It has been almost a decade since Responsiveness To Intervention (RTI) was introduced to educators during the reauthorization of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act, the federal law dealing with the provision of educational services to students with learning differences. At the time, RTI was a largely unproven and very broadly defined approach to identifying those in need of special education services, including those with a learning disability in reading, or dyslexia. Fortunately, this has changed, especially in the last several years.

Although RTI was introduced as a new way to identify those with a learning disability, it is actually a process that integrates assessment and instruction. RTI for reading is a process that typically consists of three levels of instruction. The first level is the regular education curriculum, where most students receive reading instruction. During Level 1 instruction, all students are screened for reading problems using one or more reading tests, usually in the first grade. Those identified as at risk for reading problems through Level 1 screening become eligible for Level 2 reading instruction. This usually includes small-group instruction using a validated reading program, one shown to work in rigorous experimental studies. Students in Level 2 are monitored continuously with data drawn from curriculum-based measures of reading skill. If they fail to make satisfactory progress, they are identified as having a learning disability in reading and can then receive more intense, Level 3 instruction with a highly trained reading specialist. This is a simplified description of a typical RTI model; other models are also used. For example, some models include more than three levels, and the quality or type of intensive reading instruction may vary across programs.

When RTI was added as an optional approach to identifying children with a learning disability in reading, there was a fair amount of research on some aspects of RTI, such as the use of direct and daily measurement of student products and curriculum-based measurement (CBM). There were not, however, any large scale, controlled studies of many other aspects of RTI, or of the efficacy of RTI generally. As RTI was implemented, there were some opportunities to compare the effects of RTI to other approaches, but these were serendipitous. For example, when RTI was offered to multiple schools in a district, some schools declined to participate and these schools could then be compared to each other. While helpful, these formative evaluations needed to be followed by controlled studies (in which schools are assigned at random, for example).

Doug Fuchs and his colleagues at Vanderbilt University recently summarized important, new RTI research in an issue of the journal *Exceptional Children*. This research, some of which was funded by the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Department of Education, uses randomized, controlled studies to answer key questions that have arisen as RTI use has spread. One issue is what these researchers call the RTI “wait to fail” model. In some RTI models, after students

(Continued on page 7)
Dear Readers,

Here we are in April, and we are one-third of the way through the year already! As the new President of PBIDA, I have had the good fortune to follow some very capable past presidents, most recently Jeannie Bowman and Nanie Flaherty, who have ensured that our organization continues to have a strong foundation and to build efforts to make PBIDA more effective in all its enterprises. Testament to their leadership is the number of activities and events that have begun over these years.

Our cadre of volunteers, led by Betsy Boston, has presented the very popular "Experience Dyslexia: A Simulation" at The Pilot School in Wilmington, and at Woodlynde in Strafford. At the end of April we will re-present the program at Woodlynde as an in-service for their teachers. The Pittsburgh Region/PBIDA has also presented the simulation in their area this spring. Betsy continues to offer sessions to train volunteers who help with the Simulation. Sometimes a Simulation presentation may draw well over 50 attendees, which requires many volunteers to ensure that all have a good experience.

I have just today come from a showing of the Raymond's film "Journey Into Dyslexia" which was co-sponsored by PBIDA and the Academy in Manayunk. Many adults in the audience spoke about their own experiences with dyslexia, or the struggles their child was currently having with learning to read. PBIDA has sponsored a number of screenings of this remarkable and very moving documentary, which originally premiered on HBO. Now available on demand on HBO.

At the week end, I'll attend the annual conference of the Pittsburgh Region/PBIDA. The Keynote speaker is Dr. Jan Hasbrouck who will bring current research and information on Reading Fluency and its place in reading instruction. The full-day program features other presentations and is covered further in this issue of Focus. The Pittsburgh Region has worked hard on this conference, and their efforts are readily apparent in the quality of the program and the speakers that are featured.

Then at the end of April our PBIDA Speaker Series will present a program on the basics of dyslexia, a program co-sponsored with Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. The presentation will provide an overview of the developmental reading process, how and where it can go wrong, red flags to look for, and what steps to take to get help. A case study of a child with dyslexia will highlight the issues and the process involved in getting appropriate services.

While that is going on, I will be attending the IDA Branch Council Spring Meeting, to be held in Baltimore, where the Branch Presidents and other representatives will learn more about the IDA Standards of Field Operations and Governance, which have been developed by National IDA over the past year to help strengthen the national association and the branches through many channels of organization and communication.

Following that meeting, a retreat for the entire PBIDA Board of Trustees is planned for June, where we will review the Standards and see how they will apply to PBIDA. We will have an opportunity to consider various initiatives to focus our organization's efforts, and we will take some time to envision a long-range plan.

If it sounds like a busy Spring, it surely is! That's what makes PBIDA such an exciting organization. There are so many active, involved people in the PBIDA organization who are passionate about finding ways to make literacy for all not just a goal, but a reality.

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

After reading the Letter from the President we know you must see that PBIDA is a vital organization with lots of energy. The conferences, simulations and educational meetings are essential components of our mission of expanding awareness of dyslexia in schools and in the community. Our Focus newsletter also has an important role to play in spreading knowledge about dyslexia and research based interventions to address learning needs. With that in mind, in this issue, in the 2011 PBIDA CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS: PRESENTATION SUMMARY, we have several more brief abstracts from our 33rd Annual Fall Conference, The Reading Brain: The Latest Research and Instructional Implications.

Next, our featured institutional member is Reading Assist, a dynamic volunteer reading tutoring program that trains reading tutors in Orton-Gillingham strategies in Delaware. These volunteers then work with students who have failed to learn to read. Just as important as their work in training tutors, Reading Assist also trains teachers in multiple components of the reading process so that classroom teachers can be more effective in teaching reading.

Tom Jennings continues to expand our knowledge base on technology. In his Resource Center column Tom provides information and resources on apps for the iPad. As Tom notes, there has been an explosion of technological devices and online programs for students with Learning Disabilities. As professionals, it can be overwhelming to keep up with all that is happening with technology. We thank Tom for helping us keep abreast of options and giving us some guidance so that we can facilitate the learning of those with learning disabilities.

In Research Notes: Summaries of Recent Research with Practical Implications, John Krudeneir shares intriguing research on Response to Intervention (RTI). As RTI matures, researchers are able to gather more research based evidence on what does and doesn’t work. With this knowledge educators can be more discriminating in how they use the process in order to implement appropriate research based strategies to the appropriate population, to address reading problems when the most progress can be made, and to use resources where most needed.

Read about the work of Kids Inspiring Kids, a volunteer parent organization in Delaware that supports school district services for children with disabilities. This program is going beyond just book learning to teaching students with disabilities how to assume control over their own lives so that they can successfully negotiate whatever path in life they choose.

Finally, the PBIDA Western region had a very successful conference in April; some highlights are summarized in this issue. One last note: we are adding a new feature in this issue: Member News. The purpose of this feature is to disseminate information that expands the knowledge of the PBIDA community. We look forward to receiving your contribu-

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.

**Advertising Rates:**  
Full Page $150  
Half Page $110  
Quarter Page $70  
Back Cover - Full Color $300

Please send payment to:  
PBIDA, 1062 Lancaster Avenue, Suite 15A  
Rosemont, PA 19010

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.
“Every time I accomplish something I think there is no way I would have gotten there without Benchmark.”
Kristie McCollom, Alumna

Reading is just the beginning of what children learn at Benchmark School.

“When people ask me what is the best school I have seen in action, my go-to school is Benchmark. It is incredible and without peer.”
Steve Graham, Currey Ingram Professor of Special Education and Literacy, Vanderbilt University

Students who attend Benchmark arrive with labels such as dyslexia, auditory processing difficulties, ADD, and ADHD. From this starting point, Benchmark develops a profile of each student’s strengths and challenges and uses this understanding as a basis for individualized instruction. Benchmark graduates are self-advocates who take charge of their own learning and meet with success in public and independent high schools, college, and beyond.

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financial aid available
In 1979, motivated by her 12-year-old son’s inability to read, Reading ASSIST® Institute Founder Virginia Biasotto developed an Orton Gillingham-based multisensory structured language program. Determined that other children would not suffer as her son had, Ginger taught the method to friends and neighbors, who offered themselves to local schools as literacy tutors. This “kitchen table” group went out into Wilmington, Delaware area schools and volunteered to teach other children for free. Their students began to be successful in school and Ginger began training more reading tutors to voluntarily work with children who had failed to learn to read with conventional classroom approaches. In 1989, Reading ASSIST® Institute was incorporated into a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

Twenty-three years later, RAI has dramatically expanded its unique Volunteer Tutor program, providing volunteers with over 40 hours of training and placing them in over 40 area schools yearly. Volunteers also receive additional support from RAI’s Mentors as well as ongoing continuing education. RAI’s volunteer force currently includes over 150 trained volunteers, many of whom have given over ten years of service to RAI and the children it serves. There is NO COST to volunteers, families or schools for this service, and it is safe to say that over the years RAI has successfully taught thousands of children throughout the region to read.

But RAI wants all children to become proficient readers and recognizes that the most efficient way to get that done is to train area teachers to infuse multisensory structured language instruction into their daily lessons. RAI’s Professional Development Program has served hundreds of teachers annually in Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland with its RAPS (Reading ASSIST for Primary Students) intervention course and its professional development modules. Additionally, as official DIBELS mentors and as an affiliate site for LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling), RAI’s instructors have traveled throughout the country to train teachers.

Last spring, RAI Director of Instruction Judie Caroleo initiated a “Train with the Experts” speaker series for educators. Presenters such as Susan Hall, Judi Dodson, Lucy Hart Paulson, Antonio Fierro, Susan Ebbers and Vicki Gibson have inspired area teachers and administrators. In its fourth series, “Train with the Experts” has attracted capacity audiences of area educators and confirms that good teachers want the tools and resources to make them more and more effective in the classroom.

In November, RAI will present its first regional meeting of experts, its CORE (Creating Opportunities for Reading Excellence) Conference. This one-day conference will allow area teachers of Pre-K to Grade 8 and ELL to interface with reading experts like Louisa Moats, Anita Archer (both keynote speakers), Maria Elena Arguelles, Judi Dodson, Susan Ebbers, Linda Farrell, Vicki Gibson, Susan Hall, Lucy Hart Paulson, Jan Hasbrouck, Nancy Hennessy and Joan Sedita.

So much has happened since Ginger and her tutors worked around that kitchen table. But as we grow, RAI remains as committed as ever to “unlocking the written word…one sound at a time.”
On April 14, 2012, approximately 170 people gathered at the Allegheny Intermediate Unit for the 2nd IDA conference in Pittsburgh, **Dyslexia Today 2012: A Conference for Professionals and Parents.**

Highlights of the day included:

- **Keynote address by Dr. Jan Hasbrouck, *Reading FAST or Reading WELL? Putting Fluency in Perspective,* which defined fluency and focused on the importance of helping students reach the appropriate level of fluency.

- The Christopher Gardner Award for Excellence in the Field of Dyslexia was presented to The Valley of Pittsburgh Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite Masons for the establishment and ongoing support of the Children’s Dyslexia Center – Pittsburgh.

- Attendees chose from 10 breakout sessions with sessions geared toward the specific interests of teachers and tutors, educational psychologists and social workers, parents, and high school students. All sessions received positive reviews from those in attendance.

- Sixteen exhibitors filled the exhibit hall displaying helpful products and providing valuable information to conference participants.

- Julia Sadtler, our PBIDA president, and George Vosburgh, a board member, traveled from Philadelphia to support the conference.

The Pittsburgh Region of PBIDA wishes to thank the following:

- The Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Non-Public Schools Program for co-sponsoring the conference and providing the venue for the conference.

- The Buhl Foundation for a grant that helped cover the cost of our keynote speaker.

- Our conference committee: Christina Bogler, Carrie Gardner, Jennifer Marsh, Maria Paluselli, Christine Seppi, and Kathleen Smith and other members of the Pittsburgh Region/ PBIDA committee for their hard work and commitment to making this conference a success.

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**Conference Photos:**

1. Julia Sadtler (PBIDA President), Carol Utay, Christine Seppi, Chris Bogler, Carrie Gardner, Maria Paluselli, Jennifer Marsh (Pittsburgh Region PBIDA committee, missing: Sharon Arffa, Debra Bogen, Catherine Davidson, Kathleen Smith) Keynote speaker, Dr. Jan Hasbrouk
2. Conference session with Carol Utay
3. Exhibit Hall
4. Conference participants
5. Succeeding in College session with University of Pittsburgh student, Lynett Van Slyke, (Director of Disability Services, University of Pittsburgh), George Vosburgh, (Educational Consultant, PBIDA Board Member)
6. Curtis Kossman, Paula Calabrese (Provident Charter School)
7. Kathleen Smith (2012 Pittsburgh Region Conference Committee)
8. Wendy Farone
On April 14, 2012, participants at Dyslexia Today 2012: A Conference for Professionals and Parents were fortunate to be able to hear from Dr. Jan Hasbrouck, a leading expert on the topic of fluency in reading. In her presentation Dr. Hasbrouck explained her concern about an over-reliance on speed as a measure of reading ability, defined fluency more accurately, and presented the reasons for including instruction in fluency as part of reading instruction.

Dr. Hasbrouck established the foundation for her presentation by first clarifying that reading rate speed is not the same as reading fluency. She defined reading fluency as “reasonably accurate reading at an appropriate rate with suitable prosody that leads to accurate and deep comprehension and motivation to read.” She stressed that the foundation of fluency is accuracy and the goal of fluency is comprehension. While fluency is an essential part of reading, it is not the final goal.

Dr. Hasbrouck then presented practical, research-based information on assessing oral reading fluency (ORF). She outlined three purposes for assessing reading fluency: 1) to help determine which students might need additional support in learning to read; 2) to diagnose a student’s individual skill level in reading fluency; and 3) to determine if a student is making sufficient progress. She emphasized, however, that a focus on continually increasing reading rate is not appropriate. While there is significant evidence that it is crucial to help students read with fluency at or near the 50th percentile to support comprehension and motivation, there is no compelling evidence that a reading rate significantly above the 50th percentile increases comprehension or motivation.

Given these data, Dr. Hasbrouck suggested that fluency assessments should be used to help educators identify students who need help reaching the 50th percentile. These students should then receive direct instruction in decoding skills as well as direct instruction in fluency. Once students reach the 50th percentile, however, efforts should be focused on other higher-level comprehension skills.

Students who need fluency instruction need help to be able to read words accurately and to connect words and ideas automatically in order to access meaning. Suggestions for helping students achieve fluency involve choral reading, during which the whole class reads aloud and together from the same selection, cloze reading during which a teacher reads aloud and pauses to have students say the next word—making sure it is a word the students can read, and structured partner reading. During partnered reading, Dr. Hasbrouck cautioned that one should avoid pairing the highest and lowest skilled readers, and suggested taking the very lowest readers into a small group for practice with the teacher during the partnered reading time. Dr. Hasbrouck would like to ban round robin reading entirely from all classrooms.

For teachers who wanted more specifics on using reading assessments appropriately, Dr. Hasbrouck presented a workshop on Reexamining the Role of Fluency Assessments. In the workshop, Dr. Hasbrouck reiterated her earlier points and presented various types of fluency assessments with suggestions for using the data from those assessments appropriately. Everyone who heard her felt that they had been given information that is useful and can be readily implemented by teachers and tutors working with struggling readers.
The Pittsburgh Regional Group of the Pennsylvania Branch of the International Dyslexia Association presented The Christopher Gardner Award for Excellence in the Field of Dyslexia to The Valley of Pittsburgh AASR (Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite) in honor of the valuable work they have done through the establishment and ongoing support of The Children’s Dyslexia Center—Pittsburgh.

As early as 1996 the Scottish Rite Masons of Pittsburgh began discussing the establishment of a tuition-free center where children with dyslexia could be taught to read. In 1998 a board was formed and facilities were prepared to house their dream. In 1999 the Masons brought Marcia Henry to Pittsburgh to train the initial three tutors in the Orton-Gillingham method of instruction, and the Children’s Dyslexia Center opened with a handful of students.

Since that time the Pittsburgh Scottish Rite Masons have provided free Orton-Gillingham tutoring to over 200 students. The center currently has 20 tutors and serves 36 students who each receive one-on-one Orton-Gillingham tutoring twice a week. Most students receive tutoring for three years. Several of the earliest students have graduated from college and many others are now being successful in high school and college. In addition, the Masons have increased awareness of dyslexia in the community by providing training to 75 tutors, 49 of whom have become fully certified through completing a supervised practicum of 100 hours.

The Scottish Rite Masons in Pittsburgh have made the Children’s Dyslexia Center the heart of their service efforts. When the center first opened, it was entirely funded by the personal donations of the members of the 32nd degree Scottish Rite Masons. As the center grew and the financial demands increased, they have committed themselves to a variety of fundraising efforts to ensure continuous operation of the center—a monumental effort given that it requires approximately $5000 per student per year.

We thank the Valley of Pittsburgh AASR as a whole for the effect they are having on the lives of children with dyslexia. We particularly thank three men who have served as chairman of the board of governors, David S. Kielman, who founded the center; Jay E. McElravy, who greatly expanded the center, and Richard A. Rodibaugh, the current chairman, who has continued to ensure that the center is fully supported.

Christopher Gardner, a dyslexic, was an adult before he learned to read. Learning to read made it possible for him to live a successful life. His wife, Carrie, and daughter, Valerie, chose to support the Pittsburgh Regional Group of PBIDA in his memory, to help the spread of information about dyslexia in this region. This award was established to honor those who make a difference in the lives of people with dyslexia.

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**Pittsburgh Regional Group of PBIDA to co-sponsor Wilson Language “Just Words” Workshop**

**July 17th and 18th, 9:00 am to 3:30 pm**

Best Western Parkway Center, Pittsburgh, PA

**Wilson Just Words** is a highly explicit, multisensory decoding and spelling program for students in grades 4-12 and adults who do not require intensive intervention but do require explicit decoding and spelling instruction due to word-level deficits. This 10-hour workshop provides the practice and guidance needed to effectively begin teaching the Wilson Just Words curriculum. $375.

**Workshop Topics:**
- Understanding Word Structure
- Student Identification and Placement
- Program Structure & Implementation
- Getting Started: Unit Structure
- Hit the Ground Running...an In-Depth Review of Unit 1
- Measuring Student Progress
- Just Words InterActivities

**To obtain a registration form, go to**

www.wilsonlanguage.com/workshop

Early Registration Available: Save $50 when you register within the early-registration period. Registration must be submitted to Wilson three weeks (21 days) before the scheduled event to qualify for early-registration tuition rate. Registration is required before the event and is processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Payment is due at the time of registration and includes a continental breakfast. Materials are sold separately. Payment is refundable up to 14 days prior to the event date, less a $25 processing fee. A confirmation letter will be sent with directions.
The Calculating Brain!

Nancy Krasa, Ph.D.

Psychological and neurocognitive research has come a long way in understanding how children learn to read and why some students struggle. Comparable research on math learning and disability has begun in earnest only in the past 10 years or so. And although research on math pedagogy is still disappointingly thin, we now know something about the many perceptual, cognitive, and executive skills that contribute to math learning—and the deficits that can lead to math failure.

One such skill is “number sense”—an intuitive idea about “more” and “less.” We know that the brains of humans and animals process quantity as if on a mental number line, although without counting; number sense is relative, approximate, and skewed. Children’s sense of number becomes more linear and accurate, beginning with small quantities, as they master counting and gain numerical experience. Number skills are closely related in brain and behavior to visual-spatial skills and to finger awareness. Visual-spatial skills are important for geometry, physics, and other math applications, and may be associated with number sense. They are also more closely related to math achievement in girls than in boys. Fingers, which taken together form our earliest convenient physical number line, help link counting to number sense and are key to early math success. Recent research has indicated that early number-line-based interventions may be effective for some students.

A second critical skill for math learning is mastery of mathematical language, which is a cultural invention and must be taught. The brain follows a developmental trajectory during math-language acquisition that is similar to that followed during natural-language reading acquisition. In fact, natural and mathematical languages are related in complex ways, sharing some mental functions but not others. Shared functions include visual and phonological skills. Misalignments between the two languages abound, however, and can contribute to significant difficulty in math learning. Impairments in one of these languages may or may not imply impairments in the other. Thus individual evaluation for reading difficulties must include a math assessment, and should examine both verbal and visual-spatial skills. To date, there has been very little research on the application of language and reading remedial interventions to math.

A third set of critical skills is comprised of the so-called executive functions, which include attention and mental control, working memory, planning and sequencing, self-monitoring, and mental flexibility—skills that are necessary for, but not specific to, math learning. Abundant research has linked attention and working memory, in particular, to math achievement. These skills, like the frontal lobes of the brain which govern them, develop slowly and are fragile, vulnerable to disruption, and highly resistant to intervention.

A comprehensive review of the psychological and neurocognitive research on math learning and disability, including work on the roles of number sense, visual-spatial skills, mathematical language (and its relationship to natural language and reading), the executive functions, and reasoning, as well as guidelines for psychoeducational evaluation of math learning difficulties and a review of some professional educational issues, can be found in *Number Sense and Number Nonsense: Understanding the Challenges of Learning Math*, by Nancy Krasa and Sara Shunkwiler (Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 2009).
Connecting Reading and Writing through Text Structure Instruction
Zoi A. Philippakos and Charles A. MacArthur

Instruction in writing can support reading comprehension (Graham & Hebert, 2010). Closer instructional attention should be given to reading activities that could support writing performance. Attention should be also given to explicit writing instruction. Strategy instruction provides explicit instruction on text structure and self-regulation; and research findings suggest that it supports students’ writing (Graham & Perin, 2007; Graham, 2006; Graham & Harris, 2005). Instruction in text structure has the potential of improving students’ awareness of text demands, supporting their reading comprehension, and increasing their motivation to read and write. Text structure instruction can support the students’ writing development as the students can, for instance write variations of an ending in a story, respond in writing to a character or rewrite a story by altering a problem. Further, students can write stories using wordless books or they may re-write a given story from the perspective of one of the characters. Text structure instruction can also improve students’ writing quality and support them in writing papers with clear organization that supports and enhances the reader’s understanding. For instance, when working on persuasion, students will make sure to provide a lead that will interest the reader, and a clear position to their paper. Then, they will provide reasons that support that position, examples and explanations that support the reasons, and a conclusion. Also, they acknowledge and address the opposing position, and rebut it by providing clear supports. The students’ reading comprehension is also supported as they better identify the important elements of a paper and can better attain to its meaning. For example, when reading aloud to children, instructors could refer clearly to the text structure elements of a story being read and use those elements for retelling purposes and during writing instruction. By making explicit connections between reading and writing using text structure, students can grow as readers and AS writers.

References:

Additional reading suggestions:

Former PBIDA board member and past president, John Kruidenier, of Kruidenier Education Consulting, has written two book chapters recently on reading instruction for adult learners. The first chapter, originally appearing in the International Dyslexia Association’s journal, Perspectives, was published in a compilation of frequently requested articles by experts. This book, edited by Louisa Moates, Karen Dakin, and Malatesha Joshi, is called Expert Perspectives on Interventions for Reading: A Collection of Best-Practice Articles from the International Dyslexia Association and is available through IDA. The second chapter is in the Handbook of Family Literacy, edited by Barbara Wasik and Barbara Van Horn, which is scheduled to be published by Routledge in May.
AIM Summer Training Schedule

As many of us plan summer vacations, teachers are often considering what training classes are available to help hone their skills and increase effectiveness in the classroom. Below is a list of the trainings offered at AIM's new training facility this summer.

Access to the Experts Speaker Series: Margie Gillis Ed.D.

Monday, June 11, 2012
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Creating Language-Rich Home and School Environments for Young Children

Margie Gillis’s work focuses on building teachers’ knowledge and skills to increase their effectiveness teaching all aspects of reading. She and her team of twelve mentors embed their professional development in the classroom where they model lessons and coach teachers in the use of evidence-based strategies. She is past-president of the Connecticut Branch of the International Dyslexia Association, the Northeast Regional Representative for IDA and the President and co-founder of Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities.

Cost is $125 per person

Wilson Reading System® Introductory Workshop

Applied Methods: 3-Day Overview

Monday-Wednesday, July 9-11, 2012
8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (first day) • 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m (second & third days) • 15 CEU hours

This workshop provides an introduction to the Wilson Reading System® and is a prerequisite for all other Wilson training. We suggest that you purchase and bring to class the Wilson Starter Kit, which can be purchased by going to the Wilson website www.wilsonlanguage.com/store.

Cost is $525 per person

Wilson Fundations® Level K/1

Friday, July 13, 2012
8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. • 6 CEU hours

Wilson Fundations® for K-3 is 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.

Cost is $225 per person.

Advanced Strategies in Multisensory Structured Language Instruction (WRS Group Mastery) Workshop

Monday-Tuesday, July 16-17, 2012
8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. • 10 CEU hours

This course provides strategies to improve all aspects of WRS group instruction through hands-on practice and discussion, and prepares participants for the WRS Group Mastery Practicum.

Prerequisites: Level I Certification and a Bachelor's Degree in education or a related field.

Cost is $375 per person.

For more information contact Karen Keesey at Kkeesey@aimpa.org

Please Register Online at www.aimpa.org

AIM–Academy In Manayunk • 1200 River Road • Conshohocken, PA 19428
215-483-2461 • www.aimpa.org
The Brandywine Special Needs PTA, BSNPTA, a volunteer parent organization, was founded in 2004. We organized so we could work as an effective group within our district to support and enhance pupil services for students with disabilities. We have hosted over 25+ educational meetings ranging from Reading to Behavior to State Testing to Social Skills. This past year, we dedicated our energy and resources into enriching awareness and education surrounding Transition Services.

Often the forgotten step-child in IDEA, Transition Services is the final implementation of what every teacher, therapist, reading interventionist, psychologist, principal and paraprofessional has worked towards achieving for their students since pre-school. In surveying parents and educators to explain Transition Services, we discovered it is not clearly understood even though it is the mission statement of IDEA, that all students should be prepared for further education, future education and independence! In other words, our BSNPTA committed to developing a student leadership program where our children would learn skills that would help them today but would also serve them when they are 30 years old!

Our endeavor was a paradigm shift in which students gravitate from listeners to active managers preparing, co-facilitating and initiating in their IEP meetings, thus preparing them to be active participants in their own futures. Let me give you an analogy. Think of a brick wall built with bricks labeled reading, math, social studies and science. To fulfill IDEA, our children need explicit instruction on the “mortar” skills, self-determination and advocacy! Our organization developed training to accomplish cementing their future successes today!

After securing the time commitment from students and parents and finding two pioneering teachers, our program started to take shape. We met on Saturday mornings at Wilmington University where we held parallel training for both the students and parents. You cannot have self-determined students without self-determined parents! Each session the attendees shared ideas, mentored each other and built on each other’s strengths. The climax of the training occurred when our self-determined students ages 11-15 ran our PTA meeting and showcased their new skills to an audience of 60 people. They led activities, discussions and communicated their desire for more of this type of training. In fact, these students challenged the school district to offer this training and provide this opportunity for all students to learn about self-determination. Authentic self-confidence…priceless!

After the event, everyone asked how they could participate in the next training. We had educators psyched for the opportunity to teach these skills, parents desiring to see self-confidence in their children and students asking how they could get in on all the fun! School on Saturday is not supposed to be fun!

Please read more, in the following piece, about this innovative training by one of our students and by one of our trainers. Their enthusiasm is contagious! Self-determination, pass it on!

- Kids Inspiring Kids is a program where Kids learn to be more independent and organized with their education. My name is Josh Rittberg and I am an 8th Grader at Springer Middle School. The program helped me to identify my goals and have confidence in myself that I can achieve them. My goal is to become a Theater Critic. During the meetings we discussed what steps I need to take such as practicing good writing skills and writing articles for newsletters like the one you are reading right now. I consider my IEP important because it lets my teachers know the tools I need to be successful. I would like other students to participate in Kids Inspiring Kids because every kid has goals they want to achieve. Please help me make this happen.

—Josh Rittberg

- Education. Identification. Implementation. These three key teaching and learning modalities were utilized in the Kids Inspiring Kids Self-Determination Development Training. The BSNPTA (Brandywine Special Needs PTA) recognized the need to develop student leadership training for Transition Services. Students’ learned to identify their strengths, recognize their learning styles and understand their needs. It is crucial for our students to possess these skill sets so they can self-advocate for themselves while they are still in school, but also when they transition to further education, future employment or independent living. Fulfilling the mission statement of IDEA! The students, ages 11-15, participated in 15-hours of training at a host site, Wilmington University, where they had full access to the latest in technology. Through first-hand experience, stu-
Adoption and Learning Disabilities

Jennifer Keller, The Quaker School at Horsham

Research shows that children who are adopted both domestically and internationally present with a higher rate of learning disabilities than non-adopted children. A 1991 New Jersey study revealed that adopted children comprise five to seven percent of the special education population, yet they represented only one to two percent of the general population of children (Brodzinsky & Steiger, 1991). Additionally, a Barker Foundation survey of 500 adoptive parents found that 30% of the children adopted by this parent group had some diagnosis of a learning or attention problem (Allen R. Barker Foundation, 1996).

There are several factors inherent in the journey of many adopted children that may account for the rates of learning disabilities in this population. Many adopted children have histories of poor maternal prenatal care (including drug and alcohol exposure), birth complications, malnutrition, neglect, abuse, or time spent in foster or orphanage care (Ijzendoorn, Juffer, & Poelhuis, 2005). It can be difficult for parents and educators to recognize and understand the myriad issues that can accompany these children.

As with virtually any disorder, early and appropriate intervention of learning disabilities is ideal. For example, physicians and speech pathologists recommend an educational assessment in the child’s native language within the first two weeks of adoption for a non-English speaking child (Miller, 2005). Recommendations for domestically adopted children include educational assessments later in the adoption process after the child has obtained some level of emotional comfort in the adoptive home.

Resources are available for parents and educators who wish to learn more about this topic.

**Websites**
Barker Foundation (information and resources) http://www.barkerfoundation.org
- Adoptive Families (articles and resources) http://www.adoptivefamilies.org
- National Adoption Center (information and resources) http://www.adopt.org
- North American Council on Adoptable Children (parent and subsidy information) http://www.nacac.org
- The Evan B. Donald Adoption Institute (statistics, policy, and practice information) http://adoptioninstitute.org

**Books for a School Library or Classroom**
- *A Mother for Choco* by Keiko Kasza, Ages 2 to 8
- *Families Are Different* by Nina Pellegrini, Ages 4 to 8
- *How I Was Adopted* by Joanna Cole, Ages 4 to 8
- *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes* by Rose Lewis, Ages 4 to 8
- *Lucy’s Family Tree* by Karen HalvorsenSchreck, Ages 8 to 11
- *Tell Me Again About the Night I Was Born* by Jamie Lee Curtis, Ages 2 to 8
- *We’re Different, We’re the Same* by Bobbi Jane Kate, Ages 2 to 6

(Kids Inspiring Kids, continued from page 12)
TQS, FP
**Nominations Sought for the Annual Janet L. Hoopes Award**

PBIDA is accepting nominations for the 2012 Janet L. Hoopes Award. The presentation will be made at the 34th Annual Fall Conference, “The Many Dimensions of Literacy” on Friday, October 5, 2012, at the Woodlynde School.

This prestigious award, instituted in 1993, is given to an individual or individuals from Pennsylvania or Delaware who have made a significant contribution to the advancement of the education of those with learning differences.

*Previous Recipients of the Hoopes Award*

- 1993: Janet L. Hoopes
- 1994: Virginia Biasotto
- 1995: Joan Frank
- 1996: Barbara Lorry
- 1997: Thomas Atkins
- 1998: Katherine Gordon-Clark
- 1999: Dorothy Flanagan and Sandra Howze
- 2000: Jean Bay
- 2002: J. Barton Harrison
- 2003: Lisa P. Simon
- 2004: National Conference in Philadelphia (no award)
- 2005: Adele Gerber
- 2006 Charna O. Axelrod
- 2007: Sharon Tomalin
- 2008: Fran James-Warkomski
- 2009: Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D)
- 2010: Kathleen Hunt
- 2011: George Rowe

The Awards Committee encourages the submission of nominations from a broad spectrum of disciplines. All nominations should include a brief biographical sketch of the nominee. Please submit the nomination by August 1, 2012.

Please email nominations to the Chairman of the Awards Committee, Dr. Charna Axelrod at charnaaxelrod@gmail.com or to dyslexia@pbida.org.
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An “enlightening and extremely educational experience” was held at the Woodlynde School in Straf-
ford, PA on January 26, 2012. Experience Dyslexia, A Simulation was presented to 68 people, in-
cluding community members, parents and educators. An additional 69 people attended the first simu-
lation held in Delaware, hosted by the Pilot School in Wilmington, on March 15, 2012. This hands-
on program includes six stations designed to mimic the daily challenges and frustrations encountered
by individuals with dyslexia. The evening began with an introductory powerpoint on dyslexia and
concluded with a question and answer session.

I believed that I was able to get a glimpse into what it must be like to be
dyslexic through this exercise. Having the experience of looking at a page
and NOT being able to read a word or UNDERSTAND a word was very
powerful. I can't even imagine what it must be like for people who have to
experience that day in and day out without any intervention.

Being a teacher I was able to gain a better understanding of the level of
frustration students experience while reading, writing and listening. The
various simulations made me reflect on how I interact with students. I am
more aware of how “good intentions” could cause students to feel sad,
inferior and anxious.

I thought the simulation was amazing. I got to experience how exhausting it
is for my daughter to work as hard as she does every day. I'm now much
more sympathetic to her meltdowns in the evening and can appreciate
giving her more down time.

It was so much more than a lecture. We got to experience how difficult it can
be for our kids. I wish I would have been shown this when my child was
much younger.

To schedule the dyslexia simulation for your organization or become a volunteer,
contact Betsy Boston at dyslexia@pbida.org or 610/527-1548.
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In Memory of Sarah Sadtler Feather
Mary Ellen Trent

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Calendar of Events

JUNE

Academy In Manayunk Access to the Experts Speaker Series, June 11, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. Margie Gillis Ed.D., Creating Language-Rich Home and School Environments for Young Children. Register at www.aimpa.org.

“Teaching All Kinds of Minds” Professional Development, Valley Forge Educational Services, June 18-June 20, 8:30 am to 3:30 pm, $375, (17 Act 48 hours). Register at www.vfes.net.

Fast ForWord®, Stratford Friends School, June 18-July 27, Stratford Friends School, Newtown Square, PA. Contact aherron@stratfordfriends.org.

The Janus School Summer Program, June 18-July 27, Program includes Core Academics, Assistive Technology, SAT prep, Early Learning Readiness. Contact Robin Payne: rpayne@thejanusschool.org

Delaware Valley Friends School Summer Program, June 25-July 27, 8:30 am to 12:15 pm. A 5 week summer day program for students entering 6th-12th featuring one-on-one instruction to help students advance their reading, writing and math skills. For application information, contact Kathy Barry, 610-640-4150 X 2160 , Kathy.barry@dvsf.org.

Valley Forge Educational Services Summer Voyagers Program, June 25-July 20 or June 25-August 3. A 4- or 6- week academic program for children experiencing learning challenges in school. Small-group academic instruction in reading, math, language arts and written expression, executive function skill building with social and recreational opportunities. Half-day or full-day options. For students ages 5-10. Register at www.vfes.net.

Stratford Friends School’s Adventures in Learning Summer Program, June 25-July 27, Stratford Friends School, Newtown Square, PA. For more information, contact aherron@stratfordfriends.org.

Stratford Friends School Teacher Training Course: Multisensory Reading Instruction, Lectures: June 25-29, Practicum: July 2-27, at Stratford Friends School, Newtown Square, PA. For more information, contact rsample@stratfordfriends.org.

JULY

The Janus School Open House, July 5, 9:00 am. Contact Robin Payne, rpayne@thejanusschool.org

Wilson Reading System Introductory Workshop/applied Methods, Academy In Manayunk, July 9, 8:30 am to 3:00 pm, July 10, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm, July 11, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. (15 CEU hours) To register, visit www.aimpa.org.

Wilson Fundations Level K/1, Academy In Manayunk, July 13, 8:30 am to 4:00 pm. (6 CEU hours) To register, visit www.aimpa.org.

"I Don’t Get It!!" -Multisensory Classroom Comprehension Strategies, July 16, 9:00 am-12:00 pm, Cooper Learning Center, Voorhees, NJ. Register at www.cooperlearningcenter.org or call.856-673-4902.

"Fluency Solutions"-Comprehensive Overview of Effective Fluency Programs, July 16, 1:00 pm-4:00 pm, Cooper Learning Center, Voorhees, NJ. Register at www.cooperlearningcenter.org or call 856-673-4902.

Advanced Strategies in Multisensory Structured Language Instruction (WRS Group Mastery) Workshop, Academy In Manayunk, July 16-17, 8:30am to 3:00 pm (10 CEU hours) To register, visit www.aimpa.org.

Wilson Just Words Introductory Workshop, Western Region/PBIDA, Best Western Parkway Center, Pittsburgh, PA, July 17 and 18, 9:00 am –3:30 pm. To register, visit www.wilsonlanguage.com/workshop or call: 800.899.8454.

Orton-Gillingham One Day Reading Overview, July 26, 8:30 am-4:00 pm, Cooper Learning Center, Voorhees NJ. Register at www.cooperlearningcenter.org or call 856-673-4902.

Total Learning Center, Wexford location. For information on the following programs, contact Mary Soisson, 724-940-1090, mary@totallearningcenter.com.

• Social Skills Class, July 9-August 17, 12:00 pm –1:00 pm.
• Summer articulation, July 9-27, 1:00 pm –2:00 pm.
• Success with Keyboarding, July 9-20 and July 30-August 10, 11:00 am –12:00pm.
• Handwriting Camp, July 23-27, 9:00 am—1:00 pm.
• Sensory Integration Camp, Call for schedule.

AUGUST

The Janus School Open House, August 2, 7:00 pm. Contact Robin Payne, rpayne@thejanusschool.org.

Summer Articulation. Total Learning Center, Wexford location, August 6-24, 1:00 pm—2:00 pm. Contact Mary Soisson, mary@totallearningcenter.com.

Early Writing In The Classroom And At Home, August 9, 9:00 am-12:00 pm, Cooper Learning Center, Voorhees, NJ. Register at www.cooperlearningcenter.org or call 856-673-4902.

“Back-To-School” Literacy Make and Take, August 16, 9:00 am-12:00 pm, Cooper Learning Center, Voorhees, NJ. Register at www.cooperlearningcenter.org or call 856-673-4902.
Apps for the iPad ———and Two Writing Programs

Since the inception of this column less than three years ago, there has been a veritable explosion of technological devices and online programs, some of them designed explicitly for students with learning disabilities, and some mainstream offerings that have been found suitable for the needs of learning disabled (LD) students. Several of these have been reviewed here, including Kindle, iPhone, and Intel Reader, along with several online apps, such as Bookshare, Blio, and Read Write Gold. Of all the new and exciting innovations, however, it seems that the iPad has increasingly become the device of choice for students looking for a portable, lightweight, easy to use, device for access to assistive technology.

One of the challenges that iPad users quickly encounter is choosing among the myriad of programs or “apps” that are available. Fortunately, there are experts who have reviewed many of the apps and provide online guidance for choosing the most useful for specific purposes. One such guide was posted on the Smart Kids with LD website in June 2011: “There’s an App for Your Child with LD,” http://www.smartkidswithld.org/at-bytes/ipad-apps-for-kids-with-ld

Although it doesn’t claim to be comprehensive, as “new apps are introduced daily,” the article covers a wide range of possible uses, organized into categories: Books (especially free e-books), Reading (text-to-speech readers), and Reading – Phonics; Math, Math - Calculators, and Math – Money Skills and Telling Time; Writing – Dictation, and Writing – Graphic Organizers; as well as apps for note-taking, calendars, homework management, and more.

The online responses to the article are also helpful in providing the personal experiences of some users of the apps, as word of mouth guidance is another way to cut through the many choices of apps. In this regard, students from Delaware Valley Friends School recently demonstrated some of their favorite apps at the Apple Store in Ardmore. Some of the apps on their list were: Audio Books, Mac Dictate/Dragon Dictation, Power Point, Garage Band, Photo Shop, iFlash Drive, and Adobe InDesign.

Becca Boston is a local college student who has been dealing with dyslexia throughout her school career (and her mom works in the PBIDA office). She agreed to share some of her experience with the iPad. She describes herself as a frequent user of the iBooks and Dragon Dictation apps. She likes iBooks, “because not only does it read to you, but you can highlight text and make notes on important information. Also, you can double click on a word to get the definition, which is great for me because I can always use help with vocabulary.”

Dragon Dictation shows up on everyone’s list, and Becca agrees - “It is a great app for anyone with a learning difference. You can talk out your thoughts about a topic, and it writes them down for you as you speak. I like using this before starting a paper, so I can talk out all of my ideas and thoughts on the subject and then use that as an outline.”

As always, readers are invited to submit their favorite apps for the iPad, as well as any other recommendations for learning support resources.

Debra Schwartz, reading specialist at The Reading Connection, recommends two programs for writing instruction. Here is her description of the programs and how they have worked with two of her current students:

• Rewards Writing: Sentence Refinement is a highly structured approach aimed at strengthening vocabulary selection, sentence combination and expansion, and paragraph editing skills. It can be used in remedial and special education settings with middle and high school students. There are 75 brief lessons in all, each including four components -- Introduce, Teach, Practice, and Feedback. Materials include a student workbook, a “word choice” student book, overhead transparencies, and a teacher’s manual containing various Appendices -- the SCORE editing technique, an incentive program, a posttest, a word choice list, and research support.

An eleventh-grader whose writing was far below grade level has done well with this program. She thrives on the explicit, systematic, and incremental mini-lessons that supply a framework for well-written sentences and paragraphs.

• Story Grammar for Elementary School: A Sentence-Composing Approach: A Student Worktext, [lays the groundwork for Sentence Composing for Elementary School ] – by Don and Jenny Killgallon. This “sentence-composing” approach to writing is used in classrooms nationwide at grade levels from elementary school to college. Throughout the series, the method is to have students systematically imitate and manipulate written expression by known authors. This is a creative, application-oriented approach to grammar that has enough structure to be able to be used with dyslexic students, but is much more palatable to them than diagramming sentences.

This approach has been effective with a bright, mildly dyslexic fifth grader who was full of interesting ideas in conversation, but whose written work lacked detail, sentence variety, and consistently correct structure. She enjoys reading the rich and stimulating excerpts, and she recognizes some of the works – all good literature – and even made note of one of the book titles, so she could ask her mother to get it for her.
students who will not benefit from Level 2 instruction, it also tends to identify a lot of students for Level 2 instruction who do not need any special reading instruction beyond what is provided in the regular classroom. Two studies have compared the number of students identified as at risk by an initial screening in first grade with the number of those students who actually had a reading disability two or four years later. They show that a typical, one-stage screening process can identify students needing Level 2 instruction. In one of the studies, for example, five times as many students were identified as in need of Level 2 instruction than were shown to actually have a reading disability by the fifth grade.

Multistage screening also helps solve this problem of over-identification. Second stage screening in one study consisted of a set of cognitive measures and resulted in roughly one-third fewer students being identified, while at the same time still capturing those students in need of Level 2 instruction. The second study also used an effective second stage screen consisting of two different measures: short term progress in reading fluency combined with dynamic assessment of student decoding (a measure of how much help a student needs to learn to sound out words). While multistage screening may be expensive (the cognitive measures mentioned above consisted of Rapid Automatized Naming, phonological processing, oral language comprehension, and nonverbal reasoning), the savings from a sizable reduction in the number of students served at Level 2 should more than offset the extra cost.

The studies described in the Fuchs review indicate that RTI is a rapidly maturing approach to the problem of identifying and teaching those with a reading disability. Fuchs and his colleagues conclude not only that RTI models should include multistage screening procedures, but, more generally, RTI needs to be implemented more flexibly in order to avoid problems like the ones their research addresses: failure to provide the right instruction at the right time.

While most of the research reviewed by Fuchs and his colleagues focuses on issues related to the implementation of Level 1 and Level 2 RTI, they also discuss many questions that surround Level 3 instruction. Level 3 instruction is designed for the roughly five percent of students who cannot benefit from Level 1 or Level 2 instruction. While research clearly indicates the need for Level 3 instruction, delivered by highly trained and experienced teachers, more studies are needed in order to continue to address issues related to the quality and character of instruction at this level.


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October 5, 2012
Woodlynde School, Strafford, PA

Keynote Address by Eric Tridas, M.D.
The Developmental Web: A Neurodevelopmental Approach to the Diagnosis and Management of Learning Disorders

Eric Tridas, MD, FAAP is the President of the International Dyslexia Association. Dr. Tridas is also the State Medical Director for Pediatric Health Choice Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care (P-PEC) facilities. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Society for Developmental Pediatrics, the American Academy of Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine, and the Society for Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics.

The Developmental Web: A Neurodevelopmental Approach to the Diagnosis and Management of Learning Disorders: The diagnosis and management of developmental and behavior disorders is complex and at times confusing. The Developmental Web offers a clear, systematic, and practical approach to the workup and management of neurodevelopmental and behavior disorders. During the presentation, Dr. Tridas will review the four areas that are typically associated with clinical impairment. He will then review the factors that combine to cause this impairment by emphasizing the dynamic relationship between development, behavior, health and the environment. The description of how these symptoms combine to cause impairment can then lead to intervention techniques to manage them including educational, psychological, medical and environmental strategies. Dr. Tridas will use examples of common developmental problems such as ADHD and Dyslexia to describe the clinical applications of the Developmental Web.

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