

WHO WILL TEACH MY CHILD TO READ?

WHAT IS THE DVS PARENT SURVEY?

The DVS parent survey gave Victorian parents of children with literacy difficulties the opportunity to share their experiences.

The survey comprised 21 open-ended and multiple-choice questions. The anonymity of the survey allowed parents to be truthful. Parents were informed that their responses may be used for advocacy. The survey was open on the DVS Facebook page from June 29 – August 3, 2020.

Of the total 604 respondents, 436 were included in the results for meeting the following criteria – 1. DVS parent member 2. Child/ren with literacy difficulties 3. Enrolled in a Victorian school.

Over 3,000 comments (90,000+ words) were examined using thematic analysis. The dataset was independently crosschecked with this report to ensure its transparency.

The comments used in this report are direct quotations from the parents except for minor edits (deletion of names and correction of typos and/or spelling that may have hindered meaning).

Thank you to the hundreds of Victorian parents who shared their personal experiences in this survey. You are not alone.

WHY IS THE DVS PARENT SURVEY IMPORTANT?

Victoria's education system has long failed children with literacy difficulties. Rather than being equitable, it's discriminatory. Rather than being inclusive, it's marginalising.

All children deserve policy makers, educators and parents who are willing to step up to the collective responsibility of teaching all children to read and write in their early years of school.

"The ability of a population to read and write at standards considered competent, and not merely functional, confers widespread opportunities to succeed academically and gain post-school training and education, even in the context of inter-generational academic under-attainment. This in turn affords opportunities for larger numbers to be part of the social and economic mainstream, and sits at the core of reading ability as a pressing public health issue and as a modifiable form of social inequity and disadvantage."

(Snow, P. (2020). *SOLAR: The Science of Language and Reading. Child Language Teaching and Therapy. Published early online August 4*
["https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0265659020947817"](https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0265659020947817)<https://doi.org/10.1177/0265659020947817>)

DVS parents contend with the academic, social, emotional and financial costs that follow when their child's reading difficulties are not addressed at school.

GLOSSARY

(note - there are no standard definitions for the terms below)

accommodations

measure or action that alters how a student learns material but does not reduce educational standards and requirements e.g. use of text to speech technology and extra time in tests

assistive technology

electronic devices, computer hardware and software that increase or maintain the capabilities of an individual to access written and/or spoken text

decodable books

consist primarily of words that children can read accurately using the grapheme phoneme correspondences that they have learned, facilitate word decoding via phonics

dyscalculia

a specific learning disability characterised by difficulties understanding numbers, learning how to manipulate numbers and learning mathematical facts

dysgraphia

a specific learning disability characterised by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent written expression and by poor spelling and handwriting skills

dyslexia

a specific learning disability characterised by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition, poor spelling and decoding abilities typically resulting from a weakness in the phonological component of language

evidence-based

based on current research evidence with effectiveness supported by independent reviews

intervention

targeted, intensive and explicit instruction for children who need more support than they are receiving from the general curriculum

leveled readers

typically used in classrooms for shared and guided reading and as take-home readers in the early years of school whereby children learn to use a variety of skills, processes and behaviours to read, facilitate word decoding via meaning

literacy teaching

instructional practices in reading, spelling and writing

modifications

measure or action that alters what a student is taught or expected to learn e.g. reduced subject content and exemption from tests

MSL (multisensory structured language)

explicit, direct, cumulative, intensive instruction focused on the structure of language

and involves the use of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic-tactile pathways simultaneously

reading recovery / leveled literacy intervention (Fountas and Pinnell) short-term interventions that follow a whole language or balanced literacy approach

SLD

specific learning disorder/ disability such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia

speech pathologist

study, diagnose and treat communication disorders, including difficulties with speaking, listening, understanding language, reading, writing, social skills, stuttering and using voice

SSP (systematic/ structured synthetic phonics)

children learn the predictable relationships between the sounds of speech (phonemes) and the alphabet letters (graphemes) we use in written language

whole language / balanced literacy approaches

reading and writing teaching that facilitates learners in a 'meaning making' process via the use of 'multi-cueing' strategies (meaning cues, language cues, visual cues). Phonics instruction is integrated into meaningful reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities and taught incidentally

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HEADLINE RESULTS DVS PARENT SURVEY - LITERACY IN VICTORIAN SCHOOLS REPORT

SURVEY DETAILS: 436 responses (3,000 comments & 90,000 words) from parents of children with literacy difficulties in Victorian schools were analysed. 72% had children in primary school. 61% were enrolled in government schools.

LITERACY TEACHING & INTERVENTION:

Over 50% of parents rated the literacy teaching at their child's school as low or very low quality. The most reported teaching approaches were whole language / balanced literacy / 3-cueing, which parents noted as not suitable for their child.

The most reported intervention programs were Fountas and Pinnell, Levelled Literacy Intervention and Reading Recovery. Parents reported these interventions as ineffective.

Parents whose child did not benefit from school-based intervention and parents who could not get intervention for their child at school reported multi-sensory structured language (MSL) as the most common private intervention.

DISCOVERY OF LITERACY DIFFICULTIES:

62% of parents identified their child's literacy difficulties on their own and paid for private assessment. When parents raised their child's literacy difficulties with schools, they were often dismissed. Parents were advised to 'wait and see' or 'give it time'. There was consensus among schools that some children will always struggle with literacy and not much can be done.

Of parents who were offered assessment by their school, wait

times of over 2 years were reported; leading many parents to seek private assessment.

Of parents who sought private assessment, many reported it made little difference to the level of support their child received at school. Secondary behavioural difficulties were more likely to attract school support.

IEPS & REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS:

One-third of parents said their child did not have an IEP.

Parents whose child did have an IEP had to advocate strongly for it. Parents reported IEPs as a 'box-ticking' waste of time. IEPs tended to include intervention that was 'more of the same' that didn't work in the first place and lacked SMART goals and were inconsistently implemented.

27% of parents said their child received no reasonable adjustments at all despite being eligible. Parents whose child did receive reasonable adjustments said their implementation was inconsistent across year levels and teachers.

TEACHER KNOWLEDGE ON DYSLEXIA:

48% of parents rated their child's teacher as 'not knowledgeable' in dyslexia. Parents took on the responsibility of trying to educate

their child's teachers about dyslexia by initiating discussions and sharing weblinks. Some teachers were receptive to parents' efforts.

Of parents reporting high levels of knowledge about dyslexia, some said the teacher had self-funded professional development.

LITERACY DIFFICULTIES & MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING SUPPORT:

81% of parents said literacy difficulties had a negative or very negative impact on their child's mental health. Over half of parents said their child did not receive wellbeing support at school.

Parents noted inconsistency in effectiveness of wellbeing support. Some parents paid for out-of-school wellbeing support.

CHANGING SCHOOLS:

Over two-thirds of parents had considered changing schools due to their child's literacy difficulties. Parents who did not change schools said there were no better options. Many parents cited other schools were using the same approach to teaching literacy as their school so changing schools would be a waste of time. Parents noted their child's social connections at their current school as the reason for not changing schools.

POSITIVE CHANGES IN SCHOOL IN RELATION TO SUPPORTING CHILD WITH LITERACY:

Around a third of parents said that there had been no positive changes over time due to teacher reluctance to change instructional practices or teacher knowledge not being sufficient.

Parents who said there had been positive changes at their school mentioned compensatory changes such as increased awareness of dyslexia, the implementation of accommodations and modifications such as LOTE exemption and modified class work.

BENEFITS & CHALLENGES OF REMOTE & FLEXIBLE LEARNING:

Parents were divided on the benefits and challenges of remote and flexible learning. While some parents reported benefits such as growth in their child's confidence or fewer distractions, others reported these same factors as challenges.

Many parents mentioned a benefit of seeing firsthand how much their child is struggling in their learning and some were able to focus on improving their child's literacy skills and/or use of assistive technology.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL ADVICE & INTERVENTION:

Only 10 parents surveyed said their child's school was meeting their literacy needs. All other respondents

reported consulting a range of allied health practitioners including paediatricians, MSL therapists and speech pathologists.

Many parents commented on the cost of out of school support by referring to it as being a prohibitive factor, or a necessary cost given their school was not helping their child.

SUGGESTIONS FROM PARENTS FOR JAMES MERLINO AND DAN TEHAN:

Parents overwhelmingly commented on the need for teacher training in reading instruction in both initial teaching education and within schools.

Parents also called for an updated Australian and Victorian English Curriculum, updated Victorian department of education website, assessment and funding for dyslexia.

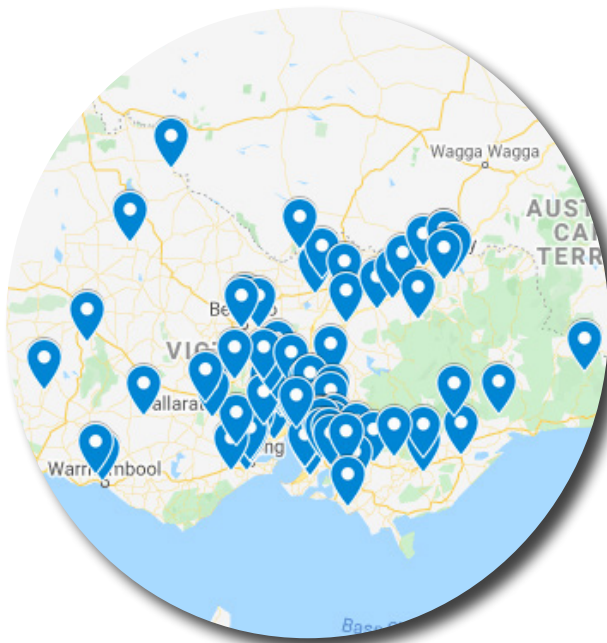
SUGGESTIONS FOR VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT POLICY ON DYSLEXIA:

Parent sentiment can be summed up by this parent's comment – "Work with families not against them we don't want to make your job harder we want to give our children better opportunities and a better chance at an equal education to their peers".

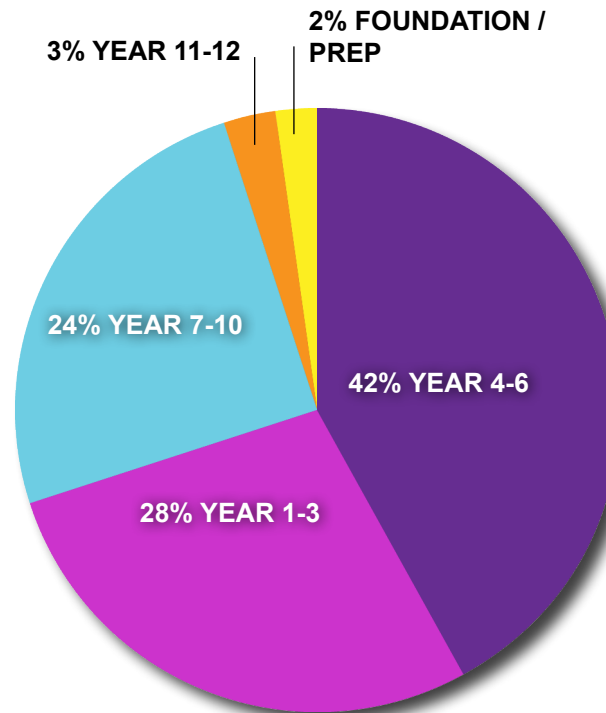
PARENTS WITH CHILDREN IN ALL SCHOOL LEVELS AND ALL SCHOOL TYPES FROM ACROSS VICTORIA SHARED THEIR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

DVS PARENT SURVEY RESPONSE LOCATIONS

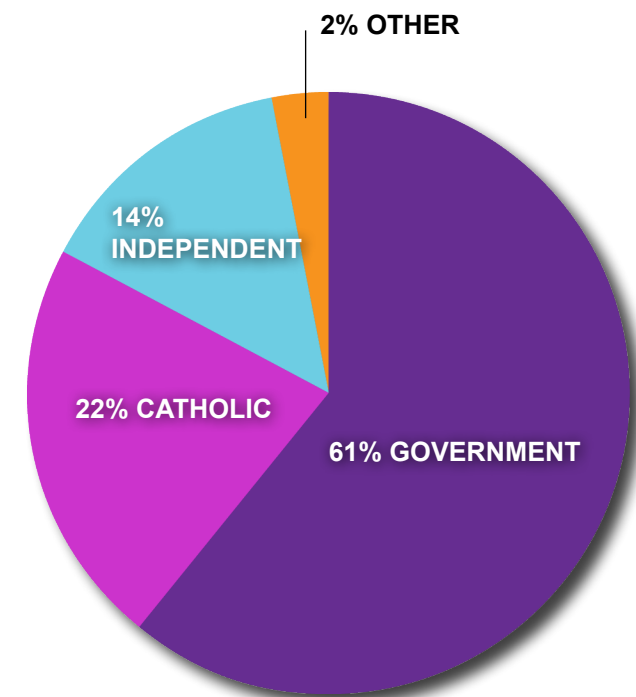
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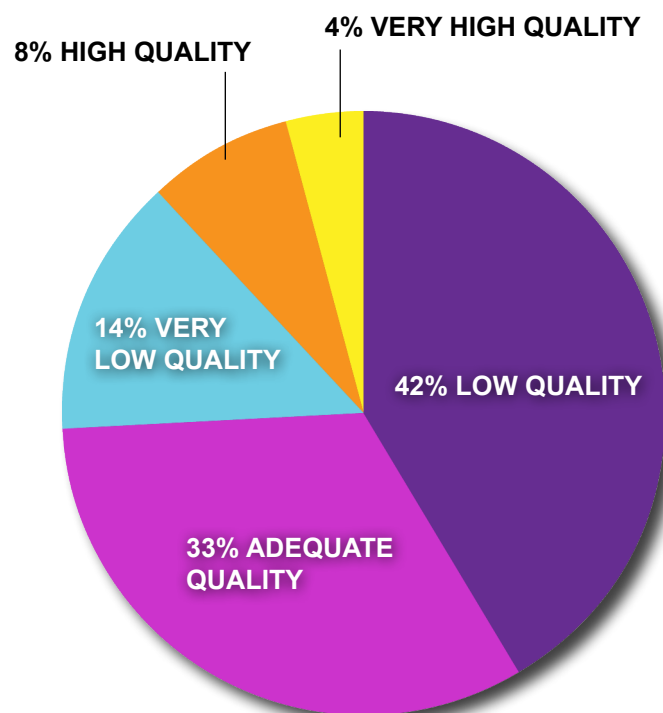
WHAT LEVEL IS YOUR CHILD?



WHAT TYPE OF SCHOOL IS YOUR CHILD ENROLLED IN?



HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE QUALITY OF LITERACY TEACHING THAT YOUR CHILD RECEIVES AT SCHOOL?



'We have spent thousands on private tutors trying to overcome the school program for the past 3 years.'

PARENTS WERE INVITED TO COMMENT ON THE PROGRAMS, APPROACHES, METHODS & RESOURCES THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOL USES TO TEACH LITERACY.

A sizable number of parents mentioned the inadequacy of the literacy teaching at their child's school meant they needed to advocate for support. Parents who were not successful in gaining literacy support at school were forced to seek literacy intervention outside of school.

'Following years of advocating for change with my first dyslexic child, the school has started to make some positive changes (and finally some evidence-based ones). Decodable books have been introduced throughout the school. One teacher is studying MSL (at her own expense) and is bringing back significant amounts of information.'

'I have had to fight to get the right supports and depending on teacher and teacher quality have had many up and down experiences. My second child the supports a lot better.'

'Student reached year 3 unable to read at all and forever confused with instruction. Commenced tutoring once a week and daily practice using explicit systematic phonics and now learnt all his sounds and able to read only issues now is trying to 'undo' previously learnt bad habits from school instruction.'

'School has not offered any specific literacy program for our child or any child with dyslexia at the school. We have had to advocate and seek alternatives outside school from MSL tutor. Despite SSS [student support services] regional team aware of importance of appropriate literacy program and encouraging school - nothing'

'We have spent thousands on private tutors trying to overcome the school program for the past 3 years.'

'No special programs or resources have been provided for my son. As a result, we do our own using Fitzroy Readers and Nessy.'

'We had to seek alternate support externally. And did all the research and payed for it all ourselves. It was a hard and difficult process and very time consuming especially when working as well and trying to help!'

'Parents have had to go off and get own psycho-educational testing done to help advocate for child's needs- still a resistance to put supports in place even with reports. Teachers have not had training or an understanding of needs and schools have not been using appropriate resources and programs for his needs.'

'I have removed my child from receiving intervention at school as it was not suitable - they use brain gym and reading recovery with leveled readers. Instead we use phonic readers and workbooks at home and see a speech pathologist. Rural school in regional Victoria - not able to go elsewhere.'

'No support, tried reading recovery which failed. I had to hire private MSL tutor which worked, but I didn't have the money so stopped and my child has suffered as a result.'

Among the parents who rated their child's literacy teaching as low quality, parents frequently mentioned whole language / balanced literacy approaches as being the core literacy approach used in their child's school. Parents identified this literacy teaching approach as not being suitable for their child.

'School uses balanced literacy approach which provides no support at all for my child in learning to read.'

'Focus on learning lists of whole words & guessing from pictures. Reader books were given in levels which did not match student's ability to decode words.'

HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE QUALITY OF LITERACY TEACHING THAT YOUR CHILD RECEIVES AT SCHOOL? cont...

'No understanding of how to teach phonics and in particular children with dyslexia. Not using any decodable readers but 'guess the words' by the pictures.'

'Whole language/ 3 cue system used. Acknowledgement that this does not work for him but refusal to use systematic synthetic phonic approach. Refusal to do anything to help him.'

The literacy intervention programs most mentioned by parents were those based on whole language theory such as Fountas and Pinnell, Reading Recovery and Leveled Literacy Intervention. Parents mentioned the lack of effectiveness of the intervention for their child.

'My daughter has been a part of both reading recovery and a Fountas and Pinnell program and neither were beneficial. She has been taught to look at the word and guess and that doesn't work for her.'

'They just rehash the same way they teach the whole class. It was not working for him in the group so why would it work one on one.'

Parents with a child in secondary school commented on the lack of literacy intervention for their child.

'He is now in year 7. Some of his teachers did not realize after term 1 that he has a learning disability. He does participate in a dictate class instead of language, but he is not receiving any literacy-based intervention - they teach organization and some skills such as summarizing or essay writing, and often just do homework.'

'Primary was pm readers and reading recovery, which made things worse. High school intervention was extremely poorly run and dyslexic kids showed little to no improvement after a year.'

Parents consistently mentioned that their child's teacher lacked knowledge in identifying dyslexia and providing advice and/or intervention.

'My daughter's prep teacher completely missed all the signs she was struggling with dyslexia and has left her well behind her peers starting yr 1.'

'We weren't told that he didn't know his letters or sounds until halfway thru term 3 when he was in prep last year. The teacher didn't offer any support or strategies other than to practice the magic words.'

'The teachers at my sons school have no knowledge of Dyslexia or Dysgraphia. They have no knowledge in what it is, how to recognise it or how to help.'

Some of the parents who rated their child school's literacy program as high quality or very high quality said they had changed schools. Intervention programs that parents mentioned included MultiLit, MiniLit, MacqLit, MSL, Toe by Toe and Nessy.

'We had to move schools for a MSL program. The first school had no idea what they were doing. He was in RR for 2 weeks, then removed from the program as he was too good! Then we regressed again to the point I needed an external tutor after my son came home saying he wanted to kill himself...'

'My child's school uses the MSL approach and offers daily small group support classes. His previous school did not. That's why we left.'

'Change schools in year 4 and started with Jolly Phonics, is now doing Macqlit four times a week.'

HOW DID YOU DISCOVER YOUR CHILD IS EXPERIENCING LITERACY DIFFICULTIES?

PARENTS WERE INVITED TO ADD THEIR EXPERIENCES OF HOW THEIR CHILD'S LITERACY DIFFICULTIES WERE DISCOVERED.

In most cases, the parent identified and assessed their child or advocated for school assessment. Of the parents who paid for private assessment, many said the school declined to provide an assessment by telling parents 'not to worry' and to 'wait and see'.

need to read to your child at home more!

Among parents who requested support from their child's school, some parents said the school discouraged their concerns. Of the parents of sons, some were told 'he's a boy' as a reason for their child's low progress in literacy.

'When I approached my sons school about my concerns regarding his poor literacy attainment, I was told it was 'because he's a boy.'

'It became clear after starting prep that my child wasn't developing literacy skills at the expected rate. This was raised with the school. I was told not to worry, it's common with boys. Give him time.'

'After expressing concerns at Kinder and again with prep teacher and told "he's a boy" I paid for psychologist testing. Very clear results.'

'Nil support from previous school, in fact they actively argued with me that there was nothing wrong-despite being over 12 months behind standard.'

'I raised my concerns with his primary school only to be told that he was behind his peers and there was nothing they could do about it. His primary school said "he will always be behind.'

'Voiced my concerns in primary school and was told by principal that I was overreacting and that dyslexia was just another label.'

A few parents mentioned the school did provide an assessment but only after much parental advocacy and pushing for support. Many of

'I raised my concerns with school for 3 years with no action from them. They said to give it time and that he was average ability and just slow to read. I organised and paid for a complete literacy assessment and they also recommended an IQ test. My son was diagnosed with dyslexia and tested an IQ at 145.'

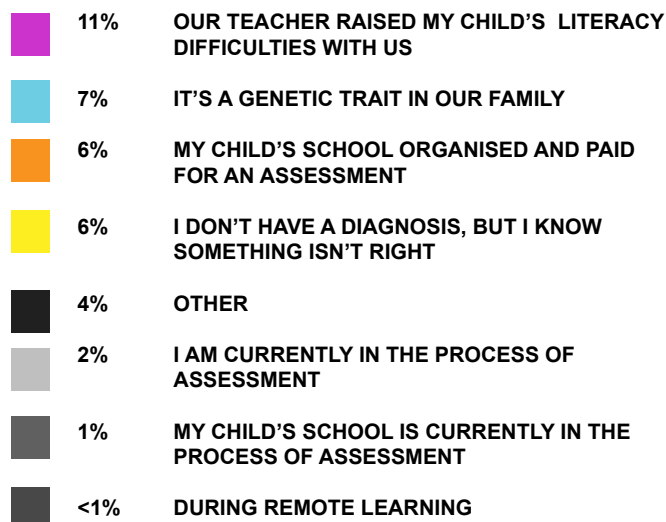
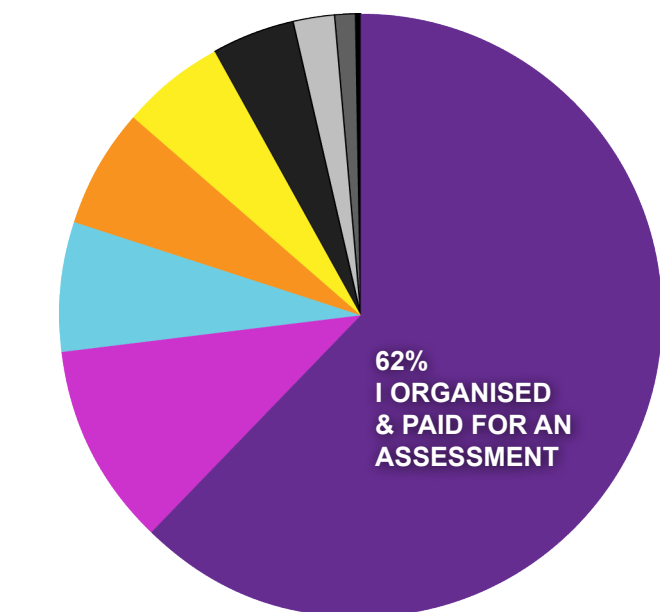
'I spoke to the school several times about my son's difficulty in learning to read. They were reluctant to arrange testing and dismissed my concerns initially. I had to pay for this myself which was hard as a single parent.'

'Despite having clear warning signs of dyslexia, her early primary teachers did not pick up any difficulties despite me raising concerns. Her grade two teacher shared my concerns though told me to 'wait and see' instead of getting her tested. I organised and paid for testing when she was in grade 3.'

'Teachers kept denying there was anything wrong. When I could finally save enough money for oldest to get diagnosed it was found that he was severely dyslexic.'

'School told me nothing was wrong that my child was fine. My child was not learning to read or write. He started school refusing Monday mornings due to journal writing. After 18 months of asking for help and being ignored (and made to feel like a bad mother) we left the school. After paying \$1800 for assessment he was diagnosed with dyslexia.'

'School was blatantly neglectful-wait and see attitude and you



HOW DID YOU DISCOVER YOUR CHILD IS EXPERIENCING LITERACY DIFFICULTIES? cont...

these cases of support were provided when the child was experiencing additional difficulties in behaviour.

'I became aware of an issue with decoding when doing homework in prep and raised concerns with school these concerns were ignored. Raised same concerns in year 1 in first term again ignored, third term yr 1 raised further concern as behaviours increased term 4 school organised assessment.'

'Despite concerns raised by preschool teacher, private speech pathologist and myself. As well as family history of dyslexia, school denied any issue with my child's learning until the end of year one at which point he was 2 years behind his peers in reading and writing. At this point the schools primary concern was behavioural issues ,and not the delay in his learning. My child is now ten years old and has multiple assessments for behavioural issues and he has NONE. The only issue is SLD.'

Other parents mentioned the school was willing to provide an assessment but as the wait time for assessment was excessive, the parent sought private assessment to be able to provide more timely intervention.

'When my now G2 was in Prep he was constantly sent to another class for not listening and he was part of the reading recovery program. Nearing the end of Prep (November) they raised serious concerns that he was not progressing like his peers. They were discussing options of having him evaluated through the school psychologist, but that was apparently a 12 plus month wait. We didn't get any support so decided to do it ourselves at our own cost. Very very disappointed to say the least.'

'...Grade 1 teacher identified difficulties, speech assessment was done through the school. She recommended a cognitive assessment, fill in all paperwork. After 2 years of waiting for an assessment. I organised one at SPELD in Melbourne.'

Some parents' discovery of their child's literacy difficulties was based on family history, other difficulties their child was having and/or changes in their child's mental health.

'Son has ADHD so aware of dyslexia. When started saying he wanted to kill himself I sought intervention and got a test despite teachers telling me he was OK.'

'She is my third child. I highlighted in prep her learning wasn't the 'same' as my other two children. The school said she was fine and would learn at her own pace. By the end of grade one I was frustrated and sad to see my vibrant, happy, easy going girl change so drastically. She was crying every night and so aware that she couldn't do what the other kids in class were doing.'

'I am not going to waste money on an assessment as the school will not do anything further with a diagnosis. She is my third child with dyslexia and my husband is also dyslexic. I have trained as a specialised literacy and language practitioner and we are running our own program from home.'

'My son is 12. I have been pushing for help since he was 4. Slowly and with a mountain of effort on my part, ADHD, generalised anxiety, sensory processing difficulties, fine motor delay, gross motor delay and finally dyslexia have been diagnosed.'

In quite a few cases, the parent reported that the school had identified the child was having difficulties, but they took no action so the parent funded a private assessment.

'After concerns raised by teacher, I had to organise my own SPELD assessment.'

'For over 2 years I expressed concerns and no one listened. Even once they admitted that his reading level was low it was up to me to work out what the next step was.'

'School flag possible issue with writing however paid external assessment indicates bigger issue - grade 2 child is 'reading' based on memory and guessing; he can't decode and has prep level writing and spelling.'

Of the parents who said the school organised and paid for assessment, there was variability in outcomes for the child.

'He was assessed at the beginning of Year 3, but the teachers have not followed the advice of the psychologist to base the teaching on phonics and phonemic awareness. By the end of Year 3, his teacher judged he was reading only at late Prep level. The school blamed the parents, saying that he had not been helped enough at home.'

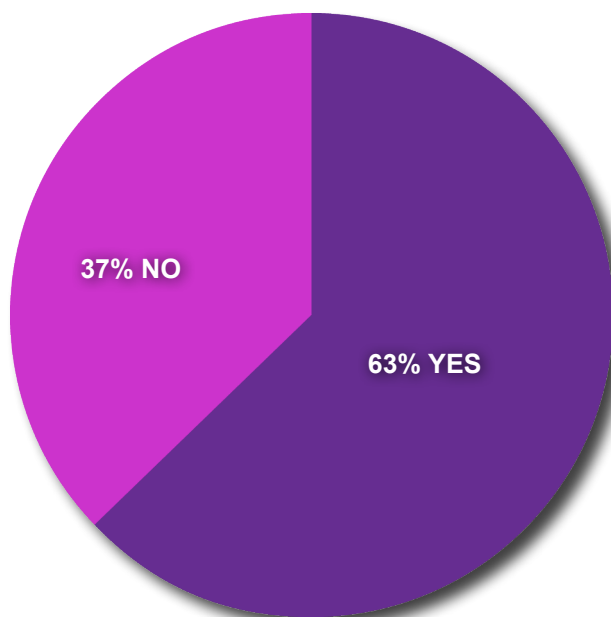
'I have two dyslexic children. The school identified literacy issues, and engaged a department of education assessment. The assessment was really only looking for children with significant disability that might be eligible for a teacher aid. The psychologist advised me that they are not allowed to provide a dyslexic diagnosis. We would need to do that privately.'

'I knew there was a problem in prep. It has taken till grade 5 this year to get the school to act and a diagnosis to be given. Complex dyslexia.'

'Over 6 years she was always struggling, teachers just said she was slower, some disagreed with a learning difficulty, some agreed but didn't know what or how to support well. She was struggling but not struggling enough for them to get her assessed until the end of year 5 when the lack of progress was enough for the school to look at assessment.'

DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE AN IEP / ILP (INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN / INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLAN)?

PARENTS WERE INVITED TO COMMENT ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE IEP/ILP FOR THEIR CHILD'S LITERACY SKILLS.



'I've requested one [an ILP] a number of times, but he doesn't have one. He was diagnosed at the beginning of year 3 and is now in year 6.'

Of the parents whose child did not have an ILP, some parents commented on the ineffectiveness of previous ones. Some parents remarked that their child did not have an ILP despite asking for one and having an assessment with specific recommendations.

'He did for 2 years, total waste of time. The teachers had no idea what to do. It's really surprising when teachers say they've not heard of Dyslexia. How can they help??? 'I've been asking for four years. She's now in grade 6 without one.'

'He had a very poor one in primary school. Difficult to measure and they took it away. I don't believe he has one in high school. Each teacher has been contacted and advised of the most recent assessment done.'

'I've requested one [an ILP] a number of times, but he doesn't have one. He was diagnosed at the beginning of year 3 and is now in year 6.'

Of the parents whose child did have an ILP, a majority stated that it was ineffective. Parents said schools were box ticking rather than providing ILPs specific to their child.

'I put no weight on this document, it is a tick the box exercise and her teachers aren't following it. She has just moved into high school and it's not worth the paper it's written on.'

'It is not as good as it should be - the goals are not SMART and it feels a bit like a tick box affair.'

'The ILP does not offer SMART goals and is littered with balanced literacy approaches. I have given up on negotiating an ILP that is worthwhile given the lack of understanding within the school. I am also sick of hearing that offering PM readers will build resilience in my child and offers authentic text. There is nothing functional about offering a child who is learning the code systematically readers they cannot decode. It's insanity!'

'After being promised & asking for one it took 1 year & 1 term to get one. I don't think it has been effective or made any difference yet as it's too generic - I feel it was copied from another child's plan in a rush for NCCD.'

'Not worth the paper.... the teacher and school have done very little to support or make adjustments for our son. It's the out of school support which we fund which has been the greatest assistance.'

Many parents whose child did have an ILP commented on its lack of effective implementation often due to a gap in teacher knowledge and skills in ILPs and/or dyslexia.

'Had them sporadically but there was never much substance to them or follow up. I felt like teachers, with the very best of intentions were ticking education department/principal boxes. I don't necessarily blame them because they are working within the system they have been given. They weren't given the training, resources or extra help they should've had in the classroom to genuinely support our daughter. There isn't a consistent approach to literacy education in the school, let alone across the whole education system.'

'It's over a year old. Doesn't seem to be reflected in work actually expected of my son. There seems to be no overview/oversight of how individual teachers use/implement the ILP. Some teachers

DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE AN IEP / ILP (INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN / INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLAN)? cont...

really seem not to know how to implement it.'

'The IEP is based on one that I wrote following a PD I did years ago at SPELD (Vic). The generic one provided by the school was dreadful with no SMART goals and very limited information. Some teachers work well with this document, others still don't know how to work with it.'

'Not effective at all. The plan is still based in a way where literacy is taught where he cannot learn. Not teachers' fault as they simply don't know how to help.'

'Ineffective - not review or meeting after it was developed. Feels like a paper pushing exercise rather than support or adjustments for my son.'

'I still persist with external speech intervention as I can't rely on the school (I can't trust them to oversee the progress).'

'Rarely used by most teachers. She's yr 9 secondary school and each yr and term I need to go and remind most staff for accommodations PLUS educate them on what dyslexia is - and isn't.'

'I think it's just a piece of paper...it's only taken seriously by some teachers, and I question the governance of how we know the actions within the ILP is actually happening?? While home learning, many things I thought were happening were not.'

Of the parents who rated their child's ILP as effective, parents mentioned regular meetings, having their child involved in the decision-making process and ILPs that included report recommendations and SMART goals. Most parents noted that the ILP is only effective if it is implemented by the child's teachers.

'It's a great IEP that meets our daughter's requirements, so long as each teacher takes the time to read it, understand it, honour it

and implement it without our daughter being belittled or treated as stupid in the process. Where it has worked really well is when there is a teacher advocate who really understands why the IEP is in place, coupled with our daughter's growing self-advocacy skills and teachers' respecting and listening to her needs and understanding and teaching to the way she learns.'

'Better this year. As he's in grade 6 we actually involve him in meetings and try and get him to set goals too. Though difficult to assess and often have to remind teachers about them.'

'We have had to heavily advocate for the IEP to include SMART goals. The goals are now more specific and the school holds more responsibility.'

'It is reviewed every 6 months to be tailored to his growth and development, particularly as he approaches senior years at the school. He is included in all meetings, asked to contribute and is always attended by all his teachers.'

Parents expressed that they needed to 'push' and 'fight' for an ILP and that they were carrying the responsibility of their child's literacy progress.

'We fought long and hard for it however it has never been useful. Her report from the ADA had recommendations which were all ignored. Then the school would meet in week 5 to create an IEP for that term. Nothing was ever implemented. At high school they send us a copy to sign at the end of the term for that term IEP. I don't even understand why. It always has pointless things on it and things that are wrong. Once we even got one with a different child's name on it. Obviously, a cut and paste job.'

'It's been a massive "fight" to get an ILP. Little understanding of how to write and implement an effective ILP meant had one for 6 months then nothing for years, then another attempt but goals were non evidence based and ILP was never monitored or evaluated.'

'Only in grade six when I approached the school with a dyslexic expert was I taken seriously. Up until then I felt I was disregarded as

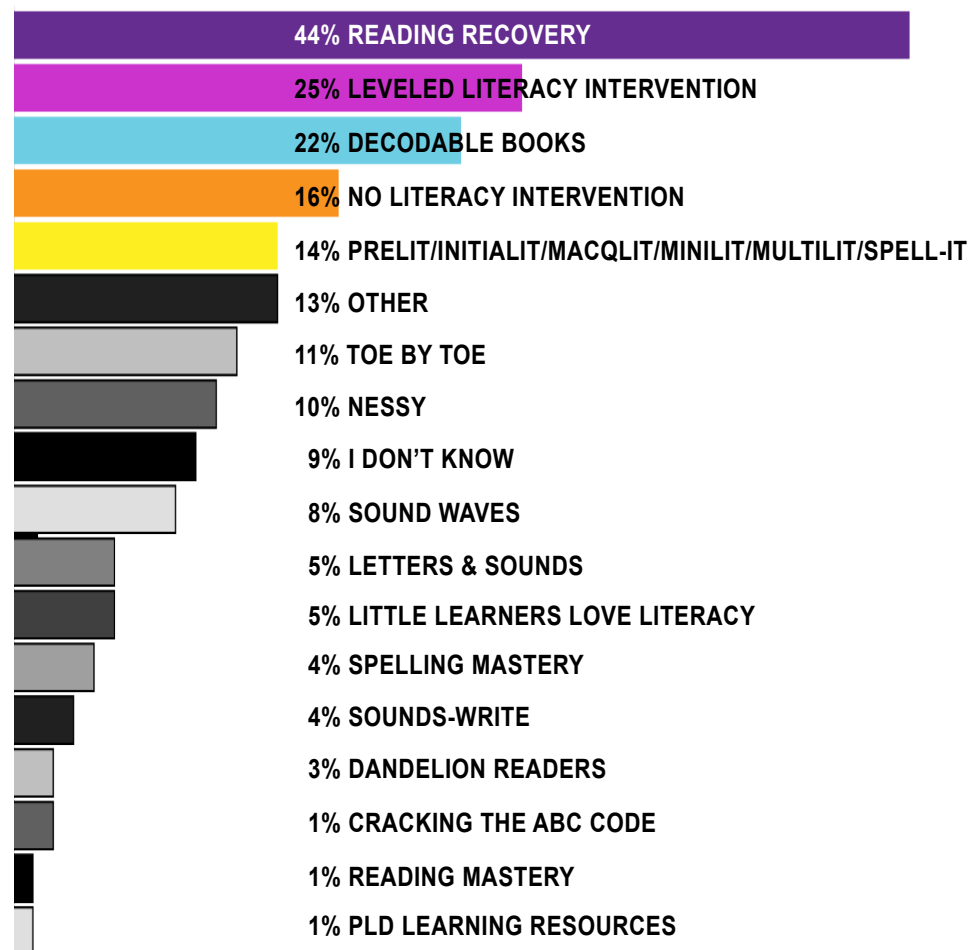
a nagging parent and quickly dismissed by the principal, left to deal with classroom teachers who were not educated about dyslexia. It really was a hopeless situation. When he started grade six I knew it was crucial for him to have a positive schooling experience before transitioning into high school so I employed the services of a dyslexic advocate to attend our first ILP meeting for the year. Up until then my meetings had been only with his classroom teacher but because I had an advocate with me I finally had the attention of a literacy support teacher and the vice principal.'

'He has an ILP that I wrote and presented to the school. I did this as 3 terms had passed after I had given them his test results and diagnosis and they still hadn't written an ILP or IEP. I don't know how well they implemented the plan.'

'I have had no feedback from my son's school. I wrote his current ILP during his transition from Grade 6 to secondary school to help guide his teachers in understanding his weaknesses and his strengths. The schools (he moved schools between Year 7 and Year 8) were both receptive to my input in his ILP but neither have added to it nor given any feedback on its effectiveness.'

'I feel like after meeting for ILP. We discuss what I'm not doing for her.'

WHAT LITERACY INTERVENTION HAS YOUR CHILD RECEIVED AT SCHOOL? (CHECK AS MANY AS APPLICABLE)



PARENTS WHO CHECKED THE 'OTHER' BOX WERE INVITED TO SPECIFY THE LITERACY INTERVENTION THEIR CHILD RECEIVED AT SCHOOL.

Parents commented that their school did not offer intervention suitable for their child's literacy difficulties. Some parents went on to say that as a result, they had organised and paid for private intervention outside of school hours or within school hours and/or provided the intervention themselves.

'My son isn't offered any evidence-based interventions or programs. He sees a dyslexia specialist tutor and this is his private intervention, organised and paid for by us.'

'Nothing specific to dyslexia. His teacher has been using a Thrass chart which is much too complex for a child with a learning disability.'

'My child received no literacy intervention at school because the program they offered was not suitable for a dyslexic child.'

'None that I know of or have been offered despite flagging history of dyslexia and lack of motivation/interest in literacy. Have used LFH [Learning from home] to start LLLL [Little Learners Love Literacy] myself.'

'Reading Recovery is the worst program that a child with reading issues could do. They are told to guess and now 6 years on this is still affecting our son with his learning.'

'A tutor that I paid for was allowed to see my daughter within school hours.'

In some instances, the parent did not know the details of the intervention that was provided by the school.

'I don't know what was given in her last school, but no specific program was ever identified to me.'

'The high school has not explained what programs they are using.'

Some parents noted that they had raised their child's literacy difficulties, but no action was taken by the school.

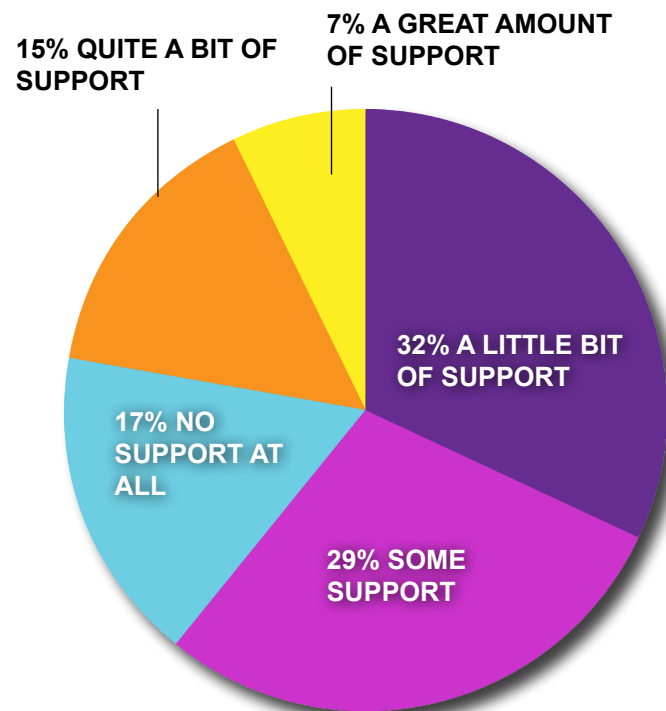
'I did Toe by Toe with my son. The school did not offer anything.'

'At primary school we were told that we were overreacting to her obvious difficulties with literacy.'

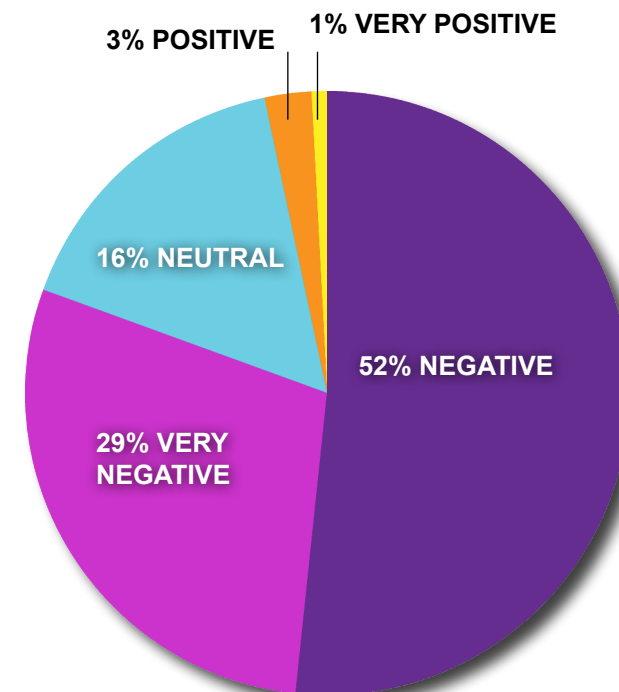
'I have raised my concerns but was brushed off. My child is in year 1.'

'My child received no literacy intervention at school because the program they offered was not suitable for a dyslexic child'

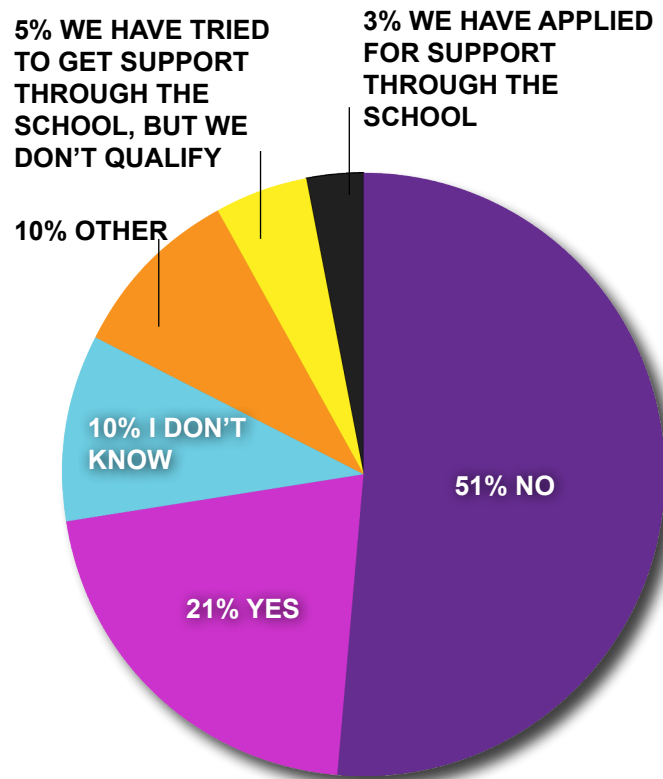
HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE SUPPORT THAT YOUR CHILD RECEIVES AT HIS/HER SCHOOL I.E. TO DO CLASSWORK, HOMEWORK AND ASSESSMENTS? CONSIDER MODIFICATIONS, EXTRA TIME, TEACHER AIDES, ACCOMMODATIONS, ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY.



WHAT IMPACT DOES YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY DIFFICULTIES AND/OR DYSLEXIA HAVE ON HIS/HER MENTAL HEALTH?



DOES YOUR CHILD RECEIVE WELLBEING SUPPORT AT SCHOOL?



'We have applied [for wellbeing support], they say yes, but nothing comes of it'

PARENTS WERE INVITED TO ADD THEIR EXPERIENCES.

Of the parents who said that wellbeing support was available, only a small portion said that it was effective for their child. Many commented that the support was inconsistent and/or it was provided for a period but then not available.

'Has at times, particularly in transition to yr 7. School refusal was an issue in past high school years. Informal and ad-hoc support provided now but with no real plan. Frankly, it is not sufficient to meet his needs.'

'She has previously [had wellbeing support] but they are busy with other students who they deem need it more so than my daughter.'

'The support offered by the school is not supportive, my daughter actively tries to avoid the 'support' staff member because she's not kind to her and doesn't understand her issues.'

'We have applied [for wellbeing support], they say yes, but nothing comes of it.'

'He did with a youth worker but it stopped this year. They think he's too dependent on her. They don't see that he needs the break from the classroom and she's taken the time to get to know him.'

WHICH SUBJECT/S DOES YOUR CHILD RECEIVE ACCOMMODATIONS?

PARENTS WERE INVITED TO SPECIFY MORE DETAILS.

Many parents commented that despite their child being eligible, there was variation and uncertainty in implementation of accommodations.

'We have an agreement in accommodations to be implemented but up until now the school has not been implementing agreed accommodations.'

'Her ILP says she should have accommodations in all subjects but teachers either don't read it, don't understand it or won't allow her to use the strategies. Her support coordinator is lovely and supportive but seems to have very limited ability to influence what happens in the classroom.'

'Depends on the teacher and if they're knowledgeable about dyslexia and if I've had a personal conversation with them.'

'It's random and only happens when I request it in relation to EACH PIECE OF WORK. Like they forget each time that he needs mods. It's infuriating!'

'Not really sure on what or how it plays out in the classroom. It's meant to but I can't say for sure it does.'

Some of the accommodations that parents mentioned were not genuine accommodations but rather 'modifications'.

'Literacy but only by setting work below grade level.'

'In a lower math group purely because she can't read the questions and takes too long to answer even though she gets the questions right.'

Parents indicated uncertainty regarding whether their child was receiving literacy-based accommodations. This parent expressed frustration for receiving daily phone calls from

her child's school regarding his behaviour in relation to literacy-based work.

'I receive daily phone calls about my son refusing to do work or about his behaviour. When asked what he was being told to do it is usually around a reading or writing task. I am constantly told that the teacher does not have time to help him I have other students. I get that but there us only 9 students in the class, yes very small school.'

Other parents noted that the accommodations for their child with a literacy difficulty were only in place as a result of parent advocacy.

'Only after paying an advocate to come with me when he started at his third school at the start of year ten.'

'Accommodations are in place because I educated the school. However, they are not implemented well.'

Some parents stated that no accommodations were in place for their child.

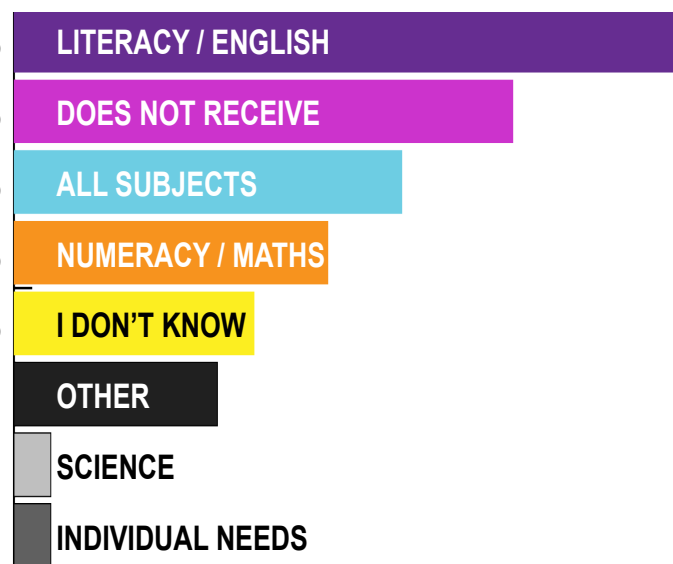
'No formalised accommodations. Teacher might adjust work from time to time such as allowing him to copy and paste from web to prepare information PowerPoint presentation rather than write/type content.'

'There are no listed accommodations for my student. We must make a request to every teacher, every time we require an accommodation for a learning or assessment task.'

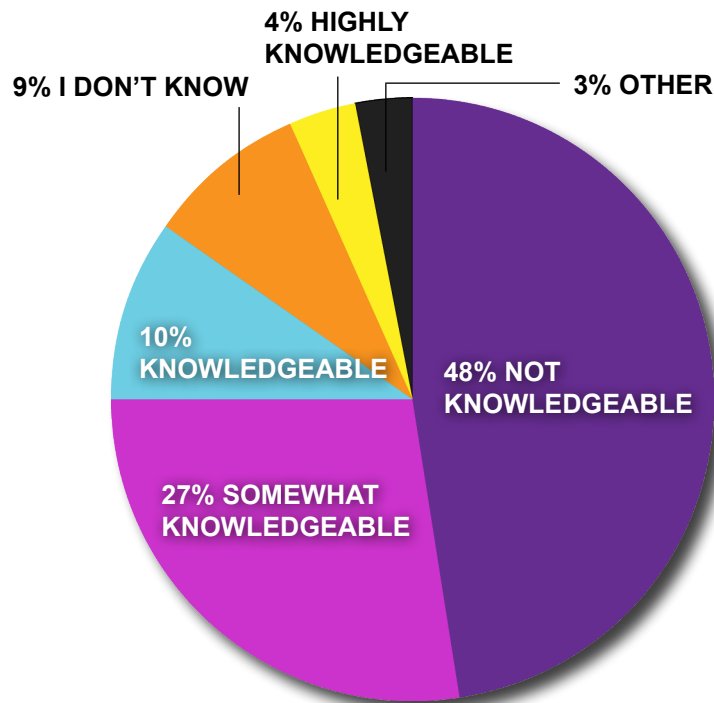
'My child has severe dysgraphia and moderate dyslexia.... he is not receiving any support. The technology provided by the school is old and out of date and too frustrating for my child to use.'

'She is in grade 5 so no formal accommodations however the teacher has been adjusting her work tasks during remote learning when required.'

'Accommodations are in place because I educated the school. However, they are not implemented well.'



HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR CHILD'S TEACHERS' LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES, ALSO KNOWN AS DYSLEXIA?



'I had a number of teachers say that they did not know what dyslexia was.'

PARENTS WERE INVITED TO ADD THEIR EXPERIENCES.

Of the parents who rated their child's teacher as highly knowledgeable or knowledgeable about dyslexia, one parent noted that their child's teacher is self-funding professional development while another parent noted the fact that her child's teacher is a parent of a child with dyslexia meant they were knowledgeable and supportive.

'My child's teacher is currently self-funding her way through the MSL course. She has been a significant help for my son and is advocating evidence-based changes throughout the school.'

'I am fortunate my daughter's teacher has a dyslexic child and therefore is knowledgeable in this area. She gets the academic and emotional challenges that occur.'

Of the parents who rated their child's teacher as somewhat or not knowledgeable about dyslexia, many said they had tried educating their child's teachers. Some parents commented on the variability of knowledge and the misinformation among teachers about dyslexia.

'You occasionally get a teacher who knows, but most have absolutely no idea and also give really bad advice through their ignorance.'

'There are multiple teachers I have engaged with that have no knowledge and I have had to spend time educating them.'

'As my son is now in Year 9, he has had numerous teachers. I have never spoken to or heard from a single teacher in the two primary schools or the two secondary schools he has attended

who is knowledgeable in dyslexia nor the science of reading. The teachers seem blindsided in that they don't know what to do to help him learn to read/spell.'

'My child's teachers generally have no understanding they have stated that he is lazy and if he worked harder, he would be better off.'

'I had a number of teachers say that they did not know what dyslexia was.'

'My son is currently in year 7 but I can say that all through primary school there was not a single teacher that understood or helped. I received outside help with tutors. I pity those families unable to pay for private tuition.'

'I have constantly shared my knowledge and share my expectations with them.'

'When I told his teacher about his diagnosis, she asked what dyslexia is. The vice principal suggested giving him coloured paper.'

'In 7 years at primary school only one teacher had any idea what dyslexia was, the rest had either never heard about it or just thought it was letter reversal.'

'I have been educating my daughter's teachers. Each year I have had to start over again with a new teacher. The school has paid for this year's teacher to do a course about dyslexia but I have no idea as to the usefulness of this course.'

'He has gone to one primary school and two different high schools. At each, it was as though he was the first kid with dyslexia to ever attend.'

'None of the teachers have been knowledgeable thru no fault of their own but very few have been willing to listen to my advice

HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR CHILD'S TEACHERS' LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES, ALSO KNOWN AS DYSLEXIA?? cont...

which as someone who actually has this disability my advice is golden. No one who does not have a disability will ever truly understand what it's like and what is beneficial and what is not.'

'My sons teachers knew very little about dyslexia that was accurate.'

'I can't believe the Department of Education is not doing something about upskilling teachers. It's truly shocking how little they know.'

'The teacher knows nothing about dyslexia or learning difficulties, the teacher treats her like she has an intellectual disability which she does not. Her IQ is within the 'normal range'.'

'I meet with the teachers at the beginning of school year and give them resources and links re dyslexia. I also send the learning support teacher anything that I think she might find useful inc PDs teacher may be interested in. Some years ago, I sent the principal the link to 'outside the square' when it first came out. We also offer the teachers to meet the kids tutors which we pay for. The teachers don't always want to do this.'

Some parents noted the variation between primary and secondary schools, across schools that their child had attended and among teachers even those in literacy support.

'Secondary College is doing so much to assist, all teachers trying to be accommodating. Primary School was a nightmare, teachers didn't appear aware of dyslexia or were afraid to mention it.'

'The level of knowledge changes with the teacher each year. Disappointingly the special needs coordinator appears to have little knowledge and hasn't helped to organise additional supports.'

A few parents who said their child's teacher lacks understanding of dyslexia mentioned that their child's teacher was willing to learn.

'Teacher is willing and keen and recognises this as a gap in her training but actually hasn't had the time or support to get the professional development which is required. This is a very common experience.'

'Her teacher this year (grade 5) is the first teacher to actually understand our daughter. She doesn't know much about dyslexia but is always willing to learn and is amazed by how much my daughter teaches her.'

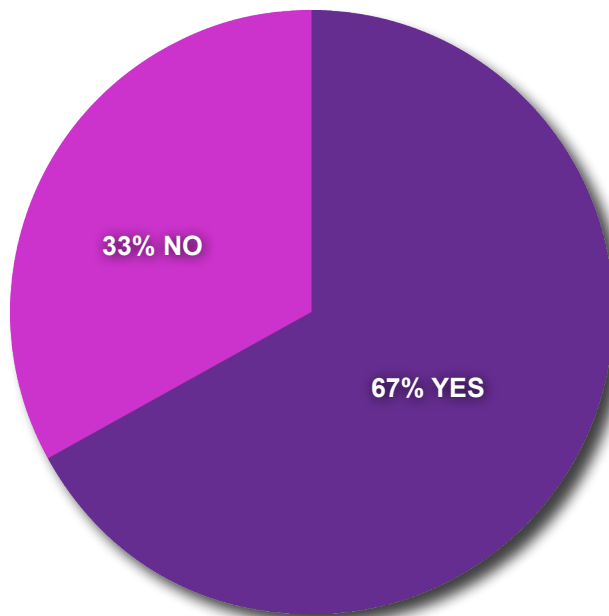
'Teachers are very willing to assist with accommodations however have little knowledge how dyslexia impacts child and admits to having little knowledge. Only one teacher has gone above and beyond to learn outside of school and bring some changes at a school level and implementing program for kids who are struggling.'

'Teachers are willing to learn but don't have a lot of knowledge, this includes the learning pathways staff. I am constantly providing them with ideas/information. It's not their fault, I am a trained teacher but wasn't trained to deal with dyslexia!'

'One teacher paid for PD herself as wasn't supported by principal to attend courses Another teacher acknowledged that reading recovery was not working with my child but didn't know why until I gave them articles to read.'

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED CHANGING SCHOOLS DUE TO YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY DIFFICULTIES AND/OR DYSLEXIA?

PARENTS WERE INVITED TO ADD THEIR EXPERIENCES.



'I researched all the schools and found that none of them seemed to have knowledge or effective programs in place for dyslexic kids.'

The largest number of parents commented that they had considered changing schools but had decided that there were no better options. Many parents cited that other schools were using the same approach to teaching literacy as their school so changing schools would be a waste of time.

'Yes a number of times, but there's no point because there are no schools that teach the way my son learns!'

'We have changed schools with my older children. Unfortunately changing schools is unlikely to change the lack of knowledge in public education. There are no schools offering whole school evidence based instruction in our area.'

'Out of the frying pan into the fire.'

'There isn't any better option for schooling with only being in primary school we just have to try to get more help through current school or pay for private help outside this.'

'I have looked around local schools and asked what intervention they have. It's either the same or worse than ours so it was best to leave her and get a tutor instead.'

'Victorian Education department places a ridiculous focus on IQ to determine support and or funding for children in public schools. If you have and average or high IQ you can just forget about additional assistance. Why would a different school improve an already dysfunctional system that is completely failing our children?'

'This is SUCH an infuriating topic! So few options. Would change him if there was a place worth changing to. No options in our area where addressing learning difficulties is a priority, including decent

resources and training for teachers.'

'We would like her to go to Bentleigh West PS as we live near there, but we are not in the zone. We just want all schools to have a whole-school approach to learning difficulties. It benefits ALL kids, does NO harm and will only improve learning outcomes.'

'We have looked into it but because of school zones our only option is private which we can't afford. Our son in particular has been incredibly disadvantaged by the lack of support and evidence-based intervention.'

'I researched all the schools and found that none of them seemed to have knowledge or effective programs in place for dyslexic kids.'

'He has been to 2 different public primary schools and one semi private high school, nothing much differs, high school has been a bit more supportive but I would like more for him.'

Other parents said that changing schools while desirable from a literacy perspective, was not an option due to their child's friendships at their current school. Some parents also noted that while their current school is not ideal in terms of literacy teaching, overall they are satisfied with it.

'My son is very connected to his friends and his mental health and resilience is good, so we won't change, but this doesn't mean we aren't struggling on the academic side of things. I actually don't think there are any better schools in our local area, so no point also in changing.'

'We considered moving schools, but his psychologist felt that

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED CHANGING SCHOOLS DUE TO YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY DIFFICULTIES AND/OR DYSLEXIA? cont...

moving him at this time would negatively impact his already very low self-esteem, so we decided to wait and see a bit longer. His mental health is most important to us.'

'Only reason I haven't is because I worry that taking him away from his peers and comforts at school now that he is in grade 3 will be detrimental to his mental health as he was a school refuser in prep and grade 1. But at the same time I worry that their lack of ability and knowledge of dyslexia and the associated difficulties speech and language will mean my son will continue to fall behind as he goes up year levels.'

'The school does not offer any education support (just some well being support). They do not seem able or willing to offer the support that he requires. Other schools in the area have a better reputation in this regard but my son feels he is better off 'roughing it out' where he has existing friends.'

'I feel so much guilt about not knowing what approaches they use to teach literacy at my daughter's school and not understanding how wrong the environment was for her. Her social connection is her super power and she has so many wonderful friends. We left her at the school because socially and emotionally a move would not have been positive for her.'

'Although I'm not satisfied with the literacy approach and support our school offers, overall, we are happy with our school and they are being supportive of our efforts to privately support our son's literacy development. They provide supervision of my son for 1 hour per week while he has a Telehealth appointment with a speech pathologist during which he receives evidence based literacy instruction. They are doing the best they can with the current skills/ knowledge/DET support that they have. It's just a shame they are not more aligned with the science of reading.'

Parents tended to opt to stay at the school but supplement with private tutoring.

'I feel that his primary school was scaffolding not trying to help him gain reading and writing skills. I thought if leaving but he was very happy socially at so we had to try and work with the school but mainly outside interventions. Unfortunately I don't think any school

does learning support very well.'

'Yes, we did in primary school [consider changing schools] but living in a small rural area there was nothing better out there. We opted to pay for one on one private tuition.'

Of the parents who said that they had changed schools due to their child's literacy difficulties, many either stated or indicated that the change was positive.

'We have just recently moved to this school. It is not great but it is better than the last one!'

'We moved schools at the beginning of this year to a school we're our son had some close friendships through family friends and sport. This was important for him after his experiences at his previous school.'

'We changed schools 4 years ago. My son has ASD, ADHD, GAD. The old school blamed my son for his difficulties and at age 9 he was rated as having clinical depression. The new school isn't perfect but he is in a very caring environment generally speaking.'

'My son started school at a primary school that didn't believe anything was wrong, they believed keeping him back he would just get it, no changes to teaching! We received zero support from anyone at the school and everyday my son had huge meltdowns going to school. When we changed school's they were supportive from the start and have sent teachers to do training.'

'We did, moved from public to private at a significant expense but well worth it for the incredible support and his mental health.'

'We have already changed schools and couldn't be happier. The improvement and understanding of the teachers is amazing!'

Of the parents who said that they had changed schools due to their child's literacy difficulties, some parents mentioned that the new school was not any better than the first one.

'He spent Prep to end of Year 2 in one school, then, because he was not making any progress, we moved him to a second school 18 months ago. The second school was no better. They are not teaching him how to read, just providing what they call accommodations.'

'We have changed schools once but I am of the opinion that due to lack of funding and resources there is no silver bullet. We now focus on private support, we put everything we have into that financially and that is extremely hard but we feel there is no alternative. We are also conscious of the mental impact of this however, he spends all day at school and then he does more work at home, it's a real balance to make it constructive and effective.'

'My son changed schools in grade 3 due to bullying and the promise of better literacy support. Didn't receive any better literacy support. It was the same problem. Schools having no clue to what programs they should be teaching. Using out-dated and unproven programs and inexperienced/unknowledgeable teachers.'

Some of the parents said that they are still considering changing schools or changing to home-schooling.

'Still considering [changing schools] due to schools lack of commitment and poor literacy program but then school seems enthusiastic about increasing support..... and then nothing happens.'

'I've heard other families have changed schools due to the lack of support of kids with dyslexia or learning difficulties. We're considering it.'

'Every day I wish i could home school my children and every day I continue to try and move towards home schooling. I regret ever having enrolled my children in school.'

WHAT POSITIVE CHANGES OVER TIME (IF ANY) HAVE YOU NOTICED IN REGARD TO HOW YOUR DYSLEXIC CHILD IS SUPPORTED IN YOUR SCHOOL?

Around a third of parents said that there has been no positive changes over time.

'None, slowly killing his confidence and self worth each year.'

'I think we have given up on that [positive change in the school], we focus on him having good friends and being happy at school. Learning is a home thing.'

'No positive experience, feeling very let down by the school. Teacher appears to implement what she wants to and not necessarily what is evidence based best practice. I am constantly chasing school for information and updates.'

'None at this stage. They are reluctant to look beyond their current approach which does not work for us. They have very experienced teachers who seem completely committed to the way they have always done things and not open to evidence based practices and research which strongly suggests a need for change.'

'No changes...it's how hard you push as a parent and the luck of the draw with what teacher you get!'

'I haven't seen any change in the school. Lack of knowledge by teachers and conditioning parents to understand accommodations will not be given during VCE. Some teachers even dismissing contents of a report by the educational psychologist.'

'Invisible. Kids are smart enough to stay out of the radar. Not the troublemaker, not the smartest or popular kid.'

'Nothing stuck in dark ages! All support has been driven by me, googling, and researching and telling the so-called teachers what will help...grrr.'

Of the parents who said that there has been positive changes at their school over time, many mentioned compensatory changes

such as increased awareness of dyslexia, the implementation of accommodations and modifications such as LOTE exemption and modified class work were noted.

'I think my son's school has developed more awareness and understanding of dyslexia which has helped him. Once they stopped calling him lazy and really learnt about his difficulties things improved.'

'Finally at the beginning of 2019 my daughter received an ipad to use at school. It took me 3 years of pestering the school for this accommodation. This year (her last year of primary school she is getting her first decent IEP). Unfortunately, it took my child becoming suicidal for the school to become serious about providing support and listening to my suggestions.'

'There has certainly been more awareness but the resources weren't available to the teachers or the school to make effective changes in the classroom.'

'The school has allowed the use of assistive technology, extra break times, reduced workload and reduced or adjusted homework to allow time for homework set by our private tutor.'

Some parents commented that there was little change at their school and it most often relied on their strong parent advocacy. Changes that parents noted were the school allowing a private tutor to work with their child at the school.

'The more I advocate for him, the more (even though minimal) support we get.'

'The conversation is starting to happen but we're leading the discussion.'

'Dependant on his individual teacher and their knowledge. The principal is now allowing his tutor to come to school so I don't have to pull him for even longer. (precovid)'

'Very few unfortunately, there seems to be a little bit more knowledge however I find this staggering given the amount of people that have dyslexia and how many slip through the cracks.'

'Finally after forwarding so much information to the school, being an advocate for my children, things are finally starting to change as staff become more aware. A long way to go but there are small positive changes.'

'Each year I speak to the school they are doing more to teach the teachers and find support for kids who don't receive funding, I send the principal links and he's taking them on, he's new to our school and he's actually passionate about teaching ALL children not letting any coast.'

'After 6 years of advocating for my own children and sharing significant amounts of evidence-based information, staff are finally listening. They are beginning to alter teaching and assessment methods to evidence-based methods that provide relevant information that helps students.'

Slight, due to my stomping up & down.'

A similar number of parents highlighted that any positive changes were inconsistent in that they varied from year to year, teacher to teacher and noted that teachers although willing to make changes are often hindered.

'Her teacher is open to learning but the systemic school approach and education guidelines make change difficult'

'Positive changes are dependent upon the teacher he has. Some

HAVE WHAT POSITIVE CHANGES OVER TIME (IF ANY) HAVE YOU NOTICED IN REGARD TO HOW YOUR DYSLEXIC CHILD IS SUPPORTED IN YOUR SCHOOL? cont...

teachers seem to go above and beyond for him and others are more focussed on high achieving students.'

'Varies year to year. Often the individual needs teachers are supportive however not consistent through the year levels.'

'A few teachers have taken time to self educate on how to best teach a dyslexic learner. They've been amazing.'

'Current teacher is open to learning, he is constrained by the school's overall ethos and resources.'

Around one in ten parents noted positive changes in their child by reporting increased confidence and an ability to self-advocate.

'Child's own advocacy skills and confidence in self is good. Had mostly very supportive classroom teachers. Intervention teacher with specific training in SSP employed (but my child has no access to this teacher). Only taking matters beyond school and to Equal Opportunity helped in getting a much improved ILP.'

'As he is able to advocate for himself, he is educating teachers as he goes. He is now getting A's and takes great pleasure when teachers are surprised that a Dyslexic is capable of those grades. We paved the way for opting out of a second language. It was a struggle for us, but it seems to be easier for those who follow.'

'My son asked his teachers to explain to his classmates what dyslexia was and tell them that this is what he has. this has been a hugely positive impact because 99% of the students are kind, caring, empathetic and helpful to our son and he no longer feels the level of shame he used to.'

Due to factors such as their child being newly assessed, remote and flexible learning or a change in schools, some parents said it was too early to tell if there have been any positive changes.

'Hard to tell coz he was only officially diagnosed end of last year in grade 6 and this year started a new school in year 7 and most of the year has been remote learning.'

Some noted the difference in support in their child's primary and their secondary school.

'His secondary school has been a lot more attentive to his needs. He is in a literacy program (for struggling students so his SLD is still not directly addressed). The program does however offer accommodations across all his subjects with modified work available. He is also receiving additional literacy support instead of LOTE.'

'With the better understanding in high school my son now feels he can accomplish school, but it has been an uphill battle for the whole family. It's like VICTORIA is still in the stone age while the rest of the world has moved on.'

'High school this year has been amazing both with their knowledge and approach. We have felt very confident our daughter is in great hands to achieve her best whilst being well supported.'

Some parents mentioned a positive change in relation to the intervention that their child's school provides, and others mentioned the positive impact of teacher training at their school.

'Gradual introduction of evidence-based interventions has proven to be somewhat effective however the amount of time spent is insufficient for any notable progress.... too little, too late.'

'In so many ways, the introduction of targeted teacher training and PD. Introduction of Fitzroy readers than. MultiLit. The complete use in assisted tach if required. Modification also if required but will help bridge the gap to access grade level work. Embracing dyslexia and not making it a taboo subject, wonderful for mental health.'

'They actually have MSL trained teachers instead of Reading recovery now. More teachers are aware of dyslexia & more children are being recognized with having dyslexia.'

'The teachers and support staff have received training in specific learning difficulties and have therefore helped many more children.'

WHAT WERE THE BENEFITS AND/OR CHALLENGES OF REMOTE AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING (RFL) FOR YOUR CHILD?

Parents were divided on the benefits and challenges of remote and flexible learning (RFL). While some parents reported benefits such as growth in their child's confidence or fewer distractions, others reported these same factors as challenges.

'She enjoyed it. Less pressure in the classroom, less noise and distraction from peers. No need to appear like she understands and keeping up with the work in front of the teacher and peers.'

'He was able to learn at his own level and his own pace. He felt confident and happy as there was no comparison of peer levels. This resulted in an incredibly happy child with no exhaustion or meltdowns.'

'He thrived. Less distractions, more free time and more flexibility for self-pacing. He is hoping we will go back into lockdown! We have always known he may want to change to distance Ed later on for those reasons. It's been a great trial.'

'Benefits were they didn't feel pressure to be done in a certain time frame. They were able to be shown or given a different explanation or way of doing things. Which in turn kept them interested and confident because they achieved their task.'

'He struggles to stay motivated and concentrate. Too many distractions at home.'

Many parents mentioned a benefit of seeing firsthand how much their child is struggling in their learning. While many parents noted the benefit of RFL was the one-on-one support they gave their child, others lamented it is what their child needed but could not access.

'It was very upsetting for me to witness how little he can write. He has so many basic gaps with grammar and punctuation, spelling is

extremely bad so he won't attempt to write a sentence as he can't spell. He is in his first year of high school, Good to see some of the programs would have a voice to read the questions. I have had to sit with him the entire time to make sure he was on track and knew what he was doing so took me away from my work. The main benefit was that he was not under stress by other kids seeing that he couldn't do the work.'

'We learnt so much about the way our child learns and so much about how the school underestimates her ability to learn. Instead of providing accommodations they were modifying the work so that it was simple, not teaching her how to do work at her level. We have shared our learnings with the school, and they seem to have taken some of it on board.... but we will see what happens in term 3.'

'The benefit was that I saw exactly how poor the quality of teaching was at the government school, and how far behind my son was. I was able to make the decision to change schools, and to begin teaching him to read myself at home using the programs recommended by the psychologist and the speech pathologist. He simply had not been taught to read at that government school. He made so much progress with me at home as his teacher during remote learning.'

'I got a good understanding of why somethings are a challenge for our son at school. We got to try out a lot of technologies like speech to text, audiobooks that got my son excited and engaged, he actually made more progress this term remote learning than any other term.'

'He had one on one help with me. He got more work done and worked to his ability. We used a c-pen to help him read textbooks, edge to read text on the computer and windows voice to write text.'

'Regular 1:1 support whenever he needed it. The ability to be able to ask questions and clarify what was required as many times as he needed. Accommodations whenever needed. Only real challenges were around the social isolation and lack of sport.'

'Very little support. She needed one on one and she didn't get that. It significantly affected her mental health and we now have significant issues in getting her to school.'

'More refusal of doing any work. Resumed school as I am an essential worker. Thus, became a challenge again as he was given a pack with a week's work in it and was given no assistance or direction from teacher. Very difficult for my son no work achieved at school in that time'

'I am able to read summarise and check that my child understands the work provided and take summary notes when researching and be the scribe for my child to reduce his fatigue and irritability related to learning(dyslexia and dysgraphia with dysgraphia being the larger problem and adhd also). Enable frequent breaks in work and enable more kinaesthetic active learning ie timetables whilst bouncing and catching a ball, more applied learning, less self-awareness of differences when compared with peers-less social anxiety re output and performance at home than at school, hence less work avoidance.'

While many parents were able to use RFL to focus on improving their child's literacy skills and/or use of assistive technology.

'I was able to spend large amounts of time focussing on remediation and support for literacy and assistive technology... access to technology currently unavailable at school was a game changer.'

'That I could concentrate on the important stuff reading, writing (plans, ideas), spelling words but useful words and not just games that have nothing to do with his spelling words. Getting him using speech to text more as he's not embarrassed around school peers. Having MSL therapist and myself concentrating on his writing task and getting him to do good plans and really encouraging voice to text and getting him to check over his work.'

'We were able to use technology to help my boys read. This is something they are both embarrassed to do at school. I was fortunate to get altered literacy work for my boys. I'm so thankful to the teacher!!!'

'The benefit was that I was in more control of my son's reading instruction so I was able to focus on what I know all readers need to

WHAT WERE THE BENEFITS AND/OR CHALLENGES OF REMOTE AND FLEXIBLE LEARNING FOR YOUR CHILD? cont...

become fluent - good oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.'

'I could switch and provide private quality tuition with our MSL tutor instead of the rubbish content offered by the school. My child was not humiliated on a daily basis as he wasn't struggling and behind his peers.'

'She could relax a bit from trying to do difficult reading/writing tasks. Was able to adjust her learning needs and use approved dyslexic apps (Nessy, Toe by Toe, decodable readers) that I sourced.'

'Using technology for all her work allowed her to use assistive technology to help with reading and spelling. We also had more time to work on her specific needs in a dyslexic friendly way.'

Many parents noted school-based challenges such as the lack of adjustments, lack of modified work, lack of teacher support, lack of face to face interactions and the volume of written work.

'It highlighted the challenges he faces trying to work to the set curriculum. There were no adjustments made for him. It required 1 parent to take leave from paid employment to support his remote learning.'

'Remote learning is soul destroying for my child. She has dysgraphia as well, so the typing/technology side of learning is hard. Switching between screens, heavy reliance on reading instructions and typing/writing is so difficult for her.'

'Huge chunks of text that she could not read so she did not know what she was supposed to be doing.'

'... Struggling to read is a massive challenge for home learning. There is no way my son could learn from home if I wasn't reading most of what he has to work with the curriculum.'

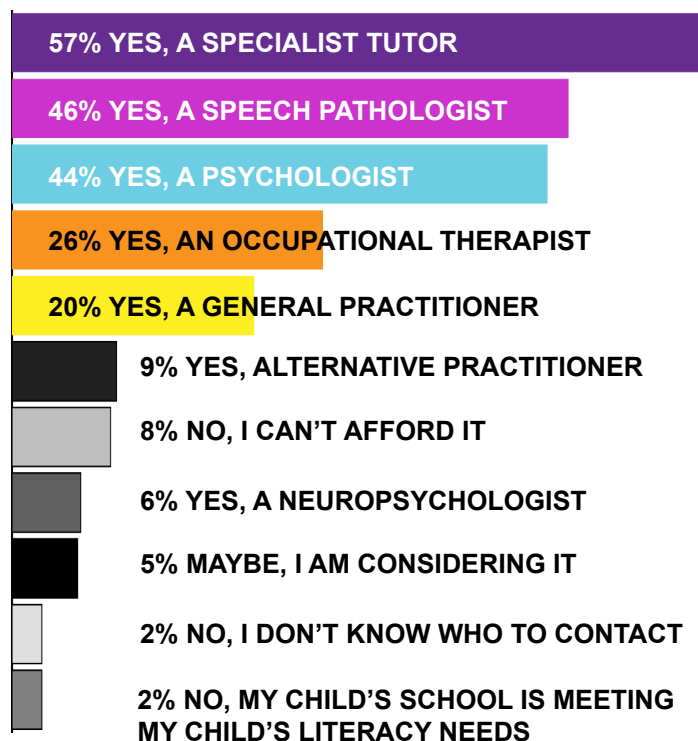
'It did not consider the challenges with tasks being all reading based. It had a serious impact on our child's mental health'

'It was horrendous. Nothing was adjusted. There was little to no face to face (online forum) support. Learning tasks were set and forgotten about by the teachers. My children were stressed as the tasks kept mounting up and were visible as uncompleted...'

'Extremely challenging. As a teacher myself, I modified his tasks. He needed 1:1 support to attempt any task as the instructions were written and it was too hard for him to read it all and then comprehend what to do. I spoke to the school a number of times, but they didn't change what they were doing. Recorded instructions would have helped lots of kids not just my son.'

HAVE YOU SOUGHT ADVICE AND/OR INTERVENTION OUTSIDE OF YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL REGARDING YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY SKILLS? (CHECK AS MANY AS APPLICABLE)

PARENTS WERE INVITED TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES



Many parents mentioned consulting multiple out-of-school specialists.

'Behavioural Optometrist. Educational Psychologist. Eye & Ear Specialist. Paediatrician. Child Psychiatrist. Speech Pathologist. Chiropractor. Paediatrician (second one). Clinical Psychologist. Multi-sensory Tutor. Occupational Therapist. Educational Psychologist (second one).'

'I have left no stone uncovered. I first asked my son's teacher and his school principal for advice on his reading difficulties. Then I sought advice and assessment from an audiologist, optometrist, literacy specialist, speech pathologist, behavioural optometrist, and an educational psychologist. At Year 9, he is having twice weekly sessions with a teacher to support him in his education so to prevent him leaving school too early. He can't participate in the curriculum without support due to his weak literacy skills.'

'In the process of seeking help from all the above providers as the school has told me they won't help, and I need to seek help elsewhere.'

Many parents commented on the cost of out of school support by referring to it as being a prohibitive factor, or a necessary cost given their school was not helping their child.

'I have used people on and off over the last 6 years, but it is expensive, so I have to stop and try and support him at home.'

'I have spent thousands of dollars getting support for my daughter outside of school which has been positive however it's not followed in the schools which makes it very hard to continue the positive impact.'

'This is an expensive process however I can no longer rely on the DET to provide effective literacy education to my son, so we prioritise this support in our family budget. It is frustrating when you hear of DET schools who have adopted a science of reading approach to their literacy curriculum and are seeing the results in their students that we are required to pay for from private practitioners. This type of education should be available to all children.'

'He has an MSL tutor and will have a math tutor when I find one. But this is extremely costly for us. We only manage to do it because we feel like we have no choice as school isn't teaching him the basics he needs to know.'

'The school have been of minimal assistance. We have paid for private assessment and ongoing weekly speech therapy for 2 years.'

'She is progressing and gaining confidence. It is very expensive, and I can only send her once a week. I think she would benefit from more time.'

'Without the help of our speech path we shudder to think what might have happened. We are extremely lucky to be in a position to afford this. There was no miracle cure just calm, persistent and constant teaching and re-teaching.'

'We see a speech therapist fortnightly - and will probably need to for the rest of his school life, I guess. We are waiting to see a psychologist. The cost of the cognitive assessment was so expensive, but necessary. The ongoing cost of other therapists is really more than we can afford right now but we have no choice if we want him to improve his skills.'

'The school has not offered resources but has welcomed therapists to interact in SSG's [student support group] and visit

HAVE YOU SOUGHT ADVICE AND/OR INTERVENTION OUTSIDE OF YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL REGARDING YOUR CHILD'S LITERACY SKILLS? cont...

class/ teacher. I feel there probably was more the school could have done rather than private funding and that if I had waited it would be too late because of how literacy challenges have impacted my child's self-esteem, behaviour and mental health.'

'I have tried everything within my budget. Many efforts have been a waste of time and money because I did not know then what I know now about dyslexia. I really wish someone within the education system had directed me in the right direction from the beginning of his struggle.'

'I do not think parents should have to pay for private tutors, unfortunately that is what is happening. Children should be supported in government schools (and all other schools!) to develop a basic ability to read and write.'

'Extremely costly and time consuming. All helpful but we went around in circles for some time seeking answers. I thought getting the diagnosis would be the hardest part, I was totally shocked to realize having a diagnosis from a number of professionals, (who all gave good suggests to implement) that this diagnose made absolutely no difference to the way our son was taught! Accommodations were rare, inconsistent & never suggest by the teacher.'

'All our intervention has been undertaken privately. It's expensive but the consistency has been so worthwhile, and all our children have benefited tremendously. Also, by going privately we know what they are learning and can practice at home on a daily basis.'

'MSL tutoring has been incredible - seeing progress for the first time in years.'

Parents commented on the impact of out of school intervention on their child including tiredness, refusal and/or time that should be spent on leisure.

'... From Term 3 onwards, he will not go to school five full days a week but have lessons at home or with the tutor at least 2 half-days a week. He gets too tired if he has to go to school as well as having

after-school tuition. The class teacher has agreed with this plan.'

'We have had specialist tutors in the past to focus on reading and phonics, but nothing seemed to help. My son doesn't want to have to have tutoring outside of school. He enjoys sport and has training and games during the week and weekends. This is his passion and something that makes him happy.'

'Specialist tutors work well for our son. The problem is, where to fit it in in an already very busy day. He is exhausted at the end of school, after trying so hard all day to keep up. It seems cruel to then have to get him to sit down and spend more time learning with a tutor. When does he get a chance to just be a child and go play outside?'

'It's difficult to get into services. I have to take my son out of school once a week to take him to his MSL tutor, otherwise he wouldn't have a spot.'

'We travelled an hour and a half every week to see a specialist tutor for an hour. It wasn't enough but it is all we could do. We live in a regional town of 100,000 people but we could find no help here.'

IN RELATION TO LITERACY, WHAT SUGGESTIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR OUR VICTORIAN DEPUTY PREMIER AND EDUCATION MINISTER, JAMES MERLINO, FEDERAL MINISTER FOR EDUCATION DAN TEHAN, AND TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, TO STRENGTHEN SCHOOL EDUCATION FOR YOUR CHILD? (POINT FORM IS FINE)

Parents overwhelmingly commented on the need for teacher training in reading instruction in both initial teaching education and within schools. The following parent comments capture the collective frustration from parents of children who are not being taught to read in school.

'Educate the educators! More PD on specific learning disorders would be the one single thing that I would love to see. I have several friends who are teachers, both primary and secondary, and I feel as though I'm much more knowledgeable about dyslexia than they are. If our children slip through the cracks at the lower levels it just compounds as they get older...'

'It should be mandated for all School Principals' to be well versed and equipped to cater to all students as not to struggle daily with their learning difficulty...'

'I am angry I am enraged. I can see with synthetic phonics my incredibly bright capable child flourishes...Every teacher should know the science of reading. Why would you expect anything less? How healthy is it for a 4, 5, 6...year old child to have to put in one extra hour for every classroom hour of teaching to overcome instruction that teaches them to look and guess. How realistic is it for a child that young to explain to their teacher guessing is NOT reading? We read to our son every day since he was born. We still read every day. That didn't teach him to read. Stop the misinformation about reading it just hurts everyone.'

'I was failed as a child, my husband was failed as a child. Surely after 20 plus years of the balanced literacy approach there is enough data to show it does not work. Evidence based instruction following systematic synthetic phonics supports all students. Please stop this education induced poverty cycle. These students are the future and we already have too many illiterate people with heavily impacted mental health issues. The LANTITE test is a joke it will NOT raise teaching standards. For that to occur current teachers need training, universities need to provide preservice teachers with the evidence-based knowledge and skills required to be successful in the classroom and they need adequate resources such as decodable readers.'

'...complimentary teacher training in the science of reading (give all teachers the time and the access to a comprehensive training program) and follow up forums for questions and professional development - provide funding to schools with a program of change to the science of reading - support with funding for teacher training, resources, expert mentoring - complimentary teacher training in assistive technology.'

'Nothing has changed for these kids since I was in primary school over 30 years ago. It is unacceptable to send these kids out into the world illiterate and mentally exhausted thinking that they can't do anything well. Bring in evidence-based interventions, Teach teachers ways to help these kids. Stop saying to parents that the child will just get it.'

'Look at Bentleigh West as an example of how a whole-school approach can be implemented, they have done it on a State school

budget...'

'...Stop recommending literacy courses through Bastow that do not align with the Science of Reading.'

Parents identified further opportunities for changes to strengthen their child's education such as an updated Australian and Victorian English Curriculum, updated Victorian department of education website, assessment and funding for dyslexia.

'...re-write the Australian and Victorian curriculum (the English curriculum should be based on the Simple View of Reading whereby decoding and language comprehension knowledge and skills are explicitly taught).'

'Please recognise that dyslexia impacts more than a child's ability to read. My son became so depressed that he was self-harming. Please introduce a screening process in year 1 so that children can be identified, and appropriate support given before the gap between them and their peers gets bigger. All children deserve to be taught using evidence-based approaches. Victorian education needs to adopt the Science of Reading approaches which support all students. The explicit and systematic approach is essential for students struggling and those with dyslexia. This approach is helpful to all and essential to many!'

IN RELATION TO LITERACY, WHAT SUGGESTIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR OUR VICTORIAN DEPUTY PREMIER AND EDUCATION MINISTER, JAMES MERLINO, FEDERAL MINISTER FOR EDUCATION DAN TEHAN, AND TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, TO STRENGTHEN SCHOOL EDUCATION FOR YOUR CHILD? cont...

'Stop mucking about with literacy at the early years. Stop promoting Fountas and Pinnell assessment when it does not assess all the facets of learning to read. Put in Grade 1 phonics test. Teach teachers with the same evidence based information. Put out a consistent message - some aspects of DET website are up to date and reflect science of reading - other parts are wishy washy and incorrect. Model and demand each school has RTI plans which are based on science of reading.'

'Start endorsing evidenced based reading programs to all schools and remove detrimental programs immediately. This will result in higher education levels across the whole of society. The fact that this has to be pointed out to politicians is frustrating in itself...'

'Consistent approach across all of Victoria at all year levels. Psychological support for students at all schools. Ability to get an assessment through the school, not having to go private. Early screening so you don't get to upper primary before issues are raised.'

'Make it mandatory that children are screened for learning difficulties early in their schooling. Replace the mandatory English Online interview with one that screens for phonemic awareness difficulties.'

'...increase funding to support Speech Pathology & Psychology assessment in schools.'

Parents provided a range of suggestions for the Victorian education department and schools to consider.

'Support for staff and teachers in schools needs to be increased and improved. The school staff are at the front line with students and are in the best position to make the biggest impact on students learning and wellbeing. Those educators need to have access to funding and professional development to improve literacy outcomes for all children. It is unrealistic to wait until a child is behind, and they expect intervention to catch a child up to standard. Schools need to be held accountable for the support of these children. It shouldn't

take 2 years to get a diagnosis. It's not good enough now, or in the future.'

'Current school psychologist distribution means that they are unavailable to most students for several years. If one cannot fund own interventions these children have very poor literacy outcomes and significant self-esteem issues.'

'Please make remote schooling an option for all kids even when not in COVID times, the combination of face to face and remote would be perfect as 1:1 support can be given at home...'

'Please resource your schools with decodable readers!'

'Mental health support.'

'...VCAA applications for special provisions should be made as early as possible - like anytime once the kid hits high school. The process needs to be much more transparent and the current process is deeply flawed and unfair. The school must show evidence of providing accommodations throughout schooling - so kids are provided with these, then the VCAA makes their decision late in the kids VCE year and denies accommodations - with no explanation. The kid is used to getting them and feels able to engage on a level playing field only to have this changed at the last minute. IT IS OUTRAGEOUS.'

'Better specific accommodations to students facing their final years when solid intervention and need can be shown. Our son is very intelligent but he simply cannot read and comprehend at the same speed as most students, allowing extra time does not take into account the enormous mental and physical drain and effort placed on him to carry out tasks. The purpose of exams and all assessments should first and foremost be to show the skills and learning of the student, Accommodations must be tailored to each child to allow this to be shown. VCE should not be faced by parents with such fear and trepidation, that the journey they have taken and the challenges they have supported, often in collaboration with the school are turned away and refused. You scare dyslexic students, their families and their schools from having faith in any system to support.'

'Mandatory implementation of ILP in every class and weekly reporting by every teacher.'

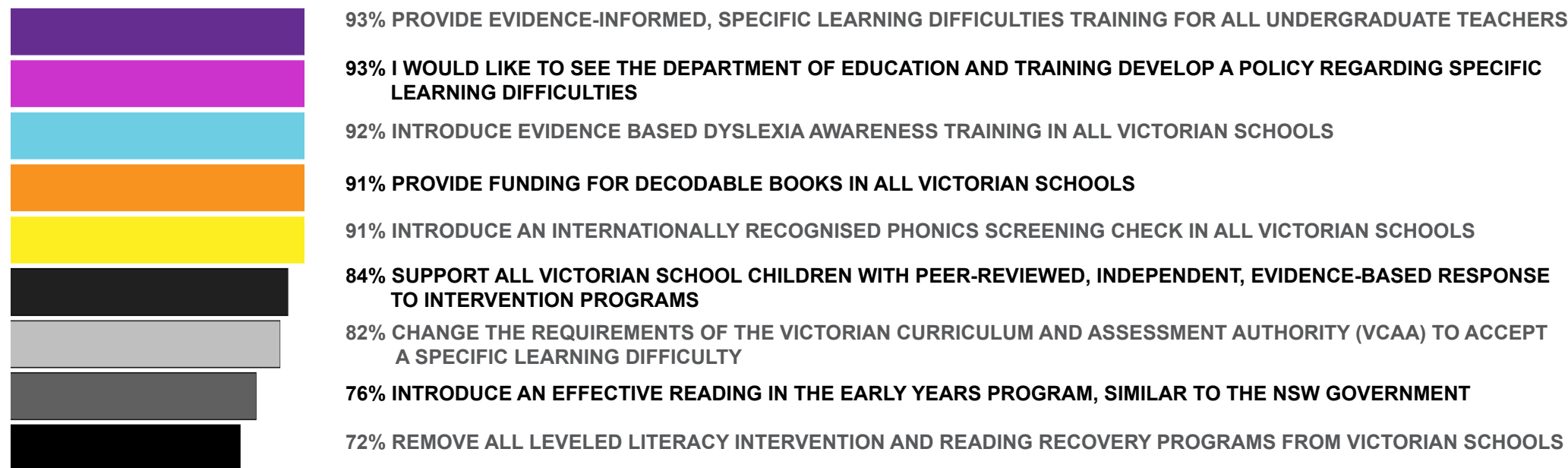
Parents also made suggestions for a shift in how children with reading difficulties are viewed during their education.

'...I feel children with learning difficulties are viewed as a burden to the system. Our kids have to work extra hard and at times don't receive the recognition they deserve....'

'...Value dyslexic thinkers.'

'...it is time to move away from traditional mode of schooling and create a modern flexible mode reflective of our understanding of human potential...'

WHAT CHANGES IF ANY WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MADE TO VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT POLICY IN RELATION TO DYSLEXIA?



PARENTS WERE ASKED WHAT CHANGES THEY WOULD THEY LIKE TO SEE MADE TO VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT POLICY IN RELATION TO DYSLEXIA.

'Ban reading recovery and other programs that lack evidence.'

'Do not put unqualified teachers in a job that they are not trained in. E.g. if you don't have special education training you cannot become a learning support teacher.'

'Classify dyslexia as a disability, so that these children can get financial support from NDIS. This would help parents to pay for private tuition if the school is providing inadequate teaching.'

'NON VCE pathways tailored early in high school to help dyslexic kids see a future before it's too late for them.'

'We plead for all of the above. PLEASE. The effects of struggling at school reach beyond the school gates from a very early age.'

'Work with families not against them we don't want to make your job harder we want to give our children better opportunities and a better chance at an equal education to their peers.'

'FUND dyslexia. Attach to the child. If the school is not providing intervention parents should be funded for an out-of-school tutor for these children.'

'Ban 3 cueing.'

'Understand that it is good for everyone- not just dyslexic Students. ALL students.'

'Early identification is necessary. Don't push this under the carpet but have a process to address and identify issues earlier.'

'Just make a change. Really concentrate on the early years of intervention, once they are in grade three, they are expected to read and write, if they don't have this foundation by then the gap continues to widen.'

'Reach out to experts in Victoria such as Pamela Snow and Alison Clarke to guide and oversee policy in early reading teaching.'

'Formalise IEP training for teachers.'

'Provide the right level of mental health support to our dyslexic children to assist in anxiety and withdrawal from learning'