

*the Government Blueprint for*  
**Dyslexia  
Action**

This Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand (DFNZ) Update looks ahead to Dyslexia Action Week in June (15-21 June, 2009) and includes a handy pack of our latest resources. With the Government 100% committed to its Crusade for Literacy and Numeracy, dealing with dyslexia in the classroom is more critical than ever.

2009 is a Year of Action on dyslexia, following official recognition from Government in 2007 and great strides in understanding this learning difference in 2008. This understanding, and how it translates to practical action, is captured in the Government's official dyslexia resource booklet, produced by the Ministry of Education and titled Teachers Resource: About Dyslexia, which was released earlier this year. Available for download at: [http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy\\_numeracy/pdf/moe-dyslexia-booklet-2009.pdf](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/literacy_numeracy/pdf/moe-dyslexia-booklet-2009.pdf)

About Dyslexia creates an approved framework for schools to act on dyslexia, in line with the Crusade for Literacy and Numeracy. This is a key accountability document for improving educational outcomes, and reflects the Government's major focus on transparency and assessment.

About Dyslexia requires schools to have an inclusive school policy which accommodates dyslexic students' unique learning differences. It also challenges teachers to recognise these differences, empowers them to take action and sets out practical and sound strategies to assist students in the classroom. It contains useful checklists on characteristics that may be related to dyslexia in different age groups, and it lets parents know what to expect for their children, as well as requiring schools to build a support team involving staff, family/whanau and other resource people as needed.

Overall, About Dyslexia empowers schools to act, and sets out the ways in which they can deliver for dyslexic children in the classroom where their needs are not being met. The new National Curriculum also delivers empowerment, valuing the right to be different and therefore the right to teach and to learn differently.

Against this backdrop, we believe it is important to offer schools all the help we can in delivering on this accountability framework. Our unique, and free 4D | For Dyslexia programme for schools is an ideal companion to the About Dyslexia resource and details ways in which teachers can make inexpensive changes in the classroom to improve the learning environment for New Zealand's estimated 70,000 dyslexic schoolchildren.

We are also bringing international dyslexia expert Neil MacKay to New Zealand in June to provide further practical help to schools through a nationwide series of workshops. More detail overleaf and at [www.dfnz.org.nz](http://www.dfnz.org.nz)



## Improving Outcomes for All through Dyslexia Action

If accountability on literacy and numeracy are the new education watchwords, understanding the significance of dyslexia is critical to achievement in this area. Unless dyslexia is at the forefront of thinking and action, we believe it will be very difficult for schools to make progress on literacy and improve the long tail of poor literacy and numeracy outcomes. Dyslexic students are clearly and significantly over-represented in this, with statistics indicating that 30-50% of those at the tail-end are dyslexic.

This is because dyslexia impacts across so many literacy and numeracy vectors. Difficulties with literacy and numeracy are a common feature of dyslexia, and the most immediate characteristic is a problem in decoding words and their meanings. But dyslexia also impacts a much wider range of behavioural and learning issues such as auditory and visual perception, planning and organising, motor skills, short-term memory and concentration. Some of these can make it especially challenging for individuals to follow instructions, turn thoughts into words and finish work on time. Some can also lead to self-esteem issues and the type of disruptive classroom behaviour which ruins the environment for all students.

On the positive side, however, the type of classroom interventions and personalised teaching that benefit dyslexic students can also produce very constructive results for all students, lifting performance across the board.

## A Helping Hand for Schools – the Neil MacKay Workshops

Along with our free 4D resource, our half-day workshops with international dyslexia expert Neil MacKay are specifically designed to help schools take effective action on dyslexia and gain a head-start on the type of accountable progress that will be required under the Crusade for Literacy and Numeracy.

Many schools have already registered for these 13-21 June workshops, a cornerstone activity for this year's Dyslexia Action Week. Schools who are part of the 4D programme also receive a special discount, with places available at just \$95 instead of the regular \$195. More details are on the registration forms enclosed or at [www.4dschools.org.nz](http://www.4dschools.org.nz)

These highly targeted workshops will draw on material from Mr MacKay's acclaimed book *Removing Dyslexia as a Barrier to Achievement* and offer hands-on advice for teaching dyslexic students. His approach has received recognition at the highest levels – he is a consultant to the British Dyslexia Association as well as Education Authorities and Departments in the UK, Hong Kong and Malta.


Mr MacKay will also provide essential guidance on working within the new curriculum. As schools prepare for the implementation of the new curriculum, there is no better time to start introducing dyslexia-aware best practice.

Mr MacKay's mantra is "notice and adjust" – notice those children who are getting stuck and make reasonable adjustments in the way they are taught and assessed, including personalised learning and alternative evidence of achievement. Personalised learning includes strategies based on developing comprehension through use of context, syntax and grammar, and looking at areas such as organisation of ideas, planning skills, learning to remember, raising self-esteem and valuing emotional intelligence.



He also warns that focusing on reading accuracy is not the magic bullet for dyslexia, and in fact can be detrimental. Dyslexic pupils think faster than they read – so putting them in low-ability groups and measuring them solely on reading ability wrongly labels them as 'failures', impacting on their self-esteem. "The proof that thinking is more important than reading? Weak readers who can think and who are valued for their intellect go on to achieve their potential. Strong readers who can't think go nowhere!" Mr MacKay says.

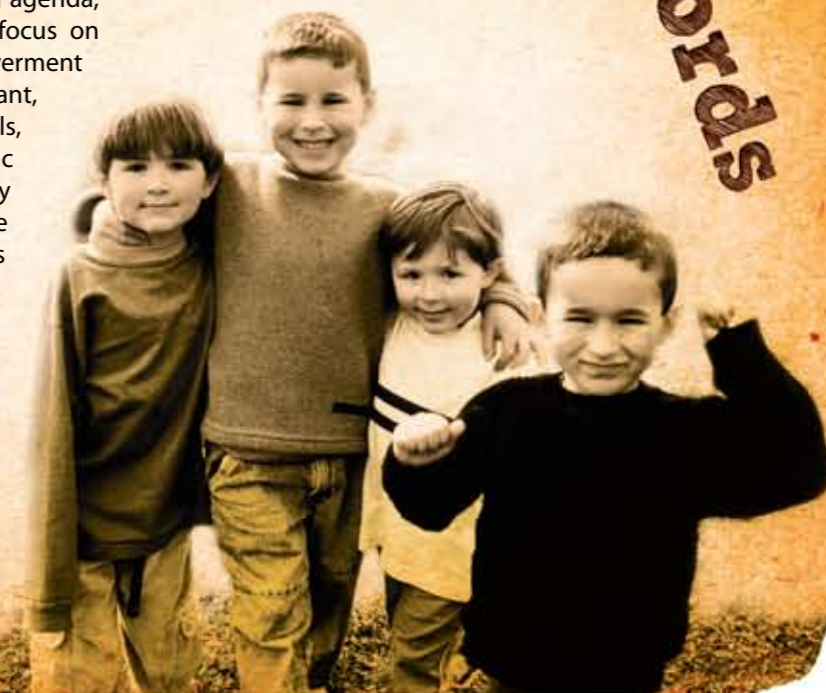
During these workshops, Mr MacKay will also share his controversial but powerful thoughts on dyslexia and youth offending – an ironic 'guide' to what the education system does wrong for alternative thinking students, pushing them towards negative outcomes. Adopting Neil MacKay's advice will have immediate impacts, not just for dyslexic learners but for students at both ends of the ability spectrum.

  
**Dyslexia**  
**Action**  
**Week 2009**

15 - 21 JUNE

**Actions Speak Louder than Words**

The theme for this year's highly anticipated Dyslexia Action Week is 'Actions Speak Louder than Words'. This reflects the evolution of the dyslexia agenda, and is in tune with the Government's focus on action and accountability. We see empowerment and personal responsibility as important, and would like to challenge all schools, teachers, support staff, parents and dyslexic individuals to take whatever actions they can to make a difference this year. We are now working on our programme of events and activities for Dyslexia Action Week and will be providing updates closer to the time. Updates will also be available on our website [www.dfnz.org.nz](http://www.dfnz.org.nz)



## How 4D can work for you

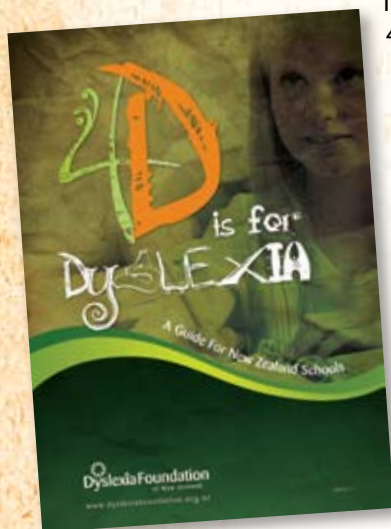
The resources we have enclosed with this update include a copy of 4D | For Dyslexia – the Guide to our free programme for New Zealand schools. It also includes a number of copies of our brand new Dyslexia Foundation brochure.

The 4D programme is the ideal complement to the Government's About Dyslexia resource and has already been adopted by more than 300 New Zealand schools nationwide. The programme is outlined in more detail in the enclosed Guide and on our special 4D website [www.4dschools.org.nz](http://www.4dschools.org.nz), and is designed to provide practical advice to help teachers identify and act on dyslexia in the classroom. In this way, it can help deliver against enhanced requirements for accountability on

literacy and numeracy outcomes. Free downloadable copies of the 4D | For Dyslexia Guide are also available on this website.

Later this year, we plan to launch an exciting new evolution for 4D – our Virtual 4D School. The School will be an interactive world, in which teachers and other interested groups can take a virtual tour of a hypothetical New Zealand school that demonstrates dyslexia-aware best practice in all areas of school life. We will be drawing on international learnings and best practice information gained during a research trip to the US and UK this year, and on the expertise of international dyslexia expert – and our nationwide workshops host – Neil Mackay.

We will also be inviting schools to send us ideas on what they'd like to see in the Virtual 4D School, from what features will be most of use to busy teachers through to what tips and tricks have worked in bringing out the best in dyslexic students. The Neil MacKay workshops will also provide an excellent opportunity for teachers and other educators to share ideas for this.



## Looking ahead

Dyslexia Foundation would like to thank Mainfreight, Daily Freightways, and Cookie Time for their generous assistance in getting these latest DFNZ resources out to New Zealand schools.



We are very excited that 2009 is the Year of Action on dyslexia, and absolutely committed to helping schools effectively address dyslexia in the classroom – and thereby succeed in improving literacy and numeracy outcomes as required by Government. We look forward to working closely with schools on this throughout the year.

Kind regards  
The team at DFNZ

