PBIDA’s 41ST ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE ON READING, LITERACY & LEARNING: READING AND THE ROAD TO RESILIENCY

Saturday, October 19, 2019
8:30 am - 4:15 pm

Philadelphia Marriott West
Conshohocken, PA

Keynote Speaker:
Dr. Kelly B. Cartwright

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Getting to Know Dr. Kelly Cartwright, The Keynote Speaker for the 41st Annual PBIDAConference

By Robb Gaskins, PhD

Kelly Cartwright is a Professor of Psychology, Neuroscience, and Teacher Preparation at Christopher Newport University (CNU) where she directs the Reading, Executive function, and Development Lab (READ Lab). Kelly’s research explores the development of skilled reading comprehension and the factors that facilitate and inhibit comprehension processes. Her work has appeared in Journal of Educational Psychology, Contemporary Educational Psychology, Research in Developmental Disabilities, and a range of other research publications. Her most recent book is Executive Skills and Reading Comprehension: A Guide for Educators. Kelly regularly works with teachers across the country to better understand and improve reading comprehension for struggling readers, and these experiences inform her research.

While this brief bio provides a concise overview of who Kelly is as a professional, it doesn’t begin to capture just how exceptional she is as a person nor why I know you will greatly enjoy hearing her speak. To that end, I conducted a brief interview with Kelly to help you get to know her a little better.

Kelly, I have had the good fortune of knowing you for quite some time. You are one of my favorite people in literacy. Beyond being incredibly prolific and consistently moving the field forward with your work, you are smart, energetic, articulate, interesting, caring, and fun. I look forward to my PBIDA colleagues experiencing these qualities, too. Thank you for agreeing to this interview that I hope will provide some insight into you and your work.

How would you describe yourself?
Thank you, Robb. I wear many hats. I am a mom, daughter, sister, researcher, university professor, tea-drinker (black, with milk), and book nerd. My students describe me as enthusiastic and approachable, yet challenging in the classroom, and I think those descriptors fit. I try to bring that positive enthusiasm to everything I do.

What led you to be interested in pursuing a career in academia in the field of psychology?
Throughout childhood, I developed a love for language, wordplay, and reading. Yet, when I started college I thought I wanted to be a veterinarian and thus completed a year of pre-vet coursework before taking my first psychology course. As soon as I learned that I could study human thinking and learning and how they relate to brain processes, I was hooked! When I took a course in cognitive psychology and learned about the twin roles of bottom-up and top-down processes in reading, my passion for reading science was ignited.

What continues to get you excited about exploring executive functioning and its connection to reading comprehension?
I’m passionate about understanding what makes reading comprehension work and why it doesn’t work for some children (and adults), particularly when it seems they have the decoding skills needed to support successful reading. I’m excited about new directions in this area that seek to find specific ways executive function skills, individually and collectively, support reading processes in order to develop assessments and interventions that can be used in classrooms.

(Continued on next page)
What will be the focus of your keynote address for PBIDA’s 41st annual conference?
I’ll share important background on executive functioning skills and why they are important for both word reading and reading comprehension. Then, I will share research-tested strategies that support and strengthen executive skills in service of better reading.

Why is this subject matter particularly relevant for educators and parents of children who learn differently?
Research suggests children who learn differently may have problems with executive functioning skills that impact their performance in many areas, such as staying focused, planning and organizing tasks, keeping track of information, following directions, staying on task in the classroom, working well with peers, and succeeding in subject areas such as reading and math. Educators and parents may have heard of executive functioning skills like working memory, inhibition, and cognitive flexibility in child study meetings, but they may be less familiar with how these skills relate to reading. I hope to change that in our session together.

What do you like to do away from work?
I like to read stories, play board games, and watch movies with my 9-year-old son. I also enjoy walking our rescue dogs, kayaking, and spending time near the water.

What is your biggest guilty pleasure?
Recently, I have discovered that Cook Out makes a delightful banana milkshake!

What is your most treasured possession?
I don’t really have one most treasured possession. However, I have several books that are quite special to me: my great-grandfather’s journals, given to me by my grandfather; a few of my mother’s childhood favorites, such as Misty of Chincoteague and Nancy Drew mysteries; and some favorite books from my own childhood that I have been able to share with my children.

What accomplishment are you most proud of in your life?
Personally, I’m proud of raising two smart, funny, fun, kind, industrious children who both happen to be readers. Professionally, I am proud of contributing to the field in ways that cause people to reframe how they think about reading, such as writing the first comprehensive text for educators on executive function and reading comprehension, developing a reading-specific executive function task that improves word reading and comprehension, and — with my colleague Nell Duke – developing the DRIVE model of reading to provide an accessible model of the complexity of reading for parents, policy-makers, and educators to help move the field beyond oversimplified understandings of reading processes that may leave young readers behind.

What is the best book you have ever read, and why is it your favorite?
I have always loved E.B. White’s The Trumpet of the Swan, in which a boy named Sam encounters a voiceless swan in the Canadian wilderness. Sam helps the swan, named Louis, learn to read and write to help him find his voice. Even before I knew reading science fascinated me, I loved reading about the life-changing power of literacy.

What would comprise your perfect day?
A perfect day would include quality time with family, time to appreciate nature, and time to read, write, and reflect.

Professionally, I am proud of contributing to the field in ways that cause people to reframe how they think about reading, ...

That sounds like a wonderful day to me, too. Thank you for taking the time to help us learn a little more about you. We look forward to seeing you in October.
I look forward to meeting everyone in the PBIDA community soon, too!

Robb Gaskins, Ph.D., is an educational consultant, freelance writer, and motivational speaker. In addition, he is a former PBIDA board member and the emeritus head of Benchmark School.

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Our very special thank you to Franca Palumbo for her many years of help and support to PBIDA as a Board member, Executive Board member and a dear friend. Franca’s generosity and commitment to helping our organization has been and continues to be unwavering.

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Dear PBIDA Members and Friends

I am pleased to share this conference edition of the PBIDA Focus with you. Our conference this year is especially exciting. For our 41st Annual Fall Conference on Reading, Literacy and Learning, we are collaborating with the Pennsylvania Council for Exceptional Children (PACEC) to present a two-day event on Friday, October 18th and Saturday, October 19th. This conference will allow both organizations to reach educators, school administrators, and professionals from many different disciplines as well as parents who are concerned about appropriate education for children with a variety of special needs.

We have organized this conference with a wide range of options for attending to accommodate various schedules and interests:

- For PBIDA members and others specifically concerned with dyslexia, our PBIDA conference is Saturday: *Reading and the Road to Resiliency*.

- Friday, PACECs conference features speakers and workshops focusing on Legal Issues, High Leverage Practices, Trauma Informed Practice, Social and Emotional Learning, among other pertinent topics that will be of valuable to all participants.

- Friday evening’s combined Awards Dinner will feature Steve Dykstra, Ph.D. speaking on *Reading and Trauma – How Do They Fit Together?* Friday evening will also include the presentation of PBIDAs annual Hoopes Award.

Register for both days for the best learning experience! If your schedule does not allow for the whole conference, you can attend Friday only, Friday plus Saturday morning, or Saturday only. To any of these options you can add the Friday night dinner.

As we work to reach more areas around our state, we are also offering a simulcast of selected Saturday sessions to five sites: Delaware Valley School District (Northeast); Allegheny College of Maryland – Everett Campus (South Central); Canon-McMillan School District (Southwest); Children’s Dyslexia Center in Pittsburgh; and Compass Reading Center in Erie.

For those needing continuing education credits, both days of the conference offer ACT 48, CERI, ALTA, and IMSLEC credits. Certain sessions will also be eligible for APA and ASHA credits.

Please see the PBIDA website for detailed conference information and links to registration.

I hope to see many of you in Philadelphia or to join with you virtually through a simulcast.

Christine Craig Seppi
President
International Dyslexia Association, PA
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RESILIENCY

PA Branch of the International Dyslexia Association & PA Council for Exceptional Children Collaborate

YOU MAY HAVE ALREADY NOTICED that PBIDA is doing something a little different for our annual Philadelphia regional conference. Yes, we have changed the location, largely in response to feedback received after last year’s conference. But more significantly than a change of location is the fact that we are collaborating with PACEC, the Pennsylvania affiliate of the Council for Exceptional Children.

This collaboration has its roots at a 2015 event sponsored by Read by 4th and PBIDA promoting awareness of the need for better teacher preparation in the area of reading and literacy through IDA Accreditation. Rick Sabousky, professor at IDA Accredited Clarion University current President of PACEC and PBIDA Board member and Monica McHale-Small, then Superintendent of the Saucon Valley School District, met when they were both part of the panel addressing teacher preparation.

PBIDA and PACEC both have missions emphasizing the need to ensure that individuals with learning exceptionalities and needs and their parents and teachers have access to the tools and resources they require to advance their education and provide for a successful post-school life. Celebrating our overlapping interests, this year’s collaborative conference has a focus on resiliency. Across Pennsylvania, countless individuals are impacted by life events as well as trauma. Data shows that children with disabilities and learning differences may be even more at-risk than the general population. However, there are decades of research that indicates the trauma can be overcome. The literature on specific academic tactics as well as resiliency supports the idea that caring and supportive teachers who build their students’ self-efficacy can impact the trajectory of trauma. This year’s collaborative conference focuses on understanding trauma, how learning struggles and trauma are related, and how to build the academic and social skills of our children in a way that enhances their self-efficacy.

Collective impact makes a difference. This year’s conference will provide an opportunity for members of two organizations that advocate for some of our most vulnerable individuals to collaboratively support educational practices that make a difference.
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AGENDA

41st Annual PBIDA Conference
Reading and the Road to Resilience

Saturday, October 19, 2019
at the
Philadelphia Marriott West in Conshohocken

Agenda

7:30 – 8:30 Registration and Exhibits
8:30 – 9:45 Welcome and Keynote Address
9:45 – 10:30 Break, Posters and Exhibits
10:30 – 12:00 Morning Sessions
12:00 P.M. End of Conference for those purchasing
Friday plus Saturday A.M. option
12:00 – 1:00 Lunch, Exhibits, and Posters
1:00 – 2:30 Afternoon Plenary Session
2:30 – 2:45 BREAK
2:45 – 4:15 Afternoon Sessions

Keynote Address

Kelly B. Cartwright, Ph.D.
Why Don’t My Best (Word) Readers Comprehend Text?

This program is co-sponsored by the PSCP: The Psychology Network and PBIDA. PSCP: The Psychology Network is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor Continuing Education for psychologists. PSCP: The Psychology Network maintains responsibility for the program and its content. This program may provide a maximum of 4 Hours of CE credits for Psychologists.

SATURDAY MORNING WORKSHOPS:

AM 1 Teaching Executive Skills to Support Reading Comprehension
AM 2 A Developmental Model of Trauma, Growth, and Resilience: The Place for Language and Reading
AM 3 What EXACTLY is the Difference between Balanced Literacy and Explicit, Systematic Reading Instruction, and Why Does It Matter?
AM 4 The Value of Language Assessments for Children with Confirmed/Suspected Dyslexia

SATURDAY AFTERNOON PLENARY SESSION:

Dean Bragonier
The Dyslexia Renaissance: A Paradigm of Opportunity

SATURDAY AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS:

PM 1 Finally! The Big Picture of Reading Instruction: How All the Pieces Fit Together
PM 2 Lose the Rules: Reading and Spelling Multi-syllable Words Made Easy
PM 3 Best Practices in Reading Instruction – Panel Discussion
PM 4 Evaluation and Identification of Dyslexia and other Reading and Writing Disorders
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Kelly B. Cartwright, Ph.D. - Saturday Keynote & Saturday AM 1 Workshop

Kelly B. Cartwright serves as Professor of Psychology, Neuroscience, and Teacher Preparation at Christopher Newport University (CNU) where she directs the Reading, Executive function, and Development Lab (READ Lab). Kelly’s research explores the development of skilled reading comprehension and the neurocognitive, linguistic, and affective factors that underlie reading comprehension processes and difficulties from preschool through adulthood. Kelly has a particular interest in the role of executive function processes (mental skills that support goal-directed activities), such as cognitive flexibility, in the development of skilled reading comprehension, and she wrote the first comprehensive text on this topic (Executive Skills and Reading Comprehension, Guilford, 2015). Kelly has developed reading-specific executive function assessments and interventions, and her graphophonological-semantic cognitive flexibility assessment has been adapted for use in several languages. More recently, she has turned her attention to the roles of executive function processes in particular domains of reading comprehension, such as health literacy and mathematics word problem comprehension; contributions of executive functions to other individual difference variables that support reading comprehension, such as strategic processing; and to reading comprehension development in Spanish-speaking English learners.

Steve Dykstra, Ph.D. - Friday Evening Keynote & Saturday AM 2 Workshop

Steve Dykstra is a clinical psychologist in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he has worked in public sector community mental health for more than 25 years. He is a founding member of the Wisconsin Reading Coalition and vice president of the Coalition for Reading Excellence, but he has never tutored or taught a child to read. Except for parts of one or two courses in graduate school, he has no formal training on the topic. Instead, through the course of his work and life, he has come to see the role of reading, reading struggles, and reading failure in the lives of the thousands of children he has served, as well as in their families, schools, and communities. Building on knowledge and training he sought for himself, he brings together the science of reading he has discovered, with the lessons he has learned from the children he serves, and what he knows about people to understand how we got to where we are, and how we might change that. Steve is a member of the advisory board of the International Foundation of Effective Reading Instruction.

Linda Farrell, MBA, M.Ed. - Saturday AM 3 Workshop

Linda Farrell is a founding partner at Readsters where she is immersed in the world of beginning and struggling readers. Linda designs and presents workshops, writes books, and develops instructional materials for effective reading instruction. She has coauthored several publications with her business partner, Michael Hunter, including Phonics Plug-In, Phonics Blitz, Phonics Boost, and the Diagnostic Decoding Surveys. She is also a coauthor of the Teaching Reading Essentials Program Guide and Coach’s Guide (coauthored with Louisa Moats), and DIBELS: the Practical Manual. Linda was a National LETRS Trainer for seven years. Linda has been presenting workshops and giving speeches on reading instruction throughout the country since 2000. She taught junior high English and was a high school and elementary school counselor. However, it was only when Linda volunteered to teach adults to read that she understood older struggling readers’ needs for explicit phonics and phonemic awareness instruction at the most basic levels. Linda keeps her skills fresh and innovative by working with struggling readers of all ages whenever she has time.
Tatyana Elleseff, MA CCC-SLP – Saturday AM 4 Workshop

Tatyana Elleseff MA CCC-SLP is a bilingual SLP, specializing in issues of multicultural, internationally & domestically adopted, at-risk children with communication disorders in school and private practice settings. She has been published in several peer-reviewed journals and has presented for numerous medical, academic and non-profit organizations and speech-language-hearing associations in the United States as well as Canada. She is a clinical instructor at the RWJ Medical School Dept. of Psychiatry and a Clinical Supervisor at Rutgers Day School, an outpatient facility located in a hospital setting for children with significant psychiatric disturbances and concomitant language and literacy impairments.

Dean Bragonier - Saturday PM Plenary Session

Dean Bragonier is the Founder and Executive Dyslexic of NoticeAbility Inc, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping students with dyslexia identify their unique strengths and build self-esteem. Shaped by the challenges associated with his dyslexia and after struggling through the traditional secondary education system, Dean became a diligent and successful college student who developed a true love of learning at Bates College. Upon graduation, Dean embraced his entrepreneurial instincts and acquired a small seasonal restaurant on Martha’s Vineyard Island that he transformed into a successful full-scale enterprise. It was through this endeavor that he was able to contextualize his years of laborious academic learning and discover the true gifts of his dyslexic mind. As a social entrepreneur, Dean has founded his own nonprofit organizations and served as board member and advisor to a number of others. NoticeAbility is the culmination of Dean’s passion for education and his conviction that the advantages of dyslexia far outweigh its associated challenges.

Kelly Butler, M.Ed. - Saturday PM 1 Workshop

Kelly Butler is Chief Executive Officer of the Barksdale Reading Institute (BRI). She brings BRI’s research knowledge and teaching expertise to improve reading instruction in Mississippi public schools at all levels – teacher preparation, K-3 classrooms, instructional coaching, and school leadership. Kelly also develops partnerships with state and national organizations that promote evidence-based practices in early literacy instruction. Kelly spearheaded BRI’s development of The Reading Universe©, a detailed scope and sequence for training teachers on how to deliver sequential, systemic, explicit reading instruction; and the development of a Social/Emotional Literacy project for pre-K through 8th grade. She is the project coordinator for a BRI-sponsored statewide initiative to improve teacher preparation programs focused on early literacy instruction in Mississippi’s 15 public and private universities and is lead author of Mississippi’s Statewide Study on Teacher Preparation for Early Literacy Instruction. She has active partnerships with the Governor’s Task Force on Teacher Preparation for Early Literacy Instruction, the Higher Education Literacy, and the Advisory Board of the Southeast Regional Educational Lab. Previously, Kelly was a teacher in the Greenwich, Connecticut public schools and has worked extensively with a variety of nonprofit organizations in social service, health care, and education in the areas of program development, support, and evaluation. Kelly holds a bachelor’s degree in special education, and a master’s degree in administration, planning, and social policy from Harvard University.
Michael Hunter, M.Ed. - Saturday PM 2 Workshop

Michael Hunter is a founding partner of Readsters. Michael found his passion for teaching struggling readers by volunteering to teach adults to read in Washington DC. In 2001, Michael left his job as president of a concrete construction company to pursue a career helping students learn to read using the most effective methods available. Michael is co-author with his business partner, Linda Farrell, of Phonics Plug-In ONE, the Practice Packets to Fix Common Confusions, Phonics Blitz and Phonics Boost lessons, and the Diagnostic Decoding Surveys. Michael presents professional development workshops nationally and advises schools and districts on implementation of effective reading instruction. He also continues to create assessments, lessons and other materials to help beginning and struggling readers. He enjoys working with and learning from struggling readers of all ages whenever he finds time. Michael’s work has even taken him to the Republic of Gambia and Rwanda in Africa to train and advise on early reading instruction for the Global Partnership for Education.

Best Practices in Reading Instruction – Saturday PM 3 Workshop
Moderator – Kirk Smothers, Head of School, Delaware Valley Friends School

Panel - Suruchi Keenell  AIM Academy/AIM Institute for Learning & Research
    Susie Macik        Bentworth School District
    Dawn Brookhard     Danville School District
    Megan Fairchild    Delaware Valley Friends School
    Penny Moldofsky    Woodlynde School/Literacy Institute at Woodlynde

Monica McHale-Small, Ph.D - Saturday PM 4 Workshop

Monica McHale-Small is an Adjunct Associate Professor at Temple University. She retired from public education after twenty-seven years of service in Pennsylvania. Monica started her career as a school psychologist but spent the last fourteen years in a variety of administrative positions including Superintendent. She earned her doctorate and masters’ degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education. Dr. McHale-Small has long advocated bringing sound research into practice in public schools. She was invited to join the PA Dyslexia Literacy Coalition and served on the advisory committee for Pennsylvania’s Dyslexia Screening and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot. Dr. McHale-Small is an advocate for responsible inclusion and equity for historically underserved students including racially, culturally and linguistically diverse students and students with disabilities.
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PBIDA - Building Collective Impact Across PA and DE

By: Maria Toglia

In January of this year, PBIDA was excited to seat a cohort of nine new board members hailing from across the state of Pennsylvania and Delaware. In an effort to expand our reach, a diverse group of professionals who have been actively promoting literacy, often in historically underserved areas, were asked join the board in order to better serve the community at large. We now have representation in Central PA, the Northwest and Northeast PA regions and Delaware, along with continuing representation in Eastern and Western PA. Our aim is to cultivate active regional groups who can identify local needs and leverage PBIDA resources to develop programs that effectively meet those needs. The goal is to maximize our collective impact by mobilizing PBIDA members across Pennsylvania and Delaware in activities that directly serve the needs of all students learning to read.

The Dyslexia Simulation program has been one of PBIDA’s longest running and most successful outreach efforts. This interactive experience not only educates participants about dyslexia and reading development; it also gives them the opportunity to experience what it is like to struggle with typical educational demands in school classrooms. The feedback we have received from parents, educators, and other professionals indicates that in addition to broadening participants’ perspectives this experience leads to changes in the way they support and respond to struggling readers. The simulation experience has also inspired schools to reach out to PBIDA for additional professional development regarding dyslexia and struggling readers. We are now training regional groups to bring the dyslexia simulation to schools and communities in and around Northwestern, Northeastern and Central PA and Delaware in order to expand this valuable resource to underserved areas.

The ongoing partnership between PBIDA and Read by 4th has been a productive collaboration. For the last five years, we have worked closely to promote teacher preparation that is aligned with research-based IDA Knowledge and Practice Standards (KPS). The KPS detail the knowledge and skills all teachers of reading should know in order to provide effective structured literacy instruction in the classroom. Specifically, the work of the Teacher Preparation and Support committee (formerly Instructional Strategies) has resulted in the School District of Philadelphia, the philanthropic community, and Read by 4th leadership embracing the KPS by supporting University accreditation and prioritizing the hiring of teachers from IDA accredited programs. To date, five Pennsylvania teacher preparation programs have been accredited by IDA with more programs in the pipeline.

Because of the work initiated by PBIDA’s current Executive Director, Diane Reott, and the PA Dyslexia Literacy Coalition, the Pennsylvania Dyslexia Screening and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot Program was initially passed by the PA state legislature and signed into law in 2014. The PA Department of Education has provided funding to support and extend the Pilot Program for an additional two years. We are proud to continue to collaborate with the PDE on the extension as the Pilot program has brought research-based early screening and instructional practices into classrooms, along with ongoing teacher training and support. The results have been very positive, and the extension will allow more schools across PA to develop these research-based practices that will help more students.

PBIDA has historically been involved with schools in Pennsylvania who provide specialized education for students with language-based learning disabilities. These relationships have energized PBIDA with leadership talent and hard work that has helped propel our organization to the place we are today. We continue to develop these partnerships in order to leverage the knowledge and expertise these schools have to offer and spread the word to all educators about what works with struggling readers.

Finally, the annual and biennial conferences held in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh have been instrumental in providing the public with state of the art, research-based knowledge about reading development and instruction for all community members who support students learning to read. These conferences attract nationally renowned experts who have provided our participants with the latest in research findings and scientifically based methods for teaching students to read. Local workshops in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia have expanded our reach by training teachers in multisensory mathematics instruction, multisensory writing instruction, and structured literacy instruction. Our recent symposium, hosted in partnership with Read by 4th and Temple University, raised awareness about the importance of pre-service and in-service teacher training based in the KPS to benefit the reading and writing skills for all children.

Focus, PBIDA’s semi-annual publication, has been a primary means of bringing important information to our membership. In our next issue, we will begin a continuing series on what’s happening with PBIDA regions and partners so that we may share their successes in applying best practice structured reading methods to all students. We hope to provide our membership with the opportunity to connect with other teachers, parents, and advocates in order to improve and expand upon the ongoing efforts in our schools and communities. To impact real change, we need to do this work together. Collective impact only happens when we share our successes, trust each other, and work together so that success can breed further success.

Maria Toglia is a PA Certified School Psychologist and Doctoral Student at Drexel University. She has served on the PBIDA Board since 2017.
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This dual certification program provides candidates with state-of-the-art knowledge and skills in evidence-based diagnostic and intervention programs. Students who successfully complete the dual major in early childhood education and special education program, maintain a GPA of 3.0, and pass the required Praxis exam can apply for Level 1 teacher certification in both special education and PK-4 teaching.

M.S., Teacher Education – Reading Specialist Certification
The Teacher Education Department offers a 36-credit master’s degree with reading specialist certification that provides graduate students with extensive preparation in literacy assessment, instruction, and intervention. The certification program requires 24 credits of coursework and approximately 150 hours of fieldwork with a diversity of readers. Courses include: The Psychology of Literacy, Writing in the Classroom, Literacy Assessment and Instruction K-3, Literacy Assessment and Instruction 4-12, Literacy Research, Organizing and Planning Programs, and the Literacy Practicum. To complete the degree, candidates can use their 12 elective credits toward selected special education courses including those in the Wilson Reading System (WRS) Level 1 program.

For more information on these programs, please visit sju.edu/gradstudies.

Literacy helps everyone #LiveGreater
Teaching the Science of Reading in Teacher Preparation Programs

By: Lori Severino, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor Special Education, Drexel University

OVER THE YEARS, researchers studied teacher preparation programs in relation to the teaching of reading only to find that most programs did not prepare teachers to systematically teach all readers, particularly the one in five who may have learning disabilities, ADHD or other related disorders (Moats, 2004; NCLD, 2019; Washburn, Joshi & Cantrell, 2011). In the previous 20 years, much research on evidence-based practices has been disseminated; however, dissemination does not mean implementation. Research in neuroscience and brain changes after intervention have led to increased knowledge of what works for students with reading disabilities. Most research takes approximately 10 years to get from the “lab” to the classroom. How can universities prepare pre-service and in-service teachers to bring the most current research to the classroom and how can we prepare school leaders for the changes necessary to improve reading scores across all students of all backgrounds and abilities?

Course Work:
Drexel offers not only the knowledge of the structure of language, but the experiences to help our candidates use that knowledge while working with K-12 students. The content and pedagogy are taught to mastery in order to provide our candidates with the confidence to teach all students to read. Some of the important content knowledge includes: The National Reading Panel’s (2000) findings to introduce phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension in reading instruction; Scarborough’s Reading Rope (2001) to understand the complexities of reading and all the parts that must come together for successful fluent reading; and The Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) for elementary candidates and the Adolescent Reading Model (Deshler & Hock, 2006) for secondary candidates to provide the theoretical background for how students get to the ultimate goal, comprehension.

Field Experience and Practicum:
In addition to the coursework, our undergraduate candidates spend many hours in the field practicing their newly learned skills. While being introduced to the concepts, candidates are observing in classrooms. As they begin to master the content, a practicum is provided for them to work individually with a struggling reader and provide a Tier II intervention. In the beginning of the course, practicum students often feel nervous and a bit unprepared. Candidates first assess the K-12 student to determine areas of need. An intervention is planned based on the results of the assessment. As they work with the K-12 student and begin to see the results of the intervention through progress monitoring, confidence builds and instruction continues. Individual feedback is provided throughout the field experience as lessons are developed and delivered. It is important (Continued on next page)
(Continued from previous page)

to note that this Tier II intervention course takes place just prior to the candidates taking a methods course in which they spend six months in a school classroom for 20 hours each week. This occurs at the end of their junior year to prepare them for a 24-week student teaching experience.

The candidates in the multi-sensory reading concentration of the Master of Special Education program take a similar course as the undergraduates just prior to taking a series of courses with a practicum in the Wilson Reading System (WRS)® Level 1 Certification. In this practicum, candidates work one-on-one with a struggling reader for a minimum of 65 hours. They are also observed and provided immediate feedback five times throughout their practicum courses. Candidates in our Reading Specialist Certification also take the WRS® courses and practicum. This series of courses provides an in-depth knowledge of dyslexia and the effective literacy instruction necessary in the areas of decoding, encoding, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

Research Opportunities:
Research is an important part of Drexel’s culture. There are multiple opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students to work with their professors on research projects. As part of our Promise Neighborhood grant, we partner with seven schools in the surrounding neighborhood. The faculty and students implement Response to Intervention models in entire buildings and work with individual classrooms supporting interventions. Candidates learn the evidence-based practices that are supported by research and are active in working with faculty on presenting at conferences and writing for publication.

Summer Literacy Camp:
An important component of our Reading Specialist certification is our Summer Literacy Camp. This is the culminating activity for those candidates. It is a free, four-week camp for 3rd to 5th grade students that are at least two grade levels below their peers in reading. Our reading specialists design the Tier II intervention that includes a pre and post assessment for the campers. They work with small groups on various literacy skills, and as all the reading specialist candidates are Wilson® Level 1 certified, one of the small group stations includes Wilson®. The camp is held in a Drexel owned facility in the neighborhood and our undergraduate students are hired to work as teacher assistants to support the reading specialists. Drexel faculty are also on site to supervise and provide immediate feedback to the candidates. The experience of creating and participating in this type of setting has proven to be one of the candidates’ favorites.

While the information presented in this article is not all encompassing, the goal is to ensure that our teacher candidates are prepared and confident in teaching all students to read successfully.

References:


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Strengthening Teacher Preparation in Philadelphia

Read by 4th + PBIDA + Universities
By: Nancy Scharff, M.Ed., Special Education

THE FALL 2018 FOCUS ARTICLE, “Teaching All Children to Read – Collective Impact Makes the Difference”, described the partnership of Read by 4th and PBIDA in strengthening teacher preparation by encouraging university programs in the region to meet the Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading developed by the IDA. The article labeled this a bold undertaking - one that can only succeed if Philadelphians work together. And they are.

Philadelphia’s focus on teacher preparation began in 2015 with a symposium on the Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading (KPS), led by Read by 4th and PBIDA, and hosted by Drexel University. In 2015, only one university program, that of Saint Joseph’s University, was accredited as meeting the KPS. Now Drexel, Arcadia, Temple and Saint Joseph’s in the Philadelphia area and Clarion in the western PA area, all have accredited programs. And more program reviews are underway.

In April of this year, Read by 4th and PBIDA hosted another symposium on the KPS. Temple University, whose Early Childhood Education (ECE), undergraduate program is now KPS accredited, hosted the symposium. The four Philadelphia area universities with KPS accredited programs presented, and four others were in attendance. The power of the presentations lay in universities presenting to their peers.

The symposium began with Emily Hanford of American Public Media, and author of “Hard Words”, setting forth the challenge: “All kids can learn to read – if they’re taught with approaches that line up with what scientists have discovered about how the brain reads,” she said, “But many teachers don’t know this science.”

Philadelphia’s Read by 4th partners are making sure that teachers have access to the science of reading. Dr. Hite, Superintendent of the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) declared: “The School District of Philadelphia, together with the Read by 4th campaign, is committed to strengthening teacher knowledge in the science of literacy instruction in order to ensure that every child is able to read on grade level by age 8. SDP and Read by 4th are using the Knowledge and Practice Standards developed by IDA to strengthen teacher preparation”.

The Knowledge and Practice Standards provide a comprehensive, research-based framework that articulates what all teachers of reading and reading specialists should know and be able to demonstrate to teach reading successfully to all students. The IDA Director of Accreditation reviewed the standards and the process for university programs to apply. While IDA reviews programs four times per year, the volume of applications nationally has pushed the next application opportunity into 2020.

Sonja Banks, CEO of IDA, attended the symposium and affirmed that accreditation of teacher preparation programs is the highest priority for IDA and that Philadelphia is leading the way.

Jenny Bogoni, Executive Director of Read by 4th, issued a call to action: “For the benefit of Philadelphia, and for the benefit of all other cities that will follow our lead, we ask that universities, aspiring teachers, classroom teachers, and the larger community, commit to the science of reading. Together we will strengthen teacher practice and student achievement.”

Nancy Scharff, M.Ed. Special Education: Read by 4th Consultant to Teacher Preparation and Support; Board Member; KIPP Philadelphia Schools; Former Executive Director; ReadWorks.org
Transcription of Emily Hanford’s Remarks

April 15, 2019
Read by 4th & IDA Symposium - Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading

(Please note: this transcript has been lightly edited for clarity)

INTRODUCTION: EMILY HANFORD IS A JOURNALIST for APM Reports (American Public Media) known for her ground-breaking article and podcast episode, Hard Words, summed up as follows: “All kids can learn to read – if they’re taught with approaches that line up with what scientists have discovered about how the brain reads. But many teachers don’t know this science.”

I am here today to share some of what I have learned from teachers and other educators across the country. At this point, I think I’ve probably interviewed and directly interacted with well over 100 teachers and former teachers and talked with them specifically about what they did learn, and what they didn’t learn, in their preparation to be educators.

So, what everyone seems to learn is how to assess kids … kind of … for reading problems. There is a focus on assessment, but teachers don’t really learn what to do about it. And whether or not they are really learning how to assess kids well, in ways that would lead them to know what to do about it, is a question. They are definitely learning something about assessment and they’re learning a lot about children’s literature and how to build classroom libraries, and how to get kids engaged with reading, and that’s good. That’s good stuff, but they are not learning how to explicitly and systematically teach children how to read the words on the page.

And one of the ways I have started to think about what is going on - both in teacher preparation, from what I have learned in my own reporting and research, and - what I have seen in classrooms -- has to do with professional opportunity costs. What are we spending our time on? And are we spending too much time on some stuff that’s not really going to give us as much of a bang for our buck? And are we spending a little bit of time, or no time at all, on the things that really matter when it comes to teaching little kids to read? And then there’s the question of what you focus on most, in terms of time. Right now, a lot of reading instruction in schools is work with a lot of books, with a little bit of everything all at the same time, and not really based on the way that the reading process works, and how to structure that in the classroom.

So, another thing that I think teachers aren’t learning enough about – and that sometimes gets left out when we talk about the science of reading -- they didn’t learn about the structure of the English language and how English spelling works, about morphology, and etymology. And you know, teachers need a deep knowledge of this stuff to be able to teach little kids how to read. And I think one of the reasons that we fight so much about reading instruction in the United States, and many other English-speaking countries, is because English is a difficult language to learn. And there is a lot to know. Teachers in Germany can teach their kids the basics of that language in a few months’ time. But it takes a few years for most kids to really master the basics of the English language, and to get to the point where they learn to read by reading. Once kids have some basics of the code and are able to unlock how words work -- and different kids need different amounts of that stuff, different intensity levels - once they know the basics of how the written language works, they learn to read by reading. The key here is that the primary task of little kids coming in to school - is to figure out how their written language works.

But we are presuming too much - that they learn to read by reading at the beginning.

That is not true for most kids. Some kids do come in and they are ready to
go. But most kids aren’t. And even those kids, as you know, who look like they’re reading very easily - if their teachers really understood the structure of the English language, those kids could be learning so much about the way the language works and can even become much better spellers.

So many people say to me, “I’m a good reader but I can’t really spell.” If you really understand the relationship between spelling and reading, if your spelling isn’t great, you could probably be a better reader. You don’t know as much as you could know about the English language.

So, as a quick aside, by the way, in my own learning about this stuff as a reporter, I want to repeat the phrase that we want to “teach children how their written language works.” That’s one of the things that I have really been thinking about. We kind of get stuck in this fight about phonics, and if you really need to know the research -- first of all you have not been skeptical of phonics because you recognize how important it is - that all good readers have phonics skills. We can either teach those skills to kids in school or hope they learn them somewhere else. But we also know the reading science isn’t just phonics; it is all the things that you need to learn to figure out how your written language works. It includes Phonological and Phonemic Awareness, which we know is left out too much in teacher preparation. Phonics doesn’t work too well if you don’t have good phonemic awareness. But also, morphology, the understanding of the way that words work.

There’s another thing that drives me a little crazy about some of the fights we get into about this stuff – especially for these kids who don’t need a lot of help. I was one of those little word-nerd kids that didn’t need a lot of reading instruction, but man, if someone had taught me some of the cool things about the ways that words work, I would have eaten that up. And you can see that kids do. When it’s taught well, those kids who are off and kind of advanced early with reading, learn so much about the language - it’s so fascinating. So, people get stuck saying phonics - it’s so boring. If it’s taught well, it’s not boring at all. And you know, when you are 5 and 6 years old and you learn how to read words, it’s so great!

One of the things that I did recently as part of my reporting is look for a class where I could learn more about the science of reading. I’ve been interviewing lots of people and reading a lot of books, but I thought - why shouldn’t I take a class and see what else I can learn? And I found a class, and unfortunately, it’s not that easy to find one. But I did find a class, in the Masters of Reading Science Program at Mt. Saint Joseph University in Ohio. And the professor, Amy Murdoch, agreed to let me audit for free. That was a really awesome perk of being a journalist. Most of my classmates were teachers, from all over the country (one of my classmates is here today – we just met for the first time). The class is all online. The class was an introduction to the reading science, called Reading 505. I did tell the professor she should make it a MOOC. And I do think we need more ways for teachers to access this knowledge, because when you get this knowledge, it is so eye-opening. Many teachers learn a little bit of it and feel like they want to know more.

I’m going to read you some of the things my classmates said in our online discussions about their teacher preparation. These were teachers from across the country, currently teaching reading:

“My colleague completed a Reading Master’s program this December, and I was amazed that they never discussed scientific-based reading. In fact, her favorite professor said that he didn’t believe phonics was an essential component in teaching reading!”

So that’s a big part of it - that when you get to a certain point in your career and a you have a certain level of education and it’s like, whoops, I didn’t know that. That is shocking and stunning. There’s a defensiveness and you have to figure out a way in.

Here’s another student:

“I kept falsely reassuring myself my students weren’t making growth because of this reason or that reason, although deep down I feared it was me and my instruction. I wasn’t adequately prepared. It’s not that I didn’t care, it’s that I didn’t know any better.”

(Continued on next page)
Another person said:
“My colleague completed a Reading Master’s program this December, and I was amazed that they never discussed scientific-based reading. In fact, her favorite professor said that he didn’t believe phonics was an essential component in teaching reading!”

And then another person said:
“I felt so angry and guilty when I was finally taught the basics of reading science. I thought, ‘how did you let me teach literacy without knowing this?!’”

And that happens all the time. There’s so much guilt when teachers do get this knowledge. It’s not just what teachers DON’T learn in teacher prep. It’s what they DO learn, and the fact that they are learning things that don’t line up with the science. And I think it’s possible that this is as much or more of the problem we are having in teacher prep and in classrooms. It’s not what’s lacking but what’s present. Because most schools do have some kind of foundational skills. They’re doing some kind of phonics. But the question is - how good is it? How much is it? Are they focusing on the right things at the right time? Where in the process of learning to read is the emphasis on phonemic awareness and phonics? What’s the order? And what else are you teaching? And are you teaching things that go against what you’re teaching when you teach foundational skills?

My classmates in the psychology of reading class said things like this:
“Our readings have made me realize that many theories and practices I once thought were effective can be really detrimental to students.”
“My idea has always been that if the people above me say that I should use this program or if everyone else is using it, it must the right way to teach and must be beneficial. It isn’t until I started this course that I realized how wrong I was. The information I presented this week was all new and eye opening.”

“A lot of the information that I learned this week was very new to me; I had the incorrect idea that children with dyslexia are unable to read due to visual problems. It was enlightening to learn that visual deficits are not the cause of dyslexia.”

“Another teacher: “Before the readings this week, I was under the impression that dyslexia was simply reading letters and words backwards.”

There is clearly this huge gap between research and practice when it comes to early reading instruction. And it would be a mistake to blame that entirely on teacher preparation for sure. I mean, first of all, there is no way of making sure teachers learn everything there is to know about learning to read in their teacher prep. Teachers need professional development. But there’s a lot of PD that is not lined up with the science. There are teachers who do learn the science in teacher prep programs, and then they go into schools and they’re like, “well, no one else knows it.” And they either become that person who is grumpy and doing something different from everyone else, or they just start doing it the way everyone else is doing it. And the reading instruction seems to work for a lot of kids, so maybe it’s fine? But a lot of what’s going on out there is, I think, maybe wildly off base.

For my classmates in the Reading Science program, the big challenge for them is finding a school where they will be respected for what they have learned and where they can manage to teach and use what they know about the science of reading. There is a huge opportunity for teacher preparation because this is where a big part of the problem is, a big source of the problem, one of the many. And when teachers do learn the reading science, they are grateful. What would be so great is if teachers didn’t have to have that surprise in their mid-career – when they’ve been teaching 15-20 years - and then they learn all this stuff. I think the people in this room, and others who are really trying to attack this question of what we teach about reading, this is kind of where it’s at. This (teacher preparation) is the biggest bang for the buck. So, to be able to establish something that could be replicated, where other people look and say, “Hey, these programs are doing this, and this school district is doing this.”

One of the things I know from talking to the professor of the class I took at Mount St. Joseph’s is that finding people to teach in these programs is difficult. There’s a supply-side problem in teacher prep.
I think you all [those of you gathered here today for this talk] have the power to prevent this kind of mid-career shame and surprise that happens to too many teachers. Teach them the science before they go out there and actually teach.

And I guess the only other thing I would say as a reporter who came to this and has become a little obsessed with this topic over the past couple years - I’ve become obsessed with it for two reasons. First of all, it’s so critical. There are no magic bullets in education, but if actually all kids could really read well by 4th grade, so many other problems would start to take care of themselves. It wouldn’t all go away, but so many of the problems - behavior problems, kids who start to fall apart in middle school, low high school graduation rates, getting stuck in remedial education when you go to college, spending money on college education but never finishing, - these kinds of things could be nipped in the bud if seven-year-olds could read.

And the other reason I’ve become so obsessed with this topic is because it’s so fascinating. I mean it’s just so interesting. And I’m not saying every teacher will be wildly enthusiastic about this, but I do think it is important to appeal to that. Getting people involved in this because of the curiosity factor is huge.

Good luck to all of you [those of you gathered here today for this talk] in what you are doing. I am going to continue to press upon these various, very important parts of the problem (in how we teach kids to read) and maybe in a few years we can all look back and say, “Wow, some things really have changed.” I think things are changing and it’s because people from different places - superintendents, parents, teachers, International Dyslexia Association, PA and now teacher educators - are getting on board and starting to see it the same way. Because this evidence is so vast and it’s undeniable. We have to have people see this body of evidence. Thank you.
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Pittsburgh New Church School Multi-Sensory Institute Summer Enrichment Camp 2019

The Pittsburgh New Church School (PNCS) launched its first summer enrichment camp for children with dyslexia this summer. The camp was open to all children throughout the Pittsburgh area. Three faculty members organized and operated the camp. PNCS Principal Cyndi Glenn, Melissa Sellner, primary grades teacher, and Dr. Joe Nocera, Admissions Director and Robotics Instructor led the activities. Glenn and Sellner are both trained in Orton-Gillingham and multisensory math instruction. Two one-week sessions were offered. Each session began with daily academic instruction in Orton-Gillingham reading followed by a multisensory math class. Students were then able to choose two of three different elective classes such as art, music or robotics. A total of eighteen children attended the camp with daily sessions lasting four hours. Each week had a theme and the students were able to create fun projects to take home. “Camping” was the theme of the first week. The students designed a miniature campground, made tie-dye shirts, programmed Ozo bots, and ended the week with a mock camp-out including s’mores over a real camp fire.

The second week’s theme was “Under the Sea.” Students crafted sea slime, footprint paintings, more advanced robotic Vex bots, and played in a kid carwash constructed of PVC pipes that the previous week’s students had designed and built in math class. Overall, the summer camp was a big success and we look forward to expanding our offerings for next summer. See you in summer 2020! If you are interested in more information or to register for next summer call (412) 731-0122 or visit our website at www.pittsburghnewchurchschool.org

Public Testimony on Chapter 49

The State Board of Education conducted a public hearing on June 14 at the Allegheny Intermediate Unit #3 in Homestead, Pennsylvania. PBIDA President Christine Seppi offered public testimony at the Public Hearing on Chapter 49: Certification of Professional Personnel. Seppi spoke passionately as a parent and organization leader offering feedback on a draft proposed set of amendments to Chapter 49. Additional stakeholders offering testimony were parents Laura Muhl, Sharon Janosik, Carol Bateman, Daphne Uliana and retired teacher, Janet Mittenberger. All told their stories or shared experiences as to why it is important for teacher preparation programs to change how they are training teachers.
Delaware Valley Friends Lower School Division: Developing Happy, Confident, and Able Learners

By: Jason Segern
Lower and Middle School Director
Delaware Valley Friends School

Delaware Valley Friends School has a history of successfully preparing students with language-based learning differences for future work and study. For over 30 years the school has transformed the lives of families by helping students at both the middle and high school levels achieve academic success. A few years ago, the decision was made to open a lower school division to serve students in grades 3 through 5. More recently the school has made plans to serve students in first and second grades as well. The school felt the need to reach the younger students outside of our community whose academic needs were not being met and to help parents understand that there was a path to academic success for their children.

Students with language-based learning differences at the lower school level often do not experience the same joys and successes common to their peers who do not have these similar challenges. For some students, this happens as early as first and second-grade during which they have difficulty grasping even the most basic phonological skills associated with being a fluent and capable reader at the word level. For others, reading difficulties become more apparent at the third and fourth-grade level. The common refrain is that a child’s educational experience transitions from “learning to read to reading to learn.” This shift impacts a student’s ability to navigate the curriculum in all classes (not just the language arts and English). In both cases, students are left feeling frustrated and consequently school brings about anxiety and stress instead of joy and laughter.

The DVFS lower school program remains true to the mission of the school while at the same time is developmentally appropriate for students in the lower grades. A vision statement was created that describes the program as a nurturing Quaker program for students in grades 3-5 where children develop the skills, mindset, and knowledge to become happy, confident, and capable learners. The latter part of the vision resonated with all as a key component of the new division.

This vision is supported by two philosophical pillars: “closing the gap” and educating the “whole child”. We close the gap in academic skills through the Orton-Gillingham (OG) approach to remediating reading including our own DVFS Literacy Program. We close the gap in number-sense and number fluency by training all of our teachers in a multisensory approach to teaching mathematics. Marilyn Zecher’s Multisensory Math follows a similar approach to the lesson structure of the OG approach to reading. It is characterized by introducing and reinforcing math concepts first at the concrete level, then at the representational, and, finally, at the abstract level. In addition, students who are diagnosed with ADHD benefit from classroom setups and instructional approaches that help increase metacognition related to self-regulation. Teachers receive training from executive function expert Sarah Ward and implement her strategies such as having an externalized visualization system for preparing, engaging and completing assignments and having visual representations of the passing and utilization of time as it relates to completing academic tasks. All of these approaches and strategies are guided by the teaching practice of meeting the students where they are academically and being diagnostic and prescriptive when planning their instruction.
It is crucial when designing the experience for the DVFS lower school students that a significant portion of the programming is devoted to creating opportunities for success. Opportunities that allow us to reach and teach the “whole child”. This is achieved by scheduling students in a variety of non-academic classes. Traditional elementary school specials such as art and physical education are included and meet frequently throughout a scheduling cycle. Students also have time dedicated to participating in music classes that help build executive function skills, designing and tinkering in the DVFS Makerspace, taking a yoga class that encourages mindfulness practices, and participating in a movement and dance class that helps support self-confidence and respect.

Knowing that students with learning differences may have poor self-concepts related to their school functioning and struggle to manage their emotions, social/emotional learning is a key aspect of the DVFS lower school. Having developmentally responsive programming at this level must include direct and explicit instruction in positive character development and what it means to be a good citizen. Wellness in children requires purposeful attention and intervention in both educational and emotional areas. Students in the DVFS lower school participate in our own CORE class that is guided by the Quaker testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, and Stewardship as well as the belief that there is inherent goodness in all individuals. A central and welcomed component of this course is our labradoodle therapy dog, Lucy!

DVFS provides an environment where there is a focus on remediation that meets the individual needs of students and allows them to start to experience success again in the classroom. Having a whole child approach to programming grants students time within the school day to participate in areas where they may have some latent talent or strength. When a third-grader makes an announcement in front of 210 students plus faculty during our morning Gathering and raises the spirits of the whole community, this is a sign of newfound courage and confidence. With our lower school students, little successes in and outside the classroom eventually are a catalyst for bigger successes - and with some patience, time, understanding, and hard work by teachers and students, school becomes a place of joy and excitement again. A place where our students are happy, confident, and able learners.

Jason Seggern is the Lower and Middle School Director at Delaware Valley Friends School in Paoli, Pennsylvania. He has worked in the field of education for the past 15 years as a cognitive therapist, classroom teacher and administrator. He holds a Master’s Degree in Educational Leadership from Drexel University.
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UPON LEARNING THAT SHE would receive the 2019 Janet L. Hoopes award, Mrs. Julia Sadtler opened our interview by saying, “But there are so many more deserving people,” and closed with, “I wish I could have done more.” At PBIDA, we know that Julia is a truly deserving recipient of this award that “honors an individual or individuals in Pennsylvania or Delaware who have made significant contributions to those living with learning disabilities.”

Julia’s humility may be why her work in the field of dyslexia might not be well known to many of you, but it is also a hallmark of the generous support and guidance she has provided to so many of us. For over forty years, Julia has been a respected colleague, and with quiet determination and persistence, she has had an immeasurable impact on our International Dyslexia Association (IDA) branch and on the lives of students with learning disabilities.

Julia began her work as a research assistant in the Department of Psychology at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) in the mid 1970’s, at a time when few even recognized the word dyslexia. She worked with Dr. Thomas Atkins, our 1997 Hoopes honoree for his work on dyslexia, and there she began a lifelong friendship with eventual PBIDA board members Tom Jennings and Cynthia Solot. Julia recalls that our 1998 Hoopes honoree, the late Dr. Katherine (Kit) Gordon-Clark from the Bryn Mawr Child Study Institute, used to call the four of them, “our in town [dyslexia] mafia.”

After almost two decades at CHOP, and a brief stint in a private practice, Julia became the Admissions Director at the Crossroads School from 1994 until 2010. There she was a life-changing first point of contact for hundreds of children with language-based learning disabilities and their parents. During these years, Julia served several terms as a PBIDA Board member, and she became an Orton Oak, “longstanding IDA members who have been important supporters of the organization for a minimum of 25 years.” Julia, and then PBIDA President Marianne Cook, undertook a monumental challenge in 2004 as the Local Arrangements Chairs for the National IDA Conference in Philadelphia. Attended by over 3700 attendees, it was by far the largest national IDA conference at that time.

From 2012 to 2015, Julia served two terms as President of PBIDA. During her tenure, Diane Reott founded the Pennsylvania Dyslexia Literacy Coalition (PA DLC). With Julia’s friendship and leadership, PA DLC became a standing committee of PBIDA in 2014, and Diane went on to become PBIDA’s first Executive Director in 2018. PA DLC’s efforts, including the work of Diane, Julia, Daphne Uliana, former PBIDA Presidents Eugenie Flaherty and Monica McHale-Small, and countless others, culminated in the Pennsylvania legislature passing “Act 69 of 2014, the Dyslexia and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot Program. [This] requires the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to establish a dyslexia and early literacy intervention pilot program to provide evidence-based early screening and multtier support systems, using evidence-based intervention services for students with potential risk factors for early reading deficiencies and dyslexia...” This Pilot Project is groundbreaking in Pennsylvania and a model for national legislation.

Julia shared that her grandfather had hoped to attend MIT but could not gain admission because he could not read. Her grandfather went on to build a hydroelectric power system on his rural New Jersey farm, but he never knew why he couldn’t read. When her mother would walk home from school on dark winter evenings, their home was the only one with lights. We are sure that her mother and grandfather would share our pride in Julia’s selfless commitment to a lifetime of work shining a light on dyslexia and helping to provide a path - until everyone can read.

Julia has been married for 52 years to her husband Sandy. She is the mother of 2 daughters and has 4 grandchildren. In addition to a retirement filled with participating in the PA Master Naturalist Program, foal-sitting at the New Bolton Center of the University of Pennsylvania, and spending as much time as possible with her family, Julia always answers our call at PBIDA and is a valued mentor and friend.
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Stop by my table or contact me for your copy of the Building the Reading Brain white paper.

Mary Wexler
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215.817.9327
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Executive Director, Honoree Acceptance Speech

The Children’s Dyslexia Center’s 2019 Honoree was PBIDA’s Executive Director, Diane Reott. Diane was chosen for her many years of hard work and contributions to dyslexia awareness and early intervention. She is well respected by many across PA and around the country and has been an inspiration to groups ranging from parents to politicians. Diane’s leadership and determination changed the trajectory of literacy in our state with her advocacy for early intervention of reading difficulties. We are honored to share her speech with you and hope that it will inspire all constituencies to continue to work collectively to impact change together. \textit{The PBIDA Board}

I am proud to say that he has just graduated college with a degree in Supply Chain Management. Way to go….Matt!

Any journey that softens a heart is one worth taking and I will tell you that this journey has touched my heart more than I thought possible. When Matt was diagnosed with dyslexia, the neuropsychologist told us he would never learn to read so he would have to learn Braille. As his mother, I believed I’d find a way. In the beginning I was lost and had to locate answers to so many questions which, at that time, were not easy to find. It was a daunting experience and I was anxious at the heart-wrenching prospect of not being able to help my child. I continually asked, “Why is this happening to Matt?”.

I stand here today to tell you why this had to happen to Matt. It happened for the parenting groups that I created and the parents that I helped. It happened for those who attended and learned from my dyslexia presentations, workshops and speeches. It happened so that there would be a PA Dyslexia Literacy Coalition. It happened so that the PA Dyslexia Screening and Early Intervention Pilot program would be rewritten to change the trajectory of literacy in PA. Most importantly it happened so that more PA children would have a better opportunity to learn how to read and more teachers would be trained to learn how to be a part of that success.

I was blessed to meet and learn a lot from those I call Matt’s angels…Lisa Goldstein, Megan Leahy, Carol Just, Sandy Klos, Julia Sadtler, Penny Moldofsky, Sam Steinberg, Nanie Flaherty, and Mary Ellen Trent to name a few. Our beloved Reott Angel, Penny Moldofsky, is the reason both of my children are where they are today. She is sitting here with her two great accomplishments who love her dearly. Not only was she the one who took Matt under her wing and taught him how to read, but she also took my daughter, Alex under her wing. She trained her in Wilson, oversaw her practicum and continues to help and mentor her whenever she needs it. As a certified Wilson instructor and school psychologist, Alex has made a difference in the lives of so many children and this is clearly another reason why this had to happen to Matt.

I had many fingers pointed in my face over the years warning me to watch what I said and not to use the ‘D’ word. I had a reading specialist say to me once, “Who do you think you are? You will never change reading. What do you know - you’re just a mom.” Little did she know…wrong mom. I don’t take no for an answer and I can make the impossible possible. As Churchill said, “a pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity, an optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty.” Please know that I truly appreciate this award and all of your

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support so very much. The recognition in the media over the years is appreciated as well but the real credit goes to those who work with children every day. My work has always been about helping others and making sure no other child felt as diminished and worthless as my little boy, and that no parent should ever have to feel that same anxiety and helplessness that I felt.

I created the PA Dyslexia Literacy Coalition, with the help of my colleagues, Nanie Flaherty, Lisa Goldstein and Julia Sadler so that together we could do more to impact change for children. I took the lead to be a leader, and my passion led to my goals. I worked hard to create and collaborate with a team that I fully trusted. There were many ups and downs, but I always found ways to unite us and encourage a commitment to the goal— the children. In spite of those who didn’t support my choice, I remained that leader and took on the pilot program, I was determined to do it right. I found strangers whose backgrounds I felt were important to the quality of the Pilot, and I brought them in to work with me on it. I personally worked with each individual on the team to draft each section of the legislation. When the new leadership at the Department of Education stopped supporting the Pilot, I alone stepped up. I had the courage to speak up for its importance in PA and for keeping our consulting group intact so that we could keep the pilot moving as planned to the end. I don’t run away from bumps and I have never deviated from the road or the goal.

I want to thank Pat Hozella, Fran Warkomski, Lynn Dell, John Delligagrotto and Marie Abbazio, the consultants on the pilot advisory group, who gave so much of their time, expertise and commitment to create a great pilot. They continue to inspire and teach me. They too are an answer to the question…. “Why did this happen to Matt?”

We have all learned a lot from our wonderful pilot schools and their staff. They are the heroes who have given life to the language we drafted, and to the implementation outlined by the advisory group. Our pilot districts have demonstrated the successful outcomes of good leadership. The pilot leadership stayed positive and focused on the work and the children. They brought together strength as a team and they understand that creating success breeds more success - and the winners are our children. I am proud that I stayed the course and believed in my goal. And I am proud of the great opportunities the pilot program has provided so many others who want to carry the work forward in their own personal way. My sincere thank you goes out to all our pilot teams.

And so 18 years later, we are now allowed to use the ‘D’ word, and dyslexia has a place in schools and classrooms. Teachers are being trained in the science of reading that came out of the research of dyslexia. Schools and districts are learning how to implement that training and seeing positive outcomes for their students. I am happy to look out into this audience to see a wonderful new generation of moms continuing this work and doing it their way. I am proud to be in their lives to mentor them, to pass along history, and to watch them grow and become the heroes I already know they are. I want to thank all the young adult dyslexics here who have given so much of their time to work with me, and to work on behalf of PBIDA and the Coalition to pay it forward. They speak to teachers and administrators to help them understand why their curriculums and their trust in the research matters. They speak to parents of children with dyslexia so that they are able to see that success is possible. I am proud and honored to know and mentor each of them - they are our young heroes.

As the Executive Director of PBIDA, I am committed to working with and supporting parents, teachers, school districts, universities and communities to bring positive change so that all of our children are made to feel they have worth and amazing gifts. I tell the young children I’ve had the pleasure to work with, “You are the only one qualified to be you. It’s your choices as much as your abilities that define you”. What would the world be like without our dyslexics? They have amazing social skills that can capture a room and empathy that can illuminate the darkness. They have the ability to change tears of sadness into tears of joy. They bring color and design and words to life. Yes, life would be pretty boring without our dyslexics who are here in our world to bring their gifts to life and share them with us.

And so, things do happen for a reason and nothing is impossible if we keep it about the children. I thank you all again for this honor. But most importantly, I thank those of you in the audience who stuck by me and believed in me during those difficult years and for your continued support in this important work. I have been allowed to touch lives in more ways that I could have ever hoped but there’s still a lot more work to be done so please stay the course. We need each of you to work hard and to keep it about the children. The way to drive success is to stay focused on the goal of the work, and to do it in the best possible way - together. Thank You.
Saturday, April 25, 2020

PBIDA 2020 SPRING CONFERENCE
CARLOW UNIVERSITY
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Anita L. Archer

Anita L. Archer, PhD, is an educational consultant to school districts on explicit instruction, the design and delivery of instruction, behavior management, and literacy instruction. She has taught elementary and middle school students and is the recipient of 10 awards honoring her excellence in teaching and contributions to the field of education. Dr. Archer has served on the faculties of San Diego State University, the University of Washington in Seattle, and the University of Oregon in Eugene. She is nationally known for her professional development activities, having presented in every state over the course of her 40-year career. Dr. Archer is coauthor, with Dr. Mary Gleason, of numerous curriculum materials addressing reading, writing, and study skills.
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Lisa Scottoline is *The New York Times* bestselling author and *Edgar* award-winning author of 32 novels. She also writes a weekly column with her daughter, Francesca Serritella for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* titled “Chick Wit” which is a witty and fun take on life from a woman’s perspective.

Lisa believes in writing what she knows, and she puts so much of herself into her books. Lisa is also an incredibly generous person as well as an engaging and entertaining speaker.

In 2016, both *Amazon* and *People Magazine* chose Lisa’s new book, *Damaged* as their pick for Best New Book. The story centered around Patrick, a young boy with dyslexia. Lisa’s research about dyslexia and the world he would face with learning disabilities began at PBIDA with members Franca Palumbo, Lisa Goldstein, and Diane Reott.

**Thank you Lisa for your friendship and support!**
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