



MEDIA RELEASE

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Dyslexia – it’s time to hear from the front line

Dyslexia Foundation to launch ground-breaking online survey for NZ teachers

New Zealand teachers will this week have the opportunity to have their say on dyslexia with a ground-breaking online survey being launched by the Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand.

The survey, a key component of this year’s Dyslexia Awareness Week June 16-22, is designed to benchmark for the first time New Zealand teachers’ attitudes to dyslexia and uncover what it’s really like in the classroom.

Guy Pope-Mayell, Chair of Trustees of the Dyslexia Foundation, says the survey – developed in conjunction with market research leader The Nielsen Company – is a critical initiative in addressing the needs of the 70,000 New Zealand school children affected by dyslexia-related learning disabilities.

“In order to drive real change it’s imperative that we begin to gather information from our teachers at the front line who deal with dyslexia every day,” Guy Pope-Mayell says.

“We see dyslexia as the sharp end of the stick in that if you get the learning environment right for dyslexic students early on, it will work for and benefit others. We want to know how teachers deal with dyslexic students, what works for them, the level of support they currently have and what additional support they need.”

Last year, the Ministry of Education laid the foundation for change when it formally recognised dyslexia. However, the Government needed to front up with specific funding – as promised last year – in order to translate recognition into action.

“We want the Government to put its money where its mouth is on funding, and we believe this survey will begin to highlight the areas where specific funding can best be spent. With subtle changes such as dyslexia-specific teacher professional development, dyslexia modules in teacher training courses, and simple classroom-based dyslexia assessment tools, we’ll start to see real progress,” Guy Pope-Mayell says.

The survey will be live 15-25 May, with results to be released in time for Dyslexia Awareness Week.

The theme for this year’s Dyslexia Awareness Week – Dyslexia: blessing in disguise – is focused on recognising the creative gifts that dyslexia can bring. The theme refers to the ‘blessing’ of creativity as well as the difficulties and coping strategies which are the ‘disguise’.

“Every day dyslexic people of all ages see themselves as failures instead of embracing their unique talents and way of looking at the world around them. If there’s any disability associated with dyslexia, it’s self esteem,” says Guy Pope-Mayell.

“Dyslexia is an alternative way of thinking that affects one in ten New Zealanders. If effectively addressed, dyslexia can be a gift, and we think that is something that’s definitely worth working towards.”

Additional Dyslexia Awareness Week initiatives

- All schools are being encouraged to celebrate creativity, with free Dyslexia Resource Kits sent to all primary, intermediate and secondary schools. The kits are a treasure trove of information about dyslexia, creative classroom ideas, resources from solution providers and Dyslexia Awareness Week stickers and posters
- The Foundation has also developed a specific classroom teaching aide – The Dyslexia Discovery Creativity Challenge – which celebrates the achievements of world-class engineer John Britten, who designed and built the V1000 Superbike, and Richard Taylor from Weta Workshop and Lord of the Rings fame
- By taking part in Dyslexia Awareness Week, schools also have the chance to win one of five \$2000 cash prizes to apply to any dyslexia resource purchase or initiative

The Dyslexia Foundation has also recently launched 4D, a pioneering new programme to establish a register of dyslexia friendly schools and share best practice learnings and resources.

More information about Dyslexia Awareness Week, the 4D programme and the Dyslexia Foundation is available on www.dyslexiafoundation.org.nz

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Notes to Editors:

1. Teachers who want to take part must register at info@dfnz.org.nz before 20 May.
2. A number of the Foundation’s members have agreed to share their dyslexia experiences. To find out if there’s someone in your area who is willing to talk, please contact Carley Young on the number below.

For more information please contact: Carley Young, 0272 576 818