

Phonics or Whole Word?

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Not long after we are born, we look up from our cot, trying to make sense out of what our proud parents are saying. This is our first encounter with 'language by ear'. Not long after, we engage in 'language by mouth' as we try to repeat what they say. Much later, we encounter 'language by hand', as we struggle to draw the letters that represent the sounds that we hear. Later still we, encounter 'language by eye', which is silent reading, the ultimate goal that we strive to achieve.

Brain scanning research shows that languages by ear, mouth, hand and eye are all interrelated. All their pathways are active, even when reading silently by eye. It is not hard to see how problems with how we hear the sounds of our language could affect how we say it, how we spell and write it, and ultimately how we read it.

Reading research scientists agree with almost total unanimity that children need to develop a 'phonological awareness' in order to learn how to read. That is, they need to look at words, not as a complete 'design' which represents one complete sound, but as a collection of visual symbols that represent a collection of sound 'blocks'.

A solid 'phonics' training helps children gain that phonological awareness and helps them to develop their orthographic and phonemic processing skills. This means mastering the rules for symbol - sound correspondences, which underpin our language.

Many children are born with mild visual or auditory processing problems. Brain research suggests that this causes them to use too much of their 'conscious' working memory, processing tasks that otherwise would be processed as 'sub-conscious' activities. This leaves not enough capacity in working memory for higher level of processing necessary for good comprehension and fluency.

This is why Cellfield has developed a program that targets phonological awareness in a unique way, freeing working memory for better comprehension and enhanced language skills.

This is why after only two weeks, decoding skills can improve by almost two years and comprehension can improve by one year, whether your child is normal or dyslexic. (See The Australian Journal of Learning Disabilities Vol 10 issue 2).

More and more clinics in Australia and New Zealand are taking up licenses to provide the Cellfield intervention.