



Fall 2009 Newsletter

Saturday, October 24, 2009

Study Skills for Teens!

The Magic of Success

Amazing, Almost Magical Study Skills that Really Work!

with Diane Shepard

1:00-4:30 pm

Back by popular demand! Using fun and interactive strategies, Diane helps teens develop essential study skills that can be used in learning settings such as classrooms, lectures, labs, study groups, and testing situations. This workshop is specially designed to help teens improve their study skills. Parents are invited, too!

Diane Shepard specializes in teaching and learning strategies for diverse learners, faculty, and staff at Central New Mexico Community College in Albuquerque, New Mexico. A certified Learning Disability Specialist and Educational Diagnostician, Diane brings her skills as a special educator and faculty development specialist—and as an honest-to-goodness magician!—to work with students to help them become more effective learners.

Growing Up with Dyslexia

with Sara Leggett and Ryan Luther

1:00-2:00 pm

Parents have the option of attending a break-out panel discussion and Q&A with young adults who have accommodated their dyslexia to gain insights on how their children can overcome their learning disabilities. (This discussion will run concurrent with the Diane Shepard event. Parents can join the second half of the Diane Shepard event after the panel discussion.)

Where **Mercy High School San Francisco, Rist Hall**
3250 19th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94132

Cost **\$40 individuals**
\$75 families (2 or more family members)

Register at www.dyslexia-ncbida.org/events.html

President's Letter

Adults with Dyslexia

Recently, I read a *New York Times* article about Gavin Newsom, current mayor of San Francisco, that noted his rather elaborate system of managing the reading he needs to digest each day. The article states that "Newsom struggled with severe dyslexia as a child" and describes some of his compensatory strategies. As he states, "learning in unconventional ways leads a person to adapt in ways that nurture creative solutions. Doing so can also promote audacious goals that many would dismiss as irrational." I would guess if Mr. Newsom told one of his elementary school teachers his goal was to be mayor of San Francisco (or governor of California), they might not have thought it possible!

Recently, two adults with dyslexia approached NCBIDA offering their help and wanting to share their stories. So, realizing the value of learning from someone who has walked in those shoes, we took them up on it and put them to work! These two young adults with dyslexia will be part of a panel at our fall event, leading an informal question and answer session with parents. You can read more about Sara Leggett in her article, "A Wish For My Children," and our winter newsletter will feature an interview with Ryan Luther. We are pleased to have them both lend their talents to our branch.

Other Events 2009-2010

We have two events to celebrate Dyslexia Awareness Month in October. Diane Shepard will be back by popular demand, talking to teens and their parents about organizational and study skills. You may recall that Diane, besides being a learning specialist, is also a magician. She will keep the energy and enthusiasm high in "The Magic of Success" at Mercy High School in San Francisco on Saturday, October 24. Trying to cater to the "teen inner-clock," this presentation will be in the afternoon from 1:00- 4:30 pm. And as mentioned earlier, there will be a breakout session for parents, featuring several young adults with dyslexia who can answer questions and share their secrets of success in high school and college.

On Thursday evening, October 29, we are very excited to be presenting a book reading with Joan Ryan, a former *San Francisco Chronicle* sportswriter. She will be discussing her latest book, *The Water Giver: The Story of a Mother, A Son and their Second Chance*. This book chronicles her experiences caring for her learning-disabled teen after a serious skateboard accident. Joan is a terrific speaker, and her book has received excellent reviews. We are currently negotiating a site for this event, and will let you know the exact details by email shortly.

Winter will bring us to Star Academy in Marin County, where Nancy Cushen White will give a morning presentation called "Teaching Reading: What Works And Why," followed by a dyslexia simulation in the afternoon.

Next spring, NCBIDA is looking forward to presenting its first **Dyslexia Dash**, a 5K run/walk to raise awareness of dyslexia and related learning disabilities. The final location and date of the event will be announced soon, but be ready for a morning of fun. We encourage teachers and tutors to bring their students out to run/walk the route together, and enjoy the festivities. We will provide more information shortly.

Teacher Training Scholarships Awarded

Under the leadership of NCBIDA Board member Jennifer Rabalais, the Scholarship Committee awarded seven partial scholarships to students attending month-long Slingerland trainings this summer at a variety of locales in the San Francisco Bay Area. Additionally, NCBIDA was pleased to co-sponsor a three-day Wilson Reading System training in Berkeley in August. Check our website at www.dyslexia-ncbida.org for information about future trainings in our area.

Spotlight on a Volunteer

In each newsletter this year we will give some background on one of our board members or other volunteers. What is their *real* job? How did they become interested in working with NCBIDA? What have they gained from that experience? This month our story is on Leslie Woodward, our immediate past president.

Research on our Dyslexia Simulation

NCBIDA's simulation kit, "Put Yourself in the Shoes of a Person with Dyslexia," was used recently in a research study at Southeastern Louisiana University. See the simulation article in this newsletter for a summary of the results, which were very positive indeed!

Thank You to Martha Renner

Martha Renner, the backbone of the Northern California branch of IDA for the last 30 years, has regrettably decided to step down from the Advisory Board. There are no words that can adequately express the gratitude we have for her gentle guidance over the years. Besides being an integral part of this branch, she has served in many roles on the national level, including acting as Program Chair of numerous national conferences, and historian of the organization. She is certainly the only person from our branch to have a room named after her at the IDA headquarters in Baltimore! The Northern California branch of IDA could never have maintained its strong presence in the SF Bay Area without Martha's guidance and unwavering leadership. We are exceedingly grateful for all she has done over the years. Thank you, Martha!

Sincerely,
Nancy Redding
NCBIDA President

Learning disability specialist Diane Shepard offered her study skills workshop at our fall program last year in Menlo Park. It was so well received that we are bringing her back on October 24 to Mercy High School in San Francisco. Please join Diane as she offers tips and strategies to help students enhance their personal learning strengths. Here is an article about Diane's approach to effective organizational tools, which ran in our Fall 2008 newsletter.

Creating and Using Effective Organizational Tools

by Diane Shepard

Effectively organizing materials, creating learning tools, and identifying personal study areas can be one of the most daunting tasks faced by many students. With the start of the fall semester, parents and students are often scrambling to put together supply lists, shopping to find just the right backpack, and getting ready for the start of classes. Along with all the purchases to help create a more organized approach to improving success in the classroom, there are some practical strategies that may be of help.

Develop a personal student success "tool kit"

Going to school is work and requires specific academic tools and strategies to succeed. Using an effective "tool kit" helps students have the right tools at the right time. Here are some ideas students can use to improve organization at school and home:

- **Binders are Better.** Depending on specific class requirements, each student can use a medium-sized three-ring binder or series of smaller three-ring binders for each subject to keep different course topics organized. Three-ring binders allow students to add and delete materials as the course progresses. I don't recommend spiral notebooks because they aren't flexible for adding or adjusting paperwork. Having a binder for each subject allows for identification of each unit or subject topic, allows for the use of subject dividers that can be colored-coded and easily identified, and keeps all course handouts in one place. Having a course calendar or syllabus at the front of the binder makes it easy to know what is required each day, week, or semester. Keeping that course calendar in a plastic sleeve makes it even more noticeable and accessible.
- **"Five-Second Rule."** A well-organized binder allows students to find essential course materials easily. I like to tell students about the "Five-Second Rule." It simply means that if their course materials are organized, they should be able to find any piece of paper, handout, or assignment within five seconds. Many students struggle with finding the right piece of paper quickly. Often while they're looking, the teacher goes on with instructions or course information. Students can quickly become frustrated and angry as a result. At home, practice finding course paperwork quickly. Parents can make a game of the "Five-Second Rule."
- **The "Cockpit Office."** Just as a pilot flies a plane using a variety of navigation tools, they also have those tools within arm's reach. Using this same idea for organizing a personal study area can be very effective—

especially for students who can be easily distracted. Moving around the house to find a stapler, paper clip, pen, pencil, or other materials can add up to lost time and loss of concentration. Consider developing a “cockpit office” that includes essential study tools in a brightly lit and personal setting. All students in the family can benefit by shopping for or re-organizing their materials for use at their own desk or study area. When using their own tools, they are less likely to have to hunt for those materials in other areas of the house. Using a zippered pouch in their binder or backpack can accomplish the same idea when at school. It’s important to remember that those tools are personal tools and are not to be borrowed by other family members. Students take pride in having their own materials at their desk.

An important aspect of using your tool kit or “cockpit office” successfully is to go through it daily, adding or deleting pages, updating projects, restocking supplies, and organizing so it’s ready for the next day. Students’ tool kit and personal study area may be their most important organizational tools. Materials and supplies kept within arm’s reach can be seen and used easily. Creating and using effective organizational tools and developing a “cockpit office,” or personal study space, can help improve grades, increase participation, and build confidence.

About the Author: Diane Shepard specializes in teaching and learning strategies for diverse learners, faculty, and staff at Central New Mexico Community College in Albuquerque, New Mexico. A certified Learning Disability Specialist and Educational Diagnostician, Diane brings her skills as a special educator and faculty development specialist—and as an honest-to-goodness magician!—to work with students to help them become more effective learners.

Sara Leggett is one of two young adults who, as part of our October 24 program in San Francisco, will participate in a panel discussion on the challenges and rewards of growing up with dyslexia. Sara, who works in marketing and sales, shares her perspective on dyslexia’s role in her past and her future.

A Wish for My Children

by Sara Leggett

I am dyslexic, my husband is dyslexic, and someday I hope we will have dyslexic children. Many parents and teachers reading this may find that hard to believe. Why would I want my children to suffer with a learning disability?

It’s not because elementary school was easy, or because I enjoyed the tear-filled nights desperately attempting to memorize words for a spelling test. I didn’t enjoy spelling, reading or writing. My mother didn’t enjoy the extra hours it took to help me compensate. No, I don’t want dyslexic children because I think it will be easy, although there have been major breakthroughs in teaching reading and writing to dyslexic children since my husband and I were in school. Instead, I want dyslexic children because I think it will be fun.

I look forward to raising a child with the many gifts associated with dyslexia—gifts that, in my experience, compensate for its challenges. My British-born husband, a custom furniture builder, is an excellent example of dyslexia’s gifts. As a young adult he realized his passion for creating things and worked as a furniture builder while studying to earn a masters degree in furniture design from the London Metropolitan University. Now he creates functional works of art, sees every piece from all angles, and with that visual perspective, is able to solve structural problems before the job is finished. He is outstanding at what he does because of dyslexia, not in spite of it.

In elementary school in Seattle, I was diagnosed as dyslexic and gifted. I struggled though school, unable to read and spell as fast as my mind could comprehend. I was a sophomore at the University of Puget Sound when I read the November 22, 1999 issue of *Newsweek*, entitled “Dyslexia: New Hope for Kids Who Can’t Read.” I learned that there were lots of kids like me—quick, smart kids who just couldn’t spell. From then on I believed that I did not have a learning disability, but a gift.

Dyslexia didn't limit my educational goals. It has not hindered my career in marketing and sales. When I tell people I am dyslexic, the next thing out of their mouth is, "Wow, I would have never guessed."

There are, in my experience, no "rules" limiting what dyslexic people can do. I, for example, have a talent for foreign languages. Despite my challenges with English, I started studying Spanish in 9th grade, and excelled at it. For me the structure, spelling, and grammar of Spanish made more sense. (In fact, scientific consensus is that Spanish is the easiest language for dyslexic students to learn.) After earning my BA in international business (with a semester's study in Spain), I accepted a job teaching English in Japan. Every day wasn't easy, but because of my struggles with dyslexia, I had patience and useful techniques to help my students learn English. My dyslexia even helped me learn Japanese. In English, I memorized spelling as a picture, not a word. With that visual perspective on language, I was able to learn enough Kanji to read menus and signs.

As my husband I and discuss starting a family, we both remember the difficulties we faced growing up with a learning disability. But after the struggles and tears, we found we were capable of anything we wanted to do. Dyslexia gave us skills to reach higher and achieve more.

I look forward to the challenges of raising a dyslexic child. We know it won't be easy, but there is a world of possibilities open to you when you focus on the gifts of being dyslexic.

Spotlight on a NCBIDA Volunteer

by Nancy Redding

Recently I asked Leslie Lingaas Woodward, the immediate past president of NCBIDA, to tell me a little about herself and how she became involved with this group. Leslie began her professional life working in the public affairs department of hospitals in Chicago and San Francisco. After having her two daughters, both now young adults, she began freelance writing work, specializing in healthcare. One of her daughters was diagnosed at an early age with dyslexia, which led to her interest in the field. Leslie was referred to IDA as a resource for information, and subsequently attended some branch programs as well as the National Conference when it was last held in San Francisco. In 2001, Leslie took the Level I Slingerland course and now has a tutoring practice which, in her own words, "indulges an interest in teaching that goes back to my own childhood."

After attending a few NCBIDA events, Leslie began volunteering to do some editing for the group. She soon joined the Board of Directors, working on the newsletter and public relations committees. She served a year as vice-president of the branch before her two-year term as president. Leslie continues to serve on the Board as immediate past president and volunteers tirelessly as editor for all newsletter articles and other writings that emanate from the branch.

When asked what she felt she had gained from serving with the NCBIDA board, Leslie replied that professionally, she was pleased with the opportunity to gain leadership experience; personally, she enjoyed working with a dedicated group of professionals who are passionate about helping people who have learning disabilities, a common but widely misunderstood phenomenon. She added that we are fortunate today to have several organizations in the Bay Area that provide information on learning disabilities. But for detailed, state-of-the-art, research-based information on dyslexia, she continues to rely on IDA.

We at NCBIDA are extremely grateful for Leslie's gifts of time and talent.

Study Shows Benefit of Dyslexia Simulation

by Leslie Woodward

A study from researchers at Southeastern Louisiana University (SLU) using a dyslexia simulation based on NCBIDA's "Put Yourself in the Shoes of a Person with Dyslexia" clearly showed that participation increased awareness of this learning disability among teachers-in-training.

The study, published in *Literacy Research and Instruction*, Volume 47, No. 4, 2008, was conducted over a three-year period among 345 undergraduate and graduate education students. The simulation, which provides hands-on experiences that simulate the frustrations people with dyslexia cope with, is required of all SLU students as part of their teacher preparation coursework.

Data was collected through an eight-question survey given immediately after the simulation that explored teachers' knowledge, attitudes, feelings, and values about dyslexia and working with dyslexic students. The data "overwhelmingly indicated that the participants' awareness of dyslexia was heightened" as a result of the simulation, according to the study's authors. "Ninety-nine percent of the participants, over the period of three academic years, indicated that the simulation increased their awareness of the possible limitations, abilities, and feelings of a learner with dyslexia." The study also found that 98 percent of participants "indicated that the simulation had influenced their dispositions to work with learners with dyslexia" and that they "would be more likely to recognize learners who may have dyslexia or other learning difficulties."

In the discussion section of their report, the authors suggest that teachers-in-training-should undergo the dyslexia simulation early in their programs, ideally coupled with field experiences so that they can immediately apply what they have learned. They also suggest that school districts should offer the dyslexia simulation to new teachers as they enter the school system and use it as a professional development opportunity for current teaching staff.

Wadlington, Elizabeth, Cynthia Elliot, and James Kirylo, "The Dyslexia Simulation: Impact and Implications," *Literacy Research and Instruction* 47, no.4 (2008):264-272.

Check out the simulation webpage at www.dyslexia-ncbida.org/simulations.html for more information on NCBIDA's dyslexia simulation, "Put Yourself in the Shoes of a Person with Dyslexia."

IDA 2009 Conference

Save-The-Date!

November 11-14, 2009-09-01

The International Dyslexia Association's 60th Annual Conference

- Hosted at the Walt Disney World Swan & Dolphin Resort in beautiful Lake Buena Vista, Florida.
- All session schedules, registration and housing reservations are available online.
- The Premiere Professional Development Conference in North America attracting the best and brightest practicing today in the field of dyslexia.
- 160 Professional/Educational sessions focusing exclusively on dyslexia and specific learning disabilities
- IDA's Leadership Group of presenters includes foremost research, scientific, and education thinking and best practices known today.
- Visit www.interdys.org and view every session and register!

Welcome to Our Newest Members!

Please welcome the following members who joined our branch in March-July, 2009.

Leticia Abeyta
Ralph Banks
Carrie Cassara
Linda Christensen
Jeremy Davidson
Kim Gitnick
Alyssa Hedberg
Susan Kaplan
Amber Lamprecht
Joni Mahler
Jon Millard
Karen Noble
Theresa Rezentes
Julie Sanford
Lindsay Santos
Lois Sheridan
Tammy Sigl
Rabindra Srikantan
Terry Ubaldi
Raelene Van Otten
Cynthia Wagner
Julie Wallenhorst

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