

P. O. Box 2141
Hudson, Ohio 44236

The Northern Ohio Branch Mission Statement

The International Dyslexia Association is an international organization that concerns itself with the complex issues of dyslexia. The IDA membership consists of a variety of professionals in partnership with dyslexics and their families.

We believe all individuals have the right to achieve their potential, that individual learning abilities can be strengthened and that social, educational and cultural barriers to language acquisition and use must be removed.

The IDA actively promotes effective teaching approaches and related clinical educational intervention strategies for dyslexics. We support and encourage interdisciplinary study and research. We facilitate the exploration of the causes and early identification of dyslexia and are committed to the responsible and wide dissemination of research based knowledge.

Watch the NOB/IDA Web site and fall newsletter for information on the
The 22nd Annual NOB/IDA Symposium

DATE: Friday, March 5, 2010

PLACE: Intercontinental Hotel and Conference Center, Cleveland, OH

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Maryanne Wolf, Tufts University, author of

Proust and the Squid: The Story of Science and the Reading Brain

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Look Inside

Letter from the President	2
For Your Information	
Grassroots Push for the Ohio Dyslexia Law	3
Branch Spotlight: Wilma Jean Lang	3
Symposium Pictures	4
Tracing Business Acumen to Dyslexia	5
Newest Issue of <i>American Educator</i>	6
The Magical Feather	8
Summer Professional Development Programs	9
What is Orton-Gillingham?	9
Members	10
Advertisements	11

Northern Ohio Branch
Formerly The Orton Dyslexia Society

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2009

KSU Student's "Crowning" Achievements by Krystle Formosa



Krystle Formosa

Student with Dyslexia is Beauty Pageant Contestant

I am a senior at Kent State University studying Fashion Merchandising. I will be graduating with a Bachelor's degree in May 2009.

My history as a student with dyslexia started when I was held back in kindergarten and had to attend pre-first grade. Teachers were unaware of my dyslexia and they held me back so

that I could catch up with the other children. I was first diagnosed with dyslexia in the fourth grade. The primary reason for this diagnosis finally being discovered was due to my mother insisting that I was dyslexic. At times I found it hard to fit in with other students because I was always being taken out of class to visit with my tutor. Fortunately, I found great friends who accepted me.

Throughout high school I still needed help from tutors, but I was a little embarrassed. So I went to teachers after school and asked them for help instead of getting help from tutors. I attended mostly honors courses because I felt I had to prove to myself that I could perform just as well as my peers. I graduated high school with a 3.5 and an honors diploma.

My college experience has been a challenge. There really has not been a great deal of help provided to me because of my learning disability. I have managed to get through it all on my own and with the help of my peers.

While attending college I am participating in the Miss America pageant system. Participants in the pageant need a platform issue. My platform is Dyslexia Awareness.

I am very passionate about dyslexia awareness for many reasons. One reason is that I know the importance of catching a learning disability at an early age. Second, I would love to be a role model to those who feel that they are not equal to their peers.

As I researched more about dyslexia, I found out more about myself. The more I learned, the more I knew that I had to help others understand what it means to have a learning disability and the importance of an early diagnosis.

Understanding my learning disability has really helped me grow as a person and as student. My desire is to show students with learning disabilities that they have special talents and to motivate them to work hard at achieving their dreams.

Changing people's attitudes and behaviors is also a key component to the success of my platform. Most people only have a vague idea about dyslexia. I have witnessed many occasions of people indicating that "they must be dyslexic today" because of a certain mistake they have made. Creating a greater understanding of what dyslexia is really about will help bring to light this misunderstood issue. My own personal battle with this disability will allow me to effectively educate communities on this issue.



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Tel: 410-296-0232 Fax: 410-321-5069 Email: member@interdys.org Website: www.interdys.org

The International Dyslexia Association

40 York Road, Suite 400
Baltimore, MD 21204-5202

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
(Rates effective January 1, 2005)

New Member Information (please print)

Name _____
Organization _____
Address _____
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Benefits of Membership
Contact IDA Headquarters or visit our website for additional details about Institutional and Corporate member benefits. Corporate member benefits:

- Perspectives
- Annals of Dyslexia
- Discounts on IDA Conferences
- Local Branch Affiliation
- Branch Newsletters
- Discounts on IDA Publications

Please check **all** categories that apply to you; then circle the category that best describes your reason for joining IDA.

<input type="checkbox"/> Advocate	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual with Dyslexia	<input type="checkbox"/> Reading Specialist
<input type="checkbox"/> College Student	<input type="checkbox"/> Lawyer	<input type="checkbox"/> Researcher/Educational
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Administrator	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Other Family Member of Individual w/Dyslexia	<input type="checkbox"/> Researcher/Medical
<input type="checkbox"/> Ed. Diagnostician/Psychologist	<input type="checkbox"/> Physician	<input type="checkbox"/> Speech-Language Pathologist
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<input type="checkbox"/> Elem./Sec. School Educator	<input type="checkbox"/> Psychiatrist	<input type="checkbox"/> Tutor
<input type="checkbox"/> General Supporter		

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Check enclosed made payable to: *The International Dyslexia Association*
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Account Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____
American Express Discover MasterCard Visa

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Signature: _____

Membership Mailing List Rental
At times, the IDA membership list is made available to other organizations whose products or services we think our members might find of interest. If you do not want your contact information included on these mailing lists, please check here: _____

LD Service Provider Database
IDA maintains a list of service providers for people who contact us for resources. If you would like to be on this list and receive an application, please check here: _____
Your listing will remain on the service provider list as long as your membership is active.

Membership Levels (please check one) (U.S. Currency Only)

College Student \$40
(Copy of Student ID Required)

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(60 years - send back membership form)

Individual \$70
(Copy of ID Required)

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Individual / Supporting \$300

Family \$110

Institutional \$395
(Copy of Non-profit Status Required)

Lifetime \$2,000

*Corporate—Level I \$295

*Corporate—Level II \$795
* Only For-profit Organizations are eligible for Corporate Level

Signature: _____
By signing this form I certify that I (or the corporate entity) qualify for the membership category checked above.



Promoting literacy through research, education, and advocacy.

Dear NOB/IDA Members and Friends,

With so many dedicated and talented members of NOB/IDA who are expert in the field of dyslexia and in teaching children to read, it is with great humility that I follow in the footsteps of Monica Gordon Pershey as President. With my very limited experience in these areas compared to many of you, I am pondering how it could be that I was asked to assume the mantle of leadership.

The passage of No Child Left Behind in 2002 was the seminal event that began my journey into the world of struggling readers. Prior to NCLB I was like many school administrators in a suburban district -- happy and content that a large majority of our students passed the state reading test. Whatever our teachers were doing to teach reading was working for most students and I could tell our school board that the Ohio Department of Education deemed us to be an excellent school district. So we patted ourselves on the back despite the 10-15% of our students who were not passing these tests. After all, most of them were in special education which, in the minds of many, excused us from responsibility to teach them to become independent readers. Instead, we invented many accommodations to help them survive in school even as they fell further behind their peers in reading. In the spring of 2002, I attended an event where a team from the U.S. Department of Education heard from Ohio administrators in the audience that the expectation that all children will be successful in reading tests was unrealistic. Pleading to be excused from helping students in special education be successful, the audience was admitting that we knew little of what to do to teach all students to be successful readers. I sat silently, hiding my own ignorance, but also knowing schools had twelve years to solve this problem and I would probably retire before the goal of 100% had to be achieved.

I am most fortunate to work alongside a Past President of NOB/IDA, Barbara Marsh. Barbara was elevated to the position of district literacy specialist for Bay Village Schools in 2004. She figuratively grabbed me by the ear and told me to listen to her. She demanded that I start paying more attention to the research findings of the National Reading Panel. If our district could learn to apply that research, we could teach all children to read! Barbara introduced me to NOB/IDA, asked me to attend our Cleveland Symposia and the National IDA conventions and invited me to join the board of directors of NOB/IDA. Unlike the administrators at the 2002 meeting, I now found myself surrounded by people who believed they could teach all children to be successful readers.

Other board members became my tutors and taught me how this goal could be accomplished. I learned about Orton-Gillingham and the benefits of using a systematic, multisensory approach to the teaching of reading. I listened as Sally Shaywitz taught us that these methods can actually change the way the brain of a child with dyslexia processes the printed page to become a more efficient reader. Her book was a guide for educators and a message of hope for all struggling readers.

Thank you to all the members of NOB/IDA for instilling in me the optimism to believe that schools can meet the challenge of NCLB. However, there is much work to be done. As Louisa Moats showed us, many teacher preparation programs still do not address the research findings that would enable new teachers to give the gift of reading to all students. Teachers who entered the field prior to the National Reading Panel Report are often unaware of the research or reject it because they were instilled with misunderstandings about the role of phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency as necessary paths to true comprehension. Many principals and other administrators lack the knowledge of systematic reading to enable them to lead their schools to higher reading scores.

My goal as President of NOB/IDA will be to continue to build bridges between our organization and the school community. I want to bring to schools in our area the optimism I have gained that we can be successful with the teaching of reading to all children. I will seek to grow our membership to include many more school teachers and administrators so they have the opportunity to share in our beliefs about reading instruction. I want to continue to facilitate our outreach to the community through our professional development programs. I look forward to greater dialogue with colleges of education in our area who prepare future teachers of reading. I want to continue to help parents of struggling readers find support through our organization and their schools to enable their children to read.

Thank you for inviting me to join you in the quest for universal literacy. I look forward to working with you to provide literacy through research, education, and advocacy.

Sincerely,

Lawrence Orrach, M.Ed.
President, NOB/IDA



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Save the Date

Plan to attend IDA's conference in Orlando, Florida

November 11-14, 2009





New Members to NOB/IDA

Watch us Grow! (or is it gro...groa... or... groe... How is one to know?)

We are so glad you have joined us and hope you will become active in our branch!

Sheryl Boyd, Elyria
 Paula Heine, Olmsted Falls
 Linda Herrmann, Troy
 Carol Krabill, Louisville
 Marilyn Parker, Alliance
 Joel Pressman, South Euclid
 Anne Pyros, North Olmsted
 Erica Slesnick, North Canton
 Stephanie Stollar, Terrace Park
 Alison Vokmann, Westlake

We are so glad you have joined us in our pursuit of helping every child and adult achieve his or her potential. We welcome you to become involved at our branch level. Please contact us at 216-556-0883 or e-mail us at info@dyslexia-nohio.org.

Members:

Please send your updated e-mail address to Allyson at info@dyslexia-nohio.org

*Would you like to receive this newsletter via email?
Please let us know: info@dyslexia-nohio.org*

Membership...Reaching out to Meet the Needs of Families

Are you interested in networking with others?

Members of NOB/IDA are predominantly educators who realize the importance of learning the most effective practices for teaching literacy and becoming advocates for persons who are dyslexic. We also have many other members including parents, psychologists, pediatricians, attorneys, and other stakeholders.

The NOB/IDA Board is beginning to provide a forum for community members to gather to discuss the issues relating to parenting children with dyslexia.

If you are interested in being a member of a networking group or would like assistance in forming a group, please contact Melissa Pillari at pillari6@oh.rr.com.

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Grassroots Push for the Ohio Dyslexia Law

by Stephanie Gordon, NOB/IDA Advisory Council

Take ownership of the passage of the Ohio Dyslexia Law! Join our grassroots push to bring education for students with dyslexia into Ohio law. Our objective is to have Statutes & Session Law 3323.01, "Education of Children with Disabilities," include provisions for screening and treatment of students with dyslexia.

Legislators listen to what you say and read what you write because your power is your vote. The Ohio Dyslexia Group has a Facebook page that you can join. It's easy! Here are the directions:

Go to <http://www.facebook.com>. If you are not already a member, you will need to sign up. Sign up, then log in to your own site. Look for Applications and select "Invite Friends." Enter the Groups page, type in "Dyslexia Group." The next screen will show groups relating to dyslexia. Select Ohio Dyslexia Group and click "join."

The Ohio Dyslexia Group is holding its first Ohio Dyslexia Rally on the Capitol steps in Columbus on October 1, 2009. Everyone is invited to attend. We need people to speak out! Are you willing to give your testimonial? Updated information about the rally will be posted on the Ohio Dyslexia Group Facebook page.

You can also communicate with your state senators and representatives quickly by email. Go to <http://www.house.state.oh.us> and search for your senators and representatives. All you need is your zip code + 4 digit extension.

Before you email your legislators arm yourself with the facts about dyslexia. The International Dyslexia Association Web site has several Fact Sheets that you can quote, including Definition of Dyslexia, Dyslexia Basics, and Multisensory Language Teaching, (available at <http://www.interdys.org/FactSheets.htm>). If you meet with your legislators in person or send postal mail, print and distribute these Fact Sheets.

Branch Spotlight: Wilma Jean Lang

Submitted by Joyce Hedrick, NOB/IDA Advisory Council

Calvin Coolidge was certainly on target when he said "No person was ever honored for what he received. Honor has been the reward for what he gave." Wilma Jean Lang, a long time Board member and the immediate past secretary of NOB/IDA, was honored at the Northern Ohio Branch of the International Dyslexia Association's spring symposium for her contributions to the branch. In her quiet humble way, she has given so much, not only to NOB/IDA, but also to her students.

Wilma Jean's path to the teaching profession began at a very young age. She credits her mother, who taught her all the nursery rhymes long before she started school. Throughout her schooling, she encountered many dedicated teachers. They had very different personalities but all had a common bond: helping the young minds of students to grow with knowledge gained from the printed word. Wilma Jean emphasized, "My goal in teaching has always been to help my students realize the value of their self-worth. For students in special education, that is not something that comes easily for them. Helping my students look at a printed page, read what it says, and then tell me in their own words what it says, is a most rewarding experience."

Unfortunately, for many years, Wilma Jean experienced the frustration which many teachers experience when observing students who make limited progress in reading. Some teachers eventually accept limited progress. Others continue to look for different solutions. Wilma Jean explained that, "For many years, the basal reader was the reading text used in the resource room and student progress was very limited. I kept looking for an alternative to the basal reader, without success. Then, in August 1999, I attended a two day overview of the Wilson Reading System. Here was a systematic multisensory language program using decoding and encoding skills. I conveyed my enthusiasm for this program to my administration and they agreed to my implementing the program and paid for my training." Undoubtedly Wilma Jean's ability to keep striving for better methods led her to the Orton-Gillingham approach, which reaped benefits for her students and her teaching

continued on page 9



Photo highlights of the 21st Annual NOB/IDA Symposium

“The Path from Fluency to Comprehension”

March 3, 2009



NOB/IDA Board member Diane McFiggen, chair of the branch's Publications Committee, organized the annual book sale



Jan Hasbrouck, Keynote Speaker



Advisory Council members Joyce Hedrick and Stephanie Gordon at the branch's Executive Legislation Committee table



IDA Board member and NOB/IDA Advisory Council member Karen Dakin presents the NOB/IDA/s retiring Board Secretary, Wilma Jean Lang, with an award of thanks for her volunteer services (See related story page 3, 9)



Publications Committee member Marcia Anselmo at the book sale table



Board member Wilma Jean Lang and Advisory Council member Eric Wonderly sold raffle tickets for a variety of educational materials



Branch Spotlight: Wilma Jean Lang

continued from page 3

colleagues as well.

The training which Wilma Jean received greatly impacted her students in Norwalk City Schools. After using the program, reading scores for her students improved significantly. In approximately a one-year time span, 3 to 6 years of reading progress was gained by some students. Furthermore, Wilma Jean and many of the other teachers at her school experienced the joy of knowing that the program was truly working. These same students were actually volunteering to read the mainstream texts in their classrooms! Moreover, many of her students made the honor roll and were eventually able to exit the resource program.

In addition to Wilma Jean's accomplishments as a teacher and a valued dedicated member of NOB/IDA, her past awards and recognitions include the WCTZ Terrific Teacher Award, the Walmart Teacher of the Year Award, and the Martha Holden Jennings Scholar Award. Sadly, Wilma Jean recently learned that she has some serious medical challenges facing her including myasthenia gravis, a chronic autoimmune disease characterized by weakness of the muscles of the body. Slurred speech and loss of speech production often result. Those of us who are fortunate enough to know and work with Wilma Jean are certain that in her humble quiet way, she will continue to teach, encourage, and provide a positive example for others, and that speaks volumes about her.

What is Orton-Gillingham?

The Orton-Gillingham approach is a multisensory, explicit, systematic, and cumulative reading and writing program designed for people with dyslexia. It uses visual, auditory and tactile modalities to enhance learning and memory. The program does not leave anything to be guessed...it is not discovery learning. It starts with the basics and progresses methodically, and once a skill is taught, it is never abandoned or forgotten. The goal is for the learner to reach automaticity in reading and spelling skills.



Summer Professional Development Programs

Watch your email for additional information or contact NOB/IDA President Larry Orrach at lorryrac@leeca.org

Wilson Applied Methods
June 23-24-25 Holiday Inn, Independence

Wilson Applied Methods
July 27, 28, 29. Holiday Inn, Independence

Seeing Stars
June 23 and 24, Notre Dame College

Visualizing/Verbalizing
June 30 and July 1, Notre Dame College

Making Math Real: The Four Operations and the 400 Math Facts
August 3-4, 5-6, 10-11, 13-14, Bay Village Middle School

To register for any of these programs – go to <http://www.bayvillageschools.com>;

click “For Staff”

click Staff Development Programs

Select Public Events from the Pull down Menu

For Wilson Applied Methods

Go to <http://www.wilsonlearning.com> to register

EDITORS

Rebecca Tolson, Treasurer &
Monica Gordon Pershey, Past President

If you have suggestions for the next Newsletter,
please email Rebecca Tolson at rebecca.tolson@sbcglobal.net.

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The Magical Feather™

The Magical Feather

by the Magical Feather Team

Cheryl Persanyi and Lisa Millard, veteran educators for children with learning disabilities, founded *The Magical Feather*, a series of multisensory educational clinics, in 2002 after attending the 53rd IDA conference in Atlanta. The IDA keynote speaker, Louisa Moats, stressed the importance of evidence-based programming for early literacy skills and the need for trained teachers. Phonemic awareness was also the topic of many breakout sessions. Current research was revealing the importance of direct teaching of phonemic awareness at an early age to promote subsequent reading success.

Cheryl and Lisa were already incorporating phonemic awareness skills in their own classrooms and had witnessed the significant progress of their students. Simultaneously they felt both challenged and inspired, not only by the evidence to support success but also by the lack of effective programming that offered phonemic awareness. They began to brainstorm methods to help young children build a solid foundation for reading success on a larger scale. Together they developed a summer program to directly teach phonemic awareness skills in a dynamic, energetic setting. With their combined energy, passion and creativity, *The Magical Feather* was born.

The mission for Cheryl and Lisa is to strengthen academic skills in young children in order to promote confidence and a joy of learning. *The Magical Feather* boasts a highly effective incentive program. *The Magical Feather* store is available for children to go “shopping” each week in exchange for tickets earned for their best efforts and hard work. One parent quoted, “*The Magical Feather* gave my son tips and tricks for reading success so he could enter 1st grade with confidence AND he loved going! The highlight of his week was collecting his reading tickets so he could go shopping at *The Magical Feather* store—it’s better than Chuck E. Cheese!”

Since 2002, *The Magical Feather* has evolved. In the beginning, the co-founders offered and instructed only four summer clinics, targeting pre-kindergarteners through second graders. Currently they have six master-level instructors

offering twelve classes, serving pre-kindergarteners through fifth graders. In response to customer demand, one-week, August workshops in the areas of math and study skills were developed to jumpstart skill and confidence building for the upcoming school year. In an effort to continue to offer strategies and tools that are applicable to older students (fifth through eighth graders), a ten-hour “Tech-Savvy Strategies” class, taught by Denise Falcon, NOB/IDA Board Member, was added. To aid in comprehension, Patricia Harpring, also an NOB/IDA Board Member, will offer classes which will incorporate Visualization and Verbalization techniques.

The Magical Feather waiting area is inviting as well as educational. Siblings can complete puzzles, listen to books-on-tape, or draw. A parent resource library offers research articles, books, and news of upcoming educational events. As one parent quoted last summer,

“I just wanted to let you know how impressed I was at your clinic today. “T” has gone to numerous appointments in the last six months and I had come to dread going to them because I always have two of her siblings to bring, one being a 2-year old who does not always listen and a 7-year old who is always “bored.” Yet my son was amazingly patient as he was waiting for his sister. The books on tape and other distractions made it FUN for him and stress free for me. I can only imagine the amazing things you do in the classroom. I want to thank you for offering such an amazing program!”

After-camp afternoon hours are offered so that kids can enjoy their regular summer activities. Even after a long day at camp and an hour at *The Magical Feather*, the children leave happy and enriched, with a colorful feather in hand given by their instructor. Verbal praise is always attached to the feather. “I like the way you read fluently!” or “You were a great decoder today!” are examples of the encouraging messages they hear on their way home.

The Magical Feather co-founders, Lisa and Cheryl, encourage professionals and families to visit www.themagicalfeather.com or call 216-396-6666 or 216-408-6227 for more details. The 2009 clinics begin June 29th! Space is limited! Let *The Magical Feather* build your child’s confidence this summer! Remember, Dumbo was afraid to fly until he was given his Magical Feather!



Tracing Business Acumen to Dyslexia

Excerpted from the New York Times

December 6, 2007

A new study of entrepreneurs in the United States suggests that dyslexia is much more common among small-business owners than even the experts had thought.

The report, compiled by Julie Logan, a professor of entrepreneurship at the Cass Business School in London, found that more than a third of the entrepreneurs she had surveyed — 35 percent — identified themselves as dyslexic. The study was based on a survey of 139 business owners in a wide range of fields across the United States. Approximately 10 percent of Americans are believed to have dyslexia.

“We found that dyslexics who succeed had overcome an awful lot in their lives by developing compensatory skills,” Professor Logan said in an interview. One reason that dyslexics are drawn to entrepreneurship is that strategies they have used since childhood to offset their weaknesses in written communication and organizational ability — identifying trustworthy people and handing over major responsibilities to them — can be applied to businesses.

“The willingness to delegate authority gives them a significant advantage over nondyslexic entrepreneurs, who tend to view their business as their baby and like to be in total control,” she said.

William J. Dennis Jr., senior research fellow at the Research Foundation of the National Federation of Independent Business, a trade group in Washington, said the study’s results “fit into the pattern of what we know about small-business owners.”

“Entrepreneurs are hands-on people who push a minimum of paper, do lots of stuff orally instead of

reading and writing, and delegate authority, all of which suggests a high verbal facility,” Mr. Dennis said. “Compare that with corporate managers who read, read, read.”

Indeed, according to Professor Logan, only 1 percent of corporate managers in the United States have dyslexia.

Much has been written about the link between dyslexia and entrepreneurial success. Fortune Magazine, for example, ran a cover story five years ago about dyslexic business leaders, including Richard Branson, founder of Virgin Atlantic Airways; Charles R. Schwab, founder of the discount brokerage firm that bears his name; and Paul Orfalea, founder of the Kinko’s copy chain.

Emerson Dickman, past president of the International Dyslexia Association in Baltimore and a lawyer in Maywood, N.J., said the study’s findings “just make sense.”

“Individuals who have difficulty reading and writing tend to deploy other strengths,” Mr. Dickman, who has dyslexia, said. “They rely on mentors, and as a result, become very good at reading other people and delegating duties to them. They become adept at using visual strengths to solve problems.”





Newest Issue of American Educator Spotlights Spelling Instruction and Word Study

Stephanie M. Gordon, M.A., NOB/IDA Advisory Council, Dyslexia Specialist & Diagnostician

“Spelling requires knowledge of sound and letter patterns,” write R. M. Joshi, R. Treiman, S. Carreker, and L. C. Moats, experts in this branch of learning. Noah Webster, as early as 1773, viewed spelling as a linguistic task stating, “spelling is the foundation of reading and the greatest ornament of writing.” This three-in-one article will review three reports from the journal *American Educator* (Winter 2008-2009): “How Words Cast Their Spell,” “The Real Magic of Spelling: Improving Reading and Writing,” and “Don’t Computers Make Spelling Instruction Unnecessary?”

How Words Cast Their Spell

The authors researched why teachers encourage memorizing words and rely on visual memory in spelling instruction and found that this “misconception” is based on a study published in 1926 that “deaf children spelled relatively well compared to normal children of similar reading experience.” This study and the commonly believed variability of the English spelling system are the basic reasons why people began to believe that spelling is a rote memory task.

The authors develop a convincing case for linguistic analysis of sounds and letter patterns in teaching spelling, rather than visual memorization. They cite recent studies which show that students misspell regular words as often as irregular words and state that good spellers develop “insights into how words are spelled based on sound-letter (phoneme-grapheme) correspondences, meaningful parts of words, word origins, and history” which supports a specialized “orthographic memory system--memory for letters in words.”

“The spellings of English words are influenced by the positions of the letters within the words, meaningful word parts, and the history of English. Spelling, therefore, is a window on what a person knows about words. Learning about words and about the language will improve spelling skill.” The article addresses the following points:

Don’t Students Learn to Spell through Flashcards and Writing Words?

Using flashcards and writing words five to ten times has been popular since the 1920s. To counter these misconceptions, the authors cite recent research studies among first, second, third, and fourth grade students that contrast the merits of linguistic versus visual learning of words. All of the studies show that the students who received explicit or sound-based instruction became faster readers and more accurate spellers.

Is English Predictable Enough for Explicit Spelling Instruction?

English has regularity. According to the authors, if the student is taught word origin and word meaning, then “only 4 percent of English words are truly irregular.” Approximately 20-25% of English words are of Anglo-Saxon origin, about 60 percent are of Latin origin, and the remaining 15-20% are of Greek origin. They dispute linguists Noam Chomsky and Morris Halle who view English as being irregular and illogical and defend the English writing system whose richness “conveys meaning.”

What Types of Information Make Spelling Predictable?

Predictability in spelling comes from knowledge of word origin and history, syllable patterns, letter patterns, and one’s prior knowledge of the meaningful parts of words.

Word Origins and History.

When students learn origins of words, they more accurately pronounce and spell the words. For instance, science words are Greek based words and the /f/ sound is represented by *ph* (*phonology*) and the /k/ sound is represented by *ch* (*chemistry, school*). The /sh/ sound has three origins in English words. The letter pattern *sh* (*ship*) appears in Anglo-Saxon words, the *ti, ssi, ci* (*nation, passion, facial*) in Latin words, and *ch* (*chef*) in French words (the /ch/ sound does not exist in the French sound system). Historically, Anglo-Saxon words developed from tribal and guttural origins that dealt with daily life and which today may have silent letters (*knee, wrist*). English has also been enriched with names of famous people (*caesarean, silhouette, leotard, pasteurize*).



Syllable Patterns and Meaningful Parts of Words.

When students learn *open* and *closed* syllables, they can better understand when to double the consonant in the middle of the word once suffixes are added. When teaching the spelling of word parts, teachers need to guide students in a linguistic analysis of *prefixes, suffixes, roots, and morphemes*.

Letter Patterns in Words.

Learning letter patterns that frequently represent speech sounds provides the student with clues for spelling. An example of a frequently predictable rule is the association of *q* and *u* (*queen*). The authors maintain that, with a strong language based spelling program, students learn to discover exceptions and can apply mnemonic patterns. (A sidebar is included with sample pages Louisa Moats’ primary spelling programs: “Teaching Spelling” and “Spellograph,” published by Sopris West Educational Services.)

What Should Be Taught in Each Grade?

The authors present a systematic and explicit spelling program. In kindergarten, children become aware of individual sounds in words and develop letter-name and letter-sound knowledge with “plentiful opportunities to write.” In grade 1, spelling instruction includes short vowel sounds then expands to the long vowel-consonant-silent e rule. In grade 2, spelling instruction includes more complex Anglo-Saxon spelling patterns for final sounds after vowels, vowel digraphs, doubling medial consonants, and dropping the letter *e* (*hoping*). In grade 3, when multisyllable words are introduced, spelling instruction includes practice discriminating the unstressed schwa sound (*sofa, alone*) and the soft c sound (*cent, city*) and changing *y* to *i* (*happy, happiness*). In grade 4, when Latin-based prefixes, suffixes, and roots are introduced, spelling includes learning origins of meaningful root parts, e.g., *vis* (*television*), *spect* (*inspection*). In grades 5 to 7, when Greek-based words are introduced, spelling includes awareness of combining Greek and Latin root parts (*tele + scope* (*telescope*), *tele + vis* (*television*)).

How Should Spelling Be Taught?

The authors say that students need to know that spelling has laws (rules) and understand that there are some exceptions. The teacher needs to lead students to

recognize the sounds in words and their most frequent spelling patterns and teach the terms *initial, medial,* and *final* to locate a sound in a word.

How Should Spelling Be Assessed?

A student’s spelling errors indicate how well she or he understands the sound and language structure of English.

The Real Magic of Spelling: Improving Reading and Writing

This one page article is an emphatic appeal to the empowered who make educational decisions and approve appropriations on the federal and state levels, and to publishers and the educational research community.

“Spelling is an abandoned stepchild in the family of language arts, overlooked by federal grants such as *Reading First, federal and state assessment policies, state program-adoption guidelines, publishers of comprehensive instructional programs, and the educational research community.*”

The authors expand the relationship of spelling to reading, writing, vocabulary building, and comprehension and expose the frustration, embarrassment, and the loss of expressive power experienced by a poor speller. As for the spelling and reading comprehension connection, they say,

“The correlation between spelling and reading comprehension is high because both depend on a common denominator: proficiency with language. The more deeply and thoroughly a student knows a word, the more likely he or she is to recognize it, spell it, define it, and use it appropriately in speech and writing.”

The “real magic” of this article is that these experts speak out and research supports them.

Don’t Computers Make Spelling Instruction Unnecessary?

“Spell checkers do not eliminate the need to learn to spell accurately,” the authors write in this half page article. They agree that a spell checker is useful but add that this device is “mainly a tool for correcting typos.” The spell checker will identify a misspelling only about 25 percent of the time. Since young children cannot often pick the correct word from a list of suggested words, the authors conclude that spell checkers “do not substitute for explicit spelling instruction.”

