Message From The President

Heather Walton, CCC-SLP - President, IDA Alaska

The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) has a new sharpened mission to promote Structured Literacy in every classroom. This is a drastic change in the methodologies used by public institutions from the past 30 years. Balanced Literacy and Guided Literacy approaches have been the norm nationwide, but they do not attack the decoding skills students with dyslexia need. 20% of the population has dyslexia (Shaywitz, 2003). That means in a classroom of 30 students, 6 of them are not being taught in a way that has been scientifically proven effective. The Structured Literacy approach is an evidence-based instruction model that instructs our students with learning disabilities, including dyslexia, neurotypical learners, and highly gifted students because it focuses on the basics of language skills (IDA 2020). While there have been various methods used in the past, the strongest evidence today shows that Structured Literacy has the best results in teaching students to read and write with the most consistent habits (Lorimor-Easly & Reed, 2019). (Continue...pg. 3)

Learning to read is the process of acquiring the several types of statistical knowledge that support rapid and efficient comprehension starting with phonological structure, orthographic structure, the mapping between orthography and phonology, vocabulary, and grammar” (Seidenberg, 2017).
New this year! IDA is offering free one year classroom teacher starter memberships for pre-service and current classroom teachers. For all membership options, including parents and professionals, see the link below: HTTPS://PORTAL.DYSLEXIAIDA.ORG/CLASSROOMTEACHER
The International Dyslexia Association has outlined the content of Structured Literacy as follows:

- Phoneme awareness
- Sound symbol correspondence
- Patterns and conventions of print (orthography)
- Morphology
- Syntax and Semantics

The principles and methods for Structured Literacy include:

- Explicit
- Systematic and cumulative
- Hands-on, engaging, and multi-modal
- Diagnostic and responsive

The above does not leave out the top of the Scarborough Rope which includes language comprehension. There are many curriculums that use the above approach which can be taught in the general classroom, Tier I, and in a small group or direct instruction through Tier II and III. Some of these approaches include Lindamood-Bell, Wilson, Barton, Spell-Links, Orton-Gillingham method, and more.

But where does this instruction come from? It comes from our fabulous teachers providing the instruction and the districts supplying the materials. Being that many post-secondary education institutions have been teaching our upcoming teachers Balanced and Guided Literacy approaches, most of our licensed teachers, unfortunately, do not have adequate training to teach reading and spelling using a Structured Literacy approach. There is little evidence-based instruction being conducted.

A universal teacher preparation requirement for licensed teachers in Alaska in evidence-based literacy instruction is needed to ensure our students do not continue to slip through the cracks. The International Dyslexia Association has tasked itself with naming accredited teacher training institutions using “Knowledge and Practice Standards” (KPS). Our teacher-training institutions must include these standards in their literacy education curriculums and aim for accreditation from IDA.

All students in the state of Alaska and nationwide should have the ability to be taught to read and write through evidence-based curriculum. Legislation has been ongoing the past few years, but Alaska is still behind the many states with comprehensive literacy laws.

It is the mission of the IDA Alaska to be an advocate for those with dyslexia and a resource for teachers, school districts, and state policymakers with the goal to implement Structured Literacy in our schools so someday, everyone can read.

IDA Alaska is honored to award Heather Mildon, the principal at Chugiak Elementary, a $500 scholarship this quarter. Heather is pursuing Orton Gillingham Associate Level Training with OG Training Fellow Janet George through The Fortune Academy. This includes coursework via distance delivery, followed by an 8 month, 100-hour practicum working 1:1 with a student, including observations with feedback. Go, Heather! (See page 4 to learn about scholarship opportunities.)
Scholarships are now available to IDA Alaska members for professional development opportunities – good for classroom teachers, advocates, administrators, or parents who intend to become a voice in the community. Check out the new free membership!

IDA branches across the nation, as well as other organizations aligned with the Science of Reading, are successfully presenting high-quality virtual conferences, webinars, certification programs, and continuing education programs. IDA Alaska compiled a list of recommended opportunities and hopes to support its members on their continuing education journey. Continuing education opportunities not on this list, if aligned with the Science of Reading, can be eligible upon approval.

For more information on IDA Alaska scholarship awards (up to $500 per participant) visit: www.ak.dyslexiaida.org.

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**Continuing Ed. Scholarship Opportunity**

**Featured Facebook Group For Educators:** Alaska Science of Reading- What I Should Have Learned in College

**About this group:**
The purpose of this group is to connect the research of how we learn to read to our teaching practice. Our mission is to inform and deliver to teachers professional development in evidence-based practices.

Dr. Mark Seidenberg defines the “Science of Reading” as a body of basic research in developmental psychology, educational psychology, cognitive science, and cognitive neuroscience on reading, one of the most complex human behaviors, and its biological (neural, genetic) bases. This research has been conducted for decades in the US and around the world. The research has important implications for helping children to succeed, but it has not been incorporated in how teachers are trained for the job or how children are taught.

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**Structured Literacy Teacher Insight**

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