According to the latest National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), most fourth- and eighth-graders in the United States have at least some difficulty understanding what they read, scoring below the “proficient” threshold on the NAEP measure of reading comprehension. U.S. students overall are falling farther behind their peers in other countries on a test of reading comprehension administered by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). Both of these facts were cited by Hugh Catts, a speech and language professor at Florida State University and Director of FSU’s School of Communication Science and Disorders, in the opening to his keynote address, *Reading Comprehension is Not a Single Ability*, at the 38th annual PBIDA Conference on Literacy and Learning Disabilities.

The U.S. Department of Education’s research branch, the Institute of Education Sciences, funded The Language and Reading Research Consortium (LARRC) and other initiatives to address the reading crisis in our schools suggested by these assessment results. Hugh Catts, a leader in the field of language and reading disabilities over the last several decades, is a co-principal investigator of LARRC, a large research project involving many investigators across seven universities that was designed to take a new look at the concept of reading comprehension through rigorous research and, in doing so, develop better ways to teach reading comprehension.

To help understand reading comprehension, LARRC researchers administered a battery of tests to a large group of students in the early elementary grades, preK through the third grade. The tests measured reading comprehension and other skills thought to be closely related to comprehension. Catts and his colleagues analyzed the results using a statistical procedure that helped determine which of these skills are unique factors in reading comprehension. The analysis showed that reading comprehension is not a single, unitary skill, as posited by at least two popular theories, but seems instead to be made up of many factors.

Dr. Catts noted that previous research looking for the unique skills that make up the reading process led to the “simple view” of reading: reading is decoding plus listening comprehension. In this view of reading, comprehension is a single, unitary skill. The same is true for another popular theory described by Catts that is based on a great deal of common sense as well as some research. In this theory, comprehension is considered to be based almost entirely on what we know, or content knowledge. In school, the ability to understand a text is dependent on what students know or have learned from social studies, science, literature and other content-area courses, and as a society it depends on shared knowledge, or cultural literacy. This is supported indirectly by the work of Richard Anderson and Walter Kintsch who showed that readers construct a mental representation of a text as they read, integrating concepts from the text with what they already know (background knowledge stored in schemata or situation models). The construction of a useful, coherent-
SAVE THE DATE!

The Pennsylvania Branch of the International Dyslexia Association

39th Conference on Literacy and Learning Disabilities

Monday, October 9, 2017

Columbus Day

St. Joseph’s University, Philadelphia
Maguire Campus - City Line Avenue

Nancy Mather, Ph.D.
Keynote Speaker

Keynote Address:
The Elephant in the Room: What We Overlook Regarding Dyslexia

Large Group Session:
How Do We Solve the Reading Crisis?

Nancy Mather is a Professor of Special Education at the University of Arizona in the Department of Disability and Psychoeducational Studies. She has also served as a learning disabilities teacher, a diagnostician, and an educational consultant. She has published numerous articles and books and conducts workshops on assessment and instruction for students with dyslexia both nationally and internationally. Dr. Mather is a co-author of the Woodcock-Johnson IV and has co-authored two books on interpretation and application of the WJ IV. Other recent books are Essentials of Dyslexia: Assessment and Intervention (Mather & Wendling, 2012), and Learning Disabilities and Challenging Behaviors (Mather, Goldstein, & Eklund, 2015).

APA • ACT 48 • ASHA
Registration Opens in June
Dear Members,

PBIDA is beginning 2017 with big plans. We are implementing a two year strategic initiative, which will be our roadmap for answering the most important questions about how we will move forward. It is a big undertaking when a small organization asks: Who are we? What do we do? What do we want to do? What do we need to do? And, most importantly: Can we do it? We need to answer these questions because our all-volunteer board has a good problem. We can’t keep up with the demand for our programs and services across Pennsylvania and Delaware.

Each of us has our own reason for volunteering with PBIDA, reading Focus, attending a simulation, going to a PBIDA conference, or becoming a member. Usually, this reason is personal - someone we care about has dyslexia or a learning disability in reading, or as professionals we work with children and adults who are struggling to learn to read. When we think of dyslexia or reading disabilities, a real person comes to mind, maybe more than one, but each one is a unique individual. It is personal for us.

But reading, or the failure to learn to read, is also an urgent public health issue. According to Read by 4th http://libwww.freelibrary.org/readby4th/ 

“... about 65 percent of public school students nationwide cannot read at grade level by 4th grade. On-track literacy is an important indicator of a child’s future academic and professional success, and the inability to read at grade level by the fourth grade is correlated to higher rates of dropping out of school, risky behavior, and incarceration later in life.”

Think about that - 65 out of 100 fourth graders cannot read at grade level.

In a field where the science of reading was established and published by the National Reading Panel 17 years ago, we are still not teaching more than half of our children to read. Did you know that the science of reading came from the science of dyslexia? We know how to teach children to read. Perhaps that makes us responsible for every child learning to read. Because this is personal for us, we know exactly what it means for each of those children who is failing to learn to read.

So, who are we? What do we want to do? Can we do it? Will you support us? Let us know your thoughts at dyslexia@pbida.org.

Sincerely,

Lisa Goldstein, MD
President, Pennsylvania Branch of the International Dyslexia Association

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**Advertising in Focus**

Focus is published three times a year by the Pennsylvania Branch of the International Dyslexia Association. We welcome submissions of articles, Calendar of Events, The Heroes of Dyslexia, and advertising. Please submit to Tracy Bowes at dyslexia@pbida.org or (610)527-1548.

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**IDA Disclaimer**

The International Dyslexia Association supports efforts to provide individuals with dyslexia appropriate instruction and to identify these individuals at an early age. The Association and the Pennsylvania Branch, however, do not endorse any specific program, speaker, product, or instructional material, noting that there are a number of such which present the critical components of instruction as defined by IDA.
Hello to all from the Editorial Board! Writing this letter in the midst of unexpected February warmth is a reminder of the much needed Spring that lies ahead and follows a whirlwind of a Fall and Winter. I am sure you feel the same. Perhaps this Spring issue of Focus will serve as an informative pause from the fast and furious news cycle!

Thank you to all who joined us for the 38th PBIDA Conference on Literacy and Learning Disabilities. We look forward to seeing those who could not attend next year! The new day and venue served us well, and we all enjoyed hearing the expert presentations on a variety of topics, honoring our Janet L Hoopes awardee, Dr. Hollis Scarborough, and networking and catching up with one another. We also learned so much from Dr. Hugh Catts’ keynote address, Reading Comprehension is Not a Single Ability. As we all know, we have a reading crisis in our schools with by some estimates an intolerable 65% of students nationwide not achieving grade level reading by the fourth grade (Read by 4th; http://libwww.freelibrary.org/readby4th). Dr. Catts, co-principal investigator of The Language and Reading Consortium (LARCC), presented findings from research specific to our understanding and teaching of reading comprehension. The ‘take home’ points are skillfully summarized by Dr. John Kruidenier in this issue of Focus. Please read on to learn about the multifaceted view of reading comprehension gleaned from the LAARC research and the implications it has for reading comprehension assessment and instruction. We are so grateful to Dr. Kruidenier for yet again authoring an immensely informative synopsis of our conference keynote address!

This issue of Focus includes several other must reads relevant to the cause of improving students’ reading skills. Victoria Innes shares about Reading Assist Institute Reading Corps and a pilot project providing one-on-one intervention to students in a local public school district with “astonishing” results. Avivia Coyne-Green, M.P.P. & Emily Prichard, M.A.T. of AIM Academy offer additional perspective about the importance of teachers and researchers working collaboratively so to inform each other’s work and translate findings into the classroom to more effectively educate students, and they share how this was done via a School-Based, Practitioner-Researcher Partnership model. PA Dyslexia Literacy Coalition (PA-DLC) Year in Review highlights an impressive 2016 with extraordinary and inspiring education, research, outreach, and advocacy happening across Pennsylvania. Updates on the powerful dyslexia simulations, the expansion of a local private school serving students with learning disabilities, and the family outreach of the Pittsburgh Branch are further examples of the work of so many!

There are also articles relevant to the lives of older students. In the third of our series, Life After High School for Students with LD, Jason Hoffman, who serves in many roles at Woodlynde School including Director of College Guidance, provides a detailed and valuable discussion of their approach to preparing students for life beyond Woodlynde. Hallie Ciarlone, Director of College Counseling at Delaware Valley Friends School, reflects upon the new and more streamlined College Board accommodations request process.

Read on and enjoy this Spring 2017 Focus!
ent mental representation of a text depends on learning content-area knowledge.

The LARRC research demonstrated that models in which comprehension is treated as a unitary concept or single skill are incomplete, or too simple. Reading comprehension consists of additional, unique factors, especially those related to language ability. Catts and his colleagues found that the reading process does, as previous models suggest, consist of word recognition skills (sight word knowledge, decoding ability, and phonological awareness) and the ability to integrate new knowledge with old (inference-making skills). However, reading comprehension also includes the ability to monitor how well we are understanding what we read (a metacomprehension skill) and other, separate language skills, including (a) vocabulary or morphology (knowledge of word parts and how they are put together); (b) how words are combined in sentences (grammar or syntax); and (c) how sentences are combined in longer discourse (narrative and expository texts). Working memory and attention are important to decoding and language skills, and so both of these also affect reading comprehension.

Above all, reading comprehension is an interactive process. Catts noted that interactive processes in reading, described by researchers such as Charles Perfetti and David Pearson, have guided, and been supported by, reading research for two or three decades. The reader’s skills and knowledge described above are deployed in unique ways depending on the type and complexity of the text being read, and both the reader and aspects of the text are affected by the reading activity or purpose for reading. An “easy” text can become difficult when the task associated with reading the text is complex, or the reader lacks the appropriate skills or background knowledge.

The multi-faceted view of reading comprehension resulting from the LARRC research has implications for reading assessment and instruction. According to Catts, teachers should rely less on assessments that treat reading comprehension as a single skill and more on those that look directly at separate aspects of reading comprehension: vocabulary, syntax, cohesive devices, discourse structures, inference making, and comprehension monitoring. This is supported by LARRC research that evaluated a typical standardized reading comprehension assessment, with isolated reading passages at different grade levels followed by multiple choice questions, and found that while it may differentiate between those children who do and do not have comprehension difficulties, it does not help teachers identify which components of reading comprehension students struggle with or excel in.

In addition to evaluating reading comprehension assessment, LARRCC project researchers also developed and tested a curriculum designed to teach the specific, unique aspects of reading comprehension identified in their descriptive studies. This rigorous experimental study (a randomized controlled trial) tested whether teaching language-based skills found to be significant factors in reading comprehension would actually improve students’ reading comprehension. Skills taught included comprehension monitoring, understanding narrative and expository text, inference making, knowledge of text structure, and vocabulary. These skills were not taught using isolated texts but, instead, in a content-rich environment with subject-oriented texts and reading activities. Students in the study using the language-based curriculum made very good progress on experimenter-designed tests of the specific skills taught. Progress was not significant, however, on standardized reading comprehension tests treating comprehension as a unitary skill.

In his keynote presentation, Hugh Catts demonstrated from a wide variety of evidence, including LARRC research, that reading comprehension instruction focuses too much on teaching comprehension strategies in isolation, detached from the everyday school texts where they are needed to help students learn course content. Comprehension instruction should focus more on the reading and language skills and strategies that research finds are key to the reading comprehension process. Instruction should occur in situations where students are learning from content-oriented material. Traditional standardized reading tests should not be given to measure an individual student’s growth in reading comprehension because they are unlikely to reliably pick up changes in the student’s understanding of specific comprehension skills taught. It is better to use measures that can assess instruction in specific reading comprehension skills, including word reading tests, tests of academic language, and tests of content knowledge, and to do this with reading tasks and texts that teachers and students might actually use when learning content in school.

Dr. John R. Kruidenier is a literacy and technology consultant and heads Kruidenier Education Consulting (KEC) in Horsham, Pennsylvania.
PA Dyslexia Literacy Coalition continues to grow and stay busy! We are happy to have added more members from different parts of Pennsylvania; Erie, Lehigh Valley, and many areas in and around the Northeastern, Central and Western parts of PA. We have parents, teachers, advocates, as well as teens and adults with dyslexia who have joined us to add their voice and support as we build a network of knowledge, strengths and passion working together to advocate change on behalf of the dyslexic community and all struggling readers. There are a lot of wonderful people doing great work throughout our state; pulling it all together and sharing what works is the goal of the Coalition. We are a team who wants to help each other succeed so that we can effect change across our state for all children.

We continue as part of the advisory group working on the implementation of the Dyslexia and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot Program, and we are happy to say that the first year has shown promising results with children and school districts thriving. That is not to say this first year was not without it’s challenges; regardless of all the ups and downs everyone involved is pretty happy and excited with the first year outcome. While each district implementation is a little different based on what works best for them and their students/teachers, the bottom line is that it is working. The children are improving and the teachers are excited about the progress of not only those students who are struggling, but the added benefit to all the other students. Parents are happy to finally see their children excited about school and their ability to learn like their peers. Daphne Uliana and Diane Reott (PADLC founders, bios below) had the privilege of spending a morning in one of the pilot schools as the assistant superintendent provided an overview of the program. It was truly amazing to see it in action! We are proud of all the hard work and dedication of the teachers, administrators, students and parents who are part of this pilot. We want to thank the PA Department of Education (PDE) on its implementation of the pilot. Onward and upward to year two! Below is a link that shows the excitement of one little boy who is finally learning how to read…

http://www.pattan.net/Videos/Browse/Single/?code_name=student_inspiration

Below are “year in review” highlights from our exciting 2016:

- January 27th, 2016, Monica McHale Small and Diane Reott co-wrote another article for the Notebook, an educational newspaper published in Philadelphia. The article, “Reading Before 4th is Critical and Educators can Make it Happen” was well received.

- In February 2016 we took part in the PDE Special Education conference in Hershey, PA. It was a great success. Reid Lyon was the keynote speaker. Reid and Diane worked with the teachers and administrators of our pilot school districts by answering questions and advising them on how important their work and the success of this pilot are to everyone. They joined us in a group discussion with the parent liaisons from each school district to guide them through an understanding of their role in supporting each other and our children as well as the teachers. It was a great conference and we were thrilled that the word dyslexia is being used in schools throughout PA, maybe not all but we are getting there. The 2017 conference will be hosted once again at the Hershey Lodge, March 8th to the 10th. A few of the speakers scheduled to be there are Maryanne Wolf, Judith Birsh, Virginia Berninger, Tim Shanahan and more. You can find more details about the conference on the PaTTAN website under Training, PDE Annual Conference. http://www.pattan.net/category/Training/PDE%20Annual%20Conference

- On March 31st, 2016, WESA Radio, Pittsburgh interviewed Daphne Uliana and Christine Seppi about the upcoming Pittsburgh PBIDA conference and the connection to the Pilot program. They discussed what dyslexia is and answered questions about the Pilot program. It was a great way to get the word out and bring together the eastern and western teams supporting all the work throughout PA.

- The PBIDA Pittsburgh conference was held on April 9th, 2016 with Nelson Lauver as the keynote speaker. He was an amazing presenter and the conference was a great success. The PA DLC members from different areas of PA attended and PA DLC helped provide scholarships so that those teachers and parents of the Pilot program living in the surrounding areas who were interested were able to attend. There were a number of interviews and news articles before and after the conference supporting it’s success.

- Our own Monica McHale Small and Barbara her colleague created a seminar this year that was presented to school psychologists and teachers throughout PA as part of a webinar series in March, April, and May 2016. On June 20th, Monica and Dr. Dawn Flanagan presented a full day videoconference throughout the Commonwealth on Assessment and Intervention for students referred for suspected learning disability and dyslexia. http://www.pattan.net/Videos/Browse/Single/?code_name=students_referred_for_suspected_sld_in_t

(Continued on page 8)
The love of learning grows inside and out.

For nearly 60 years, The Pilot School has been helping students with language-based learning differences develop the skills and confidence they need to succeed in a traditional academic environment.

In November 2016, we opened our doors to our new 50 acre school, thoughtfully designed to provide a calm-yet-stimulating educational environment both inside our building and throughout the woodlands surrounding it.

Come experience the Pilot difference...

in our campus and in our students’ lives.

Pilot School
208 Woodlawn Road
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www.pilotschool.org
• October 2016 was Dyslexia Awareness Month and once again we hosted our Dyslexia Awareness Day at the Capitol. Ashley Fox, ESPN commentator and NFL host, was our keynote speaker. Her speech was truly amazing and touched everyone there. She had the full attention of all those present, especially the legislators who were thrilled to have a sports writer and commentator talk about her long journey to figure out why her very bright child was not learning to read despite the best education and circumstances. She gave a voice to our support for better teacher training so that no one should go through her same experience. It was an honor to have Ashley at our event but more importantly we are thrilled to have her in our corner and call her a colleague and partner in support of our work. http://www.pattan.net/Videos/Browse/Single/?code_name=2016_dyslexia_awareness_day_a_parent_s

• At the October 2016 PBIDA conference, we were given the opportunity to host a session on the Pilot program. It was well attended and well received. Our colleagues from the PDE joined us to answer questions with more details which sparked attendees’ interest in staying connected and learning more in the next two years. We have more people interested in becoming involved in our work, and we have received calls from others states asking for our help and advice on how they might mirror our program in their states. It truly does take a village and we are happy to grow our village. This ongoing interest has allowed us to learn as much from others as they are learning from us.

• June through September 2016 were busy months. We had a number of meetings to discuss ways to team up with other organizations involved in improving literacy efforts, including the United Way and the Special Education Council of other Dioceses. They are interested in knowing more about dyslexia and early intervention and remediation. We were also able to get the attention of the PA Department of Transportation to request that they add an audio version of the drivers’ manual to their website for those who struggle to read. They are in the process of making that happen. We were given the opportunity to present at the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PESA) Conference to update them on the details of the Pilot program. Teachers and administrators are interested in knowing more which is progress!!

We are proud to continue our partnership with Read! By 4th in Philadelphia and our work on behalf of the Instructional Strategies Committee. The team is doing such great work! There have been a few events where RB4 provided an overview on dyslexia, what to look for and how to intervene to provide appropriate instruction for children. All was well received by the teachers and administrators who attended. The Special Education Department of the Philadelphia School District agreed to train some of their special education teachers in Orton Gillingham (OG). Ron Yoshimoto, an Orton Fellow from Hawaii, along with Elenn Steinberg from Colorado Dyslexia Coalition provided a week long initial overview training. Ron will continue to oversee the practicum hours of these teachers. We are all thrilled at how well the partnership of all those involved in the RB4 committee has been working.

Diane Reott is a founding member of the Pennsylvania Dyslexia Literacy Coalition (PA DLC) and the parent of a son with dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia. Diane’s journey into the field of reading began in 2001 when her first grader couldn’t learn his letters was diagnosed with dyslexia. During the next 15 years Diane attended conferences and speaker series, while working with experts like Reid Lyon, Judith Birch and Ken Pugh, to understand their years and years of proven research and successful outcomes on how struggling readers and children with dyslexia learn. Diane has been asked to speak about dyslexia as both a parent and an advocate to parents and teachers at conferences across the country; and she was recognized for her hard work on behalf of dyslexic children in the March 2015 issue of Parents Magazine. She is an active board member of the Pennsylvania Branch of the International Dyslexic Association, Literate Nation, the Coalition for Reading Excellence and she is involved, as part of the Instructional Strategies committee, of the Read By 4 Annie E. Casey grade level reading campaign in Philadelphia. Diane was involved as one of the architect and drivers of the passage of PA House Bill 198, now known as Act 69 of 2014. The Dyslexia and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot program began in September 2015 in eight school districts across the Commonwealth. Diane serves on the Advisory group working with the PA Department of Education on all aspects of the implementation of this 3 year pilot.

Daphne Uliana is a co-founding member of the Pennsylvania Dyslexia Literacy Coalition. She was instrumental in the drafting and passage of Act 69, 2014. The Dyslexia Screening and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot program and now serves on the Department of Education advisory council for the pilot. She is a Board Member of the Pennsylvania Branch of the International Dyslexia Association and serves on the Board of the Gow School in South Wales, NY. Daphne spent 20 years working for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and as a campaign consultant. She is a mother of three children with dyslexia and is dyslexic herself.
Centreville Layton School offers a rigorous educational experience for students who learn differently. Our program identifies academic and social needs of individuals and provides a curriculum that focuses on problem solving and critical thinking. Through intervention and strengthening learning strategies, the school empowers each student to reach his or her potential.
PBIDA had a significant outreach in the Lancaster/Harrisburg area in November 2016. Twelve new facilitators were trained at the Janus School on November 14. Those facilitators then assisted with a dyslexia simulation that evening at Janus for 34 people from the community, and a second program at the Capital Area Intermediate Unit (C.A.I.U.) the following day for 71 educators.

Experience Dyslexia® was the first part of the full day in-service program at C.A.I.U. which included a very stimulating panel discussion. In the second half of the day, Monica McHale-Small, Ph.D. spoke on “Dyslexia and Other Reading Disorders in the Classroom”. Dr. McHale-Small is the superintendent of Saucon Valley School District, a Board Member of I.D.A. and a part of the advisory council for Pennsylvania’s Dyslexia Screening and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot. As a reading specialist noted, “Dr. McHale-Small was a very knowledgeable presenter.”

The Fall 2016 also included PBIDA’s 6th simulation program for Bryn Mawr College students and a robust community outreach at the Hillside School near Bethlehem, PA.

The statistics pale in comparison to the impact made on educators, students and families. Participants call the simulation experience “relevant, engaging and eye-opening”, as they gain empathy and understanding. A special education teacher said “changes in my perceptions of students/individuals with dyslexia include understanding the embarrassment/humiliation they may experience when asked to read aloud in class, the cognitive fatigue participating in an entire school day, and frustration of being unable to do something that appears so easy for others to do.” A reading specialist commented “I didn't realize that dyslexia had a hearing/listening component. I will also be looking for the warning signs in kindergarten and early first grade. Some of these signs I thought were just a result of ‘that skill has not been taught yet.’” A parent shared, “I came home and gave my son a big hug. For 6 ten minute sessions I felt frustration and embarrassment. 60 minutes for me, a lifetime for him.” Lives are being changed as evidenced by these and so many other survey responses.

PBIDA was able to reach a record 437 people with Experience Dyslexia®, A Simulation in 2016 with 8 simulation programs. Since 2010, 2,066 people have attended 47 simulations in the Philadelphia region.

To schedule the dyslexia simulation for your organization, contact Betsy Boston at betsy@pbida.org or 610/527-1548.
Since 1970, Benchmark School has been providing a comprehensive academic program tailored to the way each student learns best.

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Updates from the Pittsburgh Regional Group:
Working on Outreach to Families

The Pittsburgh Regional Group has been focusing our efforts on outreach to families of students with dyslexia. We now have three parent groups in the area: South Hills, which has been active for a couple of years; an East End of Pittsburgh Group, which started this year; and a new group in the North Hills. We see the involvement and training of parents as key to helping students get the services they need and deserve.

On November 5, 2016, we presented the Dyslexia Simulation at Provident Charter School to members of all three parent groups and to other interested teachers and families—50 people attended. As always, the simulation brought tears to some people as they understood the emotional toll that a student feels when confronted with tasks that feel impossible. We were thrilled to deliver the simulation at Pennsylvania’s new public school for students with dyslexia in its first semester of operation.

The simulation was followed up on November 19, 2016 by a free training for parents and families on Evaluation and Re-Evaluation Reports presented by The PEAL Center (Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership Center). The training guides families in understanding how to use the forms and to see themselves as active participants in Individual Education Plan (IEP) process. Approximately 20 people attended.

If you are in the Western part of Pennsylvania and interested in joining or forming a parent group, please email pittsburgh.dyslexia@pbida.org. We will work with you to get a group going.

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Multisensory Math:
Strategies for Helping All Students Master Essential Concepts

Presented by Marilyn Zecher, MA, CALL

1-day Workshop

This workshop will offer hands-on, evidence-based strategies for meeting the needs of all students in critical skill areas of math. Participants will leave with ideas for teaching a whole class, a small group, or an individual learner. The workshop is suitable for those who work with all traditional learners, students with learning disabilities, at risk populations and ELLs.

For Registration Information, check PBIDA.org in March

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Save the Date!
Saturday, May 13, 2017
Pittsburgh Region Workshop

Multisensory Math:
Strategies for Helping All Students Master Essential Concepts

Presented by Marilyn Zecher, MA, CALL

1-day Workshop

This workshop will offer hands-on, evidence-based strategies for meeting the needs of all students in critical skill areas of math. Participants will leave with ideas for teaching a whole class, a small group, or an individual learner. The workshop is suitable for those who work with all traditional learners, students with learning disabilities, at risk populations and ELLs.

For Registration Information, check PBIDA.org in March
Learn More.

Children with dyslexia flourish in a learning environment where their success is the driver of every decision. At Provident Charter School, our specialized, multi-sensory curriculum allows our teachers to ensure academic success for all students. Through diagnostic and prescriptive teaching, we are able to capitalize on each student’s strengths while we address individual areas of need.

As a result, students at Provident Charter School thrive academically, personally and socially.

Learn more today about how Provident Charter School can help change your child’s life.

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Enrolling 3rd-5th Grade • 2017-18 School Year

Designed for students with dyslexia and language-based learning differences.

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Delaware Valley Friends Expands to Lower School Grades

Delaware Valley Friends School, a Quaker day school serving students living with learning disabilities and a longtime member of PBIDA, will add a lower school program in September 2017 at the time of its thirtieth anniversary.

Kirk Smothers, the DVFS Head of School, and Curt Grogan, the Clerk of the Board of Trustees, made the exciting announcement on December 6, 2016. With the addition of third and fourth grades, DVFS becomes the only Friends school in Pennsylvania for students who learn differently from elementary through high school.

“I have seen firsthand the incredible impact our program has on students and families in the middle and upper school,” said Jason Seggern, middle school director, who will also oversee the new lower school division. “I am thrilled that we will be able to share our educational expertise with a new set of students and families in the lower school.”

There has never been a more important time to bring a DVFS education to students. According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities, approximately 1 in 20 school-aged children are identified as having a learning disability (dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia) or an associate deficit or disorder (ADHD, executive functioning deficit, auditory or visual processing deficits, or nonverbal learning disability). As many as 15% of their peers struggle with such conditions but go undiagnosed. Years of educational research has led to a consensus among experts that the earlier a student’s needs can be identified and addressed, the better off they will be in terms of their childhood development and in skill building for future academic success which continues into adult life.

“We believe that educating students who learn differently in an environment guided by Quaker principles and practice has a positive effect on their sense of self-esteem,” adds Smothers. “Our students, who are often judged and misunderstood because of their academic difficulties in mainstream schools, are embraced as people of infinite inherent worth and able to meet their full potential because of the environment and programs at Delaware Valley Friends School.”

DVFS is an independent, college-preparatory, day school. On average, 98% of their more than six hundred graduates were enrolled in a university or career-directed, post-secondary program at the time of their graduation. It currently serves 173 students in fifth through twelfth grades.

DVFS is the only school in Pennsylvania that is accredited by both the International Dyslexia Association and the International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council for the advanced instruction and teacher training in an Orton-Gillingham based reading, writing, and study skills curriculum. It is one of three schools in Pennsylvania to achieve recognition as an Apple Distinguished School for the integration of technology throughout the curriculum.

Recently, the DVFS faculty has done extensive work with Sarah Ward and Sam Goldstein, experts in the field of executive functioning remediation, to assist students with these challenges.

Founded by PBIDA’s Janet L. Hoopes honoree Irene McHenry in 1987, DVFS has enjoyed a long-standing relationship with PBIDA. DVFS administrators, faculty, and parents have proudly served as officers of the PBIDA Board, as Directors, and Conference, Program Committee, and Website Committee Chairs. The school served as the host for six of the annual PBIDA conferences.

For more information about Delaware Valley Friends School, including their new lower school program, please visit www.dvfs.org.
Delaware Valley Friends School

WELCOMES

3rd & 4th Grades

TO OUR LOWER SCHOOL PROGRAM

There has never been a more important time to bring a DVFS education to students.

1 in 20 school-aged children are identified with a learning disability (dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia) or an associate deficit or disorder (ADHD, executive functioning deficit, auditory or visual processing deficits, or non-verbal learning disability). (NCLD)

With the creation of a lower school program, DVFS becomes the only Friends school in the Philadelphia area dedicated solely to the education of students who learn differently from elementary through high school.

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Wednesday, April 19 at 9 am (All grades)
Wednesday, May 3 at 6 pm (All grades)

Register with Kathy Barry in Admissions at 610.640.4150, ext 2120 or kathy.barry@dvfs.org

Learn more at dvfs.org/lowerschool

GRADES 3-12

Mary Ellen Trent, Director of Admissions  |  maryellen.trent@dvfs.org  |  610.640.4150  |  19 E. Central Ave., Paoli, PA
Gone are the days when students with diagnosed learning differences were encouraged in the direction of trade schools, the military, or the work force. Students with learning differences across the nation realize the value of continuing their education beyond high school and have increased in numbers on college campuses over the course of the last 25 years. However, the path to post-secondary education for a student with a learning difference is a bit different than that of your typical teenager. Woodlynde School is a specialized college preparatory school for grades K-12 that focuses on educating students with a wide variety of learning differences, ranging from dyslexia to ADHD to executive function disorder. Located on the Main Line, Woodlynde School has worked with a wide variety of students over the course of the last 40 years to assist them with their goals of post-secondary education. And over the course of the last 40 years, Woodlynde School has adapted with the evolving landscape of higher education and continually prioritized college preparedness throughout its instruction and curriculum.

College preparedness is a term our nation likes to throw out liberally to describe various methods, programs, and activities that help prepare our high school students for the next phase of their educational careers. Woodlynde School has taken the term college preparedness and developed an extensive path and curriculum for our students to follow to help ensure they understand various aspects of college life well before they are thrust onto a campus. The Process, to borrow a phrase from our local Philadelphia 76ers, is an overarching curriculum and lecture series that helps our students, parents, and the entire community prepare for the world of academics that lies beyond Woodlynde. And it starts with the most fundamental aspect of any person’s education: self-realization.

Every student from grades 6-12 at Woodlynde School is enrolled in a Metacognition class. This course is crucial to a student’s self-perception and understanding of their individual learning style and incorporates a wide variety of activities, lessons plans, lectures, and projects that help students perceive their own learning differences and more importantly, develop strategies and methods of coping with them. Over the years, the Metacognition curriculum has adapted with the changing educational landscape of our country, but more importantly, it has always sought to instill self-advocacy and work ethic in our students. The path to success is not smooth for anyone, but as a student with a learning difference, it can present its fair share of bumps in the road along the way. As students engage in the class activities over the years in Metacognition class, a consistent topic of focus is education beyond Woodlynde School. Starting in the Spring of 8th grade, middle school students are introduced to the topic of college guidance during the Metacognition 8 class. Taught directly by the Director of College Guidance, students are afforded an opportunity to understand the world of college and post-secondary education in a structured, supportive environment. The activities and topics begin at the most basic level, from discussing the concept of career and educational goals to the role of standardized testing to the college search process. The first step in the entire process for the 8th grade student is simply realizing college can be an option. For students with learning differences who have encountered various educational obstacles throughout their academic careers so far, college often seems like an unattainable, far-off dream. However, illuminating the nervous, anxious 8th grader to the wide array of educational possibilities beyond high school and instilling the self-confidence to reach those goals is necessary to move the student through high school. Although early, the first steps in 8th grade build the foundation of drive and work ethic that will hopefully carry all the way through the student’s high school years.

As students progress through the Upper School, the college guidance process and preparation is handled through a combination of individual student/parent meetings, Metacognition class activities, and specific college guidance lessons in Metacognition class. Students are strategically introduced to topics in 9th and 10th grade that pertain to the college guidance process, including learning the role of grades and GPA in the admissions process, selecting extracurricular activities to build the college resume, understanding standardized testing, and perhaps most importantly, the need for updated psychoeducational testing. Although typically a high school student is aware of his/her learning differences, having the student understand the nature of his or her own specific LD is crucial to future success in college. Typical to most high schools, academic progress and success is the primary goal of the early high school years. Although the natural small

(Continued on page 20)
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Dear Colleague,

Thank you for your nomination for the recipient for the 2017 Janet L. Hoopes Award. As you are aware, the Hoopes Award was established in 2003 in memory of Dr. Janet L. Hoopes, a dedicated Board member and Professor Emeritus at Bryn Mawr College. This prestigious award is presented at the Annual Fall Conference to an individual or individuals in Pennsylvania or Delaware who have made a significant contribution to the education of those with learning differences.

Listed below is the brief nomination form; we appreciate your completing it and returning it to the PBIDA office (dyslexia@pbida.org).

Your Name and Contact Information:

Name of Nominee:

Nominee’s current position:

Brief statement as to why you believe the nominee is deserving of the reward:

Additional Information (e.g., pertinent, personal, social)

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Charna Axelrod (610-642-4873 ext. 14 or charnaaxelrod@gmail.com). Thank you again for taking the time to complete this form. We will contact you to inform you of our progress.

The Janet L. Hoopes Awards Committee
environment is conducive to growth and progress for students with learning differences, the focus on metacognitive strategies and academic progress in the early years of high school will eventually lay the foundation of self-advocacy and self-understanding that is necessary for college success.

Communication among the parent, student, and counselor is the crux of the college guidance program. One of the most integral aspects of that communication is the parent presentations that occur every year for each grade. Each presentation is specific to the current grade level, and the presentation topics vary according to age and grade level. Presentations are interactive and parents are encouraged to ask questions pertaining to their individual student. A wide variety of materials and articles are also distributed at these presentations in order to fully immerse the parent and family in the college guidance process. As students advance through the Upper School and parents attend presentations and maintain communication with the college guidance counselor, both students and parents are able to conceptualize the logical progression through the middle school and high school years and understand the college selection process.

Although the 11th grade parent presentation in January of the junior year is considered the official start of the in-depth college guidance process, the parent presentations in the previous years are all designed and implemented in order to familiarize the parent with the academic requirements, psycho-social development, and independence needed to begin the college selection and visit process. The route to success for students with learning differences is rarely a straight line, but with the on-going communication and consistent feedback and information about the process, students, parents, guardians, and families are able to understand their own individual paths in a variety of ways.

Once students reach the second semester of their Junior year, Metacognition class morphs into College Guidance 11 class, a course that meets once a week to help students with selecting individual colleges, preparing for standardized tests, writing a college resume, securing a letter of recommendation, and various other activities that introduce the student to the academic and social world of post-secondary learning. Throughout the spring months, all students and families in 11th grade schedule an individual meeting with the Director of College Guidance in order to start the college guidance and selection process off on the right foot. Students in 11th grade complete a variety of surveys and activities that allow the Director of College Guidance to understand the post-secondary goals, major preference, location and geographic preference, individual learning needs, and social interests. These surveys are invaluable tools because they provide the Director of College Guidance with the appropriate amount of insight needed to create a specific, individualized list of colleges and academic programs for the student to explore and visit throughout the spring and summer. The college visit process is one of the most vital aspects of choosing a college and students are highly encouraged to visit a variety of colleges, universities, and programs in order to understand and visualize the success that awaits them one day. In addition to the individual student/parent meetings, the students are enrolled in the junior year College Guidance 11 class. Taught by the Director of College Guidance, the course goals are multi-faceted, but all serve to help each individual student set, work towards, and reach their own individual goals. Post-secondary education can take various forms in the outside world, and although most students traditionally choose to attend a four-year college, various others through the past years have explored community college, trade school, gap years, post-graduate academic years, military service, etc. Regardless of a student’s post-secondary goals, the College Guidance 11 class is valuable to students in a variety of ways, specifically in that it is a sounding board for the students to get their questions answered in a supportive, nurturing environment. As students with learning differences tend to have uncertainties with self-esteem, self-advocacy, and confidence, the class, coupled with individualized meetings with the Director of College Guidance and the Learning Specialist for the 11th grade, allows for students to explore topics, colleges, and ideas that were perhaps once a far off dream to most students. Students who have spent the majority of their educational years toiling in understaffed resource rooms or at the mercy of unforgiving teachers may lack the general desire to continue education. The course seeks to provide students a variety of post-secondary educational options that provide realistic, attainable educational paths and give students the confidence and desire to continue with their education.

As students end their 11th grade year, the summer months are also an important time for students to engage in a variety of tasks. From continued college visits to updating psychoeducational testing, the summer between a student’s Junior and Senior year is a brief respite before the hype of the application process begins. Communication is still a critical factor in the summer, with students and parents often working with the Director of College Guidance to narrow down college choices, understand specific learning support programs at schools, and schedule updated psychoeducational testing in order to be prepared for the college accommodations process. Once the students return to school for their Senior year, they are immediately welcomed with a Mock Interview day. On the very first day of school, students engage in mock interview and admissions information sessions with local college admissions representatives from schools like Cabrini

(Created & Sustaining Self-Advocacy, continued from page 16)
The Gow School

Gow is a college preparatory boarding and day school, grades 7-12, for students with dyslexia and related language-based learning disabilities. Gow provides the right environment and the right tools for dyslexic students to rethink the learning process and reinvent themselves.

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What are the keys to a successful partnership between practitioners and researchers? The value of teachers and researchers working collaboratively to inform each other’s work and translate their findings into the classroom is a core component of research-based education. AIM Academy, a research-to-practice school for students with language-based learning differences, has established a mission that includes a commitment to providing teachers with access to the latest evidence-based information on how to foster student achievement. To support this mission, AIM has developed relationships with leading reading researchers who, during the 2015-2016 school year, worked collaboratively with AIM Academy educators, enabling them to design a sensitive and accessible study to carry out a school-based research project evaluating the effectiveness of current classroom practices. This article offers an educator’s perspective on the design and implementation of this research project studying the critical role of building background knowledge to support comprehension development in children with learning differences.

The AIM Literacy Framework provides the foundation for development of reading and writing proficiency. One of its critical components, AIM’s Framework for Comprehension Instruction, focuses on the acquisition and development of critical language processes and skills, including background knowledge. AIM also employs a unified approach to developing a deep knowledge base by allowing students to link concepts between content areas and teaching them the critical thinking skills necessary to identify and understand interdisciplinary connections. A cornerstone of this process at AIM is Interactive Humanities (IH). IH is a unique, arts-based methodology that encourages students to learn about a specific time period by fully immersing themselves in an interdisciplinary study of civics, geography, history, and literature. At AIM, 5th grade students take on the roles of great thinkers of the Italian Renaissance and join together as members of a Florentine artisans guild. This class provided the research team with a unique pool of student participants with deep, expert-level, domain-specific knowledge and a natural environment in which to explore literacy development and instruction.

The AIM Knowledge and Reading Comprehension Project, led by Dr. Donald L. Compton, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology and Education, Associate Director of the Florida Center for Reading Research and Dr. Amy Elleman, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Middle Tennessee State University, emerged as the direct result of the intersection of AIM’s mission, the AIM Literacy Framework, and the IH program. The project had two main objectives: to understand if students could transfer domain knowledge from IH to parallel topics in other domains; and if so, to identify the cognitive and language processes that allowed this transfer to occur. The project also allowed AIM the opportunity to use sensitive research methods to evaluate the influence of the IH methodology on building background knowledge. To achieve these objectives, AIM assembled a research team including university researchers, school administrators and AIM faculty.
University, Widener University, and Rosemont College. This activity sets tone for the upcoming fall months when college applications and selections become critical. Once again, students are enrolled in College Guidance class, where the primary focus in the fall is the completion of the Common Application and other supplementary applications, essays, writings, and portfolios. The course meets twice a week and allows individualized supports for each student in order to complete the applications in a timely manner. In general, most Woodlynde students complete their college applications, including supplementary essays and required portfolios, by November, which is well ahead of the national average. Students are continually introduced to a variety of topics pertaining to post-secondary education, including time management on a college campus, class selection, Greek life, clubs and activities, but perhaps most importantly, using testing accommodations and learning support on a college campus. As previously discussed, the path to success for students with learning differences on a college campus is a bit different than that of the traditional student; however, colleges and universities nation-wide have, and will continue to, realize the importance of solid learning support programs and resources on a college campus. From colleges like Landmark College, a college created and catered strictly towards students with learning differences, to West Virginia Wesleyan, a small, private liberal arts college with some of the most individualized support in the entire nation, our educational philosophy has evolved far and wide to encompass students of all different backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, and most importantly, learning abilities.

One final aspect of the college guidance process is the contacts at various colleges and universities across the nation. Although students are encouraged to visit schools and make contacts with both admissions professionals and academic support staff, visits from the Director of College Guidance throughout the year, specifically in the summer months, assist students when making these visits. Directly connecting an apprehensive, somewhat anxious junior to a seasoned, assured learning support specialist on a college campus can make a world of difference. Making various contacts with learning support professionals throughout the nation has proved invaluable in a number of ways, including starting an online dual enrollment partnership between Woodlynde School and Landmark College. Additionally, Woodlynde School offers two other dual enrollment classes with local universities for Seniors in the spring, granting them the opportunity to understand and engage in college level academics before their matriculation next fall. Overall, by immersing students with learning differences in the world of college before they actually begin their freshman year has proved an invaluable tool in helping students understand the academic rigor and organizational process involved with utilizing learning support on college campuses. These small details, connections, lessons, and activities all add up to a cumulative experience that ideally helps the student understand that despite what learning differences he or she may possess, educational success and achievement is possible with the right set of tools.

The Process. The Path. The Road to Success. Whatever moniker you would like to put on the comprehensive curriculum and support structure that Woodlynde School uses to help guide students to post-secondary success is not the point. The bottom line is simple though: honest, open communication and discussion throughout a student’s secondary career is vital to success in post-secondary education. Conceptual understanding of the academic world of college, coupled with the experiences and activities provided throughout high school, has helped transform many of our students from timid, apprehensive 9th graders to confident, prepared, and excited Seniors. At this point in our society, education and life-long learning are the key to cultural advancement. And now, I hope, it is evident that everyone in this world can learn – and we all just do it differently.

J eason Hoffman serves as the Director of College Guidance, Dual Enrollment, and the Summer College Bridge Program at The Woodlynde School. In addition to his BA in English and BS in Secondary Education English from Bloomsburg University, he is Wilson Certified. This is Jason’s fifth year teaching at Woodlynde, where he has found that his work has “changed my life for the better and given me a view of what true education looks like!”
A Counselor’s Reflection to the College Board’s Updated Accommodations Request Process Announcement

By Hallie Ciarlone, M.Ed., NCC

The College Board (CB) recently announced a more streamlined and updated request and review process for students seeking testing accommodations for their exams (PSAT, SAT, and AP exam). I was pleased to see an increased level of communication from College Board representatives after the 2015-2016 school year difficulties in which many counselors felt blindsided or ignored during unexpected major CB and SAT exam overhauls. In April 2016, I had the privilege to travel to New York City to meet directly with senior level CB administrators as part of a handpicked national group of counselors. This group of about a dozen counselors represented both public and independent schools from all corners of the country. While I was the only representative from a purely LD school, all counselors had LD populations at their schools and were keenly aware of the needs of this growing, yet underserved, population. My two main takeaways from this meeting were that the CB is actively trying to regain their market share by appealing to counselors who advise students and also that the LD population of test takers is growing, thereby necessitating more equitable and accessible testing policies. Since the meeting, our group has had several follow ups including directed calls in relation to LD specific policies to ensure the CB communication was moving in the right direction.

The most recent policy change outlines a streamlined SSD accommodations request process. As of January 1, 2017, counselors will no longer need to fill out the cumbersome multiple page online list of diagnoses and testing details. The CB is now instituting a policy that more closely aligns with school-allowed accommodations. For those schools that utilize IEP or 504 plans (i.e. mainly public schools), students’ CB accommodations will mimic those in the IEP/504 document. I am hopeful that this will help increase basic access to the SAT/PSAT exams for those public school students for whom updated psycho-educational evaluations are too expensive or not covered by their schools.

For independent schools who do not utilize IEP/504 plans, the CB has outlined the following process: “Most private school students with a current, formal school-based plan that meets College Board criteria will also have their current accommodations automatically approved for College Board exams. Under the new process, you’ll [counselors] need to answer only two questions when submitting most requests for students: Is the requested accommodation(s) in the student’s plan? Had the student used the accommodation(s) for school testing?” I am pleased by the CB’s response here and their sensitivity to how independent schools function within the LD accommodations process.

Since the College Board announcement, I have already been contacted by both colleagues and CB administrators asking great follow up questions about how DVFS documents school accommodations and how DVFS administers the SAT and ACT exams to students who need extra time or other accommodations that require school-based testing. Some colleagues at non-LD schools are concerned that their learning support documentation will need to be updated, but I look at this as a good opportunity for their schools to grow and recognize the variety of learning styles within the schools. While I still recognize major flaws in all standardized examinations for LD and non-LD students, this is at least a step in the right direction of acknowledgment of the impact and potential of the LD population.

Hallie Ciarlone, Director of College Counseling, Delaware Valley Friends School. Hallie joined the DVFS community in 2011 after spending five years in Baltimore, Maryland creating the College Counseling Department at The Shoshana S. Cardin School. She earned her NCC distinction and M.Ed. in School Counseling from Loyola University Maryland, where she published several studies on adolescent self-efficacy with Dr. Bradley Erford. Hallie holds a B.A. in sociology and public policy from Franklin & Marshall College. She credits her love of college admissions with her extensive work as a student intern and tour guide while at F&M. She is currently professionally involved with PACAC, NACAC, and ACCIS. At DVFS, Hallie has found her passion for counseling students who have diagnosed learning differences and helping their families make the successful post-secondary transition.
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Two members of this core team were 5th grade faculty Aviva Coyne-Green and Emily Pritchard. As Project Liaison, Aviva Coyne-Green facilitated project development and implementation, provided a bridge between the AIM Team and University Research Team, and provided expert knowledge on comprehension and vocabulary within 5th grade curriculum. Interactive Humanities Teacher Emily Pritchard provided access to and expert knowledge on the Interactive Humanities: Italian Renaissance curriculum, with a focus on enduring understandings, background knowledge building, and vocabulary instruction. Throughout the 6-month development phase of the study, team members took on a variety of tasks, including but not limited to:

- Referencing AIM ELA enduring understandings to explore and select topics for IH-specific passage (Gutenberg’s Printing Press), transfer passage (Twitter) and control passage (Eli Whitney and the Cotton Gin)
- Crafting a trio of passages focusing on vocabulary, figurative language and parallel ideas
- Designing parallel literal, inferential and transfer questions to assess student passage comprehension
- Running coh-metrix analyses to determine readability of passages with a focus on narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep cohesion
- Conducting pilot assessments of passage/question testing with 6th grade students

Upon completion of the development phase, the week long implementation phase included tasks such as:

- Managing communication and gathering consent forms from parents of AIM 5th grade students
- Administering baseline data testing battery and passage testing to all participants
- Assessing results of testing using a scoring rubric created in response to student answers

The result? Deep knowledge matters! Preliminary data, as presented by Dr. Compton at the 2016 AIM Research to Practice Symposium, and Dr. Elleman at the 2016 International Dyslexia Association Conference, suggests “in-depth learning of the Renaissance period allowed transfer between the printing press and Twitter passages above and beyond listening comprehension skill and analogic reasoning skill.” (Elleman, 2016)

In addition to this project development and implementation, engaging in reflection has been equally important to assess the study’s impact and attempt to identify key elements of this successful initial collaboration that can inform future research endeavors. One early factor was identifying research topics mutually beneficial for both researchers and practitioners, and ensuring all research goals directly supported the mission of each participating institution. As these goals were established, the team identified a project liaison with the knowledge and ability to effectively assess participants’ strengths, articulate clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the research team, and delegate tasks accordingly. Throughout the development phase, the core team was continually informed by their access to leading experts via AIM’s Research Advisory Board, as well as other community resources, including AIM’s Speech Language Pathologist and Psychology teams. Similarly, the team garnered support for the research study by periodically conveying project goals, logistics, and results to the AIM community, including administrators, staff, parents, and the wider research stakeholders. Dedicated time for practitioners to work on research study tasks within the school day, via AIM team meetings as well as weekly conference calls with the University Research Team and AIM’s Assistant Head of School Dr. Grace Ashton, also greatly contributed to the success of this partnership.

Practitioner Professional Learning Model

(Continued on page 27)
Although this collaboration represents AIM Academy’s first foray into translational research, the impacts, both small and large, are already observable. On a practitioner level, this project influenced educators’ personal teaching praxis, as well as the broader AIM curriculum, by providing key insights on the development of background knowledge and vocabulary. On a school level (AIM Academy and AIM Institute for Learning & Research), this project represented an active contribution to AIM’s Research-to-Practice mission and institutional culture. It strengthened existing university partnerships with Florida Center for Reading Research and Middle Tennessee State University and built a foundation for ongoing and future research initiatives, several of which are already in the development phase. On an institutional level, this project empowered educators to become leaders in the field of research who seek to diminish the researcher-practitioner gap. As an exemplar of translational research, the AIM Knowledge and Reading Comprehension Project embodies an ideal articulated by Nancy Hennessy, M.Ed., AIM’s Director of Academic and Professional Practices: “Practitioners informing the research community of their concerns, needs, and findings, coupled with researchers providing practitioners the knowledge and tools necessary to understand and make informed decisions about innovative and effective practices, allow for the development and implementation of important research needed to inform classroom practices.”

Aviva Coyne-Green, M.P.P. is a graduate of Vanderbilt University. She holds degrees in elementary and special education as well as a Master’s degree in public policy with a concentration in education policy. She is currently a teacher and Wilson Certified Instructor at AIM Academy where she has participated in the development of literacy curriculum in reading and writing. Aviva is a member of the AIM Leadership for the Future Team and most recently, was chosen as the Research Liaison for the AIM Knowledge and Research Project, a unique partnership between her school and researchers from Florida State University and Middle State Tennessee University.

Emily Pritchard, M.A.T. is a graduate of Ithaca College with a background in fine art, art history, and gender studies, as well as The University of the Arts, where she completed her M.A.T. in Teaching Visual Arts. She has taught Visual Arts and Interactive Humanities at AIM Academy since 2009, where she has also participated in Leadership for the Future, the AIM Knowledge and Research Project, and curriculum writing for AIM Institute. Emily currently leads a staff committee on Diversity & Inclusion, and has presented at local, state, and national conferences on the topics of equity, inclusion, and evidence-based instruction for students who learn differently.

Works Cited
Compton, Donald L. "From The Printing Press To Twitter: An Exploratory Study Examining The Role Of Knowledge Transfer In Comprehension For Students With Learning Disabilities”. 2016. Presentation.
Reading Assist Institute was celebrating 25 years of great success when I became executive director three years ago, with a dedicated and passionate staff and a trained volunteer base that worked in teams in schools throughout the area. But even as I started, the ground was already shifting beneath our feet.

The history of Reading Assist will be familiar to anyone who has worked in this field for more than a few years. Our founder, Ginger Biasotto, became trained in Orton-Gillingham methods in the late 70s after all other reading interventions had failed her son. This one worked. She was soon asked to help others, and then to train others, while developing the reading intervention program as the head of the Reading Assist Institute in Delaware.

Reading Assist grew into a program that coordinated hundreds of volunteers, but still served only a fraction of the students in Delaware who struggle to read. Fewer new volunteers were signing up every year. Funders were asking for detailed data on students and outcomes, data that our nonprofit organization outside of the school system had a hard time tracking. Even as schools were opening up to a conversation about dyslexia and reading disorders like they never had before, we were struggling with what the future of the organization looked like.

We embarked on strategic planning – and not just a little soul searching. We realized quickly that if our ultimate goal was to increase the rate of learning for the students who struggle the most, for whom other reading intervention programs had not been successful, we wouldn’t get there the way we were going. In order for students with reading challenges to make progress, the intervention needed to be more explicit, intensive, frequent and consistent. Students with learning differences, who are already far behind their classmates, do not have the luxury of time.

At the beginning of the 2015-16 school year, we introduced the RAI Reading Corps, an AmeriCorps program unlike other in the country. Members of the RAI Reading Corps begin their service with a month-long orientation where they learn our reading intervention program, receive training in how to manage classroom behavior and are introduced to the schools where they will serve. All students chosen for the Reading Corps program are Tier 3 students in first through third grade. Some may have dyslexia and other reading disorders, others are English Language Learners or special education students, and a few might fall into all three categories. Our Reading Corps members meet with their students inside the schools, during the school day, five times a week for 45 minutes a day.

We found very willing partners inside the Colonial School District, where many of their teachers, reading specialists and administrators had already taken Reading Assist training over the years. The school district agreed to share student data, draw students from their population of Tier 3 students, and track their progress with us over the course of years, even after they leave the program. We also found encouragement and enthusiasm from the leaders of AmeriCorps Delaware, who funded 12 AmeriCorps members that first year of the pilot program.

Our RAI Reading Corps members worked with 78 students in that first year. The results were astonishing, even for people who had worked with the program in the past:

• By mid-year, every second- and third-grade student in the program – including all ELLs and special education students – had reached benchmarks for phonemic segmentation. (Only 25% of the third graders, and none of the second graders, had started the year at that point.)

• Students at all grade levels demonstrated significant improvement in word recognition skills as measured by whole words read. Gains in oral reading fluency were seen across grade levels, significantly in second and third grade.

Teachers and principals reported markedly positive changes in classroom attitude and behavioral problems. (One family decided against an out-of-state move after a social worker told them they were unlikely to find similar one-to-one reading intervention programs elsewhere.)

Over the summer, Reading Assist Director of Tutoring Services Debbie DeGrosky and Director of Professional Development Kimberley Phillips worked on a significant update to our reading intervention program, tailoring it to the intense, one-to-one setting of our Reading Corps. Reading Corps tutors are taught to be diagnostic and prescriptive in their tutoring, something that cannot be accomplished with an off the shelf program. They meet with coaches regularly to talk about what’s working for individual students and what’s not. Tutoring sessions are divided into two parts:

(Continued on page 31)
Calendar of Events

MARCH

Benchmark School Admissions and Summer Camp Open House, March 2, 9:00-11:00am, Benchmark School. Contact LindaLattif@BenchmarkSchool.org

Delaware Valley Friends School Admissions Information Sessions, March 8, 10:00-11:45am; March 22, 9:00-11:00am, Contact Kathy Barry 610-640-4150 x 2120 or kathy.barry@dvfs.org.

AIM Research to Practice Symposium, March 13, 8:30am - 3:30pm, Free, AIM Academy. Contact Karen Keesey, kkeesey@aimpa.org.

Woodlynde School Open House, March 14, 8:45am, Woodlynde School. Register at www.woodlynde.org/openhouse

AIM Academy Open House, March 16, 9:00-11:00am. Contact Lindsey Boden, lboden@aimpa.org, 215-483-2461.

Delaware Valley Friends School Tour Tuesday, March 28, 9:30am, Contact Kathy Barry 610-640-4150 x 2120 or kathy.barry@dvfs.org.

APRIL

AIM Academy Open House, April 5, 9:00-11:00am. Contact Lindsey Boden, lboden@aimpa.org, 215-483-2461

Benchmark School Open House, April 6, 9:00-11:00am, Benchmark School. Contact LindaLattif@BenchmarkSchool.org

Raising Kids to Thrive, presented by Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg, April 6, 7:00 p.m., The Literacy Institute at Woodlynde School. Information at www.woodlynde.org.

Centreville Layton School Free Community Screening, April 8th, 9-12am. Contact Meghan Kivler, mkivler@centrevillelayton.org, 302-571-0230. For more info, visit http://centrevillelayton.org/screening.

Gow School Summer Camp Open House, April 8, 9:30-11:00am. For information: www.gow.org/gsspopenhouse

Wilson Just Words Training, April 10 & 11, 8am - 4pm, AIM Academy

Woodlynde School Open House, April 11, 8:45am, Woodlynde School. Register at www.woodlynde.org/openhouse

Delaware Valley Friends School Admissions Information Session, April 19, 9:00-11:00am, Contact Kathy Barry 610-640-4150 x 2120 or kathy.barry@dvfs.org.

MAY

Wilson Fundations Level 1 Training, May 2, 8:00am-4:00pm, AIM Academy. Contact Karen Keesey, kkeesey@aimpa.org.

Delaware Valley Friends School Admissions Information Session, May 3, 6:00pm, May 17, 9:00-11am. Contact Kathy Barry 610-640-4150 x 2120 or kathy.barry@dvfs.org.

AIM Academy Open House, May 4, 9:00-11:00am. Contact Lindsey Boden, lboden@aimpa.org, 215-483-2461

Woodlynde School Open House, May 9 at 8:45am, Woodlynde School. Register at www.woodlynde.org/openhouse

Benchmark Open House, May 11, 9:00-11:00am, Benchmark School. Contact LindaLattif@BenchmarkSchool.org

Access to the Experts Parent Evening, Jamie Martin will present, A Road Trip of Assistive Technology for LD Students, May 16, 6:30 - 8pm, AIM Academy. Contact Karen Keesey, kkeesey@aimpa.org.

Access to the Experts Speaker Series for Professionals, Jamie Martin will present, A Road Trip of Assistive Technology for LD Students, May 17, 9am - 3pm, AIM Academy. Contact Karen Keesey, kkeesey@aimpa.org.

Delaware Valley Friends School Tour Tuesday, May 23, 9:30am, Contact Kathy Barry 610-640-4150 x 2120 or kathy.barry@dvfs.org.

JUNE

Delaware Valley Friends School Admissions Information Session, June 14, 7:00pm Contact Kathy Barry 610-640-4150 x 2120 or kathy.barry@dvfs.org.

Delaware Valley Friends School Tour Tuesday, June 27, 9:30am, Contact Kathy Barry 610-640-4150 x 2120 or kathy.barry@dvfs.org.

Wilson 3 Day Overview, June 27 - 29, 8:00am–4:00pm, AIM Academy. Contact Karen Keesey, kkeesey@aimpa.org.
Creating a Community Where Each Child Blossoms

OUR MISSION: The Quaker School at Horsham uses research-based programs provided by compassionate professionals to enable each student with complex challenges to blossom and achieve meaningful personal, social and academic success.

OUR PHILOSOPHY is that The Quaker School at Horsham is a compassionate community that builds trusting relationships among students, parents, therapists, faculty and staff.

THE QUAKER SCHOOL at HORSHAM

OUR STUDENTS SAY...

“Before The Quaker School, I felt left out and jealous of other students in my class. Now, I can fit in for the first time in my life.”

We are a K-9 school for students with complex learning challenges. We work with students to create a learning plan that allows them to express who they truly are. Many of our students come to us frustrated with some aspect of their current school: maybe they aren’t able to keep up in the traditional classroom setting or perhaps making friends has been a challenge. Here at TQS, our students thrive as they discover the confidence to live and learn in a supportive environment.

- Caring community where students learn to love school
- Integrated social development program
- Research-based teaching interventions
- Integrated occupational and speech therapy
- Multi-sensory, experiential learning

FIND OUT IF TQS IS THE RIGHT FIT FOR YOUR FAMILY

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(Reading Assist, continued from page 28)

- A review of what’s been taught at both the sound and the word level, in reading and spelling
- A guided discovery lesson, introducing new concepts, new graphemes, and other specific skills the individual student needs to learn

This personalized, one-to-one engagement is now the cornerstone of the RAI Reading Corps program. It is also time consuming and, even with AmeriCorps support, expensive to maintain. But we have remained stalwart in our belief that this is what struggling readers at Tier 3 need to move forward, and with Colonial’s help in tracking outcomes, we believe we will show that early intervention will prove less expensive than later remediation, every time.

We are only in the second year of a planned three-year pilot, and we continue to test, analyze and refine the program. Where does this path lead? Perhaps toward a time when every school district in Delaware has its own Reading Corps team. Perhaps toward an educational system geared to identify struggling readers in kindergarten or even earlier. But more than anything, we want to convince our state’s school leaders that intensive, systematic, multisensory reading programs can exist side-by-side with conventional classroom instruction in a way that creates better long-term outcomes with fewer resources. That’s how we will reach every student in our state. That’s the future for Reading Assist.
Woodlynde School has been transforming the lives of students in grades K-12 who learn differently for over 40 years. We provide:

**A Caring and Transformative Environment**
Our expert teachers, counselors, and learning specialists are our students’ greatest champions who help them achieve their full potentials.

**A Rigorous Curriculum Blended with Innovative Support**
Through innovative and comprehensive learning support from teachers and dedicated learning specialists, our students understand their learning differences and develop a repertoire of strategies to help them master our rigorous college-prep curriculum.

**A Focus on Personal Growth**
By integrating social and emotional learning into all that we do, our students develop the relationship skills, work ethic, and responsible decision-making skills to navigate today’s increasingly interconnected world.

**A Foundation for Future Success**
One hundred percent of Woodlynde seniors are typically accepted to colleges and universities across the country. Our students leave with a toolbox of strategies that empower them to be independent, joyous learners and confident self-advocates for life.

**Learn More**
Attend an upcoming Open House: March 14 - April 11 - May 9 - July 11