

Dyslexia Action Group of Naperville: September 18, 2017

WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

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Thank you to Karen Kreiling and the Dyslexia Action Group of Naperville for inviting me to speak this evening – I am honored and excited to be here. And, more importantly, thank you for the important work you are doing on behalf of students with dyslexia.

Thank you to Martin and Cathy Slark and Molex....

Most of what I have to say is not new news to you, because, in reality, we do know what we know through our awareness of neuroscience, experience, best practices and research.

In general, I believe that we all learn or have come to know things that bring out a reaction, a change in who we are or what we do.....Sometimes immediate.....sometimes over time...But lead to change. Example: Sea Captain.... Change of course..... No secret that I am seeking educational changes based on what we know, and there are lighthouses helping to chart the course.

Now, here is what I believe we know about students with Dyslexia/LBLD.....

- **WE KNOW that Awareness of dyslexia/language-based learning disabilities** began around **1900** with observations of children who appeared “normal,” were creative, could learn many things, yet were not learning to read and write....This was thought to be due “word blindness”, or a visual problem. Often, glasses were prescribed.

Thus, **awareness** of the problem has existed for more than 100 years.

- **1930's** – Samuel Orton, Anna Gillingham, Edith Norrie, Rita Buchan, and others focused on reading and speech problems, and developed specific strategies, or remedial techniques that seemed to help, without understanding the causes of these learning difficulties. They talked about a confusability factor in the brain. Thus, specific strategies were prescribed.

So, **awareness of strategies** that help these students learn have been available for 80 years.

- * Multi-sensory inputs – KATV
- * Hierarchical, tightly structured, micro-united instruction
- * Review and practice – repetition and spiraling
- * Emphasis on cracking the code by using a child's cognitive ability to analyze language, and to think about thinking and learn about learning (metacognitive)

ALL of these strategies are relevant today.....

Since the 1930's, neuroscience, direct experience and research have continued to inform best practices and we know that:

- **LBLD/Dyslexia is a language processing problem that interferes with an individual's ability to realize his/her own learning potential, yet is unrelated to intelligence. The potential to learn is higher than the actual learning, or performance. (Important on many levels – hold this thought!!)**
- **LBLD is a DIFFERENT way of learning or processing information.** While different for each child, LBLD affects the **WAY** people learn, **HOW** they learn, **not** whether they **CAN** learn.
- Individuals with LBLD may have average to superior cognitive ability to learn, analyze and problem solve, yet struggle to master language through traditional educational techniques.
- **LBLD is a neurologically based learning problem....**
- **LBLD is a life-span issue....**No easy fix – a life-time experience affecting everything a person does, including school performance, social development, family life, etc.
- **LBLD is a hidden handicap** – not easily identified, like a physical handicap.
- **We know that LBLD is generally devastating when it is undiagnosed and/or unremediated,** and can lead to defeated self-concepts, school failure and drop-out, substance abuse, involvement with the juvenile justice system, etc.
 - **15-20% of the school population has learning disabilities – 12-15,000,000 children.**
 - **80% of the teachers in inclusion classrooms have had NO training in special education.**
 - **Success is the exception, failure is the norm for students with LBLD.**
 - **National school drop-out rate is staggering** – Senator Dodd (years ago) – 1500/day – 75% illiterate with high % of LD. NOW: 1.2m/yr...7,000/day....1/26seconds (Do Something.org)
 - **86% of children admitted for psychiatric services have communication problems** – Tony Bashir at Emerson College.
 - **Huge ADULT issue** – Adults with LBLD often become the responsibility of different social systems that do not understand LD -welfare, treatment programs, mental health, criminal justice, social security, vocational training....
 - **Reading ability and recidivism....**The Criminal Justice Policy Council in Texas tracked more than 25,000 inmates after release to determine how educational achievement may have affected their rate of reincarceration...
 - “The largest impact on recidivism rates occurred when high risk inmates who were nonreaders became readers,” the council reported.
 - **High risk nonreaders who learned to read had a 37% lower recidivism rate than high risk nonreaders who did not learn to read.**
- **WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED COMES FROM:**
 - **EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE in the field of learning disabilities, and**
 - **RESEARCH (from Children's Hospital, MIT, Yale, Vanderbilt, Rutgers, the National Institute of Health, Harvard, IHP, and other major research centers)**

- **WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED CLEARLY INDICATES THAT LANGUAGE-BASED LEARNING DISABILITIES/DYSLEXIA IS ESSENTIALLY A BIOLOGICAL, NEUROLOGICAL, AND HEREDITARY CONDITION FOR WHICH THERE IS NO MEDICAL TREATMENT...**
- **We also know that WITH APPROPRIATE INTERVENTION, CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITH LANGUAGE-BASED LEARNING DISABILITIES CAN BECOME SUCCESSFUL, PRODUCTIVE, ENTREPRENEURIAL ADULTS WITH LANGUAGE-BASED LEARNING DISABILITIES.**
- **The Medical Model holds.....through a diagnostic-prescriptive approach, appropriate educational models DO provide a solution.**
 - **INTERVENTION is the key!**

AND

AN APPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS WITH LBLD SHOULD INCLUDE:

- An appropriate diagnosis of the learning problem (relative processing and learning strengths and challenges).
 - Individualized intervention and remediation.
 - A structured, systematic language-based approach.
 - A skills-based curriculum.
 - Teamwork – including the parents, student, teachers, and specialists.
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DESPITE ALL THAT WE KNOW, WE ALSO KNOW THAT STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES ARE CONFRONTED TODAY BY A NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM THAT IS OFTEN INCAPABLE OF MEETING THEIR NEEDS AND INCREASES THEIR POTENTIAL FOR FAILURE.

FACTS:

- **National Education Reform has focused on general education, not special education.**
- **Legislative efforts HAVE TRIED to eliminate LD as a disabilities category under ADA and IDEA. The definition of “Learning Disability” is a target - without the word “disability,” this group of students becomes non-categorical.**
- **In some states, such as N.C., Dyslexia is not an approved diagnosis, thus services are not available.**

- Education Reform endorses the **INCLUSION MODEL** (all students in the regular classroom) – Toward a position that regular education can handle LD, which is viewed as an academic only issue (not inclusive of social/emotional issues).
- Yet, 80% of general education teachers have **NO** training in special education....**NOT** their fault! (Admins from local districts – what keeps them up? **NO** time for training!)
- Identification/assessment models are based on survival in the group (is the child keeping up?) as opposed to the IQ-achievement discrepancy model (individually diagnosed ability vs. performance criteria). RTI?
Remember: Potential vs. performance.....
- Peripheral accommodations have replaced direct intervention and remediation. Here is where RTI comes in. (Doug Fuchs from Vanderbilt embraced and researched RTI and his conclusion was that it is not working for myriad reasons)
- Non-categorical groupings are used even within special education programs.
- Individualization has been eliminated.
- Increased caseloads and decreased funding are common.
- Content-based **CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS** have become the teaching guides within inclusion classrooms.
- **HIGH-STAKE TESTING** has become the measure of success.
- College admission criteria are changing toward higher college-preparation demands, higher grade-point averages, and closed doors to anyone not passing the high-stakes testing.

PROBLEM:

- Today's national education system is continuing to move in a direction contrary to the needs of many students with learning disabilities.

SOLUTIONS – WHAT CAN WE DO?

1. We can focus on the words of Rumi, the Persian Poet.

“Out beyond Ideas of Wrong-doing and Right-doing, there is a field.
I will meet you there.”

We need to start by putting aside all political, ideological, bureaucratic, and even economic differences and recognizing the responsibility to meet each and every student where he or she is in the learning process, and to truly teach each student.

2. We can recognize what we know and that we sometimes have **GREAT** difficulty seeing what is directly in front of our noses!!!

For each student, what we sometimes miss is their potential, creativity, opportunities, success.

Based on the fact that “We Know What We Know,” we NEED to see what is directly in front of our noses!!!

....Man on the river..... God will save me!!! He did not see what had been sent to save him.

In our case: First Boat = Science
Second Boat = Experience
Helicopter = Research

3. So, we can know that we do not need anything else, we do not need to wait any longer or look or ask for more help.....

We need to come together and create MUCH greater awareness, much broader and more meaningful collaborations, and a movement that cannot be overlooked – one without politics, prejudice, personal pet projects, or predetermined prescribed programs. “Movement” dates me! A CULTURE of equity in education for all students!!!!

There have been wonderful efforts as you all know.....
Chapter 766, PL 94-142, IDEA, LDA, IDA, Decoding Dyslexia, ADA, DAGN!... schools, programs, initiatives, trainings....

YET with NO comprehensive universal change and outcomes for many reasons, be they economic, political, and structural (no time for training.....).....

To me, none of the reasons are good enough, for we know what we know...and that can't be played with.

4. I am always allowed one lawyer joke....anyone here a lawyer?

Well, one day, St. Peter was at the Pearly Gates when three individuals approached him:

A Mathematician, an Engineer, and a Lawyer.....

St. Peter explained that there was a test they must pass to get into Heaven...

.....The test was to answer the question: What does $2 + 2$ equal?

.....Mathematician: That's easy.....4 (c'mon in)

.....Engineer: well, $2 + 2 = 4$ (c'mon in)

.....Lawyer: Leaned over and whispered into St. Peter's ear asking, “What do you want it to be?”

When it comes to the lives of kids, it is NOT OK to ignore or work around, for whatever reason, what we know about the science and practice of learning.....not a game, and nothing to gain and everything to lose.....

We KNOW that $2 + 2 = 4$, and we know that kids can learn to their potential. Irrefutable!

HOW can we better come together? COLLABORATION!!!

COLLABORATION = more credibility, stronger and broader support networks, and greater potential impact..... Examples: North Shore Heads of School / IDA and LDA.

5. We can make a responsible effort to create a MOVEMENT (Toward a CULTURE of equity), and a broad based partnership – a collaboration of stakeholders willing to walk through every crack in every joint that we can find in an effort to create change.

WHY? What are the GOALS? What is the REAL VALUE PROPOSITION?

To call upon educational models to become more aligned with Medical models:
Diagnostic and Prescriptive

To help merge science, instruction, research, and assessment to meet ALL students where they are in the learning process, and this means considerably more time allowed for teacher training.

To take the view that TEACHING and TESTING/ASSESSMENTS are most valuable when used to determine students' strengths and challenges, and thereby informing instruction.

To view the word DISABILITY more as an INABILITY TO ACCESS THE CURRICULUM at a student's level of potential.....and that OUR JOB IS TO ENABLE THEM TO DO SO.

To, therefore, teach language and learning skills, based on a diagnostic – Prescriptive model as the vehicle for helping students access the curriculum. TENNIS TASK ANALYSIS (Georgetown)

To teach teachers the skills necessary to educate the wide range of learners in their classrooms which enhances a faculty member's sense of feeling NECESSARY, for they are then the ones making these changes and saving lives. TRAINING

In the regard, LANDMARK'S MISSION STATEMENT READS: "Landmark's Mission is to enable and empower students with Language-Based Learning Disabilities (LBD) to reach their educational and social potential through an exemplary school program complemented by outreach and training, assessment, and research.....

And, in her book "Daring Greatly," Brene' Brown states that great cultures have great leaders, and I LOVE her definition of LEADER: She says, "I've come to believe that a leader is anyone who holds her- or himself accountable for finding the potential in people and processes. The term leader has nothing to do with position, status, or number of direct reports. The leaders are ALL of US.....the parents, teachers, community volunteers CEOs, staff, anyone who is willing to dare greatly and lead." Diagnostic/Prescriptive potential vs. performance, educational and social potential....
LANDMARK = Diagnostic/Prescriptive, remedial, language and learning skills based education... No ONE method but focused on what the students need..... Teachers feel empowered and necessary, students feel smart and become metacognitive learners..... engaged in their own learning process.

To know that students should NOT need to leave their homes, schools, even countries to find success!

Landmark = 475 STUDENTS, 19 states and 6 countries = 100% to college and pass MCAS....Why did they need to come to Landmark?

To this end, we train around 5,000 teachers a year through Outreach and have On-Line courses in partnership with SNHU and from our own platforms.....

We are working to be truly a MISSION with a School, and Outreach, and on-Line, and Research.....

What is the VALUE PROPOSITION??? LITERALLY TO SAVE LIVES!!!

So tonight, I thank you all for being here, and for all that you do to create awareness and effect change.

And, I put out a call and a challenge for GREATER COLLABORATION, a truly expansive and impassioned partnership of stakeholders, a movement to again work for change IN OUR EDUCATIONAL CULTURES in our efforts to save lives!

THANK YOU!