



Winter 2008 Newsletter

*The Northern California Branch of
The International Dyslexia Association (NCBIDA) presents*

Phonics and Beyond

Saturday, Feb. 9, 2008, 9:00 am-12:15 pm (check-in starts at 8:30 am)
The Nueva School, 6565 Skyline Blvd., Hillsborough, CA 94010

Educators and parents will be able to brush up on their understanding of phonics and the continuum of structured language that students need to be taught. Presenters are NCBIDA board members and teacher trainers Nancy Cushen White, Nancy Redding, John Osner, and Frances Dickson.

The workshop will include two breakout sessions covering basic and advanced material:

Beginning Phonics: How to Help Children Make Sense of Unknown Words
with Nancy Redding, M.Ed., and John Osner, M.Ed.

This workshop is designed for parents or educators who would like an introduction to phonics or a "phonics-refresher" course. It will include a review of common terminology as well as strategies to help students decode and encode words encountered in elementary school.

Advanced Phonics and Structure of the English Language
with Nancy Cushen White, Ed. D.

This workshop is designed for educators who are familiar with systematic approaches to reading and spelling one-syllable words and want to learn more advanced strategies that can be applied to the multi-syllable words typically encountered in upper elementary, middle, and high school.

Registration fees: \$40 for NCBIDA members, \$50 nonmembers, \$55 walk-ins, \$30 students

Pre-registration ends Wednesday, February 6, 5:00 pm. Individuals may register onsite.

[Click here for more info or to register](#)

NCBIDA would like to thank the *Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation* for their generous support for this event.

President's Letter

I'm happy to report that NCBIDA's new year is off to a very good start indeed. Here are some highlights, along with reminders of upcoming events.

Teacher training scholarships will resume

We are happy to report that thanks to generous gifts from many members and friends of NCBIDA to our teacher training scholarship fund, we will be able to once again award scholarships in 2008. (See the story in this issue about the eBay grant we were thrilled to receive in support of the program!) Watch our website for details about summer multisensory structured language education (MSLE) course offerings and the timeline for applying for scholarships. Typically, course information is available by March, and scholarship applications are due in April. Scholarship support will be offered for programs that follow International Multisensory Language Education Council (IMSLEC) or Orton-Gillingham criteria and that include a practicum in their curriculum.

We always welcome contributions to our scholarship fund. The more money we are able to raise, the more teachers we are able to support with MSLE tuition assistance. You can donate on our website at www.dyslexia-ncbida.org/donation.html – just check the box that indicates you want your contribution to be applied to scholarships.

Nancy Cushen White receives national recognition

Advisory board member and former branch president Nancy Cushen White, Ed.D., received one of The International Dyslexia Association's highest honors at the organization's annual meeting in Dallas in November – the Margaret Byrd Rawson Lifetime Achievement Award. Those of you who know Nancy have probably marveled at her tremendous energy and passion for helping struggling students and the teachers who work with them. Our branch has benefited enormously from her knowledge about multisensory structured language education (MSLE) over the years. Congratulations, Nancy, on this well deserved honor!

Thank you, David Futterman

I want to say a particular thank you to outgoing board member David Futterman, who is rotating off the board after completing two consecutive three-year terms. We're delighted that David will continue to serve as our organization's treasurer, a position he has ably filled for a number of years.

Upcoming programs

If you haven't already done so, be sure to register for our February 9th program, *Phonics and Beyond*, which will be held at The Nueva School in Hillsborough. You can find details on the program in this newsletter and on our website. It includes two break-out sessions to fit your interest, so you can enroll in the one that will be most useful to you.

NCBIDA is also co-sponsoring an opportunity to hear reading expert Joseph K. Torgesen, Ph.D. He's speaking on the evening of February 28 in Palo Alto on new research about reading. Other program sponsors include the Palo Alto Unified School District and the Children's Health Council. For more information, visit www.dyslexia-ncbida.org/events_torgesen.html.

Also, save the date of Saturday, April 12, when NCBIDA has arranged for nationally-recognized expert Eric Tridas to speak on ADHD. Plans for this day, including the site, are still evolving – we'll keep you posted as details are finalized.

Finally, I want to thank all those volunteers who help make NCBIDA's programs successful. We couldn't do what we do without you!

Sincerely,
Leslie Lingaas Woodward

NCBIDA Receives eBay Foundation Grant

eBay Foundation recently awarded a CHAMPION A CHARITY grant of \$2,500 to NCBIDA's teacher training scholarship fund. The grant was made possible by Roger Rabalais, an eBay, Inc. employee, who "championed" funding for our organization. Funds will provide scholarships for teachers taking multisensory structured language training courses during Summer 2008.

eBay Foundation's CHAMPION A CHARITY program encourages employees to become involved with and advocate funding for nonprofit organizations that work to improve the quality of life for all. A competitive program through which grant decisions are made by an employee committee, eBay Foundation CHAMPION A CHARITY grants are only made to organizations recommended for funding by eBay employees.

About eBay Foundation

eBay Foundation was established by eBay, Inc. in 1998 as a way to give back. Today, the Foundation works to improve the social and economic well-being of communities by partnering with leading nonprofit organizations. Since its inception, the Foundation has contributed over \$14 million to nonprofit organizations worldwide. To learn more about the Foundation, visit www.ebay.com/foundation.

Thanks to generous donors like ebay, NCBIDA will once again award scholarships to educators for summer 2008 multisensory structured language coursework.

Beginning Phonics How to Help Children Make Sense of Unknown Words

by Nancy Redding, M.Ed.

Picture this. A six-year-old boy, sweaty forehead, smudges on his cheeks, bends over his primary-lined paper, where he has written these letters:

d a d

Deliberately and slowly, he says the sound for each letter. Then, as his teacher sweeps her hand under the letters, he begins to blend the sounds. After a few tries, he says "DAD!" A big smile breaks out, as he conjures up a picture of his own dad. The miracle of reading has begun for another child.

New brain imaging techniques have allowed us to witness what a miracle the act of reading actually is. Multiple areas of the brain are activated when we read, and it is a highly sophisticated process. No single "reading areas" exists in the brain, unlike those for speech or vision. So how does this miracle occur?

English is based on the alphabetic principle, which means that letters are symbols, with letters and combinations of letters representing sounds. Dr. Sally Shaywitz states in *Overcoming Dyslexia* that "Prospective readers must master the alphabetic principle in order to learn to read, yet one in five children is unable to do so." (p.45) Phonics, the study of sound/symbol relationship, is the key to helping children crack the alphabetic code for mastery of reading and spelling skills.

In order for students to begin to read, they must first realize that words can be broken up into tiny units of sound, called phonemes. They then must begin to understand that the symbols we call letters are used to represent these sounds. Next, the students must learn the sound/symbol relationships and the blending skills necessary to break the code of reading. A student who is guided through the process of phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, blending skills, syllable division, and the study of morphemes (units of meaning), is given the lifelong tools necessary for reading and spelling. Dr. Shaywitz reminds us that "The National Reading Panel found that children who are taught phonics systematically and explicitly make greater progress in reading than those taught with any other type of instruction."(p.203) Older students who are struggling readers can make steady and sure progress when they are exposed to a structured, sequential, multisensory approach to learning phonics and the

structure of language. The goal of reading is comprehension, yet this cannot occur unless a student first achieves fluency in decoding.

The American school system has had a love-hate relationship with the study of phonics over the years, and many adults today, although fluent readers, do not have a strong phonics background. Many of the teachers in primary grades today have only a vague knowledge of the structure of the English language. Teachers and parents can greatly increase their ability to help beginning and struggling readers by understanding the basics of phonics and the rules that govern our language.

In the Beginning Phonics break-out session of the *Phonics and Beyond* program on February 9, participants will learn the vocabulary that is integral to the study of phonics. They will receive instruction and ideas for helping students learn phonemic awareness, knowledge of the sounds of common phonograms, blending skills, rules that govern the English language, non-phonetic words, types of syllables, and syllable division rules. In short, participants will explore the elements that can help many students break out in the same grin described at the beginning of this article – the unmistakable smile that comes when students first break the code of the language and begin to read.

References:

Shaywitz, Sally, M.D., *Overcoming Dyslexia*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.

Wolf, Maryanne, *Proust and the Squid*, New York: HarperCollins, 2007.

About the Author: Nancy Redding received her B.A. in education from the University of Texas and her M.Ed. in special education from the University of Utah. She has worked with learning disabled students for over 30 years and is currently a learning specialist at De Anza College and St. Francis High School. Ms. Redding conducts teacher workshops on the structure of language, is a frequent instructor at Orton-Gillingham summer trainings, and has co-authored multisensory curricula.

Beyond Phonics

by Nancy Cushen White, Ed.D.

Differences between good and poor readers and spellers are associated with significant differences in sensitivity to word structure at the morphological level. Insensitivity to morphological aspects of word structure also characterizes adults who spell poorly [Carlisle, Moats].

Explicit instruction in both orthography and morphology is effective for teaching word identification, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and spelling [Abbott, Berninger, Carlisle, Nagy]. English spelling problems that arise at a phonological level can often be solved with instruction in use of morphology [Bourassa, Treiman, Kessler]. While basic knowledge of grapheme-phoneme relationships may be sufficient for students to read and spell one-syllable words, analysis of word structure, made possible by knowledge of morphology, is needed to learn to read and spell multi-syllable words.

Problems that poor readers have with applying morphological rules to identification of unfamiliar words are due primarily to more basic weaknesses in phonological processing. Because morphemes are units of both sound and meaning, deficits in phonological processing contribute to confusion of similar-sounding words and word parts, failure to recognize similarities of structure, and failure to either store or retrieve words with precision [Carlisle].

Virginia Berninger noted that three different codes are involved in spelling – phonology, morphology, and orthography. These three codes activate common and unique brain regions, but the specific activated brain regions associated with each word code may change during the course of a child's development in learning how to spell. For example, beginning readers create orthographic codes from the relationship of letters and phonology.

Morphology plays a greater role in the longer, more complex words in middle school and high school curriculum. Berninger wrote, "Our research is telling us good spellers are taught, not born, as is often assumed. Unfortunately, what happens in most schools is dyslexic children learn how to read and then get dismissed from special education classes even though they still need specialized instruction until they learn to spell." Spelling is not systematically and explicitly taught in many classrooms in the United States [Berninger, Moats]. Too often, spelling is taught as a visual rote memory activity that resists "reasoned sequenced instruction" [Moats]. Awareness of morphology makes unique contributions to reading comprehension and to spelling [Nagy, Berninger, Moats]. Researchers agree on several recommendations for informed instruction of reading and spelling that include knowledge of morphology:

- § Foster word consciousness by integrating the teaching of word identification, vocabulary and spelling [Berninger, Carlisle, Moats, Nagy].
- § Focus on spelling [orthography]-meaning relationships through exploration and direct teaching of derivational morphological features and processes [Silliman].
- § Use word study to promote curiosity and interest in how spelling represents meaning and to support the development of strategies for solving problems regarding word meanings [Berninger, Moats, Nagy].

Good readers attend to the *parts* of words, both spoken and written. The meaning of a word is the sum of its parts. 80% of derived words mean what their parts suggest, as long as multiple meanings of the base elements are taken into account [Nagy]. English orthography often delineates the meaningful parts of words, preserving them in spelling even when the pronunciation of the morphemes may vary:

§ **define** **definition**
 § **wild** **wilderness**

Related words are activated in memory when they have meaningful connections and when they share structural elements at the morpheme level, especially when spelling reveals those connections [Nagy]:

§ **relate™relative™relation™relationship™interrelate**

Morphological awareness helps understanding and memory of differences between homophones:

§ **site™situation cite™citation**

People with awareness of morphology can organize their mental dictionaries so that related words are associated and are more readily retrieved. Adults who read accurately and fluently have accumulated wide networks of word families for ready access and cross-referencing in the lexicon [Nagy]. Pattern recognition reduces the load on memory and facilitates retrieval of linguistic information [Berninger, Carlisle, Moats, Nagy]:

§ **scribble™inscribe™subscription™scribe™describe™script**

This presentation will include lecture, work samples, demonstration-modeling of strategies, and attendee participation in use of strategies. The following components will be defined, explained and included in guided practice:

- Morphemes
 - Roots
 - Base Elements
 - Stems
 - Affixes
 - Suffixes
 - Inflectional
 - Derivational
- § Prefixes
 - Chameleon Prefixes
- Layers of English
 - Anglo-Saxon
 - Latin
 - Greek

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About the Author: Nancy Cushen White, Ed.D., is an Associate Clinical Professor at the University of California San Francisco, Department of Pediatrics, a teacher, and a learning disabilities specialist.

Dr. White has a private practice, assessing and remediating language based learning problems and consulting with independent schools. In addition she serves on the Board of the Slingerland Institute and is a past member of the Board of Directors of the International Dyslexia Association (IDA).

Additionally, Dr. White has more than 30 years experience in public schools as a classroom teacher and program consultant in special education curriculum with San Francisco Unified School District, California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, Curriculum Commission, State Board of Education, and CA Department of Education.

Welcome New Members

Please welcome the following members who have joined our branch from July to December, 2007:

Beck Adams
Sue Alvey
Jim Arena
Diane Arnell
Catherine Bratton
Alisa Crovetti
Jack Davis
Joann Durst
Laura Gilmore
Lynn Gurule
Elizabeth Henriquez
Anne Jensen
Carrie Kartman
Joyce Kelley
Nina Locker
Deirdre Marsh-Girardi
Polly Mayer
Margaret McCrory
Susan McLean
April McMurtrey
Sally Moreno
Anthony Pierre
Judyth Suttle
Katie Todd
Lois Treiber
Judy Wescott-Bower
St. Peter and Paul Catholic School