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The **dyslexia** debate

University of Exeter, November 24th, 2020

A universal
scenario

Perceived benefits of a dyslexia diagnosis

- **At last someone has worked out what is the problem**
- **At last they will know what to do to help my child**
- **At last my child will have access to necessary resources**
- **Now I can reassure my child that it is not their fault**

“Does dyslexia exist?”

....is a daft question...

Differing conceptions of dyslexia

Source: Elliott, J. (Autumn, 2020). It's time to be scientific about dyslexia. *Reading Research Quarterly*

- **Synonymous with reading disability**
- **A sub group of those with RD diagnosed by cognitive tests**

The place of genetics, neuroscience and cognitive science in the dyslexia debate....

Lopes, J. A., Gomes, C., Oliveira, C. R., & Elliott, J. G. (2020).
Research studies on dyslexia: participant inclusion and exclusion criteria.
European Journal of Special Needs Education (on Online First)

Problems often found in those
who struggle with reading





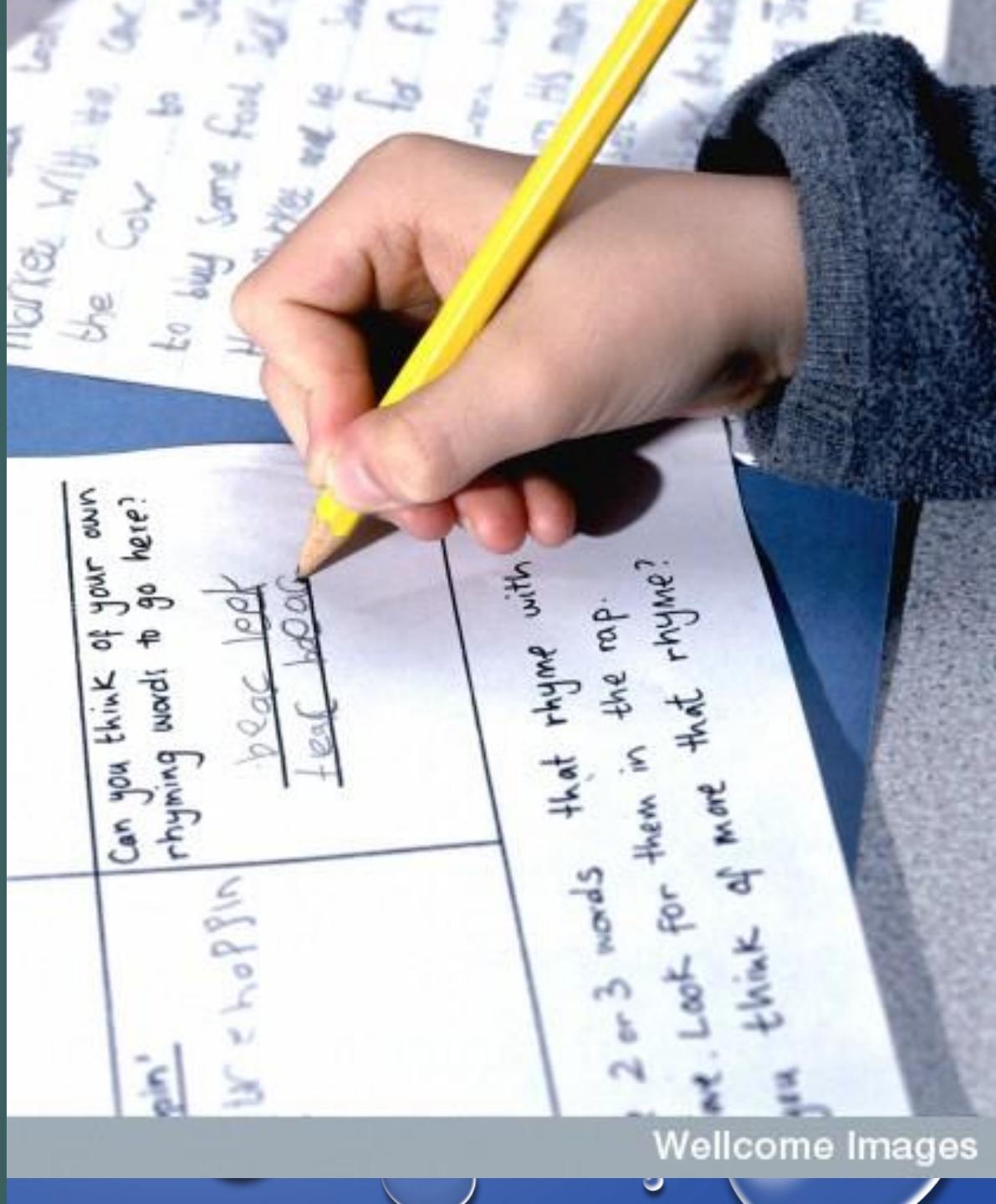
JOHN FLEMING STEAD - MR. BUNCE, M.D., HEALTH OFFICER - VITALITY PROJECT

So if it makes someone feel
happier, that it's not their fault,
what's the harm?

Differing conceptions of dyslexia

- **Synonymous with reading disability**
- **A sub group of those with RD diagnosed by cognitive tests**
- **Intractability to reading instruction**
- **A neurodiverse condition that goes far beyond reading**

To what extent does a diagnosis of **dyslexia** guide the educator in devising appropriate forms of treatment?



• FORMS OF TRAINING

- Cognitive
- Auditory
- Visual
- Motor

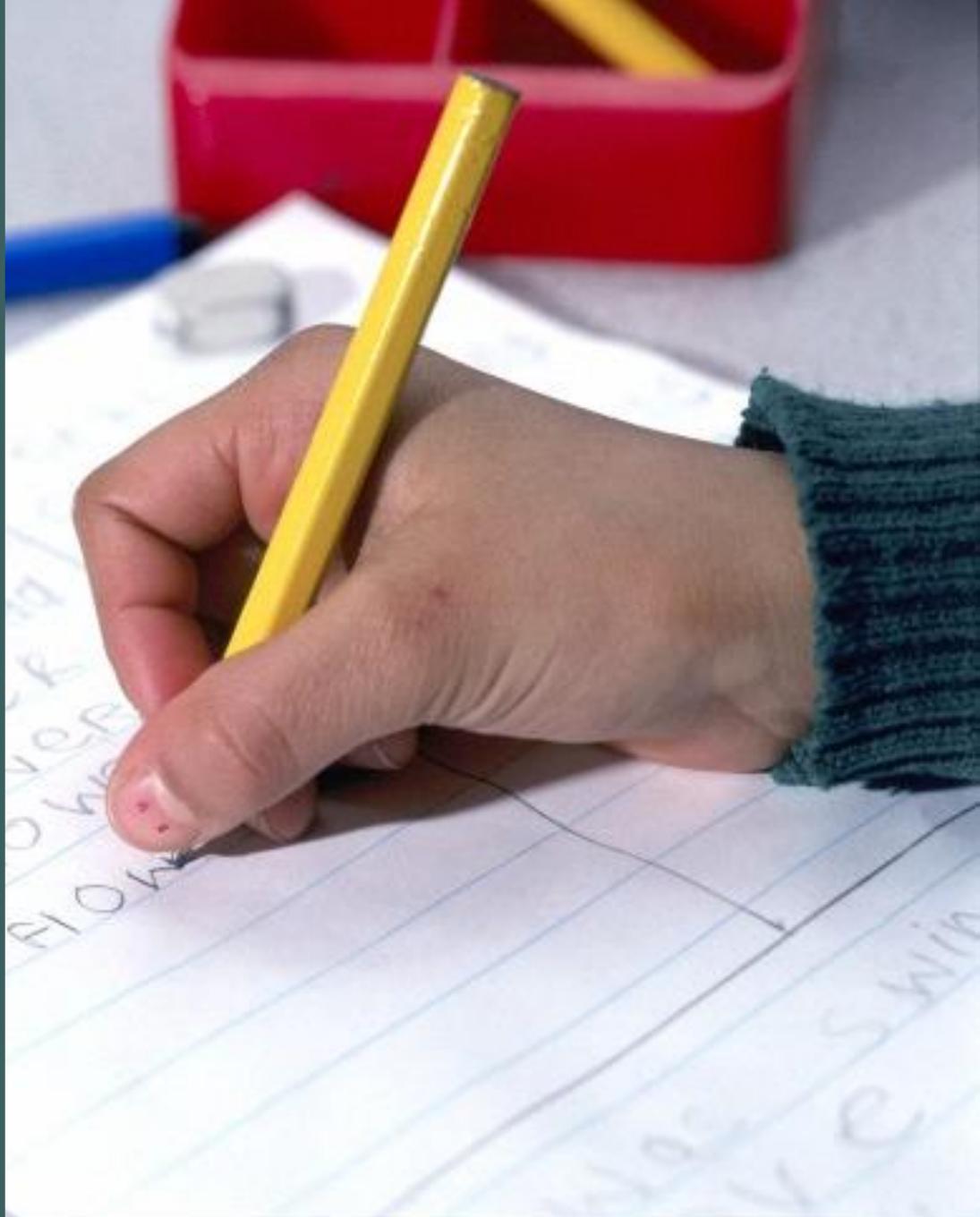


Practitioners should:

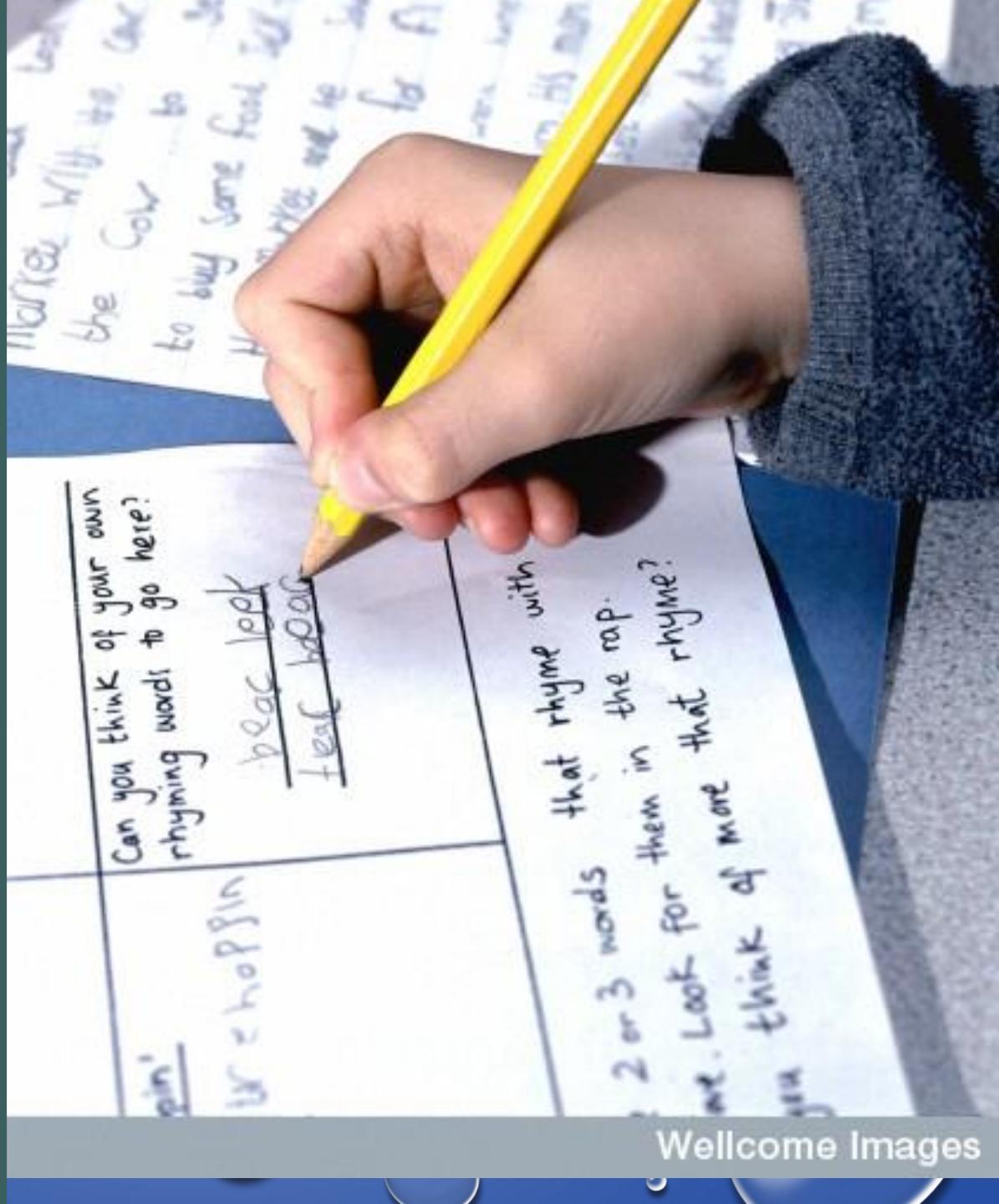
“...shift the focus of their clinical activities away from emphasis on psychometric assessment to detect cognitive and biological causes of a child’s reading difficulties for purposes of categorical labelling

.... in favour of assessment that would eventuate educational and remedial activities tailored to the child’s individual needs”

Vellutino et al. (2004)



Should a dyslexia diagnosis lead to differential levels of resourcing?





(MUM)... HAD PAID AROUND £2,000 ON COMMISSIONING FIVE INDEPENDENT REPORTS SHOWING HOW BRIGHT AND INTELLIGENT ALEX WAS DESPITE HIS CONDITION – AND HOW MAPLE HAYES WAS THE PERFECT PLACE FOR HIS SECONDARY EDUCATION, WITH ITS SPECIALIST PROGRAMMES AND INTENSIVE TEACHING.

“ALEX IS NOT STUPID, HE IS DYSLEXIC,” SHE HAD SAID. “EVERY CHILD IS ENTITLED TO THE EDUCATION THEY NEED. THIS IS CLEARLY NOT BEING MET IN ALEX’S CASE. HE NEEDS SPECIALIST DYSLEXIA TUTORING BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE. MY SON IS BEING LET DOWN SEVERELY BY THE SCHOOL SYSTEM.”

Science, politics ...and follow the
money

Sirin Kale... Guardian journalist,
The House of Lords and belief
that the Earth is flat.....

The way forward?



Elliott, J. G. (2020). It's Time to Be Scientific About Dyslexia. *Reading Research Quarterly, 55*, S61-S75.

Elliott, J. G., & Grigorenko, E. L. (2014). *The Dyslexia Debate*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Channel 4 Dispatches (2005)...The Dyslexia Myth
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lrAQedApVg>

Sirin Kale (2020). The battle over dyslexia.
(<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/sep/17/battle-over-dyslexia-warwickshire-staffordshire>