EDFD-221:
Creating inclusive safe and supportive schools

Assignment 2: Agency Report

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Tutorial: Wednesday 12 Noon

SPELD Victoria Inc.
Dyslexia and other Learning Disabilities Support
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Agency Description:
SPELD Victoria is a not-for profit, member based organisation and registered charity. The organisation has been working for the past 48 years to help improve the learning outcomes and lives of 1 in 10 Victorians who have specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia.

As dyslexia and specific learning disorders (SLD's) are not considered to be strong intellectual disabilities they are often misunderstood by teachers and educational professionals, which is often frustrating for children and their families who live with these “unnoticed” disabilities. Often this lack of understanding of SLD’s and Dyslexia limits children’s ability to achieve to their fullest potential.

SPELD Victoria’s Mission:
SPELD Victoria aims to ensure that every Victorian child has the opportunity to reach their fullest learning potential.
To achieve this mission SPELD works with members of the government, schools, parents, students and the community to ensure that their vision can become a reality.
**SPELD's Reflection on Legislation:**

SPELD Australia (2015) has been a major influence in the National Governments Decision to consider dyslexia as a less severe cognitive disability as well as a learning disability. This consideration now means that children with dyslexia are now considered within the Disability Discrimination Act (2006) which states that children with a disability have the right to participate in education free from discrimination whilst allowing them to achieve to their fullest potential. The Australian Human Rights Commission (2011) also reserves the all children regardless of their situation have the right to education free from discrimination.

SPELD Victoria's Mission of ensuring that all Victorian Children have equal opportunity to achieve their fullest learning potential, reflects on the legislation stated by the Australian Human Rights Commission (2011) as well as that of the Disability Discrimination Act (2006).

**SPELD Victoria's Services:**

SPELD Provides a range of services for its members which help to support students, teachers, parents and schools. These services serve to honour SPELD's Mission and aim to ensure that all students have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

Encouragement of positive mental health and wellbeing is important in an educational setting (Response Ability, 2002). When children struggle academically it is often frustrating for them (SPELD Victoria, 2015) especially when the cause of their struggle goes undiagnosed. This struggle can often lead to low self-esteem and poor emotional wellbeing in children. By providing services to support children, teachers and parents in identifying and dealing with dyslexia and SLD’s, SPELD is able to ensure children can develop positive wellbeing.
Assessments:
SPELD Victoria provides assessments for the testing of SLD’s and Dyslexia. If parents, teachers or other professionals feel that a child may fit the category, SPELD is available to undertake and support the assessment process.

The Department of Human Services and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2010) states that teachers and school staff have a duty of care to protect and preserve the health and wellbeing of students. By conducting assessments and identifying the cause of learning difficulties with the services and support of SPELD, teachers are able to protect the wellbeing and emotional health of students by developing a greater capacity to support children’s learning.

Parent/ Caregiver Support Groups:
SPELD acknowledges that parents play a significant role in children’s lives and therefore provide opportunities for parents to be supported as they support their children. In order to maximise learning opportunities for students with disabilities to succeed, collaboration between teachers, parents, caregivers and health/support services is important (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2013). The parent and caregiver support groups offered by SPELD allow collaboration between professionals and parents as well as teachers to occur. This helps to improve the support for children with dyslexia or SLD’s

Technology Services:
Assistance technology is provided by SPELD to children who would benefit from it. Technologies include: Software's for reading, writing, literacy and numeracy.

Social and emotional wellbeing is a critical part of health and happiness for all people. Promoting positive wellbeing helps to positively impact on the development and behaviour of students (Australian Government, Department of Health 2013). By providing technological support services, such as software’s and applications to assist students with dyslexia and SLD’s, SPELD is helping to improve and ensure positive wellbeing and emotional health as well as positively impacting the development and behaviour of students.
In School Consultations:

By recognising the role of teachers in children’s lives SPELD offers assistance and support to educators and other professionals in schools to discuss concerns for students who have dyslexia or another SLD.

Consultations provide educators the opportunity to talk with a qualified SPELD Victoria psychologist regarding:

- Educational progress and difficulties with learning
- Academic achievement
- Strategies for intervention
- Self-esteem issues
- Education or career prospects

According to MCEETYA (2004), children who are able to self monitor their progress and know when to ask for assistance from teachers or peers are able to enhance their interpersonal wellbeing as well as their learning and development. By working in partnership with SPELD consultants though in school consultations, children are able to learn to manage and deal with learning disabilities such as dyslexia and SLD's, this includes knowing when to ask for assistance, how to deal with self-esteem issues and strategies to improve learning and increase achievement.

Personal Development (PD) & Workshops:

Personal Development and Workshops provide teachers with opportunities to develop understandings, knowledge and be given support as to how to deal with, assist and improve the educational outcomes for students with dyslexia and SLD's. Types of PD include: In service training, PD workshops, Out of School Training, Parent workshops and Student workshops.

The workshops often include student and parent sessions which can support students and parents and provide assistance and strategies for dealing with dyslexia and to promote educational outcomes.

Beal & Tranter (2010) contend that children with specific learning difficulties and disabilities often develop behavioural difficulties which are often evoked by a lack of mental wellbeing or low self esteem. This low self esteem an poor mental wellbeing is often the cause of an inability to perform academically to their fullest potential. Through PD and workshops, teachers and parents are able to develop an understanding as to how to control student wellbeing and the behaviour which often comes from this lack of wellbeing, as are the students able to learn to deal with their emotions.
Research Project: Peer Tutoring Program:

The peer assisted learning program (PAL) involves the training of student mentors in order to assist with the tutoring of students with dyslexia or other SLD’s. The program has found to not only have educational benefits but social and emotional benefits as well.

Online Resources:

The online Shop provides access to Dandelion Readers books, which assist children with dyslexia. As well there are many online resources to help access and support with Dyslexia and SLD’s within the classroom and at home as well as FAQ sheets.

Referral Procedures:

SPELD Victoria is a not-for profit organisation. There are no formal referral process' needed to access the support services of the organisation. In order to access the agency parents, teachers, students, members or the community or other professionals are able to contact the agency directly via email, telephone, or by visiting their offices. Other services and information are available online at the SPELD Victoria website.

Generally it is teachers who contact SPELD when they have concern for a child or some children in regards to dyslexia or other SLD’s. Teachers are encouraged to contact SPELD for support and assistance with accommodating children with dyslexia and SLD’s, however teachers cannot contact SPELD in regards to having children assessed without parental or guardian approval.

Melbourne Location: 60 High Street, Preston 3072
Call the info line: 1800 051 533
Call the office: 03 9480 4422
Website: www.speldvic.org.au
Addressing Issues of Social Justice:
SPELD Victoria aims to assist all Victorian children, regardless of race, gender or background; who may have dyslexia or another SLD. By working with schools, governments, communities, families and children SPELD is able to assist children to reach their fullest learning potential whilst serving social justice.

Serving Culturally Diverse Backgrounds:
SPELD Victoria aims to serve all Victorian’s, this includes those from culturally diverse backgrounds. However the online services may not be suitable or directly accessible for those from culturally diverse backgrounds, particularly those who are not fluent in reading and writing English, or those who do not have access to the internet in their home or community environments.

It is assured by SPELD Australia (2015) that people from culturally diverse backgrounds are valued by the agency and are supported by its staff. This level of support may not be online, however the staff from SPELD agencies are “there to help”.

Implications for Educators:
There are many services and support programs which are provided by SPELD to assist educators to accommodate students with dyslexia or SLD’s in the school and classroom environments. SPELD assists educators in assisting children to ensure that the SPELD Victoria mission that “every Victorian child has the opportunity to reach their learning potential” is upheld.

SPELD provides support for teachers in regards to the accommodation of students in the classroom as well as adjustments to support these children with dyslexia or SLD’s. This support includes, specialist learning programs for children with dyslexia or SLD’s, technologies to assist the learning of the children, strategies, goals and focuses for student learning, equipment and learning tools (printable's and resources) as well as support tools for dealing with stresses and behaviours which often branch from learning disabilities.
Theories Underpinning SPELD:

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecology Model demonstrates an expanding set of structures which are structured around a developing child which lies at the centre of the model. Bronfenbrenner's theory stated that the development of a child is effected by everything in their surrounding environment (Bowes, Grace & Hodge, 2012).

SPELD’s mission and focus shows a connection to Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecology Model in the way in which it connects the micro system, to develop a functioning mesosystem which works to enhance the development of a child.

SPELD aims to connect families and schools together to help support students with dyslexia and SLD's. By the individual factors in the micro system of immediate family and school working together the mesosystem can function and help to improve the overall development of the child. In this theory SPELD sits in the exosystem, they are developing the connection between the micro systems of a child and creating a well-functioning exosystem for the child.

With these connections the development and understandings of children with dyslexia and other SLD's can be enhanced as well as their capacity to learn to their fullest potential. This is also a connection to the mission of SPELD which aims to ensure that every Victorian child has an equal opportunity reach their fullest learning potential.
References


