

FLORIDA BRANCH of the INTERNATIONAL DYSLEXIA  
ASSOCIATION

<http://www.idafla.org/board.html>

Summer 2010

Promoting literacy  
through research,  
education, and  
advocacy.



## NEWSLETTER

### Mission Statement of Florida Branch

The Florida Branch of the IDA seeks to educate and empower those in Florida with knowledge about dyslexia, appropriate assessment for dyslexia and effective, research-based interventions.

*Supporting Dyslexic  
Floridians and their  
Quest for Excellence*

Many of our 350 members are actively involved in the treatment and remediation of dyslexia. Our members are educators, psychologists, physicians, social workers, individuals with dyslexia and parents who have dealt with learning disability issues within the local school systems and the State Department of Education. One of our branch's most important issues is to raise awareness of dyslexia in order to increase early interventions. We support teacher education and hold outreach programs.

## **President's Message**

I have enjoyed a whirlwind three year term as president of our branch. It is always a challenge to maintain momentum for a volunteer organization when you have such a large geographical area and such diverse populations. The benefits, however, are huge. We have so many knowledgeable people in our state and many wonderful resources to draw from.

As I leave the presidency, I see a new focus before us. The whole world of special education for dyslexic children in Florida's public schools is changing due to new eligibility requirements. The new practice called Response to Intervention is a federal mandate that has at its heart getting effective instruction to students who are struggling as quickly as possible. While it holds great promise, there will be many pitfalls as the whole practice unfolds and general education teachers learn new ways of conducting their classrooms.

For families and private service providers, the body of knowledge about helping children and adults with dyslexia achieve to their potential continues to grow. Finding timely help and guidance in decision-making is still one of the greatest challenges that they face. The Florida Branch of IDA continues to be a source of information for these families as well as for the educators and professionals who seek to answer their needs.

Our strength as a branch has always been in our high quality conferences. This past year we hosted the national conference and are planning a wonderful conference in the fall of 2010 to continue the journey of learning. I hope that you will join with us in supporting our efforts to assure research-based practices for dyslexic learners are available in our state.

**Dr. Gayle Cane**  
**President, Florida Branch**



## **Highlights of the FLIDA Annual Meeting, June 6, 2010**

Our **Annual Meeting** and election of new board members was held on Sunday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, at Shorecrest Preparatory School in St. Petersburg. The panel discussion by our Florida experts on **Response to Intervention** was very interesting, reflecting information from a variety of perspectives representing different areas of our state.

Congratulations go to Dr. Carole Repensek, our newly elected president! She is already actively planning the next year of offerings for our membership.

We are pleased to welcome our newly elected board members who are listed below and thank them for their willingness to serve.

Judith Cohen: Ed. D. in Exceptional Student Education;  
currently director of the Office of Field Experiences for FIU;  
formerly FIU Professor teaching SPED classes; educational diagnostician, teacher and consultant

Carol Poulson: MS in Elementary Education;  
son has been diagnosed with dyslexia; owns her own tutoring center; former teacher, St. Petersburg area

Eileen Schmucker: MA in LA/Reading;

currently teaches intensive reading/LA in Sarasota County; son is having reading difficulty and may have dyslexia; she is a teacher/parent that initially contacted the FL-IDA website for more information

Lou Ann Bigsby: MA in Reading & Early Childhood Education;  
currently a reading coach in Polk County Schools; formerly researched and wrote grants to obtain education funding; former adjunct professor for Florida Southern College and managed their reading clinic

Kathryn Rawlings: M. Ed in LD & Behavioral/Emotional Disorders;  
Currently in private practice in Jacksonville; former teacher, psychometrist, and educational services coordinator

Linda Starr: M.Ed in Reading;  
former FL-IDA board member, serving on several committees; currently an Orton-Gillingham trained instructor in private practice

## **From the Editor's Desk**

### **Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading**

In 2009, the Professional Standards and Practices Committee appointed by the International Dyslexia Association and chaired by Louisa Moats, developed a well-referenced document which serves as a guide for college and university teacher preparation, professional development, and certification of those who teach reading and related literacy skills in all settings. "Reading difficulties," says the document, "are the most common cause of academic failure and underachievement." The standards developed by this committee address the fact that that a tremendous amount of knowledge and skill is required in order to address reading problems effectively. The committee hopes these standards will 1) inform professional development and dyslexia preparation programs, 2) be used in colleges of education to prepare teacher candidates, and 3) help inform publishers of literacy materials and textbooks.

Retrieved 5/25/10 from <http://www.neuhaus.org>

Our FLIDA president, Gayle Cane, distributed the final document, just published in 2010. The document, states that the responsibility for teaching reading and writing is shared by classroom teachers, reading specialists and special education personnel. It goes on to say that though reading disabilities may "originate with neurobiological differences," these differences are often treated by skilled teaching and informed and effective classroom practice. The document goes on to ask, "Are Teachers prepared?"

The document replies to this question by providing a content framework for college/university courses, course sequences and guidelines. The document has two defined sections. The first, *Knowledge and Practice Standards*, discusses knowledge and practice from general concepts to the specific language teaching, ending with a discussion of ethics. This describes both content knowledge and application options. The second section, *Guidelines*, provides guidelines for teachers in schools, clinics or private practice. It is available at <http://www.interdys.org/>.

### **Rtl – Response to Intervention**

My colleagues and I, at the university, have become very interested in Rtl and its implementation in Florida school systems. As a result of our investigations, we will be introducing Rtl, its tiers and application and implementation of strategies for meeting students needs, at the tier levels, in our undergraduate and graduate reading courses starting fall 2010. According to a 2006 collaborative publication, *New Roles in Response to Intervention*, which includes a chapter from IDA, the reading specialist will have a primary role as resource and support in the implementation of the Rtl model in schools. Florida's plan for Rtl implementation, published in 2008, can be found at <http://www.florida-rti.org/index.htm>. The annual meeting held a panel discussion on Rtl.

**Joyce VW Warner, Ed.D.**  
**Newsletter Editor**

## **Topics of interest**

### **Adult Literacy, the Challenge *Enter the 2<sup>nd</sup> Decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century!***

Susan Santell

Having been involved in teaching reading for 35 years, I could consider winding down, right? The reason I just cannot is because of my growing concern over the state of adult literacy programs in our country. The latest statistics across the country indicate that one in seven adults in the U.S. is functionally illiterate.

A recent inventory of my local community's adult literacy programs leads me on a search for other adult reading models around in the country. Granted, I wasn't able to do a complete compilation, but I definitely made an observation... **adults who are illiterate are hurting big time.**

First of all, many programs are using outdated curriculum, sometimes originating from the early 1900's. Often, directors of these adult teaching centers are not educators, but have backgrounds ranging in medical sales to marketing. Also, professional organizations for the sole interest of adult literacy are often, not always, clouded in political agendas which usually are attached to grant monies and territorial control. "It's always been done like this, and seems to be working just fine."...a professor reminded us, "The streets of hell are paved with good intentions!" In my survey, the best case scenario was someone, usually a well-meaning, but less experienced educator, who may have been introduced to a scientifically researched – based methods training for reading instruction. What happens next is that someone then devise this/her own "newer-and-improved-program" instead of sticking to the original fidelity of proven strategies. The students experience limited progress because the critical components of the original scientifically researched-based programs are missing.

I am also aware that the other challenges, when helping adults tackle illiteracy, are the logistics of few available hours and the constraints of making long-term commitment. However, is this the appropriate approach to the address the current state of adult literacy? I've always maintained that parents and students will likely stick with a program, despite financial or logistics issues, IF there is success which is realized from the very beginning. Are we as educators aspiring for quality or quantity?

#### ***New Trend***

In the past ten years, English Language Learners (ELL) represent a huge influx of numbers of participants in adult literacy programs. I maintain that there is a vast difference in teaching someone to learn to speak English as a second language versus teaching those who grew up speaking English, but are still failing to read and write with ease. This issue divides adult literacy programs into two distinct groups, neither being less important than the other. Keep in mind, however, that it is not embarrassing to admit that coming to a new country you may not understand anything about speaking English. While on the other hand, it may be embarrassing, to step forward and admit you attended to school, sometimes received a diploma, but still cannot read and spell.

Several adult literacy directors report that if there was no cap on ELL's who attend class there would be too many ELL's to serve. In comparison, few English speaking adults come forward to get help in learning to read and spell. I have learned that most adult literacy programs have, at most, 10 - 15 % native English speaking students. I am thinking, there are a lot of "them" hiding out there. Can we blame them for not raising their hands, admitting they have a difficult time reading, and then asking, "Help me learn to read!"? They failed before, often numerous times in their lives. Why would they trust again that someone can teach them to make sense of written language? The mindset is clear to them---they must be stupid. Don't admit it. How many, do you suppose, are non-diagnosed dyslexic adults who fall into the one in seven?

#### ***Where's the research?***

As an experienced teacher of hard-to-teach children and adults, I have learned that using research-based methods, strategies and appropriate curriculum help to reach students in the most effective way. This message is beginning to reach our schools, but has not, in my opinion, begun to touch the surface of the adults who missed out learning to read during their years in school years.

A successful reading program is most often one that incorporates a researched-based, multisensory, structured and systematic approach to reading instruction. Even if I were to set up a wonderful adult literacy program using a curriculum, such as Wilson or another Orton-Gillingham

based approach, I am uncertain as to how to lure those adults ,who are native speakers of English, to the door. Is this “pioneer” territory? I’m thinking baby steps...

I invite our readers to email comments or opinion, sightings of successful programs, curriculum, or individuals anywhere in the country who have made significant effort to incorporate solid, research-based approaches in helping adults learn to read and spell. Let’s begin to make a difference. Thank you !

**Susan Widder Sentell, M. Ed.**  
**Assistant Newsletter Editor**  
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## **Article Review**

From: **ADVANCE for Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists**  
*Reviewed by Dr. Jean Schmidt and Susan Sentell*

“ Post-RTI - Moving from a Reactive to Proactive Role” by Alyssa Banotai

The role of the speech pathologist has made some positive changes in McCracken County Public Schools (KY) due to their proactive involvement within the RTI perspective for addressing reading skills in a child’s educational needs. They are no longer placing a Kindergartener, who just has speech sounds that are not quite right, into speech intervention with a speech language pathologist’s (SLP); as it typically became apparent that many speech issues are actually related to reading development. In an attempt to support this change in thinking and action, specific programs, viewed through the lens of multiple studies, were consulted and used as supporting evidence. In addition, the speech language pathologist joined individual school RTI teams, which also included the classroom teachers.

Several programs endorsed through this initiative were:

- *5-Minute Kids*, by Janelle Publications,
- *The Sounds Abound Program*, by LinguSystems Inc,
- *Land of the Letter People*, by Abrams Learning Tends,
- *Hear It! Say it! Learn It!* by Super Duper Publications.

The Special Education Director of McCracken County Public Schools (KY) Amie Tooley stated that due to the system’s proactive involvement within the RTI perspective, “We don’t necessarily stick to just programs---things in a box. For example, we use good old drill and practice. That is a research-based intervention that has been proven to work and is proving very successful with our kids so they are able to catch up with their peers and make progress within the curriculum.”

In their opinion RTI has served to highlight the speech language pathologist’s expertise in all areas of language and literacy learning within the curriculum. Traditionally, the SLP is not credited with being involved with writing, word development and spelling. The McCracken County Public Schools feel that it is proving that the Speech Language Pathologists’ role is more than pulling kids out of the classroom, showing flash cards, and trying to teach sounds to students. Additionally, the classroom teachers appear to feel connected and more inclined to work together with Speech Language Pathologists to help the students.

## **In Memory**

With the sudden death of Dr. Marjorie Zensky in October 2009, the Florida Branch has lost one of its most dedicated professional supporters. Extremely talented and dynamic, she worked tirelessly and enthusiastically on the Board of Directors for many terms. She was outstanding in developing our conferences and meetings and was the most successful at building attendance and obtaining the most educational and extensive professional exhibitor displays. She is sorely missed by all of her family and the Florida Branch of the International Dyslexia Association

## **Final Note**

**Please send items for the newsletter to:**  
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