterns for vowels should be constantly available for beginning readers and writers - colored in as they became familiar.

will all be cleared up.

- 6 Children's spelling. Experience today proves that most learners do NOT grow out of misspellings unless there is intervention before their most common errors become habits. From Grade 1 on, the most time-saving way to learn to spell adequately is when teachers 'help you to get the spelling better' (NOT mark it for being WRONG) by marking spelling mistakes that have NO phonic justification and writing in the present correct spelling. The children then write out their own phrase or sentence with the correct spelling in it, in their 'spelling books' so they have their most common spelling problems always available to refer to. They are learning the correct spelling with multiple 'hooks' to keep it in place, from graphomotor practice to visual appearance. This also helps to ensure that children are learning the correct form of the word for speaking too - when otherwise, with no help to correct them, they may not be sure whether it is SUNDARIN or SUBBAREEN or SUBMARIN.

In children's drafts, creativity may run free with 'Don't worry about the spelling now - if you don't know a word, say it slowly to yourself, and then spell it like it sounds'.

- 7 Learning to look at spelling - A game to help to learn the present spelling, as well as how it could be improved. A page, or a story on the board - 'put a slash thru all the letters that aren't needed - like this - apple a p ~~æ~~ l ~~e~~ so you have - a p l
- 8 Lost causes may show future trends. For example, these 'spelling demons' could follow the present trends and be rationalised.
 - i. Apostrofes a. for very common shortenings do not immediately seem logical or needed. Learners can know what these are shortenings for, but insertion of the apostrophe is optional eg don't won't can't isn't shouldn't etc

Confusion of homophones in reading is rare as context almost always automatically determines the meaning, even for THE TRUCK HAS A TENDER BEHIND. In this section alone, you will not have been confused by the following homographic homophones - CAUSES MAY SHOW PRESENT COMMON SHORTENING CAN WONT CANT EVEN LETTERS LONG SOUND LIKE LIKELY SETS RARE WILL

v. F for PH is so common internationally that everyone recognises TELEFONE, FOTOGRAF, GRAFIC, ELEFANT - and why not.

vi. J for soft G and I for short Y are not so clearly on the way in, but might be allowed - as in DANJER IMAJ SISTEM SILABL

vii. Syllabic consonants are very common in the spelling of young children, as in ANSR LETR COLM APL HAPN. They are also becoming common in TXT MSGs and may also be part of modern streamlining.

viii. -IBL-ABL -ENT-ANT etc. The reason for some of these invidious spelling distinctions may be simply to show whether a word comes straight from Latin or via French. Do we need to realise this still - at what cost? Allow either. Personally I prefer -ABL to -IBL because of its connotation of 'being able to'. So why not let young spellers have a reason for their choice?

9 Publicise **International English Spelling Day**, October 9, so that schools and the public generally can have a Great Day with Spelling!

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/spday.html>

Comment: What might be the result of such permissive but also strict spelling policies in classrooms and for disabled spellers?

I constantly meet otherwise competent adults who say they are 'dyslexic' and no doubt you do too. And I also see adult 'dyslexics' whose failure in reading has harmed all their chances in life.

Those who seek special consideration in their academic work due to learning disability in reading or writing should be given opportunities to find out for themselves whether they have gaps or cognitive confusions that could be remedied.

4a (ii) assessment of needs related to literacy disability

Assessments can be made into too much of an industry.

I have worked in settings of Educational Psychology where teachers rightly objected that the common practice was much assessment and little help.

Parents who take their children for help may also be liable to receive often expensive detailed assessments that could have been postponed to be a last resort following basic assessments and appropriate opportunities for catching up.

There are thousands of research articles about what disabled learners' needs may be, and grants are still awarded for further research.

I recommend assessment of difficulties and needs through the use of teaching materials which simultaneously teach and assess.

The most useful assessments:

1. Check that there are no physical problems, such as deafness or poor vision or poor health, which would be affecting more than reading skills in any case.

would like to be able to read - and re-read to fluency, and find help to do so, from someone the student likes.

Allowance should be made for the fact that many children arrive at school not ready to learn to read in any way, and holding up the class for them is no answer. All classrooms need to be 'catch-up' classrooms, containing materials that can help and encourage failing learners pick up from scratch, as they become able to do so, using self-help.

I have some literacy materials that can be played with from age 3 upwards, at whatever level the child has reached. This helps to prevent invidious comparisons with other children who are 'ahead', and makes it easier to advance using the same materials. Teachers can observe children's levels by how they use the materials.

In 1972 I made a list of 90 causes of learning disability from the research literature - and research into personal defects still continues. My own work has focused on learning disabilities in literacy caused by environmental and classroom handicaps, intelligence operating below average, cognitive confusion, poor motivation, emotional blocks and other psychological disturbances, and specific weaknesses in attention or in the range of verbal skills that facilitate learning to read and write.

4a (iii) Handicaps in literacy

due to backgrounds which are low socio-economic, non-English speaking, indigenous or rural backgrounds, or affected by disturbed families or antisocial peer-groups.

It is one of the important functions of government to try to ensure that no child suffers from poverty, neglect or psychological or physical abuse.

Schools in low socio-economic areas CAN be improved to be places of pride and inspiration with as much investment as in upper-class private schools - but detailed recommendation cannot be made in this brief submission. However two points are essential:

1. No teacher in any class should have to put up with disruptive and aggressive students or parents.

Every class like that is a scandalous waste of taxpayers money and people's lives. Teachers unions should welcome, not try to prevent publicity about this. If a concerted campaign was planned and operated by all relevant community organisations including government and media, there are many measures that could reverse this appalling trend and make classrooms places where teachers and students can be happy and get down to business, while the disruptive learning-disabled are given treatment goals and encouragement that can help them find ways out of their anti-learning box without humiliation.

In disadvantaged areas many intelligent youths seen as 'learning disabled' play possum and act dumb and disruptive in order to deflect persecution from peers or invidious treatment by teachers.

The greatest handicap within socially disadvantaged urban groups are commonly lack of motivation or even hostility to schooling of students and often parents too; disruptive classrooms so that little teaching is possible; and peer persecution of motivated students. The waste of materials through vandalism, sheer carelessness and teachers' belief in constant novelty can be excessive.

excellent, the literacy record has been poorer. Here general recommendations apply, and a paper on multiculturalism is available.

4. Indigenous and rural backgrounds. I think much more could be done in the way of self-help distance education, including watch-at-home video, and libraries as resource centres. General recommendation apply. A paper available emphasises the mutual contributions of koori and majority cultures in education, and calls for production of and evaluation of '*Dreamtime Dillybag*' - a half-hour cartoon literacy video project using indigenous culture.

4a (iv) Early intervention programs

See earlier section 2 on materials for early prevention of literacy disabilities

4a (v) Support and funding in public and private sectors. ^

i. These include the ideal that all Australian students should have access to schools as good as the best private and public schools - and government schools funding should be directed to raising all schools to the level of the best, especially in those areas where children are most disadvantaged in home and community.

ii. Funding and support to ensure that no primary school children have to suffer (or cause) uproar in their classrooms. Classrooms where no real learning is possible are a scandalous waste of taxpayers money - if you want to push home the 'bottom line' about this tragedy.

iii. Children at risk. Support to ensure that all children at risk or in trouble can find someone in their community and school whom they like who can be a

professional development

(incomplete through lack of time)

'The function of a teacher is to inspire and to entertain'. This is doubly important for all teachers who train teachers in colleges and universities. To be able to hold a class fascinated. To inspire. Having support.

Teachers used to 'teach from the book' when they wanted the easiest way out. Many still do this, despite all the theory and courses that they have undergone. Ed-biz provides text-books and reading books for the students complete with questions for teachers to ask them, and masses of work-sheets which can be used for 'activities'. Boys especially are likely to become disaffected and become 'learning disabled' when these become rituals, rather than occasional treats.

I have not seen research on the teaching value of all these time-fillers and student-annoyances. But this would be useful.

Most teachers are not naturally brilliant - but their potential is still to be better than they are. They need opportunities to observe brilliant teachers in action - on video if nowhere else.

Class teachers today can face four major problems that teacher-education institutions could address by action research and practical training.

1. Disruptive and aggressive students and parents.
Training and support for this could be vastly improved, including more practical support from educational faculties.

ran a very successful elective whereby trainees for secondary teaching spent time over a term acting as teacher-aides in primary schools, with a small project as the only requirement for their assessment. They benefited from getting to know children well, and learning about the primary school situation that their future students would have experienced, in a situation that was completely stress-free for them personally. Teachers loved them as intelligent and non-threatening company in the classroom, and so did the children. Children in need were able to have special attention from the young enthusiastic friendly aides, and some of them became motivated to make unexpected progress. Unfortunately the conditions of electives changed to make this experience no longer possible - but for many years former students told me of how much it had helped them to be better teachers.

3. *"I know all the theory. But I don't know how to put it into practice."* This was one of the most common appeals teachers made to me when I was a schools psychologist.

This often applies both to classroom teaching and to teaching children with special needs. I think the situation in teacher-education colleges is now better than it was - but there is still room for more improvement in facilitating practical application of theories.

One professional development recommendation. - Teachers do not do another in-service course until they have implemented the one before.

4 b) Role of government in supporting the education of students with learning disabilities in literacy.

Others will be making valuable recommendations here. However, two recommendations below would help to benefit all students, and particularly the disabled.

5. APPENDICES

1. REFERENCES

A full list can be available. The most significant for this submission are:

Yule, Valerie. 1986. The design of spelling to meet needs and abilities.

Harvard Educational Review. 56. 278-297

- 1996. 'Take-Home Video for Adult Literacy'. *UN International Review of Education*, ' 42.1-3, 187-203.

WEB PAGES ON WRITING SYSTEMS

linked to <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas>
Australian Alternative Ideas and Innovations

1. WORLD WRITING SYSTEMS

AN INTRODUCTION <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/writintro.htm>

WRITING SYSTEMS OF THE WORLD -

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/writsys.htm>

SOCIETY AND WRITING SYSTEMS -

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/writsoc.htm>

PROBLEMS OF MODERN WRITING SYSTEM S-

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/wrintprob.htm>

ALPHABETIC WRITING SYSTEMS, PRO and CON -

<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/writalfa.htm>

- GREENLAND- <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/wgreenref.htm>
- HISPANIC- <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/whispanref.htm>
- JAPAN- <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/wjapref.htm>
- KOREA- <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/wkorref.htm>
- MALAYA & INDONESIA- <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/wmalind.htm>
- PORTUGUESE- <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/wportref.htm>
- RUSSIA- <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/wrussref/htm>
- TURKEY- <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/wturk.htm>
- INDIA, A FAILED REFORM- <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/windref.htm>

2. QUALIFICATIONS

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Formerly clinical child psychologist in the Royal Children's Hospitals, Aberdeen and Melbourne; academic teacher and researcher at Monash, Melbourne and Aberdeen Universities in the departments of Psychology, Education and English; schools psychologist, mainly in inner urban disadvantaged primary schools with high immigrant populations, under the Commonwealth Disadvantaged Schools program; Innovations Counsellor in primary schools; remedial and secondary teacher. I have been involved in teacher education at Monash University and Melbourne State College.

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