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MSDE Releases the Specific Learning Disability Technical Assistance Bulletin

Working closely with Decoding Dyslexia Maryland, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) released a Technical Assistance Bulletin (TAB) on November 7, 2016 regarding Specific Learning Disabilities including dyslexia.

The TAB provides the International Dyslexia Association's definition of dyslexia and the warning signs of and identification criteria for dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia. The TAB also qualifies those eligible to identify these learning differences in students in Maryland Public Schools. It also clarifies and emphasizes the authority that teachers, special educators, and administrators now have to use the term *dyslexia* and to provide effective instruction for dyslexics. To download a copy of the TAB, visit: <http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Special-Education/TAB/MDTABulletinSLD.pdf>



A Roadmap to Literacy

“At age nine, when it became obvious that my son was not growing out of his reading problems, I didn’t know what to do or where to go.”

“We hired the Reading Specialist from our school to tutor our daughter. After six months, there was no real progress. The Reading Specialist seemed as stumped as we were.”

“I trusted the teachers in school to teach my children to read. Aren’t they the experts?”

Sound familiar? When a child experiences frustration when reading, parents naturally look for solutions. Many invest in countless hours doing internet searches, meeting with teachers, lamenting with other parents, and paying bills for tutoring that



Mark Your Calendar!

Dr. Julie Washington, Professor and Program Director in Communication Sciences and Disorders at Georgia State University, will be guest speaker at DCIDA's **Spring Conference** on March 11 at the Universities at Shady Grove in Rockville, MD. In her presentation, **Examining Language and Risk: Linguistic Difference and the Development of Early Reading Skills**, Dr. Washington will



explain why children who enter school speaking a language or dialect that differs from the language they will encounter at school are at high risk for slow or poor reading development. This presentation will also focus on current efforts to improve identification in order to prevent long term reading difficulties in low-income, elementary school-aged African American children, a group that is disproportionately poor and uses a cultural dialect that differs from mainstream American English in rule-governed, predictable ways. To register, go to the dc.dyslexiaida.org home page and click on **Spring Conference** in the Events column.

just doesn't seem to work. Some go further. They push the teachers to do more, hire advocates, and then they confront the grim reality that the teachers in their school system, regardless of credentialing in reading or special education, have not been adequately prepared to address the needs of learners with dyslexia. Desperate, parents often turn to private schools or home schooling, hoping to meet their child's needs. A lucky few connect with a Certified Academic Language Therapist (CALT) or other qualified dyslexia therapist, and after extensive one-on-one instruction, are able to breathe a sigh of relief as their child eases into reading independence.

Against this backdrop, the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) took a bold step in 2016. Through the Center for Effective Reading Instruction (CERI, pronounced seer-ee), it began credentialing Certified Structured Literacy Teachers (Tier I) and Certified Structured Literacy Interventionists (Tier II). Further, IDA is credentialing Dyslexia Specialists and Dyslexia Therapists at the Tier III Level. This credentialing, at long last, gives parents and school systems a new way forward. Change will include hiring teachers, reading specialists, and special education teachers with the requisite literacy training to effectively teach all learners, including and especially students with dyslexia. Tier III interventionists will be made available to severe dyslexics, those able to read only with intensive, one-on-one therapy.

This credentialing initiative builds on two existing IDA programs: the accreditation of university programs beginning in 2012 and the publication of the *Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading (K&PS)* in 2010. The accreditation of university programs gives school systems guidance on which new hires are trained to deliver structured literacy instruction for all learners, not just those with dyslexia. The *Knowledge and Practice Standards* spells out what teachers and interventionists need to know. If a teacher did not graduate from an accredited program, the K&PS can be used to direct courses of self-study or continuing education. Teachers now have clear directions on how to supplement their skills so they can better serve all students in their classroom; administrators can look for these credentials and skills when making hiring decisions; parents can request that professionals working with their children have documentation that these professionals have training specific to supporting struggling

Next Steps: Another Dyslexia Family Networking Forum!

Academic success requires direct, effective instruction in reading and spelling, along with powerful tools for self-advocacy. For parents, knowledge is key, as is becoming empowered and active. So please join DCIDA for an information-sharing, support, and community-building event at Commonwealth Academy in Alexandria, VA on **March 25**. For more information and to register, visit dc.dyslexiaida.org.

Save the Date!

Please join DCIDA at its **May Membership Meeting** on Saturday, May 13, 2017 at the Siena School in Silver Spring, MD.



Our speaker, Dr. Maureen Lovett, is the Founder and Director of the SickKids Learning Disabilities Research Program (LDRP). She will be speaking on the topic of

reading difficulties in students in middle school and high school settings. Dr. Lovett is recognized internationally for her contributions to reading disabilities research and intervention over the past 25 years.

readers. For the DC area, public schools face a mounting challenge. While awareness of the needs of students with dyslexia is increasing and parents are pressing the need for improved services, not one college or university preparation program in DC, Virginia, or Maryland holds CERI

accreditation. Human Resources Departments within school systems have the ability to pressure local university programs to pursue CERI credentialing. For now, teachers and parents in the DC area have to advocate that teachers employed by the school systems receive additional training to meet the K&P Standards.

The DC Branch of the International Dyslexia Association is contributing to these efforts. In addition to our well-attended workshops and conferences, our Board has decided to combine its expertise in the publication of this newsletter. With each issue, we will address a skill from the *Knowledge and Practice Standards*. We will examine the skill, describe its importance to reading, and provide classroom or small group activities in support of skill development. Further, we will describe indicators of students who cannot develop this skill in their learning environment. This documentation will aid parents, teachers, and administrators in the decision-making process that may lead to Tier II and Tier III interventions.

Taken together, professional credentialing, accreditation of training programs, and the *Knowledge and Practice Standards* give hope to parents, teachers, administrators, and —most of all — students for improved literacy outcomes within our public education system. We know what it takes to teach students to read. It is our task now to make sure that these skills are available to all teachers and all students.

“Far too many teachers say they feel unprepared for the classroom after completing teacher preparation programs, yet we know that there is no more important in-school factor for student learning than having a great teacher, particularly in our highest-need communities.”

ESSA: <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/education-department-releases-final-teacher-preparation-regulations>

-Deborah Spear, M.Ed., CALT, CDT
Vice President, DCIDA

Running Until Everyone Can Read

What does running, run-walking, power-walking, and walking have to do with reading disabilities remediation, teacher training and certification, and support for dyslexics and their families? Everything, according to the International Dyslexia Association (IDA). To raise dyslexia awareness and to promote the use of evidence-based instructional solutions in school systems and colleges of education, the IDA launched its **TeamQuest** initiative in November, 2015. TeamQuest is an endurance training and fundraising program. No matter what fitness level, participants can train for a rewarding and exciting endurance event at one of the great destination events worldwide while raising money to help children and adults with dyslexia. Participants receive a customized training plan, ongoing



coaching, event lodging, a TeamQuest logo singlet, pre-race dinner, and post-race party, among other perks. This is a great way to make new friends, improve your level of fitness, explore a new city, have a lot of fun, and accomplish what you may never have thought possible for yourself and struggling readers.

DCIDA board members and friends participated in the *Potomac River Towpath TeamQuest Solidarity Walk* on June 6, 2016 – concurrent with the TeamQuest San Diego Rock’n’Roll Marathon a couple of time zones away, where IDA members from branches around the nation ran to raise awareness of the prevalence of dyslexia.

TeamQuest Marathon and Half-Marathon events are currently scheduled for the Spring of 2017 in: Nashville, TN on April 29; Newport Beach, CA on May 7; and Cleveland, OH on May 21. Join us and make a difference in your life and the lives of others! To learn more, visit: <http://teamquestdyslexia.org>. 4age on

Join us at the 2017 Towpath Solidarity Walk on Sunday, May 21. Visit dc.dyslexiaida.org for more information and to register for this fun event and important cause!

Questions? Email: dcida.lmoloney@gmail.com

