

Review by Ruth Jones R.T.L.B. (M.Ed Psych, BA, Post Grad Dip Teaching)

**'Removing Dyslexia as a Barrier to Achievement:
The Dyslexia Friendly Schools Toolkit
2nd Ed 2006
by Neil MacKay**

As an increasing interest and need in the means to address dyslexic students learning needs becomes more widespread, in the educational and wider community, the arrival of this text toolkit adds to the body of resources available for use by educators.

New Zealand teachers and specialists within the educational field will find that this toolkit reflects familiar philosophical and practise approaches that may be usefully applied within an inclusive classroom practise model.

This is a practitioner friendly resource with clearly laid out sections relating to specific areas of learning need addressed within the text format.

The text incorporates philosophical and practise explanations developed by the author and then moves on to expand on these with specific practise strategies outlined for use in the general classroom.

By using clearly descriptive formats of useful interventions and adaptations that can be incorporated into classroom practise the author encourages educators to reflect on the 'whys' behind the use of common classroom techniques e.g. dictation.

Of particular note is how the author focuses on dyslexia as a learning difficulty that applies to numeracy, speech, memory, task learning strategies as well as literacy related issues. By focussing on learning style differentials/preferences and comfort zones the author accounts for the social impact, for the student/learner, of those difficulties.

Chapters relating to the development of classroom and school wide strategies as well as a section devoted to classroom strategies outlined in response to particular difficulties encountered by students include stated difficulties matched to specific suggestions for support e.g. Concentration, Distractibility, Stamina etc

The author incorporates a holistic framework to support students with diverse learning needs and by removing dyslexia from isolation, encourages educators to address these learning needs in an inclusive school and classroom setting.

Whilst the author does refer to the primary level schooling throughout the text, I feel that this toolkit could prove to be a useful resource for use at Intermediate and Secondary levels when or wherever students who are in need are identified.

The use of this toolkit is most likely to be beneficial if implemented in a school or class wide context rather than as an isolated, and isolating, tutoring tool, as many of the strategies outlined are likely to support a classroom practise style which aims to meet inclusive practise philosophies and systems as well as addressing general learning needs of all students.

Other practitioners may prefer to 'cherry-pick' specific strategies which meet individual areas of learning e.g. spelling, numeracy, revision skills before moving on to wider integration of suggested strategies within classroom teaching contexts.

My single reservation relates to the layout of the book in terms of referencing. It would be useful for users to be able to refer quickly and easily to academic and research references and indexing which would lend support to the suggestions and assertions contained within the text.

By drawing together various familiar and innovative strategies to apply to learning needs experienced by students dealing with dyslexia, into a coherent practitioner friendly framework the author is offering a toolkit which will be found useful by teacher training institutions, beginning teachers, experienced classroom teachers as well as specialist and support educators in itinerant and school based roles.