

Dyslexics need exams 'tweaked'

By SUE FEA in Queenstown

WITH at least 10 per cent of the population affected by dyslexia it was time for "archaic exam boards" to accommodate dyslexic children, leading British expert on dyslexia Neil McKay said in Queenstown yesterday.

Mr McKay has developed a preferred learning concept for dyslexics, who he said merely had a different way of communicating what they knew.

He is thought to be the only person in the world working with the concept and is holding a one-off seminar for parents and teachers in Queenstown at Millbrook Resort today.

Dyslexia was not a disability and dyslexics had a right to be the way they were – they just had a "preferred way of learning", Mr McKay, a teacher of 26 years, said.

They preferred to be taught in ways that suited their brains – information often ran like a video through their heads and they showed what they knew in different ways. "If they can only use sentences and paragraphs ... they can't show the teacher what they know, but if they use a flowchart ... cartoon or videos, they can."

This was the direction examinations should be heading in if they were to accommodate dyslexics.

"Unfortunately, exam boards are governed by an archaic way of running exams – there are too many hoops and it is a problem."

With three students in every class of 30 affected, changes needed to be made.

"If we can just tweak the classroom environment ... if we can get it right for dyslexics we get it right for everybody."

Mr McKay said the dyslexic way of learning fitted perfectly into New Zealand's schools curriculum and he would love to see that adopted in England. However, there was more willingness in Britain to accommodate dyslexic students in exams than there was in New Zealand.