Earlyne Hastings Will Address
Spring Conference on April 1, 2000

The ALTA Annual Spring Conference will feature Earlyne Hastings as the keynote speaker. Ms. Hastings will speak on phonological awareness. She will address current research as well as practical application of research-based knowledge.

Ms. Hastings is a special education teacher who has taught young students with learning disabilities for over twenty years. She holds a master’s degree in early childhood education and in learning disabilities. She is a Ph.D. candidate in special education at Syracuse University where she has studied with Dr. Benita Blachman.

Ms. Hastings leads workshops on early reading intervention and phonological awareness. She has co-authored and taught, with Dr. Darlene Tangel, a training module on phonological awareness and early reading intervention for the Educational Research and Dissemination Program of the American Federation of Teachers.

Chairman Sherry Warren and her committee members are hard at work planning the conference, which will be held on Saturday, April 1, at Texas Scottish Rite Hospital. The annual conference provides an opportunity for ALTA members to enhance their knowledge of dyslexia and best practices for intervention. In addition, it is a great time to renew friendships and meet new professional colleagues.

Three ALTA Centers, Neuhaus Education Center, EDMAR Educational Associates, and Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children, will present phonological awareness materials in the afternoon session.
Dear ALTA members,

By now I hope that most of you have made your plans to attend ALTA’s Annual Conference, “Sound Thinking about Reading.” Our keynote speaker is Earlyne Hastings from Syracuse University and her topic will be “Phonological Awareness: What You Should Know; What You Should Do.” Ms. Hastings’ topic reflects more than 20 years’ experience working with students with dyslexia. She will share her depth of knowledge and expertise in phonological awareness with us in the morning session on April 1.

In the afternoon three of our ALTA accredited centers will present the phonological awareness materials developed in their training centers. Sherry Warren, Vice President of Programs and her committee have thoughtfully planned our day to include the key ingredients most of us look for in a professional conference. We will enhance our knowledge of current research, learn practical applications of that knowledge, and have time for fun with our professional colleagues. Thank you, Sherry, for chairing this important event in the ALTA year.

On Saturday, January 22, the ALTA Phonetic Spelling Bee was held at Hillier School in Dallas. More than 500 students accompanied by their families and therapists took home a medal or trophy in recognition of their accomplishment. Smiling faces were everywhere! On behalf of ALTA and the Board of Directors, I would like to thank Liz Kennedy and her committee for an excellent job of planning this extraordinary event. Many children benefited that day because of your commitment.

Following the election of new officers and board members of ALTA, we will begin establishing new committees that will be assigned a wide variety of responsibilities. ALTA continues to grow in numbers and in recognition. There is a great deal of work to accomplish. The board and officers would benefit from your talents and expertise. Our goal is to engage more of you in the important committees that reflect our national membership. Please contact me or any board members if you would like to participate on an ALTA committee.

I am looking forward to seeing you on April 1.

Elizabeth Cantrill
Help for a child...easy as

A child whose learning problems are misunderstood may suffer needlessly during the school years. This often can be prevented, however, if someone acts as an advocate for the child.

An advocate becomes necessary when an individual is vulnerable and must have assistance interpreting a need. When problems occur because the requirements of school become overwhelming to a child, adults are presented with the obligation of providing advocacy.

All the adults who touch the life of a child with a learning disability have a responsibility to be well informed in order to make good decisions. It is wise to include the child whose fate is being discussed. This expresses respect and acceptance of the child as a capable person rather than simply the embodiment of a disability. A bonus result may be that the child will be a more willing participant in a plan which he has helped to design.

It is important that adults approach the learning problem with a realistic, accepting, and positive attitude. Acknowledging a problem is usually the first step toward finding a solution. Their demeanor should be open, honest, and sensitive without overtones of pity or futility. Also spending some time talking about the child’s strengths and achievements will help to put any difficulties into perspective without denying them.

It is essential that family members and professionals obtain basic information about learning problems. There are many terms for learning disabilities that are used interchangeably by schools and other agencies. Properly applied terminology can be useful in helping to describe and understand a child’s specific learning problem. Discrepancies in terms, however, should not be a factor in determining educational services to be provided. It is more important to reach an understanding of the child’s unique blend of strengths and weaknesses, and the resulting educational needs, than to focus on the words involved.

Parents can play a vital role in helping educators to understand their child’s learning problem. The knowledge, which parents have gained by experience, is valuable information, and should be shared with educators for everyone’s benefit. Unless parents communicate on a consistent basis with the schools, sometimes teachers have no way of knowing that a problem exists.

When individuals share information, express ideas, discuss differences in viewpoint, and seek to agree on solutions to problems, they are participating in collaborative communication. This type of team approach is a process rather than a single event. It requires time, patience, planning, flexibility, and emphasizes several distinctive qualities:

• Collaborative attitude and atmosphere: Parents and educators who interact in an assertive, positive attitude encourage teamwork. Setting realistic education goals for the child, building a knowledge base, learning communication skills, and maintaining frequent contact are some ways to establish an atmosphere of collaboration.

• Comprehensive perspective: Develop a broad perspective of all concerns, decide upon the major purpose for the meeting, state a goal to be accomplished and maintain focus on the “big picture”. After specific behaviors, performances, and events have been considered, the problem may be redefined, or the main purpose for communication may be adjusted.

• Consideration of the future: Before deciding upon any action, advocates will want to consider all possible outcomes, the effect on other adults involved, and whether the process will take too long to help the child. If the goal cannot realistically be reached, or if there are possible results that are unacceptable, alternatives may need to be considered before launching into a major process.

• Carefully planned statements and actions: There is no substitute for
A Balanced Approach to Literacy Instruction

Balance is an important part of our lives. The tires on our cars last longer if we balance them every so often. To remain solvent, we cannot forget to balance our checkbooks. The stress in our lives is reduced if we balance work with well-deserved relaxation. To stay healthy, we must balance our daily diets, and so on. All of the seeming unending balances in our lives complement, nourish, and sustain us. One balance that must not be overlooked is the balance in literacy instruction for students; it is essential in helping all students become successful readers and writers.

What is a balanced approach to literacy instruction? It is an approach to teaching reading and writing that involves four major, interdependent balances. The first balance is the balance between reading and written expressive language. Reading reinforces writing and writing reinforces reading. Since full literacy demands competence in reading and writing, balanced literacy instruction must include both elements.

The second balance is the balance between the two components of reading — decoding and comprehension. Reading is a process in which symbols on paper are translated into words and meaning is attached to those words. The ultimate goal of reading is to gain information from the printed page for educational or recreational purposes. The translation of symbols is traditionally known as decoding. With automaticity and accuracy, good readers use four skills to decode unfamiliar words; instant word recognition; sound/symbol correspondences; structural analysis (i.e. attention to syllables, prefixes, suffixes, roots and combining forms); and contextual clues. The foundation for decoding skills is based on an understanding of sound/symbol correspondences (i.e. the alphabetic principle), which is based on phonemic awareness (i.e., sensitivity to the sounds in words) and instant letter recognition. The attachment of meaning to the decoded words is traditionally known as comprehension. Good readers understand the translated symbols because: they have a strong oral language base; they have and can activate a large store of world knowledge; they visualize what they are reading; and they reflect on the text by asking themselves questions (i.e., inner dialogue). The foundation for comprehension is a strong oral language base. A balanced approach to the reading portion of literacy instruction must address the skills for developing both decoding and comprehension.

The third balance is the balance between the two components of written expressive language — mechanics and composition/creativity. Written expressive language is a process in which thoughts and ideas are translated onto paper. The ultimate goal of written expressive language is communication. Good writers have a strong sense of sentence and paragraph structure, a sense of how the language works for spelling and fluid handwriting. Good writers can create and compose their thoughts because they have a strong oral language base, a large store of world knowledge, the ability to visualize, and the ability to use inner dialogue. A balanced approach to written expressive language must address both the skills for developing the mechanics and creativity/composition.

The fourth balance involves the ways in which students learn the skills for successful reading and written expressive language. Within a language-and literature-rich environment, students need many and varied opportunities to read and write, balanced with direct instruction that is systemic and sequential.

A balanced approach to literacy instruction complements, nourishes, and sustains our students, enabling them to become fully literate and full, responsible participants in society.

Suzanne Carreker is Director of Teacher Development at Neuhaus Education Center and past president of The Houston Branch of The International Dyslexia Association.

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ALTA Centers Council Board Meeting

The ALTA Centers Council officers and board met via teleconference on January 15, 2000. The meeting was called to discuss the goals and objectives for the coming year and to formulate a plan to accomplish identified goals. All officers and committee chair were involved in the call.

The Council revisited its purpose, which is stated in the Articles of Incorporation as:

"Academic Language Therapy Association Centers Council, Inc., is organized for the educational purposes of developing and accrediting Centers for the Academic Language Therapy Association, monitoring accredited centers, fostering the education of academic language therapists, and supporting research related to the practice of Academic Language Therapy."

Discussion revolved around the purpose. Council Committees were formed to meet with ALTA Committees to discuss Qualified Instructor requirements and to begin a dialogue with the ALTA Exam Committee concerning cooperative curriculum issues. The Centers Council will additionally form an Ethics Committee and a Fundraising Committee.

Several ALTA Accredited Centers are also accredited by IMSLEC including: LEAD, Neuhaus Education Center, Payne Education Center/Oklahoma City, and Southwest Multisensory Training Center. These centers went through each accreditation separately. Pat Sekel has applied to be the first center to complete a simultaneous accreditation process with ALTA and IMSLEC.

The next meeting of the Centers Council Board has been set for Saturday, March 11, via teleconference. The full Council will meet on April 1 following the ALTA Annual Conference.

Milestones

Welcome new student members Sally Blair, Frances Bordogna, Rose Engel, Gigi Gross, Tammy Jones, Marjorie Kaufman, Cynthia Ploch, Vicki Prindle, Jill Schultz, Barbara Sussman, Jill Bennett, Cindy Cathey, Cynthia Ellis, Mary Gilbreath, Kristine Myers and JoNell Trammell.

Welcome new active members Margaret Herrell, Jill Hickey, Debbie Lovell, Sandra Lynch, Susan Priddy and Laurie Lee Youngblood.

Congratulations, new Qualified Instructor Caroline Kethley.

A new professional group has organized in Houston. 35 people attended the first meeting of the Houston Professional Group on February 23 at the Neuhaus Education Center. For information contact Marybeth Flachbart, (713) 664-7676. For information about forming an ALTA professional group in your area, contact Carolyn Nesbitt, (972) 774-1772.

The New York ALTA group held a meeting on January 23 that featured a speaker from Recording for the Blind and dyslexic. Members learned how to help their students obtain listening devices and tapes to listen to texts that they might not be able to read by themselves.

2000 Registration Exam Calendar

April 15, Scottsdale, AZ (Phoenix)
June 3, Bellaire, TX (Houston)
June 14, Lubbock, TX
June 17, Dallas, TX
August 5, Oklahoma City, OK

Contact Madeleine Crouch with the ALTA national office for more information or an exam application: telephone (972) 233-9107 ext. 204, fax (972) 490-4219, e-mail mad@dondillon.com.
The ALTA Board of Directors voted in December to enact a grace period for two years (1/1/00-12/31/01) on all fees charged for offering or acquiring CEUs. This means that ALTA members will not need to pay $8 to receive CEU credit for attending an approved event, and organizations will not need to pay ALTA to offer credits to our members. All other CEU procedures will remain as written in the by-laws. We hope that this change will make it easier for you to become familiar with the process of fulfilling the CEU requirement. Any of you who have paid $8 to receive CEUs during 1999 can request a refund from the ALTA National Office.

As a reminder, active ALTA members are required to obtain 20 contact hours of Continuing Education credits every two years. Attending the ALTA Spring Conference on April 1 will provide you with 4 contact hours.

The first audit will take place in 2001. Forty-five days prior to the membership renewal date, 2% of the active membership will be selected at random for an audit. These people will need to send evidence of the completion of the required CEUs to the CEU Committee. Such evidence is a letter, transcript, form, or certificate bearing the number of contact hours or college credits/units as well as a valid signature or verification from the provider of the event.
March 10
Dallas Branch IDA Conference
Speaker: Dr. Mel Levine, Understanding and Educating All Kinds of Minds
Cityplace Conference Center
271 N. Haskell at Central Expressway
Dallas, Texas
Cost: $110 (member of IDA); $175 (non-member)
Contact hours: 5
Contact: Cindy Hamm (972) 233-9107, ext. 203

March 23
Dysgraphia/Handwriting Workshop
Speaker: Cindy Hipes
Region 10 ESC
400 E. Spring Valley Rd.
Richardson, TX 75083
Cost: N/A
Contact: Cindy Hipes (972) 348-1490

March 24
Dyslexia Assessment Conference: The Educational Identification of Dyslexia
Speaker: Cindy Hipes and Gina Mitchell
Region 10 ESC
400 E. Spring Valley Rd.
Richardson, TX 75083
Cost: N/A
Contact: Cindy Hipes (972) 348-1490

March 27
Assessment Conference
Presenters: Cindy Hipes and Gina Mitchell
Region 10 ESC
400 E. Spring Valley Road
Richardson, Texas 75083
Cost: N/A
Contact: Cindy Hipes (972) 348-1490 or
(800) 232-3030, Ext. 1490

March 31
The Benefits and Limits of Phonological Training for Children with Reading Disabilities: How to Effect Lasting Improvement in Independent Reading, Spelling, and Writing
Speaker: Barbara Wise, Ph.D.
Lubbock Civic Center Theater
1501 6th St., Lubbock, Tx.
Sponsor: The Scottish Rite Learning Center of West Texas
Cost: none
Contact hours: 5
Contact: Jan Morris (806) 765-9150

March 31
What Intelligences are Sleeping in our Classrooms
Speaker: Dr. Thomas Armstrong
Weinstein Galleria, Houston, Texas
Sponsor: Neuhaus Education Center
Cost: $15
Contact hours: 2
Contact: Marybeth Flachbart (713) 664-7676

April 1
ALTA Spring Conference “Phonological Awareness: What You Should Know; What You Can Do?”
Speaker: Earlyne Hastings
Dallas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children
Cost: $40
Contact hours: 4
Contact: ALTA office (972) 233-9107, Ext. 204

April 7
Dyslexia Identification Seminar
Sponsor: Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children
Cost: none
Contact hours: 5
Contact: Luke Waites Child Development Center (214) 559-7885

April 14
Southwest Multisensory Training Center Recent Findings in the Field of Dyslexia Assessment and Evaluation
Speaker: Peggy Signall, M.Ed.
Cost: $95
Contact hours: 5
Contact: Judy Higgins (972) 359-6646

April 28
Southwest Multisensory Training Center Verbal into Written Expression
Speaker: Beverly Dooley, Ph.D.
Cost: $175 (includes materials)
Contact hours: 5
Contact: Judy Higgins (972) 359-6646

June 5
Plano ALTA Networking Group
Alphabetic Phonics and Visualizing and Verbalizing
Speaker: Nancy Redington, CALT
Cost: $20
Contact hours: 2
Contact: Jean Fortune (972) 527-3215

July 10-15, July 17-22,
July 24-25
“Speech to Print with Dr. Louisa C. Moats”
Courses in Language Study for Teachers of Reading
Language I: Phonetics, Phonology, and Orthography: 40 contact hours
Language II: Meaning, Syntax, and Text: 40 contact hours
Diagnostic Prescriptive Teaching Practicum: 80 contact hours
Sponsor: Greenwood Institute
Greenwood School, Putney, Vermont
Cost: $650
Presenters: Dr. Louisa C. Moats; Marcia Hamm and Michael Minsky from the Greenwood Institute

Although parents must often assume this vital advocacy role, the very best thing parents can do for learning disabled children is to be good parents! The support and nurturing that only parents can provide is essential for protecting the child’s self-esteem and assisting his development in areas of interest and strength.

Home can be an oasis in a lonely desert for a child who is constantly under pressure during the school day. This does not mean that home should be a place of complete freedom. Quite the contrary! Organization and structure at home lend security when there is an atmosphere free of tension.
Book Review By Jo Polk

Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills
Judith R. Birsh, Ed.D. editor
© 1999, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
PO Box 10624
Baltimore, MD 21285-0624
ISBN1-55766-349-1

In the new book Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills, Dr. Judith Birsh has succeeded in bringing together the expertise of a constellation of respected and well-known contributors to produce what will undoubtedly become a highly prized and much-used text/reference book in the field of dyslexia and learning differences. Calling on various authorities to write sections in their area(s) of greatest interest and strength, she has developed a greatly needed resource for understanding, teaching, assessing, and parenting those who have dyslexia and related disorders.

Beginning with the definition and characteristics of dyslexia, a discussion of the latest research in the field, and the need for all teachers to understand the structure of the English written code, the book gives the prospective reader an overview of the eighteen chapters by offering chapter summaries. Other aids for the reader include extensive references for each chapter; graphics and other illustrations; a glossary of key terms; and a most carefully organized appendix of materials and sources.

In an enlightening and forthright discussion of multisensory instruction, the authors of the first chapter address the issue of lack of research studies concerning the efficacy of multisensory teaching. They conclude, however, that there is theoretical support for this approach and that, until research is able to confirm or disprove the effectiveness of multisensory instruction, it behooves teachers to rely on their own experience and professional judgment, as well as on the professional judgment of others who, over the years, report student success when multisensory instruction is used.

The Chapter One discussion of multisensory methods provides the platform upon which the remainder of the book is built. Subsequent chapters proceed logically from the role of oral language to the importance of phonological/phonemic awareness and alphabetic knowledge in the teaching of accurate decoding and reading fluency. A most helpful treatise on the teaching of reading comprehension follows discussion of these vital elements of effective reading from a multisensory perspective.

Readers will also find instructive and well-written sections on such subjects as multisensory mathematic instruction; oral language; phonological awareness; spelling; handwriting (including the multisensory presentation of manuscript letter forms); organization and study skills; and several other subjects. In addition, chapters dealing with adult and high functioning dyslexics, parenting issues, and transition to the general classroom and content areas present materials of high interest and utility.

Instructors in university undergraduate and graduate classes will find this book to be an excellent choice as the text for reading disability courses. It is suggested that the editor and publisher consider developing an instructor’s manual and, perhaps, a student guide as supplementary materials for this book.

Having just ordered five copies of this book for use in our university classes for training dyslexia specialists, this reviewer submits that those who deal with learning different individuals will find this book to be a goldmine of theory and practicality.

Jo Polk is Director of the Learning Therapist Certificate Program, Southern Methodist University.

Judith Birsh is an active member of the Academic Language Therapy Association, and is Director of the Department of Curriculum and Teaching at Teachers College Columbia University, New York.
ALTA WEBSITE
FIND-A-THERAPIST LISTING

Mark additional items you wish to include in your listing. A phone &/or e-mail address must be included so that clients will know how to reach you! Listings may be updated weekly.

Last Name: ______________________________ First Name: ________________________ (required)

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Certified: Yes________ No__________ (required)

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City:______________________________________ State:________ Zip:____________ (required)

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☐ Member Site URL: __________________________________________________________

Ages of students served: Mark categories that apply. (required)

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☐ Philosophy: __________________________________________________________________

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☐ Educational Background: __________________________________________________________________

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Mail form with $60 payment to:
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2000 Spelling Bee Committee

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Parents can be their child’s best advocates if they heed the warning signs, learn about the appropriate teaching methods, interact positively with the educators, make requests in an assertive but collaborative manner, and create the best home environment possible.

Martha Sibley is the Dyslexia Coordinator of the Child Development Division of Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children. This article is based on her handbook for parents.

Reprinted with permission of the International Dyslexia Association.
Commitment to Excellence

When the Dyslexia Legislation was enacted in the State of Texas in 1986, Neuhaus Education Center began a collaboration with the Houston Independent School District to provide appropriate staff development for regular and special education teachers in the recognition and remediation of dyslexia. Thirteen years later, this important partnership continues in both the regular and special education departments of the Houston ISD because of the cooperation and support of many Houston ISD administrators and coordinators. Neuhaus Education Center would like to recognize one person for her effort in the continuation of this collaboration.

To teachers who have received professional development at Neuhaus Education Center, Candace Riddle is a very familiar face. She has assisted the Neuhaus staff in teaching summer courses and has been viewed on videotapes teaching her classes. Teachers are continually impressed with her helpfulness, her in-depth knowledge of the curricula, and her classroom management skills.

Candace received her Alphabetic Phonics training at Neuhaus Education Center while she was a resource teacher at Gregory-Lincoln Education Center in the Houston ISD. She quickly saw the value of multisensory teaching in helping students with learning disabilities learn to read. She obtained her Alphabetic Phonics certification in 1997. After completing her Masters in Education that same year, and eager to help more students learn to read, Candace applied for the position of Multisensory Teaching Coordinator for the Houston ISD. In this position, she was responsible for supporting other teachers who had Neuhaus training.

Candace now assists twelve multisensory teachers, one in each of the Houston ISD’s twelve administrative districts, who provide support for Special Education teachers through observations, demonstration lessons, assistance with lesson planning, and the procurement of materials. The commitment of Candace Riddle, her twelve multisensory teachers, and the Houston ISD has greatly strengthened the programs available to students with learning disabilities, thereby increasing the opportunities for their successful academic advancement.

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T-Thanks!

The T-shirt Committee of the ALTA Spelling Bee wishes to thank the following companies and individuals for their support. Not only did they show generosity with their materials and funds, but they did so with graciousness and kindness of spirit.

Thank you to:
Cindy Oates of ADVISION
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Sandra Porter
WORLD WIDE DEB
ALTA members Jean Aoki and Lynn Harnden

(Please note: If you have students who did not pick up their prepaid T-shirt order at the ALTA Spelling Bee, they must contact the ALTA office by April 1, 2000.)
March
Dallas Branch, IDA, Dallas, TX: Spring Conference, Cityplace Center, March 10. Call 972/233-9107, ext. 203.


March-June

April
ALTA, Dallas, TX: Spring Conference, April 1. Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children. Call 972/233-9107, ext. 204.

April-July
SMU Learning Therapy Program, Dallas, TX: SALT (Structured Accelerated Language Training) for Academic Language Therapists, April 8 and April 15; Learning Therapist Graduate Certificate Program, Introductory Classes, June 5-29; Advanced Classes, June 6-28; Study Skills for Academic Language Therapists and Classroom Teachers, July 24-28. Call 214/768-7323.

June
James Phillips Williams Memorial Foundation, San Angelo, TX: Teacher Training Introductory Course, June 5-23; Advanced Course, June 12-23. Call 915/655-2331.

Multisensory Language Training Institute of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM: Introduction to the Structure of the English Language and Specific Language Disability, June 5-7; Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills, June 8-23. Call 505/898-7500.

June-August
Neuhaus Education Center, Bellaire, TX: Basic Language Skills, June 5-23; Language Enrichment, July 24-Aug. 4; Multisensory Reading and Spelling, July 10-14; Scientific Spelling, June 21, July 17; Reading Readiness, June 19, July 19; Reading Comprehension, June 26; Multisensory Grammar, June 27, July 18; Written Composition, June 20. Call 713/664-7676.


Academic Language Therapy Association®
4020 McEwen, Suite 105
Dallas, TX 75244