

## **Moving the Literacy and Dyslexia Debates Forward: Promoting Reading for All**

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### ***Introduction***

This special edition of *Educational and Child Psychology: Literacy Assessment and Intervention* brings together a selection of articles relevant to theory and practice issues in relation to literacy and literacy difficulties.

In this extended editorial we aim to outline the trajectory of issues, understandings and approaches to literacy and related difficulties over time. This includes a review of the historical context all the way through to the current British Psychological Society (BPS)'s Division of Educational and Child Psychologists (DECP) Literacy Working Group on Literacy and Literacy Difficulties. The BPS DECP group is in the process of developing updated guidance for the educational psychology (EP) profession. This is in response to evolving theoretical models of reading development and reading difficulties, and associated developments in assessment and intervention.

Literacy and literacy difficulties remain one of the most controversial areas of applied educational psychology, drawing high levels of scrutiny from the public, the media, lobby groups and the government. There have been a great many developments since the BPS DECP working group published their report on the psychological assessment of dyslexia in 1999 (updated in 2005). It is therefore considered timely that we review and update the BPS DECP report, in respect particularly of the current national context relating to children's literacy development, the evidence base relating to effective teaching and developments in EP assessment and intervention work to support children and young people with literacy difficulties.

It was just under a quarter of a century ago, that the BPS DECP report, *Dyslexia, Literacy and Psychological Assessment* (1999;2005) explored whether to continue to use the term dyslexia, and determined to do so, largely on the basis that it was so widely used. The report acknowledged that dyslexia was considered to be synonymous with specific learning difficulties for most EPs. It is interesting to note

that at the time, those EPs who wished to avoid using the term dyslexia had suggested instead using synonyms such as 'literacy difficulties', 'persistent and severe literacy difficulties' and 'learning difficulties in literacy'.

The BPS DECP report also noted that during the 1999 consultation process, EPs had also identified how they could work with schools to implement effective assessment, intervention and monitoring processes. Within this context, EPs described how they could carry out detailed psychological assessment and programme planning, used assessment through teaching as a systemic means of collecting formative, rather than summative, data about children experiencing literacy difficulties, and advised teachers on effective interventions.

In deciding to retain the term dyslexia as a sub-category of literacy difficulties, the BPS DECP working group determined to "*take a proactive role in informing society of the meaning that psychological research and practice gives it*", (Reason, 1999), and defined dyslexia as follows:

*"Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the 'word' level and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities". (page,8).*

The BPS DECP definition (1999; 2005), did not include any causal explanations and focused on identifying characteristics rather than exclusionary criteria, thus leaving scope for the generation of multivariate explanations derived from psychological theory. Despite the optimism at the time of the BPS DECP working group about the opportunities for the report to shape how society understands dyslexia, this has not been realised to date.

### **Developments in the field**

In 2014, Elliot and Grigorenko, published a seminal work. They conducted an extensive and exhaustive review of the scientific evidence in the field of literacy and reported that despite decades of research, there remains no scientific consensus about either the nature or causes of literacy difficulties. Furthermore, there is no consistent or agreed means of discriminating between those with generic reading

difficulties and a distinct subgroup, often described as dyslexic. (Elliott and Grigorenko 2014; Sadusky, Berger et al. 2022; Stanovich 1994,). This evidence indicates the need for a shift in the dominant models and approaches to assessment and intervention in the field of literacy and clarifies why a revision of the 1999; 2005 BPS DECP guidance is now required.

## **The Challenges**

### *The impacts of literacy difficulties*

Learning to read not only requires integrating highly complex cognitive processes, but difficulties in developing effective reading skills can have far reaching consequences for children. These can include lower educational outcomes, (Kilpatrick, 2015), impacts on emotional responses to learning and students' own views around themselves as learners (Durrant, 2021; Gibby-Leversuch, Hartwell & Wright, 2021) school exclusion, non-attendance, (National Literacy Trust, 2014), poorer mental health and well-being outcomes, including depression (Maughan et al, 2003). Literacy difficulties present a risk factor for a multitude of other negative life outcomes, including unemployment and lower income in later life (McLaughlin et al 2014), homelessness, and offending (Creese, 2016). Lower literacy levels can also be associated with poorer health (Public Health England, 2015). These risk factors impact, not only at the individual level, but on society more generally. This has led the UK government to take an increasingly directive approach to the teaching of literacy skills.

### *The teaching of reading*

There has been considerable progress in the understanding of the most effective ways to teach reading over the last 20 years or so, building on the work of Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky and Seidenberg (2001). However, the filtering of this into classrooms has been slow (e.g. Buckingham, Wheldall and Beaman-Wheldall, 2013; Wheldall and Bell, 2020). As identified in what will surely come to be known as their seminal review of the science of learning to read, Castles, Rastle and Nation (2018) conclude that the reading wars have been largely won, with the victory of systematic phonics approaches over whole language reading approaches. In the UK,

this has been reflected in schools through the rollout of systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programmes following the Rose Report (Department for Education and Skills, 2006) and the more recent Reading Framework (Department for Education, 2022). While the loudest battle drums may be quietening, ongoing skirmishes are still brooding over important details surrounding how systematic phonics instruction should be most effectively provided. Solity (2020) provides an overview of factors relating to government-mandated SSP programmes which he suggests have the potential to “*contribute to pupils experiencing difficulties in learning to read*” (Solity, 2020, p.129-130). There is ongoing debate about the relative roles of real and decodable books, whether or not systematic synthetic phonics is necessarily a more effective teaching approach than systematic analytic phonics, how many and which grapheme-to-phoneme correspondences children should be taught, whether children should be taught high frequency words and the teaching of wider skills needed for literacy (see Castles et al, 2018; Oakhill, 2020; Solity, 2020; Solity and Vousden, 2009).

Nonetheless, unity can be found in the shared drive to improve reading instruction so that all children can be given the best chance of developing the literacy skills they need to achieve academic success as well as social and economic wellbeing in adulthood. Indeed, within the Department for Education’s Reading Framework (Department for Education, 2022) there is emphasis on why it is so important that children learn to read, and early, because of the impact of struggling to read on enjoyment of and engagement with reading, as well as the wider impacts on life chances. Ensuring that all children learn to read is recognised as not just about academic success, it is about full participation in society, from which those struggling with literacy in adulthood often find themselves excluded in a range of ways (see Department for Education, 2022; Dugdale and Clark, 2008; Rice and Brooks, 2004).

#### *The proportion of children who struggle with learning to read*

Despite advances in the understanding of reading instruction and the seemingly interminable initiatives and guidance relating to literacy over the last 35 years (see Innes, Gunter and Armstrong, 2021), there appear to be intractable levels of low

literacy at the end of primary and secondary school in England. Literacy standards in the UK are estimated to be lower than those in most other developed nations (OECD, 2016). As shown in Table 1, the percentage of children leaving primary school with prespecified skill levels in reading and writing has fallen since 2010. This has included the period following the introduction of SSP approaches and the Phonics Screening Check in schools across England and in the periods before and after the disruption to education associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The extent to which this may have been exacerbated by real terms cut in education spending of 8% between 2010-11 and 2019-20 (Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2022), is as yet unclear.

Percentage of pupils achieving prespecified end of Key Stage 2 literacy outcomes											
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2022
Reading	83	84	87	86	89	89	66	72	75	73	75
Writing	71	75	81	74*	76*	80*	73*	77*	78*	78*	69

**Table 1.** Percentage of pupils in England reported by the Department for Education to have achieved end of Key Stage 2 targets in reading and writing between 2010 and 2022. Data not available for 2020 and 2021 due to factors associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Year groups reaching the end of Key Stage 2 since the introduction of the Phonics Screening Check are shaded. \*Writing described as Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling Data sourced from [Statistics: key stage 2 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

These outcomes are not dissimilar for children finishing primary school in Scotland ([Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels: 2021/22 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)) with expected Curriculum for Excellence levels in 2022 of reading (78%) and writing (73%). Outcomes appear to be fairly similar in Northern Ireland's measures of literacy through Communication based on the data available, although this is not necessarily entirely accurate ([Microsoft Word - KS2 NI Summary 2019](#)

[final \(ccea.org.uk\)](https://www.ccea.org.uk); [save\\_the\\_children.pdf \(nicva.org\)](https://www.nicva.org). The most recent assessment information for the end of Key Stage 2 in Wales (2019) indicates that reading and writing outcomes were higher than in the other countries of the UK, in English (as well as in Welsh language) assessments.

### *Distribution of literacy difficulties as an issue of social justice*

It is of particular concern that children's literacy outcomes are not evenly distributed across the population. Department for Education statistics indicate that in England, children from lower income families are consistently less likely than their peers who are not eligible for free school meals, to achieve literacy targets at the end of Key Stage 2 ([Key stage 2 attainment, Academic Year 2021/22 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-2-attainment-academic-year-2021-22)) and Key Stage 4 ([Key stage 4 performance, Academic Year 2021/22 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-4-performance-academic-year-2021-22)). At the end of secondary school, the likelihood of achieving a pass in English GCSE is also mediated by ethnicity, even when accounting for social-economic factors.

The impact of income is not limited to literacy levels in childhood. There is evidence that in adulthood, those from the lowest income areas of the UK are around five times more likely than adults in the highest income areas of the country to have significant literacy difficulties (National Literacy Trust, 2014). The widespread, persistent and unequal distribution of literacy difficulties, particularly when considered in the context of the wider impacts that they can be associated with, is clearly an issue of social justice.

### **How to identify and support children with literacy difficulties**

What is to be done for those children who do not learn to read effectively, and later become adults whose life outcomes are at risk of being adversely affected in a range of ways? The unanimous response must be 'something', but what that 'something' looks like remains a topic of some dispute. Undoubtedly this response must include ensuring that children are being taught to read in the most effective ways possible. This is clearly the intention of the Reading Framework (DfE, 2022), although there

are challenges to whether or not the features of its current form do indeed achieve that (e.g. Solity, 2020). We are demonstrably yet to achieve the perhaps utopian vision of a system in the UK where the teaching of literacy is so effective that no, or only a very few, children finish school without having learned to read and write at the levels expected (Snowling, Hulme and Nation, 2020). A response for those children who struggle with reading, until we reach a point where literacy instruction is so successful that their struggles no longer exist, is undeniably needed.

### *The dyslexia debate*

Enter stage left: the elephant in the staffroom, holding aloft in its trunk the debate over the role of dyslexia diagnosis in the response for struggling readers. Decades of arguments about how literacy difficulties can or can't be and should or shouldn't be categorised and labelled, do not appear to have advanced the situation for the majority of struggling readers and writers in schools. None of the four countries of the UK have in their Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice documents, a requirement, or even a suggestion that a diagnosis of dyslexia is required for literacy difficulties to be identified and addressed ([SEND Code of Practice January 2015.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) [Cover & Inside cover - English \(gov.wales\)](#); [Supporting Children's Learning: Statutory Guidance on the Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) Scotland Act 2004 \(as amended\): Code of Practice \(Third Edition\) 2017 \(www.gov.scot\)](#); [Code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs | Department of Education \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](#)).

### *Early attempts to apply evidence from research into policy:*

Building on the advances in understanding of literacy development as outlined by Elliott and Grigorenko (2015), and in line with the relevant SEND legislation, Warwickshire EP service developed an evidence-based systematic and strategic response to literacy difficulties, that is effective and inclusive and focused on response to intervention to identify pupils with persistent literacy difficulties. The local authority agreed and endorsed a literacy policy which stated:

*"The techniques used to teach reading to children diagnosed with dyslexia are the same as those used to teach any other struggling reader" and "a diagnosis of*

*dyslexia does not provide any additional information that is useful for addressing the difficulties, nor does it predict the rate of progress,” adding, “It is widely accepted that the diagnosis of dyslexia is scientifically questionable and can be misleading,”*

(Warwickshire Educational Psychology Service Policy Statement, (2018 in TES 2018).

This policy statement led to a great deal of controversy amongst dyslexia lobby groups and prompted a debate in the House of Lords in October 2018. During the debate Lord Watson commented:

*“Warwick County Council’s guidance to parents ignores the science and refuses to recognise that **dyslexia is a medical condition**. One wonders if, perhaps, it has also advised their residents that the earth is actually flat and that there is no such thing as global warming. With Cambridgeshire and Staffordshire considering aligning themselves with Warwickshire County Council’s position, I think it is important that the Government set out what action they will take to ensure that this misguided guidance is withdrawn as a matter of urgency.”* (TES, 2018).

This presents a resounding example of the mismatch between government SEND policies and parliamentary narrative about the need for, and role of, dyslexia diagnosis (All-Party Parliamentary Group, 2019; [Matt Hancock - Dyslexia Screening Bill 2021-22 contributions \(paralleparliament.co.uk\)](https://paralleparliament.co.uk)). The narrative is often not in line with evidence from academic research around literacy difficulties/dyslexia (Elliott & Grigorenko, 2014; Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs and Barnes, 2018; Gibbs & Elliott, 2020). This raises an interesting question about who directs the narrative about the need for dyslexia diagnosis in identifying and addressing literacy difficulties. There is evidence that public understanding of dyslexia is often incomplete and inaccurate (Furnham, 2013). This has also been found to be the case for teachers Bell, McPhillips and Doveston, 2011; Knight, 2018) which is arguably relevant to reports of teachers often not feeling confident supporting literacy difficulties when they are described as dyslexia (e.g. Gibbs and Elliott, 2015) and teachers, parents and students themselves, having lower aspirations when literacy difficulties are described as dyslexia (e.g. Knight, 2021). Simblett (2021) found that there is a deep-rooted representation in the media of the need for dyslexia diagnosis and suggests this may be perpetuated by some charitable organisations associated with dyslexia who, in a



bid to spread awareness, may inadvertently entrench inaccuracies in public understanding as a result of their higher prominence in the media than academic researchers and education practitioners.

### **Challenges relating to the labelling of educational issues**

Narratives around the labelling of educational difficulties are also cautioned as ill-advised by Ofsted,

*Pupils who are not taught to read well in early stages of their primary education are particularly susceptible to being wrongly identified as having SEND because they cannot access the curriculum', SEND, Old issues, New issues, Next steps (Ofsted 2021)*

*'We can be too quick to label children. And what this can lead to is attributing difficulties in learning to a deficit in the child, when in fact our first thoughts should be: 'are we providing the curriculum and the teaching that children need'? Amanda Spielman, (School and Academies Show, 2022)*

Indeed, there are many problematic factors associated with the labelling of educational issues. These include difficulties relating to the permanence of labels associated with learning difficulties. These include commonly reported negative impacts of labels on self-efficacy beliefs and the further ramifications of these for self-esteem, constructs about academic ability, and, eventually, on career choices. This has also been found to be the case at university level (e.g. Reed et al, 2011). In the specific case of the dyslexia label, there are reports of individuals finding the term empowering (e.g. Gibby-Leversuch et al, 2021) which is consistent with a strong media narrative and a fundamental assumption of policy initiatives such as the proposed Hancock Bill. However, it is equally important to name the potentially unhelpful, albeit surely unintended, consequences of the dyslexia label for the individuals upon who it is bestowed which can include lower aspirations held by parents, teachers and young people themselves (Knight, 2021).

In the education ecosystem, labelling students has, in fact, become part of the medicalisation of education. Funding and support in some education authorities has become inextricably linked to finding a label and therefore a diagnosis. The practice

of educational psychology has become strongly connected to this where the separation of students between schools and/or classes has become accepted practice and encouraged as a method of intervention to support students with additional support needs (Boyle, 2007). Labels may certainly *seem* useful and helpful in supporting the attribution of a descriptive label to a behaviour or characteristics, thereby simplifying the process of understanding the characteristics being referred to. However, there are grave concerns around the persistence of educational labelling being linked with a diagnostic process, particularly one which is demonstrably spurious in its capacity to discriminate a subtype of difficulty as in the case of dyslexia. There are also concerns about the prevalence of a shared belief that the recognized and accepted method to gain access to school support and/or funding is through the attachment of a label. Educational labels and diagnoses are by their nature entirely focussed on difficulties and struggles, and the language relating to these diagnoses is in turn focused on what children cannot do with a requisite level of accuracy, speed or proficiency.

As such, a number of complex systems have been created surrounding categorisation and diagnosis. There are a number of professionals involved and arguably, an extensive industry (Tomlinson, 2012). Educational psychologists in many authorities have been cast as gatekeepers to resources and thus may find themselves in the position of investigators of 'disorders' on behalf of the broader system (Lauchlan et al, 2017).

### **Where we are now**

Despite the universal implementation of systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) instruction in schools since the Rose report in 2006, current evidence suggests that more than a quarter of children have not reached the government's expected reading levels by the end of their primary school career, (Mullis, 2017, and see also Table 1). There have been seismic developments since the previous incarnation (BPS 1999; 2005) of the BPS/DECP guidance on Dyslexia, Literacy and Psychological Assessment, relating to the theoretical and practice-based landscape regarding the teaching of literacy and the most effective ways to identify and support those who are struggling with literacy. However, the ongoing challenges to steps taken by the educational psychology profession to address literacy difficulties in an equitable and

scalable way which is based on current theory and best practice, is clear evidence of the lag between advances in knowledge and theory, and their currently very limited influence on policy, practice and public understanding (Castles, Rastle, and Nation, 2018).

The reading war and the dyslexia debate are evidently not yet resolved. Their tenacity and the associated dispute fatigue must not be allowed to detract from the importance of working tirelessly towards better and more effective systems so that all children have the best chances that they possibly can of developing the good enough literacy skills that so many positive lifelong outcomes are associated with, and to break intergenerational cycles of low literacy and low income. This has been the catalyst for forming the current DECP Literacy Working Group.

### *Summary of the updated DECP Guidance*

The updated BPS/DECP Guidance on literacy and literacy difficulties, due to be published in 2023, takes a course which is markedly different from the last version published in 1999, and revised in 2005. The evidence from research concerning the identification of a subgroup of struggling readers whose needs can be categorised as qualitatively distinct from other struggling readers is unequivocal. There is no means by which to distinguish a subgroup of struggling readers as dyslexic, and there is no difference in what would be provided in order to address literacy difficulties based on such a categorisation. This is not to diminish or underestimate the existence, prevalence and impact of literacy difficulties. On the contrary it is in recognition of the extent, distribution and consequences of literacy difficulties that it is so important that there is an evidence-informed, equitable and scalable response, which works for all children and young people, no matter what their background is. The updated BPS/DECP guidance therefore aims to move away from theoretical debates which, in their persistence and apparently insurmountable disagreement, have maintained a prominence which has been more than a little obstructive to the development of effective systems. It aims instead to provide a robust, equitable, implementable and sustainable framework by which children who are struggling to read and write can be identified and supported. To this end, the updated guidance encourages a wider drive towards developing the most effective ways to teach children to read and write in all schools, while not attempting to specify what those effective initial pedagogies

should be, as well as early identification (from Reception onwards) of children who are not making progress with literacy, or early language skills associated with later literacy development, and a staged process of evidence-based response and intervention. In doing so, the updated BPS/DECP guidance emphasises and calls for the importance of workforce development and confidence in identifying and addressing literacy difficulties. The updated BPS/DECP guidance on literacy and literacy difficulties therefore recommends an explicit departure from the individual diagnostic model of literacy difficulties, which disproportionately excludes children and young people from lower income backgrounds, and calls instead for a commitment to systemic (i.e. whole school) frameworks which can meet the needs of all. This update to the guidance should not be interpreted as an attempt to remove the rights and recognition of those individuals whose literacy difficulties have been identified through an individual diagnostic approach, but rather as ensuring that these rights and recognition are available to all struggling readers and writers. The updated guidance demands a reframing of medicalised language surrounding literacy difficulties, away from diagnosis and towards identification and in so doing, liberates children and their families from the sense that dyslexia diagnosis is necessary in order for their needs to be identified, acknowledged and supported.

### **Literacy: Assessment and Intervention**

The selection of articles in this special edition of Educational and Child Psychology on Literacy: Assessment and Intervention presents a range of pragmatic, innovative and solution-focused approaches to considering how literacy difficulties can best be identified and supported. In the spirit of the updated BPS/DECP guidance on literacy, the following articles follow up on key themes of social justice and equity through the development of scalable and evidence-based systems which do move away from a reliance on diagnosis, explore and further consider the importance of workforce development to ensure a robust professional response to literacy and literacy difficulties in which educational psychologists can be confident, and then present a range of practical and effective approaches to support the practice of all professionals who are working to support the development of children and young people's literacy.

The powerful and compelling narrative developed by Stanbridge, Branigan and Walter in their article entitled, **Time for a new paradigm shift in literacy difficulties: From 'Flat Earth' to rational, effective and equitable systems**, describes the significant advances in theoretical understandings of literacy difficulties that have seriously challenged the view that there exists a distinct and identifiable sub group of children struggling with literacy that could be defined as dyslexic. They develop their narrative to highlight the consequent logical flaw in attempting to develop and implement an associated diagnostic process. The authors provide compelling evidence of how current models of identification and intervention do not target or tackle inequalities, and they question the current paradigm in terms of theoretical consistency, operationalisation and equity challenges. The authors promote moving the focus from individual diagnosis to equitable and universal systemic frameworks, implementing school-based interventions to respond to identified literacy needs in a timely manner. Stanbridge, Branigan and Walter advocate the Response to Intervention model as an alternative approach and provide an inspirational case study demonstrating how this new paradigm model has been effectively operationalised locally. The authors acknowledge the challenges inherent in such valiant change, but they encourage educational psychologists to be courageous and to support innovative policy responses to developments in theoretical understanding, and promote the development of strategic and systemic models of identification and intervention that redress current inequalities and provide access to effective interventions for all struggling readers.

The highly pertinent issue of developing workforce skills, confidence and competence in literacy and literacy difficulties is explored in Maries-Collier and Woods' article, ***Exploring the training experiences of Trainee Educational Psychologists in supporting children and young people with literacy difficulties***. Maries-Collier and Woods identify the critical role of educational psychologists in supporting literacy skills as well as the challenges faced in this endeavour, including a lack of consensus in practitioner knowledge and practice in this arena. In their study, Maries-Collier and Woods investigate the experiences and perceptions of trainee educational psychologists in relation to their training on literacy and literacy difficulties/dyslexia. Their findings relate to issues of training and

placement experiences, with considerable variation in different local authorities' systems resulting in a perceived inequality of access to support. Maries-Collier and Woods present extremely helpful conclusions for educational psychology training courses, services and professional bodies to reflect upon when considering the role and practice of educational psychologists in the context of literacy difficulties.

In their article entitled ***Assessing children's writing products using curriculum-based measures of writing (CBM-W)***, Piercy and Dockrell name the importance of writing as a crucial and complex skill. They highlight the current limited availability of high-quality writing assessment tools and how this is problematic for teachers who need to be able to identify what difficulties with writing a young person is experiencing in order to be able to support them effectively. Piercy and Dockrell explored curriculum-based measures of writing (CBM-W) as a tool for writing assessment. Their findings present promising indications of the validity of this tool in relation to other standardized measures of writing assessment, and the capacity of CMB-W to capture variability in writing, and changes within children's writing productivity and accuracy over time.

Dunford and Hill present a bold and innovative example of the way in which developments from theory can be applied in practice to address literacy difficulties in their article: ***Evaluating the effectiveness of a broader approach to reading instruction: a single-case study of a reading intervention***. In this case study, Dunford and Hill explore how key recommendations made in Jonathan Solity's (2020) critique of current restrictive government-approved reading schemes might be used to support primary-aged students who are not making progress with their reading. Dunford and Hill elegantly draw measures of skill development as well as enjoyment of reading and staff and student views of the intervention approaches into their research. Their findings provide an encouraging overview of ways in which the principles of broader and adapted reading instruction identified by Solity can be implemented and the positive impacts that were found in their case study.

In their article entitled ***Thinking outside the phonological box: Combining repeated reading and action video games to develop reading fluency in year 7 children with Dyslexia*** Murray and Birch reflect on how to continue supporting

children who persist to struggle despite early support, including children identified as dyslexic and those in secondary education. Considering recent research implications and results on the positive effect of playing action video games (AVGs) in improving word and pseudo-word reading speed for children with dyslexia through increasing visual attention. The authors present a study aimed to explore whether AVGs are actually able to boost the effects of a reading fluency intervention, Repeated Reading (RR) while also analysing the effectiveness of RR intervention alone, through a single case experimental design (SCED) with eight Year 7 children with dyslexia. Results suggest a promising positive effect, documenting reading gains from the combined intervention, RR and AVGs, of this specific approach that includes play as a tool for support, offering insight into the possibility to combine more structural vs more engaging activities to support and strengthen children's reading skills.

Finally, McBreen and Savage in their paper entitled ***The Effectiveness of a Cognitive-plus-Motivational Reading Intervention: A Multiple-Baseline Study with Four Pupils At-Risk for Reading Difficulties***, discuss and examine the impact of supplementing cognitive reading interventions with supports for reading motivation, considering reading interest, self-efficacy and the reading fluency of four Year 4 pupils at-risk for reading difficulties, using a case study methodology. The authors compare the effects of a combined Cognitive-plus-Motivational intervention (experimental phase) to those of a Cognitive-Only intervention (baseline phase) using probes for reading fluency, interest, and self-efficacy. The preliminary results illustrated in their interesting work, support the importance of including specific motivational interventions while working with these children whilst also providing insight into individual patterns of response to the intervention.

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