



Winter 2009 Newsletter

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

For Parents and Educators

Ways with Words Effective Vocabulary Instruction

with **Marcia Henry, PhD**

Jan. 31, 2009

9:00 am-12:30 pm (check-in starts at 8:30 am)

The Nueva School

6565 Skyline Boulevard, Hillsborough, CA 94010

Improving and broadening vocabulary for all students in all subject areas is a major goal of current research and the National Reading Panel. Dr. Henry will lead participants through interactive strategies that show how analyzing a word's structure can reveal its meaning. Anglo-Saxon, Latin, and Greek roots, prefixes and suffixes will be presented in this review of English morphology.

Marcia Henry, PhD, has almost 50 years of experience working in the field of language acquisition and dyslexia as a diagnostician, tutor, teacher, and professor. She speaks frequently at regional, national, and international conferences on topics related to intervention strategies for dyslexic learners. She also writes for professional journals and is the author of several books.

Cost \$40 members, \$45 non-members, \$30 students
(onsite registration is \$50, \$30 for students)

To Register www.dyslexia-ncbida.org/events.html or call **650.328.7667**

A Letter from Your President

Happy New Year! It is hard to believe that this is my last letter as your branch president. It has been an honor to hold that position for a two-year term. This month I will be turning the job over to my very capable successor, Nancy Redding. Many of you have heard Nancy speak at our past programs. Nancy, who has worked with learning-disabled students for over 30 years, is currently a learning specialist at De Anza College and St. Francis High School. She conducts teacher workshops on the structure of language, is a frequent instructor at Orton-

Gillingham summer trainings, and has co-authored multisensory curricula. I know Nancy will serve the branch well in her new role.

I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge our hard-working board members, who help coordinate all our outreach activities—three programs a year, dyslexia simulations, our referral call line, teacher training scholarships, our newsletter, website, and much more. They are supported by a dedicated group of volunteers from our general membership, who make sure our programs run smoothly. Thank you all for your excellent work—volunteer work that somehow gets sandwiched into lives already filled with job and family responsibilities. Thanks, too, to Glenn Ricafrente, our terrific administrator, who keeps our branch operations running smoothly. You have all been a pleasure to work with!

Mark your calendars

We have some excellent programs coming up this winter and spring. Marcia Henry, PhD, will be speaking on “Ways with Words: Effective Vocabulary Instruction,” the morning of Saturday, January 31st at The Nueva School in Hillsborough. In March, we will be co-sponsoring two workshops on the science of the reading brain with cognitive neuroscientist and child development expert Maryanne Wolf, EdD. Maryanne is the author of *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain*, and also directs the Center for Reading and Language Research at Tufts University. She will speak on Saturday, March 14, at a morning program for parents, educators, and the community. She will also present a free seminar for classroom teachers and educators the afternoon of Thursday, March 12. Both programs will be held at Palo Alto High School and are presented in partnership with the Palo Alto Unified School District and Parents Education Network (PEN). See our website and this issue for details on all these events.

Last chance to sign up for free RFB&D memberships

Do you know a student who would benefit from listening to books while reading them? One of our partner organizations, Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic (RFB&D), has asked our branch to help publicize the availability of 1,500 free one-year individual subscriptions to their computer-based audiobook. The offer, made possible by a grant, is for students in the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Mateo, and Sonoma. Information on how to sign up was emailed to everyone on our mailing list in December. Students can continue to sign up through January 30, 2009; check the links below for details.

RFB&D Offer to Parents - www.dyslexia-ncbida.org/RFB_D_Offer_Parent_Letter.html

RFB&D Offer to Educators - www.dyslexia-ncbida.org/RFB_D_Offer_Educator_Letter.html

Best wishes for a happy and prosperous 2009!

Leslie Lingaas Woodward

Ways with Words: Effective Vocabulary Instruction

by Marcia Henry, PhD

Vocabulary knowledge contributes to reading comprehension, and is linked to academic success (National Reading Panel, 2000). Those of us who enjoy reading, and who read frequently, are constantly learning new words.

Vocabulary growth takes place as children encounter unknown words in oral and written language. Yet many children with reading problems read very little and may hear only limited numbers of words; they rarely confront new, unfamiliar words through reading.

Children benefit from learning strategies in six specific areas that often are problematic for word meaning. These include learning about available clues such as (a) context clues and (b) structural clues, (c) dictionary definitions

and thesaurus entries, (d) semantic relationships such as antonyms and synonyms, (e) multiple meanings of many words, and (f) appreciation of figurative language such as metaphors, idioms, similes, and analogies.

Context Clues

Teachers often point out context clues to children. Yet Miller & Gildea (1987) pointed out that “learning words by reading them in context is effective but not efficient. Some contexts are uninformative, others misleading” (p. 96). Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002) noted that contexts may be “misdirective,” “non-directive,” “general,” or “directive.” Only directive contexts lead the reader to a correct meaning of the word as in “the waves *undulated* smoothly in the calm ocean.” Teachers should point out directive context clues, but children cannot depend solely on context clues for meaning of all unknown words.

Structural Clues

Children who understand word structure often get the meaning of words when they understand the meaning of prefixes, suffixes, and roots. Primary grade children can begin adding prefixes and suffixes to short Anglo-Saxon base words and discuss the meaning. They discuss the meaning of *spell*, *misspell*, *respell*, *spelled*, and *speller* and of *read*, *reread*, *preread*, *misread*, *reader*, and *reading*. Children in upper elementary school and the secondary grades will benefit as they learn the meanings of additional affixes and common Latin roots and Greek combining forms. Knowing that *spect* is Latin for *to see* helps them learn the meaning of *respect*, *inspect*, *spectator*, *spectacular*, *introspective*, *spectacles*, and *retrospective*. Knowing the Greek combining forms *graph* and *gram*, meaning written or drawn, accesses words such as *phonograph*, *autograph*, *biography*, *telegram*, *phonogram*, and *histogram*. (See Henry, 2003; Henry & Redding, 2005 for lists of affixes, Latin roots, and Greek combining forms, along with activities for building vocabulary.)

Dictionaries and Thesauri

Dictionaries provide formal definitions along with other important word information. Be sure to introduce using guidewords, and discuss the parts of an entry with your students including pronunciation, part of speech, definition(s), and etymology (the history and word origin of the word). Provide vocabulary activities such as: Find the difference in *interstate* and *intrastate* highways, or *extroversion* vs. *introversion*.

Each classroom should have thesauri as resources for students. Have students make their own wall charts or *word wall* with many words to use instead of *said*. Or, have them find as many words as possible to substitute for *happy* or *sad* and other common words.

Semantic Relationships

Synonyms and antonyms are among the first semantic relationships that students encounter. Have your students brainstorm as many opposites as possible. Also, ask them to make a thermometer as they find words describing the happiest to the angriest words. Words they select might include happy words such as *hilarious*, *delightful*, *buoyant*, and *cheerful*, and angry words such as *aggravated*, *exasperated*, *fuming*, and *boiling*.

Multiple Meanings

One of the most difficult areas of vocabulary is the large number of meanings a single word can have. The word *run* has 31 definitions as a transitive verb, 28 definitions as an intransitive verb, and 30 definitions as a noun (American Heritage Dictionary, 2000). In addition, there are many common phrases with *run* such as *run after*, *run against*, and *run along*. Finally, there are common idioms containing *run* including *the long run*, *in the short run*, *a run for the money*, and *run rings around*. Ask children to see how many definitions of *run* they know.

Figurative Language

Many children with learning disabilities have difficulty understanding a variety of figures of speech. Figurative language tends to be vague and requires a special understanding. Metaphors, idioms, similes, and analogies all may be difficult for children with reading problems. Introduce your students to these forms of figurative language and play word games to enhance students' understanding.

Conclusions

Students learn new words as they encounter them in reading and in speaking. We can enhance their understanding of words through discussion, word play, reading, and direct instruction. The National Reading Panel (2000) reminded us, "Repeated exposure to vocabulary items is important for learning gains. The best gains were made in instruction that extended beyond single class periods and involved multiple exposures in authentic contexts beyond the classroom" (p. 4-4). Specific content area words and words found in literature may need to be introduced and taught directly. Graphic organizers such as webs, matrices, and thermometers may be useful in showing semantic relationships and word associations.

References

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The author, Maryanne Wolf, EdD, will present two workshops in March for NCBIDA. See the NCBIDA website for details.

Book Review: *Proust and the Squid*

by Karleen Curlee, MEd

For the individual who would enjoy a great synopsis of reading development, including research regarding dyslexia, Maryanne Wolf 's book *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007) is well worth the read.

Dr. Wolf, a neuroscientist at Tufts University and a parent of a dyslexic child, discusses the realm of reading by dividing the book into three clear-cut sections: "How the Brain Learned to Read," "How the Brain Learns to Read Over Time," and "When the Brain Can't Learn to Read." As for the book's title, Proust is the well-known French novelist often recognized for discussing abstract thoughts in long, involved prose. Much of his writing includes symbolism that is challenging, but not impossible to comprehend. The squid, on the other hand, represents the world of the concrete and, in this case, the biological aspect of reading.

In essence this book discusses not only the mechanics of reading text, but also the abstract, inferential part that comes with reading between the lines and beyond the lines. While the majority of *Proust and the Squid* is written from a neutral, objective standpoint, Dr. Wolf voices her opinions about the role of reading in the conclusion of her book. Dr. Wolf fears that children are becoming “a society of decoders of information, whose false sense of knowing distracts them from a deeper development of their intellectual potential. It does not need to be so, if we teach them well, a charge that is equally applicable to our children with dyslexia.” Reading, then, should not be a mere mechanical, decoding activity, but one that builds personal growth and a deeper understanding of the world.

Finally, in her discussion of the digital age, she posits that just as the brain has learned to function directly with the demands of reading and writing through the centuries, the digital child will demonstrate flexibility in his response to new reading demands: “Many of our children learn to code-switch between two or more oral languages, and we can teach them also to switch between different presentations of written language and different modes of analysis. Besides this book’s appropriateness for those interested in the topic of reading, *Proust and the Squid* would be an ideal text for beginning teacher preparation students. Wolf’s writing is easy to understand, her tone is warm and inviting, and all of her major points are substantiated with detailed references for further consideration.

This review originally appeared in the Fall 2008 Inland Empire Branch of IDA’s “The Resource” newsletter. This article is being reprinted with permission.

Summer 2009

Scholarships for MSLE Teacher Training

Are you thinking about adding multisensory structured language education (MSLE) to your teacher “tool kit?” For many years, NCBIDA has supported teachers who want to learn MSLE by offering partial scholarships to help offset the considerable costs of these training programs. MSLE is a systematic approach to teaching reading, writing, and spelling that benefits all students. It has been shown to be the most effective way to teach children with dyslexia, a language-based learning disability that affects up to 20 percent of the U.S. population.

In Summer 2009 we will once again offer scholarships to teachers who enroll in programs that meet our training criteria. Check our website at www.dyslexia-ncbida.org/index.html for details on scheduled programs; we will post the information as it becomes available, along with information on how to apply for a scholarship.

In the meantime, here is a sampling of what the seven local teachers who received scholarships in Summer 2008 had to say about their Slingerland MSLE training:

“The proof is always how my students respond. The light bulbs are starting to go on. For the first time I had three students who didn’t seem excited about reading group say, “Oh, I get it!” These kids all have reading fluency about half of what it should be but had never experienced someone breaking it down for them into easier chunks of learning.”

“(The training) provided a chance to get a firm grounding in a reading methodology that is both comprehensive and adaptable. Simple techniques I learned in the course—such as having my student use the side of her hand to keep her place—keep her from pointing to one word at a time and help her learn to read in phrases.”

“The Slingerland training I received this past summer was invaluable... I have been able to use each component of this multisensory sequential instruction and have witnessed this approach allow students to make significant progress in reading, writing, and spelling. The best part is seeing a student that had given up, or just guessed at words when reading, now become excited because he has learned strategies that allow him to succeed.”

NCBIDA welcomes tax-deductible donations to our teacher training scholarship fund. Donations can be made online at www.dyslexia-ncbida.org/donation.html (please check off the box indicating the donation is for the scholarship fund). You may also mail a check payable to NCBIDA with "Scholarship Fund" written on the memo line to NCBIDA, PO Box 5010, San Mateo, CA 94402-0010. The NCBIDA is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Its Federal ID number is 94-2384215.

Welcome to Our Newest Members!

Please welcome the following members who joined our branch in September-November, 2008.

Judy Alessandri
Sharon Ball
Karen Baughman
Christina Clark
Michaela DeSapio-Yazar
J. Faye Dixon
Carol Emerson
Carol Galletta
Trudy Green
Paul Hokr
Patricia Holden
Diana Kennedy
Amy Louton
Maureen Ricketts
Laura Rizzi
Sheryl Trembley
Nancy Wolf
Joseph Wouk