

Dyslexia Assessment and Support Services

Consultant: Karen Starkiss

I have been involved in education for over 30 years, in England and latterly Australia. I have 30 years class teaching experience as a class teacher, learning difficulties consultant, school improvement officer and school principal. I have worked in inner city and rural schools; primary and secondary schools and I have taught teenage 'school refusers.' My achievements include:

- Principal for 4 years of a school recognised as one of England's best primaries even though we had the highest number of students with severe LD in our county
- Royal Society of Arts Post Grad Diploma for Specific learning Difficulties (dyslexia). Qualified to carry out a full learning assessment for individual students and adults. Write, monitor and develop individual learning programmes.
- Lectured teachers, ran courses and provided training, both locally and nationally, covering a number of areas connected with education
- Worked with employers to advise them how to make the workplace 'Dyslexia-Aware' and inclusive for people with different learning styles and needs
- Invited to Buckingham Palace in 2007 in recognition of my "Outstanding contribution to education."
- Registered teacher with the Victorian Institute of Teachers. All qualifications have been checked by them.
- Trained teachers, class assistants, psychologists and speech therapists throughout Victoria and interstate. Provided workshops for Tafe teachers and tutors about creating an inclusive workspace

About Me

As a parent or an adult, looking for answers and support for learning difficulties, it's very important to know that you are making the correct choice. When you look online or in the phone directories very little information is given about the person you are trusting to help you; what their qualifications are, their experience, their interest and enthusiasm in helping you or your child. As a parent, myself, of children with special needs I can understand how the whole process must be very difficult and how you may be scared of making the wrong decision.

During my career I have assessed and taught a significant number of students who have required considerable care and attention, many of whom struggled to succeed academically. As far as my experience of dyslexia is concerned I have assessed and taught children, teenagers and adults. Many have kept in touch over the years, and it has been an extremely fulfilling experience for me, sharing their successes. But it has also been very sad to hear how their difficulties have affected not only their learning but also their confidence and self-esteem.

I have assessed adults from all walks of life; mums, dad, grandparents, beauticians, teachers, accountants, engineers, artists, university students, managers, directors of companies. Most had encountered negative experiences at school and sometimes these have had an enormous impact on their confidence and self-esteem.

Many adults have been frustrated because they know they are intelligent but cannot understand why they can't spell, can't remember messages, get figures the wrong way round, have problems filling in forms, need to read information two or three times for comprehension, can read a novel but not retain any of it etc. Their reasons for seeking an assessment have been varied. Some have taken on a promotion at work that involves different tasks and suddenly they are making errors that are being picked up by employers, some have come because their employers have recommended an assessment and are very supportive. University or college students often can't cope with assignment tasks and note taking during lectures, they cannot finish exams at the same time as their peers. One mum asked for an assessment as she wanted to improve her reading. She said that she had always coped but now her 3-year-old daughter was getting off her lap and asking someone else to read a book to her as her mum read too slowly and she became bored. So many reasons.

Some people just want an answer, to understand why they have these difficulties. Others want the answer and then to know what to do about it.

That is also why it is important that you choose a professional to carry out a learning assessment for you. It's also important that you, not only know what is causing your problems, but also have detailed recommendations to help you overcome them. Writing detailed recommendations for you for home, in further education and at work is also part of my service. This isn't a service that is offered by all assessment services.

*In addition to assessments I provide training courses for teachers and parents. I can also run courses for employers and advise about making the workplace inclusive.

Contact me at karen@dyslexiasupportservices.com.au or telephone: 0402225051