



THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

# Report of the Task Group on Dyslexia



## MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

As Minister for Education, one of my key priorities is special education. I believe strongly that all children should have the opportunity to achieve to their full potential, and that how we provide for the needs of those children who need extra help is a measure against which our education system should be judged. Within special education, I am continually impressed and heartened by the wealth of dedication, love, imagination and skill which teachers bring, day and daily, to their work with children, both in special schools and units and in mainstream classes. I believe that this expertise needs to be shared more widely within education; but also there is much more which needs to be done.

Our focus on dyslexia and autism reflects the fact that research shows that these are under-reported and underdeveloped aspects of special needs. These are issues which are of concern throughout Ireland. When the North-South Ministerial Council was established, special education was an immediate priority for both our Education Departments, and we decided that dyslexia and autism should be the areas for first attention. At the same time, parallel Task Groups were established in these areas here and in the South, and we took pains to ensure that membership of both groups overlapped so that experience and information could be shared to the benefit of all.

The North's Task Group on Dyslexia was led by Mrs Hazel Mullan, Principal Educational Psychologist of the Southern Education and Library Board. I owe a debt of gratitude to her personally, and to her colleagues on the Task Group, for giving so generously of their time and expertise in producing this important and far-seeing Report; to all those who otherwise contributed their experience and insights to the preparation of the Report; and also to the Southern Education and Library Board for allowing Mrs Mullan the time and administrative support to lead the Group and compile this Report.

It highlights very real concerns and challenges for all of us in education, particularly the need for training for classroom teachers in recognising where children have, or may have, dyslexia, and in putting in place the means to address their difficulties – and, most importantly, to ensure that the obstacle which their difficulties presents in accessing the rest of the curriculum is minimised. Equally, these are challenges for further and higher education, for employers and for society, because dyslexia is not a condition which disappears with maturity.

I very much hope that this Report will inform our thinking, and will act as a catalyst to help us all in the education system reassess and improve what we do. I commend it to you and look forward to your response.

MARTIN McGUINNESS MP MLA  
Minister for Education

April 2002

# CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraph</i>
Executive Summary	
Membership of Task Group	
Introduction	
Terms of Reference	
<b>Chapter 1</b>	
Setting the Scene	1.1 - 1.27
<b>Chapter 2</b>	
Dyslexia - An Overview	2.1 - 2.49
<b>Chapter 3</b>	
Current Provision	3.1 - 3.8
<b>Chapter 4</b>	
Teacher Training and Training Needs	4.1 - 4.13
<b>Chapter 5</b>	
Indicators of Good Practice for Teachers and Parents	5.1 - 5.8
Appendix A	
Glossary	

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Task Group on Dyslexia was set up in January 2001 to audit current provision for children and young people with dyslexia, from nursery level to further education, and to identify training needs and opportunities for teachers.

The Task Group consisted of representatives from the Education and Library Boards' Educational Psychology Services, Curriculum Advisory and Support Services, Special Education sections and Peripatetic Services, together with representatives from Queen's University, Belfast, University of Ulster, St Mary's University College, Stranmillis University College, Beechlawn School and the Education and Training Inspectorate. A member of the Southern Task Group also sat on the Northern Task Force, facilitating the sharing of information between the groups.

The Task Group consulted through verbal and written requests for information, individual submissions, consultations and written responses from relevant services, and by meeting individuals and voluntary groups, representing the interests of parents. A review of recent research literature was undertaken and the findings summarised.

### **Terms of Reference:**

The Terms of Reference for the Task Group were set by the Department of Education in January 2001, and were as follows:-

- a. To advise the Department of Education on the range of provision for dyslexic children and young people, pre-school to post-secondary.
- b. To identify training needs, training opportunities and indicators of good practice for teachers, and as appropriate, parents.

- c. To recommend a model of provision to promote consistency of approach to identification and service delivery across all Board areas.
- d. To produce a report to the Department on the above.
- e. To inform and learn from ongoing work on dyslexia provision on a North-South basis.
- f. To contribute as appropriate to the compilation of reports from Ministers to the North-South Ministerial Council. (Since the education sector of the North-South Ministerial Council did not meet again during the life of the Task Group, this element of the terms of reference was not brought into effect).

### **Summary of Recommendations:**

This report makes reference to the current position of the ELBs. The recommendations should be fully implemented by whatever institutions emerge from the outworking of the Burns Report recommendations.

The result of the Curriculum Review may also have implications for these pupils.

Any further work in this area should take into account the views of pupils, parents and teachers.

While most practitioners in Northern Ireland prefer to use the term "specific learning difficulties", the term "dyslexia" is more frequently used in research papers and by voluntary groups. The term "dyslexia" is used throughout this report for the sake of brevity.

## Chapter 1: Setting the Scene

This chapter provides an overview of the legislation, policy documents, main international obligations and issues impacting on the education of children and young people with special educational needs. It also outlines the current ELB figures of pupils identified as having dyslexia or specific learning difficulties.

## Chapter 2: Dyslexia: An Overview

This chapter summarises recent findings in various fields of research. It then considers some of the most recent definitions of dyslexia, endorsing the position taken by the Republic of Ireland Task Group.

### Recommendations:

- 2.1 The Northern Ireland Task Group endorses the Republic of Ireland definition.

*Dyslexia is manifested in a continuum of specific learning difficulties related to the acquisition of basic skills in reading, spelling, writing and/or number, such difficulties being unexpected in relation to an individual's other abilities. Dyslexia can be characterised at the neurological, cognitive and behavioural levels. It is typically described by inefficient information processing, including difficulties in phonological processing, working memory, rapid naming and automaticity of basic skills. Difficulties in organisation, sequencing, and motor skills may also be present.*

It more comprehensively reflects the theoretical position held by most practitioners in Northern Ireland.

- 2.2 In addition, it is our strongly held view that there is a range of difficulties presented by students with dyslexia, from mild to severe, and that there should be a range of interventions to address these needs.
- 2.3 The Group recommends effective early intervention to minimise the risk of children suffering the negative experience of academic failure and associated consequences.
- 2.4 It is essential that these interventions include whole school policies, within-class approaches and individual interventions at Stages 1 and 2 of the Code of Practice, as well as the type of external support available through the various ELB Services, as outlined in Chapter 3.
- 2.5 In view of the recent developments in various fields of research, the Task Group recommends the convening of a regional conference to disseminate these findings.

### **Chapter 3: Current Provision**

This chapter discusses the present position of the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs). It notes the recent work done by the Regional Strategy Group on Special Educational Needs (RSG) to harmonise the criteria for statutory assessment, including those for “specific learning difficulties eg dyslexia”. This draft report is now undergoing equality screening and impact assessment.

Provision for children and young people with dyslexia is made available at primary, post-primary, higher education and further education levels. The Task Group noted variation in the availability and nature of this provision, as a result of differing theoretical positions and geographical factors. There were also variations in the structure and staffing of support services and in the amount of support available to parents and pupils.

The Task Group is concerned at the very limited nature of external support or provision at post-primary level. There seems to be general uncertainty regarding effective forms of intervention for these pupils and students (a finding also noted in the research literature).

At Higher and Further Education levels, there are still a significant number of students enrolling whose needs have not been precisely identified. Whether identified or not as having dyslexia, the onus is on students to self-declare. If they do not, they cannot be offered access to assessment and support. Access to SCRIBE, a training programme for voice recognition software, is no longer available at Further Education level.

### **Recommendations:**

- 3.1 Pupils should have access to a continuum of provision that meets their needs, throughout their education, regardless of age or geographical location.
- 3.2 As a matter of urgency, the 5 ELBs should agree a theoretical perspective and access criteria to inform the future development of provision and support.
- 3.3 Further research into effective forms of intervention and support should be commissioned at all phases but with particular urgency at the post-primary level.
- 3.4 A provision such as SCRIBE should be made available across FE and HE.

### **Chapter 4: Teacher Training and Training Needs**

This chapter audits the current training in special educational needs made available during Initial Teacher Education and Continuous Professional Development courses. It also audited the training made available by the ELBs to teachers in post during 1999-2001.

There are a small number of relevant training courses and conferences organised by other bodies, but attendance at these is voluntary, occurs outside school hours and is usually self-funded.

### **Recommendations:**

- 4.1 DE should reconsider their position on the funding of Award Bearing Continued Professional Development.
- 4.2 ELBs should ensure that all teachers have access to a centralised system of advice, support and resources.
- 4.3 All current and future initiatives in Northern Ireland should take account of pupils with dyslexia.
- 4.4 A Northern Ireland accredited training course on dyslexia should be developed in collaboration with universities, university colleges and ELBs. Where possible, it should be made available through local centres, to maximise uptake. Funded places for SENCOs should be given consideration.
- 4.5 Each ELB should be responsible for training an identified core of personnel (eg peripatetic teachers, outreach support teachers, advisory staff etc) to an appropriate accredited level.
- 4.6 Where applicable, courses for SENCOs should be further developed to include a core element on dyslexia, and be delivered by trained and/or experienced personnel. These should be developed on a regional basis, to ensure consistency, but delivered locally for ease of access.
- 4.7 Awareness-raising courses for mainstream teachers should be developed and delivered by trained and/or experienced personnel in all ELBs.

The Task Group's aspiration would be that such training as listed above would be offered concurrently.

- 4.8 Consideration should be given by DE to the dyslexia training component of Initial Teacher Education courses, with a view to offering students the opportunity to gain accredited training.

## **Chapter 5: Indicators of Good Practice for Teachers and Parents**

The Task Group was also asked to consider indicators of good practice. This chapter provides a brief summary of these.

### **Recommendation**

- 5.1 The Task Group recommends the development of further guidance materials for circulation to schools and parents eg a "Good Practice Guide", the development of a CD rom etc.

## MEMBERSHIP OF TASK GROUP

Mrs Hazel Mullan, (Chairperson), Principal Educational Psychologist, Southern Education and Library Board, 3 Charlemont Place, The Mall, Armagh, BT61 9AX.

Mrs Marleen Collins, Education and Training Inspectorate, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor, BT19 7PR

Mrs Fiona Crookes, Assistant Advisory Officer, Special Education, Southern Education and Library Board, 3 Charlemont Place, The Mall, Armagh, BT61 9AX.

Mrs Valerie Haugh, Head of Peripatetic Support, Belfast Education and Library Board, Ulidia Centre, Somerset Street, Belfast, BT7 2GS.

Mr Hugh Kearns, Principal Lecturer, Continuing Professional Development, Stranmillis University College, Belfast, BT9 5DY.

Dr Rosemary Kilpatrick, Senior Lecturer, Graduate School of Education, Queen's University, Belfast, BT7 1HL.

Mr Don Mahon, Inspector, Department of Education & Science, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1.

Dr Joan McQuoid, Chartered Psychologist, Counselling and Guidance, University of Ulster at Jordanstown, Shore Road, Newtownabbey, BT37 0QB.

Mr Colin Millar, Assistant Advisory Officer, South Eastern Education and Library Board, Grahamsbridge Road, Dundonald, Belfast, BT16 0HS.

Mr Frank Quinn, Senior Lecturer in Education, St Mary's University College, 191 Falls Road, Belfast, BT12 6FE.

Miss Margaret Robinson, Beechlawn School, 3 Dromore Road,  
Hillsborough, BT26 6PA.

Ms Joan-Ann Wilson, NASEN.

The Task Group would like to acknowledge the contributions made by  
the following:-

Lord Laird

Mrs M Totten, Dyslexia & Dyspraxia Support (DADS)

John Clarke, Northern Ireland Dyslexia Association (NIDA)

Regional Strategy Group (RSG)

Martin McPhillips, Primary Movement.

They also wish to record their gratitude to Mrs Marian Donnelly, SELB,  
for administrative and clerical support to the Group during the  
preparation and writing of this report.

December 2001

## INTRODUCTION

The North-South Ministerial Council held its first sectoral meeting on education in February 2000.

In its discussion, the Council examined proposals on how best to take forward matters for co-operation, having regard to the common concerns and interests on both sides.

The Council agreed the establishment of a number of Joint Working/Co-ordination Groups, one of which was on Special Educational Needs Provision.

This Joint Special Education Co-ordination Group has focused initially on Autism and Dyslexia, working with parallel Ministerial Task Groups in the North and South to take this work forward.

In the North, the Department of Education established a Dyslexia Task Group, drawing on representatives from the ELBs' Educational Psychology Services, Curriculum and Advisory Support Services, Special Education sections and Peripatetic Services, together with representatives from Queen's University, University of Ulster, St Mary's University College, Stranmillis University College, Beechlaw School and the Education and Training Inspectorate. A member of the South's Task Force on Dyslexia also sat on the North's Task Group to share information and expertise.



## TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference for the Task Group were set by the Department of Education in January 2001, and were as follows:-

- a. To advise the Department of Education on the range of provision for dyslexic children and young people, pre-school to post-secondary.
- b. To identify training needs, training opportunities and indicators of good practice for teachers, and as appropriate, parents.
- c. To recommend a model of provision to promote consistency of approach to identification and service delivery across all Board areas.
- d. To produce a report to the Department on the above.
- e. To inform and learn from ongoing work on dyslexia provision on a North-South basis, and
- f. To contribute as appropriate to the compilation of reports from Ministers to the North-South Ministerial Council. (Since the education sector of the North-South Ministerial Council did not meet again during the life of the Task Group, this element of the terms of reference was not brought into effect).

## Chapter 1:

## SETTING THE SCENE

- 1.1 The term 'Dyslexia' is not new, it was first used in 1886 to describe an acquired condition of specific aphasic loss of the ability to read. More recently in 1978 Warnock<sup>1</sup> advocated caution when using the term and in 1998 the Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of Special Educational Needs included dyslexia as part of a subset of Specific Learning Difficulties. However, for the purposes of this report the term 'dyslexia' will be used throughout.
- 1.2 Since children and young people who are dyslexic have been described in the Code of Practice as having special educational needs it would seem useful to give a brief overview of the legislation, policy documents, main international obligations and issues which may impact on the education of children with special needs, before examining dyslexia in greater depth. The first section of this chapter will outline the statutory framework and related policy documents within the UK while the second will consider the two main international obligations which impact on special educational needs, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).
- 1.3 In recent years there also have been three substantial studies of aspects of special education in Northern Ireland, namely: an extensive survey commissioned by the Department of Education (DE) and conducted by the Special Needs Research Centre of the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne which looked at current practice in mainstream schools in Northern Ireland with regard to

---

<sup>1</sup> Warnock Report (1978) Report of the committee of enquiry into the educational needs of children and young people, London, HMSO

pupils with special educational needs;<sup>2</sup> a report in August 1998 to the House of Commons by the Comptroller and Auditor General for Northern Ireland on Special Education in Northern Ireland;<sup>3</sup> and an enquiry by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee on Public Expenditure in Northern Ireland: Special Needs Education in March 1999.<sup>4</sup> These three documents will be drawn on as appropriate.

- 1.4 Current legislation in special educational needs can be traced back to the Warnock Report which formed the basis for the Education Act 1981 in England and Wales and in Northern Ireland the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. This Order also laid down the definition of special educational needs as a child who has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for it<sup>5</sup> which is still used today.
- 1.5 The Warnock Report anticipated that approximately 20% of pupils (or one in five) would have special educational needs at some stage in their school career, with approximately 2% of these children having such needs as to require long-term, additional support and therefore requiring a statement of special educational needs. Statements identify both the child's educational needs and the provision to be made available to meet those needs. It is the child's Education and Library Board (ELB) which undertakes responsibility for conducting the statutory assessment on which basis a decision will be made as

---

<sup>2</sup> Practice in Mainstream Schools for Children with Special Educational Needs: Analytical Report (referred to in this report as 'The Dyson Report'). Published as DE Research Report No. 11 1998, from, DE, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor

<sup>3</sup> HC898 (1997-98)

<sup>4</sup> HC33 and 317, 1032 I-ii (1997-98)

<sup>5</sup> See Lundy, L. (2000) *Education Law, Policy and Practice in Northern Ireland* SLS Legal Publications (NI) pp239-242 for an thorough examination of the definition of special educational needs.

to whether or not a statement is required, as well as ensuring that the education provision as identified in the statement is provided. It is thus the ELB which is responsible for funding to meet statement requirements.

- 1.6 While Warnock's figures do not have a sound statistical base they have acquired a degree of influence in determining policy<sup>6</sup>. However, DE accepts that the estimated percentage of children needing statements is now outdated and state that they are no longer used for any administrative purposes, to determine levels of funding or to set a quota for numbers of statements<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, the Department agrees that recent trends in the growth of statemented pupils will continue in the immediate future.<sup>8</sup>
- 1.7 In Northern Ireland in 2000/01 there were 172,491 pupils in primary schools. Of these pupils 1.5% (N=2,505) had statements of special educational needs and 32 of these pupils had statements for dyslexia. This is 0.02% of the total primary school population. In post-primary schools in the same year there was a total population of 155,553 pupils and of these 1.5% (N=2,363) had statements of special educational needs with 175 pupils (0.1% of the total post-primary population) having statements which referred to dyslexia. In special schools there were 4,674 pupils of whom 3,877 were statemented (82.9%). Of this total population there were 9 pupils who had statements which referred to dyslexia, plus an additional 45 pupils who did not have statements but who had dyslexia mentioned as a reason for their special school placement (1.1% of the special school population). Thus of the total special, primary and

---

<sup>6</sup> See the Code of Practice, para. 2.2 and Lundy, L. in *Child and Family Law Quarterly*, Vol 10, No. 1 (1998) p. 39

<sup>7</sup> Northern Ireland Affairs Committee *Public Expenditure in Northern Ireland: Special Needs Education*. Session 1998-99 HC33 and 317 1032 I-ii (1997-98) para. 22

<sup>8</sup> *ibid* para 23

post-primary school population there were 261 pupils or 0.08% who had been identified as having severe dyslexia in that they had a statement, or had been placed in a special school because of this condition. There were 972 (0.6%) primary pupils who were not stated but who were referred to their ELB for extra support because of dyslexic tendencies. In the case of post-primary pupils the majority of Boards do not offer such support unless the pupil is stated.

**Table 1.1 Numbers and percentage of pupils with statements and identified as dyslexic**

School	Total Number	Stated		Dyslexia	
		N	%	N	%
Primary	172491	2505	1.5	32	0.02
Post-Primary	155553	2363	1.5	175	0.1
Special	4674	3877	82.9	45+9	1.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>332718</b>	<b>8745</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>0.08</b>

- 1.8 The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) in 1989 estimated that there were 10% (4% severe and 6% mild to moderate) of children who have some degree of dyslexia. Therefore, it could be argued that some young people who experience dyslexia at one level or another, slip through the net and do not receive the educational support that they require. This may well be associated with the fact that teachers are not always aware of the indicators of dyslexia, and training opportunities in this area can be somewhat limited. (See para 1.14 and Chapter 4). It should be noted that this issue is somewhat clouded since an accurate indication of the prevalence of dyslexia is extremely difficult to ascertain due to a variety of factors. These include such things as variations in definitions (see Chapter 2); the fact that dyslexia can occur with a range of other disorders and may not be seen as the primary learning difficulty; and that common

usage of the term is often without any clear understanding of the condition. However, unless this situation is addressed it is likely that this high level of under-reporting (perhaps as much as 300%) will continue and many pupils who are dyslexic will continue to struggle, unsupported, with their difficulties both during their school career and into adult life.

- 1.9 Though not directed specifically at special educational needs, there were two aspects of the 1989 Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order which had particular implications for the provision of education for this group of pupils. Firstly, the Order introduced the Northern Ireland Curriculum for all grant-aided schools. This entitles all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to receive the full curriculum except where a statement indicates otherwise or where there may be a temporary exception. Secondly it introduced financial delegation to schools and thus any extra resources for non-statemented children would in future be provided for out of the school's budget.
- 1.10 Following on from this Order, any additional funding for pupils without statements of special educational needs is now made from the Targeting Social Need Initiative and allocated to schools through each Boards' Local Management of Schools formulae. The Boards use different methodologies for allocating special needs resources and this difference, along with the fact that the money is not ring-fenced, means that there is little opportunity of ensuring equity of resources for these pupils. Both of these points were raised by the Northern Ireland Audit Office's Report and the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee Report. At the time of writing, a document on a common funding formula for grant-aided schools had been issued for consultation<sup>9</sup>. The Task Group considers it is important that any additional funding for SEN is spent in the most appropriate manner within an individual educational setting, to the benefit of those children with SEN.

---

<sup>9</sup> DE Publication *A Common Funding Formula for Grant-Aided Schools*  
A Consultation Document April 2001

- 1.11 The next major consideration of special educational needs in England and Wales came as a result of government's general review of education in 1991 and the resultant Education Act of 1993. Major reforms of this Act increased parental involvement, provided an independent means of challenging decisions through the introduction of the Special Educational Needs Tribunal (SENT) and provided for a Code of Practice on special educational needs which schools are required to 'have regard to' when making decisions about children with special educational needs. The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1996, the Education (Special Educational Needs) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1997 and the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Education Needs (implemented in September 1998) echoed these reforms in Northern Ireland.
- 1.12 The Code of Practice provides guidance on the identification and assessment of special educational needs as well as on its organisation and management in mainstream schools. The Code refers to dyslexia but places it as one of a subset of specific learning difficulties. Furthermore, it embraces one particular model of dyslexia (the IQ discrepancy model) to distinguish children with dyslexia from other poor readers. It therefore is this model that tends to dominate identification and assessment of dyslexia in Northern Ireland despite the fact that there is no common agreement regarding this definition amongst professionals and academics. (See Chapter 2).
- 1.13 The Code also introduces a formal five stage process for identifying and assessing special educational needs. Stages 1 to 3 are school-based and refer to children who have special educational needs but who are not seen to require a statement. When the child is referred for a statutory assessment they move into Stage 4 and on the basis of this assessment the child may receive a statement and thus be at Stage 5 of the Code.
- 1.14 In most schools identification and assessment of children with special educational needs between Stages 1 and 3 is firstly the responsibility of the class or subject teacher, with the special

educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) playing a key role at Stages 2 and 3. However, in the case of dyslexia there can be a major problem since many teachers and SENCOs are unaware of the current thinking and assessment techniques in this area.<sup>10</sup> In a somewhat similar vein in 1995 Riddick reported that 50% of parents of children who were dyslexic stated that they believed the school had labelled their child as 'slow' or 'thick'.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, instead of teachers identifying children with dyslexic tendencies, it was often the child's mother who first noticed that something was wrong. The Task Group welcomed submissions from DADS and NIDA, and noted their concerns regarding the level and inconsistency of support for children with dyslexic tendencies across Northern Ireland.

- 1.15 The Education (NI) Order 1996 introduced the greater involvement of parents and their right to appeal through the Special Educational Needs Tribunal. In the case of parental involvement, there is evidence of parental dissatisfaction in relation to dyslexia<sup>12</sup> and the potential for conflict between parents, schools and ELBs is high. Most parents wish their children to receive the support necessary to ensure that they make as much progress as possible at school, yet schools and ELBs are faced with limited resources to be shared equitably amongst a range of children with special needs. The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee recommended that there should be research conducted in the area of parental involvement and the Department has now commissioned such research.

<sup>10</sup> Collins, M. (2000) unpublished research on teachers and SENCOs beliefs about and attitudes to dyslexia

<sup>11</sup> Riddick B (1995) Dyslexia: dispelling the myths. *Disability and Society* 10 4 457 – 473.

<sup>12</sup> See for example Riddick (1995) *Dyslexia: Dispelling the Myths*, and comments to the Task Force by a representative from Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Support

- 1.16 The Dyson report identified wide variation in the extent and the quality of responses to the Code on the part of schools and support agencies. On the basis of the findings from the research it was argued that there was a need for a 're-visioning' of the Code with the focus on the principles rather than practice. It was further argued that mechanisms and processes should be developed to support SENCOs and Principals in the implementation of the Code, alongside the need to place an emphasis on the classroom implications and a review of support services, all of which require action by the Department, ELBs and Principals. The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee enquiry reinforced these recommendations along with support for on-going monitoring and review of the Code, and the Minister's response indicated that these recommendations were endorsed by the Department. As a response to these the Inter-Board Regional Strategy Group on Special Educational Needs is currently meeting with regard to these points.
- 1.17 The 1996 Education Order furthers the argument for inclusion by stating that children, regardless of whether or not they have a statement, should be educated in ordinary schools with the proviso that three conditions are met. The child must be 'receiving the special educational provision which his learning difficulty calls for', the provision must be compatible with 'the provision of efficient education for the children with whom he will be educated' and the education must be compatible with 'the efficient use of resources'.<sup>13</sup> These qualifications allow ELBs and schools a degree of discretion in providing for both stated and unstated children and in Northern Ireland the majority of children identified as having dyslexia, regardless of whether or not they have a statement, would be educated in mainstream schools with additional support if required and where available. However, this raises the question of the variability of support and teachers' awareness of indicators of the condition. (See Chapter 3).

---

<sup>13</sup> See Articles 7 and 8 of the Education (NI) Order 1996

- 1.18 The most recent relevant educational material in Northern Ireland is the School Improvement Programme, which was launched in Northern Ireland in February 1998 by the Department of Education. This programme comprises seven separate but related elements designed to address the key issues faced by schools. Especially relevant for maintaining children with special educational needs in mainstream schools is the strategy to improve standards in literacy and numeracy, where the focus is on early intervention to identify and address the needs of children who are falling behind.
- 1.19 The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland was established under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and replaces the pre-existing Fair Employment Commission, Equal Opportunities Commission, Commission for Racial Equality and the Northern Ireland Disability Council. It therefore now covers all of the nine section 75 categories of the Northern Ireland Act and includes the areas of religion, political opinion, sex, age, marital status, race and disability. Its duties include working towards the elimination of discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and encouraging good practice. To achieve its aims and responsibilities the Commission has a wide range of powers which allow it to fulfil functions such as advising and assisting complainants, awarding grants for promotional work, providing information and advice, conducting research and reviewing the legislation.
- 1.20 Given the remit of the Equality Commission it would seem that equal opportunity for children with special educational needs should come under its umbrella. However, neither the Special Educational Needs and Disability Rights in Education Act 2001 nor the education provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 yet extend to Northern Ireland and thus special education is, for the most part, not included in the anti-discrimination legislation to date. Instead the Government has chosen to deal with these issues through the education framework. However, in view of past legislative experience, it might be anticipated that the Northern Ireland Assembly will

introduce legislation reflecting that already in existence in Great Britain.

### International Obligations

- 1.21 The United Kingdom is a signatory to a range of international instruments, the most relevant to this report being the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Convention on Human Rights.
- 1.22 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990 (UNCRC): as well as stating a number of principles which relate to the treatment of children generally, the UNCRC makes particular reference to education in Article 28, which states that:

*“state parties shall recognise the right of the child to education, and, with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular make primary education compulsory and available free to all;*

*encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need.”*

- 1.23 The UNCRC has a number of limitations, including the fact that many of the rights are drafted in very broad terms, and its enforcement mechanisms are limited. In relation to the latter point enforcement is conducted by a system of monitoring where the member state is required to report to a specialist UN panel.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> see Lundy, L. Education Law, Policy and Practice in Northern Ireland 2000 para 1.49

There have to date been two United Kingdom reports submitted.<sup>15</sup> The first of these did not receive a favourable response from the Committee which highlighted the lack of respect for the views of the child to be heard in schools,<sup>16</sup> and the Committee's response to the second report is currently awaited. Additionally, Save the Children in collaboration with the Children's Law Centre in Northern Ireland<sup>17</sup> have issued a report which identifies various ongoing breaches and matters of concern, including education, specific to Northern Ireland, in the most recent report submitted to the UNCRC.

- 1.24 The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) which gives individuals a series of rights, including a right not to be denied education, was ratified by the United Kingdom in 1951, and its provisions were adopted into domestic legislation in the Human Rights Act 1998 which came into force in October 2000.<sup>18</sup> This means that individuals can now have their case heard in the local high courts if their rights are breached. However, there are certain limitations to the ECHR and, with one exception, no major cases related to education have been successful in the United Kingdom.<sup>19</sup> Despite its limitations the ECHR has the potential to play a much greater role in education law in the United Kingdom and it is envisaged that this will increasingly become the case, especially when the Children's Commissioner takes office.

<sup>15</sup> The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UK's First Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (1994) HMSO and the UK's Second Report to the UNCRC, 1999, Executive Summary

<sup>16</sup> Caskey, D. Education Law and Dyslexia 2001 p 14 unpublished research report School of Law QUB

<sup>17</sup> T. Geraghty *Getting it Right?* (Save the Children and the Children's Law Centre, 1999)

<sup>18</sup> *ibid* para 1.61

<sup>19</sup> see Lundy, L. Education Law, Policy and Practice in Northern Ireland 2000 para 1.51

- 1.25 Responsibility for ensuring that Northern Ireland law and practice is in accordance with human rights rests with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC). This body has a range of powers and it was its task to produce the proposal for a Bill of Rights intended to supplement the ECHR.<sup>20</sup> Two issues which have potential ramifications for education are raised here, firstly an obligation on Government and public bodies to 'respect on the basis of equality of treatment, the identity and ethos of both communities in Northern Ireland' and secondly the need for 'a clear formulation of the rights not to be discriminated against and for equality of opportunity in both the public and private sectors'. The second of these could have implications for the provision of education for children with special educational needs in general and dyslexia in particular.
- 1.26 In relation to the protection of children's rights The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) have recently issued a consultation document regarding the establishment of a Commissioner for Children. Such a post would support the culture of promoting and protecting children's rights in Northern Ireland. Despite the fact that there is no specific mention of the education sector in this consultation document the role of a Commissioner for Children would undoubtedly extend into this field and could challenge any potential breaches of the child's right to education as stated in Article 28 (and Article 23 in the case of those with a physical disability or learning difficulties) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## Summary

- 1.27 Special educational needs is one of the most highly regulated areas of education in Northern Ireland and recent changes in the legislation and policy have resulted in improvements in provision for these children. Additionally, though they have limitations, the

---

<sup>20</sup> The Agreement (1998) Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity. Para 4.

UNCRC and the ECHR have raised awareness of children's rights and provide a basis for comparisons across countries. However, despite the changes there are still issues which have been identified in this overview, several of which are specifically related to dyslexia including its definition, identification and assessment, teacher awareness and support and parental concern. Some of these issues are now explored in greater depth in the following chapters.

## Chapter 2:

## DYSLEXIA - AN OVERVIEW

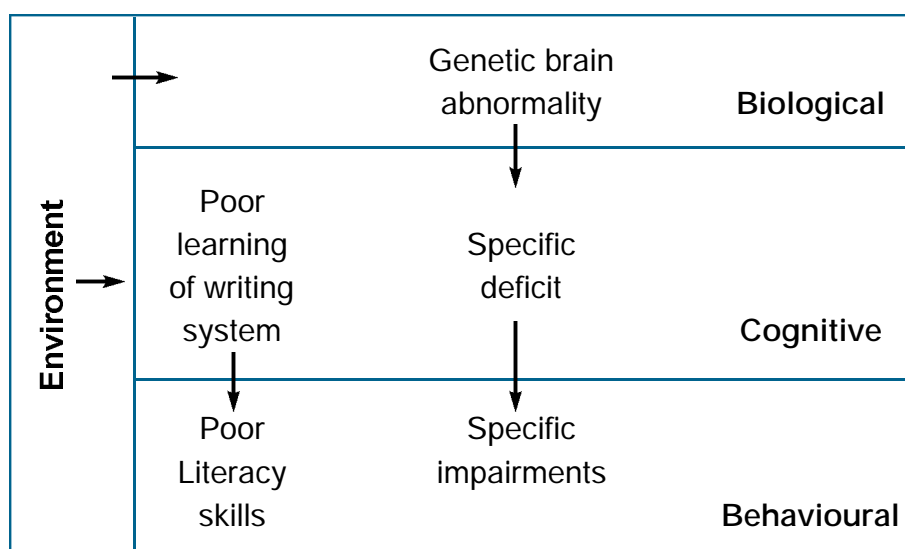
- 2.1 Developmental dyslexia was first described in 1886, in the case of a 14 year old boy who was unable to learn to read. A further study in 1917 attributed such difficulties to “congenital word blindness”. It was not until the 1960s that research moved from the area of medicine into the area of education, with studies into what factors, if any, discriminated between “dyslexic” and “backward readers”.
- 2.2 Since that time, there has been much debate on what causes dyslexia and how it is manifested in those who are thought to have the condition. However, there has been little agreement on a precise definition.
- 2.3 The term “dyslexia” has been generally used within medical/biological research and remains the term preferred by the voluntary groups in this field. However, as Nicholson (2001)<sup>21</sup> points out, this implies that “there is a single relatively uniform syndrome”. Current research indicates that this is not the case. Educationalists, in particular educational psychologists, preferred the term “specific learning difficulties”, indicating that the person had a deficit in *some* of the processes of learning, but not all. Within the USA, during the 1980s, the term dyslexia was replaced with the term “reading disability”. The consequence of this was a shift from an analysis of the process of *learning*, to that of the process of *reading*.

---

<sup>21</sup> Nicholson, R.I. (2001) in A. Fawcett (Ed) *Dyslexia Theory and Good Practice* London: Whurr, (page 5)

## Current Research Findings

- 2.4 One of the difficulties in considering the research into various aspects of dyslexia has been that the studies arise from and are driven by the various models adhered to by the researchers. Results have at times been unconnected, or even conflicting, and led to different understandings of the nature of dyslexia.
- 2.5 Morton and Frith (1995)<sup>22</sup>, and Frith (1997)<sup>23</sup> proposed a Causal Modelling Framework, which permitted these theories to be considered within a common framework. The framework below indicates three levels of an individual's functioning, together with a consideration of relevant environmental factors eg language system, social and emotional factors etc:



- 2.6 The behavioural level deals with the "symptoms" of dyslexia, eg poor reading or spelling, difficulty with rhyme etc.

<sup>22</sup> Morton, J, and Frith, U. (1995): Causal Modelling: A structural approach to developmental psychopathology. In D. Cicchetti and D.J. Cohen (Eds) *Manual of Developmental Psychopathology*, New York: John Wiley and Sons, pages 357 – 90.

<sup>23</sup> Frith, U. (1997): Brain, Mind and Behaviour in Dyslexia. In C. Hulme and M J Snowling (Eds) *Dyslexia: Biology, Cognition and Intervention*, London: Whurr, pages 1 - 19

- 2.7 **The cognitive level** deals with the processes underlying the observed deficits in performance, eg phonological processing, short-term memory deficits, difficulties with automaticity and central processing etc.
- 2.8 **The biological level** seeks to identify the processes within the brain, eg abnormalities in the cerebellum, and in the magnocellular pathways. It also allows consideration of information coming from genetic research into the underlying genetic mechanisms.
- 2.9 It would be helpful to consider the most recent research findings under each of these headings.

### **Behavioural Level**

- 2.10 Research and anecdotal evidence has suggested a number of behaviours that can be observed in people deemed to be dyslexic. These include difficulty with reading and/or spelling, in discriminating between right and left, difficulty in recalling lists of information eg days of the week, telephone numbers. Some information may be omitted, or the sequential order may be incorrect. There are difficulties in phonological tasks, with naming and with spoonerisms. Some find the association between letter name and letter sound difficult to acquire. Many mention clumsiness and difficulties in organisation of information and materials.
- 2.11 These have led to the development of lists of indicators eg Bangor Dyslexia Test, and materials published on the website of the various voluntary support groups. Although they have contributed to the planning of intervention in the identified areas, they tell us little of the processes that underlie the acquisition of these skills.

## Cognitive Level

- 2.12 Work on these cognitive processes seeks to identify those within-child variables that underlie poor reading skills.

## Phonological Skills

- 2.13 Phonology has to do with the sounds of words within a language. The phonological delay/deficit model attributes a person's difficulties in acquiring literacy skills to an underlying weakness in their ability to process sounds accurately eg segmenting words into phonemes, difficulties in retaining strings of sounds or letters in their short-term memory, difficulty in organising their accurate recall, and also naming of items etc. (Snowling 1987<sup>24</sup>, 2001<sup>25</sup>, Stanovitch 1988<sup>26</sup>) Difficulties in learning the grapheme-phoneme system (matching letter to sound) would also fall within this framework level.
- 2.14 At the biological level, these difficulties are considered to arise from differences at the level of brain function, with some genetic predisposition (Frith 1997<sup>27</sup>, Elbro et al 1998)<sup>28</sup>.
- 2.15 Some of these indicators can be observed in pre-school children. The most powerful predictors of later reading and writing skills were those requiring phonological awareness, particularly the

---

<sup>24</sup> Snowling, M.J. 1987: *Dyslexia: A Cognitive Developmental Perspective*. Oxford. Blackwell

<sup>25</sup> Snowling, M. J. (2001): *Dyslexia: 2nd Edition*. Oxford. Blackwell

<sup>26</sup> Stanovitch, K.E. (1988) Explaining the differences between the dyslexic and garden-variety poor reader: the phonological-core variable-difference model. *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 21: pages 590 - 612

<sup>27</sup> Frith, U. (1997): Brain, Mind and Behaviour in Dyslexia. In C. Hulme and M.J. Snowling (Eds) *Dyslexia: Biology, Cognition and Intervention*, London: Whurr, pages 1 - 19

<sup>28</sup> Elbro, C et al (1998) Predicting dyslexia from kindergarten. The importance of distinctness of phonological representations of lexical items. *Reading Research Quarterly* 33: pages 36 – 60.

ability to manipulate phonemes. However, some children displaying these delays go on to acquire good reading skills, and account must be taken of differing rates of maturation, and of the social, emotional and educational environment the children are exposed to (see 2.24). This corresponds to the environmental framework proposed in Frith's model.

- 2.16 Other researchers have looked at differences in short-term memory between dyslexic/non-dyslexic subjects, suggesting that these are linked to inefficient phonological coding. (Hulme et al 1995<sup>29</sup>, Stanovitch et al 1997)<sup>30</sup>.

## Biological Level

### Automaticity

- 2.17 Nicholson and Fawcett's work (1990<sup>31</sup>, 1995<sup>32</sup>) suggests that people with dyslexia also have difficulty with the automatising of skills. It is known that the cerebellum is implicated in any skill becoming an automatic one, and that it also has a role in the acquisition of language.
- 2.18 Nicholson and Fawcett demonstrated that dyslexic children require significantly more time both to acquire a new skill and for it to become automatic. For example, pupils were given a task requiring them to walk along a line. There was no significant

---

<sup>29</sup> Hulme, C et al (1995) Practitioner review: Verbal working memory development and its disorders. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 36, pages 373 – 98.

<sup>30</sup> Stanovitch K.E. et al (1997): Progress in the search for dyslexia subtypes. In C Hulme and M. J. Snowling (Eds) *Dyslexia: Biology, Cognition and Intervention*, London: Whurr, pages 108 - 130

<sup>31</sup> Nicholson, R. I., Fawcett, A. J. (1990) Automaticity: a new framework for dyslexia research? *Cognition* 35(2): pages 159 - 182

<sup>32</sup> Nicholson, R.I., Fawcett, A.J. (1995) Balance, phonological skill and dyslexia: towards the dyslexia early screening test. *Dyslexia Review* 7: pages 43 - 47

difference in their performance and that of a control group. However, when they were asked to count backwards at the same time, their balance became much poorer. It was argued that their need to concentrate on the new task required the balance task to be done automatically. Their cerebellar deficit meant that they were unable to do so, causing their balance to deteriorate. In the control group, the ability to balance was more instinctive, allowing them to concentrate fully on the new task.

- 2.19 In their research, they identified not just phonological difficulties, but also delays/deficits in working memory, speed of processing, motor skills and balance, and in the estimation of time, all of which are connected to cerebellar activity. These deficits can be observed at the behavioural level, and are often reported by parents and teachers.
- 2.20 Fawcett and Nicholson (2000)<sup>33</sup>, in a summary of research findings, indicated that, as well as evidence of cerebellar deficit in function, many dyslexic subjects seemed to by-pass the cerebellum to some extent, with increased frontal lobe activity. This suggested to them that dyslexic pupils relied more on conscious strategies, and may use different methods in sequential learning and automatic performance than non-dyslexics. This has implications for intervention strategies.

### Visual Processing

- 2.21 Research continues into the visual processing skills of dyslexic pupils. They note “visual discomfort” as evidenced by eye-strain and headaches. Stein (1992)<sup>34</sup> notes difficulties in visuo-motor control. Children reported that the letters seemed to move around the page. In fact the children were unable to control the

---

<sup>33</sup> Fawcett, A.J. and Nicholson, R.I. (2000) in A. Fawcett (Ed) *Dyslexia Theory and Good Practice* London: Whurr, pages 89 – 105.

<sup>34</sup> Stein J. F. et al Role of the cerebellum in visual guidance of movement *Physiological Reviews* 72: pages 972 - 1017

movement of their eyes and fixate on the print Garzia et al 1993)<sup>35</sup>. Subsequent research has shown that these motion signals arise from the visual magnocellular system, and that for some dyslexics, this is impaired (Stein et al 2000)<sup>36</sup>. They therefore find it difficult to learn a reliable representation of letters, word segments and whole words (as they appear to move about), making accurate recall problematic.

### Genetic Research

- 2.22 There is growing evidence of a genetic component in dyslexia. Grigorenko (2001)<sup>37</sup> provides an overview of this research. Many studies indicate that if at least one member of the family has developmental dyslexia, there is a higher than normal probability that other members will also have reading problems. Evidence from studies of twins has shown that at least some proportion of developmental dyslexia has a genetic basis, even if the transmission mechanisms are not yet clear.

### **Dyslexia in the Early Years**

- 2.23 There is a body of opinion supported by research suggesting that children who are at risk of developing dyslexia can display indicators before they go to school or shortly after they start primary education. Miles and Miles (1984)<sup>38</sup> investigated the effect of early intervention. They argued that “if dyslexic children are caught early, less time is needed for catching up, while in many cases the children can be helped before frustration sets in”.

---

<sup>35</sup> Garzia R. P. et al (1993) Vision and Reading. *J Opt Vis Dev* 24: pages 4 - 15

<sup>36</sup> Stein J. F. et al (2000) Controversy about the visual magnocellular deficit in developmental dyslexics. *Trends in Cognitive Science* 4: pages 209 - 211

<sup>37</sup> Grigorenko, E. L. (2001) Developmental Dyslexia: an update on genes, brains and environments. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 42: pages 91 – 125

<sup>38</sup> Miles, T. R. and Miles, E. (1984) Teaching needs of seven year old dyslexic pupils. Department for Education and Science, London

- 2.24 Chasty (1996)<sup>39</sup> maintains that schools represent the most critical period for diagnosis. The earlier the diagnosis and the more immediate the help, the less serious the damage to the child. Although the Task Group recognises that the formal diagnosis of dyslexia at an early age would not be appropriate, it is agreed that certain warning signs or difficulties can be observed and responded to long before the diagnosis of dyslexia can be appropriately applied. (See 2.15).
- 2.25 The Code of Practice (1998) places an emphasis on early identification and support. It clearly states that the school and teacher have statutory duties and responsibilities to identify and assess a child with special educational needs as soon as possible. The Task Group would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the concerns raised in paragraph 1.14 regarding the lack of teacher expertise in the identification and support of pupils with dyslexic tendencies.
- 2.26 The Group recommends effective early intervention to minimise the risk of children suffering the negative experience of academic failure and associated consequences.

### **Dyslexia in Different Linguistic Systems**

- 2.27 Research in this field is developing, but it should be noted that not all studies are using the same criteria for definition of dyslexia, making it difficult to compare incidence levels from one language to another. The initial research was with English speaking populations, and English is known to be one of the most orthographically irregular languages. Some of the more orthographically regular languages have a lower incidence reported.

---

<sup>39</sup> Chasty H. (1996) Review of Dyslexia: an avoidable national tragedy. Channel 4 documentary. Hopeline Videos, London

2.28 Grigorenko's<sup>40</sup> review of this area of research concludes that dyslexia appears to be independent of race and social background. She maintains that there is now sufficient evidence to say that

- phonological approaches are universal aspects of the development of literacy in many languages *and*
- understanding of the phonological structure of words is an important predictor of reading success in many languages.

However, there remains the question of how to diagnose dyslexia in a way that is compatible with the work going on elsewhere.

### Discrepancy Model

2.29 Many researchers have adopted the discrepancy model to select dyslexic participants. This is based on the apparent link between intelligence and reading skill, whereby generally more able children learn to read more quickly than less able children.

2.30 By a statistical process known as regression, it is possible to predict a child's expected reading age, given their chronological age and IQ. This can then be compared with their actual reading age, and the statistical significance of the difference calculated. In practice, where the actual reading age is lower than would be expected, and the difference is statistically significant at the 95% level, the child could be considered to be dyslexic ie have a *specific* learning difficulty with reading.

---

<sup>40</sup> Grigorenko, E. L. (2001) Developmental Dyslexia: an update on genes, brains and environments. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 42: pages 91 – 125.

- 2.31 In contrast, poor readers are those pupils who have a measurable delay in their reading level (usually more than one standard deviation below the mean for the general population at their age) but where the difference between their expected reading age and actual reading age is not statistically significant ie their performance is in line with what could be predicted given their age and IQ.
- 2.32 This approach has been the subject of considerable criticism. Snowling (2000)<sup>41</sup> points out that it is open to be over-inclusive. For example, a pupil who does *no* reading is unlikely to have a reading age in line with their predicted score. However, the discrepancy is just as likely to be as a result of lack of reading experience, as of dyslexia.
- 2.33 Stanovitch (1986<sup>42</sup>, 1991<sup>43</sup>) argues against the use of IQ in the definition of dyslexia. He points out that the verbal skills of poor readers tend to decline as a consequence of their limited reading experience. If this is the case, then their lowered verbal IQ will predict a lower expected reading age, and may not give a statistically significant difference. The discrepancy model may fail to identify these pupils, even though they have real difficulty with reading. Equally, pupils who have learned to read but continue to have significant spelling or writing difficulties will be missed, unless these skills are included in the criteria.
- 2.34 Snowling (2000)<sup>44</sup> recommends that if the discrepancy approach is used, then it should be supplemented by positive diagnostic markers that will allow practitioners to identify children who show

---

<sup>41</sup> Snowling M. J. (2000) in *Dyslexia*: 2nd edition. Oxford. Blackwell

<sup>42</sup> Stanovitch, K. E. (1986) Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly* 16: pages 360 - 364

<sup>43</sup> Stanovitch, K. E. (1991) Discrepancy Definitions of reading disability: has intelligence led us astray?. *Reading Research Quarterly* 26: pages 7 - 29

<sup>44</sup> Snowling, M. J. (2000) in *Dyslexia*: 2nd edition. Oxford. Blackwell

early or residual signs of dyslexia that require intervention. They should not rely solely on the extent of the child's reading problem.

## Definitions

2.35 These have ranged widely over the years. To date there remains no universally accepted definition within the UK. The most recent are considered below.

2.36 British Dyslexia Association 1996<sup>45</sup>:

*Dyslexia is a complex neurological condition which is constitutional in origin. The symptoms may affect many areas of learning and function, and may be described as a specific difficulty in reading, spelling and written language. One or more of these areas may be affected. Numeracy, notational skills (music), motor function and organisational skills may also be involved. However, it is particularly related to mastering written language, although oral skills may be affected to some degree.*

2.37 The BDA considers the syndrome to be neurological and constitutional ie within child, rather than an interaction between the child and its learning environment. They consider the difficulties to be specific (ie some areas are not affected) but indicate that they can be manifested more widely than in reading alone, reflecting the experience of many parents and teachers. However, there are no objective criteria for positive diagnosis.

---

<sup>45</sup> British Dyslexia Association @ [www.bda.co.uk](http://www.bda.co.uk) and associated publication

2.38 British Psychological Society 1999<sup>46</sup>:

*Dyslexia is apparent when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the “word level” and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities. It provides the basis for a staged process of assessment through teaching.*

2.39 The BPS Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) Working Group’s focus was on younger school-aged children. It removes any consideration of cognitive ability, but again lacks objective criteria for identification.

2.40 The advantage of the BPS approach is the emphasis on the child’s access to “appropriate learning opportunities”. It moves from being a condition within the child, to an interaction between the child and its learning environment. Reason (2001)<sup>47</sup> elaborates on the background to this work, and its implications for learning and assessment. There is the expectation that the teaching programme will be adjusted regularly on the basis of the child’s response to instruction. Diagnostic assessment can and should be carried out by the child’s teachers at Stages 1 and 2 of the Code of Practice, facilitating early intervention, without the need to wait for an external assessment from psychologists at Stage 3.

---

<sup>46</sup> British Psychological Society (1999) dyslexia, Literacy and Phonological Assessment: report of a Working Party of the Division of Educational and child Psychology of the British Psychological Society, Leicester, BPS

<sup>47</sup> Reason, R. (2001) Educational practice and dyslexia: The Psychologist 14, 6, pages 1 - 4

- 2.41 However, this definition has been criticised as too narrow by Nicholson (2001)<sup>48</sup>. He argues that most dyslexic children do eventually learn to read. They still continue to have dyslexia, however. Practitioners and in particular teachers of these pupils maintain that their difficulties are much further reaching than just at the word level, and would argue that account needs to be taken of their difficulties in recall, short-term memory, poor organisational skills etc. This too would need to be assessed and included in any learning plan for it to be effective.
- 2.42 The definition is also of limited use to those wishing to consider identification and early intervention with pre-school children, or with adult dyslexics who have achieved reading but continue to have considerable difficulty with literacy and numeracy tasks, study skills, organisational skills etc.
- 2.43 **The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (1998)<sup>49</sup>:**

The Code of Practice uses both “dyslexia” and “specific learning difficulties” and defines the condition through a number of indicators:

*Some children may have significant difficulties in reading, writing, spelling or manipulating numbers, which is not typical of their general level of performance, especially in other areas of the curriculum. They may gain some skills in some subjects quickly and demonstrate a high level of ability orally, yet may encounter sustained difficulty in gaining literacy or numeracy skills. Such children can become severely frustrated and may also have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.*

---

<sup>48</sup> Nicholson, R.I. (2001) in A Fawcett (Ed) *Dyslexia Theory and Good Practice* London: Whurr, (page 24)

<sup>49</sup> Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (1998) DENI

2.44 To determine whether the pupil's needs are significant and complex, the Code then suggests that evidence be sought from the school, asking whether, for example, there are

- significant discrepancies between attainments in different programmes of study, or within the same programme
- expectations of the child which are significantly above their attainments in reading, spelling or mathematics
- evidence of clumsiness, sequencing difficulties, visual perceptual difficulties
- evidence of behavioural difficulties

This implies both the use of indicators, such as those outlined by the BDA in their published materials, *and* the use of a discrepancy model.

2.45 Many practitioners within Northern Ireland prefer a definition that is broader than that of the BPS, permitting consideration of a wider range of factors than difficulties at the word level.

2.46 Republic of Ireland Task Force on Dyslexia<sup>50</sup>:

This group proposes the following definition of dyslexia:

*Dyslexia is manifested in a continuum of specific learning difficulties related to the acquisition of basic skills in reading, spelling, writing and/or number, such difficulties being unexpected in relation to an individual's other abilities.*

---

<sup>50</sup> Republic of Ireland Task Force on Dyslexia: 2001. Draft report

*Dyslexia can be characterised at the neurological, cognitive and behavioural levels. It is typically described by inefficient information processing, including difficulties in phonological processing, working memory, rapid naming and automaticity of basic skills. Difficulties in organisation, sequencing, and motor skills may also be present.*

2.47 The ROI Task Force also recognises that learning difficulties associated with dyslexia

- occur across the lifespan, and may manifest themselves in different ways at different ages;
- may be associated with early spoken language difficulties;
- may be alleviated by appropriate intervention;
- increase or reduce in severity depending on environmental factors;
- occur in all socio-economic circumstances;
- co-exist with other learning difficulties such as Attention Deficit Disorder, and may or may not represent a primary difficulty.

2.48 They also recognise that, since the difficulties presented by students with dyslexia range along a continuum from mild to severe, they require a continuum of interventions and other services.

## 2.49 Recommendations

The Northern Ireland Task Group endorses the ROI definition:

*Dyslexia is manifested in a continuum of specific learning difficulties related to the acquisition of basic skills in reading, spelling, writing and/or number, such difficulties being unexpected in relation to an individual's other abilities. Dyslexia can be characterised at the neurological, cognitive and behavioural levels. It is typically described by inefficient information processing, including difficulties in phonological processing, working memory, rapid naming and automaticity of basic skills. Difficulties in organisation, sequencing, and motor skills may also be present.*

It more comprehensively reflects the theoretical position held by most practitioners in Northern Ireland.

In addition, it is our strongly held view that there is a range of difficulties presented by students with dyslexia, from mild to severe, and that there should be a range of interventions to address these needs.

- The Group recommends effective early intervention to minimise the risk of children suffering the negative experience of academic failure and associated consequences.
- It is essential that these interventions include whole school policies, within-class approaches and individual interventions at Stages 1 and 2 of the Code of Practice, as well as the type of external support available through the various ELB Services, as outlined in Chapter 3.
- In view of the recent developments in various fields of research, the Task Group recommends the convening of a regional conference to disseminate these findings.

## Chapter 3:

## CURRENT PROVISION

- 3.1 Within the staged approach of the Code of Practice, all children with special educational needs should have these identified and addressed through school-based interventions, with additional external assessment and support where appropriate. All five Education and Library Boards (ELBs) provide peripatetic or outreach support to pupils with a variety of learning difficulties.

The information gathered in Tables 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 indicates that there is variation in access criteria, provision, service structure and qualifications of support teachers across the five Boards.

- 3.2 With regard to pupils with dyslexia, all five Boards use the discrepancy model (see para 2.29 et seq) to identify those who are eligible to access external support. The Boards have retained this approach, despite concern about its theoretical validity, in order to allocate available resources in an equitable manner. This model has the advantage of being transparent in terms of measurable criteria, using tests normed in the UK. It is considered to be consistent and defensible, should the case be taken to an SEN Tribunal. The North Eastern Education and Library Board uses IQ level as one of a range of criteria, but set at a lower level than the other ELBs. This Board targets its support to all pupils within mainstream schools who are exhibiting severe literacy difficulties, whether or not they could be considered as "dyslexic".
- 3.3 The other four ELBs (Belfast, South Eastern, Southern and Western) retain funding to provide additional support services to those more able pupils (traditionally considered as dyslexic) who meet the criteria at either Stage 3 or Stage 5 of the Code of Practice, as described in the next chapter. In these Board areas, the responsibility to support those pupils with dyslexic tendencies who do not meet the criteria remains with their own schools, funded through their LMS budgets.

**Table 3.1.1.1 Access Criteria and Provision Across Education and Library Board  
May 2001**

ELB	Criteria	Provision – Stage 3	Provision – Stage 5	Pre-school Provision
<b>BELB</b>	<p>Cognitive ability: Verbal, Performance, Full-scale IQ 90+</p> <p>WISC/WORD discrepancy at 0.04 level of significance</p> <p>EPs provide: – Predicted score for reading, spelling and comprehension</p> <p>Difference Frequency</p> <p>From these scores pupils are ranked in order of severity for support</p>	<p>164 pupils receive support for SpLD at Stage 3 / P4–P7</p> <p>Each teacher supports approximately 17 pupils</p> <p>1 year support initially &gt; review by peripatetic teacher and Educational Psychologist &gt; possibly another year</p> <p>2 periods of 40/45 minutes per week</p> <p>Lowest ranked pupils are tested and school staff receive advice and support from Literacy Centre staff-on request</p> <p>After 2 years of peripatetic support &gt; review by EP &gt; if severe/persistent, placement in Harberton Reading Centre</p> <p>Post-primary pupils do not receive teaching support from Peripatetic Support Service.</p> <p>Peripatetic staff and Literacy Centre staff are well resourced.</p>	<p>A small number of children with specific learning difficulties are statedented and supported by the Outreach Learning Support Service.</p>	<p>There is no structured pre-school provision.</p>

**Table 3.1.1.1 Access Criteria and Provision Across Education and Library Board (continued)**  
**May 2001**

<b>ELB</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Provision – Stage 3</b>	<b>Provision – Stage 5</b>	<b>Pre-school Provision</b>
<b>NEELB</b>	<p>Criteria:                      IQ of 70 or above                      Reading Age less than 8 years                      Reading Age at or below 4 percentile                      Discrepancy (Predicted/Actual) at 2% frequency</p>	<p>200 + primary pupils receive 1:1 support / P3-P7                      Pupils whose teaching begins in P7 may have teaching in Y8 and pupils whose teaching begins in Y8 may have teaching in Y9.                      Support is for a maximum of 6 terms or Reading Age – 8yrs                      2 periods of approx. 45 minutes per week                      Each teacher supports approximately 20 pupils                      There is advice to the school for pupils beyond Y9.                      Staff do not have laptops / otherwise quite well resourced</p>	<p>Following a maximum of 6 terms intervention-school takes initiative and may request statementing.                      Post Primary provision – pupils with statements receive either 3 hours direct teaching or 10 hours classroom assistance (choice made by school).</p>	<p>There is no structured pre-school provision.</p>
<b>SEELB</b>	<p>Full scale verbal IQ 90+                      Attainments 20% below chronological age or standard score 80 or less on WORD                      WISC/WORD discrepancy less than 2% frequency</p>	<p>134 primary pupils receive in-reach part-time support for SpLD at Stage 3 (P4-P7). Sessions are held at Cottown and Beechlawm Reading Centres and at Killinchy PS and Lisnasharragh PS                      Part-time support consists of 3 sessions of 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> hrs per week for 1 year &gt; review by Educational Psychologist &gt; full-time support at Beechlawm for a further year (not Cottown) &gt; review by Educational Psychologist                      Outreach small group support is offered by Beechlawm Reading Centre                      Advice is available to the pupil's post primary school in terms of strategies etc.</p>	<p>A pupil with a statement receives either 1 hour of 1:1 teaching time from the SpLD Support Service or 2 hours funded teaching to the school.</p>	<p>There is no structured pre-school provision.</p>

**Table 3.1.1.1 Access Criteria and Provision Across Education and Library Board (continued)**  
**May 2001**

ELB	Criteria	Provision – Stage 3	Provision – Stage 5	Pre-school Provision
<b>SELB</b>	<p>Cognitive ability:                      Significant areas of functioning lie at or above 25<sup>th</sup> Centile</p> <p>WORD/MISC discrepancy in one or more areas – significant at 1% or 5% level</p> <p>Priority given to most severe cases</p>	<p>1 year of peripatetic support &gt; review by Educational Psychologist &gt; second year of peripatetic support &gt; review by Educational Psychologist &gt; Reading Centre (max of 2 years)</p> <p>Peripatetic – 2 sessions of 35/40 minutes per week</p> <p>Reading Centres – 2 sessions of 90 minutes per week (groups of 2)</p> <p>188 primary pupils receive peripatetic 1:1 support at Stage 3 and 26 more receive support at Reading Centres in groups of 3 (P4-P7)</p> <p>67 post primary pupils receive 1:1 support (Y8-Y12)</p> <p>10 post primary pupils receive advice and support</p> <p>(From 1.9.01 post primary teaching support will be available for Y8 pupils only.</p> <p>Advice and support will be available for older pupils.)</p> <p>All peripatetic teachers are equipped with laptops and Reading Centres are well resourced</p>	<p>Pupils who continue to have serious difficulties with literacy after support in Y8 will be statedented and receive either 2 sessions of teaching support per week from a peripatetic teacher or the school will receive 2 hours funded teaching time.</p>	<p>There is no structured pre-school provision.</p>

**Table 3.1.1 Access Criteria and Provision Across Education and Library Board (continued)**  
**May 2001**

<b>ELB</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Provision – Stage 3</b>	<b>Provision – Stage 5</b>	<b>Pre-school Provision</b>
<b>WELB</b>	<p>Cognitive ability:                      Verbal, Performance,                      Full-scale IQ 95+                      WISC/WORD                      discrepancy at 0.05                      level of significance or                      cognitive                      ability/attainment                      discrepancy 20 points                      and positive indicators                      of dyslexia</p> <p>With young children a                      more predictive test is                      used eg DEST</p>	<p>Approximately 260 primary pupils receive support for, SpLD at Stage 3</p> <p>Support from 1 term &gt; 4 terms                      1 morning or afternoon each week</p> <p>From 1 &gt; 5 pupils in a group/normally 3</p> <p>Following a maximum of 4 terms teaching support/school can request advice and support.                      Child can be re-referred</p> <p>Post primary pupils do not normally receive support from the peripatetic service</p> <p>Peripatetic teachers share laptops / 1 between 3 (more have been requested)</p> <p>Bases are quite well resourced.</p>	<p>Primary pupils are not statemented for SpLD</p> <p>Occasionally a pupil will receive teaching support from the peripatetic service</p>	<p>There is no structured pre-school provision.</p>

**Table 3.1.2 Structure and Staffing of Support Services across Education and Library Boards  
May 2001**

<b>ELB</b>	<b>Structure of Service/s</b>	<b>Staffing</b>	<b>Range of Qualifications</b>	<b>Support for Parents</b>
<b>BELB</b>	Assistant Senior Education Officer > Head of Service (Specific Learning Difficulties, Sensory Impaired) All psychologists involved – each Educational Psychologist refers children from their delegated schools.	10 full-time teachers which includes 2 Senior Teachers and Head of Service Head of Service teaches part time Senior Teachers are responsible for the Resource Centre/administration respectively, plus full teaching programme.	All teachers have Post-grad SEN qualifications (DASE, Masters, Advanced Certificate, all with elements of Specific Learning Difficulties) 1 teacher – RSA Certificate (SplD), 1 teacher – Primary Movement, 1 teacher – Phono-Graphix (Whole team to be trained in Phono-Graphix- Aug 01)	Parent booklet “Guide for Parents”. Parents can visit teacher during teaching sessions subject to appointment. Parents can make appointment to discuss child’s progress at Literacy Centre and receive advice
<b>NEELB</b>	Principal Educational Psychologist > Senior Teachers All Educational Psychologists involved-referral at Stage 3 > assessment > pupil referrals made direct to Literacy Teaching Support Service Senior Teachers	15 peripatetic teachers including 2 Senior Teachers 1 seconded teacher for Stage 5 pupils – Inreach	3 teachers – RSA Diploma (SplD) All have qualifications in SEN and are trained in Reading Recovery. Some qualifications include elements of Specific Learning Difficulties. Senior teachers received First Steps Tutor training.	Leaflet for parents. Initial meetings prior to teaching/attend meeting to review Individual Education Plan. Encourage parents to observe lesson.

**Table 3.1.2 Structure and Staffing of Support Services across Education and Library Boards (continued)**  
**May 2001**

<b>ELB</b>	<b>Structure of Service/s</b>	<b>Staffing</b>	<b>Range of Qualifications</b>	<b>Support for Parents</b>
<b>SEELB</b>	Assistant Senior Education Officer > Principals of Longstone and Beechlawn > Co-ordinators of Cottown and Beechlawn Reading Centres All Educational Psychologists involved in referrals at Stage 3 > assessment > Educational Psychologist and Principal decide if support is appropriate	Cottown - 4 teachers Beechlawn – 9 teachers + 1 full-time temporary	2 teachers – RSA Diploma (SpLD) 1 teacher – RSA Certificate (SpLD) 1 teacher – MA (with elements of SpLD) Other teachers have range of SEN qualifications (4 include elements of SpLD) or considerable experience in teaching Specific Learning Difficulties.	Ongoing communications with parents from Cottown and Beechlawn for children on part-time and full-time courses. Parent focus groups/practical work-shop sessions. Leaflets, information sheets etc. Dyslexia booklet.
<b>SELB</b>	Assistant Senior Education Officer > Senior Educational Psychologist / Assistant Advisory Officer All Educational Psychologists involved > assessment > referrals to Senior Educational Psychologist and Assistant Advisory Officer	10 full-time permanent teachers, 5 permanent job share, 7 full-time temporary and one part-time temporary. Three more teachers support SpLD pupils for half of their timetable. (Five of the full-time permanent staff have recently been promoted to Senior Teachers) Each full-time teacher supports approx. 14 pupils As from 1.9.01 the five Senior Teachers will be based at Reading Centres, the remainder will be peripatetic	2 Senior Teachers – RSA Diploma (SpLD) 1 Senior Teacher – RSA Certificate (SpLD) 1 teacher – RSA Certificate (SpLD) Others have various SEN qualifications, a few with SpLD elements All teachers have Phono-Graphix qualifications	Initial meetings. Booklets, information sheets. Ongoing liaison with parents.

**Table 3.1.2 Structure and Staffing of Support Services across Education and Library Boards (continued)**  
**May 2001**

<b>ELB</b>	<b>Structure of Service/s</b>	<b>Staffing</b>	<b>Range of Qualifications</b>	<b>Support for Parents</b>
<b>WELB</b>	<p>Assistant Senior Education Officer &gt; Education Officer &gt; Head of Service (Specific Learning Difficulties, Sensory Impaired, Pre-school)</p> <p>3 Senior Educational Psychologists service Enniskillen, Derry, Strabane + Omagh</p>	<p>Support Service has 16 full-time permanent teachers and 1 full-time temporary teacher</p> <p>2 Senior Teachers have been appointed</p> <p>Each teacher supports 18 pupils; some are taught individually and some in small groups.</p>	<p>1 teacher – Advanced Certificate in Special Education</p> <p>1 teacher MA</p> <p>Some other teachers have SEN qualifications with elements of Specific Learning Difficulties</p> <p>1 teacher trained in Reading Recovery</p> <p>14 teachers received First Steps Tutor training.</p>	<p>Weekly liaison with parents who bring pupils to Reading Centres.</p> <p>Parents Evenings/Open Afternoon/Parent Pack/ brochures etc.</p> <p>Annual Public Information Day in the Derry Reading Centre.</p> <p>New initiative – Parents of pupils who are on the Waiting List are contacted and given an advisory session and the Parent Pack.</p>

- 3.4 One of the tasks given to the Regional Strategy Group on Special Educational Needs has been the drafting of agreed criteria for Statutory Assessments across the five ELBs, and this report is now undergoing equality screening and impact assessment. It includes criteria for specific literacy difficulties, and has reached a consensus position for the pilot year. However, the report acknowledges the existence of strongly held, but conflicting, theoretical positions within Northern Ireland.

It is expected that further work on Stage 3 criteria, looking at both policy and provision, will be requested during 2001-2002.

- 3.5 Having considered the contents of Tables 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, the Task Group concludes that
- there is variation in the availability and nature of provision, resulting from geographical factors
  - there is no structured pre-school provision
  - access criteria for provision vary across ELBs due to different theoretical standpoints
  - the support given to pupils varies across and within Board areas
  - the structure of each ELB service varies
  - the number of peripatetic/outreach support staff varies, as do pupil/teacher ratios
  - there is a lack of uniformity in peripatetic/outreach support, staff qualifications and experience
  - the level and amount of information offered to parents varies across the ELBs.

- 3.6 The Task Group is concerned at the very limited nature of provision at post-primary level, and by the general uncertainty regarding effective forms of intervention for these pupils and students.

### **Further and Higher Education**

- 3.7 The Task Group's audit of the identification process, the structure and the staffing of support services for pupils with dyslexia at Further Education and Higher Education level produced the information contained in Tables 3.7.1 and 3.7.2. The Task Group concludes that

- there are still a significant number of students enrolling whose needs have not been identified during their schooling
- the onus is on students to self-declare, and anecdotal evidence indicates that many are reluctant to do so. They need to feel confident that this will not prejudice their application
- if they do not self-declare, they may remain unidentified, and cannot access the support available
- there is limited access to psychological assessment
- the Task Group regrets that SCRIBE (a training programme for voice recognition software) is no longer available, due to lack of funding. It would seem important that this or similar provision is made available across FE and HE.

**Table 3.7.1 Identification, Support and Staffing at Further Education Level**

Institutions	Identification/Assessment	Support/Funding	Personnel/Qualifications
<p><b>Audit of FE Colleges</b></p>	<p>Students mostly declare their dyslexia on enrolment forms, self refer or are referred by a tutor.</p> <p>The subsequent route differs across colleges - often to a team leader and then to the Learning Support Co-ordinator or via a SpLD Committee rep from the Department.</p> <p>Interviews and assessment follow, sometimes informal with a personal or basic skills tutor</p> <p>or by using Studyscan before referral for a formal assessment.</p> <p>Formal assessment is mostly by an external educational psychologist, although one institute employs their own.</p> <p>Assessments are also carried out by the Educational Guidance Centre for Adults, the NI Dyslexia Centre or by using institutional staff with the OCR Diploma in SpLD.</p>	<p>12 institutions support students with individual tuition</p> <p>6 use computers and specialised software such as TextHelp or Kurzweil Reader</p> <p>4 screen/assess</p> <p>4 have special examination arrangements</p> <p>1 gives no support because of untrained staff.</p> <p><b>Funding</b></p> <p>11 institutions report that the support is funded by the DENI Additional Special Funding</p> <p>2 are funded by the college Learning Support budget</p> <p>1 has access to weighted FTE/T&amp;EA funding</p>	<p>5 institutions use a dyslexia support team or a professionally qualified tutor</p> <p>3 use course tutors</p> <p>3 use specialist tutors</p> <p>2 use ABE tutors</p> <p>1 uses a tutor trained in Primary Movement</p> <p>1 uses a team consisting of a Learning Support Co-ordinator, dyslexia support tutor and staff.</p> <p><b>Qualifications</b></p> <p>2 colleges have no staff with specialist qualifications</p> <p>7 have either 1 or 2 staff with OCR Certificate or Diploma</p> <p>1 has a staff member with the RSA Dip Teaching Literacy Skills to Adults</p> <p>1 has an Educational Psychologist</p> <p>1 has Primary Movement Certificate</p> <p>1 has Advanced Diploma in SEN</p>



**Table 3.7.2 Identification, Support and Staffing at Higher Education Level**

University	Identification/Assessment	Support	Funding
UU	<p>Students either identify dyslexia on their UCAS form or may at a later stage self refer.</p> <p>They may be referred to Student Support by a tutor as possibly dyslexic.</p> <p>Following an initial screening, the chartered psychologist conducts a formal assessment using WAIS III and WORD or WRAT, then writes a report plus a needs assessment for UU and the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).</p>	<p>Support consists of :</p> <p>Individual help from a chartered psychologist on more effective learning strategies.</p> <p>Academic support within lectures.</p> <p>Special exam arrangements.</p> <p>Training in voice recognition software.</p> <p>Assistance with the DSA to purchase computers and appropriate software.</p> <p>Non-medical help - readers and dyslexia support tutors from a Register of Support Workers.</p>	<p>Funding for the individual helpers comes from the DSA.</p> <p>The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) provides additional monies to the university in relation to the number of disabled students claiming DSA.</p>

**Table 3.7.2 Identification, Support and Staffing at Higher Education Level (continued)**

University	Identification/Assessment	Support	Funding
<p><b>QUB</b></p>	<p>Students identify dyslexia on their UCAS or application form or may at a later stage self refer or be referred to the disability officer by a tutor as possibly dyslexic.</p> <p>The Disability Services Co-ordinator screens and then, if necessary refers the student to an external consultant psychologist for assessment.</p> <p>The Disability Services Co-ordinator organises DSA.</p>	<p>Educational psychologist's report is implemented within the university.</p> <p>The Disability Services Co-ordinator organises special examination arrangements and assistance with DSA applications for computer equipment and non medical help from the joint Register of Support Workers.</p> <p>Individual support comes mainly through the non medical helper. These helpers include readers, notetakers, IT and Maths tutors, typists, library helpers, educational psychologists and dyslexia support tutors. The latter have the OCR Certificate or Diploma in SpLD.</p>	<p>Funding for the individual helpers comes from the Disabled Students Allowance.</p> <p>DEL provides additional monies to the university in relation to the number of disabled students claiming DSA.</p>

**Table 3.7.2 Identification, Support and Staffing at Higher Education Level (continued)**

University	Identification/Assessment	Support	Funding
<p><b>Stranmillis University College</b></p>	<p>Students either identify dyslexia on their UCAS form or are facilitated at a later stage to self refer and access support from within the university college and from a range of external agencies with which the university college has constant links. The Director Student Affairs arranges for further professional assessment and supports the student in accessing support via the DSA.</p>	<p>Professional advice is accessed through the Director (Student Affairs) who organises special examination arrangements and supports application for the DSA which has provided voice recognition software, voice recorders and supporting materials.</p> <p>Additional specialist support can be made available via the QUB Disability Support Officer. Students can receive specialist training from the SCRIBE<sup>1</sup> project team based at UJJ in the use of specialist software. The University College has a designated facility with PC and voice recognition software for the use of students with a range of specific learning difficulties.</p>	<p>Funding for the individual helpers comes from the Disabled Students Allowance. DEL provides additional monies to the University College to help it improve access and facilities for students with disabilities.</p>

<sup>1</sup> SCRIBE is a project to provide voice recognition training for people with disabilities, using appropriate software. Further information can be found at [www.infj.ulst.ac.uk/scribe/](http://www.infj.ulst.ac.uk/scribe/)

**Table 3.7.2 Identification, Support and Staffing at Higher Education Level (continued)**

University	Identification/Assessment	Support	Funding
<p><b>St Mary's University College</b></p>	<p>Students are encouraged to self-declare on the application form at the point of application. They are further encouraged to self-declare during the period of induction and to contact Student Services in respect of any felt need. The College accepts and implements the outcomes to the Psychological Assessment held by the student from the appropriate Education and Library Board from the period of compulsory education.</p>	<p>The College acts upon the Psychological Assessment held by the student. Where necessary appropriate special examination arrangements are put into place. Assistance is offered to apply for DSA and to gain access to computer equipment. Within the College, through the disability policy photocopying is offered free of charge to individual students. All staff are alerted to the needs of the student, and advised that special consideration and support should be offered in respect of spelling grammar and handwriting in both examinations and coursework. The Examinations Officer is alerted to the needs of the student.</p>	<p>DEL provides access monies to the College and students experiencing disabilities are among the priority students for consideration in respect of the access funds. Further assistance is offered to students to apply for access through DSA.</p>

### 3.8 Recommendations

The Task Group recommends that

- pupils should have access to a continuum of provision that meets their needs, throughout their education, regardless of age or geographical location
- as a matter of urgency, the five ELBs should agree a theoretical perspective and access criteria to inform the future development of provision and support
- further research into effective forms of intervention and support should be commissioned at all phases but with particular urgency at the post-primary level
- a provision such as SCRIBE be made available across FE and HE.

## Chapter 4:

## TEACHER TRAINING AND TRAINING NEEDS

### Initial Teacher Education

- 4.1 Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is provided by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and participating schools, with HEI assuming the lead role. Whilst there is no accredited training in dyslexia, all provision for ITE follows the Northern Ireland Teacher Education Committee (NITEC) competence framework, within which competence in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs, including dyslexia, is embedded.
- 4.2 In the University Colleges, final year BEd students may select a module in Special Educational Needs, within which they may opt for a placement with dyslexic pupils.
- 4.3 Similarly, within QUB, PGCE students can do a voluntary certificate in Special Educational Needs, which includes a session on dyslexia.
- 4.4 The Task Group notes that in the partnership between HEIs and schools, there is no formal agreement that students gain specific experience of working with pupils with dyslexia during the school placements.

### Continuing Professional Development

- 4.5 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the universities provides named M-level awards in special education with modules which have components relating to dyslexia. A module specifically on dyslexia is available at Queen's University. All CPD courses are voluntary, outside school hours and usually personally funded.

### **Current Training in Dyslexia provided by the ELBs**

- 4.6 The Task Group also audited the training within the five ELBs. The purpose of the audit was to ascertain the specific training delivered to teachers and to document the range of additional support and advice which is offered by other agencies, for 1999/2000 and 2000/2001.
- 4.7 The information provided by the ELBs indicated that Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) officers, Educational Psychologists and Peripatetic/outreach support teachers have delivered limited training on dyslexia across the ELBs. An audit of the training on dyslexia has highlighted the differences between boards. (See Tables 4.7.1 and 4.7.2).
- 4.8 The Task Group notes that there is a variation in the extent of INSET support available to schools across the ELBs.

### **Additional Courses**

- 4.9 A small number of teachers attend training courses/conferences in dyslexia organised by NASEN (National Association for Special Educational Needs), NIDA (Northern Ireland Dyslexia Association) and DADS (Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Support). However, such conferences are voluntary, outside school hours and often personally funded.

### **Accredited Training Courses available within Northern Ireland**

- 4.10 A range of accredited training courses is available in the UK. However, not all are easily accessible, as they require extended placement outside Northern Ireland. Listed below are those courses currently running in Northern Ireland, and those distance-learning courses which could be facilitated by visiting tutors.

**Table 4.7.1 Inservice training for Teachers: Dyslexia 1999 - 2000**

Organisation	INSET Title	Duration	Target Audience	Presenter(s)	Numbers	Other Training
<b>BELB</b>	"Dyslexia and Dyscalculia"	1 day course delivered twice	Primary Post-Primary SENCOS	Guest Speaker	64 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Clusters delivered by peripatetic service</li> <li>■ Advice and support at Resource Centre</li> </ul>
<b>NEELB</b>	"Coping with Dyslexia"	2 half day courses	Teachers with a pupil statemented for dyslexia	SEN AAO LTSS Field Officer	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ LTSS Field Officer supported teachers in school</li> </ul>
<b>SELB</b>						
<b>SEELB</b>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Advice and support from Beechlawn Reading Centre and Cottown Outreach</li> <li>■ Clusters delivered from Beechlawn Reading Centre</li> </ul>
<b>WELB</b>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Clusters organised by Peripatetic Service</li> </ul>

**Table 4.7.2 Inservice training for Teachers: Dyslexia 2000 2001**

Organisation	INSET Title	Duration	Target Audience	Presenter(s)	Numbers	Other Training
<b>BELB</b>	"Dyslexia and Dyscalculia"	1 day course delivered 3 times	Primary, Post-Primary SENCos	Guest Speaker	28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ School based INSET by psychologists</li> </ul>
					33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Advice and support at Resource Centre</li> </ul>
<b>NEELB</b>	"Understanding Dyslexia"	2 day courses delivered 3 times	Primary and Post-Primary SENCos	CASS EPS LTSS	80 primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Advice and support to schools from LTSS</li> </ul>
					25 post-primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ LTSS seconded officer to support schools</li> </ul>
<b>SELB</b>	"The Dyslexic Adolescent"	1 day	Peripatetic teachers and post-primary SENCos	Guest Speaker Learning Support	150	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Advice and support at Reading Centres</li> </ul>
<b>SEELB</b>	Dyslexia	1 day	MLD unit teachers Primary and Post-Primary SENCos	EPS Teachers from Beechlawn Reading Centre and Cottown Outreach	35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Advice and support from Beechlawn School and Cottown Outreach to schools</li> </ul>
					99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ School-based CASS support to 5 nursery schools (1 day)</li> </ul>
<b>WELB</b>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Support to post-primary schools on request</li> </ul>
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 3 hours a week for up to 2 terms (peripatetic service)</li> </ul>
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cluster organised by peripatetic service</li> </ul>

#### 4.11 *OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations) Certificate in Specific Learning Difficulties*

This course is presently available to certificate level at NIDA (Northern Ireland Dyslexia Association) in Belfast. It was available through DADS (Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Support) in North East Institute at Magherafelt campus during 2000-2001.

#### 4.12 *Courses are available by distance learning from:*

Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre:  
Diploma in Specific Learning Difficulties

Hornsby International Dyslexia Centre:  
Diploma in Specific Learning Difficulties

#### 4.13 **Recommendations**

The Task Group recommends that

- DE should reconsider its position on the funding of Award Bearing Continued Professional Development courses.
- ELBs should ensure that all teachers have access to a centralised system of advice, support and resources.
- All current and future initiatives in Northern Ireland should take account of pupils with dyslexia.
- A Northern Ireland accredited training course on dyslexia should be developed in collaboration with universities, university colleges and ELBs. Where possible, it should be made available through local centres, to maximise uptake. Funded places for SENCOs should be given consideration.

- Each ELB should be responsible for training an identified core of personnel (eg peripatetic teachers, outreach support teachers, advisory staff etc) to an appropriate accredited level.
- Where applicable, courses for SENCOs should be further developed to include a core element on dyslexia, and be delivered by trained and/or experienced personnel. These should be developed on a regional basis, to ensure consistency, but delivered locally for ease of access.
- Awareness-raising courses for mainstream teachers should be developed and delivered by trained and/or experienced personnel in all ELBs.
- The Task Group's aspiration would be that such training as listed above would be offered concurrently.
- Consideration should be given by DE to the dyslexia training component of Initial Teacher Education courses, with a view to offering students the opportunity to gain accredited training.

## Chapter 5:

## INDICATORS OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

- 5.1 The following indicators give a brief overview of what can be considered to be good practice in this area. The aim is to promote inclusive education, and many of the indicators are relevant to a wide range of special educational needs, not just dyslexia.
- 5.2 They will need to be supported by a programme of training for teachers, SENCOs, Senior Management, Principal and all relevant support staff in schools.
- 5.3 It is considered essential that steps are taken to ensure that these principles of good practice are actually implemented throughout the school, rather than remain within a written school policy.
- 5.4 Practice is seen to be good when teachers recognise and make provision for:
- The existence of dyslexia in its varying degrees of severity.
  - The *different* learning styles/strengths of individual pupils.
  - The likelihood of associated difficulties (also presenting in varying degrees of severity); these include deficits in working memory, organisational difficulties, dyspraxic and dysgraphic tendencies, attention deficit/hyperactivity, scotopic sensitivity.

- The emotional and pastoral needs of the dyslexic child at risk in an environment where he may often see himself as under-achieving/failing.

## 5.5 School Ethos/Pastoral Issues

The Task Group endorses the following as good practice:

- Children's differences/difficulties are identified and addressed at an early stage to avoid the consequences of frustration and failure.
- They understand their learning differences/difficulties and feel supported by adults who understand them.
- They are catered for in a pastoral care system which is proactive in ensuring their emotional well-being.
- They feel free to discuss their differences/difficulties with understanding teachers/support staff.
- Their peers are understanding of their learning differences and are sympathetic towards them.
- They have opportunity to share mutual support with other children who have similar difficulties.
- Their parents are informed partners with the school in supporting their child emotionally and educationally.
- They have opportunities to build self-esteem and self-confidence through success and achievement in a well-managed and well-balanced curricular programme.
- They are encouraged to play a full part in the life of the school.

## 5.6 The Quality Of Teaching And Learning

The Task Group endorses the following as good practice:

- The learning and management problems of children with dyslexia are clearly identified and understood and all staff are fully aware of how these needs should be addressed.
- There is informed partnership between the teachers, outside support agencies, parents and pupil helping maintain consistency of approach.
- The children are taught, where possible, using a multi-sensory approach ie using visual, auditory and motor/kinaesthetic means and where teaching is structured, sequential and cumulative.
- They have clearly defined goals.
- They are helped to discover and utilise their learning strengths and are given structured support to practise in areas of weakness.
- They are encouraged to use compensatory strategies.
- The environment in which they learn is modified to limit potential distractions.
- They have regular access to the use of appropriate ICT resources to develop word processing (including word finding and spell-check facilities), research and filing/organisational skills.

- To compensate for poor memory, they are given sufficient opportunity to 'over-learn' to automaticity level those skills that require automatic response.
- They are helped increasingly towards greater independence in learning through practical guidance in organisational strategies.
- They are given/encouraged to develop their own coping strategies for areas of difficulty.
- They are given guidance and practice in developing a comfortable, consistent handwriting style and strategies for improving presentation of work.
- Formal teaching of writing skills is given ie planning, drafting, editing, re-editing.
- Advice and practice in skimming and scanning text is given to develop higher level literacy skills.
- They are encouraged to use mind maps as a means of organising their thinking.
- According to age and stage, they are given help to improve their study/revision skills taking full advantage of their learning strengths.
- Regular opportunities are given to develop their independence and self-responsibility.
- Pupils are guided increasingly, according to age and stage, to play their part in self-checking, proof-reading and in so doing develop discriminatory and independence skills.

- The school's marking policy is sensitively adapted to take account of the dyslexic pupil's effort and progress and to encourage him or her in future learning and achievement.
- At post-primary level, pupils are advised as to alternative ways of coping with note-taking.

### 5.7 School Management Issues

Many potential problems may be averted with early intervention and good management.

The Task Group therefore recommends that practice is efficient and effective in schools where:

- Emphasis is placed on developing educational strategies to accommodate a wide range of learners with different aptitudes and achievements rather than targeting intervention which focuses on the individual - this tends to promote a greater sense of inclusiveness.
- All teachers and support staff have a good general understanding of the nature of dyslexia and of the difficulties that a dyslexic child may have when coping in the school environment.
- All staff are fully aware of the school's policy for dealing with children with dyslexic difficulties and they implement these policies sensitively and thoroughly.
- All staff have regard for the academic, social and emotional development of each pupil.

- All teachers are responsible for recognising the early signs of dyslexic difficulties and pupil underachievement.
  - All teachers are able to match teaching and learning styles, and are flexible and resourceful in providing differentiated activities in the classroom.
  - There is a teacher(s) available within the school who, with a greater level of expertise, can advise teachers regarding those pupils with a moderate degree of dyslexic difficulty and who can facilitate further advice and resources from support services when necessary.
  - In cases of more severe dyslexic difficulty, pupils have access to support by teachers who are experienced in the teaching of dyslexic pupils.
  - The school involves parents as partners in education of their child through
    - the resources and facilities available at different levels for dealing with these difficulties;
    - practical sessions eg supporting their child in the completion of homework;
    - the provision of information regarding the nature of dyslexia and the difficulties which the child might experience both in and out of school.
- 5.8 The Task Group recommends the development of further guidance materials for circulation to schools and parents eg a "Good Practice Guide", the development of a CD rom etc.

## APPENDIX A

The Task Group invited representatives of the following groups or specific individuals to come and speak to the members at a session on 6 June 2001.

Northern Ireland Dyslexia Association (NIDA)

Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Support (DADS)

Martin McPhillips: Primary Movement

Lord Laird

### **A.1 NORTHERN IRELAND DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION (NIDA)** **John Clarke**

John Clarke of NIDA gave an overview of the background and work of NIDA and then raised the issues as he saw them.

#### **Overview of NIDA**

NIDA was one of the founder members of the British Dyslexia Association and it provides information and advice to a wide range of enquirers including parents, teachers, dyslexic adults, schools, doctors, psychologists, speech therapists and occupational therapists. The organisation holds regular meetings to which it invites guest speakers and this is seen as giving opportunities for parents to discuss their problems in relation to their dyslexic children as well as allowing dyslexic adults to talk to others with similar difficulties. The organisation also holds courses, workshops and seminars as well as an annual conference. It has a helpline and befriender service, provides awareness talks, lobbies MLAs and acts as a pressure group. In addition it can organise assessments, tuition and in-service days for

teachers as well as providing support for OCR Diploma and Certificates course in dyslexia for teachers.

### **Issues for NIDA**

The issues for NIDA were as follows:

- Lack of consistency between ELBs, educational psychologists and board officers
- Lack of consistency in assessment techniques
- Waiting times for assessment – sometimes “as long as 18-24 months”
- Issues around the Code of Practice. They report some lack of clarity here for teachers and parents tended to have little knowledge about it – particularly in relation to education plans
- Parents getting private reports
- Criteria keep shifting
- Lack of specificity in the educational psychologists’ reports
- Schools did not always put the educational psychologists’ reports into practice
- Reported a range of teachers’ concerns including:
  - Sparse or no information during training
  - Poor links between NIDA and teacher training providers

- Lack of instruction in teaching methods for special educational needs
- Ineffective INSET- lack of follow-up.

In summary John Clarke stated

- that schools lacked expertise in the area of dyslexia
- they had no specifically trained staff
- that there was inappropriate provision such as units for those with moderate learning difficulties and remedial classes etc.

He further believed that

- there was a lack of resources in the schools
- that time taken for assessment to be conducted by the ELBs was too long
- this was exacerbated by the failure of schools to make referrals.

On the basis of BDA figures he indicated that 4% of the school population could be expected to be dyslexic, which in real terms is approximately one student per class. Again, he suggested that there was a failure by schools to recognise this and as a result it was the parents who were having to raise the concern not the teachers. He did acknowledge that there were situations where there was dedicated support and input and in these instances the provision worked well. However, he was of the opinion that there was a lack of response by the ELBs who also did not provide adequate resources.



In the discussion which followed the point was made that one of the difficulties for on-going professional development was the question of funding since currently teachers are required to pay for any continuing professional development themselves.

## **A.2 DYSLEXIA AND DYSPRAXIA SUPPORT (DADS)**

Maura Totten made a presentation on behalf of DADS in which she outlined how a group of parents came together to form DADS in 1998. She described the original group's feelings of isolation and discontentment at the lack of information and help they received regarding the education of their children who suffered from dyslexia or dyspraxia.

The organisation's aims are broad and include heightening the profile of dyslexia and dyspraxia, through improved communication between parents and a range of professionals. This would ensure the involvement of all concerned and facilitate the recognition and assessment of both conditions at all levels. While the organisation aims to provide support, guidance and information and to campaign for the equal rights of their children it does not aim to give diagnoses or private tuition. She summarised what she saw as the key points as follows:

- There is no information, no assurances, no resources, no help!
- The impact on the family and siblings needs to be considered
- Where is equality of opportunity in this?
- There is an issue around the distinction between dyslexia versus specific learning difficulties

- The access to educational psychologists needs to be improved
- There are misconceptions about the role of the educational psychologist
- Resources, time and training issues for schools
- The Code of Practice may not serve the needs of individual children
- Intervention often comes too late
- Education plans need to be considered by every teacher in the school
- Criteria – is the use discriminatory?
- Welcomed the openness that is coming
- What about curricular issues? – eg foreign languages
- Whole school approach needed especially in relation to training
- Placement of dyslexic children in special needs classes with pupils who have emotional and behavioural issues
- Need increased training – which should be demanded
- Teachers are supportive but lack knowledge, confidence, and feel inadequate, insecure, put-upon
- Parent can become 'parent from hell'
- Child can become 'child from hell'

DADS also made 25 suggestions as to how the system could overcome some of the difficulties described in the above list. The 25 suggestions are listed below:

1. The curriculum is too rigid for children with dyslexia. Make the curriculum fit the child, not vice-versa. If a child cannot read, write or spell in English, French will be a problem.
2. Too much concern with people at the top of the school – not enough for those at the bottom. League tables are gone – there are new opportunities for the school to look after everyone.
3. Abolish the eleven plus – it only isolates dyslexics further.
4. Stop sending dyslexics in to special units which are often only suited to children with severe behavioural problems.
5. Teacher-training. Students must learn a multidisciplinary approach to teaching reading.
6. Teacher-training students must be taught to administer a battery of tests to gain a profile of a child's strengths and difficulties.
7. Learning situations should be adaptable. Learning styles and learning patterns taught.
8. More emphasis on social skills, feelings, self-esteem.
9. Every child needs a sense of achievement.
10. In-service training in primary, secondary/adult education: currently this is not happening in any way which might help dyslexics.
11. Where special/appropriate IT equipment is available, children with special educational needs should be able to utilise them.

12. Services should be equal in all Board areas.
13. Advice from psychologists in any one Board area should at least be consistent.
14. The criteria for assistance should be examined to ensure that children in need get the help they are entitled to.
15. The criteria need to be re-written to avoid confusion.
16. More research needs to be carried out to assess the numbers of children with speech and language problems/specific learning difficulties.
17. An evaluation of the current test procedures needs to be undertaken. Lord Bach – House of Lords (8 May 2000) ‘Newly qualified teachers, since September 1998 have to show that they can identify pupils who have special educational needs - including dyslexia.
18. Principals need to be sensitive to the rights of the children and parents.
19. Principals need to understand their obligations under the Children Act, Human Rights and Disability Rights Legislation.
20. Principals need to ensure these obligations are carried out in schools. An Employment Tribunal recently awarded a dyslexic worker £28,000. He was being bullied by his colleagues because of his dyslexia and his employers did nothing to stop this. The Tribunal heard that he had been discriminated against because of his disability.
21. There should be more support for SENCOs. They need ongoing training and their teaching load has to be reviewed

22. The profile of special needs education should be raised.
23. It is important as success at football.
24. Special arrangements can be made to ease the burden on children with dyslexia. This should be made easy, not more difficult.
25. The Law must be made clear and applied uniformly.

### **A.3 PRIMARY MOVEMENT**

This is a programme developed in recent years by Martin McPhillips, based at Queen's University Belfast. Literature is available to parents and teachers through the internet site.

Primary reflexes are "movement patterns which emerge during fetal life and are critical for the survival of the newborn .... As the nervous system develops, however, they are inhibited or transformed and the persistence of primary reflexes beyond their normal timespan (12 months) interferes with subsequent development and indicates neurological impairment".

Further information can be found at the website [www.primarymovement.org](http://www.primarymovement.org)

### **A.4 LORD LAIRD**

Finally, Lord Laird commented on the presentations and argued that at all times we must remember that the child should be at the centre of our concerns. He closed by summarising the general feeling emerging from the presentations in his comment:

*'We need to change the climate of opinion'*

## GLOSSARY

AAO	Assistant Advisory Officer
ABE	Adult Basic Education
BDA	British Dyslexia Association
BELB	Belfast Education and Library Board
BPS	British Psychological Society
CASS	Curriculum Advisory and Support Service
DADS	Dyslexia and Dyspraxia Support
DASE	Diploma in Advance Study of Education
DE	Department of Education
DECP	Division of Educational and Child Psychology
DEL	Department of Employment and Learning
DEST	Dyslexia Early Screening Test
DSA	Disabled Students Allowance
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ELB	Education and Library Board
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Services
FE	Further Education
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
HE	Higher Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INSET	Inservice Education of Teachers
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
IT	Information Technology
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
LMS	Local Management of Schools

LTSS	Literacy Training Support Service
MA	Master of Arts
MLAs	Members of the Legislative Assembly
NASEN	National Association for Special Educational Needs
NEELB	North Eastern Education and Library Board
NIDA	Northern Ireland Dyslexia Association
NITEC	Northern Ireland Teacher Education Committee
OCR	Oxford Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
QUB	Queen's University Belfast
ROI	Republic of Ireland
RSA	Royal Society of Arts
SEELB	South Eastern Education and Library Board
SELB	Southern Education and Library Board
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SENT	Special Educational Needs Tribunal
T&EA	Training and Employment Agency
UCAS	University Central Admissions System
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UUJ/UU	University of Ulster Jordanstown
WAIS	Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale
WE	Western Education and Library Board
WISC	Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children
WORD	Wechsler Objective Reading Dimensions
WRAT	Wide Range Achievement Test

