

SECONDHAND SUCCESS

Spring cleaning by a few handfuls of ALTA members ensured success at this year's conference for the Second Annual Garage Sale. While others chatted with friends, ate lunch, perused the vendors in the hallway, or stood in line for the book signing, many savvy ALTA members stocked up on slightly used teaching materials to enrich their practice.

Among the finds were games, workbooks, writing activities, testing materials, wall charts, alphabet letters, office supplies, pre-

vious Spelling Bee note cards, and much, much more.

When the day ended, the sale of donated used items had netted \$811.45, twice what our first garage sale earned last year. This income went to the ALTA Foundation, a tax exempt 501 (c)(3) organization.

The idea behind the garage sale was to create a symbiotic relationship between certified therapists and learning therapists: allowing

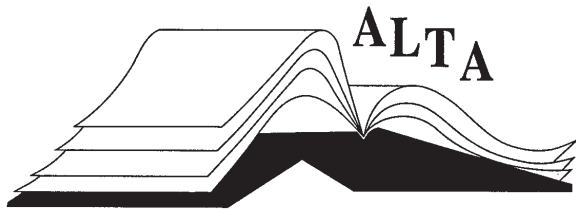
CALTs to lighten their load of superfluous teaching items and offering beginning therapist some affordable materials.

The success of the sale is dependent, of course, upon donations of materials by the membership at large. You probably have several items in your office that you no longer use. Please consider sharing it with someone just beginning in this profession. Start a sack today of garage sale donations and watch your newsletters for further information.

Please keep the ALTA Foundation in mind whenever you consider giving a memorial, scholarship money, or simply a charitable donation. The ALTA Foundation is a 501(C)(3) non-profit entity established to accept donations and contributions which support ALTA's educational mission. Through the financial support provided by the Foundation, Academic Language Therapists benefit from continued education in the most current research-based information emphasizing strategies and techniques most effective in clinical and school settings. The Foundation also supports programs to help students with dyslexia, their peers, and public at large to better understand dyslexia and to demystify the disorder. Other Foundation activities include opportunities to provide and support best practices among our members and maintain high levels of professionalism in the field. For more information, or to make a tax-deductible donation, please contact the ALTA national office.



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Academic Language Therapy Association®
Dedicated to the remediation of written-language skills.

bul•le•tin

Summer

2004

The bul•le•tin is a quarterly publication of the Academic Language Therapy Association (ALTA), and is free to its membership.



Kay Peterson, Martha Sibley, Jana Jones and Melanie Royal welcome Dr. Sally Shawitz.

Conference Attendance Doubles

It has been said that teamwork divides the task and doubles the success. This statement is certainly fitting for our 2004 ALTA Spring Conference. Our conference attendance more than doubled last year's number! Heartfelt thanks go to the efforts of many persons who are sincerely dedicated to promoting understanding and appropriate education for the children and adults whom we serve. We sincerely thank Dr. Joyce Pickering and The Shelton School's Board of Directors for graciously providing their building as a beautiful setting for our conference. I am convinced that one of Shelton's greatest assets is Mrs. Mitzi Freeman. Mitzi worked tirelessly to make arrangements to make our conference enjoyable and to make it run smoothly.

Our conference was a remarkable success due to the work of a superb conference committee. Kay Peterson's gentle and wise leadership was invaluable. Nancy Coffman planned a delightful pre-conference dinner. Many attendees enjoyed the nearby hotels and shuttle rides secured by Gina Mitchell. Anita Bruck made it possible for us to register on-line and research hotel information at the same time. Chris Wylie kept us updated on conference events in the newsletter. Creative and colorful decorations on the luncheon tables were designed by Chris Bedenbaugh. Kim Spitzer-Mullins spent hours prior to the conference in her efforts to procure underwriting for the conference. Linda Byther,

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ALTA assumes no responsibility for errors or omissions. To submit news items or articles, which are subject to editing for space and style, or for advertising or other information, contact:

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President's Letter

It has been an honor to serve as your president for the past two years. Our organization has grown and we have much to look forward to in the future as the new officers and board members lead us in continued growth. Melanie Royal brings experience with private therapy, private education and public education. She will serve our organization well for the next two years. Thank you, Melanie, for accepting the position as president of ALTA.

In this edition of our newsletter, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the officers and board members from 2003-2004. Although they were recognized at the spring conference, I would like to list their names again. Each ALTA Board member voluntarily gives countless hours of personal time to benefit our organization. Thank you to Melanie Royal, Lois Grundy, Jana Jones, Chris Wylie, Pat Sekel, Linda Byther, Martha Sibley, Chris Bedenbaugh, Elsa Cardenas-Hagan, Vicki Maxwell, Gina Mitchell, Kim Mullins, Nancy Coffman, Tracey Cox, Nancy Senior-Michael, Angela Parker, Connie Peters, Jean Fortune, Sue Kirk and Juancita Petro. Ginny McCrea and Kathy Gilman served as committee chairs and Valerie Tucker served as Centers Council Liaison. Each of these individuals has made a significant contribution to ALTA.

Our annual meeting and conference on April 17, 2004, was outstanding. Jana Jones and her committee planned a successful meeting for ALTA members and guests. The attendance was over 700 with many parents, professionals and students among the group. Drs. Bennett and Sally Shaywitz put together the puzzle pieces for dyslexia during the morning session. Representatives from ALTA Centers Council provided the afternoon sessions. The Shelton School graciously provided their campus for our conference.

Valerie Tucker is serving as the first president for the Alliance. A certificate of appreciation was presented to Valerie from ALTA to thank her for the work she is doing to promote the standards ALTA and other members of the Alliance are striving to maintain.

Summer is almost here! Some of us will take a well-deserved rest from lesson plans, reports and evaluations. Others, our Qualified Instructors, will provide training for new Academic Language Therapists who will be eligible to join ALTA as student members. The summer training and other course requirements will give student members information to prepare them for the ALTA national certification examination. Our membership grows with each new student member. Thanks to the ALTA Centers for the training they provide.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve as president of ALTA. Have a great summer!

Kay Peterson

Future ALTA Registration Exam Dates

June 5, 2004
The Neuhaus Education Center
4433 Bissonnet
Bellaire, TX 77401
P. 713-664-7676

June 5, 2004
The Scottish Rite Learning Center
of Austin
508 W. 14th Street
Austin, TX 78701
P. 512-472-1231

June 26, 2004
SMU Learning Therapy Program
5236 Tennyson Parkway, Bldg. 4, Ste. 108

Plano, TX 75024
P. 214-768-7323

June 26, 2004
LEAD/Literacy Education &
Academic Development
PO Box 262
Argyle, TX 76226
P. 940-464-3752

June 30, 2004
The Scottish Rite Learning Center
of West Texas
602 Avenue Q, PO Box 10135
Lubbock, TX 79408
P. 806-765-9150

January 15, 2005
Southwest Multisensory Training
Center
600 S. Jupiter
Allen, TX 75002-4065
P. 972-359-8291

September 25, 2005
FUNdamental Learning Center
917 S. Glendale
Wichita, KS 67218
P. 316-684-7323

Dear Members,

“Putting It All Together” was an appropriate theme for the ALTA 2004 Spring Conference held at the Shelton School in Dallas, Texas. Over 700 individuals attending the ALTA conference, including ALTA members, public and private school teachers and parents, heard Drs. Bennett and Sally Shawitz provide an enlightening and informative lecture on “The Science of Reading: Overcoming Dyslexia”. The Shaywitz’ current research on reading and dyslexia including brain imaging is a crucial piece of the puzzle in solving the mystery of dyslexia and reading disorders. The afternoon sessions helped to frame the puzzle a bit more as representatives from ALTA accredited centers provided information to attendees regarding identification, remediation, and professional growth. Thanks to all of the speakers who so eloquently shared their expertise and knowledge. The success of this year’s conference would not have been as great had it not been for Jana Jones and her committee, Chris Bedenbaugh, Anita Bruck, Linda Byther, Nancy Coffman, Kathy Gilman, Ginny McCrea, Gina Mitchell, Kim Mullins, Brandi Silva, and Chris Wylie. Super job!

Speaking of committees, several are at work behind the scenes of ALTA ensuring that the standards and competencies of CALTs are upheld. The Registration Exam Committee co-chaired by Nancy Coffman and Martha Sibley has met several times over the past few months in order to review the current national registration examination and to make revisions to its format and contents. Nancy and Martha, along with Judith Birsh, Suzanne Carreker, Kay Peterson, Edith Hogan, Elizabeth Cantrill and I have developed a new grading rubric for the subjective portion of the exam. This rubric has been made available to the training centers to aid them in preparing their exam candidates. If you would like a copy of the rubric, you may contact

any of the committee. Also, at the recent ALTA Centers Council meeting held April 16th, representatives from accredited centers were recruited to assist with revisions.

A Qualified Instructor Task Force, chaired by Kathy Gilman has also been working diligently over the past year reviewing the current requirements to become an ALTA Qualified Instructor. These requirements were presented to the training centers at the April 16th meeting and are in the final stages of revision. Upon final adoption by the ALTA Board of Directors, these requirements will be made available to the general membership. The new requirements would be for those entering Qualified Instructor training beginning in June 2005.

It is an exciting time to be an Academic Language Therapist! Scientific research is supporting what most of us have been doing for years to teach children to read, standards and competencies are being fine tuned in order to increase our level of professionalism, and ALTA’s reputation is gaining nationwide recognition due to the efforts of its members. On a personal note, I am honored and thrilled to represent you as President and look forward to continuing the ALTA mission.

Melanie Royal, CALT
ALTA President

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Growth for Scottish Rite Learning Center Austin

Summer is nearly upon us, and the growth of the Scottish Rite Learning Center of Austin is snowballing. We are emerging from being the best-kept secret in Austin for helping individuals with dyslexia and assisting their families find the proper resources to deal with this lifelong learning difference.

March 1 pushed our Learning Center into the state and national spotlight when we sponsored Yale University's Drs. Sally and Bennett Shaywitz, the foremost national experts on dyslexia, at a lecture in Austin. They spoke to an audience of almost 850 educators, parents, and policy makers concerning the most recent brain research in dyslexia and how research directly informs good teaching practices that are most important for dyslexic students. The lecture helped more Texans realize what the SRLC is all about—helping dyslexics and their families make the most out of their resources.

Additionally on March 1, Bill Hilgers, Chair of our Board of Directors, announced the formation of the Dyslexia Research Foundation of Texas, Inc. The Foundation will be affiliated with the Learning Center but will operate separately. The esteemed members of this group have varied and impressive backgrounds. The study's focus will measure the economic impact of dyslexia on Texas public schools and prisons. No one has investigated the impact and correlation before now. If a connection can be found,

policy makers and the public can be better informed so that money is saved by putting tax dollars where they are better spent—in education.

So, to accommodate our growth, we're MOVING! By June 1, 2004, our new address will be 1622 E. Riverside, Austin, 78741—that's about one block east of I-35. We invite you to see our temporary housing as soon as it gets up and running.

Why do I call this "temporary?" We are launching a \$1.5 million Capital Campaign for our 13,000-square-foot permanent home in what is to become the Children's Village at the old Mueller Airport.

Moving is a good thing because we will now have our own teacher training space! Anyone who has witnessed the caravan of SUVs and cars packed to the roofs with training materials needed for lengthy off-site training knows what a thrilling prospect this is to the training team! As proof of our growing recognition, the Introductory Course of Basic Language Skills (BLS) is full, but we are accepting names for a waiting list. This Advanced Course of BLS is the largest class we have ever had. We hope to begin offering an additional Introductory Course of BLS this fall with our new space. Interested? Then please contact the Learning Center.

Help ALTA with Website Costs

When you purchase your books, music, and videos using the w link found on the ALTA website, you help ALTA with its website operating expenses. ALTA receives 5% of the purchase price when you buy an item by visiting w first, then clicking on the link for amazon.com. In addition, ALTA receives 15% of the purchase price when you visit the book review section of the ALTA website and make a purchase. Once you review a book and decide to purchase it, click on the link for w. Consider w through w when shopping for professional reading material, children's books, music, and videos and help ALTA with operating expenses.

Conference *continued from Page 1*

Kathy Gilman and many other members collected and arranged items for the second annual ALTA garage sale. Ginny McCrea arranged for vendors to visit our conference. Gina Mitchell and Helen Macik assisted Brandi Silva in making sure that registration ran without a hitch. Many other members worked diligently before and on the day of the conference to assist in set-up for the conference and transportation for Dr. Sally and Dr. Bennett Shaywitz.

Dr. Bennett and Dr. Sally Shaywitz's presentation focused on extraordinary progress in understanding the nature of reading and dyslexia. They discussed their research and outlined its direct implications for the earlier and more accurate identification and more effective treatment of dyslexia. Both speakers expressed a strong appreciation to our organization for the opportunity to work together toward the common goal of dyslexia identification and remediation.

Karen Avrit, Suzanne Carreker, Nancy Coffman, Pat Sekel, and Valerie Tucker represented their respective training centers in afternoon breakout sessions. Edith Hogan represented the ALTA Exam Committee by presenting grading information for the revised ALTA Exam. According to the conference evaluations, the new format was greatly appreciated by an overwhelming majority of conference attendees. The breakout sessions received outstanding ratings and comments on the conference evaluations. One attendee said, "I heard information that I can use Monday morning!" Another attendee stated, "I wish this had been a two day conference. I've learned so much."

It has been a pleasure to work with so many dedicated and hardworking professionals in planning the last two ALTA conferences. You can be sure that Michelle Bufkin is already planning in anticipation of next year's conference. I look forward to seeing you there.

TEACHING VOCABULARY TO STRUGGLING OLDER READERS

by Michael C. McKenna

For the war-weary soldiers in Joseph Heller's novel, *Catch 22*, the only way out of the army was insanity. But if a soldier were sane enough to want out, he couldn't possibly be insane. That was the catch – *Catch 22*. Another version of *Catch 22* affects struggling readers as they move through the upper grades. In order to comprehend progressively more difficult text, they must experience continued vocabulary growth. But since most of the vocabulary students acquire during these years comes through reading, their word knowledge cannot keep pace with text demands. And that's precisely the catch: They need to learn more words to read well, but they need to read well to learn more words.

For these readers, vocabulary growth must become a principal target of instruction. Because they are so far behind, the task can be daunting, and yet a great deal is known about effective teaching methods. In this article I will offer both guidelines and strategies derived from the rich research base underlying vocabulary instruction.

1. Teach New Words in Related Clusters

There are many kinds of vocabulary – listening, speaking, reading, writing, sight, etc. – but the most important distinction for struggling older readers is between technical and general vocabulary. Technical terms are associated with specific content subjects while general terms are not.

This simple difference has many implications for instructional practice. For example, one of the principal lessons from research is that terms are more easi-

ly taught and learned when their meanings are connected in some logical way. The meanings of technical terms are always linked because of the nature of the content. A science chapter on airplanes might introduce terms like fuselage, flap, drag, and lift. The inherent associations among their meanings are the key to learning them.

Unhappily, a typical approach to introducing general vocabulary, usually in the context of a language arts course, is to introduce a list of terms that may offer no discernable connection at all, other than the fact that they occur with relatively low frequency in the printed language. My son, a ninth grader, was recently given a weekly list that contained the words theology, laud, bellicose, and loquacious. There is nothing wrong with teaching such words, but they would be much easier to learn if their meanings were logically linked. It would be better to compose weekly lists of general vocabulary words around thematic clusters – for example, moods, personality types, or alternatives to said.

Related words can be synonyms from a thesaurus, such as words that mean walk or words taken from a thematic or content area unit. Or one can use two sets of words, such as words that refer to communication (telephone, loquacious, proclamation) and words that relate to war (bellicose, regiment, conflagration).

When working with words

that share meaning, it is important to make clear through discussion distinctions between words. Such a discussion might begin with a simple question, like "How is bellicose different from angry?" This might be followed up with comparisons involving other pairs of words within the related sets. Semantic maps may be used to work with more complex sets of words.

Working with related words allows one to develop complex concepts (see Stahl, this issue), since one is criss-crossing the same conceptual landscape. As a result, you can

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The Hillier School

*"Equipping learning-disabled students ...
academically and spiritually."*



deepen the students' understanding and support their reading of more complex text. Silly Questions. When words are not obviously connected, it is useful to contrive a relationship. Isabel Beck and her colleagues developed a technique called Silly Questions, which combines two typically unrelated terms in the same question. For example, "Can an accountant be a philanthropist?" Or, from my son's list, "Can someone who is bellicose be loquacious?" When the answer to such a question is yes, it requires creating a scenario that demonstrates a possible relationship. (An accountant might be a philanthropist, but I would wonder where all that money came from!) Silly Questions is an obvious stretch, used to force unlikely connections. When terms are linked in a logical cluster, however, the questions are not nearly so silly: "Can the fuselage cause drag?" "How do the flaps affect lift?"

2. Use graphic representations.

Graphic displays such as diagrams and charts help students understand relationships among a cluster of terms. This is because they help students visualize abstract concepts. Moreover, there is generally very little text to read so that decoding demands are light. Of course, when new terms are unrelated (remember theology, laud, bellicose, and loquacious?), they cannot be represented graphically. All the more reason to adopt a cluster approach!

Graphic Organizers. Venn diagrams, timelines, labeled pictures and tree diagrams are among the many types of graphic organizers routinely used to illustrate non-fiction concepts in textbooks. I am always surprised by students who tell me they skip these visual aids. When asked, they often maintain that attending to them is not really "reading." I am even more surprised at how many teachers of content subjects tend to underuse these superb devices.

The basic two-way Venn diagram in Figure 1 can be used to make a great many distinctions. In the primary grades, such distinctions can be made between animals that live in water and animals that live on land (with amphibians in the overlap). For older children, a distinction between "rebellion" and "protest" might be useful in explaining the American Revolution. One of the reasons that propelled the beginnings of the conflict was that King George viewed the colonists' activities as rebellion against the Crown, since his power was to be viewed as absolute. In contrast, the colonists viewed their activities as protest against unjust laws. This conflict in values led to the Revolution.

Diagrams can, with a little creativity, even be applied to clusters of general vocabulary words that revolve about a theme. Our previous example of moods lends itself to the simple word line shown in Figure 2. Using a diagram does not eliminate the necessity of defining each term individually. But it does help students, especially struggling readers, grasp abstract relationships by giving them a visual reference. An added plus is that diagrams place few demands on the limited decoding proficiency of struggling readers.

Figure 2. Example of a word line for teaching a cluster of general vocabulary words

gruff, impassive, elated, disgruntled
stoic, ecstatic, dour, indifferent
buoyant, glum, detached, jubilant
somber, listless, exultant

Charts. Charts are another way of graphically representing information about concepts. Charts come in many formats and sizes. A simple two-column chart, for example, such as the one depicted in Figure 3, can be used to compare and contrast different concepts. A different sort of chart might be created from our example about alternatives to the word said (e.g., remarked, suggested, hinted,

muttered, maintained). Resourceful language arts teachers might construct a word wall of such alternatives, useful to students both while reading and writing.

Figure 3. Example of a two-column chart

Limerick Haiku
Always five lines
Always three lines
Rhyme scheme: aabba
Not rhymed
Generally humorous
Seldom humorous
Specified meter
Specified syllable count

There are lots of ways to use charts instructionally. One way is ask the students to read in order to complete a chart, which guarantees that they will read past the literal level. For struggling readers, however, text demands may be prohibitive. A better way may be to complete the chart collaboratively, toward the end of a unit of study. This helps the students organize the word knowledge they have acquired.

Once a chart is completed, it is important to discuss it actively, in order to see what conclusions can be reached. Both charts and diagrams make excellent classroom displays, whether they are "homegrown" or commercially produced. They provide a visual referent during discussion and later review. And like the window displays in a department store, they should be rotated from time to time as new word clusters are studied.

Feature Analysis. An especially powerful example of a vocabulary chart is the type used in semantic feature analysis. The name of a category appears in the upper left-hand corner, and members of that category are listed beneath it. Each column is headed by a feature that might or might not apply to a given member of the category. The chart is completed with

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pluses and zeroes (some teachers prefer minuses), depending on which category members have which features. The letter S is also useful if the feature only applies sometimes. (See Figure 4.)

Feature analysis has an impressive research base, but it is limited to sets of words that are members of the same category. In content areas, of course, this is scarcely a limitation at all since categories such as planets, states, countries, elements, and the like are the order of the day. Feature analysis is useful with literature as well. Fictional characters can be compared or contrasted, as can different books by the same author, different genres, and so forth.

Word Sorts. A flexible and interactive approach to charting is the word sort. Once students have become familiar with a cluster of vocabulary words, the teacher presents them in a random array. The words can be presented either on note cards, on a transparency cut into sections, or simply on a marker board. Working together, either as a whole class or in small groups, the students rearrange the words into logical categories. There are usually many reasonable ways to reorder the words, and different groups of students may arrive at contrasting possibilities. In working with struggling readers, it may be best to begin with a closed sort, one in which the teacher provides the categories in advance. Once they catch on, they will be ready for an open sort, one in which no categories are provided, and the students must infer relationships. Either way, word sorting compels the students to examine relationships that exist among concepts. Doing so leads to a richer conceptualization of word meanings.

List-Group-Label. An older technique, closely related to the word sort, requires that the students themselves generate the words to be sorted. During a unit review, the teacher asks the students to think of

as many of the new terms as they can recall. These words are written by the teacher on half the marker board or half a transparency. Since the teacher has no way of knowing the order in which the words will be generated, the listing will be scrambled. This is the desired result because the next step is to examine the words collaboratively in order to find small clusters that go together. These words are rewritten on the half of the marker board or transparency that has been reserved. At the same time, they are erased from the original, random listing. The result is that the second half of the marker board or transparency now contains small clusters of related words. The final step is to decide, again collaboratively, on a label for each of the small clusters.

Semantic Mapping. Semantic Mapping is basically a more elaborate sort. It is flexible, since it can be used with a great many different sets of concepts. It can be used in a planful manner or it can be done “spur of the moment.” Very often, semantic mapping is done as a fill-in-the-map activity. This makes it little more than a worksheet. Stahl and Vancil found that such a use was not as effective as a full discussion. Such a discussion would involve every child in the class, including children with reading problems.

Figure 4. Example of a semantic feature analysis chart

Snakes	Poisonous	Found in U.S.	Lays eggs
boa constrictor	o	o	
king snake	o	+	
rattlesnake	+	+	
ball python	o	o	+
garter snake	o	+	o

Semantic mapping is usually used to prepare students to read a content area selection or to introduce a content area unit, such as “water,” “weather,” or “astronomy.” In our work, we have used Semantic Mapping primarily in science lessons, but we have seen examples of Semantic Mapping used in such diverse content areas as music and mathematics, and we even have seen it used by a librarian to teach the Dewey Decimal system! (In their 1986 book, *Semantic mapping*, Heimlich and Pittelman offer many other examples.) It is a very flexible approach to teaching word meanings in relation to other words and to develop concepts.

A semantic mapping lesson has four parts.

- **Brainstorming:** The teacher and the class brainstorm ideas that relate to a topic. For example, for “weather,” a class might come up with rain, snow, wind, hot, thermometer, hurricane, blizzard, and so on. The teacher might stop and explain some terms that the students come up with in a discussion. The teacher might also add some terms, again explaining what they mean. These terms can be written on the board, or pictured for young children.
- **Mapping:** These terms can be drawn into a map. To draw the map, children (with the aid of the teacher) would come up with three or four categories that describe the terms on the board. These are arranged into a map. With the concept of weather a map might look like the one in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Semantic Map for weather

calm	clear	sunny	Good
spring	thermometer	How to	
Weather	Seasons	summer	rain gauge
Measure	winter	fall	Bad
rain	snow	blizzard	

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- Reading After the Map is Complete: The students and teacher read a book or selection about that topic. For younger children, the teacher can read the text aloud; for children who can read, they might read in partners or by themselves. An alternative might be an observation. For a lesson on “weather,” this might involve going outside to see the current weather. For a lesson on “plants,” this might involve growing a plant.
- Completing the Map after the Reading: Teachers and children as a group discuss what they have learned from the book. At this time, they might change categories or add another category to reflect what they have learned.

3. Distribute Review

The best way to ensure long-term retention of word meanings is to review them periodically and briefly. The pressure to cover as much new content as possible argues against this practice, of course. But there is a difference between covering and teaching. Certainly there are opportunities to revisit words that have been introduced during previous weeks or months. A science teacher who finishes Chapter 7 five minutes before the end of class might say to the students, “I know it’s been awhile, but let’s take a minute and look back over the words at the end of Chapter 2.”

There is yet another reason for returning to the same words. It concerns the fact that words are complex entities, with nuances that can only be appreciated after witnessing numerous examples. When we stop to consider that most words require 20 exposures in context before an adequate grasp of their meanings is acquired, we begin to recognize this second reason for revisiting the words we have introduced. In a typical school day there are nooks and crannies of time that can be used for this purpose. Doing so requires little in the way of advance planning. A teacher needs only the will to seize such

opportunities when they present themselves.

4. Some Don’ts of Teaching Vocabulary

Best practice is more than employing teaching strategies known to be effective. It also means avoiding strategies that are not likely to produce desired results. Check your own practice against the following list of don’ts.

- Don’t require students to copy definitions. This is a popular practice but a complete waste of time. Students can copy without being engaged. Moreover, dictionary definitions frequently contain words that are more challenging than the word they define. A fourth-grade teacher I observed recently asked her students to look up the definition of scrub and copy the definition. They did so, dutifully writing, “to wash vigorously.”
- Don’t rely on definitions alone. The pressure to teach a large number of words makes it very tempting to assume that a student who can match a word to its definition has sufficient knowledge of the word. There are two problems with this assumption. One is that most words have more than a single definition. The other is that definitions often invite misinterpretations unless contextual examples are provided as well. When my daughter was in eighth grade, she was asked to learn the word truncate. (Not surprisingly, this word was part of a weekly list of unrelated terms.) The definition provided for truncate was “to cut off.” Out of curiosity, I asked her to use the word in a sentence. She thought a moment and said, “She truncated the lights.”
- Don’t preteach all of the unfamiliar words in a story. Studies have shown that readers can comprehend fiction reasonably well even when they do not know up to 15 percent of the words. Struggling older readers tend to be masters of skipping unfamiliar

words (a strategy the rest of us practice as well).

- Don’t base general vocabulary instruction on the words in a story. If you were to list the low-frequency words contained in a fiction selection, they would probably be well worth knowing. Indeed, many teachers not only preteach them but follow up with more intensive study so that these words become, in effect, the vocabulary curriculum. The trouble with this practice is that the words are not likely to be related in meaning. This makes clustering impossible, and techniques based on clusters, such as the ones discussed in this article, cannot be used.
- Don’t forget to link new words to the lives of your students. Struggling readers are hard to motivate. Indeed, by the time they reach the upper grades, many have ceased to struggle. They may well view learning new words as a pointless exercise, one that is academic, impractical, and totally unconnected with the reality of their lives. Try your best to spark an interest. Tie contextual examples to people and events that matter to them. Cite instances where figures in pop culture have used some of the words you are teaching. Incorporate word games into your instruction. Above all, exhibit your own enthusiasm. A love of words is contagious, after all, and even the most resistant students are not completely immune.

Michael C. McKenna is Professor of Reading at Georgia Southern University in Savannah. His interests include content area methods, beginning reading, technology applications, and reading attitudes. He has published ten books and more than 70 articles on these subjects.

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Disability or Gift?

by **Larry Evans**
Principal of **The Hillier School**

I have had the great privilege of spending most of my adult life working with students who have a different style of learning from the general population. These students have a diagnosed language learning disability, Dyslexia, and struggle in the regular classroom. The relationship between the shapes of letters and their corresponding sounds is not something they easily grasp. As one would assume, this difficulty makes learning in the traditional classroom a stressful and often traumatic experience. Fortunately, learning disabilities are becoming better understood with intervention techniques more readily available.

Working with students through the years, I have often reflected on a story that involved one of the pioneer educators in the field of learning disabilities. This educator was asked the question, "After spending so much of your life seeing the struggles these students go through, wouldn't you like to be able to give them the ability to learn in the same way as everyone else?" To which she replied, "Absolutely not! They are perfectly wonderful the way they are. If you changed them you might lose all the marvelous gifts they have been given." This illustration is one that I have always remembered, and through the years have come to better understand and appreciate. Students I have worked with have been some of the most sensitive, caring children I have had the opportunity to know. Their gifts in the creative areas are typically superior. Many have a quick wit and sense of humor that is highly developed. And, yes, given the proper teaching techniques they are also able to succeed in the academic areas as well.

All of us who work with learning disabled children should always remind ourselves that we are not in the business of "changing" children. Our job is not one of "force fitting" them into a mold for which they were never meant. We are in the business of equipping children. God created them with their own special gifts. Our task is to train them, nurture them and help them recognize and make the most of, their God-given abilities.



Stripling

bulletin Calendar

**ALTA members are responsible for
maintaining their own personal CEU
records for possible audit.**

Summer Classes

**Summer 2004
Learning Therapy Program
Deadline for Enrollment
Monday, June 7, 2004**

Introduction Class ~ July 19 – 29, 2004

EDU 6330 – Section 2002 Class # 2373 Introductory Course A/ Survey of Dyslexia & Related Learning Disabilities - SMU-in-Legacy Bldg 4 Room 114 (Instructor: Dr. Karen Vickery)

Valley Location EDU 6330 – Section 2012 Class #2374
June 21 – July 1, 2004

Advanced Class - July 19 – 29, 2004

EDU 6332 – Section 2002 Class # 2375 Advanced Course A/ Advanced Cognitive & Linguistic Structures of Written Language, Part I - SMU-in-Legacy Bldg 4 Room 230 (Instructor: Dr. Karen Vickery)

Valley Location EDU 6332 – Section 2012 Class #2376
June 21 – July 1, 2004

Electives

PSYC 6106 - Section 2011 Class # 2453 Survey of Learning Strategies - June 25 & 26 - SMU-in-Legacy Bldg 4 Room 230 (Instructor: Dr. Karen Vickery)

PSYC 6184- Section 2012 Class # 2455 Dyslexia Identification - July 9 & 10 - SMU-in-Legacy Bldg 4 Room 230 (Instructor: Dr. Karen Vickery)

PSYC 6183- Section 2012 Class # 2457 Automaticity & Rate - July 16 & 17 - SMU-in-Legacy Bldg 4 Room 230 (Instructor: Dr. Karen Vickery)

ALTA CENTERS COUNCIL (ACC)

How did you find your center?

How pleased are you that you started your training?

How many lives have you touched with your training?

As most of you know, the ACC maintains a system of accreditation for post baccalaureate educational programs designed to prepare Academic Language Therapists to provide therapeutic instruction to students with dyslexia and/or related written-language disorders and prepares Qualified Instructors for teaching and supervision of Academic Language Therapists. The ACC is composed of representatives from each of the accredited training centers. The ultimate goal is quality services to the learning different population and dependable information for the public.

Once you graduated from a center, you may have felt as I did when I finished my training, "Thank goodness that's over!" But how did you get there in the first place? How pleased are you with your choice to start this journey in Alphabetic Phonics? How many lives have you touched?

My journey started on a soccer field as I watched my child play. Two of the other moms were talking about "linkages." I inquired about this odd concept and they replied that it was rather mysterious. They believed that they would be able to answer my questions in about two years. (They had just started their introductory year.) I had just learned that my middle child was dyslexic, so I thought that learning about these "linkages" might be a good idea. They told me where to go for information and off I went!

Were it not for those two moms talking enthusiastically about their experience with Alphabetic Phonics training, I never would have made the call. I am infinitely thankful that they shared their excitement with me.

In many respects, I believe that we keep our ALTA experience a secret. Children across

this nation who are struggling to read, write, and spell, need what we have to offer. Do they know who we are and/or what we do? The best advertisement is word of mouth. How can we expect to be recognized by the school systems if we do not let them know who we are and/or what we are able to do? We need to put that CALT after our names. When asked what we do, we need to say that we are therapists who teach children how to read, not tutors!

All of this is to say, SPREAD THE WORD! Tell your friends, colleagues, or fellow sports fans about your experience and how it has impacted your life. I am hoping that as you read this article you can answer the questions that I asked above as I do: I am thrilled with my decision to start this journey. I have been led in directions that I never anticipated and I have touched more lives than I can count.

If you know someone interested in training, have him or her contact any of the following centers and they can start their own life-altering journey!

Centers For Youth & Families

Stacey Mahurin
PO Box 251970
Little Rock, Arkansas
72225-1970
(501) 660-6886 x 1129
smahurin@aristotle.net

LEAD

Valerie Tucker
406 Country Club Rd.
Argyle, TX 76226
(940) 464-3752 phone
(940) 464-7293 fax
lead1234@gte.net

Multisensory Language Training Institute of New Mexico

Sandra Dillon
6344 Buenos Aires N.W.
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87120
(505) 898-7500 phone
(505) 890-4119 Fax
sandraddillon@msn.com

Neuhaus Education Center

Kay Allen
4433 Bissonnet
Bellaire, TX 77401
(713) 664-7676 phone
(713) 664-4744 fax
kallen@neuhaus.org

Payne Education Center/OK City

Janet Riggan
3240 W. Britton Rd.
Ste. 104
Oklahoma City, OK 73120
(405) 755-4205 phone
(405) 755-4281 fax
info@payneeducationcenter.org

The Scottish Rite Learning Center of Austin

Pat Sekel
508 W. 14th Street
Austin, Texas 78701
(512) 472-1231
(512) 472-3861 fax
psekell@austin.rr.com

The Scottish Rite Learning Center of West Texas

Doris Haney
602 Avenue Q
PO Box 10135
Lubbock, TX 79408
(806) 794-2210
(806) 765-9150
haney@nts-online.net

See ACC on Page 11

ACC continued from Page 10

Southern Methodist University LTP

Karen Vickery
Learning Therapy Program
Southern Methodist University
5236 Tennyson Pkwy., Bldg. 4-108
Plano, TX 75024
214) 768-7323 phone
(972) 473-3442 fax
kvickery@smu.edu

Southwest Multisensory Training Center

Beverly Dooley
600 S. Jupiter
Allen, TX 75002-4065
(972) 359-6646 phone
(972) 359-8291 fax
bevdool@buz.net

Stratford Friends School MSL Teacher Training Program

Sandra Howze
6 Llandillo Rd.
Havertown, PA 19083
(610) 446-3144 phone
(610) 446-6381 fax
showze@stratfordfriends.org


Teachers College, Columbia University Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills

Mary Rowe
Dept. of Curriculum & Teaching
PO Box 31
New York, New York 10027
(212) 678-3080 phone
(212) 678-3237 fax
mcr30@columbia.edu

Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children

Karen Avrit
Luke Waites Child Development Center
2222 Welborn Street
Dallas, TX 75219
(214) 559-7885 phone
(214) 559-7808 fax
lwcdc@airmil.net

Nancy Coffman
President, ALTA Centers Council



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AND DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT CENTER

972.233.1026
16150 Preston Road
Dallas, Texas 75248
Email: info@fairhill.org

Fairhill School is an independent non-sectarian, co-educational institution open to qualified candidates of any race, color or national origin.

WELCOME, NEW STUDENT MEMBERS:
Brooke Bucek, Kelsi Cooper, Pamela Dobson, Nancy Duncan, Marilyn Ehrlich, Gloria Garrison, Lindsey Miller, Robin Molloy, Mary O'Connell, Patti Revell, Tiffany Schappe, Andrew Schneider, Barrie Schwartz.

WELCOME, NEW ACTIVE MEMBERS:
Shirley Armstrong, Elke Blanchard, Whitney Bonner, Elise Cameron, Ann Christian, Dennis Davis, Vella Howard, Delinda Martinez, Lisa Tyler, Nanci Utay, Debbie Wise, Roberta Wolff.

WELCOME, NEW QUALIFIED INSTRUCTOR
Holly Badke.

