

## **Poor Spelling is often just the tip of the Iceberg**

In February 2011, a mother contacted us at the Tyquin Reading Clinic with concerns about her son's spelling. RB had just commenced Grade 6 and despite years of support through tutoring services, his progress had plateaued. Mum described her son as being very bright (above average intelligence) who was a poor speller, skipped words when reading and became very tired when reading. Mum described RB as more of a visual learner than an auditory learner.

The first step was for RB to undergo a thorough diagnostic assessment. RB was assessed on 4 February 2011. Results revealed:

1. Difficulties with fixation of his eyes on an object
2. Below average ability to hear sounds
3. Below average ability to spell nonsense words
4. Below average accuracy in reading a story
5. Low average ability to break words into sounds
6. Low average ability to read a list of real words
7. Low average ability to read a list of nonsense words
8. Average ability to understand sentences and short paragraphs
9. Average comprehension of a story
10. Average speed when reading a story
11. Above average visual perceptual skills.

From the results, it was clear that RB needed to improve his ability to hear words in sounds in order to assist him to decode (read) words and encode (spell) words accurately. It also appeared that RB's visual part of his brain (that was working well) was not communicating with or passing on any information to and from the part of his brain that processed and analysed auditory information. Treatment needed to target the auditory skills to improve them and to stimulate communication between the different parts of the brain.

It was recommended that RB participate in the Cellfield Program. Cellfield is a computer-based reading intervention program which provides the missing elements that help 'bind' the orthographics (the symbols of our language) to the phonological (the sound structure of our language). It is administered via 10 x 1 hour treatment sessions held over a two week period.

RB participated in Cellfield from 14 February to 8 March 2011. Assessment results after Cellfield revealed really pleasing improvements:

- Below average ability to spell nonsense words.
- Low average ability to read a list of nonsense words
- Average speed when reading a story
- Average comprehension of a story
- Average ability to read a list of real words
- Average ability to hear sounds within words
- Above average ability to understand sentences and short paragraphs



- Above average ability to break words into sounds

RB then participated in two, one-hour sessions of Behavioural Reading. The Behavioural Reading Program improves reading performance by targeting reading fluency.

RB then participated in 10, one-hour sessions (from 15 April to 5 September 2011), working through the Sound Training Activities for Reading and Spelling STARS (Basic and Intermediate) Programmes. These programmes focused on explicit teaching of vowels, vowel combinations and spelling rules.

On 12 September 2011, RB's progress was reviewed. After seven months of support from the Tyquin Reading Clinic, RB's results had improved significantly:

- Below average speed in reading a story
- Average accuracy in reading a story (improved by 53 months)
- Average ability to read a list of real words (improved by 23 months)
- Average ability to read a list of nonsense words (improved by 37 months)
- Above average comprehension of a story (improved by 29 months).

RB is now reading and comprehending above his chronological age, however his reading rate is quite slow. With continued practice his reading rate will increase.

RB's teacher has also noticed his improvements and this is reflected in his school report:

English: Writing and Designing improved from B (Semester 1) to A (Semester 2)

In RB's mother's words "He has 'found the key' to literacy and this has meant that all his subject results have improved – not just his English results as he can now read and understand the questions and answer them appropriately"

If you are concerned about your child's spelling or reading call Tyquin for a chat (33998028).