Scaffolding the Close Reading Process: A Backward Design Approach

How do we scaffold instruction to guide our students to become close readers of increasingly complex and challenging text? This is an essential question that the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) revisits. This question prompts educators of students with language-based learning disabilities or dyslexia to examine practices beyond decoding, toward a goal of constructive, deep understanding of both narrative and informational text. The term **close reading** defines this process, the constructive, deep understanding of both narrative and informational text. While assistive technology allows students to access text that is above their current decoding level, the teacher remains the essential facilitator who leads the reading process so that students learn to notice what is important and learn to clarify what is confusing in text (Fisher, Frey, and Lapp; *Text Complexity: Raising Rigor in Reading*; 2012). Timothy Shanahan, Ph.D., Director of the UIC Center for Literacy at the University of Illinois at Chicago, advises teachers to “take the kids through the text in an orderly way so they walk away with meaning—not a bunch of unrelated facts. It may take one read or fifty reads.” (Shanahan; “Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Close Reading;” presentation at Wilson® Reading Trainers’ Meeting; Providence, R.I.; July 2013).

In this article, I present one of many ways we can facilitate the process of **close reading** with complex text, in order to prepare students to independently read and comprehend challenging texts. Using the CCSS model of a “staircase of complexity,” elementary level readers at Woodlynde learn to recognize story structure (characters, setting, problem/conflicts) and to understand how major events and characters’ traits impact problems and solutions. Teachers model these processes using increasingly complex passages and “think aloud” techniques, providing a window into what occurs in the mind as the teacher makes connections, visualizes or images, questions, predicts, infers, employs resources, or summarizes. Similarly with informational text, teachers guide students to access key prior domain knowledge so that students can connect from the known to the new.

After pulling the text apart in a process Barbara Wilson describes as *Comprehension S.O.S.*™, the teachers guide students to organize the information based on text structure (problem/solution; main idea/supporting examples; comparison; cause-effect; process; description). Rather than toss the students into the pool of complex text and wait for them to ‘sink or swim,’ teachers use an “I Do,” “We Do,” and “You Do” model, gradually turning over the processes to the students. Whether they are listening to enriched informational passages from Wilson Academy in Block Three of a Wilson® Reading lesson (guided comprehension), unlocking main ideas with a “chapter book” in a *Strategic Reader* lesson, or explaining why they placed their orange (imaging) token on a particular clue in a passage from Susan Hall’s *Blueprint for Intervention: Comprehension* program (95% Group, Inc.®), the students are all guided in the habits of **close reading** with teacher modeling and gradual transfer to student control.

**Using Understanding by Design to Foster Close Reading**

**Close reading** does not mean that students need to identify every metaphor or answer every question about a passage. We realized at Woodlynde that students who were adept at locating a specific clue or quote often needed a specialized... (Continued on page 16)
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Education funding is a complex issue. Education funds come from federal, state and local resources. Each state devises its own approach to designing a formula to allocate state funds to the many school districts throughout the state. An important part of each district’s allocation is the funding designated for special education, the resource that will provide the money for services for your struggling reader. Currently in Pennsylvania, state funding for special education is distributed based on an estimate that special education students make up 16% of the overall student population in each school district. Thus, each district received the same amount per Special Education student, regardless of the intensity of need, the category of the disability, or the level of poverty in a district.

In March, Senator Pat Browne (R-Lehigh, Northampton, Monroe) and Representative Bernie O’Neill (R-Bucks) introduced legislation to reform Pennsylvania’s special education funding formula. The legislation creates a Commission, whose charge is to develop a special education funding formula and identify factors that may be used to determine the distribution of changes in funding among school districts.

The legislative commission will use the following parameters to develop a new formula for distributing any increases in special education funding over the levels allocated in the 2010-11 school year:

- The formula must include the establishment of three cost categories for students receiving special education services, ranging from least intensive to most intensive.
- The commission must obtain a student count for each school district, averaged for the three most recent school years, for each cost category established.
- The commission will assign a weight to each category of disability.
- The commission must develop a fair system for distributing the increase among the school districts and calculate the amount of funding that each school will receive under the new formula.

The outcome will be new state special education funding allocated in a manner that recognizes the actual number of Special Education students in a school and the various levels of their need for services.

PBIDA applauds the efforts of Browne and O’Neill, and is hopeful that this is only the beginning of legislative reform that will lead to early identification and appropriate, timely intervention for all Pennsylvania’s struggling readers.

For more information on Education Funding in Pennsylvania, check out the links below:

http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/education_budget/8699/SAEBG/539259
http://goodschoolspa.org/issues/education-finance-accountability/accountability-formula/

Julia Sadtler
President, Pennsylvania Branch of the International Dyslexia Association
Letter from the Editors

In this issue we are pleased to have several articles which parents as well as educators will find useful. Several of the articles focus on some of the developmental, social and emotional issues related to learning disabilities and dyslexia. While the articles on bullying, retention and self-awareness are relevant to the lives of all children, children with learning differences may be more powerfully impacted by these factors. Further, because these issues are so emotionally charged, decisions and courses of action often are made based on emotions and anecdotal information rather than on solid research. We hope the information in these articles will help readers make informed decisions.

In the Parents’ Corner, Allison Enslein highlights important issues related to retention. This is particularly pertinent to children with learning disabilities as many are first identified as ‘immature’ and recommendations for retention are often offered as a way to give the child a “gift” of a year of growth. Research on the importance of early intervention and brain development gives strong evidence that other options may be more beneficial for the child. Retention has become a somewhat controversial policy issue recently, as many states (not including Pennsylvania) now allow (or require) school districts to retain students in third grade, if they do not hit reading proficiency targets.

Crag Stevens’ review of Emily Bazelon’s new book, Sticks and Stones: Defeating the Culture of Bullying and Rediscovering the Power of Character and Empathy, and Nancy West’s and Becky Scott’s Coaching Corner’s article on self-awareness both offer valuable information on developing essential skills in children. These skills will help children negotiate their worlds in a positive way that will support the growth of self-confidence and emotional well-being.

We also would like to direct educators to the articles by Nancy Scharff on teacher preparation and by Penny Moldofsky on the close reading process. As Nancy points out in her article, if all children are to learn to be competent readers, we need to prepare teachers to deliver evidence-based reading instruction in all of the components of the reading process. Further, students need to learn how to construct a deep understanding of what they read. Nancy and Penny give very specific strategies and suggestions to help us accomplish these goals.

We hope to see many of you at our 35th Annual Fall Conference, Uncovering the Mysteries of Dyslexia, on October 4, 2013, at Woodlynde School where you can learn from experts about recent research on dyslexia and on evidence based strategies. Also, for the first time, PBIDA is offering a Parent Track at the conference; we are very excited about this and encourage all parents to sign up!

Marlyn Vogel  
Co-Editor

Nanie Flaherty  
Co-Editor

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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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.
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IDA Knowledge and Practice Standards
Support
Highly Effective Teacher Preparation for General Education Teachers

If you ask Ben Speicher, Principal of KIPP Philadelphia Elementary Academy (KPEA), a highly effective training program for his classroom teachers is one that includes preparation in recognizing, assessing, diagnosing, intervening and monitoring reading challenges at all levels - so that every student at KPEA learns to read.

What educators are beginning to recognize, is that these skills are embodied in the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading developed in 2010.

Right now, there is only one IDA-recognized teacher preparation program in the Philadelphia area – Saint Joseph University’s (SJU) Teacher-Scholar Program, a graduate level program offered by the university’s Special Education Department [reviewed in http://pbida.org/FocusFall12.pdf]. The SJU program, which requires a year-long practicum experience (also known as a residency), has partnered to date with private schools. In the upcoming school year, SJU will partner with KPEA, its first public school partnership. Four SJU Teacher-Scholars will work in general education classrooms at KPEA during the 2013-14 school year.

Extending the SJU program to KPEA will prepare classroom teachers, not just reading specialists or special education teachers, to meet the challenge of teaching reading effectively to all students. As stated by the IDA, “informed and effective classroom instruction, especially in the early grades, can prevent or at least effectively address and limit the severity of reading and writing problems.”

What follows is a detailed description of the role the three key components play in this unique teacher training program: the IDA Standards, the SJU Teacher-Scholar program, and KPEA.

The IDA Standards

The IDA Standards provide the most thorough, research-supported documentation of what every teacher ought to know and be able to demonstrate, whether they teach dyslexic students, other types of struggling readers or the general student population. The IDA Standards provide a rigorous content framework for courses as well as proficiency requirements for practical application of the content. Teachers are trained in: 1) foundation concepts about oral and written language learning; 2) the structure of language; 3) dyslexia and other learning disorders; and 4) interpretation and administration of assessments for planning instruction. In addition, during the residency, teachers must demonstrate observable competency in all areas of structured language teaching – phonology, phonics and word study, fluency, vocabulary, text comprehension, and handwriting, spelling and written expression.

To date, the IDA has recognized only nine such university programs throughout the United States. KPEA is fortunate to have one of these programs at SJU, right here in its backyard.

The SJU Teacher-Scholar Program

SJU Teacher-Scholars, most of whom are certified in elementary education, earn Master’s degrees in Special Education upon completing the program. The Master’s degree includes both online coursework aligned with the IDA Standards, as well as a year-long practicum experience. As part of their practicum experience, SJU Teacher-Scholars participate in teaching research-based curricula for four to five hours each day for an entire school year. They are also mentored by KPEA and SJU faculty. The SJU professor overseeing the Teacher-Scholars at KPEA, Jaclyn Galbally, will regularly support the Teacher-Scholars, including weekly seminars related to the Teacher-Scholar’s experiences, two formal and two informal observations each semester, and regular communication with mentor teachers and school administration. Professor Galbally has years of classroom experience with students with learning differences, both at the Lab School of Washington, D.C. and as a founding teacher of the AIM Academy in Conshohocken. She is also a past Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia LEND fellow (Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities). Professor Galbally is also a certified trainer in Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS), Modules 1, 2 and 3.

(Continued on page 8)
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The Residency Site – KPEA

In November of 2012, SJU faculty began meeting with Ben Speicher and his team at KPEA to evaluate the school’s suitability as a residency site for Teacher-Scholars. Professors Cathleen Spinelli, who designed the Teacher-Scholar program, and Jaclyn Galbally were impressed by how seamlessly KPEA met the IDA criteria for a residency experience. KPEA has a clear, structured approach to providing intervention services; uses research-based curricula; and has a staffing structure that supports highly targeted instruction.

Clear, structured approach to providing intervention services. KPEA’s vision statement, embraced by all teachers in the school, states: “The overall goal of our intervention structure is to ensure that every student in our school is making academic and social progress regardless of their need level, cognitive ability, or behavioral challenges. [This approach] also allows us to use a response to intervention (RTI) approach when determining if a child should qualify for special education services.” All children are screened upon entry into Kindergarten, and all students K-3 are assessed periodically using STEP™ (Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress) assessments, which define the pathway and track the progress of pre-kindergarten through third grade students as they learn to read using research-based milestones.

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One can hardly read a newspaper without seeing details of a horrific case of bullying that resulted in tragedy. If you run a Google search for “bullying,” you will get more than 61 million hits. Bullying is a hot topic.

Is there a bullying crisis? Are we turning into a nation of bullies? Are kids just being kids . . . while becoming wimpier? What’s wrong with letting kids fight their own battles?

Bullying—what it looks like, what causes it, how to recognize it, and what to do about it—are the questions Emily Bazelon tackles in her new book: *Sticks and Stones: Defeating the Culture of Bullying and Rediscovering the Power of Character and Empathy* (Random House, 2013).

Bazelon’s book is extremely well-researched and well-written. It is based in part on Bazelon’s interviews with experts who are currently studying bullying. Accordingly, it aligns perfectly with the academic literature. Bazelon’s training as a journalist serves the book well; she avoids hyping in a time when hype sells. Her book encourages and models responses to concerns of bullying based on being thoughtful, deliberate, and not overreacting. Bazelon structures the book by describing three case studies. For each case, she describes the problem, the escalation by adults, and her proposed solution. The organization tool works well.

**Bazelon’s Investigative Reporting Led to the Book**

Although Bazelon was trained as a lawyer, she is first and foremost a journalist, best known for her work as a senior editor at Slate magazine. She is also the Truman Capote Fellow at Yale Law School and a contributing writer at *The New York Times Magazine*. Bazelon’s interest in the topic of bullying evolved from her research on cyber bullying and her investigative reporting into the death of 15-year-old Phoebe Prince. Prince committed suicide in 2010 after school fighting that continued in cyberspace. Six teenagers were charged in the incident. After Prince’s death, her home state of Massachusetts enacted strict anti-bullying laws. Bazelon’s journalistic investigation led her to conclude that the situation was far more complicated than the media had portrayed. Bazelon then decided to expand her investigation into the broader topic of bullying. She spent nearly three years researching the topic. She spoke with numerous psychologists and psychiatrists. She also interviewed many teens and children, some of whom gave her access to their cyberspace accounts so she could see the evidence first-hand.

**Bazelon’s View of the Bullying “Crisis”**

All of us have our own experiences with bullying, usually from childhood experiences at school or around the neighborhood. Even as adults we may have to deal with bullies, although usually in less physical ways. Yet there is not a universal definition of bullying.

Bazelon offers a working definition. She draws on the research of Dan Olweus, a Swedish psychologist who began studying aggression and victimization among boys. (Notably, when Olweus was studying the issue, there was no Swedish word for the concept of “bullying.” So he turned to the English language and found that the word first appeared 400 years ago.) Bazelon adopts Olweus’ criteria for bullying: verbal or physical aggression repeated over time in the context of a power differential (real or perceived) between the parties.

Bazelon then extends this definition to identify five different types of bullies. This is consistent with her view that the bullying issue is complicated and layered. She describes the “thug in training,” the “clueless imitator,” the “bully-victim,” the “popular bully,” and finally, the “Facebook thug.”

Bazelon is especially effective when she addresses the question of whether there is a current crisis with bullying. Not surprisingly, she declines to oversimplify with a yes/no answer. Instead, she shares what “is and what is not” in the world of bullying.

Particularly useful on this point is Bazelon’s recommendation that we distinguish between bullying and what she calls “drama.” This clarification should greatly help parents and schools in their conversations about and responses to incidents at homes and schools.

*(Continued on page 14)*
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students. Four things happen during intervention meetings: 1) collaborative problem solving conversations; 2) data analysis; 3) intervention planning (what to do); and 4) follow up on impact of interventions to date. Each grade has a designated person responsible for making sure all parts of the intervention structure happen successfully.

Research-based curricula. All K, 1 and 2 classrooms use *Wilson Fundations*©, a phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics and spelling program for the general education classroom. *Fundations* is based upon the *Wilson Reading System*© principles and serves as a prevention program to help reduce reading and spelling failure.

Staffing structure. KPEA supports small group, highly targeted instruction, with a lead and co-teacher in every classroom. Additionally, every grade has an inclusion homeroom where one teacher is a general education lead teacher and the other is a special education teacher. These two teachers work together to support the highest-need students in the grade level. In addition, the school has a full-time speech therapist, a full time social worker, and additional support staff.

**Benefits of the Partnership for SJU and KPEA**

For Saint Joseph’s, a Jesuit university, partnership with KIPP is an expression of its mission – to improve quality and to foster and promote equity in educational opportunity for all students. The KPEA partnership is now taking the work of SJU’s special education department squarely into public, general education classrooms, where strong reading instruction can literally save the lives of young students.

The partnership benefits KPEA as well. From a staffing perspective, KPEA can add another certified teacher, the Teacher-Scholar, at each grade level, K-3, in the coming year, thus providing an additional teacher for targeted, small group instruction. KPEA benefits from the influx of cutting-edge research through both the Teacher-Scholars themselves and Professor Galbally, who will be overseeing the residency experience. KPEA will also have a pipeline of highly trained teachers to support the expansion of KPEA and other KIPP schools in the coming years.

**Conclusion**

Why do we need elementary general education teachers with the intense training and experience in reading instruction that this partnership is offering? The NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) provides the answer: In 2011 (the most recent data available), 87% of Philadelphia 4th graders did not meet the standard for proficiency in reading. In fact, 57% of 4th graders were Below Basic. Most of these non-proficient students are ineligible for special education services and are dependent upon classroom instruction. Those who are dyslexic (and therefore eligible for special education services) are dependent upon the classroom teacher for identification and early intervention.

General education classroom teachers trained according to IDA Standards will be equipped to identify dyslexic and other struggling readers sooner and provide them with the instruction they require. The partnership between the IDA, SJU and KPEA is a first step. The hope is that more elementary schools will recognize the benefits of highly trained classroom teachers, that more schools of education will develop programs aligned with IDA Standards, and ultimately that more children will be supported in successfully learning to read.

*Nancy Scharff, Member, Pennsylvania Dyslexia Legislative Coalition; Member, Leadership Council KIPP Philadelphia Schools;*
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Upcoming Events
9-10:30am (unless noted otherwise)

Tuesday, October 1, 2013  Open House
Saturday, October 19, 2013  Speaker Series #1
*Autism Spectrum Disorder and Mental Health Disorders*
by James Coplan, M.D., Neurodevelopmental Pediatrician
Tuesday, November 19, 2013  Open House
Saturday, January 11, 2014  Speaker Series #2
504’s, IEP and Due Process by Judith Gran, Special Education Attorney
Tuesday, January 14, 2014  Open House
Tuesday, March 4, 2014  Open House
Saturday, March 8, 2014  Speaker Series #3
*Financial Strategies for the Special Needs Family* by Bruce Sham
Thursday, April 3, 2014, 6-7pm  Speaker Series #4
*Family Functioning in the Face of a Child’s Disability*
by Scott Browning, Ph.D
Tuesday, April 8, 2014  Open House
Tuesday, May 13th, 2014  Open House

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Bazelon discusses how bullies get to be bullies and what is known about why children bully each other. She talks about how parents can recognize if their child might be a bully and how adults can try to stop bullying.

As indicated by the book’s subtitle, empathy plays a major role in decreasing bullying. While some children seem to be naturally empathic while others seem oblivious, Bazelon shares research demonstrating that empathy can be fostered in nearly all children. Parallel with teaching children empathy is the need for institutions to model empathy in developing and enforcing regulations (school rules, new laws, and prosecution).

A final concern that Bazelon discusses is whether we should worry that kids can be bullied to death. Is there evidence that bullying leads to suicide? Is “bullycide” a real phenomenon? Bazelon cites statistics and case studies to again caution against jumping on the popular media bandwagon.

**Bazelon’s Suggestions for Parents and Friends**

Towards the end of her book, Bazelon addresses Frequently Asked Questions. Here she has advice for kids, parents, and educators. While cautioning that she is not a mental health professional, she offers concrete suggestions based on her research. By addressing three separate groups, she is staying true to her conclusions that bullying is complex and involves a wider range of people beyond the bully and the victim. In this section of the book, she discusses warning signs of both being a bully and being bullied.

Also very helpful to adults is Bazelon’s discussion of the correlation between brain development and peer approval and how this might impact the phenomenon of bullying. Throughout the book, Bazelon reminds the reader to be careful about the temptation to leap from correlation to causation—a continuing threat to open-minded discussion. Bazelon also discusses the role of bystanders. She provides realistic suggestions that children and adolescents can employ.

Bazelon’s case studies show that bullying cuts across class, gender, race, religion, and other characteristics. Parents and educators will certainly feel they are not alone in trying to address the problem of bullying. In Part II of the book, “Escalation,” Bazelon makes clear that for all the challenges children confront, the response of adults is critical to successful resolution. Throughout the book, she weaves a continuing theme of maintaining a perspective in order to balance when adults need to intervene (including how) and when to allow children to work through their own struggles.

Bazelon also includes a comprehensive set of resources for further learning, also addressed to the three different audiences.

**Bazelon’s Suggestions for Schools**

Bazelon visited numerous schools and learned about several programs designed to help schools decrease bullying. Based on her descriptions, schools are working hard to address bullying. There are some clear “Do’s and Don’ts.” University professors are partnering with schools to train administrators and teachers to implement programs that are proving effective.

As one might guess, the school environment is critical to the success of providing children a safe place to learn. In fact, more important than specific anti-bullying programs are the culture and norms a school establishes. Bazelon addresses the significant challenges to creating an effective milieu in schools, coupled with realistic strategies to achieve them.

**Bazelon’s View of the Legal System’s Response to Bullying**

Bazelon reviews laws and court cases that deal with bullying. Informed by her legal training, she is thorough and very knowledgeable in this area. Every time a bullying case hits the popular media, there is an outcry for the courts and politicians to take swift action. This has resulted in a complex network of legal action over the past several decades. Bazelon covers this area well.

**Bazelon’s Comments on Social Media**

One driving force behind the book was the explosion of the Internet and social media in the last decade. To that end, after six months of persistent journalistic efforts, Bazelon secured a visit to Facebook, which was concerned that her book would be spreading “techno panic.” She was admitted to part of the “inner sanctum” and thus can speak with some authority about what social media companies have in their power to influence in regard to bullying. She also shares what she learned about the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC) and its efforts to combat abuse through the Internet.

**Worth the Read**

The reader will finish this book with a solid foundation to understand the scope of “the bullying crisis” in light of recent history and current research. Most importantly, the reader will finish the book with a sense of hope (and perhaps determination) that children can negotiate their school years successfully, with the guidance of informed and thoughtful adults.

*Craig W. Stevens, Ph.D., Head Psychologist, Germantown Friends School*
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  Organizational/Executive Function Coaching
  Reading Support (Wilson Reading System, Comprehension)
  Math Support (Elementary through College)
  Writing Support

Individual and Family Psychotherapy
  Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
  Autism Spectrum Disorders
  Anxiety Problems
  Oppositional Defiant Behavior
  Depression
  Eating Disorders
  Toileting, Eating, Sleeping Issues

Speech/Language Services
  Assessment and Therapy

Special Education Consultation
  Reviewing IEPs/Chapter 15 Agreements
  Attending Resolution Meetings

Educational and Career Counseling

Group Programs
  Social Skills Groups
  Executive Function Groups
  Young Adult Social Strategy Group

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form of scaffolding to pull the ideas together when reading novels or delving into a unit of informational materials. Before beginning the novel or unit, we provide a “cohesion tool” based on Wiggins’ idea that overarching concepts can guide deeper understanding (Wiggins and McTighe; Understanding by Design; ASCD; Pearson: 2006). For example, before reading *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding, students considered the **big idea** that inside each person there is a conflicting tug of war between a drive for wildness/chaos/savagery and a drive for civilization/rules/structure. Students accessed the text using WYNN™ Software (Freedom Scientific) with built-in virtual notecards. During the first guided read, teachers modeled close reading, explaining vocabulary and figures of speech, using the text to build imagery, and pointing out clues from the setting to infer the author’s point of view. The focus of discussion and note-taking, however, was exclusively on clues that related to the **big idea**.

What we discovered is that students benefited from much more teacher guidance in recognizing likely clues to the theme, in paraphrasing these clues, and in deciding and verbalizing how the clues related to the theme. As students progressed through chapters, they were challenged to decide which virtual notecards to save, to delete, or to archive—stretching the students to prioritize and defend a limited number of examples that provided the best support. This focus on a single major understanding freed up “real estate” in working memory so that students’ brains weren’t cluttered with details that they would attempt to memorize but would soon forget. Teachers and students reread sections of chapters to clarify and support their choices of important examples, but the student “buy-in” to the process derived from their ability to gather what they needed from the “first” read. Following this process, the students had the tools and the confidence to write a well-documented essay or to produce a theme-based project without having to rely on memory or plod through a lengthy novel trying to locate examples discussed several days or weeks earlier.

This purposeful, teacher-scaffolded “first” reading involved some second and third reading of important sections of chapters while diminishing the “falling off the cliff” phenomenon students often describe after reading and discussing a book for weeks and then being directed to return to the novel to locate the best examples that support or refute the big idea. Consider how the following discussion comment differs from the typical response that would over-rely on memory and not refer to the text:

“When I read on page 64, 'He began to dance and his laughter became a bloodthirsty snarling. He capered toward Bill and the mask was a thing on its own, behind which Jack hid, liberated from shame and self-consciousness,' I thought this was a great example of Jack being pulled to the dark side because painting his face freed up his inner-savage. 'Liberated from shame' made me think that people who felt ashamed of themselves might be the ones at risk for going to the dark side because they are hiding their shame. I'm going to hold onto this note-card because it really fits the big idea. It makes me think of some of these kids today who take guns into schools because they were ashamed of themselves.”

Tenth grade student response after teacher guided close reading of chapter four of *Lord of the Flies.*

Students with dyslexia or language based learning differences can develop a deeper understanding of complex text if:

- We understand what makes texts complex and provide a staircase of text complexity that moves in steps rather than leaps.
- We train teachers to be facilitators of deeper understanding.
- We focus on text-based questioning.

(Continued on page 17)
We guarantee the time and the tools for adequate guided practice progressing from teacher modeling to independent application.

“In the past, our profession may have been a bit complacent, waiting for students to develop in their literacy skills. That time is over. [We] must ensure that students can think deeply, look for evidence, and justify their ideas.” (Fisher, Frey, Lapp; Text Complexity; page 133). One way to teach our students to read for deeper understanding is to provide them with the scaffolding to read purposefully as they employ significant ideas as a compass.

Some references and resources:


Penny Moldofsky, Director of the Literacy Institute at Woodlynde School

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**Philadelphia Residents Take Note!**

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**SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

**Sponsored by**

Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities

The Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities of Philadelphia works to ensure that the disability community has a voice in City Government and receives equity in City services. Other goals include the elimination of all types of barriers (attitudinal, architectural, communication and programmatic), combating prejudice, discrimination, and promoting disability awareness. The Commission believes all people have the right to equal access to opportunity.

The Scholarship Fund for Students with Disabilities was established by the Mayor's Commission to provide financial assistance to students who are pursuing post-secondary education or training. Students attending (or planning to attend) an undergraduate, graduate, technical, or vocational program will be considered for the scholarships.

**Eligibility Requirements**

1. Applicant must be a Philadelphia resident.
2. Applicant must have a high school diploma or equivalent degree.
3. Applicant must have a disability, as defined by the Rehab Act/ADA.
4. Applicant must be pursuing undergraduate, vocational, technical or graduate education.
5. Application must be accompanied by two letters of recommendation (one of which must be from school personnel) and most recent transcript.
6. Proof of application and/or acceptance from the post-secondary institution.

**The following criteria will also be used to select recipients:**

1. Completed application
2. Academic progress/achievement
3. Demonstrated commitment to disability awareness
4. Priority given to full-time students

For more information and to download an application go to www.phila.gov/aco/
Six Key Success Factors for Children with Learning Differences: Self-Awareness

In a 20-year longitudinal research study conducted by the Frostig Center in Pasadena, Calif., pioneers in the diagnosis and treatment of learning differences traced the lives of individuals with learning disabilities from childhood into adulthood to identify factors that lead to successful life outcomes. During the study, six key success factors, or attributes, emerged: Self-Awareness, Proactivity, Perseverance, Goal Setting, Presence and Use of Effective Support Systems, and Emotional Coping Strategies. (For an overview of the study, see http://pbida.org/FocusFall12.pdf) In this series of articles, each key success factor will be discussed along with ways for parents to help their children develop them.

How well do you understand your child’s learning differences? Have you had an opportunity to attend a debriefing for your child’s psycho-educational evaluation? Have you fully reviewed his or her Individual Education Plan (IEP)? If so, do you understand it all? How much does your child understand about his or her learning differences?

For children with learning differences, understanding and being fully aware of the way they learn is essential to their success now and in the future. The Frostig study found that successful adults with learning differences:

- Have a clear picture of their individual strengths and limitations.
- Understand and accept their learning differences, and how they affect their lives.
- Have the ability to compartmentalize their learning difficulties – to see them as only one aspect of themselves.
- Recognize and accept that they have talents along with limitations.
- Are able to find jobs that match their abilities.

A child’s self-awareness begins with the parents, who play a critical role in helping their children understand and accept their learning differences.

What can parents do to help? First, learn all you can. You need to have a clear and complete understanding of your child’s specific learning differences before you can help your child understand them. If your child’s psycho-educational evaluation and IEP haven’t been explained to your satisfaction, ask for a meeting with the appropriate teachers and special education administrator. Be sure you understand your child’s unique strengths and weaknesses, learning style and challenges. Ask for details and concrete examples so you understand how your child’s problems affect him or her both in and out of the classroom. Learning differences often affect much more than your child’s ability to read, write or do math problems. Don’t overlook how they may impact non-academic abilities such as organizational skills, memory, social skills, communication and other capabilities needed to function successfully in life.

Gather information about the educational system and classroom accommodations that might help your child, such as extra time for tests, the use of a peer note taker or tape recorder to capture class notes, and a quiet room with minimal distractions for testing, among many others.

Second, walk a mile in your child’s shoes. Unless you have a learning difference, it is impossible to imagine the frustration that your child faces in school every day. Classroom simulations allow parents to experience their children’s frustration firsthand. Look for workshops or seminars to attend with a simulation component such as the PBIDA Dyslexia Simulation. Visit web sites such as Misunderstood Minds (www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds) where you can try your hand at classroom assignments specially designed to show how difficult it is to function with learning disabilities. You may find another window into your child’s classroom experiences through DVDs such as the classic “How Difficult Can This Be?: The F.A.T. City Workshop” (F.A.T. stands for Frustration, Anxiety and Tension), produced by nationally renowned learning disabilities expert and author Richard Lavoie, M.A., M.Ed.

(Continued on page 22)
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The Pennsylvania Branch of the International Dyslexia Association (PBIDA) receives calls and emails from parents every month about topics of concern to them. One recurring theme revolves around the question of retention. The questions sound something like this one,

“The school has told me that my son/daughter is not achieving at grade level and that he/she would benefit from another year to grow and attain skills. Is this the right thing to do? Is retaining my child an effective way to ensure that he/she will “catch up” to grade level?”

The answer to that question is usually, “No.” The majority of research studies conducted over the past 40 years have found that retaining a child in order to remediate academic deficits is not only ineffective, but also tends to be emotionally damaging to the child. Research shows that any academic benefits that may be gained by repeating a grade diminish with time while the damage to a child’s self-esteem can haunt him/her into adulthood.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) reports that sixth grade students rated grade retention as the single most stressful life event, higher than the loss of a parent or going blind. Retained students are less likely to receive a high school diploma by age 20, receive poorer educational competence ratings, and are less likely to be enrolled in any post-secondary education program. Retained students receive lower educational and employment status ratings and are paid less per hour at age 20.

Retention, in almost every case, is not the answer. When a child repeats a grade, he will most likely be exposed to the same material he learned the year before, taught in the same way. Being exposed to the same material a second time does not mean the child will be any more successful with mastering it. According to the NASP, “For children experiencing academic, emotional, or behavioral difficulties, neither repeating the same instruction another year nor promoting the student to the next grade is an effective remedy.” When students don’t “get” a concept, they may need a different teaching technique or need to have the concept recast in a form more compatible with their learning style. In addition, they ALWAYS need to spend more time on learning that concept.

What does work?

- Diagnostic testing,
  - Diagnostic testing initially involves analyzing the sub-skill deficiencies of students who are struggling:
    - Sub-skills for reading include phonemic awareness, phonics, reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.
    - Sub-skills for math at the elementary level include addition, subtraction, and multiplication facts, one to one correspondence, counting, and sequencing.

- Proportional increases in instructional time:
  - A student can be three years behind his/her classmates at the end of kindergarten if the child has not learned pre-reading and literacy skills related to phonological/phonemic awareness and alphabet knowledge. Students who are three years behind at the end of kindergarten may require 160 to 225 minutes of direct reading instructional time each day during first, second, and third grades to catch up by third grade.

- Focused teaching to the deficient sub-skill:
  - Students learn more quickly with direct instruction aimed at remediating the skills with which they struggle.

- Frequent retesting to assure that learning has actually occurred. This is called “progress monitoring” at schools and involves pre-testing before remediation and re-testing to see how much progress has been made.
made after a remediation is put into place.

- The National Association of School Psychologists promotes “the use of interventions that are evidence-based and effective…” The NASP urges schools to ...implement systems that permit early identification of academic difficulties and that ensure individualized, evidence-based remediation plans with frequent progress monitoring for students who fall below grade level expectations...the retention intervention must offer more than a “repeat” of the previous year’s instruction.”

If your child is struggling in school and it is recommended that she be retained, ask that your child be evaluated by the school psychologist or, have your child evaluated by an independent psychologist, to find out if your child’s learning is being affected by a learning disability such as dyslexia. A psycho-educational evaluation will describe your child's strengths and weaknesses and provide you and his teachers with specific suggestions on what needs to be done to address his problems.

Once you find out what the prescribed remediation is, make sure it is done by a trained and certified instructor and that the method or program is delivered in accordance to the directions/instructions recommended by the author or publisher.

To summarize, “holding a child back,” or retaining a child, is not supported by research as an effective intervention. If a child is not learning as easily as his classmates, it usually means the child needs to be taught in a different way, by highly qualified, trained, and certified teachers who will implement the intervention correctly. Whether delivered individually or in small groups, each child’s progress should be monitored frequently to make sure the intervention is effective for that specific child.

Allison Enslein, Director, Center School
If you have learning differences yourself, you probably struggled in school, and you may still struggle to overcome challenges in the workplace and life in general. Be transparent with your child about the fact that you have learning differences. Be a positive role model by demonstrating personal acceptance of your own learning disabilities, explaining the way you learn to your child and discussing the strategies you’ve developed to work around your challenges.

Third, talk to your child about his or her specific learning differences. You may need to repeat an explanation multiple times before he or she fully understands it. You can expect a wide range of emotions during these discussions. Children often feel a sense of relief to finally understand why they struggle in school, and to know that help is available. At the same time, they may feel upset or angry because “my brain is different from everyone else’s.” Give your child time and space to react. When the time is right, reassure them that they can succeed with help from teachers, tutors, parents and other appropriate support people. Involve them directly in meetings with teachers to discuss their learning challenges, develop effective coping strategies to compensate, and set goals for improvement.

Parents should encourage frequent ongoing conversations about learning differences with their children, checking in with them regularly to see if any new concerns have emerged. Be aware of signs of frustration in your child. You may hear them say things like “I hate school,” “I’m stupid” or “I have no friends,” or they may say they don’t feel well so they can stay home from school. When you ask about school, they may get angry or refuse to talk. Tearing up homework is another telltale sign. It’s best for parents to acknowledge this frustration and invite an open discussion about it.

It is also essential to help children understand that they have strengths as well as weaknesses. A learning difference is only one aspect of who they are – they should not be defined by it. Help them explore their special talents and abilities beyond the classroom, such as music, sports, photography or other areas where they excel.

To fully develop self-awareness, children with learning differences also need to understand and respect their own personal values, feelings and opinions about the world at large. Parents should encourage their children to think about these and use them to develop their own definition of success, rather than being defined by someone else’s.

Periodically evaluate your child’s current level of self-awareness. Ask yourself: does my child:

- Understand his/her academic and non-academic strengths and weaknesses?
- Recognize his/her special talents and abilities – not just in school?
- Match activities to strengths?
- Understand and accept his/her specific learning differences?
- Compartmentalize, rather than be defined by learning differences?
- Uses strategies to work around learning differences?

Use activities to foster self-awareness. Help your child learn to recognize and accept talents along with limitations by rating themselves in various areas such as making new friends, sports, art, building things and helping others. Arrange for your child to talk to adults with learning differences about their experiences, both their struggles and triumphs. Tell your child about famous people who have succeeded in life with learning disabilities such as movie producer Steven Spielberg, NFL star Tim Tebow, the late Apple CEO Steve Jobs, actress Keira Knightly and singing star Cher.

Encourage your child to check out web sites such as Sparktop.org, a web site designed to help children learn more about learning disabilities and strategies for coping with them. Kids can also connect with e-mail pen pals and teen mentors on this site, and learn about famous people with learning differences.

Most importantly, role model a positive attitude about learning differences and your child’s ability to rise above them. You are the most powerful influence in your child’s life. Use that influence to help build your child’s self-awareness and confidence in his or her ability to succeed in school and in life.

Nancy West, Coach, CTACC, Principal at Nancy West Coaching, member of the International Coaching Federation. www.nancywestcoaching.com, 215-643-9207, westnf@aol.com

Becky Scott, Family Coach, CPCC, ACC, Principal at The Navigators Way and President Elect of the Philadelphia Chapter of the International Coaching Federation, www.thenavigatorsway.com, 610-783-5676. BScott@TheNavigatorsWay.com
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Experience Dyslexia

In the eastern region Betsy Boston continues to organize dyslexia simulations. The quotes below illustrate the powerful and moving impact these experiences have on participants:

“The best training I've been to in 15 years!”

“Physically, emotionally and intellectually experiencing what children go through day in and out increases the empathy for struggles they face each day.”

“The activities increased awareness to distractions and well-meaning words of encouragement. My attempt to assist students that face a greater challenge will be different. I will be rewording my attempts to motivate and paying better attention to learning environment.”

“Doing the simulations and listening to the presentation were a lot of fun. It was nice not to have someone talk at you.”

“The simulation gives you a greater understanding of the difficulties they may be experiencing, and you could apply this probably to a whole host of other students who have different academic and social challenges as well.”

Experience Dyslexia, A Simulation

These comments were from teachers and aides in the Lower Merion School District. Ninety people from the special education department of the elementary schools attended a PBIDA in-service with Experience Dyslexia, A Simulation in May. The program started with a power point program on dyslexia, followed with the simulation and concluded with a panel that included three dyslexic students. Response to the program was extremely positive. This was the fourth PBIDA dyslexia simulation program in 2013.

Other programs for the community were hosted by the Hillside School, AIM Academy, and Wilmington Montessori School. One parent commented: “The simulation exercises had my emotions running high - from feeling frustrated, exhausted and anxious as a "student" to concern, admiration and gratitude as a mom. It opened my eyes to my daughter's world. That is a precious gift which I will be forever grateful.”

To schedule this powerful, hands-on program for your organization or to volunteer with this outreach - contact Betsy Boston at dyslexia@pbida.org or 610/304-3896.

(Photo credits: Becca Boston)
THE JANUS SCHOOL

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December 5, 2013 9:00am
January 26, 2014 1:00pm
February 27, 2014 7:00pm
April 3, 2014 9:00am
May 1, 2014 7:00pm
July 3, 2014 9:00am
August 7, 2014 7:00pm

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Stay in the loop!
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Calendar of Events

**September**

**Lewis School Open House**, September 18th, 1:00pm. Contact Cathy Byers Reimer at cathy.byers@lewisschool.org.

**Delaware Valley Friends School Admissions “Walk In Wednesday,”** September 25, 9:30am, requires no RSVP.

**October**

**The Quaker School at Horsham Open House**, October 1, 9am –10:30am. Contact Mia Glenn at mglenn@quakerschool.org or 215-674-2875, X14.

**Benchmark School Admissions Open House**, October 3, 9:00am-11:00am. Contact Admissions@Benchmarkschool.org or Linda Lattif at 610-565-3741.

**Lewis School Open House**, October 5th and October 26th, 10:00am. Contact Cathy Byers Reimer at cathy.byers@lewisschool.org.

**Woodlynde School Open House**, October 8, 8:45am. Register online at www.woodlynde.org/openhouse.

**Delaware Valley Friends School Admissions Open House**, October 9, 9:00am -11am with Administrators, Parents and Students. Opportunity to see IMSLEC accredited instruction in classrooms. Please RSVP to Kathy Barry at kathy.barry@dvfs.org or (610) 640-4150 ext. 2160.

**Delaware Valley Friends School Admissions “Walk In Wednesday,”** October 23, 9:30am, requires no RSVP.

**November**

**Delaware Valley Friends School Admissions Open House**, November 3, 1:00pm—3:00pm with Administrators, Parents and Students. Opportunity to meet our IMSLEC accredited faculty. Please RSVP to Kathy Barry at kathy.barry@dvfs.org or (610) 640-4150 ext. 2160.

**Woodlynde School Open House**, November 12, 8:45am. Register online at www.woodlynde.org/openhouse.

**Communicating with your Child or Adolescent: Establishing Routines that Lead to Results, The Literacy Institute at Woodlynde School**, November 13, 7:00-9:00 p.m. Social-skills experts and therapists, Michael Fogel and Pnina Siegler, will present practical suggestions and examples of ways to communicate with children and teenagers to avoid pitfalls and frustration.

**Delaware Valley Friends School Admissions “Walk In Wednesday,”** November 13, 5:00pm, requires no RSVP

**Benchmark School Admissions Open House**, November 14th, 9:00am-11:00am. Contact Admissions@Benchmarkschool.org or Linda Lattif at 610-565-3741.

**Lewis School Open House**, November 16th, 10am. Contact Cathy Byers Reimer at cathy.byers@lewisschool.org.

**Reading ASSIST® Institute CORE (Creating Opportunities for Reading Excellence) Conference**, November 23, 8:00am –3:30pm, University of Delaware. Keynote speaker Dr. Maryanne Wolf. To register and for more information: www.readingassist.org.

**The Quaker School at Horsham Open House**, November 19, 9:00am–10:30am. Contact Mia Glenn at mglenn@quakerschool.org or 215-674-2875, X14.

**Delaware Valley Friends School Admissions “Walk In Wednesday,”** November 20, 9:30am, requires no RSVP.

**December**

**Delaware Valley Friends School Admissions “Walk In Wednesday,”** December 4, 9:30am, requires no RSVP

**Benchmark School Admission Open House**, December 5, 9:00am-11:00am. Contact Admissions@Benchmarkschool.org or Linda Lattif at 610-565-3741.

**Woodlynde School Open House**, December 10, 8:45am. Register online at www.woodlynde.org/openhouse

**Delaware Valley Friends School Admissions Open House**, December 11, 9:00am -11am with Administrators, Parents and Students. Opportunity to see IMSLEC accredited instruction in classrooms. Please RSVP to Kathy Barry at kathy.barry@dvfs.org or (610) 640-4150 ext. 2160.
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Steve Graham, Currey Ingram Professor of Special Education and Literacy, Vanderbilt University

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**New Parent Track**

for Parents of Students Who Learn Differently

9:00-10:45: Keynote Address: Dr. G. Reid Lyon: Closing the Gap Between What We Know About Dyslexia and What We Do in Our Schools and Classrooms

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<tr>
<th>Session</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fearless Leadership: When Learning Issues Are Present, How Do You Parent Effectively?</td>
<td>11:15-12:45 AM</td>
<td>Becky Scott, ACC, CPCC, Professional Certified Coach, The Navigators Way, A learning disability can wreak havoc on a family as well as the individual with learning issues. Parents often ask: •What does this diagnosis mean for my child’s future? •How do I handle the effect on siblings and spouse? •How do I teach advocacy, self-esteem, resilience and many other characteristics my child is in need of? Parental knowledge coupled with “family leadership” is critical for parents of a family experiencing learning disabilities. Through implementing Life Success Factors into daily family life, children have the best chance of reaching their full potential to become contributing, productive fulfilled adults who lead satisfying lives.</td>
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<td>Networking Lunch</td>
<td>1:45-3:15 PM</td>
<td>networking lunch with other parents and representatives from Decoding Dyslexia, PA, a grassroots movement driven by PA families who aim to raise dyslexia awareness, empower families to support their children and inform policymakers on best practices to identify, remediate and support students with dyslexia in PA public schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Education Law 101 and Beyond: The Basics and Research-Based Instruction.</td>
<td>1:45-3:15 PM</td>
<td>Franca Palumbo, Esquire, Special Education Attorney, Thalheimer &amp; Palumbo, P.C. Dennis McAndrews, Esquire, Managing Partner, McAndrews Law Office, P.C. Rebecca Sample, CALT, Director of Teacher Training, Stratford Friends School Penny Moldofsky, M.S., Director of the Literacy Institute, Woodlynde School This session focuses on how parents can obtain appropriate programming in school for their dyslexic child, the basics of special education law and a discussion of the components of effective reading instruction for children with language based learning disabilities.</td>
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Reduced fee of $50 for parent track attendees! Register at www.pbida.org. Please note that no CEUs will be provided at the conference for parent track attendees, but you will receive certificate of attendance.
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For decades, our audiobooks have assisted countless individuals with dyslexia to realize their educational and personal goals. Today, in addition to our 75,000+ audiobook library – we have developed a comprehensive suite of parent resources designed to guide you and your child through the dyslexia journey. To find out more, please visit LearningAlly.org.
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