Welcome to the 31st annual Symposium of the International Dyslexia Association – Northern Ohio Branch

IDA of Northern Ohio prides itself on bringing timely and valuable information about the science of reading to the public, as we remain committed to improving the lives of all who are affected by dyslexia and other learning differences. Our annual Symposium has been, and continues to be, one way we annually reach the Northern Ohio community and beyond.

This year we are pleased to present Structured Literacy for All. Nancy Cushen White, Ed.D., will kick off our event with a keynote address. Our 3 sessions are divided into 4 educational tracks:

- Writing (A)
- Math (B)
- Reading (C)
- Dyslexia for Parents (D)

Professional registrants can attend any of the 12 sessions!

KEYNOTE ADDRESS – Nancy Cushen White, Ed.D

Orientation/Overview: Dyslexia and Related Reading and Language Difficulties and Multisensory (Multimodal) Structured Language Instruction (Structured Literacy)

Recently, the terms Structured Literacy instruction and Multisensory (Multimodal) Structured Language Education have begun to be used interchangeably. Current findings regarding the nature of reading development, the benefits of specific instructional practices for teaching reading, and the complexities of reading networks within the brain are leading to increased understanding to explain why Structured Literacy approaches are effective.

What are the areas of content (what is taught) and principles of instruction (how it is taught) that make Structured Literacy a beneficial instructional approach for teaching students with dyslexia and related reading and language difficulties?

Why use Structured Literacy instruction to teach students with dyslexia and related reading and language difficulties? Structured Literacy approaches teach academic skills related to oral and written language. The core content of Structured Literacy instruction includes the structure and use of phonology; phonics—including syllable instruction; morphology and etymology; syntax; text reading fluency—including prosody; vocabulary; semantics; and written expression—including handwriting. Structured Literacy is based on core instructional principles: explicit, direct; sequential, systematic, and cumulative; diagnostic; and simultaneous multisensory (multimodal) presentation. The combination of this core content and these core principles of instruction support students’ ability to learn, recall, and apply information.
Nancy Cushen White, EdD

Nancy Cushen White, Ed.D. is a Clinical Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine, at UCSF. Over the past 40+ years, she has taught students in general/special education classrooms at public/private schools, provided psycho-educational assessment and literacy intervention, trained pre-/in-service teachers and practitioners, developed curricula, and been involved in policy. She piloted a San Francisco Unified School District special day class for 2e—Twice Exceptional students who were gifted with a diagnosis of dyslexia and has taught young adults in a pre-trial diversion program through San Francisco Superior Court—Mentor Court Division.

She is a certified Instructor of Teaching for training teachers in the Slingerland Multisensory Structured Language Approach (Structured Literacy). She has received notable awards from organizations such as the Slingerland Institute for Literacy (2000—Beth and John Slingerland Award), UC Berkeley Extension (2002—Honored Instructor Award), International Dyslexia Association (IDA—2007—Margaret Byrd Rawson Lifetime Achievement Award), International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council (IMSLEC—2014—Etoile DuBard Award of Excellence), Academic Language Therapy Association (ALTA—2016—Dr. Lucius Waites Award of Service), and Northern California Branch of The International Dyslexia Association (IDA-NorCal—2019—Recognition of Extraordinary Leadership and Accomplishment).

She continues to publish, present workshops, serve as editor of IDA’s Examiner (online newsletter), and work on numerous boards and advisory boards such as the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) and the Northern California Branch of The International Dyslexia Association.

WRITING

1A: Handwriting Mechanics, Rebecca Mohler, MS, OTR/L

Teachers and parents face many challenges in today’s education teaching children and youth how to express themselves in written form. Many student’s struggle with sharing their thoughts, ideas and knowledge demonstration in a written format. The mechanics of handwriting go far beyond the ability to put words on a page. The developmental skills that need to be available for students to access their ability to write are numerous. Rebecca Mohler, MS, OTR/L will share with you her professional knowledge and experience working with children and youth to promote successful handwriting to include legibility and expression of thoughts, ideas and knowledge.

Rebecca Mohler, MS, OTR/L

Rebecca Mohler, MS, OTR/L, President of Sendero Therapies, Inc, received her Master’s Degree in Occupational Therapy in 1990 from Washington University School of Medicine. She has experience with children, adults and geriatrics in a variety of settings including: schools, community settings, rehabilitation hospitals, skilled nursing, assisted living, clinics, and in clients’ homes.
In 1999, Rebecca fulfilled her dream of specializing in pediatric practice with primary focus on school based and community integrated services. She now shares her dream with 40 occupational, speech, and physical therapists working in these settings for Sendero Therapies, Inc. in Northeast Ohio.

Rebecca and her team of therapists provide occupational, speech and physical therapy treatment focusing on their client’s functional performance and educational goals using a variety of treatment approaches in order to create pathways toward independence.

2A: Best Practices for Teaching Handwriting to Students with Dyslexia & Dysgraphia, Nancy Cushen White, MdD

From skills to functional use:
- Has Handwriting Become an Instructional Dinosaur?
- Handwriting May Be More Important Than You Think!
- What is Dysgraphia? What does the research tell us about the relevance of handwriting instruction?
- Is handwriting linked with reading and writing achievement?
- Does handwriting have an impact on skills that affect overall literacy?
- Are there advantages to teaching either manuscript (printing) or cursive letter formation?
- Are there advantages to writing by hand (manuscript OR cursive) versus keyboarding?
- Does the usefulness of writing by hand diminish as literacy increases?
- Are handwriting difficulties due to fine motor problems alone or are they language based?
- Is explicit handwriting instruction necessary? If so, why? What are the benefits of integrating the teaching of handwriting with instruction in reading and written expression?

Manuscript, cursive, and keyboarding have advantages at different ages and stages. Handwriting involves both cognitive and motor skills—and influences reading, written expression, and critical thinking. Sequential hand movements activate brain regions associated with thinking, working memory, and language. A note-taking study showed better comprehension and retention of content for handwriters. Elementary students composing by hand wrote faster, longer pieces with more ideas. Cross-disciplinary research demonstrates the effectiveness of explicit, integrated handwriting instruction from kindergarten to high school.

3A: Letterman--Resurrection of the K in the VAK Triangle, Stephanie M. Gordon, M.A.

Our founder taught the equality of the three modalities of learning our English Language, Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic, which is referred to as the VAK Triangle. My aim is to preserve the quality of the kinesthetic modality based on its history and its presentation in my LetterMan kinesthetic program.

My presentation aims to resurrect the K in the VAK Triangle of the Orton Gillingham Method as I learned it and trained in it. My plan is to give the background and history of some of the key people who developed the VAK Triangle. My students, Eloise, Charlotte, and Ethan will be introduced. All had weak kinesthetic training and were sent to me for help. These students are influential in the writing of my book, LetterMan Program: PreWriting instruction based on the 4 Stroke Principle, which I plan to discuss.
Stephanie Gordon, M.A.

Stephanie M. Gordon, M.A. and accredited in Learning Disabilities, is a Dyslexia Diagnostician and Specialist in private practice in Cleveland, Ohio since 1973. Her belief is that each person with dyslexia has a unique learning style. She specializes in finding and refining this unique learning style and includes the parents in her language therapy sessions. She originally apprenticed with Arlene Sonday in the Orton Gillingham Approach and is a Fellow of the Orton Gillingham Academy.

Stephanie is the mother of a son with dyslexia and a founder of the Northern Ohio Branch of the International Dyslexia Association. She has served on the Boards of The International Dyslexia Association and its Nominating and Development Committees and the Northern Ohio Branch. She is presently a member of the Advisory Committee. She is an experienced teacher and a dyslexia trainer for parents. She has spoken and presented at national conferences of the International Dyslexia Association and the American Association of Teachers of French and at symposiums of the Northern Ohio Branch of the International Dyslexia Association.

Besides presentations, she has written articles on language and dyslexia. She recently published her book, LetterMan Program: PreWriting Instruction based on the 4 Stroke Principle. State wide, she served on the Executive Legislation Committee of the three IDA branches in Ohio that succeeded in placing the word dyslexia in the state statutes and on the Ohio Board of Regents Taskforce that resulted in the Regent’s mandatory directive that dyslexia be addressed in undergraduate teacher training when Ohio colleges are up for accreditation.

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MATH

1B: Working Memory: What is it, why is it important, and how can we help? Dr. Cheryl Chase

Working memory is generally described as one’s ability to hold and manipulate information in immediate awareness, is an imperative foundational skill upon which virtually all other cognitive and mental processes are based. It relies heavily on attention, blocking out irrelevant information, discarding no longer needed information, and updating with new information.

There are many different models and definitions of working memory, but suffice to say, it is a person’s “mental scratchpad.” Performance on tests of working memory has been shown to correlate highly with performance on various academic tasks including basic reading skills, reading comprehension, math calculation and reasoning, spelling, written expression, listening comprehension, oral expression, and overall language skills. When working with students who have special educational needs, it is imperative that professionals also consider whether or not the student is displaying age-appropriate working memory; additional assessment and intervention may be necessary.

This workshop will define the term “working memory” using clear, easy to understand terms. It will also draw the connection between working memory and academics, highlighting the ways in which working memory weaknesses can negatively impact learning and performance. Finally,
many concrete strategies will be provided that can be used to support a student with weak working memory.

**Cheryl Chase, PhD.**

Cheryl Chase, Ph.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice in Independence, a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. She specializes in the diagnostic and neuropsychological assessment of various conditions impacting children, adolescents, and young adults including ADHD, Pervasive Developmental Disorders, Learning Disorders, and emotional concerns. In addition to her clinical practice, Dr. Chase is also an accomplished speaker at the local and national levels, leading workshops on such timely topics as executive functioning, differentiated instruction, and creative ways to support those who struggle in school. Finally, Dr. Chase serves as an adjunct instructor at several colleges in the Cleveland area. She is an active member of the International Dyslexia Association, the American Psychological Association, and the Learning Disabilities Association of America. For more information, please visit ChasingYourPotential.com or Dr. Chase’s LinkedIn page.

**2B: Why Some Children Struggle with Math, and What We Can Do About It, Jennifer Scaffidi, CALT**

This presentation will look at the reasons why some children struggle with math at various grade levels. It will begin by looking at the core deficit in math and why some instructional practices fail to help students master foundation skills. It will also explore learning differences which impact learning in mathematics, the evidence suggesting why some students begin to struggle at specific grades and how we can prevent students from falling behind.

At the core, this presentation will also focus on ways to prevent math failure through instructional methodology, differentiation and best practices. There will be special attention to the impact of language-based learning differences, or dyslexia, and instructional models which can support alternative learners.

**3B: The Perfect Storm: When Reading and Math Meet, Jennifer Scaffidi, CALT**

There is math. Then there is the word problem “problem.” Applying mathematics to real life situations or problem solving is a challenge for students with language based and related learning disabilities because of issues with decoding, prosody and comprehension. This presentation offers evidence-based strategies from the recently updated What Works Clearinghouse Problem Solving Guide and applications from reading comprehension instruction for helping students see the meaning behind the math. Using a three step process and evidence based strategies, educators can learn to model efficient procedures for helping all students attack story problems. Participants will learn to create models which help students with learning disabilities incrementally see linkages between real life and the abstract world of words.

**Jennifer Scaffidi, CALT**

Jennifer Scaffidi is a Certified Academic Language Therapist and a Multisensory Math Instructor. She is currently working in the Plain Local School District as well as assisting Marilyn Zecher in teaching her online Multisensory Math courses. She privately works with students in both reading and math. Jennifer also presents professional development workshops on Multisensory Reading and Math strategies.
Jennifer holds a master’s degree in School Administration from Ashland University and a BS in Elementary Education from Bowling Green State University with a minor in Psychology. She serves on the NOBIDA board and is a member of the Academic Language Therapist Association, the International Dyslexia Association, and the Northeastern Ohio Branch of the International Dyslexia Association.

**READING**

**1C: Prepare, Ready, Read! Purposeful Reading Practice, Rebecca Tolson, M.Ed**
This session captures the essence of planning and executing reading lessons that create independent readers through a structured process that only takes ten minutes a day! The presenter will focus on strategies for accuracy, word details, and automaticity that lead to the goal of reading comprehension.

**2C: Developing Metacognitive Strategies, Rebecca Tolson, M.Ed**
The focus of this session is creating strategic thinkers. A strategic thinker knows the structure of the text he or she is reading, connects ideas and constantly summarizes and monitors his or her understanding. If the text is not making sense, the strategic thinker has a plan for repairing his or her comprehension. Participants will learn activities that promote strategic thinking skills.

**Rebecca Tolson, M.Ed**
Rebecca Tolson is Director of Academic Planning and Research for Neuhaus Education Center and is currently a doctoral student at the University of Akron in Ohio. Tolson has a Master of Education degree from Southern Methodist University and is a member of Academic Therapy Association at the level of Qualified Instructor and Certified Academic Language Therapist and a Certified Dyslexia Therapist. Tolson began her career in education as a fifth-grade teacher and later transitioned to teaching both children and adults with learning disabilities. She specializes in using Structured Literacy techniques as intervention for dyslexia and dysgraphia. Tolson teaches as an adjunct professor for Walsh University specializing in the area of literacy with a concentration in specific learning disabilities in reading.

**3C: Wilson 4th Edition Overview, Ellen Brick, M.A**
This session will assist Wilson educators with the updates in the Wilson Language System since transitioning to the 4th edition.

**Ellen Brick, M.A**
Ellen Brick earned a B.A. from the University of Cincinnati and an M.A. from California State University, Los Angeles, both in Special Education. Her experience includes being a special education teacher in public and independent schools, an assistant administrator and head of school in independent schools for individuals with special needs, a supplemental services teacher in a countywide program for students with behavior and emotional issues, an educational evaluator at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation Learning Assessment Clinic, a private tutor, and a Trainer for Wilson Language.
Ellen is a founding board member of the Northern Ohio Branch of the International Dyslexia Association. She served as the second president, remaining continuously active, currently as an Advisory Council Member and the Chairperson for Dyslexia Simulations and the Dyslexia Symposium Dinner.

PARENTS

4A/B (two session topic): Dyslexia 101 + Multisensory Experience = Empowerment with Jennifer LaHaie M.Ed, CALT and Beth Reusser, CALT

Whether you are a community member, parent, or educator, this hands-on presentation will introduce you to the basics of dyslexia and how it could be affecting reading, writing and spelling for someone you know. First, feel some of the anxiety, frustration, and pressures that someone with dyslexia may feel every day. Then, learn the facts and where to find reliable resources to help you separate the facts from fiction about this language-based learning difference.

Jennifer LaHaie, M.Ed, CALT

Jennifer LaHaie, M.Ed, CALT has her masters in Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development from Malone University. Jennifer completed the Academic Language Therapy program at Southern Methodist University and is a Certified Academic Language Therapist. She is working toward her Qualified Instructor certification.

Jennifer currently works for Neuhaus Education Center where she teaches and coaches educators in structured literacy across the northeastern United States. She is the past president of the Northern Ohio branch of IDA and is actively involved. Jennifer believes in educating and empowering teachers to help all students read.

Beth Reusser, CALT

Beth Reusser, CALT is a part of Southern Methodist University’s Ohio cohort that graduated in 2013 and became a Certified Academic Language Therapist. She works for Olentangy Local Schools as an Orton-Gillingham tutor and is working toward dual certification within the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators (AOGPE) within the district. She is an active board member on Olentangy Dyslexia Network and has a private practice in Dublin, Ohio where she provides remediation, consults with parents, and presents various programs to groups about dyslexia and literacy.

4C: Celebrating the Many Definitions of Success: from Diagnosis to Destiny, Mary Jo O’Neill, Moderator of a panel discussion to include parents, advocates, community resources and educators (PACE).

How do you define success? For a child with special needs this question may be difficult to answer. Individual goals vary based on their abilities, supports and access to resources. Join us for a discussion about the many definitions of success, how to develop appropriate goals and ways to achieve them. Learn from professionals, students, parents, and community services providers about strategies that could help your family thrive.
Mary Jo O'Neill, M.Ed

Mary Jo O'Neill, M.Ed., Special Education Advocate, has a broad background in education. She began her career as a teacher in public and private schools, including Julie Billiart School. She was also an Advocate with Lawrence School. In addition to her time in the classroom, Mary Jo created a division within the Academic Support Center at Notre Dame College to provide quality educational opportunities and support services to students. Mary Jo most recently created her own consulting practice, in which she served as an Intervention Specialist and Parent Advocate for over ten years. She joined Hickman & Lowder in 2018.

Mary Jo serves on the national board of the International Dyslexia Association and is an advisor for the local branch and is also a member of the Julie Billiart Network Board. She authored the Forward of Expect a Miracle by Sandy and David Petrovic, Infinity Publishing (2014). Mary Jo graduated cum laude from Vermont College of Norwich University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Early Childhood Education. She received her Masters of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from Cleveland State University. She is a Licensed Intervention Specialist: Mild to Moderate Learning Disabilities.