

Media Release

Ministry improves understanding of dyslexia

Although the majority of students successfully learn to read and write, the Ministry of Education is putting greater emphasis on assisting students who struggle in these areas, including those who have been identified as dyslexic.

Dyslexia is a term that is used to refer to a group of students with a range of persistent reading and writing difficulties or disabilities. The Ministry of Education recognises that more needs to be done to identify, as early as possible, these students, and to provide them with effective interventions based on their specific needs.

“As a ministry, we are committed to ensuring that the needs of all students are met. We want to work in collaboration with schools as well as with those with specific relevant expertise to strengthen support for students with serious reading and writing difficulties. This includes working with organisations such as the Dyslexia Foundation,” Ministry of Education Deputy Secretary, Schooling, Anne Jackson said.

“We are implementing a whole range of initiatives to increase the level and quality of assistance given to students with serious reading and writing problems. We are already in the process of developing better assessment tools to identify students with reading and writing problems as early as possible. We are also developing a resource for teachers that outlines strategies for working with students with reading and writing difficulties,” says Anne Jackson.

The Ministry recently completed an analysis of international research into dyslexia, looking at various international definitions of dyslexia - as well as scientific attempts to locate and describe the causes and symptoms associated with it. Dyslexia is a term that is used to refer to a group of students with a range of persistent reading and writing difficulties or disabilities.

Anne Jackson said that the Minister met with the Dyslexia Foundation in Christchurch today. At the meeting they agreed that the Ministry of Education would work with the Foundation, and other stakeholders, to identify how Dyslexia might be understood in this jurisdiction and how that understanding would be applied in the New Zealand system.

“The research shows that children and young people who experience persistent difficulties with reading and writing are a diverse group. Research also suggests that support for students with reading and writing problems needs to build on their personal strengths and needs. So what we aim to do is ensure the literacy initiatives we implement are based on the individual needs of the student and focus on their strengths, not their weaknesses. The Ministry will use this research to support future policies to assist students with reading and writing difficulties,” Anne Jackson said.

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