

Fall 2014 — ALTA bul*le*tin

The Newsletter of the Academic Language Therapy Association

President's Message

Marilyn Mathis, M.Ed., CALT-QI
President, Academic Language Therapy Association



Marilyn Mathis, President, Academic Language Therapy Association

Dear ALTA Members,

Fall greetings colleagues! There is excitement in the air as many of us are striving to train, tutor and promote local awareness on behalf of children with dyslexia around the country. I know we all share a great sense of pride in belonging to such a prestigious professional organization as ALTA. Being a member of ALTA for the past 24 years has been the cornerstone of my professional career and I am so honored to be serving you as your new president.

As Academic Language Practitioners or Therapists, we have been awarded a nationally recognized credential that allows the public to know that we specialize in offering the "gold standard" for the remediation of children and adults with dyslexia based on the latest evidence-based research. We are empowered with the knowledge to help those who lack basic literacy skills and adhere to a code of ethical standards. What a tremendous personal achievement it is to know that you can really make a difference and change the lives of children in such a positive way. Take a bow ALTA members . . . you deserve it!

The growth of ALTA membership is exciting! ALTA represents numerous MSLE courses and is looming on a trajectory to increase membership all across the country. We currently have members in 46 states. For every state with ALTA members, we have opportunities for further growth through the creation of new MSLE courses whose graduates may later become members of ALTA. The number of chapters is growing as well. There are now chapters in Arkansas, Colorado, Mississippi, New York, Ohio; Texas now has 4 regional chapters, thanks to the work of Linda Gladden and others.

At last, legislation is making its way across our nation to benefit our students with dyslexia. Local, state, and national representatives are working hard to make sure that no child will have his or her civil rights denied to receive evidence-based instruction to learn to read, write and spell. A state-by-state list of the latest dyslexia legislation can be [downloaded here](#).

Recently, a hearing was held in Washington, D.C., on the "Science of Dyslexia". I urge you to listen to the testimony of the many distinguished speakers including Rep. Bill Cassidy and Dr. Sally Shaywitz at <http://science.house.gov/hearing/full-committee-hearing-science-dyslexia> or on the rolling banner on the [ALTA homepage](#).

I hope to see many of you in San Diego at the National IDA Conference. In recent years, we have been sharing our IDA exhibit hall booth space with IMSLEC. The Alliance for Accreditation and Certification has been working hard to promote awareness of both IMSLEC and ALTA. Following my message is a special invitation to all ALTA members from the Alliance board and also a picture of our new Alliance banner, courtesy of Jeanine Phillips, that will hang between the IMSLEC and ALTA banners. Judith Birsh, Ph.D., CALT-QI, has generously offered to do book signings of her comprehensive textbook, *Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills-3rd Edition*. We are so excited and proud to have her stand among us.

I know you will enjoy reading about your ALTA colleague's news around country in this newsletter. Please think about sharing YOUR news in the future.

Respectfully yours,

Marilyn Mathis



An Invitation To Alliance Members

Please come to the Alliance Booth #334
Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2014 for
Exhibit Hall Opening Night!

Register to win a SMART Pen
Drawing Wednesday at 8:00 PM
Also, Register to win
Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills,
3rd Edition, autographed in person by Judith Birsh

IMSLEC & ALTA Members
Please stop by to pick up your membership ribbons!

Additional Drawings for Smart Pens on
Thursday and Friday at 6:00 PM and
Judith's book on Thurs. & Fri. at 12:30 PM & 6:00 PM
(You don't have to be present to win)

See you in San Diego!

Marilyn Mathis, Alliance President
&
Members of the Board of the Alliance



Our Mission:
Provide a united association of organizations concerned with the accreditation of Multisensory Structured Language Education (MSLE) training courses and the certification of graduates of these courses.

★ IMSLEC Training Locations

■ States with ALTA Members

Items on map may represent multiple sites. IMSLEC Site also at San Juan, PR

Tribute to Dr. Sylvia Richardson

Joyce S. Pickering



Sylvia Richardson

Everyone who ever met Sylvia felt that she was their friend. She was a remarkable human being. She was one of a kind. Her intellect was astonishing. Her ability to combine information from one field together with another to help children was unsurpassed. Her humility and kindness were exceptional.

As I often walked with her through the halls of conferences, we could not take 2 steps without someone thanking her for the help she had given them. She always stopped and talked and she always helped anyone who asked. She never had the feeling she was above the mass of people, who often mobbed her for advice.

I knew her huge compassion for human kind, when I called her in 1967. I read an article she had written on Learning Disabilities. It was like manna from heaven to me. I was running a federal grant to help students with Dyslexia in Natchez, Mississippi and most of the people I spoke with told me that Dyslexia did not exist. Sylvia's article helped me to feel supported by science. I had never before or since called a complete stranger and professional recognized at the top of the field, out of the blue.

Sylvia welcomed my call and invited me to have lunch with her, when I travelled to Cincinnati, where she was the Director of the Hamilton County Diagnostic Center. That lunch was the beginning of a lifelong friendship. She was always there to answer my questions, she introduced me to my husband, Bob Pickering, she advised her son, Chris to come to Brazil to work with us and that led to Chris' marriage to Lenie. Sylvia was the godmother for our daughter, Jessica and throughout the life of Jessica and her twin sister, Leslie, was loving and caring for both of these girls. She was proud of their accomplishments as young women. She spread her love to my sons, Howard, David, and Charles and my sisters, Marilyn and Joan.

We were together at so many personal events, weddings, birthdays, at the beach, and working together for 47 years. My heart is heavy at her passing. I am not sad for Sylvia. She had a wonderful life with a strong and supportive Mother, Father, Grandmother, Grandfather and Brother. She married Bill Richardson, who was her perfect mate. They had a unique marriage and two sons, Chip and Chris, who have been devoted to both parents. She adored her sons. She had the work that she loved. She balanced work and family. She had many friends. She lived for 94 years. She had a full and fulfilling life. She left us peacefully, with her intellect and communication still superior. What more can any of us ask?

I am sad for those of us who will not have her presence in our lives. We must be grateful for every day we had with Sylvia and remember her with love all the days of our lives. There will never be another Sylvia.

2014 ALTA Annual Conference Photo Album



The Aylett R. Cox ALTA Educator Award was presented to Kay Peterson by Karen Avrit, President (left) and Karen Vickery, Award Committee Chairman (right)



The Jamie G. Williams ALTA Founders Award is presented to Karen Avrit by Karen Vickery (left), Award Committee Chairman, and Marilyn Mathis (right), incoming ALTA President



The Luke Waites ALTA Award of Service was given to Helen Macik (middle) by Karen Vickery, Award Committee Chairman (left) and Karen Avrit, ALTA President (right)



Newly-elected ALTA Board Members: Cherie Howell, Marilyn Mathis, Jana Curry, Christine Bedenbaugh, Suzanne Crawford, Lexie Barefoot, Ginny Little, Mary Wines



Present at the Spring ALTA Board Meeting (and guests): Pictured are Tim Odegard, Suzanne Crawford, Rebecca Tolson, Lynne Fitzhugh, Mary Wines, Treasa Owens, JoAnn Handy, Janet Florey, Kathleen Carlsen, Janice Robson, Kay Peterson, Marilyn Mathis, Nancy Cusen-White. Karen Vickery, Karen Avrit, Carin Illig, Janna Curry, Christine Bedenbaugh, Melanie Royal, Martha Haun, Ginny Little



Present at the Spring Alliance Board Meeting: Guest-CEU Chair-Tereasa Owens with Alliance Board members: Karen Vickery, Nancy Cushen-White, JoAnn Handy, Carin Illig, Marilyn Mathis, Jeanine Phillips, Kay Peterson

ALTA Website Update

Lexie Barefoot, M. Ed., LDT, CALT-QI
ALTA VP Website

Updates and Improvements Ongoing

The ALTA website, www.altaread.org, has recently been updated. Notable changes include the following:

- You will notice some slight changes in the home page rotating banner. It is now a navigable banner, allowing the user to move from item to item more easily.
- Two new tabs have been added to the top menu bar:
 - **Chapters** — This section will provide chapter contacts and news, as well as eventually allow our various chapters to link their own websites to our national ALTA site.
 - **Parents** — This section will be a "work in progress." It is vital that parents are made more aware of the importance of obtaining proper, qualified interventionists for dyslexia therapy.
- Some of our members have requested a copy of the ALTA By-Laws. These are now posted on our website under the "About" tab.
- The newest *Texas Dyslexia Handbook* link has been added to three tabs: Resources (Other Site Links); Licensure (State Laws and Websites); and the Parents tab (Helpful Resources).

If you have resources or articles that you believe would be useful to any of the website sections, please submit your ideas, resources, or articles to us for review. Send your comments or inputs to Lexie Barefoot at lexiebarefoot@gmail.com. Don't forget to [join us on Facebook](#) as well.

Mississippi Colleges Conduct Dyslexia Therapy Summer Training

**Kay Peterson, Master of Education in Dyslexia Therapy
Director, Mississippi College**

"Cohorts" from Different Professions to Teach English Language Structure

During the month of July, the classrooms at Mississippi College and Blue Mountain College are filled with enthusiastic participants, a "cohort" from different professions, preparing to teach the structure of the English language to students who struggle with reading, spelling, and writing. In addition to the summer courses, cohort members attend class twice in the fall semester and twice in the spring semester. Each cohort is a unique blend of teachers, parents, nurses, educational diagnosticians, speech therapists, and school administrators. They all have one common goal — to teach students to read who struggle with the English language.

Graduates of the Master of Education in Dyslexia Therapy from Mississippi College have successfully completed the national registration exam to become members of the Academic Language Therapy Association (ALTA) at the therapy level. According to Terri Broome, the ALTA Mississippi chapter president, the members are active and involved in promoting dyslexia awareness and providing instruction for public school students, private school students, and in clinics throughout the state of Mississippi. Several members of the ALTA chapter have opened a private school, a private practice, or a clinic.

The ALTA Mississippi Chapter hosts a conference during the month of February for members, professionals, parents, and other interested individuals. The 2015 conference is scheduled for February 5th. Updates will be coming soon on the ALTA website.



Ohio Reading Initiative Drives Need for Training

Vicki Krnac, M.Ed., CALT, QI and Rebecca Tolson M.Ed., CALT, QI

Keystone Literacy, LLC, Partners with School Districts

Many educational changes took place in Ohio with the passage of the Ohio Third Grade Guarantee in the spring of 2012. The educational initiatives approved by state law makers heightened the awareness of how best to teach reading. School districts sought resources and professional training to accomplish the mandate of grade level readers by the third grade. Keystone Literacy, LLC, an educational company aimed at offering high quality professional development services, partners with school districts, educational service centers, and teachers to develop individual and school potential in the area of literacy. They desire to motivate and encourage participants to strive for professional growth and fulfillment, as well as assist districts in attaining sustainability and better equip teachers to teach struggling readers. Vicki Krnac and Rebecca Tolson, owners and partners of Keystone Literacy, LLC, graduated from Southern Methodist University, with a Certificate of Advanced Studies in 2013. With their respective Qualified Instructor licenses, they immediately joined forces and started the company designed to empower teachers with knowledge of scientifically-based reading research and practical application by training specialists to be certified practitioners or therapists under ALTA.

Keystone Literacy began year one of their Dyslexia Series Training with twenty teachers. Fifteen of those teachers went on to the advanced year of training and will graduate in May of 2015. A new class of twenty participants began this past July and includes many public school teachers: Eleven teachers and coaches from Parma City School District; four from North Olmsted City School District; and one from North Canton City Schools. Jodie Hausmann from Parma City Schools states:

"The Parma City School District believes all children can read and achieve at high levels to be college and career ready; therefore, we designed a model where teacher leaders become academic language practitioners to ensure struggling readers meet or exceed grade-level benchmarks, and teachers collaboratively grow professionally from the expertise of our new building literacy specialists. We made a conscious decision to invest in teacher training versus protocol programs because our trend data demonstrates programs do not close learning gaps; teachers do. We believe if we empower our teachers with knowledge they will successfully grow all students as readers. Keystone Literacy is essential to our model as Rebecca Tolson and Vicki Krnac build genuine relationships with our educators because they understand the importance of the task at hand. After many years of research, we do not take for granted students will innately read, but require explicit instruction to acquire language for reading and writing. Our model is energizing our staff to confidently raise expectations for students, and more importantly, themselves."

North Canton City Schools have four teachers in their advanced year of training and one currently going through the Intro year. Angela Smith, Director of Instruction from North Canton states that, "We have sent several teachers to train in the ALTA system because we believe in its power to assist with our struggling readers. We have had many students who have benefited from the expertise of our trained teachers, and those students are on a path for success in all of their academic subjects due to this instruction."

Keystone Literacy also partners with Ashland University to offer graduate credits. It thrills Keystone Literacy instructors to be training a total of thirty-five teachers for ALTA certification level this year. Each trained practitioner or therapist will be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to improve their building in the area of literacy.

Texas ALTA Chapter Launched at ALTA Spring Conference 2014

Linda Gladden and Kim Jameson, Texas ALTA Co-Chairs

To work with TEA to heighten dyslexia awareness

The Texas ALTA Chapter officially launched at the annual ALTA Conference this past spring. The purpose of the Texas Chapter is to focus on dyslexia issues specific to Texas. We will continue to sponsor legislation to help school-aged children deal with their dyslexia in the classroom. Also, we will work with TEA to heighten awareness of dyslexia in public schools.

The Texas Chapter is composed of four geographic regions, and we have regional co-chairs. The North Texas regional chairs are Melanie Royal and Sally Cain. The South Texas regional chairs are Alice Marsel and Sara Mandelbaum Beer. The West Texas chair is Betzy Day, and the East Texas chairs are Mary Yarus and Kim Jameson. The Texas ALTA co-chairs are Linda Gladden and Kim Jameson. Currently, there are no dues to belong to the Texas Chapter of ALTA. Texas is fortunate to have many members living in our state. We need each one of you to become involved in your region.

The North Texas regional group has hosted two organizational meetings. One meeting was held in Dallas at Shelton School, and one was hosted in Fort Worth at Country Day School. The East Texas regional group hosted one organizational meeting in August at St. John's Episcopal Church, in Houston, Texas, and they will host another meeting on September 22nd at Neuhaus Education Center. This meeting will be a legislative update and organizational meeting. The South Texas regional group hosted a meeting at Rawson Saunders in August, and the West Texas regional group has plans for an organizational meeting in October.

The Sunset Advisory Commission recommended the discontinuation of our state license. However, this does not mean we will definitely lose it. Our ALTA lobbyist, Courtney Hoffman, will file a bill next session to retain our state license and move it to a different department. We will need ALL Texas ALTA members to support this bill. We will be sending out additional updates as they develop. Although our Texas members have a challenge to tackle, we are all up for the fight.

We welcome your thoughts and suggestions. Please email Linda Gladden at lsgladden@aol.com or Kim Jameson at kjameson@sjd.org. We would love to hear from you.

Odyssey Elementary Colorado's First School to Identify Students with Dyslexia

Lynne Fitzhugh, Ph.D., LDT, CALT-QI
President, Colorado Literacy & Learning Center

ALTA Members Selected as First Teachers to Provide Remediation

ALTA members Joanne Barner and Teresa Hinote are leading the way in changing educational outcomes in Colorado. These two teachers are providing dyslexia remediation in Colorado's first public school to identify children with a profile of dyslexia, Odyssey Elementary School.

Odyssey, in the Falcon School District located in northeastern Colorado Springs, has spent two years preparing for the creation of a "LEx School," standing for Literacy Excellence. A part of this plan is to identify students with profiles of dyslexia and teach them to read.

"We are seeing uncommon levels of passion, training, and commitment in getting all students reading," commented Mike Pickering, Ph.D., Superintendent, who led the LEx strategic planning process. Pickering, along with Principal Pam Weyer and Assistant Principal Rebecca Thompson, launched an in-depth training for Odyssey Elementary staff in order to ensure successful reading outcomes for all students. Over the past year, the staff has received numerous training sessions, including a school-wide identification of dyslexia, from the Colorado Literacy and Learning Center.

"In Colorado, diagnosing specific reading deficiencies and prescribing specific interventions to students is something almost non-existent outside the special education realm," added Pickering. "The level of diagnostic data and availability of related programming we can now begin to prescribe after in-depth professional development, sets Odyssey Elementary apart from any other public school I know of."

Odyssey Elementary teachers were presented with the proposal of becoming a LEx School, with the most critical component being the dyslexia interventionist positions filled by Barner and Hinote. Teachers voted 39-2 to take on this initiative, revealing the overall attitude and acceptance of this new mission. "I am excited and proud to be part of the journey Odyssey is taking in being the first elementary school in Colorado to be identifying and providing remediation for dyslexic students," said Hinote, a Certified Academic Language Therapist and Qualified Instructor, who moved from Texas to accept one of the two positions.

Last year, Odyssey, a Title One school, identified sixty children going into second, third and fourth grades. This year, these children receive 45 minutes-a-day of intensive intervention from Barner and Hinote.

The Falcon School District is committed to providing the highest quality reading instruction to all students. The rigor of training to meet ALTA membership requirements was a significant factor in the selection of Barner and Hinote out of a large pool of applicants. "I feel very passionate in helping to finally disseminate and practice what has been known for years to help dyslexic children," said Rebecca Thompson, OES Assistant Principal.

In 2008, Colorado passed House Bill 1223, also known as the "Dyslexia Bill." However, as an unfunded mandate, most public schools do not identify students with dyslexia and provide evidence-based reading instruction as OES is doing. "It has been extremely rewarding to see struggling readers become more successful and finally be able to understand the reading process," stated Barner.



ALTA Members Barner and Hinote (left) with Odyssey Elementary School Administrators

Update on Texas Licensure for Dyslexia Therapists and Practitioners

Courtney Read Hoffman
CRH Capitol Communications

Each state agency in Texas is reviewed by the Sunset Advisory Commission (SAC) every 12 years to examine the need for and performance of that agency. The Texas Department of State Health Services was reviewed this year and SAC staff recommended abolishment of licensing for 19 occupations, including Licensed Dyslexia Therapists and Practitioners. The SAC process this summer included avenues for comment online and at a public hearing. At the urging of ALTA, 190 online comments were logged in protest to abolishment of the license. Three witnesses appeared before the committee at the hearing in Austin and stated their objections through oral testimony. Office visits were made to legislative members of the committee; however, the final recommendation to the Legislature included cessation of the license.

The next legislative session begins on the second Tuesday of January, 2015. Sunset recommendations are typically embodied in a series of bills that must pass the Legislature in order to take effect. There are many newcomers in the Texas House and Senate since the law was passed in 2009, and there will be many more after the November 4th election. Discussions with staff and legislators have already begun to be informative about the need to keep the licensure and to identify new legislative champions.

One of the most important ways ALTA members can support the licensure is to be sure to renew their licenses. If the number of licenses begins to decline, it will be much more difficult to defend licensure. In addition, it is critical to use the terms "LDT" and "LDP." The licensure is still in place, and it is up to us to demonstrate and message its importance.

When a bill is filed regarding this issue, we will identify target legislators to approach. Champions will be activated and we will begin the full court press to remove Licensed Dyslexia Therapists and Practitioners from the list of programs to be abolished. If we are successful, the licensure will remain in effect.

ALTA Membership Growth in Ohio School Districts

Jean Colner ICALP, CALT
Director, Columbus Children's Dyslexia Center

Ohio legislators have passed significant education bills to raise awareness of dyslexia and the specialized multisensory structured language (MSLE) training, which greatly benefits those with dyslexia. As an example of local response to the increased community interest and need for MSLE training, the Columbus Children's Dyslexia Center began contracting with public and private schools in 2012 to provide Practitioner-level teacher training. Successful graduates are encouraged to sit for the National Alliance Registration exam and become certified members of ALTA. Of the 40 school district teachers we have trained since 2012, 62% of the course graduates have chosen to take the Alliance exam and are now ALTA members as Certified Academic Language Practitioners.

Another growth opportunity for ALTA is the development of training satellite partnerships in school districts. As ICALP Practitioner Level trainers are certified, they are able to conduct in-district teacher training. For example, Blythe Wood ICALP, from our Columbus Children's Dyslexia Center, has created a training satellite partnership with us to train 16 teachers in Pickerington Local School District at the Practitioner level. Sixty four children will receive MLSE instruction in the 100 hour practicum as a result of this training model. A very large number of children will ultimately be helped by the all of the teachers trained through this process. All of these training-course graduates will be encouraged to take the Alliance exam and become ALTA members next summer.

The teachers in our school districts, who are being trained by ICALP instructors, are learning successful ways to provide science-based effective MSLE instruction for their dyslexic and struggling readers. These teachers want to distinguish themselves by belonging to ALTA — the national gold standard for MSLE certification.