

# Why School Is So Difficult



*Why school presents so many challenges for the dyslexic child*

by Liz Dunoon



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First Edition 2014

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## **What Is The Concept Of 'One Size Fits All' Schooling?**

When our five to six year old children start school, have you ever considered the process? We send them off to attend their first day with the belief that the local school is the right and only place for them and that the timing is right. We never question the system, because let's face it, our education system has always been structured the same way, the way we remember it when we went to school.

Have you ever really thought about how the system works? All the children are thrown in together, taught together and assessed together until they reach their final years of secondary school. The highest year level they successfully complete and the scores they achieve will determine what job they can apply for or which university or college they will get accepted into.

This system is a 'one size fits all' model of schooling, regardless of our individual child's learning differences or their emotional or physical maturity. As parents we rely solely on this 'one size fits all' system to compare our children's academic abilities and intelligence to all other children. We use this system to guide us, because, for many of us, it is all we know and therefore we never question it.

When we buy a 'one size fits all' garment, it rarely fits all of us. If we are petite it looks like we're wearing a big garbage bag, if we are larger, a corset. Our current education system tends to rely heavily on reading and writing. So if your child is dyslexic the current standard system is probably not going to fit them well.

It is also important to scrutinise the system by which our children are assessed and compared to other children. If you look in detail you will notice that the system we use to test our children and determine their school

success is again a 'one size fits all' model. At no other time in our lives as an entire age group of people are we subjected to these forms of mass assessments and compared to each other, except perhaps when we sit the exam to go for our driving licence and we can choose when we do that. Can you imagine every thirty year old adult having to sit exams at the end of every year to determine what their future will hold?

Many school assessments and exams are in 'read the question then write the answer' formats that often create difficulties and disadvantages for dyslexic students. Yet this is often the only option available to your child. So from day one it seems the odds are stacked against your dyslexic child being able to demonstrate their full potential in a formal school environment. Keep in mind here that dyslexic children are generally of equal or greater intelligence to non-dyslexic children.

**“So should the child fit the school or should the school fit the child?”**

By bringing these points to your attention, I do not seek to suggest that schools are going out of their way to fail our dyslexic children, merely to give you an understanding of how a system that has been in place for generations has its limitations for your dyslexic child.

### **What Is The Education Conveyor Belt?**

It is very convenient for parents if a child begins school at approximately five years of age, finishes school at the age of around seventeen, gets a great job or goes straight onto college or university and from there into their chosen field or career. It is the aim of most parents, educators and the government for this to happen and yes, it does make life and paying the bills much more efficient. It is

the way the education system is designed and if your dyslexic child can experience success in this way, full credit to them, you and your child's teachers. This is definitely the fast track, but it doesn't have to be the only path to success.

There is no rule that says a child must stay at the same school(s) indefinitely while they complete their primary and secondary schooling, then choose what they want to become when they grow up, in a record time of thirteen years. The world is changing. More and more parents and students are seeing the benefits of changing to more appropriate schools or leaving school early to go out and experience the world, returning to study at a later time when the student has found their true calling. As parents, don't get caught up in the conveyor belt of the school education system and assume that this is the only way for your child to become educated and to reach their full potential in life.

Look around you. If you think about it you will be able to identify many people who got onto the education system conveyor belt and have completed long academic degrees, only to discover that they have chosen the wrong path and change direction abruptly. We can also find people who left school early to begin employment in non-academic roles and then as they developed they became passionate about a chosen career path and achieved incredible tertiary results later on in life. Sometimes people do this via further academic study or via sheer common sense and hard work.

As conscientious parents, it can cause us anxiety when we consider the thought that our child may be better off changing schools or leaving school early to work. What happens if they never go on to do anything worthwhile? You know your child best and this is a decision you must make as a family. My advice though is never to assume there is only

one pathway to achieve success in life. Life is a journey and schooling is a very small part of it.

## **How To Handle Your Child's School Report**

Parents often use their child's school report to measure their success as parents, without realising that their dyslexic child may find it difficult to demonstrate their full potential within the confines of the current school education system.

### **Zach's story**

Zach is a friend of mine and he was telling me his concerns over his son and daughter's school reports. His son struggled across all subject areas and his daughter was a disaster at maths. They had never been diagnosed with a learning disability, but Zach told me they had always struggled at school. Zach's solution was to offer them a large monetary

incentive if they could achieve an 'A' in any subject area on their end of year report. I asked Zach if he thought this was a possibility. He looked at me frowned. "It's probably not very likely", he said, "but I don't know how to motivate them to work harder. What else can I do?"

I even hear stories of secondary school students who are offered cars by their parents if they do well in their final year exams.

“When I was at secondary school, I vividly remember a straight ‘A’ student feeling so pressured by her parents to maintain her high grades and with the added stress of boyfriend dramas, she had a nervous breakdown three months before the end of the year and never sat her final exams.”

We put so much emphasis on our children's school reports. All parents do it. I'm even guilty. It seems they are our only definitive measuring tools. We all stand around chatting and comparing grades, feeling ashamed and responsible when our children do not do well. It's as if our child's school report is a direct reflection on our parenting skills. No parent is guilt free, yet the education system has its limitations. It seems to disadvantage certain children and it has for as long as history can remember. Dyslexic children are operating in a system which currently does not fully recognise their learning style or allow for it.

Keep this in mind next time you receive your child's school report. Perspective is a great thing to have, so don't lose it and let your child think they have disappointed you or let you down. The day your child started school they never set out to struggle and fail or to let you down, only to achieve personal success and to make you proud. These school reports

we receive are generally not an accurate indication of our child's intelligence or a predictor of how successful they will be in life and they never will be, unless the system changes and identifies, recognises and celebrates different learning styles.

### **Fabulous School Failures**

If you were to study all the incredibly wealthy entrepreneurs in the world, there is a common thread that connects many of them. Do you know what it is? Many had difficulty at school, failed to learn and many did not complete secondary schooling or failed subjects if they did. When researching this book, I read one study that said that this was true for approximately 33% of the world's entrepreneurs. I have no idea if this is accurate or not, but it's an interesting thought. How do people who performed so badly at school become so successful? Their stories are varied and inspirational.

“People with potential will always find a way, even when the school education system does not allow for their style of intelligence. The ‘one size fits all’ education system in which our dyslexic children operate is not suitable for everyone and it does not determine the true potential of every child.”

“I was one of the ‘puzzle children’ myself - a dyslexic...and I still have a hard time reading today. Accept the fact that you have a problem. Refuse to feel sorry for yourself. You have a challenge: never quit!”

**Nelson Rockefeller**  
Former Vice President of the United States

“I don’t know if I have a learning disability or not, but I repeatedly failed English at school. How ironic that I now make my living as a very successful copywriter, making more money than I could ever have imagined. It wasn’t my schooling that did it, that’s for sure..... living life and having a go taught me how to be successful.”

**Bret Thompson**  
Advertising Copywriter

“I was on the whole, considerably discouraged by my school days. It was not pleasant to feel oneself so completely outclassed and left behind at the beginning of the race.”

**Winston Churchill**  
Former Prime Minister of England

“I barely made it through school. I read real slow. But I like to find things that nobody else has found, like a dinosaur egg that has an embryo inside. Well, there are 36 of them in the world and I found 35.”

**Dr. John R. Horner**  
American Palaeontologist

“I never read in school. I got really bad grades—D’s and F’s and C’s in some classes, and A’s and B’s in other classes. In the second week of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade I just quit. When I was in school, it was really difficult. Almost everything I learned, I had to learn by listening. My report cards always said that I was not living up to my potential.”

**Cher**  
Singer/Actor

You can find more fabulous quotes to inspire your children on the book website

[www.dyslexiadaily.com](http://www.dyslexiadaily.com).

The education system we have is the system we must use, unless we choose to home school our children or pay for a private school. There is a growing trend to home school, and many success stories as a result of it. It is incredibly admirable if a parent can home school their children and the results are often inspiring. It takes a huge commitment from parents and not all of us have this ability or would choose this option for many varied personal reasons. Parents also need to be aware that there are also schools becoming available that provide learning and teaching programs directly for dyslexic children.

Now we have had a chance to consider our child’s schooling, how do we support our dyslexic children through the education system as we know it? Read the eBook ‘Supporting Your School Age Child’ for more information.

## About The Author

**Liz Dunoon** is a teacher and a mother to three children all with dyslexia. It was through her own research to find ways to help her children that she discovered a huge divide between what is known by scientists about dyslexia and what is happening in our children's schools today.



Liz's determination to rectify this has culminated in her working with some of the world's leading dyslexia researchers to write this empowering, but simple and easy to read eBook.

Liz has also created a website full of free information, worksheets, resources, teaching aids, reports, interviews and personal stories. From one parent to another you will soon realise that you are not alone in your quest to support your child.

## Liz Dunoon is also the author of:

### Helping Children with Dyslexia

21 Super Strategies to Ensure Your Child's Success at School.

N.B. This eBook is an excerpt from this book

### EBooks

Guide for Teaching Your Dyslexic Child to Read from Home

Guide for Teaching Your Dyslexic Child to Write and Spell from Home

Guide for teaching Your Dyslexic Child to Do Math from Home

Available from the website

[www.dyslexiadaily.com](http://www.dyslexiadaily.com)