Pittsburgh Conference
at Carlow University
April 25, 2020
RESCHEDULED:
Saturday, April 10, 2021

PBIDA’s 42nd Annual Conference:
Literacy Across the Lifespan
at Arcadia University

Information:
PBIDA.org
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Dear PBIDA Members and Friends,

A month ago, as we were preparing this issue of Focus for the printer, we realized we would have to cancel PBIDA’s April 25, 2020 conference in Pittsburgh due to concerns about the spreading coronavirus. Even as we made that decision, I could not have imagined how our lives would change in such a short time. Along with many of you, I am staying home and practicing social distancing, and we are all dealing with an entirely new world situation.

As schools have moved to online teaching, I am especially concerned about whether students who need extra support will get the help they need. We at PBIDA are available to hear parents’ concerns and to help them find ways to keep their children’s learning on track.

I am heartened to see the number of people who have stepped forward to help tutors transition to teaching online and the many companies that have shared materials and knowledge to help teachers and students. The IDA website: dyslexiaida.org has highlighted information on helpful topics including Homeschooling, the Dyslexia-Stress-Anxiety Connection, Evaluating Professionals, and an Overview of Assistive and Instructional Technology. For worried parents this is a time to be especially aware of organizations or individuals making claims that offer quick fixes that do not actually transfer to long-term gains in reading ability—remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is not true.

As we struggle to manage working from home while caring for our other responsibilities, PBIDA is planning events for this fall and beyond in hopes that we can meet in person again soon. Please save the dates for upcoming conferences and check our website at pbida.org for details of more events once the world begins to return to normal.

1. Our 42nd annual conference in the Philadelphia area is planned for Saturday, October 3, 2020, at Arcadia University. We look forward to hearing from Margie Gillis as our keynote speaker. We plan to simulcast this conference to sites throughout Pennsylvania and Delaware to reach people who cannot attend in person.

2. The Pittsburgh conference that was canceled has been rescheduled for April 10, 2021.

3. In addition to conferences, another powerful outreach tool PBIDA presents is Experience Dyslexia, a simulation of being a student with a learning disability in the classroom. PBIDA has several presentations currently scheduled for the fall.

PBIDA is an organization of dedicated volunteers who care deeply about helping all students learn to read. I urge you to become a participating member of our team—help us reach more people with the knowledge that reading is best taught through Structured Literacy and that dyslexic students are bright, capable students who can learn to read. If you are not an IDA member, please join. If you are a member, bring a friend. With more members of IDA, we can become a stronger force in our two states. Each student who learns to read is a person who is given the opportunity for a better life. This is the real purpose for what we do.

The world will return to normal, and we will continue to work on disseminating information about best practices for teaching all children to read.

For now, my hope is that all of you are staying safe and well.

Christine Craig Seppi
President
International Dyslexia Association, PA
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Kelly Cartwright Presented 41st Annual PBIDA Conference Keynote Address: Why Don’t My Best (Word) Readers Comprehend Text?

By John R. Kruidenier, Ed.D.

In her keynote address at PBIDA’s annual fall conference, Kelly Cartwright focused on an enormously important question for those in the field of reading: what can be done for those readers who, though they have developed adequate or even exceptional word analysis or decoding skills, are still unable to demonstrate adequate comprehension of the texts they read? According to Dr. Cartwright, a professor of psychology, neuroscience, and teacher education at Christopher Newport University, a careful analysis of the research suggests that approximately one third of elementary school children fit into this category. They have developed oral reading fluency but still have a severe reading comprehension deficit. Approximately one third of elementary school children can read words but still struggle with comprehension.

We know from decades of reading research that most beginning readers, including older readers who struggle with learning to read, need direct and explicit instruction in accurate and rapid word analysis: the ability to quickly figure out the pronunciation of individual words. This focus on word analysis and reading fluency makes sense – to understand a text, readers must first be able to fluently translate it into inner speech. A strong body of experimental research demonstrating this fact was necessary, at least in part, to counteract the natural tendency to view reading as something that develops simply through exposure to print, without direct decoding instruction, a view held by many non-specialists and, for a time, many reading specialists as well. Dr. Cartwright contends it is just as much a mistake to assume that reading comprehension will develop naturally, without direct and explicit instruction. According to Cartwright, even direct instruction in traditional reading comprehension strategies alone is not adequate. The key to teaching reading comprehension, she explained, is to also teach executive function skills, “a critical set of mental skills that enable the management of reading processes toward the end goal of reading comprehension.” Having conducted research and written extensively about executive function skills, Cartwright’s keynote was devoted to describing these skills, why they are important, and how they support effective reading comprehension.

We use executive function skills generally to regulate or manage our thoughts, feelings, and actions so that we can accomplish our goals. Cartwright noted that researchers agree there are three basic or core executive functions. One is working memory, that part of memory where we hold items that are currently the focus of our attention. While reading a story, for example, we collect important plot details in working memory as we construct a coherent representation of the story. The capacity of working memory or the amount of information we are able to focus on at one time is limited. Readers must constantly gather information into meaningful units in working memory so that it can be moved to longer-term memory and recalled as needed. For example, a series of events leading to the end of a story might be gathered and stored together as the story’s climax, to be recalled later in working memory when needed.

A second core executive function is cognitive flexibility, the ability to shift the focus of our attention from one item or task to another. Readers must constantly shift their attention during all aspects of the reading process. A reader may focus on the sounds of a newer word as it is decoded before shifting attention to the word’s meaning, and then shifting again to consider how this newly understood concept adds to knowledge of a character’s feelings or behavior. Inhibition, the last of the three core executive functions described by Cartwright, is the ability to restrain or resist normal or habitual responses. All of us work on resisting impulses resulting from distractions, for example. Beginning readers learn to avoid jumping to a conclusion about a word after decoding only the first few sounds, as in reading ‘bring’ for ‘bridge.’ When reading about a character in a difficult situation, efficient comprehension occurs when encountering the phrase ‘in a jam’ only if the reader is able to ignore the meaning of ‘jam’ that refers to food.

(Continued on page 7)
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While there is no agreed-upon list of executive functions among experts beyond working memory, cognitive flexibility, and inhibition, Cartwright discussed three more that are important for reading comprehension: planning, organization, and social understanding. Planning includes the ability to set a goal and then determine the steps needed to accomplish it. For readers, the ultimate goal is to understand a text. The steps needed to accomplish this goal may include many traditional reading comprehension strategies. Previewing a text before reading, asking questions while reading, and summarizing sections of text, for example, have all been shown to enable comprehension. Organization is both the ability to recognize common ways that information and objects are arranged or ordered, and also the ability to impose order. Readers learn to recognize spelling patterns and sentence and text structures, for example, and to organize information as they assimilate it. Finally, social understanding is the ability to understand what others are thinking and feeling. It helps readers understand what motivates characters in stories or, perhaps, understand an author’s purpose in writing a story or essay.

Cartwright cited research showing that children with reading comprehension deficits also have difficulties with executive function skills. Executive functions appear to underlie or support reading comprehension skills as well as other fundamental reading skills. Fortunately, there is a growing body of research demonstrating that executive functions can be taught and that teaching at least some of them can improve children’s reading comprehension.

During her keynote and then her follow-up presentation, Dr. Cartwright presented many approaches to teaching executive functions within the context of reading. Here are just a few of the approaches related specifically to reading comprehension.

- Practice resolving anaphors. To do this, students must hold a referent in working memory and connect this referent to its pronoun (‘she’ refers to the person named ‘Sally’ mentioned earlier in a text).
- Teach students to sort words by multiple criteria, first by sound and then by meaning, for example. This requires cognitive flexibility.
- Have students learn the multiple meanings of a word (e.g., ‘jam’) and explain the meanings of sentences that contain the word. As noted above, this requires inhibition.
- To practice planning, ask students to set a goal for reading comprehension and then list ways to reach this goal (preview the text, establish a focus, connect to what you already know, make goal-related questions, and predict what is coming in the text, for example).
- Teach various narrative and text structures (definition-example, compare-contrast, temporal sequence, and so on) to improve organization skills.
- Map stories from multiple characters’ perspectives to work on the application of social understanding to texts.

Dr. Cartwright ended her keynote address by emphasizing the need for reading instructors to consider precisely how executive function skills are used throughout the reading process, along with traditional or familiar reading skills. Doing this will enable explicit instruction in underlying executive function skills and lead to improved reading comprehension for children who struggle because of a specific reading comprehension deficit.

John R. Kruidenier is a literacy and technology consultant and heads Kruidenier Education Consulting (KEC) in Horsham, Pennsylvania.
MEETING LITERACY AND LANGUAGE NEEDS OF STRUGGLING READERS

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- Master’s of Reading (with Reading Specialist certification)
- Reading Specialist Certification
- ESL Program Specialist Certificate

For more information, visit arcadia.edu/PBIDALit
PBIDA’s 42nd Conference on Reading, Literacy and Learning:  

**Literacy Across the Lifespan**

**Saturday, October 3rd, 2020**

This year’s conference will take place at

**Arcadia University**
450 S Easton Rd, Glenside, PA 19038

~ Keynote: Dr. Margie Gillis ~

President, Literacy How, Inc. & Research Affiliate, Haskins Lab

Teacher, researcher and collaborator, Margie’s goal is to give teachers the tools to implement research-based practices in the classroom.

Margie will share outcomes from her experience in applying innovative professional development and research to practice. She will also explain the impact on children’s lives of extending this work through collaborative efforts with higher education, state agencies, and policy makers.

The keynote and selected conference sessions will be streamed to locations outside the Philadelphia area!
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To Empower
Exciting Changes at Carlow University Include a Science of Reading Focus

By Keely Baronak, Ed.D.

For Carlow University’s Education Department, co-sponsoring the Spring Regional PBIDA conference is an incredible opportunity to support the work of educators and families of children with dyslexia and language-based learning disabilities. There is a tremendous need to ensure all students receive research-validated literacy interventions from educators well-versed in the science of reading and structured literacy. The work of keynote presenter, Dr. Anita Archer, exemplifies this work and reflects the commitment of the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) to provide superior professional development.

The sponsorship of the IDA Regional Conference is reflective of the exciting changes taking place at the University. Carlow University’s founders, The Sisters of Mercy, ensured an inclusive social justice focus is imbued with the mission of the institution. As this mission is actualized across our departmental curricular offerings and academic programs, access to high-quality reading instruction is critical. Carlow’s Education Department believes equity in education begins in high-quality preschool and scientifically grounded literacy instruction in K-4. Carlow’s Education Department is committed to ensuring all undergraduate and graduate students in Education receive a strong background in the science of reading. All coursework in Early Childhood and Special Education is being aligned to IDA standards. Last year, a graduate Dyslexia track was designed, and a Reading Specialist Program, with an emphasis in Dyslexia, is under review with the PA Department of Education.

The IDA advocates for robust teacher preparation programs… “Evidence strongly suggests that when reading instruction is delivered by highly knowledgeable and skilled teachers, all but the most severe reading disabilities can be resolved early on, putting students on track toward academic success. This is true even with high-risk populations, e.g., impoverished children and English language learners” (Cárdenas-Hagan, E. & Carreker, S., 2016, in Structured Literacy Certification for Dyslexia Practitioners and Therapists: What? Why? How? Retrieved from: https://dyslexiaida.org/structured-literacy-certification-for-dyslexia-practitioners-and-therapists-what-why-how/)

The Carlow University Campus Laboratory School, serving children and students in grades PreK-8, provides multi-sensory based literacy instruction using Fundations® as the core curriculum K-4, tiered literacy interventions, and data-driven benchmarking. Summer professional development workshops for teachers included week-long Orton-Gillingham training this past year. Nine teachers and staff are also participating in a two-year LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) training. A new Learning Center at the School provides individualized instruction for students using Wilson Reading instruction and executive functioning skill support.

Carlow’s joint sponsorship of PBIDA’s Pittsburgh Conference is also reflective of the on-going commitment to partnerships and community collaborations. Carlow’s Education Department is stronger together, and students and educators benefit when organizations partner in support of children and youth. The new date for the conference is Saturday, April 10, 2021.

Keely Baronak, Ed.D is the Executive Director of Carlow University’s Campus Laboratory School and the Chair of the Education Department.
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Thank you to the Law Offices of Thalheimer & Palumbo for their continued support as a Platinum Sponsor of PBIDA.

Our very special thank you to Franca Palumbo for her many years of unwavering support of PBIDA.

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The Pittsburgh Regional Group of the Pennsylvania Branch
of the International Dyslexia Association is pleased to present

The Christopher Gardner Award
for Excellence in the
Field of Dyslexia
to
Dr. Rita Bean
Professor Emerita, School of Education
University of Pittsburgh
in recognition of her work in the
improvement of literacy instruction

A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, Dr. Bean is a nationally known expert on the role and impact of reading specialists and literacy coaches in schools. She served as the Director of the Reading Center at the University of Pittsburgh for several decades. Her passion to support students with reading difficulties, in addition to providing quality teacher preparation, has been the driving force throughout her career.

Among her many accomplishments is her role in advising the Scottish Rite Masons in their efforts to establish the Children’s Dyslexia Center of Pittsburgh. In the mid-1990’s, Dr. Bean collaborated with the Scottish Rite Masons of Pittsburgh and was instrumental in helping them to open their free tutoring center for children with dyslexia in 1999. In addition, Dr. Bean was pivotal in bringing Dr. Marcia Henry, a fellow of the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators, to Pittsburgh to provide Orton-Gillingham (O-G) training for the initial tutors at the center.

Dr. Bean then facilitated the continuation of O-G coursework at the University of Pittsburgh for several years. Dr. Bean recognized the multi-faceted value of providing training in the O-G methodology. Such preparation doesn’t just provide instruction on an approach to teaching reading; it also provides teachers with a valuable understanding of the structure of language. The O-G courses at the University of Pittsburgh brought an awareness and heightened interest in O-G and dyslexia to this region.

Dr. Rita Bean has dedicated her career to the advancement of effective literacy instruction. Though retired, she continues to write, consult, and research. Her commitment to the field of literacy education deserves accolade. We are proud to honor her with the 2020 Christopher Gardner Award.

Dr. Bean will be honored at the PBIDA Pittsburgh Conference rescheduled for April 10, 2021.

This award was established to honor those who make a significant difference in the lives of people with dyslexia in the Pittsburgh Region. Christopher Gardner, who was dyslexic, had to struggle to find the resources he needed to help him learn to read. His wife, Carrie, and daughter, Valerie, chose to support the Pittsburgh Regional Group of PBIDA in his memory, to help create greater awareness of dyslexia and spread the knowledge of best practices for helping people with dyslexia. Their gift made possible the first IDA-sponsored conference in Pittsburgh.

Thank you to Jacqueline Bell for interviewing Dr. Bean and preparing this article.
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The Peirce Family Foundation Makes a Difference

By Amy S. Jackson, Dyslexia Outreach Support Specialist at the Peirce Center

At the Bob and Joan Peirce Center for Structured Reading Teacher Training at Robert Morris University, it’s easy to see how one couple can make a world of difference. During the last 4 years, approximately 50 teachers have received scholarships and close to 50 students have received one-on-one tutoring, all thanks to Bob and Joan. The Peirce Family Foundation’s vision to support children with dyslexia has had great impact not just here in Moon Township, but across the Pittsburgh community.

Bob and Joan Peirce began their journey into philanthropy about 20 years ago when they started the Peirce Family Foundation. “The original goal for the foundation was to create scholarships for undergraduate students at Geneva College and Duquesne University,” explains Bob Peirce, a graduate from both institutions. “The deal was that the scholarship recipients only had to pay half of the interest-free tuition back within 5 years.” Over the course of ten years, close to 200 students benefited from the scholarships at both institutions.

After a family member was diagnosed with dyslexia, Bob and Joan Peirce refocused their foundation work in 2013 and gifted monies to the Laughlin Children’s Center in Sewickley. They approached Laughlin about starting a program specifically for children with dyslexia. At the time, Laughlin was focused on providing one-on-one services to children in speech/language, psychology, and academic tutoring, so they thought it was a great fit. Doug Florey, former Executive Director of the Laughlin Children’s Center, describes his experience with the Peirces. “By underwriting the planning, training, and implementation of Laughlin Children’s Center’s Orton-Gillingham program, the Peirces allowed Laughlin to build a first-rate dyslexia tutoring center without the normal constraints related to revenue. We knew that, ultimately, our O-G tutoring would be self-sustainable, but the Peirces’ underwriting made the whole thing possible – we were able to make the dream a reality with Bob and Joan’s support.” Laughlin has provided Orton Gillingham tutoring for almost 100 children to date.

After witnessing the success of their work at the Laughlin Children’s Center, the Peirces turned their attention to teacher training. “Many teachers don’t understand dyslexia. They don’t understand that these kids are made to feel stupid in school, and they are actually very smart,” explains Joan. “We’ve got to help the teachers get the training they need in order to effectively find and teach children with dyslexia.” In 2016, the Peirces worked with Robert Morris University to create a course and practicum in structured reading and in 2017, the Peirce Center was created.

The Peirce Center provides scholarships for teachers pursuing their reading specialist certification, tutoring in structured literacy, and houses the Dyslexia Outreach Network with the aim to provide resources to teachers, parents and students with dyslexia throughout the greater Pittsburgh region. The Peirce’s gift also helped RMU pursue IDA Accreditation Plus. “We are honored to be able to serve the community and teachers in a way that is aligned with our current program,” explains Dr. Carianne Bernadowski, Coordinator of the Peirce Center and the Reading Specialist program. “The International Dyslexia Association accreditation has allowed us to showcase the work we do at RMU with the generous support of the Peirce Family.”

The Peirces decided to expand their efforts in higher education teacher training last year, when the foundation continued their relationship with Duquesne University – this time in the School of Education. The Peirce Scholars, 20 Catholic school teachers recommended for continuing education by their schools, will receive a Reading & Literacy Education Master’s degree at Duquesne University in 2021.

Additionally, in order to keep up with their growing demand of tutoring for children with dyslexia, teachers who work in the Duquesne Reading Clinic are also getting trained in Structured Literacy practices through coursework offered at RMU.

The foundation’s shift in focus to dyslexia has created many more opportunities for teachers and students in Western PA. Provident Charter School, The Pittsburgh New Church School, Extra Mile Foundation and the Children’s Dyslexia Centers have benefitted from the Peirces’ support of their dyslexia-focused programs. Pennsylvania Branch of the International Dyslexia Association (PBIDA) recognized Bob and Joan’s dedication to the field of dyslexia in 2018, when they were presented with the Christopher Gardner Award for Excellence in the Field of Dyslexia. “We believe the Peirces embody the principles that Christopher Gardner’s wife and daughter hold dear: creating greater awareness of dyslexia, spreading knowledge of best practices throughout the Western Pennsylvania region, and making a true difference in the lives of children with dyslexia and their families.” (Seppi, 2018). The Peirces plan to continue their dyslexia outreach to better serve children and their teachers in Western Pennsylvania.
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Lisa Scottoline
PBIDA Platinum Sponsor

Lisa Scottoline is a #1 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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Focus: Can you briefly describe what your book is about?
Johnson: I think the best description of my book is in the foreword to the book, which was written by Dr. Rahmanda Salamatu Campbell, Founder and Executive Director, The Reading Clinic, Inc. Dyslexia Services for Children and Adults. “Dr. Johnson provides real-life experiences and proposes a blueprint to effectively manage and overcome obstacles associated with dyslexia.” “Journey of Hope: An Everyday Guide for Adults with Dyslexia serves as a catalyst to help adult dyslexics and offers invaluable tips and resources to promote educational success and emotional-social well-being.”

Focus: You say your book is specifically for adults with dyslexia.
Johnson: Yes, it is for the adult with dyslexia or for other people in his or her life—a spouse, a close friend, or a colleague. This is not a book for educators but for the layperson.

Focus: How do you see your book being helpful to the people who read it?
Johnson: We talk a lot to educators and to parents about what to do for children with dyslexia in school, but adults with dyslexia have to continue to deal with living in a print world when print is difficult. My book has tips for dealing with issues of basic living, such as how to figure out left and right when driving, how to fill out forms or write a resume, or how to explain what you need to an employer while still highlighting strengths.

Focus: What made you decide to write this book?
Johnson: So many individuals have asked me about my life dealing with dyslexia—at workshops I have given, at church, after speeches. I decided that a book would be a good way to get my answers to a larger audience. People want to know how I have managed to be successful knowing where I started. In addition to the suggestions for adults with dyslexia, I include examples from my own life and advice from other adults as well.

Focus: What was your early life like?
Johnson: I was put in special education classes in sixth grade and told that I was lazy, stupid, and should not even consider college. Somehow, I never really believed that I was stupid—I knew I was smart, but I did not know how to show people. I tried going to Junior College, but I had to drop out. I worked as a janitor. I was depressed and even suicidal at times. I saw an old episode of the Cosby show when they find out Theo is dyslexic. I thought that sounded like me, so I started doing research to find out about dyslexia. I found PBIDA, and I was able to get screened, which showed that, indeed, I was dyslexic. Then I found a wonderful tutor, Judith Mazer, who helped me learn to read and who continues to be a support to me.

Focus: What has been your more recent educational trajectory?
Johnson: I was eventually accepted into Harcum College where I received an Associate’s Degree with a 4.0 GPA. Later I received

(Continued on page 21)
Laughlin Children’s Center believes that all children are unique and deserve their own specialized path to learning success. That is why we take a multi-disciplinary approach to educational support.

Our Academic Department includes the NAEYC-accredited Village Preschool and certified Orton-Gillingham instructors for those with dyslexia, as well as traditional academic tutoring services. Children dealing with communication difficulties can visit one of our licensed Speech-Language Pathologists for screenings, evaluations, or therapy. Our Psychology Department offers students an array of psycho-educational evaluations, along with individual & family counseling and Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT). Finally, our Occupational Therapists work with children on graphomotor skills, the cognitive, perceptual, and motor skills which enable a child to write, using a multisensory approach.

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a Bachelor Degree in Psychology with a minor in Human Resource Management from Cabrini University, graduating with high honors. I went on to earn a Master’s Degree in Multicultural Education from Eastern University. I started a second Master’s in Special Education, but that is on hold right now because I am working on Wilson certification.

**Focus: I see that you are Dr. Tracy Johnson. When did you get your doctorate?**

Johnson: On October 3, 2015, I was honored by the Accelerated School of Christian Ministry International, Inc., when they awarded me an honorary doctorate in Christian Education. So, I went from being a girl who was told she could never succeed in college to being a woman with a doctorate!

**Focus: We certainly look forward to seeing your book. When will it be published?**

Johnson: *A Journey of Hope* is being published online and should be available through Amazon later this spring.

*Dr. Tracy Johnson is the President and Founder of Vessels of Hope, a mentoring and networking organization for low income and minority individuals with learning disabilities. She also works as an enrollment counselor at Eastern University and an adjunct professor at Harcum College. She is in demand as a speaker; giving hope and inspiration to individuals with dyslexia and other learning disabilities as well as to parents, educators, legislators, and civic and business leaders.*

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FOR STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA AND OTHER LANGUAGE-BASED LEARNING DISABILITIES

- Academic Year and Summer Programs
- One-to-one daily tutorial
- Grades 2-12
- 94% of graduates attend college
- 30 miles north of Boston

Join us for one of our monthly informational visits to see Landmark School’s beautiful coastal campus.
As an adult with dyslexia, I am challenged every day to keep pace with a world of content and communication that continues to grow. Every working adult today is bombarded with email messages, text messages, and documents with an expectation that these are processed and responded to in a timely fashion. There is also a requirement for learning new things to remain proficient in any job. And social interaction requires an awareness of what is ‘trending’ in the world around us. When reading and writing takes as much effort and time as it does for me, there is no choice but to use the power of technology to help to meet the requirements of each day.

There is a lot material that I need to “read” each day, so I use a number of tools that can convert text to speech. Email messages and text messages on my phone happen frequently throughout the day. As an iPhone and Apple laptop user, the Apple digital assistant Siri is an important tool for me. I use Siri to read my email and instant messages and dictate my responses using Siri as well. Siri is supported on both the iPhone and my Apple laptop (www.apple.com/siri).

I, like most people, get information from the web on a daily basis. It can be anything from a restaurant review to a new article on dyslexia. For much of that, Siri converts text to speech for me. But I also use other tools for some of that web surfing. When I find lengthy articles that I want to read later, I store them using Instapaper (www.Instapaper.com). The Instapaper application allows me to store the article and have it read back to me later. I also sometimes use the Google function for converting text to speech (Select and Speak) (https://www.ispeech.org/apps/select-and-speak).

Reading books presents some additional attractive alternatives. In addition to using digital readers like Siri or the reader attached to Kindle, there are a large number of audiobooks that have been recorded by a person actually reading the book. My two favorites are Learning Ally (www.learningally.com) and Audible (www.audible.com).

Learning Ally has an annual subscription fee that allows access to their extensive library of recorded books. Their library includes many textbooks that I used throughout my high school and college career. Audible is now owned by Amazon and has a monthly fee that provides one free book and access to a number of news feeds and periodicals. One of my favorites is the daily New York Times summary that I often listen to on my way into work in the morning. It is a great way to stay current.

One of the biggest challenges has been reading printed material that I did not have in digital form. When I was in college, the college had a machine that could scan those pages and convert them into digital form that could then be read by a digital reader. Unfortunately, the machine cost $5000 and was not portable. Today, that functionality is in your smartphone. The Speechify (www.getspeechify.com) app allows you to take a picture of printed text with your cellphone and have it read back to you. It is great for reading everything from documents you receive in the mail to descriptive plates on a museum display.

Speech to text is the primary way that I write. I use Siri for most of my writing requirements especially those that I initiate from my smartphone. For lengthier Word documents I sometimes use Dragon Speech. There are also a number of specialized speech recognition functions now being attached to TV remotes, appliances and other electronic devices.

It is hard to imagine dealing with dyslexia without these tools. And there are new alternatives every day.

Paul Shump blogs about making the most of dyslexia and the role of technology for people with dyslexia at www.dyscuss.org. He has a B.A. in Psychology from Kings College.
For 60 years, The Pilot School has been helping students with language-based learning differences develop the skills and confidence they need to succeed in a traditional academic environment.

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Experience Dyslexia®, A Simulation—an inside perspective for parents, paraprofessionals, teachers, administrators, and community members.

Compassion begins with an Understanding

Students arrive at school with high expectations, motivation, and enthusiasm to learn, but they soon lose this drive when they don’t progress like their peers. Often, well-meaning parents and educators don’t recognize the emotional effects dyslexia may bring when supports and understanding aren’t made available. Many individuals with dyslexia camouflage or conceal their difficulties because “it is better to be known as the ‘class clown’ or ‘bad’ student than to be the ‘dumb kid’.” These negative experiences may lead to social and emotional difficulties such as frustration, stress, low self-esteem, helplessness and depression.

The Importance of Educator and Parent Education

We don’t know what we don’t know. Numerous educators are provided general information and training about dyslexia but may not have been afforded in-depth knowledge about this disability during their educational studies. Although it is fully understood that the role of a teacher is not to diagnose dyslexia, the importance for teachers to have an accurate understanding of dyslexia cannot be underestimated. Educators who have experience with students with disabilities are more inclined to recognize these difficulties in other students and seek the necessary supports.

The Impact of the Simulation

Experience Dyslexia®, A Simulation engages attendees in conversation and reflection on their interactions with children and what they may do differently. Carol, a mother of two children with dyslexia, describes the simulation as enlightening: “The simulation highlights the everyday challenges of a child with dyslexia – the daily exhaustion, frustration, and feelings of defeat are real. I learned why sayings like ‘try harder’, ‘study more’, and ‘you should know this by now’ are cringe-worthy statements to a child who has dyslexia. I learned that patience, understanding, and empathy are essential when providing support.”

“Best in-service workshop that I ever attended (and I’m about to retire)!”

“Should be required that all staff (teachers and principals) attend”

“Very informative, exactly what we needed to know, professionally given, and removed all preconceived thoughts.”

“Experience Dyslexia®, A Simulation begins with a brief presentation of dyslexia, including the neurological basis, demographics, and warning signs. This presentation provides an opportunity for open discussion and questioning of understanding. Participants then proceed through six stations with simulated activities, which are designed to mimic the experiences and processing of those with dyslexia. After completing the stations, participants gather to engage in reflective conversation, debrief and ask questions. The event is geared towards adults and may be tailored to fit the needs of the group.

Contact PBIDA to Schedule

Interested in having PBIDA present this simulation for your group or school? For FURTHER INFORMATION about scheduling and pricing please contact:

Phone (610) 527-1548
Email dyslexia@pbida.org
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