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IDA Alaska News

International Dyslexia Association Alaska Branch Quarterly E-Newsletter



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Message From The President

Heather Walton, CCC-SLP - President, IDA Alaska

October is Dyslexia Awareness Month. It's a time each year when we work to spread the understanding and knowledge about this learning difference to as many people as possible. As a Speech Language Pathologist who specializes in the treatment of Dyslexia, this is an incredibly important month for me, because there is so much misinformation about what Dyslexia is, what it isn't, and how we test for and treat this very common condition.

According to the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity, Dyslexia affects 20% of the population and represents 80-90% of all learning disabilities! That is a lot! It is the most common of all neurocognitive disorders and occurs at all levels of intelligence. Many highly gifted individuals struggle with reading, writing, and spelling. Early signs may begin to appear even before a child enters Kindergarten.

Early Intervention certainly helps a child get the instruction they need, however, those diagnosed later should also be encouraged. Intervention can begin at any age.

We have come a long way since Dyslexia was first identified in 1896 by a doctor who sought to determine why a bright child struggled to read. We now know a great deal about Dyslexia, and the research continues to grow. We have a definition of what Dyslexia is, and we know what signs and symptoms help parents, teachers, and pediatricians watch for it. And perhaps most importantly, we know how to assess and screen for Dyslexia, and we also know the type of instruction that works. So with all our current research and expert knowledge, why do Alaska's reading scores remain among the lowest in the nation?

(Continue pg. 3)

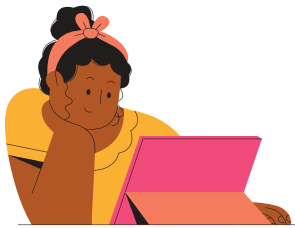
**...Dyslexia affects
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Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology is Becoming More Commonplace

Ashly Beckes, Orton-Gillingham Practitioner

Assistive technology (AT) can sometimes be thought of as used by individuals with a significant disability for basic function tasks that would be impossible for them to perform otherwise. Actually, AT can be used for students with and without disabilities. Recently, it has become more normalized to have AT both in the general education classroom and in special education.



Programs such as Google Read & Write and the accessibility tools within Microsoft can help to increase comprehension, improve writing quality, and allow students to confidently get their words on paper. Because of COVID-19, computers in the classroom have become more commonplace. This is great news for students with dyslexia, as they can use AT tools to help write their essay or read news articles for a research project they are working on.

But how can the teacher know that a student needs this? Teachers truly are amazing and can differentiate instruction to best serve their class, but remembering everyone's specific needs can be challenging. The best way to ensure a student who *needs* certain accommodations has them is through a 504 Plan or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Accommodations to use AT can be listed in these plans but you will need to work with the school to set them up.



Touch base with your school to inquire whether either of these options are appropriate and about the steps you can take. In the meantime, search AT for dyslexia videos on YouTube, a lot of great suggestions are available and are ever advancing!

CALL TO ACTION

What's happening with Structured Literacy in your world? We want to hear from you so we can help connect educators across the state.

Write us at:
info.ak@dyslexiaida.org



Miss Alaska for America Strong

Mary Mitchell, M.S., CCC-SLP

Mary Mitchell was crowned Miss Alaska for America Strong in August 2021. What does this have to do with dyslexia? We are excited because Mary's platform is dyslexia! Mary is a Speech-Language Pathologist in Anchorage at a private clinic that specializes in dyslexia intervention.

Mary says she is fortunate to have a career that she is extremely passionate about. This career passion stems from the significant impact her Speech-Language Pathologist and Reading Specialist had on her life. One of the greatest joys in her profession is seeing the excitement on her students' faces when they accomplish something they once feared was out of reach.

She radiates confidence and works hard to increase self-confidence in every student she works with.

Mary also has a passion for infant feeding with a focus on breastfeeding. In addition to specializing in dyslexia, she is working to further contribute to the community as an infant feeding specialist, helping to promote the positive lifelong benefits of breastfeeding.

Mary Mitchell Mary attended the 3rd Quarter IDA Alaska meeting and was inspired by the statewide collaboration of the membership and the resources the IDA Alaska branch is providing to professionals. She is excited to participate in upcoming events and IDA Alaska meetings.





Dyslexia Dash- 2021

Join IDA Alaska as we run and walk for dyslexia! Register now for the 2021 Virtual Dyslexia Dash. Pick the date and time you want to run or walk your 5K, then post your best time between October 2 - 16. Proceeds from this event will support scholarships for teachers and other events in Alaska, so consider becoming a fundraiser, too. Your friends and family can help you make a difference. Register here: [Dyslexia Dash Registration](#)

MEET-UP

October 7th, 2021 5:30 p.m.
Lyn Ary Park
2009 Foraker Dr. Anchorage

Run with Miss Alaska for America Strong, Mary Mitchell, or walk with IDA Alaska President, Heather Walton, for an in-person meet-up. We will start and end by the ballfields and walk around Westchester Lagoon. Register at the link above!

UPCOMING DATES:

Dyslexia Dash AK meet-up: October 7
National IDA Conference: Oct 21-23
Quarter 4 Meeting: December 14
Scholarship Deadline: Until allocation is awarded

(Continued from pg 1, Message From The President)

According to Dr. Sally Shaywitz, "The problem isn't a knowledge gap, but an action gap". Too often, Dyslexia is not acknowledged in schools. Parents spend a great amount of time seeking answers and fighting for intervention. The process is long and prolongs the adequate instruction, based on the science of reading, that these students so desperately need.

We need to be comfortable and confident when using the word "Dyslexia". It is important for advocacy, accommodations, and intervention. We can develop clear intervention plans, based on what we know works. Too often the signs and symptoms are overlooked. Parents are frequently told their children will "grow

out of it". Rather than working from a medical model of early intervention, many often rely on a "wait to fail" model. The years of science and research deserve recognition, by not just school districts, but also through public policy.

When it comes to the word "Dyslexia", we should use it, spread it, and above all, we should help EVERYONE be able to read it!

Use the word, spread the word, and let's help EVERYONE read the word!

FREE MEMBERSHIP

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](https://portal.dyslexiaida.org/classroomteacher)



Structured Literacy Teacher Insight

Kodiak Island Borough S.D. Teacher Shares Experience with Structured Literacy Training

Tracy Parker, an elementary teacher in the Kodiak Island Borough School District, completed a 45-hour course in Structured Literacy called The Reading Teacher's Top Ten Tools. IDA Alaska checked in with Tracy recently to ask what she thought of the course and if she might share some of her key takeaways.

IDA Alaska: What drew you to the Top Ten Tools course?

Tracy: The main reason I decided to take the Top Ten Tools course is because it provided professional learning in the area of reading while rooted in research. The course is led by Dr. Deb Glasner and equipped with coaches who regularly check in with participants to ensure understanding and provide encouragement along the journey. The third reason I chose the Top Ten Tools course is because of the cohort piece. This course strongly encourages cohorts to meet regularly, providing colleagues a safe space to dialogue and wrestle through the research turned into practical and immediate classroom implementation.

IDA Alaska: What were some of your key takeaways from the course?

Tracy: There are so many! Something I will immediately implement is increasing my encoding activities. While I knew this was an important piece for student learning, it wasn't until this course that I realized the significant role encoding plays in helping to facilitate orthographic mapping.

IDA-AK is sponsoring scholarship opportunities for Structured Literacy training and can be used for CEUs for teachers. Top Ten Tools would qualify as a program a teacher can use the scholarship fund for.

Continuing Ed. Scholarship Opportunity

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.

GED OPPORTUNITY

Alaska Literacy Program (ALP) is now offering GED prep classes and has programs for adults to work on their reading skills. Click on the link for more information:
www.alaskaliteracyprogram.org

The
International
DYSLEXIA
Association



Promoting literacy through research, education, and advocacy.

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