



## Winter 2010 Newsletter

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### Saturday, February 6, 2010 Events

#### Teaching Reading: What Works and Why

with Dr. Nancy Cushen White, Ed.D.

9:00 am-12:15 pm

Learning to read is complex—and teaching reading to students with dyslexia is especially challenging. An effective reading teacher understands the reading process, has knowledge of multiple systems of language structure, knows effective tools for monitoring progress, and plans comprehensive and systematic instruction. This morning's workshop will describe effective instructional strategies for teaching students with dyslexia to read, spell, and write—and tell you how to make learning stick!

#### Experience Dyslexia™

1:00-3:00 pm

Participate in six dyslexia simulation exercises and debrief with members of NCBIDA. **Experience Dyslexia™** is NCBIDA's revised and updated eye-opening simulation that allows participants to have a sense of what it is like to live with this language-based learning disability. It is highly recommended for teachers, parents, or anyone interested in better understanding the lives of individuals with dyslexia.

**Where**            **Star Academy, San Rafael**  
4470 Redwood Highway, San Rafael, CA 94903

**Cost**             **All Day -**  
\$40 NCBIDA members (includes boxed lunch)  
\$45 nonmembers (includes boxed lunch)  
\$45 walk-in (box lunch subject to availability)

**Afternoon simulation only -**  
\$20.00 (does not include lunch)

**To Register** [www.dyslexia-ncbida.org](http://www.dyslexia-ncbida.org)

## President's Letter

### Reading Instruction

A recent interview on NPR recently caught my attention. Marcel Just, director of the Center for Cognitive Brain Imaging at Carnegie Mellon University, was discussing how regular, intensive reading instruction can actually produce measurable changes in the structure of a child's brain, improving the integrity of the fibers which carry information from one part of the brain to another. Through functional MRI, researchers can actually watch the pathways that are being activated while a person reads. This amazing research gives scientific proof to the notion that good reading instruction is crucial for students with dyslexia.

We hope you can join us on Saturday, February 6 at Star Academy in San Rafael, when Nancy Cushen White will present an informative workshop on the reading process, emphasizing effective instructional strategies for teaching reading and spelling. Nancy, a well-known Slingerland master teacher in San Francisco and professor at San Francisco State University, possesses a wealth of knowledge in the area of reading instruction.

During the afternoon of the February event, you are invited to participate in NCBIDA's dyslexia simulation workshop, which has been updated and renamed **Experience Dyslexia™**. This is a "hands-on" workshop which simulates what it might be like to be a student with a learning disability. If you have not previously participated in a simulation, I highly recommend it. You will come away with increased empathy for the challenges faced each day by people with dyslexia.

### Dyslexia Dash

Mark your calendars! On Saturday, May 1, 2010, NCBIDA will present its first **Dyslexia Dash**. Other branches of IDA have held dashes across the United States with great success, but this will be the first in the Bay Area. The Dyslexia Dash is a 5K family fun run/walk to be held at Coyote Point Park in San Mateo. We are encouraging teachers, tutors, and parents to bring their students/children to participate in this morning of exercise and fun. The goal of the Dyslexia Dash is to raise awareness of dyslexia as well as raise funds to support educational and scholarship programs of NCBIDA in the Bay Area. Besides the 5K run or self-paced walk, there will be educational and sponsor tables, entertainment, refreshments, giveaways, and raffle prizes. We invite you to participate with sponsorships and/or "walking the walk." Check our website often for more information on this event.

### Spotlight on a Volunteer

This issue of the newsletter features a short article about **David Futterman**, our current treasurer. I hope you will enjoy reading about David's journey to his present multifaceted career. NCBIDA is always looking for people who would like to offer their services either on a "once in a while" basis, or as an ongoing committee member. Currently we are seeking people to help with publication sales, simulations, and the upcoming Dyslexia Dash. If you would like to be part of our team, please send us an email at [volunteers@dyslexia-ncbida.org](mailto:volunteers@dyslexia-ncbida.org).

### Board News

We are very pleased to introduce two new members of our Advisory Board. They are **Carol Moran**, Educational Specialist at Children's Health Council, and **Sue Garber**, Parent Education Coordinator at Children's Health Council. Both women have a long history of serving students with learning disabilities, and we look forward to gaining their expertise as we plan programs and services in the future. Welcome, Carol and Sue!

Elsewhere in the newsletter is the proposed slate of new Board members and Executive Officers for 2010. Members are encouraged to vote on the slate prior to or at the Annual Meeting, to be held at our February 6 event in San Rafael. Results will be tallied and announced at the Annual Meeting.

### Thank You to Outgoing Board Members

We are so grateful for the hard work and dedication shown by the members of our Board of Directors. We especially want to acknowledge and thank our outgoing Board members, Barb Langeloh, Christine Goias, Cindy Schlichte, and Leslie Lingaas Woodward. Barb has served as President of the Board and most recently as events

chairperson. Besides her work for our local branch, Barb serves on the Branch Council for IDA. Christine has chaired our volunteer committee for the past several years, welcoming new volunteers and staffing our events. It is her work that ensures that our events run so smoothly. Cindy has been chair of two simulation committees: kit sales and simulation workshops. Additionally, she has been working tirelessly on the updates to our simulation kit. Leslie, after serving a two-year term as President, served as our Board's Past President this last year. Barb and Leslie, our two past Presidents, have been a constant source of support for me. These women have been huge contributors to our success, and we are thankful for the time and talent they have shared with NCBIDA!

Sincerely,  
Nancy Redding  
NCBIDA President

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## Teaching Reading: What Works and Why

by Nancy Cushen White, Ed.D.

Learning to read is complex. As early as the end of first grade, students struggling to learn to read begin to lose confidence in their abilities when compared to the beginning of the year (Lyon, 2003). By middle school, good readers read at least 10,000,000 words during the school year; those with reading difficulties read less than 100,000 words during the same period (Lyon, 2003, p.1).

The majority of children at-risk for reading failure can learn to read if given intensive, linguistically informed teaching for up to two hours per day (Torgesen et al., 1997)—systematic, explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension strategies (National Reading Panel, 2000) delivered by a well-trained teacher. All methods found effective include direct teaching of language structure with an emphasis on decoding fluently and accurately as well as ample practice with application of skills in meaningful contexts. Decades of research indicate that very few students just “figure it out” and become competent readers without systematic, focused, and intensive interventions (Lyon, 2003; Moats, 1999). Failure to develop basic reading skills by age nine predicts a lifetime of illiteracy *unless* these struggling readers receive appropriate instruction with the intensity and duration needed; without it, more than 74% entering first grade who are at-risk for reading failure will continue to have reading problems into adulthood (Lyon, 2003; Shaywitz, 2003).

Learning to read begins before children begin school. Oral language experiences and meaningful conversation set the stage for building background knowledge, growth of vocabulary, and use of increasingly complex syntax and grammar in spoken language—the basis for later reading comprehension. To develop the phonological knowledge necessary for phonemic awareness, word identification-decoding skills, and encoding-spelling, different skills must be explicitly and systematically taught to most children. *Both* phoneme awareness and phonics are essential for skilled reading (Bhattacharya & Ehri, 2004; Adams, 1990). Phonemes are not sounds processed uniquely by the auditory system; they are articulated sounds (Herron, 2008). It is the “powerful motor system of speech that sequences and remembers phonemes” (Herron, 2008, p. 78). Text is a way of making speech visible (Herron, 2008).

Phonology, reading, and spelling are all part of the complex language system. Phonemic awareness is the conscious understanding that speech is composed of a sequence of sounds [phonemes] that can be recombined to form different words. Phoneme awareness is *not* the same as phonics. In order to benefit from phonics instruction, students need rudimentary knowledge and understanding of phoneme blending [/*sh*/ + /*e*/ + /*l*/ = /*shell*/], phoneme segmentation [/*blink*/ = /*b*/ + /*l*/ + /*i*/ + /*ng*/ + /*k*/] and phoneme manipulation [*Change the /p/ in trip to /k/*]. Phonemic awareness supports reading and writing the alphabetic code, but will not automatically generalize to fluency and comprehension.

Partly because it is a language that consists of *a river of words formed from many tributaries of different languages* (Gillingham & Stillman, 1960), English has a less-than-perfect sound-symbol match: *26 letters to spell 40+ phonemes and 40+ phonemes spelled with more than 250 graphemes*. Fortunately, the majority of English words have predictable spellings. Closed syllables alone make up 43% of syllables in English words. Open

syllables and closed syllables together account for almost 75% of English syllables. To make use of the logic and structure of English, specific word identification and spelling skills and knowledge must be taught:

- Relationships between letters-symbols and their sounds—*grapheme-phoneme associations*
- Relationships between sounds and their spelling—*phoneme-grapheme associations*
- Strategic use of syllable generalizations to read [decode] and spell [encode] unfamiliar words
- Strategic use of meaningful word parts [morphemes]—prefixes, base elements and suffixes—to read and spell longer, multisyllabic words.

One of the most pervasive myths in reading instruction culture is the perilous use of context as a way to develop word identification skills; unfortunately, this practice is deeply entrenched and continues to be taught to teachers who subsequently teach it to children. The path to comprehension begins with the *accurate* identification of individual words. Struggles with accurately decoding unfamiliar words, often the content words within passages that carry the bulk of the message, are at the crux of reading problems.

The word recognition process for skilled readers is so rapid and automatic that they rarely need to rely on contextual information (Share & Stanovich, 1995). Poor and novice readers over-rely on context and guessing because they lack letter-sound (phonics) knowledge; they have no alternative. Good readers rely on the letters in each word—NOT context or pictures (Adams, 1990; Torgesen, 2004; Stanovich & Stanovich, 1995).

Context alone resolves ambiguity [pronunciation of the word read with a long or short vowel sound; or whether *her* is being used as a possessive pronoun-adjective [*her book*] or a pronoun [*saw her through the window*] and *sometimes* supplies meaning for unfamiliar words. *Overall* [both function and content words], context enables the reader to predict accurately one out of four words (Gough & Hillinger, 1980), but the *content* words that impart most of the meaning in passages are predictable only 10% of the time (Gough, 1983). Content words tend to be less common and less familiar, so they must be decoded accurately. The moral of the “context story” is that context is least useful when it is most needed.

Skilled readers fixate on almost every word in text. Automatic word recognition is the result of familiarity with letter-sound correspondences, spelling patterns (Adams & Bruck, 1995), syllable division conventions, and morphemes. Words must be pronounced correctly before accurate orthographic representations can be formed and comprehension can occur. Automaticity is achieved by repeated encounters with—and accurate identification of—words and by *overlearning* the orthographic and phonological patterns of the language. Young or struggling readers should be encouraged to pause and study unknown words; they should never skip or guess an unfamiliar word (Adams, 1990).

Fluency and automaticity have a significant impact on the reader’s attitude toward reading, comprehension, and overall reading success. Explicit phonics instruction contributes to the development of reading fluency through development of efficient, reliable decoding strategies based on the logic and structure of English. Students learn sounds and letter associations best when teachers use explicit, systematic instruction involving teacher modeling and extensive guided practice with teacher feedback; this explicit, carefully planned instruction leads to independent application. In addition, they need extensive practice reading at their independent reading level (95% accuracy). Teachers need to hear students read orally to determine the fluency of their reading. Prosody, intonation, and the chunking of words from connected text into meaningful phrases can be monitored only if teachers hear their students read. Speed is not the main goal in oral reading. Emphasis is placed on the phrase as the smallest meaningful unit in text. To comprehend, students need to read fluently, chunking words into meaningful phrases. When all these skills are automatic, students are free to focus attention on comprehension and the enjoyment of reading.

A totally integrated language arts approach will include systematic and explicit instructional strategies for teaching oral language—listening comprehension and oral expression, handwriting, encoding-segmenting strategies, spelling, morphology, word identification-decoding strategies, vocabulary (listening-reading-writing), reading comprehension, and written expression.

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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.

## Looking Back

### An Adult with Dyslexia Traces His Path to Success

by Nancy Redding, M.Ed.

Parents raising a child with dyslexia have many unanswered questions about the future: What will my child's adult life be like? What qualities help in a successful transition to adulthood? What can I do now? At our October 2009 event in San Francisco, a group of parents were able to get insights into these and other questions when Ryan Luther, an adult with dyslexia, helped facilitate a parent discussion about raising a child with this learning disability. He has a compelling history; here are some of the highlights.

Ryan was initially evaluated in first grade, when his teacher noticed that he was not learning to read. After years of trying various tutors and methods, he found just the right match in fifth grade. Marsha Fabian used a multisensory, structured approach based on Slingerland. As Ryan says, "That was the beginning of getting real help." He continued to work with her throughout high school.

Ryan left public school after second grade, opting for a small private school that catered to students with learning disabilities. He remained there through eighth grade, and although he missed out on some experiences that go with a larger student body, he knows he made huge academic strides in this smaller setting. He went on to public high school where he enrolled in several remedial classes, utilized help from the resource center, and continued to work with his outside tutor. As Ryan says, "It was in high school where I really began to own my learning disability and started figuring out how to navigate life with it, because it was not going to ever go away." Ryan was a good basketball player and attributes much of his high school social success to that skill. Although his school counselor advised him to attend a community college, Ryan really wanted to have the full college experience. He was successful at Seattle Pacific University because he utilized his resources at every opportunity, taking advantage of tutoring, untimed tests, and early registration. Ryan remembers meeting with his professors at the beginning of the semester so they would get a better idea of who he was, and he believes that served him well.

Ryan is now married with two young children. Since college, he has worked as a sales representative in the software industry. He believes he got the job because he was honest in his interview, disclosing his dyslexia right away. He uses strategies in the workplace to compensate for his learning issues, such as writing several drafts of e-mails and having co-workers proofread them. Ryan comments, "I feel the work ethic that this thing called 'dyslexia' has instilled in me has made me a better employee."

Ryan is a very successful adult, who happens to have dyslexia. He says his mom was his biggest advocate and sounding board, and gave him tremendous emotional support throughout his schooling. His dad, with a doctorate in physics, had a more difficult time understanding Ryan's dyslexia, but was a constant inspiration to him. When asked about the keys to his success, Ryan points to his determination, his self-advocacy, and his willingness to use all his resources in any situation.

**About the author:** Nancy Redding, M.Ed., 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 President of the NCBIDA.

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## Spotlight on a Volunteer

by Nancy Redding, M.Ed.

**David Futterman**, currently Treasurer of NCBIDA, hails from Chicago, but has been in California since 2001. He teaches English and Math at California High School in San Ramon and serves as the Special Education Department Curriculum Leader. He also teaches graduate level courses at UC Berkeley related to assessment, education, development, and inclusion of students with special needs. Additionally, he has a private educational therapy practice in the East Bay. David is married and has two children, a five-year-old daughter and a three-year-old son.

David took a circuitous path to his current career in special education. He was first involved with English Language Learners, particularly because he spent six years abroad, teaching in England, Israel, and Japan. He became increasingly interested in language and literacy development across the lifespan and ultimately returned to graduate school in education, with a focus on the field of learning disabilities.

David has been involved with NCBIDA since 2002, initially as Publication Chair, and more recently as our treasurer. David has been an enthusiastic supporter of the work of The International Dyslexia Association, and the Board particularly appreciates that he keeps them in line financially.

When asked what he has gained from his work with NCBIDA, David responds: "Working alongside individuals and organizations dedicated to disability awareness and improving the outcomes of individuals with language-based disabilities through community outreach has been a tremendously rewarding experience."

We at NCBIDA are thankful for David's dedication to this group, in light of his already busy professional and personal life.

**About the author:** Nancy Redding, M.Ed., 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 President of the NCBIDA.

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## 2010 Board of Directors Election

### Nominees for the NCBIDA Board

NCBIDA members are asked to vote in this year's Board elections. The following individuals have been nominated as new members of the Board of Directors of the Northern California Branch of The International Dyslexia Association (NCBIDA) and as the officers of the Board Executive Committee.

#### New Board Members

**Katie Bond, PsyD.** Katie is a Clinical Psychologist who recently re-located to the Bay Area from Southern California. She enjoys working in private practice and last served as Learning Disability Specialist in California Community Colleges. Currently, she and her husband find themselves immersed in the delightful whirlwind of toddlerhood. If elected, Katie will be coming on the Board to co-chair the events committee.

**Kelli Takushi-Geyrozaga, M.S., CCC-SLP.** Kelli is a speech-language pathologist and Slingerland clinician who owns a private practice in Foster City. She has been working in the field for 13 years and enjoys running Slingerland groups, summer school programs, social skills groups, and individual therapy as well as team and single discipline testing. If elected, Kelly will be coming on the Board as co-chair of the Referral Line and Dyslexia Dash committee member.

**Maria Pevzner.** Maria is a Slingerland-trained Educational Therapist in San Francisco. She is a credentialed teacher currently working as a school Learning Specialist, in addition to maintaining a private educational therapy practice. If elected, Maria will be joining the Board as co-chair of the Volunteer Committee.

**Sherry Sachar.** Sherry has been a frequent volunteer at our events, often helping with the registration table. If elected, Sherry will be joining the Board as co-chair of the Volunteer Committee.



Fern Royce  
Kathy Thibodeaux  
Hope Academy for Dyslexics  
Marin Academy

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