

Spring 2017 — ALTA bul*le*tin

The Newsletter of the Academic Language Therapy Association

Texas Legislative Update

Courtney Hoffman

The 85th Legislative Session is at its halfway point. Thanks to a successful Dyslexia Day at the Capitol many legislators and staff are more aware of dyslexia and legislation filed this session. Rep. Rick Miller filed three bills, one for per pupil funding, one to require the dyslexia therapist license for those in private therapy and a third bill addressing early screening in public schools with reporting of those numbers, ensuring that the state has qualified individuals overseeing dyslexia programs and creating an online list of training opportunities for educators of dyslexia.

HB 21 was filed by Rep. Huberty, chair of House Education, designating specific funding for dyslexia within a new funding structure that increases the per pupil allotment for public schools. There was a hearing on this bill and Texas ALTA testified in favor. Thanks to those who attended the hearing and put in a card of support. Rep. Huberty filed a stand-alone bill to do the same, in case the larger funding bill does not pass.

In the Senate, there is a different approach this session for education funding for disabilities. The education savings account bill, SB 3 by Sen. Education Chair Larry Taylor, is seen as a way to direct funding for school choice to families with a child with special needs. The House has a similar version by Rep. Simmons, HB 1335 and HB 1493. HB 1493 actually allows public school parents of students in 504 to use the savings account to pay for therapy by licensed or accredited providers approved by the commissioner of education. In addition, there are two other bills, by Chair Taylor, SB 2143 and SB 2145, with an identical in the House, HB 189 by Rep. Mary Gonzalez, that increase the per pupil allotment and allow for compensatory funds to be used for dyslexia.

It will be up to House and Senate budget writers and legislative leadership to come to agreement on how education funding will be handled this session. The good news is that dyslexia is being discussed in the Capitol and there is the possibility of increased funding for dyslexia this session.

TDLR and the Dyslexia Therapists and Practitioners Advisory Committee

Robin Cowsar, M.Ed., LDT, CALT

At the close of the 84th Legislative Session, the Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 202 transferring several occupational licenses from the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR). The licensure for Dyslexia Therapists and Practitioners was one of seven health related occupations to be transferred, reinforcing that dyslexia is not simply an "education issue", but rather a health related issue that affects the education of those coping with the disability.

On October 3, 2016, TDLR officially took over all regulatory functions for the Licensed Dyslexia Therapists and Practitioners program, having oversight of license renewals, customer service and enforcement of the rules that govern the occupation. The TDLR Commission appointed a five member Advisory Committee to advise the department regarding rules related to the licensure and regulation of dyslexia therapists and dyslexia practitioners. This advice includes clarification and justification of requirements to qualify for becoming licensed. The newly appointed members of the Advisory Committee are:

Robin Cowsar, Presiding Officer (Therapist)
Helen Macik (Therapist)
Misty Demsey (Public Member)
Letricia Niegos (Public Member with dyslexic child)
Beatriz Daniels (Practitioner)

All Advisory Committee Meetings are open to the public for attendance or to watch online, either live or archived. This gives not only the public, but also dyslexia professionals the opportunity to stay informed and voice their opinions on the record for consideration in decisions that TDLR may make regarding licensure. The support we have received from staff at TDLR is outstanding! In January, TDLR representatives Mary Hoffman and Yvonne Feinleib attended the Texas ALTA conference in Austin to be available for questions regarding the licensing process. They also plan to be in attendance at the Spring National Conference in Dallas in May.

Check out the [TDLR website](#). If you search on "Dyslexia" it will take you to the Dyslexia Therapists and Practitioners Program where you can sign up to receive email updates regarding rules, the law, fees, frequently asked questions and guidelines for licensure. It is your opportunity to stay informed on the most current information for qualifying and maintaining a license.

Texas Dyslexia Identification Academy

Texas is ahead of the game when it comes to identifying and providing intervention for students with dyslexia. A dyslexia law has been in place since 1986 which requires public schools to test for dyslexia and provide treatment for any student determined to have dyslexia or related disorders. Guidance to assist in the implementation of the law has been in place since 1987 with the most recent revision being in 2014 (The Texas Dyslexia Handbook; Procedures Concerning Dyslexia and Related Disorders Revised 2014).

As with most written documents, the language used can leave room for personal interpretation. The Texas Dyslexia Handbook is no exception. The Texas Dyslexia Identification Academy (TDIA) was developed to support public schools with the challenges of identifying students with dyslexia in a way that is consistent with the intent of the law and guidance from the Texas Education Agency.

The TDIA includes five modules addressing different aspects of the dyslexia assessment process in Texas:

Module 1 — Foundations
Module 2 — Evaluation
Module 3 — Considerations for ELLs
Module 4 — Interpreting Scores
Module 5 — Report Writing and Case Studies

Educators are encouraged to attend the modules that best fit their needs. Module 1 is appropriate for all educators and could satisfy TAC §232.11 which requires educators who teach students with dyslexia to have CPE training in new research and practices in educating students with dyslexia.

For more information about the TDIA, contact your Regional Education Service Center or the Texas Dyslexia Helpline at 1-800-232-3030.

The Board of Directors would like to welcome new members to ALTA

The Board of Directors would like to welcome all the new members to ALTA. We want to welcome those of you joining as a CALP or CALT, thank you for choosing to be a part of the ALTA family. You have joined a dedicated group of highly trained individuals active in the field of dyslexia and related disorders. With your training and knowledge, we know you will be an essential part of the lives of those you serve.

For those joining ALTA as trainee affiliates, we hope your membership will enhance your knowledge as you begin your adventure in the field of dyslexia teaching and/or therapy. Our members have a wealth of knowledge and are always available if you need a guiding hand!

To those who have been ALTA members at the CALP/CALT level and have entered the ICALP/QI level, congratulations! Your expertise is so crucial for training others to work with individuals with dyslexia.

To all our new ALTA members, at all membership levels, thank you for becoming an ALTA member and welcome! ALTA continues to grow across the country and beyond, and we are proud to have you with us!

Formatting Your ALTA Credentials

Dear ALTA Members,

We recognize that ALTA members represent the highest standards in the field of written language skills. In an effort to increase name recognition and branding of ALTA as a professional organization, the ALTA board encourages members to use a consistent format when listing credentials. Please take a moment to check your credentials and make adjustments as necessary. [Note: Not all designations are applicable to all members.]

"Name, Degree, LDP/LDT, CALP/CALT"

If you are an instructor, please attach the instructor designation to the ALTA designation for which it applies:
CALP-ICALP, CALT-QI

Examples:

Mary Jones, M.Ed., LDT, CALT

Mary Jones, Ph.D., CALP

Mary Jones, M.A., CALT-QI

Mary Jones, LDP, CALP-ICALP

Mary Jones, Ed.D., LDT, CALT-QI

Mary Jones, LDT, CALT

Mary Jones, CALP

Our desire is that the credentials you have worked so hard to achieve continue to be recognized as the gold standard in our field: *"Their future depends on the expert you trust!"*

Sincerely,
ALTA Board of Directors

ALTA Chapters

Jean Colner, ALTA Chairperson

Academic Language Therapy Association Chapters function to provide local professional networking, fundraising events for dyslexia legislation and continuing education opportunities in parts of the country where ALTA members may be few in number but are growing. Increasingly states are passing dyslexia legislation resulting in parents and school districts in need of highly trained, skilled, and ALTA certified practitioners and therapists. There is growing national awareness of ALTA and our 30 years of experience as a certifying organization with consistent, high standards. ALTA Chapters serve to promote excellence in the field of reading and writing instruction.

ALTA Chapters come under the national non-profit status umbrella and do not need to open their own local bank accounts. The ALTA national office handles online event registration payments and sends expense reimbursements back to the Chapters. The ALTA Board of Directors voted in fall of 2016 to credit 10% of membership dues to the local Chapters beginning in April 2017. The ALTA national office handles event funds, simplifying the process for Chapters to host local events. We plan to purchase tabletop ALTA banners for each Chapter in next year's budget.



Seven ALTA Chapters now exist in seven states, and ALTA Texas has four regional groups. The following are examples of various Chapter activities.

The **ALTA Rocky Mountain Chapter** features a professional development book club, informational sessions on dyslexia in local public libraries, and quarterly informal meet and greets for new and potential members. The ALTA RMC website serves to inform parents of (suspected) dyslexics the academic steps to support their children. ALTA RMC is exploring the possibility of hosting a future ALTA conference.

The **ALTA Ohio Chapter** hosted a well-received "Hands-On Multisensory Math" workshop for 5 CEUs in February at the Columbus branch of Ashland University. Members in attendance were surveyed about ideas for future workshop topics.

The **ALTA New York Chapter** members meet four times per year in the city for book discussions, presentations, and professional support.

The **ALTA Virginia Chapter** was formed last year and has published two newsletters for members. Their first annual renewal meeting "Understanding Diagnostic Psycho-educational Testing" is in March.

The **ALTA Arkansas Chapter** had a successful seminar for members recently and new Chapter officers were elected.

The **ALTA Mississippi Chapter** held a regional conference in February with over 100 in attendance. A state representative gave updates on the MS Dyslexia Law. Three school districts presented their current models of services for children with dyslexia. Demonstration lessons were presented from the Association and Alphabetic Phonics methods.

The **ALTA Texas Chapter** consists of Four Regional Chapters. ALTA Texas hosted a conference in January, and in February, sponsored Dyslexia Awareness Day at the Austin Statehouse with over 75 legislators and staff members attending as a proclamation was read in the chamber. The North Texas ALTA group will meet March 2, 2017 at Shelton School and 120 people have registered. The East Texas group will meet in April at St. John's Episcopal Church.

The ALTA website outlines the [steps necessary to form an ALTA Chapter](#). Please [contact the ALTA office](#) for the Chapter Chairperson's contact information to discuss starting a local ALTA Chapter in your area.

ALTA Member Heads Learning Services at Children's Hospital Colorado



Colorado Literacy & Learning Center LISCP graduate Michelle Qazi, M.Ed., CALT, is leading the way for Learning Specialists at Children's Hospital Colorado. As Associate Clinical Manager of Learning Services, Qazi oversees both inpatient and outpatient learning services. To learn more about the important work Qazi is doing, please read our interview with her.

What do you do in your role as Associate Clinical Manager of Learning Services?

Learning is a department that covers both inpatient and outpatient children. With inpatients, I manage two learning specialists who provide bedside school for patients that are hospitalized longer than two weeks. We partner with the schools to maximize learning retention while they are in the hospital and create a smooth transition back to their school or homebound tutoring once they are discharged. Also, there is one learning specialist who works with our rehab team and patients who experience traumatic brain injury and/or spinal cord injury. In addition, we have an educational specialist in the Sie Center for Down Syndrome.

On the outpatient side, Learning Services provides diagnostic evaluations for children and adolescents suspected of having a learning disability. We also provide research-based therapy for children and adolescents diagnosed with dyslexia. Recently, our Learning Specialists began providing Parent Education Nights on dyslexia. During these sessions, parents come together to learn all they can about dyslexia and how they can best advocate for their children, as well as share their experiences and support each other.

How many Learning Specialists do you oversee, and where are they located?

We have 12 Outpatient Learning Specialists providing services at the Anschutz Medical Campus, as well as in Broomfield, Parker, Highlands Ranch, and Pueblo. I'm excited to announce that we now are adding Learning Services in Colorado Springs.

What are your goals for CH's Learning Specialists?

In order to make sure the learning specialists have all the knowledge needed to provide the most current research-based therapy, students can attend professional development opportunities at training events and conferences as part of their credit hours. My primary role is to develop, coach, and evaluate team members as well as mentoring them in creating/evaluating projects focused on improving clinical practice.

What is your favorite part of this position?

One of my favorite aspects of this position is rounding with patients, families, and team members to promote positive patient family experience and quality patient care. Another great aspect of this job is serving as the primary clinical liaison with families and referring providers, assisting with triaging and scheduling of new patient referrals, and providing expertise in clinical consultation as needed to meet the needs of the community.

How long have you been at Children's, and what occupation did you have before this job?

I've been at Children's for one and a half years now. Before that, I was a teacher and literacy specialist in public school for fourteen years. I taught K-6th grades during my tenure as a teacher. As a literacy specialist, I worked mainly with undiagnosed dyslexic students to help them understand the structure of the English language. I was also able to coach and mentor teachers and the paraprofessionals I oversaw.

What prepared you to take this job?

By far, the training I received from the Literacy Intervention Specialist Certification Program was invaluable! I remember sitting in my 3rd grade classroom my first year teaching this age group and thinking "I am not equipped to teach these kids how to read and write. I better figure out why they are not reading and how I can help them." My students led me down a path of learning that changed my whole outlook on teaching.

In your opinion, what are the biggest needs of the clients you see at CH?

They are the same needs I saw in the classroom. Our patients and families need to learn about the structure of the English language as well as how to advocate for themselves. They need to know that accommodations are available to them. These accommodations level the playing field and help them access the text necessary to learn. Most importantly they need to know that they are incredibly intelligent and valuable.

What are your goals for the future?

I hope to continue to grow the learning program in order to reach and help as many children as possible to read and spell accurately. I also hope to partner with undergraduate programs to develop an internship program so we can not only give educators the tools they need to teach kids, but also to give patients access to our services in a timely manner. Mainly, I dream of being part of a world where all children learn to read and spell without frustration.

Michelle Qazi, M.Ed., CALT, is the Associate Clinical Manager of Learning Services at Children's Hospital Colorado. She received her master's degree from Arizona State University. She is a Certified Academic Language Therapist and is currently training with the Colorado Literacy & Learning Center to become a Qualified Instructor. Qazi holds Colorado licensure in Education (K-8). Michelle currently serves as the Exhibit's Chair for the national Academic Language Therapy Association, is President-Elect of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Academic Language Therapy Association, and serves on the Board of Directors of the Rocky Mountain Branch of the International Dyslexia Association. Helping all students to read and spell is her passion. Most importantly, she is the mom of two beautiful adult daughters, Jennah and Saleema, who are the light of her life. Michelle and her husband, Jameel, live in Denver, Colorado.

Brownsville ISD Conference

Article for ALTA Newsletter Spring 2017 Through the work of Virginia Gonzales, Co-chair of the South region of the Texas ALTA Chapter, Elsa Cardines-Hagen, ATLA was a sponsor of 2017 BISD Literacy Day presented by Brownsville Independent School District on March 3rd and 4th in Brownsville. The conference began on Friday with a reception followed by a welcome to all attendees and the keynote address by professor and author David Bowles. From a diverse family with Latino roots, he discussed how growing up Latino in South Texas influenced his perspective and his writing. He held the audience's attention with wonderful memories from his childhood that found their way into his writing. Dr. Elaine Cheesman, Ph.D. was the opening speaker on Saturday morning. She gave the attendees an introduction to some of the many educational APPs she has found valuable for teaching language arts. The rest of the day was full of sessions ranging from many topics related to English Language Learners to comprehension, testing, comprehension, and mathematical literacy. The schedule allowed teachers to attend many if not all the sessions they were interested in. The day ended with a Southern Region Texas ALTA Chapter meeting. Alice Womack Marsel, co-chair of the Southern Region joined Virginia to share news about dyslexia related bills in the Texas Legislature and to help answer questions from over 20 CALTs from the Brownsville area who attended.

CALPs Receive COCLD Recognition and Scholarships

Sarah Scroggins and Kelly Obeginski were selected by the Colorado Council of Learning Disabilities to receive top honors for their work with children with learning disabilities. The two teachers, currently completing their

second year in CLLC's Literacy Intervention Specialist Certification Program (LISCP) offered in a partnership with Colorado College, were presented award checks for \$1,800 as they were recognized at CCLD's Math on the "Planes" Conference on February 25, 2017.

The two \$1,800.00 scholarships were open to state residents currently enrolled in teacher-preparation programs in an accredited college or university in Colorado who are working towards a degree or certification as a literacy interventionist. Applicants must have completed at least one-half of their program and have an overall cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher and a cumulative GPA of 3.2 or higher in their literacy coursework.

Scroggins and Obeginski also received a one-year membership to the Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD) and the Colorado Council for Learning Disabilities (CCLD). Award checks will be presented at the Math on the "Planes" Conference on February 25, 2017. Recipients will be featured in an article in the CCLD newsletter and will receive national recognition in LD Forum. The LD Forum is the newsletter for the Council for Learning Disabilities.

Read more to learn about the outstanding work Scroggins and Obeginski.

Congratulations, ladies!



Sara Scroggins — 2017 CCLD Literacy Interventionist Scholarship Recipient

Sara Scroggins currently attends the Literacy Intervention Specialist Certification Program at Colorado College and is working towards a Master's Degree as a Literacy Interventionist. When asked to describe why she decided to pursue this Reading Interventionist degree, Sara states, "My passion is for students to be successful and ensure they are able to learn in their own individual way. As a Literacy Interventionist, I can continue to influence the lives of students by believing in them, building a relationship, and provide them the tools they need to be successful in life."

Rebecca Thompson, the assistant principal of Odyssey Elementary School, remarks, "Despite the fact that Sara has taught for many years, she continues to strive to increase her knowledge and improve her practices. Her enthusiasm doesn't end with the learning of new programs, as can often be the case in education. She is very flexible and molds her instruction to what the students need based on her knowledge. She uses what she learns and reflects on the effects of its use."

Karen Bixler, a special education teacher at Odyssey Elementary School, says of Sara, "Sara demonstrates patience and understanding and that quality is a must in the teaching profession. The relationships she has built

with her students demonstrate that she truly cares for their wellbeing and achievement, both socially and academically. Sara's willingness to be open-minded and flexible helped create highly successful inclusive practices for students with special needs."

The CCLD Board is honored to recognize Sara as a 2017 scholarship recipient.



Kelly Oberginski — 2017 Literacy Interventionist Scholarship Recipient

Kelly Oberginski is currently pursuing her Master of Arts as a Literacy Interventionist in the Literacy Intervention Specialist Certification Program at Colorado College. Kelly reflects about her passion for working with students with disabilities in her autobiography.

"This journey has developed a sense for what individual students need on an almost subconscious level. The skills, knowledge, and motivation required to provide effective instruction for students with learning disabilities begins with the strong foundation any teacher needs to be effective in educating students. This includes a desire and willingness to continue learning. Each student presents unique needs and challenges. Teachers are continually learning if they truly desire to provide students with the educational foundation they need to be successful in life given their unique combination of abilities and skills."

Erin Craig-Fischi, a colleague at Ranch Creek Elementary School, remarks, "Kelly's belief that all students can learn to read proficiently, combined with her strong command of differentiated teaching strategies, makes her an incredible interventionist. Kelly's collaboration with classroom teachers ensures we provide each student the most customized, appropriate fit to help them reach their reading goals."

Susan Paulson, principal at Ranch Creek Elementary School states, "Kelly is a distinguished teacher in many different ways. Through her outstanding performance as a second grade teacher and as a literacy coordinator and reading interventionist, Kelly has conscientiously and effectively served the needs of hundreds of students struggling to read, including those with disabilities. She is a top-notch diagnostician, she provides high levels of motivation during instruction, and she is extraordinarily skilled in guiding students to meet high expectations for learning and behavior."

The CCLD Board is honored to recognize Kelly as a 2017 scholarship recipient.

The ALTA Virginia Chapter

The ALTA Virginia Chapter had a productive meeting in October 2016, at which time members showcased and shared on a wide variety of favorite *decodable text* resources. Chapter members had the opportunity to look closely at these "most useful" materials, learn when and how they are most effectively used, and how to locate the suppliers.

The end of January 2017, four CALTs met with legislators and delivered a handout *CALT: Who We Are and What We Do* at the Virginia State Capitol in conjunction with Decoding Dyslexia's legislative efforts.

Our next meeting is scheduled March 25th, 2017, at which a Clinical Psychologist from a group practice will be presenting "*Understanding Psycho-educational Diagnostic Reports*" framed for the professional Academic Language Therapist; 3 ALTA CEUs. This event will enable us to strengthen the Psychologist's understanding of the role of Academic Language Therapists in quality client outcomes, and nurture reciprocal referral relationships between Psychologists and Therapists. The presentation is exclusively for ALTA members, renewing or joining.

The Virginia Chapter dues-paying members at this time include 12 CALT and 5 CALT-track Affiliate Trainees (17 of 22 ALTA members). The Virginia Chapter maintains both a public website and public Facebook page to promote the role and services of Virginia's ALTA members, and a private Facebook group page for members to share questions, tips, resources, referrals, etc. Joining members receive an ALTA logo lapel pin.

Several members plan on attending the national ALTA conference in May.



Dyslexia Is Not a Dirty Word



["Dyslexia is not a Dirty Word" YouTube Channel](#) is not your typical source of information about dyslexia. Jennifer LaHaie began this channel with a particular premise. "I began this YouTube channel hoping to convey reliable, accurate information in a more relaxed and maybe a little entertaining format. I have just begun and I'd love to hear what people think. I'm also looking for more ideas and/or topics that people are interested in." Jennifer's goal is to make this information relevant to parents, teachers, administrators, and anyone else that is impacted by dyslexia.