

Improving provision for students with learning difficulties including dyslexia

A while ago I wrote that I was invited by Mark Tainsh, director of disabilities, at the DEECD to join a group. The invitation was to contribute to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Stage Two Learning Difficulties and Dyslexia Stakeholder Advisory Group. The purpose of the advisory group is to develop a second stage to the department's Learning Difficulties and Dyslexia strategy.

I attended the first meeting last week; the advisory group is chaired by Mark Tainsh, and its purpose is to build on Stage One actions and provide advice to the Department about how they can continue to strengthen the capacity of schools and teachers to support students with learning difficulties and dyslexia. Another purpose of the group is to identify existing approaches and resources, gaps and opportunities for further work, and develop a broad strategy framework. The group comprises DEECD representatives, a number of professionals whose aim is to support the needs of students with learning difficulties as well as teachers and parents of children with learning difficulties including those with dyslexia.

The first meeting was most positive and involved the department discussing their aims and for the focus group to identifying areas to develop and to provide suggested actions. There was much common agreement and we will meet again in September. Our overall aims will be to

- provide access to evidence based advice and information for schools related to learning difficulties
- build teachers' understanding, knowledge and skills in relation to children and young people with learning difficulties in schooling
- ensure the availability of quality resources, programs and professional development around learning difficulties

It is exciting to be part of this team and I will keep you updated in the coming months.

Karen Starkiss- Dyslexia Assessment and Support Services