The Dyslexia Guild

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Dyslexia Review

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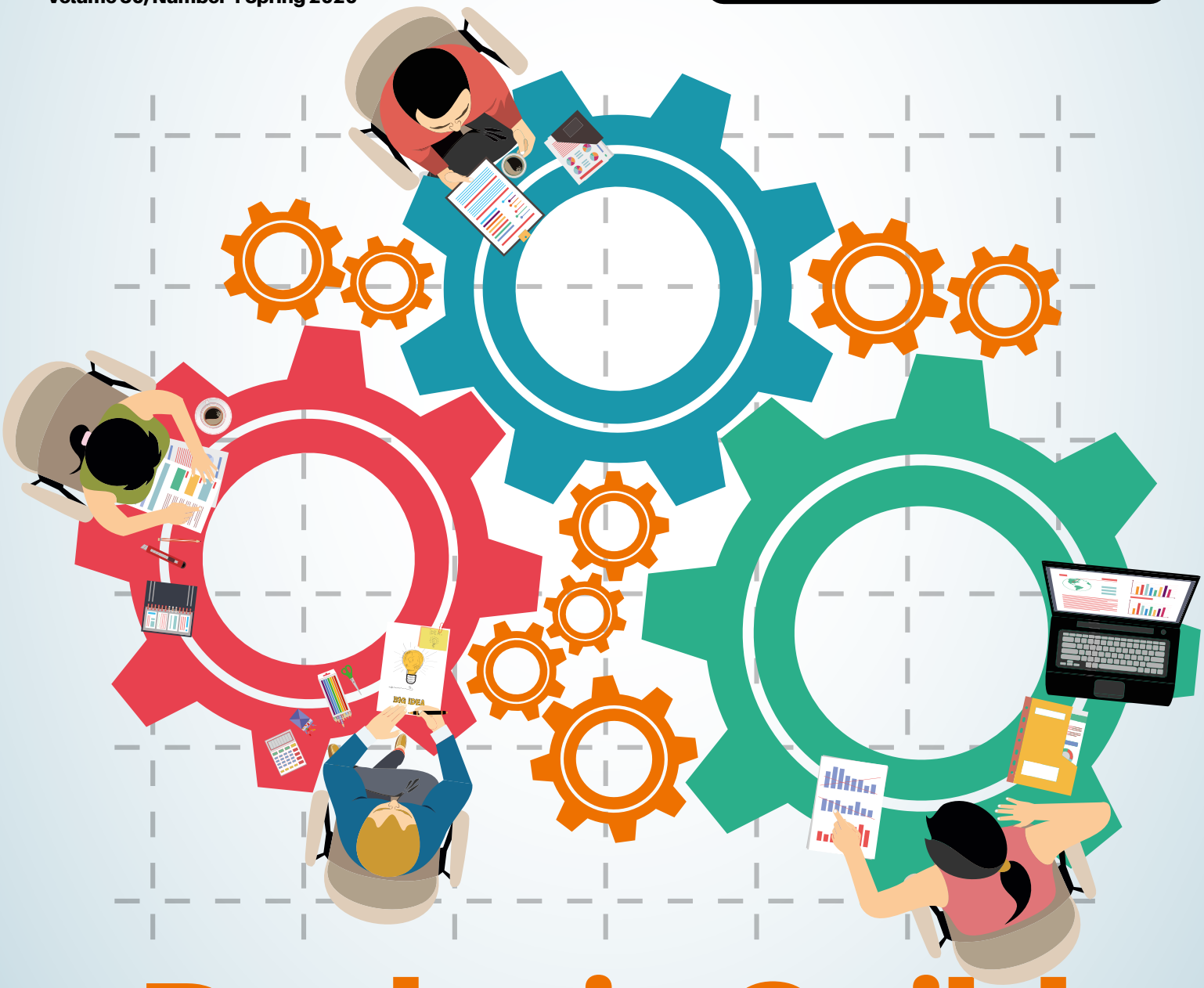
The Journal of The Dyslexia Guild



Dyslexia Guild

Focus on Continuing Professional Development

Join the Dyslexia Guild

The professional body for specialist teacher/practitioners, assessors and support staff

The Dyslexia Guild is a membership organisation for specialist teachers, assessors and practitioners and we welcome all interested professionals to join us.

Guild members benefit from letters after their name as either Fellow (FDG), Member (MDG) or Associate (ADG) and a listing in our Professional Member Directory.

The Dyslexia Guild also has a clearly defined membership grade for Study Skills Support Tutors Associate Member Further and Higher Education (ADG FE/HE) and an Affiliate grade for any individual who shares the interests of the Guild and for student members as well as a group membership rate.

- **A Library and National Dyslexia Resource Centre of specialist materials including e-books and access to over 1600 electronic journals**
- **Dyslexia Review: The journal of The Dyslexia Guild, topical articles and academic features**
- **Guild Member online discussion forums: liaise with experts on topics such as Access Arrangements, Assessment and APC and working within the adult, further and higher education environment**
- **The Annual Guild Summer Conference: a vibrant and engaging networking event**

The Dyslexia Guild is also an SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate (APC) awarding body issuing Assessment Practising Certificates on behalf of the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC).

Membership benefits also include preferential discounts on Dyslexia Action courses, 10% discount in the Dyslexia Action Shop, a regular electronic newsletter and professional indemnity insurance.

The Dyslexia Guild

LITERACY SPECIALISTS • TEACHERS • ASSESSORS

Email: **guild@dyslexiaaction.org.uk** | Tel: 01784 222342

For further information see: **dyslexiaguild.org.uk**

Welcome

Welcome to the Spring edition of *Dyslexia Review*.

At the time of writing we are all now facing the challenge of living and working in lockdown. I hope that *Dyslexia Review* will bring you a few moments of enjoyable and interesting reading at this time and provide you with some ideas of further research and online activities that you can undertake while you are at home.

Guild Members have access to an extensive library of online books and journals and now is a great time to take advantage of that reading and to make a note of it on your CPD Log. Our CPD article in this issue provides other pointers for career development too, including accessing our online forums for discussion with other members, at a time when it is impossible to do this at face-to-face conferences and events. We also provide a useful summary of information on school governance that we hope will inspire you to contribute to this role in a professional capacity and that will also add to your own career profile.

In this issue we are delighted to feature a trio of thought-provoking articles from three of our leading university academics. Professor Alison James writes about her approach to *The Power of Play* in higher education. Her research on playful and creative approaches to adult teaching and learning has now culminated in a new book on the topic and she invites you to contribute to the debate.

Dr Ruth Caleb considers the *Changes and Challenges for Mental Wellbeing* in higher education and highlights the need for improved awareness and understanding. We can all do better to support learners with mental health issues and this topic has even greater relevance now as we are faced with an ever-extending period of isolation and potential loneliness.

Professor Sherria Hoskins discusses the background to her recent book on *Growth Mindset* and explains the concepts and strategies generated by this research, that professionals should consider when working with all learners, including those with specific learning difficulties.

Our Conference at Bath University due to be held this summer has now had to be postponed until 2021. However, we still have a number of online webinars for you to access and an extensive range of training courses, through both Dyslexia Action and Real Group, which are all offered online. We will be sad not to meet with Guild members in person this year but look forward to continuing to hear from you and to supporting you online and by phone.

Kathryn Benzine
Editor

Events

Networking

Lifelong learning

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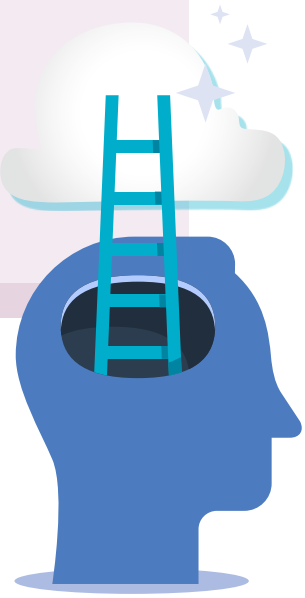


Membership News

Courses and Events

Member Benefits in Profile

Dyslexia Action Literacy Programme

Guild members who trained some years ago are now able to access a new Level 5 Award provided by Dyslexia Action. This two-term course provides a structured guide to the Dyslexia Action Literacy Programme (DALP) which can be used in school or college settings or with individuals of any reading age in private practice. It is only suitable for qualified and experienced specialist SpLD teachers/practitioners. The course consists of practical activities based on case studies and provides the core DALP handbooks. Full details of the Level 5 Dyslexia Action Literacy Programme (DALP) Award for Practitioners (DAAWD85) can be found on our website.

Free Webinars for Guild Members

Details of all of the following online and free-to-access courses and webinars can be found on the Guild Member's website: **https://training.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/member_events**

SASC Report Format Changes
The SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) has recently updated the Report formats to be used by SpLD Assessors. Full details can be downloaded from the SASC website. There is also a free webinar on the *SASC Report Format Changes* on the Guild Member website.

Effective SEN Support Provision — Middle Leaders Course
Real Training has partnered with Whole School SEND to create this free-to-access CPD course on Effective SEN Support Provision for Middle Leaders. The course outlines the principles of creating effective SEN support provision for middle leaders in all school settings.

Free Access Arrangements Update Course
This short updating course enables Access Arrangements Assessors to become fully up to date with the new JCQ guidelines and requirements for the academic year. The course gives access to a popular forum to ask questions of both peers and tutors about specific challenges. Participants are able to work through the course in their own time, as it is fully online and set out in a series of strands.

Membership News

Selected Journal Articles

There is an extensive range of academic articles available to Guild Members in the EBSCO Database which is a free membership benefit. Recent articles of interest with a focus specifically on dyslexia include:

Predicting Dyslexia in Children with Developmental Language Disorder
Crystle N. Alonzo, Autumn L. McIlraith, Hugh W. Catts and Tiffany P. Hogan Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research (JSLHR) January 2020
The purpose of this study was to examine how well letter identification and phonological awareness in kindergarten-aged children predicts future (second grade) word reading and dyslexia in children with developmental language disorder, compared with their age-matched and grade-matched peers with typically developing language skills. The findings highlight the importance of letter identification skills to literacy development.

Splashes of light: Parents of children with dyslexia explore experiences through visual arts
Jennifer Watt, International Journal of Education through Art, March 2020
This unorthodox study using visual arts experiences to explore the feelings and thoughts of parents of children with dyslexia may be of interest to practitioners looking for new ways to explore learners' perspectives of their own strengths and challenges. As Ware puts it: "In much the same way that art can inform all of our lives, among those whose lives are marked by the difference disability makes, the arts can be of particular value for exploring a unique life experience authored by disability." (Ware1 2011: 195)

It's worth dipping into for the Growing to the Light image alone – a felt-tip exploration of how learning can change lives. The idea could be adapted for discussion or exploration with learners themselves.

Spoken Word Learning Differences Among Children with Dyslexia, Concomitant Dyslexia and Developmental Language Disorder, and Typical Development
Mary Alt, Shelley Gray, Tiffany P. Hogan, Nora Schlesinger and Nelson Cowan Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools (LSHSS), October 2019
Although quite an academic article, many practitioners might find this worth a skim read. The results demonstrate that when diagnostic testing is undertaken for children with dyslexia or developmental language disorder (DLD) it is important to determine whether the children have a concomitant disorder, because a different word learning profile was demonstrated when dyslexia and DLD overlap. The children with dyslexia and DLD are more likely to have significant word learning challenges than their peers with dyslexia alone. In contrast, children with dyslexia may learn new vocabulary as well as their typically developing peers, although they are likely to struggle more with accuracy in naming tasks and with the precision of their phonological representations (how they repeat and interpret spoken speech sounds).

Twice upon a time: Examining the effect socio-economic status has on the experience of dyslexia in the United Kingdom
Stephen J. Macdonald and Lesley Deacon, Dyslexia February 2019
This frank exploratory article suggests that socio-economic status should be more widely considered when looking at 'solutions' for dyslexia within society. It seeks to demonstrate that socio-

economic status significantly affects issues of diagnosis, the educational, and the employment experiences of adults with dyslexia. The findings illustrate an intersectional relationship between socio-economic status and disability inequalities i.e. that the overlap of the two contribute to the systemic oppression and discrimination experienced by many adults with dyslexia who have poor literacy skills.

Some interesting articles with a wider focus that might also interest you:

Using Explicit and Systematic Instruction to Support Working Memory

Jean L Smith, Leilani Sáez and Christian T. Doabler, Teaching Exceptional Children, Mar/Apr 2018

This article offers information on the use of systematic instruction to support working memory. Topics discussed within it include: activation of prior knowledge to enhance long-term memory consolidation; providing specific feedback to avert misconceptions; and the role of teachers in supporting students' engagement in the learning process.

Mathematics and Metacognition in Adolescents and Adults with Learning Disabilities

Annemie Desoete, International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education, Oct 2009

We suggest that most readers would be best to skim read this article, as it has several highly technical sections. The discussion section towards the end of the article is of particular interest. You may also want to dip into the sub-section before this (In-Depth and Semi-Structured Thematic Analyses, p.90 onwards), which contains several very illuminating extracts from interviews with adult learners with maths difficulties.

All of these journal articles and many more are accessible through the EBSCO Journal Access, available through the Guild Member website. Login to your account at: **https://training.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/member_benefits**

Professional Indemnity Insurance - do I need it?

Most of you who work for an employer and are on Pay As You Earn (PAYE) will normally be covered by your employer's insurance when carrying out work on their behalf. Those of you who work privately or are self-employed should consider getting cover through professional indemnity insurance.

Professional indemnity insurance for self-employed workers can cover some or all of the cost of a claim made against you or your company from a third-party in the event that a client is dissatisfied with your work. This is important if you are carrying out assessments for dyslexia and Specific learning difficulties (SpLd) for instance.

Working for an agency

A recruitment agency will have the option to supply workers either under their own Terms of Business or under a client's contract, which is known as a non-standard contract.

Should an agency supply temporary PAYE workers or those under a contract of employment, then the responsibility should rest with the hirer and they will be required to hold adequate Public and Employers' Liability Insurance. However, if the recruitment agency is supplying self-employed or limited entity contractors then the responsibilities for these individuals can vary.

For instance, should the contractor be deemed a business in their own right and control when they work, who they work for, how they work and take responsibility for the activities undertaken, then they should have their own liability and indemnity insurance in place to cover their services.

We would recommend that you always check with the agency to see if you are covered by their insurance or not.

Where can I find professional indemnity insurance?

You are not covered for this insurance through your Guild Membership. We can put you in touch with an insurance company that offers preferential rates to our members; the insurance policy is between you and the insurance company*. For further details log in to the Guild member area and click Guild Home. You can find a link to the insurance details under Guild Benefits.

Guild members are expected to follow our Code of Practice and not to overstep professional boundaries. You can find a link to *The Dyslexia Guild Code of Practice* under the Policies section in Guild Home.

*This article does not constitute legal advice, you are strongly advised to obtain specific, personal legal advice about your case or matter and not to rely on the information or comments in the Dyslexia Review or our websites.

CPD

Continuing Professional Development

Kathryn Benzine, Head of Education and Training at Dyslexia Action, reflects on an alphabet of Continuing Professional Development terminology and examines some of the key concepts and ideas.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the way in which professionals ensure that their specialist qualifications, skills and knowledge are regularly updated and remain relevant to the changing and developing environment in which they practice.

With the increasing pressures of life, work and career it often becomes difficult to see the bigger picture for CPD; what it is and what it should be; and how it should impact and improve our working lives and professional careers. This CPD alphabet picks up on some of the key terminology surrounding professional development and examines some of the associated references that provide meaningful connections. It is not comprehensive, perhaps you could populate it with your own word bank; it may provide help next time you come to complete your CPD Log, CV or Linkedin profile?

ADAPTABILITY

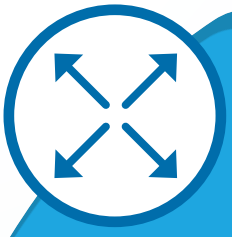
Professional careers change and are changing all the time. The training that specialist teachers and assessors undertook 10, 20 or 30 years ago is very different to that we undertake today. We are informed by technology, there are new knowledge frontiers, scientific discoveries and understanding that makes old practice redundant but also reinforces our core professionalism as we develop further. We may be time poorer, network less personally and lack some social awareness because of this or perhaps we are wiser because of our informed internet-based arena. Whatever we think, it is a given that we need adaptability to survive and thrive in the ever-changing landscape of our careers.

DYSLEXIA GUILD

The Dyslexia Guild has just celebrated 25 years of professional practice. Our Members and Fellows represent the pinnacle of achievement, professionally and practically. They are individuals whose personal development now informs and provides resource for others in terms of training and CPD. As we progress in our careers it is equally important to coach and mentor others along the way, to contribute to professional forums, to discuss and debate to improve practice and ensure that the up and coming membership has new and better ways to support individuals with learning difficulties and differences. CPD is not just for ourselves, it is to support others.

GOALS

CPD can easily become a random collection of offerings made available through training providers and professional bodies. Of course, it is sensible to take advantage of freely provided training and updating sessions whether these are offered in-house at work, through the internet or regional meetings. However. this offers no guarantee that specific training or updating that you require will be provided. In the same way that you may set goals for a learner you should also try to set your own CPD goals to ensure that the professional training you need takes place. Setting a goal and making a plan through the identification of appropriate training is required, followed by recording and evaluating your learning. Professional bodies can help with this process through the identification of appropriate training events, resources and recording. Download the Guild CPD Log template to help with this process.



A, B and C

Accreditation, Accreditation of prior learning (APL), Affiliate, Analysis, Assessment, Associate, Audit, Benefits of membership, Benchmark standards, Career development, Coaching, Cognitive reflection, Communication, Competency, Complexity, Compliance, Compulsory, Curriculum Vitae (CV)

D, E and F

Discipline, Ethics, Enthusiasm, Excellence, Employability, Evaluation, Fellowship, Fit for practice/purpose, Frameworks, Formal, Focussed, Further education

G, H and I

Higher education, Holistic approach, Informal learning, Information technology, Institutions, Investment in yourself

KEY WORDS

JOB DEVELOPMENT

CPD gives you the opportunity to showcase your achievements, it adds to your profile and can boost a CV and demonstrate currency. CPD can also boost your own confidence that your knowledge is still relevant and demonstrates flexibility, adaptability and a recognition that knowledge is not static – it needs to be added to. The Guild Librarian specialises in acquiring recent and relevant information that adds to our library of specialist literature for specialist teachers and support tutors. Have you accessed this resource lately? Have you browsed through the extensive collection of online journals (EBSCO) that is available to all Guild members? Job development is your route to improving your personal profile, career opportunities and competitive advantage and it is also a route to personal career satisfaction.

MEMBERSHIP

Are you making the most of your membership to support your CPD? The Dyslexia Guild has its own website for Guild Members and there is a wealth of resource to be accessed from there including links to:

- Access our free webinar events
- Use library access to research e-books and e-journals (available 24/7)
- Listen to specialist webinar recordings
- Review back issues of the Dyslexia Review
- Sign up for our e-newsletter Guild Gallery with topical news and information if you are not currently receiving it
- Update your directory information, essential for study skills support tutors and specialist teachers in private practice
- And last but not least download a CPD log template and start to plan your forthcoming professional development

PROFESSIONALISM

Maintaining professionalism depends on the regular updating of knowledge and practice. This is particularly important for practitioners where new sources of information challenge existing practice and provide alternative, better or different ways of tackling problems. All Guild members are expected to undertake a minimum of 30 hours of CPD a year. Specialist assessors are also required to undertake mandatory CPD each year; this year training in the SASC new report format should be on every assessor's list. Guild members have access to a free updating presentation on this subject. See reference details.

M, N and O

Mentoring, Morale, Motivation, National Dyslexia Resource Centre, Networking, Objectives, Occupational, Online training, Opinion

J, K and L

On-the-job training, Knowledge, Knowledgeability, Lifelong learning, Library resources, Listening skills, Linkedin profile

P, Q and R

Performance management, Personal, Planning, Policies, Potential, Practising certificate, Promotion, Qualifications, Quality assurance, Research, Reflective practice, Reputation, Regulation, Relevance

KEY WORDS

S, T, U and V

Self-Directed learning, Sanctions, Seminars, Skills development, Strengths to build upon, Support required, Technology, Training, Understanding, Updating, Verification, Vision

W, X, Y and Z

Other eXamples welcome, Year planner, Yearly review, career Zone, Zestful and Zeal all came to mind!

STANDARDS

Dyslexia Guild members all subscribe at the time of joining to the Code of Conduct required of members. Understanding the boundaries of professional practice is a critical part of this. There are specific qualifications relating to the different strands of specialist teaching, assessment and student support. Knowing the limitations and boundaries of your professional capabilities is important. It is a part of maintaining standards for the profession that you have subscribed to.

Feeding back on CPD needs enables training organisations to put in place appropriate training which in turn reflects back to standards development. Always double check the claims made by CPD providers; are they accredited by a known and respected body such as a university or the CPD Standards Office? How many learning hours is the course and does it lead to accredited hours or a qualification?

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

It could have equally well been work-based learning; I chose work-life balance as being just as important. We all learn from our home life and we need time to re-balance; a rounded work-life balance contributes to our professional persona, it gives us time to reflect, helps us to understand the environment at work and the wider political and social context. Remember to include this learning in your portfolio, particularly contributions to clubs, societies and networking groups.

Useful References

- Guild Members' website **https://training.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/guild-members**
Make sure that you download the revised CPD Log template and upload it to your membership record.
- Free webinars and other events for Members **https://training.dyslexiaaction.org.uk/member_events**

Useful books

Cottrell, Stella. (2017) *Critical Thinking Skills: Effective analysis, argument and reflection.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
Friedman, Andrew (2012) *Continuing Professional Development: Lifelong learning of millions.* Abingdon: Routledge
Greetham, Bryan. (2016) *Smart thinking: How to think conceptually, design solutions and make decisions.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
Talbot, Christine. (2015) *Studying at a distance: A guide for students, 4th ed.* Maidenhead: OUP

TECH TIPS

Technology for video conferencing

Are you looking for an online platform to meet and network with others? Here's a roundup of some current, freely available resources.

Cisco WebEx web-conferencing platform. Students have access to scheduled 'live' instruction. You can conduct unlimited online meetings with up to three people for free with the Basic Account.
www.webex.com/webexremoteedu.html

Google Classroom is free for educational settings and can be downloaded or set up to use quickly and easily.
https://classroom.google.com/

Google Meet is a video conferencing app which integrates with versions of Google Calendar and Gmail and shows the complete list of participants and scheduled meetings. It is the free consumer version of Google Hangouts. Until 1st July, all G Suite customers can use advanced Hangout Meet features such as larger meetings, live streaming and recording.
https://gsuite.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/products/meet/

Go to Meeting is an online meeting, desktop sharing, and video conferencing software package that enables the user to meet with other users via the internet in real time. There is a basic free plan service which you can upgrade to unlock advanced features.
https://free.gotomeeting.com/en-gb

Microsoft Teams is a collaboration tool and Office 365 team app that allows remote teams to work together and share information via a common space. See: **https://products.office.com/en-gb/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software**

Microsoft has good accessibility options, see the article 'Accessibility and inclusivity' on page 12 of the Autumn V29 (2) 2019 issue of *Dyslexia Review.*

Zoom is another video communication tool with a cloud platform for video and audio conferencing, collaboration, chat and webinars. The Basic Plan has a 40- minute time limit on meeting with three or more total participants. It can be used on mobiles or laptops. At the time of writing, the advice is not to make recordings on this system due to potential security breaches. You are also advised to password protect meetings and not allow anyone other than the host to screen-share. **https://zoom.us/**

The Power of Play in HE:

Creativity in Tertiary Learning

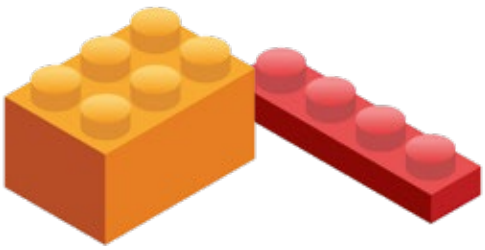
Alison James discusses the background and context to her work on developing creativity in higher education.

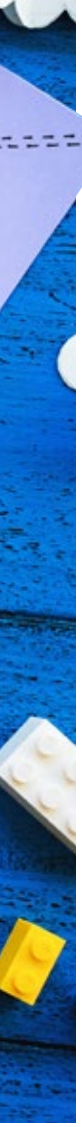
Alison James is a National Teaching Fellow and Principal Fellow of the former Higher Education Academy, now Advance HE. She holds a PhD from the University of Southampton and is Professor Emerita of the University of Winchester.

I came to my passion for playful and creative approaches to adult teaching and learning the long way round; via a traditional read-write-remember model of schooling. I did not realise then that I was lucky to fit the prevalent educational system. I was able to stuff lots of facts into my head, decode the test requirements, and spill them all out again in reasonably legible fashion. I only realised later that while I was clearing certain hurdles at secondary school there was one I had started to fall at, insidiously and almost irredeemably. I was losing my confidence and my ability to be creative. Decades later, Sir Ken Robinson would decry this in his TED Talk *Changing Educational Paradigms*[1], claiming that schools are killing creativity in young people. My own realisation came when I started working in a university dedicated to the arts, design and media, with significant numbers of students with dyslexia. Working with neurodiverse students made me reappraise how different people learn, which led to my use of, and research into, the pedagogic value of creativity and play at university.

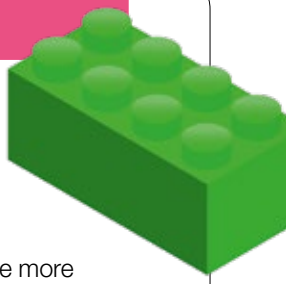
Developing and discussing creativity in teaching, using multisensory and multimodal approaches, seems today to be relatively uncontentious. Back in the 1990s when I introduced these to my arts students for fostering critically reflective capacities in personal development planning it was a different story. Many of the existing resources were text-based and something of a turn-off for those who preferred learning by doing. Professor Stephen Brookfield and I published *Engaging Imagination: Helping Students Become Creative and Reflective Thinkers* in 2014 in response to this. We argued that all learners benefit from different media and activities for all aspects of their voices to come through. We believed that the medium is indeed the message, whether it be building your learning experiences in LEGO, or walking a labyrinth to gain a quieter and embodied perspective.

From 2009 I had also started to bring LEGO and play-based approaches into my teaching, to cater for the strengths of all my students. In particular I was influenced by Papert's constructionist principle that we learn best when we make something. In so doing we create two things; new knowledge as well as the item. Neurologist Frank Wilson gives this a whole new perspective in his homage to the hand in his eponymously named book (1998).



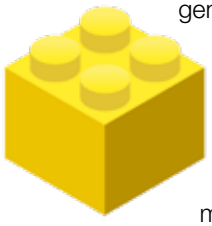


If anyone is interested in knowing more about the research, details can be found both through the survey link and via my website at **https://engagingimagination.com/the-value-of-play/**



Numerous theorists have highlighted the importance of play outside HE; for animal behavioural development (Bateson and Martin, 2013), in reshaping societal priorities (Kane, 2004), as part of healthy socialisation (Brown 2008) and as an instinctual and fundamental interaction at the heart of human sociocultural interactions (Sutton Smith, 1997).

The aforementioned theorists say little to nothing about higher education, although play itself is a well-established and expected part of early years education. It has not been, however, so readily accepted in further and higher education. While creativity seems to be an acceptable term at any stage of learning, play becomes more troublesome after primary school. With regard to higher education some resisters are concerned that it undermines the status of advanced education; being associated with frivolous pursuits that are the opposite of serious work, and early years activities. The narrowness of these interpretations misses some of the opportunities to learn which can come through play. Some objections can be linked to a lack of awareness of the research into play and its potential transferability.



Having spent several years using playful teaching methods, Dr Chrissi Nerantzi and I became aware of a shift in the mood in HE from 2015, as revealed in the numbers of conferences, events and publications that were appearing on the subject of play in HE. There seemed to be growing recognition that play could be a legitimate mode of adult learning. In celebration and as illustration of this, we produced *The Power of Play in HE: Creativity in Tertiary* Learning in 2019. We brought together 64 international contributors to challenge reductive interpretations, allow for difference in definition and illustrate the value of play.

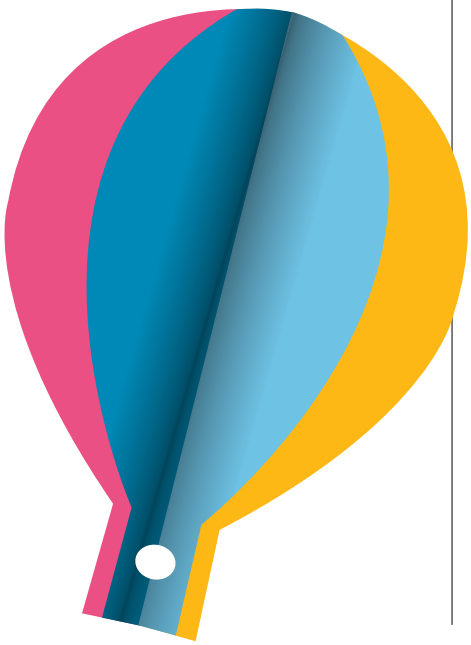
In imagining the text, we wanted to include as many voices and disciplines as possible, so we designed a structure which would include Explorations (longer, theorised pieces) and Sketches (500-word short stories, as practical illustrations). It was also the reason that we grouped our contributions into broad categories (such as Wanderers and Wonderers, Experimenters and Engagers) which could allow for all kinds of associations. In this way we wanted also to cater for diverse forms and interpretations of play, and thus challenge simplistic notions of what it is. We wanted to dispel numerous myths about play in HE, such as the assumption that play is mostly running about with balls or in groups. Play may be team-based and outdoorsy, or it may be solitary and internalised. Not everyone will like every form of play; play preferences are personal and subjective. Competitive play may galvanise some through the prospect of winning or losing, but others prefer any competition to be of the kind that is quietly and gently with themselves.

Another myth was that playful, creativity teaching is located in the arts, not elsewhere. Our authors are teaching subjects such as mathematics, science, sports coaching, teacher training, drama, and medicine, among others. Hand in hand with this was the notion that play is 'time off for good behaviour'; what you do to 'reward' students for having done 'the proper work'. We wanted to show that playful approaches are part and parcel of this proper work, such as using LEGO with colleagues to teach threshold concepts; semiotics, ergonomics, how gravity works, medical topics.

With this last in mind, play can be used effectively to address the needs of the professional world, or life outside fulltime education – as in the case of theatrical simulations from our book. Clinical enactments as play have become integral to medical education as they provide a safe environment in which to develop essential skills. However, the authors of this contribution argue that those involved in the simulations are active, creative and emotionally invested participants, who are learning much more than 'just' skills. (Pelletier and Kneebone, 2019).

Here, and elsewhere, through play, some of the more desirable learning dispositions and attributes are also fostered; the courage to persevere, trust, resilience, awareness of and respect for difference.

Play is also a mode of active learning which responds to the learning desires of a diverse student body. While many educators have already embraced such modes, students still complain that many others read off their PowerPoint slides, in a monologic lecture style. Others continue to note a disconnect between how they learn best and how lecturers teach them. Where lecturers are choosing play it is because they want to find more stimulating and effective ways to engage their students in complex learning. This may also be a direct response to fears expressed that in a market-driven teaching economy, student attendance and personal investment (not financial) in their own learning is declining. We found that play-based approaches seemed to help post-compulsory educators fulfil some of their desires; to foster love of the subject, help students master difficult topics, build connections, boost a sense of belonging and community, enable metacognitive awareness, make learning enjoyable, and include all learners irrespective of background and modes of learning.

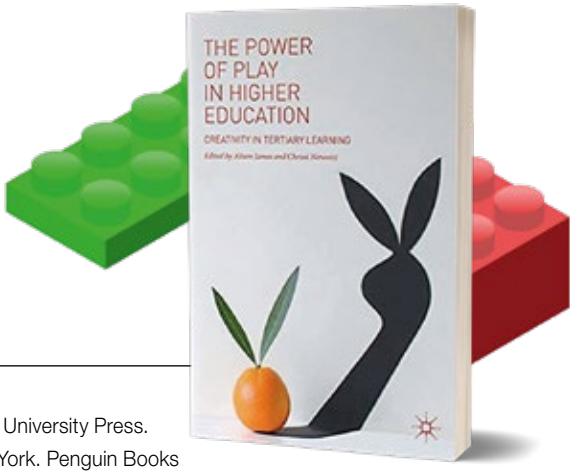


1 https://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson_changing_education_paradigms
2 https://playandcreativityfestival.wordpress.com/
3 http://www.imagilab.org/

Our experiences in the book are garnered through play-based teaching, as well as running events, workshops, debates, conferences, projects and festivals. At the University of Winchester, we ran a Play and Creativity Festival for staff and students for three consecutive years. Among its aims were to reenergise teaching, boost motivation and morale and create a positive, inclusive learning community. In the film *Play and Creativity Festival 2017*[2] you will see many examples of play, including to teach key concepts in forensic science, or as part of an education induction. Feedback from the 2019 Festival included comments from student participants, some of whom had co-designed a game for history with their tutors to teach The Wars of the Roses. Numerous others emphasised the importance of play for de-stressing and for positive mental health. Twenty student play champions also co-convened the 2019 Festival, with one of them reporting afterwards: "Care of mental health is very important to me and something I want to promote as I know many students that suffer with stress ... I think [play and creativity] benefits mental health and reminds people to look after themselves and make time to do this."

Since the publication of *The Power of Play*, my own exploration of play has continued thanks to scholarship funding provided by the *Imagination Laboratory Foundation*.[3] This work is building up the knowledge base around play in HE in general, as well as having a special focus on the teaching of management concepts and theories. This is because the Foundation has a special interest in research at the intersection between the arts, science, management, business and play. From the work done so far it seems that certain play forms are more widely accepted and used than others, such as gamified learning. This suggests to me that in higher education play formed with structure, built-in goals and outcomes offer reassurance that money and time are not being wasted. Equally it occurred to me that we are much more nervous about free or experimental play. As a result, we are not allowing space for open-ended learning, where students have choice about what they do without knowing where it is supposed to lead them, and can go at their pace and in their way. I wonder what the implications of this are for diverse learners? We seem to forget the many breakthroughs, discoveries, and inventions that have come thanks to being able to follow a train of thought without constraints.

I will be exploring this and many other questions regarding the use of play in higher education over the next 18 months and would love to hear from anyone either using play, or deeply opposed to it. Initial responses can be provided through a survey: (available at https://value-of-play.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/the-value-of-play-in-higher-education) after which I will be running a range of interviews, free talks and events to share emerging findings and practices.



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Student Life in Higher Education:

Changes and Challenges for Mental Wellbeing

Dr Ruth Caleb from the Metanoia Institute discusses the challenges to mental wellbeing faced by many students in the UK.

Introduction

Mental health in British society appears to be deteriorating.[1] In the year ending December 2018, among the UK population, 19.7 per cent or about 10.3 million people reported high levels of anxiety, and young adults aged 16–24 today are more likely than previous generations of young adults to experience common mental health conditions.[2] The number of mental health incidents dealt with by police rose by 28 per cent between 2014 and 2018.[3] There is also a greater sense of loneliness, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which in particular affects younger adults aged 16 to 24 years who reported feeling lonely more often than those in older age groups.[4] It is therefore hardly surprising that students in higher education (HE) arrive with mental health concerns or develop them during their course.

The Challenge of Transitions

Progress through the education system has always been tricky for most if not all students. Each new academic year is a different experience and requires new skills. The shift into further education (FE) college is even greater. While FE students are likely to live in or near their family home, the transitions in terms of study methods and independence of learning make demands on them that are unrecognisable from those of school. The impact of these transitions may come to a climax for students who continue on to university, which in addition to the educational targets, often requires adaptation to living in

an unfamiliar environment, separated from familial relationships and social networks as well as any existing professional support for mental health and/or learning disabilities. Even for local students who remain in their family home, university creates difficulties outside the comfort zone of most first-year students. These changes can be even more challenging for students with learning disabilities and mental health problems who will need to adapt to different academic, social and personal stressors.

Changes in the Student Cohort

The HE student cohort has changed enormously over the past decade, with almost 50% of school-leavers now attending university. The impact of the widening participation agenda and its targets has increased the numbers of students from under-represented groups, and the Disability Discrimination Act (now the Equalities Act) ensures that students with disabilities, including mental ill-health, are offered an equal chance of success in HE.

In 2014/5 the number of university students who disclosed learning difficulties was 105,550. This rose roughly in line with the growth in student numbers, since the removal of the cap on student numbers, to 110,795 in 2018/9. However the number of students who disclose a mental health condition has increased disproportionately from 33,045 in 2014/5 to 81,960 in 2018/9.[5] While this appears to indicate that far more students now suffer a mental health disability, it could also signpost concomitantly a reduction in the previously held taboo against disclosing a mental health condition. However, we also need to remember that many students have two or more disabling conditions, (34,155 disclosed in 2018/9), for example a learning disability alongside a mental health condition so the number of students with mental health disabilities is likely to be greatly underestimated, especially as many students prefer not to disclose their condition, often hoping that in their new student life, previous problems will be left behind. However, there are growing stresses in student life that may well create the resurrection of past conditions.

Now that we have a far larger proportion of HE students from Widening Participation Groups[6], we need to ensure that they are offered the support they deserve so that they have a level playing field. Student anxiety seems to have risen at all levels. Even first-year undergraduates are worried about what degree they might attain, afraid that, if they achieve less than a 2:1 grade, they may have difficulty obtaining a job with good prospects, and concerned about financial hardship and a future of debt. With the eradication of the university grant system in favour of loans, there is consequential pressure on students to have part-time (and sometimes full-time) jobs on top of their academic commitments, and an increased need to prove themselves to be exceptional in order to stand out in a job market that is now the province of the many not the few.

In spite of this we need to keep in mind that most students enjoy their years in HE, and that students actually have a lower rate of suicide than the general population. So, being in HE may offer a protective factor.[7,8]

How Can We Increase Mental Wellbeing?

Mental Health Day and Wellbeing Campaigns reduce shame and work proactively to encourage openness about mental health concerns, and the message that schools, colleges and universities now give to their students is emphatically to talk to someone about their concerns. There are clear implications for service provision, at a time of austerity which has had a profound impact on the NHS mental health services and their capacity to provide the specialist support that students with mental health challenges might need. This can be worrying for academic and administrative staff who may feel out of their depth; it can also be challenging for support staff who are managing demands that are ever-increasing in terms of both quantity and severity.

However, while there is now a far greater likelihood that schools, colleges and universities have professional support from counsellors and mental health practitioners, it is important to acknowledge that supporting student wellbeing is the responsibility of everyone within the institution's community. All staff, however senior, and the students themselves, have their part to play and a responsibility to act supportively in a way that's appropriate to their roles. This can range from thinking about how to introduce anxious students to the process of giving presentations, combatting procrastination and perfectionism, to offering tranquil as well as busy social spaces to relax in.

Most educational institutions offer training to staff to help them recognise common mental health difficulties and develop confidence in responding and referring appropriately. If yours does not, please do suggest it! All staff need to be helped to have that conversation with a student who may be distressed. They need to be able to signpost to the correct services, keep to the boundaries appropriate to their role, recognise when they are faced with an emergency situation and know what to do about it.

To Conclude:

Those of us who work with mental health and wellbeing can be slightly optimistic that the issue is acknowledged, while being concerned that there are not the resources to ensure that it is always appropriately addressed. There is much more awareness in society as a whole about mental health difficulties with many famous people now disclosing their own problems and encouraging others to do the same. Even Bury Football Club fans, suffering as a result of the club's expulsion from the English Football League, are being offered mental health support sessions on the NHS.[9]

Perhaps the most important issue that needs to be addressed without delay is the necessity for a change of attitude in the community as a whole, from avoidance to engagement. This is actually simple to achieve. If you see someone who seems to be struggling, go and speak to them and give them your time and attention. To quote Kurt Vonnegut, on welcoming new-born babies into the world, 'There's only one rule that I know of, babies ... you've got to be kind.'[10]

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BOOK REVIEW

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing in Higher Education: A Practical Guide

(2019) Edited by Nicola Barden and Ruth Caleb, London: Sage

Reviewed by Nicola Margand MDG, Dyslexia Action CPD Lead Tutor

The first thing to say here is don't skip past this review if you are not involved in higher education; there is much to commend in this publication to those in high schools, sixth forms and further education settings.

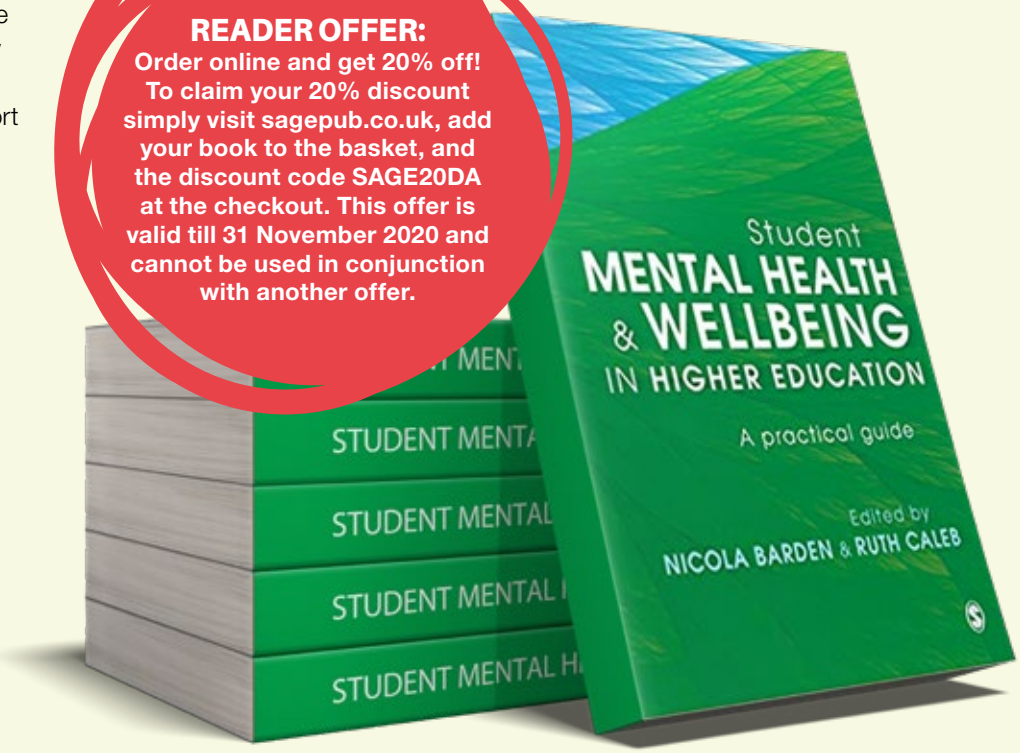
The 10 chapters of this accessible book are split into three parts:

Part I: The Context looks at the current organisation of higher education in the UK, the changes and challenges for mental health and wellbeing and societal perceptions of these. It discusses broader issues such as social and political changes which have impacted on the sector and how the widening participation agenda has diversified the student population. The second chapter provides an overview of legal obligations and limits within which higher education and its support of mental health operates.

Part II: Mental health is explored in the next three chapters which unpack the common mental health problems in the student population whilst also providing an overview of what good mental health looks like. There is a useful section on how the brain develops and what signs of mental health difficulties staff might notice in students. Pressure points and transitions are specifically examined in a chapter that would be particularly useful to those involved with, for example, students transitioning from high school to sixth form and other post-16 providers. A chapter is also dedicated to issues relating specifically to those students coming into the UK higher education system, whether as international students or from diverse cultures and backgrounds within the country.

Part III: Policy and practice makes up the second half of the book. These five chapters cover the different levels of support available to students from academic and department level to professional support as well as how support staff such as residential mentors and security staff can be impacted. Crucially, it acknowledges what training and support these non-specialists should have access to and how vital self-care is for those who are supporting students with their mental health needs.

An objectives box at the start of each chapter provides a useful overview. Useful and diverse case studies permeate the book and each chapter has comprehensive further reading, references and signposting to practical resources including websites. This book provides plenty of food for thought but also reassurance. It will be of interest to anyone working in higher education or supporting students and their mental health, particularly at times of transition.



Growth Mindset for Teachers

Professor Sherria Hoskins, Executive Dean at Portsmouth University talks about her research work on mindset, theory and practice to Natalie Houalla.

Background

Sherria is the only member of her family to attend university and understands first-hand the importance of a growth mindset. She describes her mother as "naturally a growth mindset parent" and, although she did not understand the concept at the time, recognises how positively her outlook on academia was impacted by an approach that focussed on praise and encouragement, effort rather than marks, and processes rather than results. This growth mindset language in her family engineered a positive message about learning which she explains as: "I saw the power growing up. I felt it for myself. So, when I started reading the mindsets work, while I was an Educational Researcher, I knew that this was what I wanted to do."

Sherria's brother has dyslexia and had received a poor education, growing up in an era where learners with dyslexia were not widely recognised or properly supported. This gave Sherria a strong sense of what the psychology of the learner could do to disable the learner; highlighted the power of education, and raised questions about an educational system that allows learners to 'fall through the cracks.' In turn, this led her to consider what she could do to support the educational system in creating the right emotional and psychological space in which they could learn.

Education

After A-levels, Sherria trained as an adult basic education tutor, helping those who could not read and write and was impressed by the creativity of the teaching methodology. She worked in an education centre in the evenings and taught adults reading, writing, and basic maths before specialising in working with those with severe learning disabilities. When later applying to Plymouth University, she was accepted particularly on the basis of this work with adult learners.

Early Work

Sherria's doctoral research examined the learning styles of university students and the approaches they used as well as social class impact; recognising that class can be a disabler and negatively affect self-efficacy, the learner's own expectations and the expectations of those around them. She became interested in the psychology of learners, specifically on how being in a minority group, be that as a mature student, through socioeconomic status, gender or ethnicity, can alter an individual's beliefs and hinder learning, where in the same institution, others may be thriving.

On completion of her PhD, Sherria's first job as a Senior Research Fellow looked at predictors of achievement in nationally examined professional courses for CIPD[1] qualifications, seeking to address a 50% failure rate on some of their courses. She then carried out a project with Portsmouth City Council which had concerns that some pupils were not reaching national standards. Using five years of data, her research identified that pupils who were only slightly under-performing at Key Stage 1, were then 5% under at Key Stage 2 and 10% under later on. Using Carol Dweck's *Implicit Theories*[2] work, her focus shifted to teachers' expectations of learners, surfacing a self and outside context of lowered expectations that could lead to learning deprivation.

Growth Mindsets for Teachers

Sherria and her team began the growth mindsets research when she was appointed Head of Psychology at Portsmouth University (she is now Executive Dean of Science and Health). The book Growth Mindsets for Teachers, summarises their research over a number of years and examines the evidence the research team generated which explored the complexities and the polarised debate of growth mindsets. She also led Growing Learners, a group of education research psychologists, who worked directly with schools and parents to support them in improving children's aspirations, expectations and attainment using evidence-based practice.

Sherria notes that growth mindset work is often misinterpreted as 'fixing the child', assuming that the problem lies within the child, rather than within the education system, societal, institutional or cultural beliefs. Interventions need to avoid the deficit model and focus on supporting the child, the teachers, the school culture and parents.

It is right and proper that children understand that their efforts and embracing challenges will develop them and change the outcomes. It is right and proper that we develop resilient youngsters who know how to take on board the learning strategies that teachers provide them with and try them out, even creating their own approaches, actively learning and problem solving and keep persisting in the face of challenge ... even if it does not immediately transform grades.

Challenges Around Growth Mindsets in Schools

Sherria notes that the challenge for our education system is that it focuses on outcome and not on process and on comparing people, which in

> *"Interventions need to avoid the deficit model and focus on supporting the child, the teachers, the school culture and parents."*

turn can lead to a fixed mindset and a focus away from our own growth instead. As humans, we naturally compare ourselves, however those with a fixed mindset will focus on those comparisons. We also know that if those comparisons exist in both our culture and political context, we risk focussing our children away from their own growth and development. The political context of our education system is such that we are driven to compare learners through examinations and league tables. There is a performance-fixed focus which does not come from teachers and educators; it comes from the political perspective.

Misinterpretations

Sherria explains that many individuals have adopted the growth mindset message, but some misinterpret or over-simplify it and they over-promise when selling it to schools. There are many simplistic messages circulated and this has led some in the educational arena to dismiss the theory. In reality, it is a very complex theory that we haven't yet worked out how to apply perfectly in practice; we may never be able to apply it perfectly in an applied setting. It is important to note that this is neither a quick fix nor a fad. It is simply a valuable tool amongst many others that can be used in the classroom. For teachers and parents, she notes: notes: "We don't have to stop focusing on attainment. We don't have to stop celebrating great attainment. This idea that we can only talk about effort now and not attainment is false. That theoretically makes no sense in the mindsets theory! All we have to do is stop comparing children's attainment, stop talking about attainment as if it comes from some magic source that was inherently in them. We must talk about attainment in terms of what brought them to that attainment, what strategies they used, whether or not they needed to persist. We must unravel how that attainment came into being and we must get them to focus on comparisons of their own attainment against previous attainment, not against other people's attainment, so that we create process-focus rather than performance-focus.

Teaching Children: Concept and Cognition

In her role as a psychologist, Sherria describes implicit theories of intelligence (mindsets) as an understanding that the way that we think about the nature of intelligence and abilities influences behaviour. And that behaviour then influences outcomes. If teachers focus first on the behaviour, i.e. tell children "Try harder and that will work" – this is the wrong approach. It is about getting children to have different concepts of their understanding of intelligence and ability. This will then change behaviour and, over time, this will change their outcomes, their self-expectations, and their willingness to adopt and use many strategies to learn and problem solve. In turn, this will build their resilience to future challenge and failure. We have to change the context so that it is one in which their belief is that they can and will develop. This will develop persistence and in turn improve outcomes.

She explains that when we encourage teachers to use a different language which focuses on effort and learning process not just outcomes, that is because we don't want the environment to drag their concept back, not because that alone is going to fix it. However, outcomes are not off the table – we can still celebrate these, but make sure they are not a mystery, something given; make sure children understand that efforts come from hard work and trying different strategies; celebrate

1 Chartered Institute of Personnel Development
2 Carol Dweck – *Implicit theory of Intelligence* in Dweck (2000)

that process and the development of a child's outcomes, their development, not their position in the class.

You do not know the potential of any child. Psychologists have tried to work this out for hundreds of years, we cannot. So, you have to treat every child with the highest expectations, and they will therefore perform the best that they possibly can in the learning environment that you are giving them because of those expectations.

A very important consideration for learners with specific learning difficulties, Sherria notes, is that their emotional state and prior education experience will often carry heavy weight into any new learning situation. Rather than the teacher or parent thinking about what strategies they can teach them or what the learner is incapable of, they should recognise that these strategies will not be used if they don't consider that weight.

It is important to find strategies to unravel this, all of which are in the Growth Mindset advice, and which put that student on a level playing field emotionally and psychologically. This will help to take away the fear that some pupils will have built up over years through social comparisons and experiences of failure in which they did not get the chance to overcome that challenge. As we know, fear and anxiety switch off the learning receptors. For educational professionals that read Growth Mindsets and put its approach into practice, the clearest measures of success will be:

A pupil who is putting their hand up, asking a question, saying, "I don't understand" and asking to be taught in a different strategy. They might be saying, "I tried this, and it didn't work. What else might I try?" They might even be creating new strategies of their own to solve a problem. They might have a curious, creative persistence and willingness to let others see it – to be out loud with that curious and creative persistence. They won't be hiding the fact that they are trying, or hiding when they don't understand.

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BOOK REVIEW

Growth Mindset for Teachers

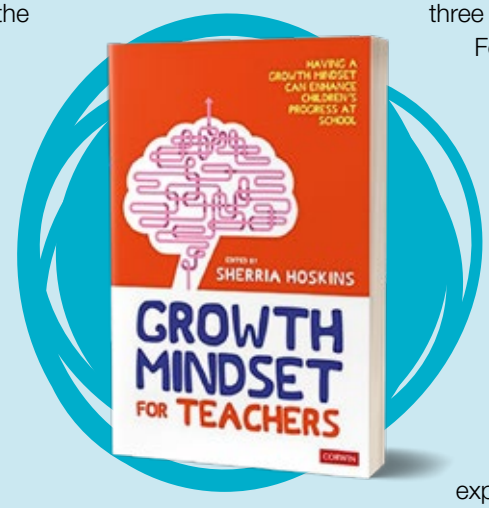
(2020) Sherria Hoskins(Ed), Thousand Oaks: Corwin

Reviewed by Jan Beechey MCILIP, Dyslexia Guild Librarian

Many of you will have heard of 'growth mindset' and the opinions on it range from complete distain to enthusiastic support. This book explores some of the research evidence, the debates and myths surrounding it and the many contributors also report on what has worked or not worked for them, and what we still do not understand about mindsets.

The goal of this book is to encourage us to take an analytical approach to mindsets, making informed decisions about whether and how to use them in the classroom, and how to critically explore the impact in practice.

Part One of the book explores why a mindset intervention was designed in the first place. The editor, Sherria Hoskins, leads Growing Learners – a group of education research psychologists who work directly with schools to improve pupil aspirations, expectations and attainment – using evidence-based practice. What they focus on is what they call non-cognitive skills – those that impact motivation to learn rather than techniques for learning. The main goal in the intervention is to help schools and teachers to support pupils to become a Growing Learner for life, not just for a specific learning task or situation. The first chapter explores a range of non-cognitive elements that relate to learning behaviour and attainment such as 'laddishness', aspiration, self-efficacy. Hoskins goes on to explore research, including that of Carol Dweck, on implicit theories of intelligence and the evidence that mindsets really do relate to or impact on the way in which pupils approach their learning. Other chapters go on to explore personality and performance and there is a good critical look at 'learning styles' and the lack of scientific study to support the view that they improve academic outcomes in any way. There are chapters which explore children's beliefs in ability in each key stage, links between mindsets and mental health, mindsets and learning difficulties and mindsets and specific curriculum subjects such as reading.



Part Two - Mindsets in the Classroom describes activities and exercises that make up the Changing Mindsets intervention programme. They have been split into three age groups: Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1; Key Stage 2 and Secondary and Further Education. Materials and resources to accompany lesson plans are available online. Each weekly activity has a key theme, learning outcomes, materials required and activity descriptions sections.

Part Three of the book explores myths, questions, misconceptions and challenges. The complexities of moving theory and research into practice are shared and try to balance some of the oversimplifications and misunderstandings that have been perpetuated in the media. The final chapter looks ahead to how we need to continue to explore some key unanswered questions and still need more experience, reflection and refinement of interventions in the classroom.

Overall, I found this book to have a well-balanced and thoughtful approach to mindset theory and intervention. It does not claim to fix everything easily but, with some questioning of and understanding of nuanced impacts of interventions, teachers can help to develop resilience and motivation in their learners.

School Governance and Special Educational Needs

A role for Dyslexia Guild members to provide support as a voluntary school governor specialising in SEND.

School Governors and SEND Support

Have you thought about becoming a school governor and wanted to find out more? Guild members have a wealth of experience to share and schools are often looking to strengthen their teams. In this article we explain the role of a governor, why they are so important, and how they can make a big difference to a school or trust. This article focuses on the SEND governor role, as this is where Guild members might like to start their voluntary career in school governance.

Governing boards have three, core functions, as set out by the Department for Education (DfE). These include ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction, overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent, and holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, as well as the performance management of staff.

The board as a whole is responsible for securing effective outcomes for learners with SEND. Whilst specific, strategic-level responsibilities will often be delegated to an individual board member or sub-committee, it is important that consequently, the board does not lose sight of their collective responsibility for SEND.

Having said that, good practice suggests that the governing board should, additionally, appoint a SEND link governor, who will attend termly school visits and carry out formal reviews for SEND support.

Why Become a SEND Link Governor?

If you are passionate about improving the lives and opportunities of SEN learners, becoming a SEND link governor could be a rewarding role. The SEND Governor is essentially the board's champion for pupils identified with SEND and inclusion needs, and will appropriately challenge and support the school, to ensure that all learners within their setting are given every opportunity to succeed.

SEND Governors play a crucial role in guaranteeing that the school is fulfilling its duties to children with additional, educational needs and your diligent attention and work can significantly and positively impact upon their achievement. Through your robust questioning and proactive assistance, you will lead your school's governing body in driving high-quality SEND provision and constructive attitudes to learning among pupils with SEN as well as affecting future board actions in favour of these pupils.

This role requires additional time, effort, and a solid understanding of SEN and what effective provision looks like. There is always additional training and support (both in-person and online) available.

SEND Reviews

SEND link governors will be expected to conduct termly SEND Reviews. When doing so, ask the school SENCo to walk you through specific support methods. If methods include the use of educational technologies,

then you may wish to ask for a description or even brief demonstration of these. This will guarantee that you, as the SEND link, will have a comprehensive understanding of the unique and individualised processes and procedures in place to ensure high-quality outcomes. These should be documented thoroughly, conveyed to the full governing board, alongside general points discussed, attitudes to learning, pupil perceptions, and values observed.

There are also review guides for governors published by the Whole School SEND consortium which can support a thorough SEND Review of the whole school.

How Can You Use Effective Questioning to Support SEND Pupils in Your School?

The scrutiny of educational outcomes for SEND and holding a school to account for SEND support commences with effective questioning. As a SEND governor, you will lead on this, particularly during SEND reviews. Questions are your best tool for supporting and challenging the school.

The following questions could be asked (Bromley 2018):

- *How are SEND pupils identified?*
- *How is funding allocated to ensure effective support for these pupils and to what effect? This includes but is not limited to staffing, additional tutelage timetables, technologies used to maximise learning retention, etc.*
- *How are the attendance, progress and outcomes of children with SEND tracked?*
- *How are support and intervention strategies monitored and evaluated? Moreover, what do these evaluations suggest?*
- *What training is offered to teachers and support staff? How is the impact of this training demonstrated? Have further training needs been identified?*
- *How are teaching assistants utilised and to what effect?*
- *How are other resources deployed and to what effect?*
- *How effective is parental communication and engagement?*
- *What liaison occurs with local authorities and external agencies? How are the outcomes actioned?*
- *How is the school bridging the gap between the educational outcomes of pupils with SEN and those without SEN? Is there clear data to highlight this?*
- *Is the school's website compliant? What information is published and is it up-to-date and accurate?*

I hope you agree that these are good questions to ask the leadership team of a school!

SEND Outcomes

The SEND Code of Practice states that the vision for children with SEND should be the same as for all children and young people – that they achieve well in their early years, at school and in college, and lead happy and fulfilled lives. With this in mind, governors, particular SEND link governors, must challenge a school's leadership, Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), and other school staff in order to confirm that robust, regularly-reviewed processes are in place to ensure fair and equal access to education for pupils with SEND.

Using your best endeavours, you can make sure that pupils with SEN get the support they need. You can also learn important strategic thinking and high-level management skills in the process.

How Much Time is Required?

Governors volunteer their time and it is important to find out how much time you are expected to give. Schools differ in their requirements and expectations. Some schools have regular short 90-minute meetings twice a term whilst other schools meet for longer once a term. You may be expected to meet with all the Governors once a term and with a small group more often.

How Do I Become a Governor?

We hope this article has helped you think about the difference you could make to a local school. As well as electing parent governors, governing boards also have the power to co-opt governors. You should therefore approach local schools asking if they are seeking new governors. There is also a matching service called Inspiring Governance which can be found by following this link https://www.inspiringggovernance.org/volunteers/

Article by:

Dr Mark Turner, Managing Director, Real Group and Secondary School Governor

Natalie Houalla, Instructional Designer, Real Group and Primary School Chair of Governors

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BOOK REVIEW

DYSLEXIA: Theories, Assessment and Support

(2020) John Everatt and Amanda Denston, Oxford: Routledge

Reviewed by Dr Jenny Moody MDG, Dyslexia Action CPD and Postgraduate Tutor

This is a comprehensive book with an aim to provide the reader with an understanding of the basics of dyslexia. The book is organised through six chapters, each with a content-identifying title. Each chapter has manageable sections of related topics, with follow-up references for further support.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Skills of Reading and Writing

The introductory chapter first sets out the background to the book before discussing elements necessary for reading and writing. Topics include key terms, such as phonology, orthographic awareness, vocabulary and meaning, working memory, and requirements for the development of reading and writing. The chapter finishes with an overview of the rest of the book.

Chapter 2: A Background and Framework to Understand Dyslexia

The focus here is on an overview of dyslexia, including some historical influential individuals, namely Kaussmaul, Pringle Morgan, Hinshelwood and Orton. Theories, practices and research include ideas related to visual deficit perspectives on dyslexia, the dyslexia/intelligence debate and then moving to those with a more language-based focus. The most commonly agreed theory of dyslexia is suggested as 'some sort of phonological deficit'. The chapter finishes with 'a framework for dyslexia', the assumption being that dyslexia is concerned with 'problems related to language, particularly the phonological component'.

Chapter 3: Theories of Dyslexia

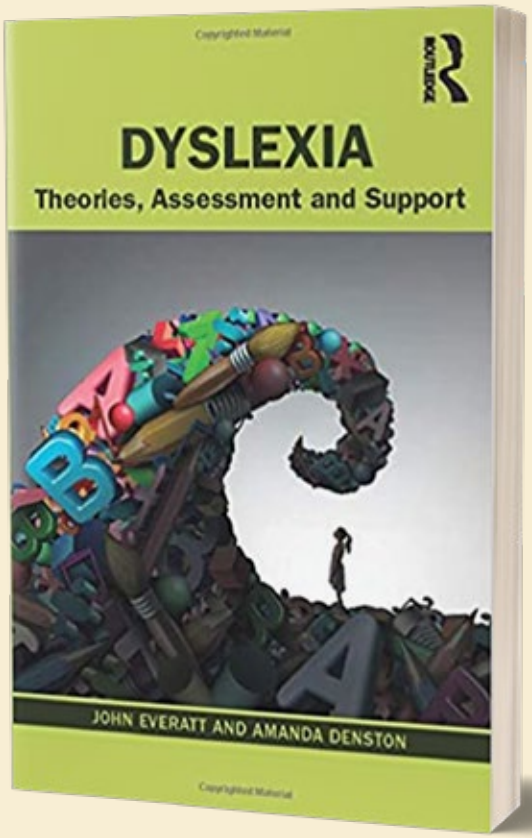
This section discusses the pros and cons of theories of dyslexia; phonological deficit hypothesis, rapid naming deficits, perceptual factors and visual processing double deficits, motor and cerebellum deficit, morphological awareness deficit. The authors conclude that 'although several theories about dyslexia have been proposed, the ones that appear to be best at explaining the features associated with dyslexia focus on language deficits, particularly in the area of phonological processing'.

Chapter 4: Identifying Dyslexia

Types of assessment methods, assessment procedures and evaluations are discussed in this chapter. Figures provide graphic comparison of the performance of those with dyslexia versus those that do not have dyslexia and of students with dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity and dyspraxia, dyslexia, specific language impairment and moderate learning disabilities. Dyslexia across orthographies, language and educational contexts is also briefly discussed.

Chapter 5: Intervention

This chapter considers two differing perspectives of dyslexia and teaching methods:



1. Dyslexia could simply represent the lower end of a normal distribution of reading and perhaps spelling ability.

2. Those with dyslexia represent a qualitatively different population of individuals, particularly in their ways of dealing with, and thinking about, reading and writing.

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The authors suggest that a middle ground has to be considered, 'given that dyslexia is a specific difficulty with learning to read and spell, the focus will have to be on literacy learning, and this is likely to be similar to teaching methods used to support all learners'.

Discussion follows a wide range of intervention perspectives such as general learning viewpoints, literacy teaching methods and phonological awareness training. Response to intervention, assessment intervention profiling, multisensory learning, working memory or meta-cognitive methods, and visual-and motor-related interventions are also all explored.

The chapter concludes, 'The current evidence suggests that intervention methods that target literacy are the most likely to reduce the difficulties associated with dyslexia as conceptualised in this book'.

Chapter 6: Self-concept and Dyslexia

The final chapter focus is given to discussion of three constructs of psychosocial development, global and academic; self-esteem and self-concept; self-efficacy and resilience. Figures are included which help to graphically support the discussion on these constructs. Research suggests that students with dyslexia and co-occurring difficulties, may have lower levels of self-concept, self-efficacy and resilience in comparison to those without learning difficulties.

The authors conclude that reading will impact all areas of the curriculum; improvements in achievement would be expected to bring about changes in self-concept. As understanding of literacy learning problems and dyslexia increases, there should be a close identification of the best method or set of methods to support the learning of individuals and their wellbeing.

Suggested readers

The book is suggested to be ideal reading for those taking courses on dyslexia or literacy learning difficulties within education, psychology and related disciplines. It will be of great interest to specialist teachers, special education staff, educational psychologists and those in related occupations.

BOOK REVIEW

Dyscalculia: From Science to Education

(2019) Brian Butterworth: Abingdon, Routledge

READER OFFER: use discount code A045, which is valid until 31 July 2020 for 20% off at www.routledge.com

Reviewed by Janet Desmet MDG, Dyslexia Action APC and Postgraduate Tutor

Brian Butterworth has been a leading researcher in the field of dyscalculia for a number of years and produced a well-known screening tool, The Dyscalculia Screener (2003), for learners between the ages of 6-14. Unlike other earlier books on dyscalculia, Butterworth puts forward here a definition of dyscalculia which helps to distinguish it from maths difficulties due to maths anxiety or other environmental factors, dyslexia or dyspraxia.

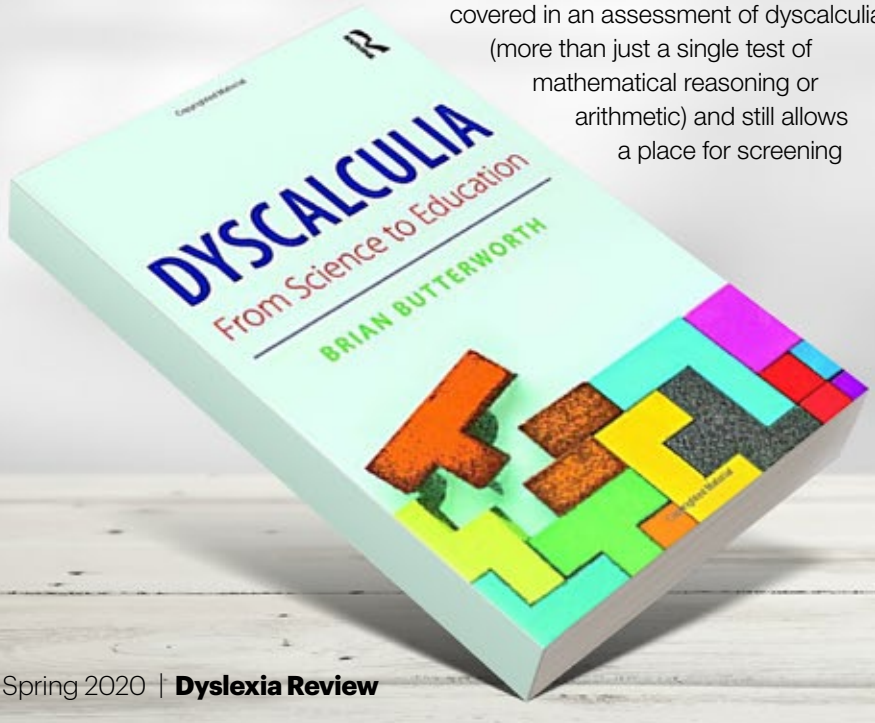
Butterworth argues that dyscalculia is due to a core deficit in the ability to understand number abstraction and reasoning which is domain specific, and presents a good deal of research to support this, as well as detailed explanation of different components of these concepts and the typical chronological development of these. This differs from earlier approaches to dyscalculia which avoided definitions and causes and concentrated on different behavioural symptoms that a teacher may recognise.

This book was published in 2019 and before the release of the SASC guidance on dyscalculia which was released later that year. The definition of dyscalculia used by SASC follows that of Butterworth. He recommends for example that an assessor without adequate training in the assessment of maths (a postgraduate top-up course in mathematics assessment) should refer a learner, who they think may be dyscalculic, on to an appropriately qualified specialist. It represents an authoritative view for professionals working in the sector.

For anyone looking for information about the qualifications or experience now required to undertake dyscalculia assessments or what such an assessment should cover, the SASC guidance is the best source. This indicates the areas that should be covered in an assessment of dyscalculia (more than just a single test of mathematical reasoning or arithmetic) and still allows a place for screening tests which examine subitising and other specific subtypes of number sense as a part of a dyscalculia assessment.

There are not many screening tests for dyscalculia, and in order to determine which would cover the necessary components of number sense, a close attention to the SASC document and descriptions of individual screening tests is required. This is not always easy to determine from catalogue or website descriptions and the discussion in Chapter Nine: Assessment: how to identify dyscalculic learners, may be helpful. This does mention his commercial interest in The Dyscalculia Screener.

Butterworth's book contains a great deal of useful explanation of the different types of number sense which would be essential for anyone considering assessing for dyscalculia. Although the chapter on assessment has been largely superseded by the SASC advice, it would be useful background reading for anyone considering additional training in this field. There is a chapter on support but this is not primarily the purpose of the book.

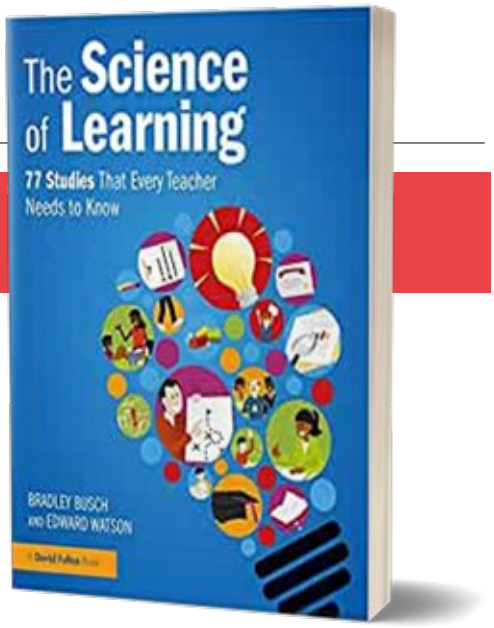


See also:
SASC (2019) Guidance on Assessment of Dyscalculia and Maths Difficulties within other Specific Learning Difficulties. Available at: www.sasc.org.uk/Downloads.aspx

BOOK REVIEW

The Science of Learning: 77 Studies That Every Teacher Needs to Know

(2019) Bradley Busch and Edward Watson, Abingdon: A David Fulton Book



Reviewed by Jan Beechey MCILIP, Dyslexia Guild Librarian

This book is great for anyone who wants to understand more about essential educational research findings in a very accessible way. Evidenced research is vital to teachers who want to improve their professional knowledge and understanding but finding the most relevant research, understanding it and knowing how to make good use of it can be more difficult. Fortunately, the authors have produced this accessible summary of important research studies that every teacher should be aware of. This is a 'pick and select your interest' type of book which you do not need to read from cover to cover. Each overview breaks down complicated research into need-to-know facts and you can digest the key findings in just two facing pages making it easier for those with eye scanning or tracking difficulties.

Each overview falls into one of seven categories:

- Memory: increasing how much students remember
- Mindset, motivation and resilience: improving persistence, effort and attitude
- Self-regulation, and metacognition: helping students think clearly and consistently
- Student behaviours: encouraging positive student habits and processes
- Teacher attitudes, expectations and behaviours: adopting positive classroom practices
- Parents: how parents' choices and behaviours impact their children's learning
- Thinking biases: avoiding faulty thinking habits that get in the way of learning.

Each of the studies is also colour coded to the category so studies about memory have blue headings, studies about parents have brown headings, making it easy to look out for the ones which most interest you. The order of the topics is mixed up though as this follows Study No.4 The One About Spacing Your Learning. Each study is well illustrated and set out so is not text heavy.

The only criticism I had was the lack of a subject index so that if there was any cross over between imposter syndrome and resilience for instance, I would need to read all the studies in both the Mindset and the Thinking categories. There were also connections between sleep and forming new memories but the study was not in the Memory category but under Self-Regulation and Metacognition and so was hard to find again. Not so good for those of us with a weak memory. I would also have liked to have seen coloured edges on the right-hand side of the pages to enable me to flick through and stop at a study in the category of my choice.

The very last section of the book has a tips section with one page for each of the seven categories which is a really quick and easy reminder of the key points.

This is a really excellent resource for the busy teacher, education student or study support tutor with plenty of food for thought and easy to understand classroom or teaching suggestions.

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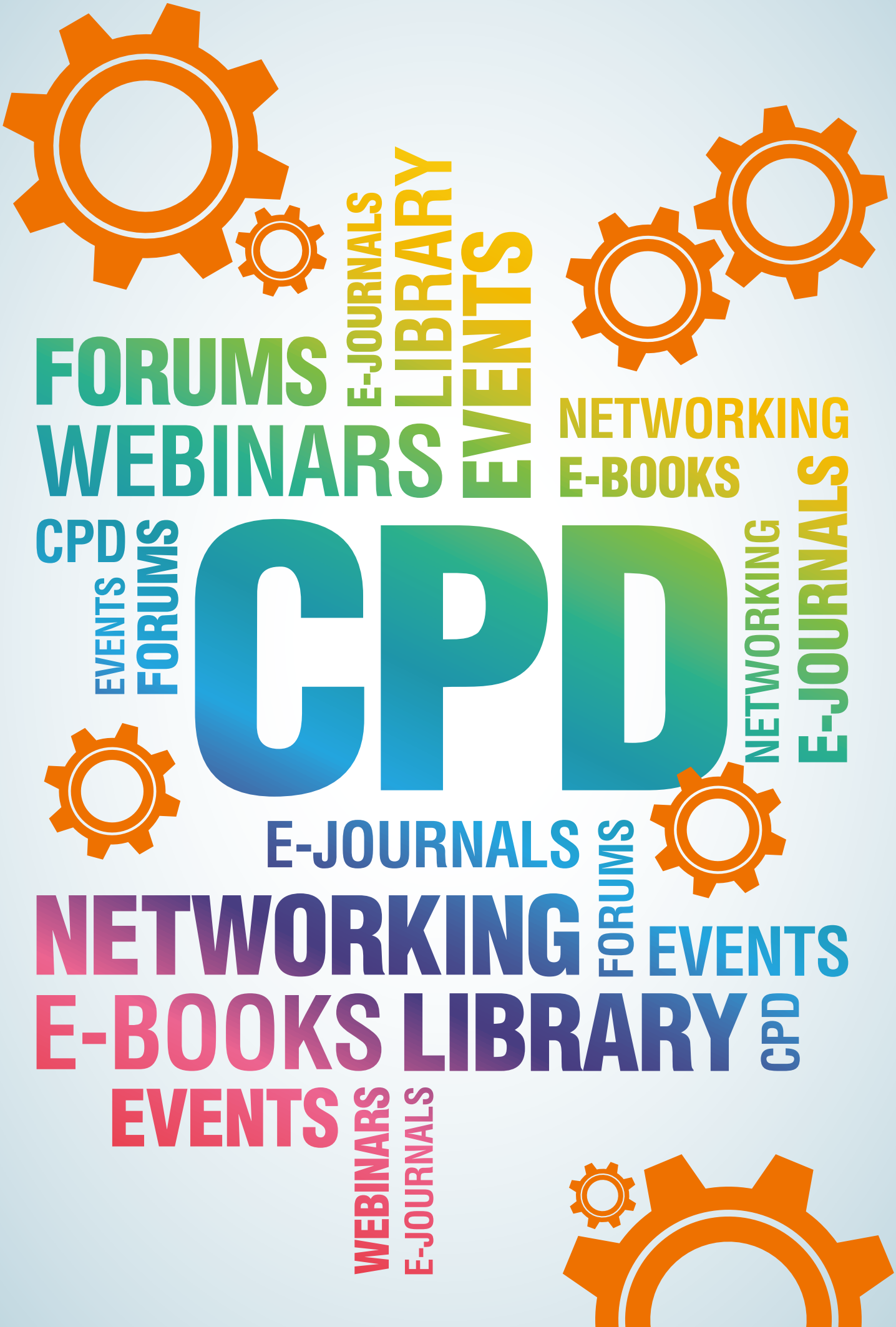
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