



## Academy Conference Keynote Speaker: Barbara Wilson



*Keynote Speaker, Barbara Wilson*

Barbara Wilson was the keynote speaker at the Academy conference in Winston-Salem on March 15, 2014. She spoke about integrating Orton-Gillingham with common core standards and how much the two align with one another. She gave specific examples about how phonics instruction and phonemic awareness need to be critical components of all student instruction. She also provided statistics on fluency, prosody,

and the ability to analyze text. She is the president and co-founder of Wilson Language Training Corporation which provides professional learning for educators in school districts throughout the country. Barbara is also a Founding Fellow of the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators. She has championed the instructional needs for individuals with dyslexia for over 30 years since her work at Massachusetts General Hospital Reading Disabilities Clinic. Her presentation was well received, and teachers left knowing that their instruction was providing students with the skills they need to succeed.

## The Ruth Harris Travel Award



*Laurie Leason*

The purpose of the Award is to help an Academy member, who would otherwise be financially unable to attend, to continue to develop his/her skills as an Orton-Gillingham practitioner by attending an Academy conference. The Award is to assist the qualifying Academy member in defraying costs associate with travel, accommodations, and conference fees.

This year's recipients are:  
Laurie Leason and Marcia Ramsey.



*Marcia Ramsey*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### 2014 Fellow Webinar

October 23, 2014  
5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. EST  
Location: Online  
Check website for updates

### 2014 IDA Conference

San Diego, CA • Nov. 12-15, 2014  
Academy Booth: 227  
Academy Reception:  
November 13, 2014 • 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.  
Hilton San Diego Bay Front

### 2015 Annual Academy Conference

Celebrating 20 years!  
April 24-25, 2015  
White Plains, New York



**Academy of  
Orton-Gillingham  
Practitioners  
and Educators**

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The purpose of the Academy is to establish and maintain the highest professional standards for practice of the Orton-Gillingham Approach. We certify practitioners and accredit practitioner training programs and student instructional programs that use the Approach to address the language-based learning difficulties associated with dyslexia. The Academy is also active in professional development and public awareness.

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# President's Message



In my first letter to you as president of the Academy I would like to acknowledge the passion and dedication of all our members, whether Fellows engaged in training teachers, or those on the front lines working with children in schools, clinics, or private tutoring. This was so evident at our spring conference in Winston-Salem, NC where we were inspired by the speakers and the enthusiastic performance by the students of Triad Academy at Summit School. Sometimes we become a little worn down by our busy lives and the responsibilities of juggling home, family, and work. Coming together at a conference lets us connect with colleagues and friends and rekindle the passion we have for teaching children with dyslexia and the Orton-Gillingham Approach. There is always something to learn, something that we can directly apply to help our students.

On the day after our conference, I observed a teacher working towards her Associate level. As she worked with her student, I saw she was incorporating the concepts for vocabulary instruction she had learned at a conference session and was excited to see her student's engagement. What an endorsement of our conference program to see teachers leave with ideas that can be immediately applied to help students.

Of particular interest were the presentations about Classroom Educator training in public schools. Fellows reported on the enthusiasm of the teachers and the success of students in these programs. The Academy now has 60 Classroom Educator Members. Although some teach Special Education classes, many are teaching in K-2 regular education classes. If only 50 Classroom Educators are teaching in classrooms, approximately 1000 students are being taught using Orton-Gillingham every year. The grant received by the Academy for teacher training described in the Fall 2013 newsletter significantly added to this training option.

No conference can take place without an enormous amount of planning and organization. This falls on the shoulders of the conference committee and those of the host location. Our thanks go to all of those involved, but especially to Triad Academy at Summit School and the Summit School, who were such gracious hosts and did an exceptional job to make the conference run smoothly.

Unfortunately not everyone can attend conferences as teachers' resources or professional development funding is often limited. In response to the suggestions of our members, the Academy is planning on-line options that will enable members to access Academy presentations through webinars and through video streaming on our website, starting with our first Fellows webinar in the fall of 2014. Improving communication, transparency of the certification process, and mentoring teachers to become Certified and Fellow members are areas that we continue to work toward.

Finally, I know that I echo all of you when I express thanks to Rosalie for her commitment and leadership over the last six years. Our organization continues to evolve and grow while remaining committed to our mission, and to the integrity of our standards for training in the Orton-Gillingham Approach.

Sincerely,

Sheila Costello  
President, Board of Trustees



# Orton-Gillingham in the Public Schools

By Christina Kirkwood, M.Ed, Associate/AOGPE

My journey I took to teaching Orton-Gillingham in a self-contained classroom for students with a language based learning disability started by accident. When I couldn't find a teacher training program based on Orton-Gillingham principles, a colleague passed along a mailing from the Commonwealth Learning Center. I completed the Associate level course and practicum, which forever changed my professional life. Since the start of my training in summer 2006, I have been on a continuous journey to deepen my knowledge of the Orton-Gillingham Approach. Currently, I have completed the coursework and practicum for the Certified level and plan on applying to the Academy in the summer.



lesson format five times per week. When the students are not in a tutoring session, they practice skills taught during their tutoring session. This practice of skills is mostly independent using a checklist of activities to complete throughout the week. Additionally, the students also use technology (iPad, Chromebooks, or the classroom computer) Lexia, Type to Learn, and Book Share to engage in literacy independently.

Instruction in the area of writing is direct and explicit. This is achieved by having the students first participate in a shared writing activity, then guided practice of the skill being taught, and finally independent practice of the skill. The skills are chosen by first analyzing the student's independent writing level. The type of writing that my students learn is guided by the district's writing units of study.

I continuously use manipulatives to make abstract math concepts concrete. There is also frequent review of previously learned materials.

I have also scheduled twenty minutes a day for read aloud. The read aloud time is used to expose my students to grade level text as well as grade level vocabulary and content. When selecting a text, I focus on a book with complexity that my students would not otherwise be able to access when reading on their own. I use the read aloud text to instruct my students directly in comprehension of complex materials.

Two years ago, Cambridge, MA, Public Schools budgeted funds to open a substantially separate classroom with the sole focus of educating grade 2-4 students with language-based learning disabilities. I applied for the position, and happily, I was selected. I came to this position with nine years of experience, four of which were in Cambridge, MA as a Special Education teacher and Orton-Gillingham tutor. As I developed my program, I had to think deeply about how I was going to differentiate my instruction from the general education classes and other substantially separate classrooms. The best approach that I saw was to consistently apply the overarching principles of Orton-Gillingham to every subject: teaching from concrete to abstract, being direct and explicit in instruction of all concept materials, constantly spiraling back, over learning of key concepts, and always incorporating multi-sensory instruction. Students come to my room after their school based special education team has determined that the traditional inclusion model is not working for them.



Science and Social Studies are taught within the general education setting. My students enter my room with a great love for those content subject areas. Within my classroom, I pre-teach and reteach the key concepts of the daily lesson so that my students have the knowledge base to be successful in the classroom. "Pushing in" for those subjects allows my students to be with their grade-level peers while showcasing their academic areas of strength.

Carrying Orton-Gillingham throughout the day with Reading and Spelling, students receive at least 40-50 minutes of 1:1 or 2:1 instruction in a traditional O-G

## In Remembrance



On December 14, 2013, as she celebrated her 75th birthday, Jean (Mitchell) Foss passed away, and the Academy, her family, and friends lost a truly exceptional friend and colleague. Born in Providence, Rhode Island, Jean graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of Rhode Island, and later received her M.Ed. from the University of Vermont. Jean is fondly remembered for her love of people, her warm and generous spirit, and her dedication to standards of excellence.

In 1968, Jean joined Pine Ridge School in Williston, Vermont as an Orton-Gillingham tutor. While excited at the prospect, she was also terrified that she would not be able to provide her students with what they needed. From then on she was hooked and became devoted to trying to determine exactly what each learner needed in order to be successful. Jean dedicated her life to helping these learners recognize that while they might have academic difficulties, the difficulties did not define who they were. Every day her passion was evident in her classroom. Eventually, her primary interest and research became that of nonverbal learning disabilities. After serving in a variety of leadership roles at the school, Jean was appointed Director of Clinical Teaching and Research. Thomas Needham, Head of School, quipped that Jean was now “DOCTR.” At her memorial service in December, a former Pine Ridge trustee lamented that Jean should have been Head of the school.

Among Jean’s many talents and passions, three stand out: her deep devotion to her family, her strong dedication to ensuring that teachers were trained to the highest standards, and her generous spirit and zest for life. Clearly, her top priority was her enormous love and pride in the many accomplishments of her family: her son David, her daughter Wendy Foss Canning, her granddaughter, Shannon Sweeney, and her son-in-law, Josh Canning. A particular source of pleasure and pride was Wendy’s dedication to following in her mother’s footsteps. Both Fellows of the Academy, Jean and Wendy were colleagues for 30 years.

Deeply committed to establishing strong professional collaborations among those who shared her passions, Jean was a leader. Actively involved in the International Dyslexia Association, she served the organization in many capacities at both the national and regional levels. Jean served on many national committees, was a frequent presenter at IDA National Conferences, and was president of the then New England Branch of the then Orton Dyslexia Society. Most notable was Jean’s invaluable leadership as a Founding Fellow of the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators. As Academy organizing committees worked to create the original standards and practice, Jean’s wisdom, judgment, and gift for language became increasingly apparent. Invariably, she would peer over the top of her glasses and craft the perfect wording. Her use of humor to diffuse tense moments was legendary. As first vice president, as chair of the Accreditation Committee, and as an active member of the Standards and IOC committees, Jean’s dedication and contributions were enormous. Colleagues respected that she did not make decisions rashly without thought. After Pine Ridge School closed, Jean collaborated with colleagues at the Stern Center to provide Orton-Gillingham training to many public school teachers throughout the state of Vermont. Jean had a love of people and an infectious chuckle that she shared freely. As Rosalie Davis wrote: “Jean was an extraordinary lady with a most generous spirit.”

## Ron Yoshimoto Award Recipients



“As a public school teacher, I am so happy to have this opportunity. Without Ron Yoshimoto’s help, I would not have been able to be exposed to such wonderful resources and knowledge.” -Kristen Kron

“Ron’s generosity towards public school educators provides the opportunity for us to continue to learn about the Orton-Gillingham Approach so we can continue to better improve our O-G instruction in the public school setting. We’re honored to speak at the AOGPE conference.” -Leslie Kesson

Left to right: Leslie Kesson, Ron Yoshimoto, Kristen Kron

# Southwestern Connecticut Update

by Jodie Rucci, Associate/AOGPE

People specifically move to Southwestern Connecticut to send their children to the excellent public schools. One of the reasons people prefer those schools is because teachers are being trained and mentored using the Orton-Gillingham Approach. Fellow, Andrea Silvia, is training and working with teachers in Darien, Wilton, New Canaan, and Weston. The training is offered to teachers on three different levels. General education teachers enroll in the Classroom Educator level of training and use their new skills in small group instruction. Literacy Specialists and Special Education teachers enroll in the Associate and/or Certified levels of training to use the Orton-Gillingham Approach individually and in small groups. Because of various teacher training options, these districts are able to individualize language arts instruction to meet the needs of students at Tiers I, II, and III. Below are a few quotes from teachers involved in the process.

## **Fran Williams, A/AOGPE, Literacy Specialist Greenwich, CT**

I've incorporated the Orton-Gillingham Approach in a variety of settings from Kindergarten through fifth grade. Even though I have 25-years of teaching experience, the quality of this professional development has positively impacted my students' reading and writing skills.

## **Tara Santos, Special Education Teacher, Darien CT**

Orton-Gillingham is flexible which allows me to guide the instruction as I assess a student's needs. Because O-G ranges in skills from phonemic card drills all the way up to expository writing lessons, most language-based learning issues can be addressed right here with me.

## **Meghan Cullen, Kindergarten Teacher, Greenwich, CT**

I was thrilled to see how our Kindergarten word study blossomed when I added the Orton-Gillingham techniques to my instruction.

## **Deborah Goodwin, A/AOGPE, Literacy Coach Greenwich, CT**

I signed up for Associate level training in 2010 even though I had been previously trained in a myriad of other phonics programs spanning the past 27 years. The practicum allowed me to reflect on my teaching techniques in a unique way and solidified my understanding and enhanced my teaching methods.

## **Lisa Florio, CE/AOGPE, Special Education Teacher and Cheryl Watson, CE/AOGPE, Speech/Language Pathologist Wilton, CT**

The practicum and the supportive relationship with my Fellow is the most valuable part of the training. We are finishing the Associate level instruction this year and plan to apply in July.

## **Frank Gasparino, 2nd Grade Teacher, Greenwich, CT**

This year I am incorporating Orton-Gillingham techniques into our second grade word-study program so every one of my students is benefitting from solid, multi-sensory phonics instruction.

## **Kathy Coon, Program Coordinator of Special Education, Greenwich Public Schools, Greenwich, CT**

We are fortunate to be able to continually offer high quality Academy certification training at all levels. As Andrea is frequently on-site, she understands the needs of our district and is always available for consultation.

## The Great Divide

Lyrics & Music by David Stoeri, 2014  
Triad Academy at Summit School

Chorus:

Oh gee, won't you help me  
Bouncin' all over in disharmony  
Scoopin', tappin', grabbin', 'cross the Great Divide  
If I blend it just right, I'll reach the other Side

The octopus and I are on the edge  
Eat an apple, scratch an itch I will not hedge  
Not sure where I'm going, take a down-up tour  
Charting unknown waters, yea that's for zure!

Caught the code, decode, head code I guess  
Echo this, not that, oh my what a mess  
Dropping, keeping, changing looking for the cure  
Charting unknown waters, yea that's for zure!

One sound, six spellings all Latin to me  
Rooting for vowel teams, count back 3  
Bump it up, keep it simple, such an allure

Charting unknown waters, yea that's for zure!  
Trace, copy, cover, hookin' to the known  
R&R, 3x5s, see how you have grown  
Scope, sequence, anchor, drill, it's all so pure  
Charting unknown waters, yea that's for zure!  
Scoop 'Er Up  
Tappin' Down  
The Great Divide  
is going 'round  
Rabbito  
Camelabra  
Tigeronda  
Pantheresque  
Ostrichovitch  
Turtlelupe  
Li, Li,  
Lioniscious  
Yum Yum  
In the Clover  
Rev it up and Lock it Down  
Way down  
In a fix  
Fore and Aft

In the dirt Anglo Saxon  
Language e volving  
Yoyo--floss  
Schwa me baby  
Prefix suffix  
Know it, show it, move it, groove it  
Grapheme phoneme morpheme moonbeam  
Sequence, alpha chippys  
Syllables fall off your lippys  
I am  
the Book of Knowledge  
SOS trace the base  
Sandy ricey rainbow spicey  
L-m-n-o-p  
Try to catch-the bee-dee  
CEASE-less, SPAN-ish, GREEK fest, French mist  
Ease of pronunciation  
Star-stare I care  
Pop-pope I hope  
Thanks O-G you set me free (2x)  
Freeeee DOM (3X)  
YEA!

## 2013 Gifts

Doreen Agena  
Diane Alting  
Rosanne Aman  
Amy Bailin  
Cynthia Boller  
Christina Bruno  
Josephine Calamari  
Chere Campbell  
Jane Comfort Brown  
Sheila Costello  
Rosalie Davis  
Patricia DeOrio  
Janet Derick  
Shelley Einhorn  
Stephanie Gordon  
Doreen Grady  
Dana Harbert  
Anne Hazelton  
Cathryn Holinger  
John & Kay Howell  
Patricia Janas  
Elizabeth Kitson  
Marcia Mann  
Martha Matthews  
Beth McClure  
Kerri McDonald-Schaub  
Sandra Minichetti  
Karin Mulvey  
Janie Munsterman  
Jane Newbury  
Dawn Nieman  
Gwen Norris  
Jean Osman  
Pamela Potter-Osit  
Jennifer Pultz  
Mercedes Quevedo  
Marcia Ramsey  
Susan Rapp  
Sylvia Richardson  
Elizabeth Rickey  
Arlene Sondag  
Eileen Tresansky  
Kathryn Trudell  
Carolyn Webb  
Dorothy Whitehead  
Carol Woods

### In Memory of Alice Garside

Mary Briggs  
Sheila Clark-Edmands  
Sharon Marsh

### In Memory of Jean Foss

Angela Wilkins

### In Memory of Dr. Lucia Karnes

Evelyn Rickert

## Book Review of Isabel Beck's: *Bringing Words to Life, Robust Vocabulary Instruction (2nd edition)*

by Dawn Nieman, Fellow/AOGPE

Isabel Beck wrote the first edition to this book in 2002. She just released an updated edition in March 2013. If you have read the first edition, the second edition is even better. The updated version includes new statistics and incorporates elements of instruction required in the Common Core Standards. It also includes activities for elementary, middle, and high school students using examples from various books on different levels.

The first edition included a variety of activities to help students learn vocabulary. Many of the activities were interactive and allowed the students to use the target words. The new edition includes even more activities.

There are a variety of interesting facts and results of studies Beck quoted in her new book. Some interesting things to consider are, "First graders from higher Social Economic Status groups knew about twice as many words as lower SES children." (Graves, Brunetti, and Slater, 1987). Many of us are probably familiar with this gap from reading initiatives like Head Start, which is designed to help low income children start school with exposure to phonological and phonemic awareness activities and high quality books. This gap still exists even today.

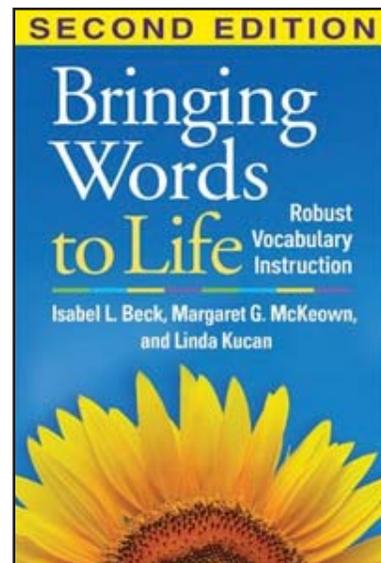
The results of a study completed by Cunningham and Stanovich in 1997 state, "First-grade vocabulary predicted students' reading achievement in their junior year in high school." Beck's book goes on to explain that little has been done to focus on improving children's vocabulary.

One of the results from recent research states, "A robust approach to vocabulary involves directly explaining the meanings of words along with thought-provoking, playful, and interactive follow-up. The finding of studies that examined robust instruction has shown it to be effective, not only for learning the meanings of words but also for affecting reading comprehension" (Beck et al., 1982; McKeown, Beck, Osmanson, & Perfetti, 1983; McKeown, Beck, Omsanson, & Pople, 1985). This is important since the main reason we want children to learn to read is to be able to comprehend the text.

As many of you already know, the teaching of Latin prefixes, roots, and suffixes enhances and improves a student's oral vocabulary. The results of a study by Snow and Kim in 2007, states, "The study of roots could promote students' semantic networks between words related in meaning, and strengthen students' knowledge for each word that shares a root." It would be beneficial to millions of school-aged children if schools started teaching the morphology and etymology of words.

Near the end of the book, Beck states, "The vocabulary gains for words that received more instruction were twice as large. Twice the instruction for twice the gain may seem a rather obvious result, but many people had suggested that there would be a ceiling." When we think about the time, effort, and energy we invest into each of our students and trainees, we should not be all that surprised by the fact that twice the effort makes for twice the improvement.

Vocabulary instruction in many of our schools should be changed to incorporate this research. This way of teaching would be beneficial for all students, and it is especially crucial for dyslexic students. I highly recommend this book.



# The Orton-Gillingham Approach in the Oceanside Central School District

by Maryann Chatfield, Fellow/AOGPE

“Orton-Gillingham” is fast becoming a household word; it is truly sweeping the nation. 1 in 5 special education students is dyslexic; that translates to 20% of our population. Although the Orton-Gillingham Approach was designed for dyslexic individuals, it is highly effective for the general population as well. To that end, the Orton-Gillingham Approach is being used in public schools across the country.

A town noted for exacting academic standards, Greenwich, CT uses the Orton-Gillingham Approach district-wide (K-12) with much success in its public schools.

Last year, Dr. Jill DeRosa, Assistant Superintendent of Oceanside Central School District, NY, felt strongly about the implementation of the Orton-Gillingham Approach in Oceanside even though they already had several teachers trained and using Wilson and/or Reading Recovery.

In this district, Dawn Nieman and I trained a group of teachers last August. As a result of that training, 17 educators began working one-on-one with students there. This is often unheard of in the public school arena. As the year progressed, three more students were approved to be tutored one-on-one.

Maggie, a reading teacher has this to say about the training, “Thank you so very much for this wonderful opportunity to learn the Orton-Gillingham Approach and become a beacon of hope for those students who struggle with reading and writing.”

“After using the Orton-Gillingham Approach for only twenty-one lessons, my student Jack has become a different reader. He is more confident, and he actually enjoys reading. He reads with expression and has become more fluent. He “attacks” an unknown word with determination. He self-corrects. He utilizes strategies that were taught to him during his Orton-Gillingham lessons. In relation to Jack’s reading comprehension skills, he has shown a boost in his ability to understand text. He goes beyond the literal understanding of fiction stories. He makes good connections while he reads. He continues to improve in his ability to infer and predict within a story. He is eager to continue reading the text during our sessions. He continues to apply Orton-Gillingham strategies to his spelling. He uses finger spelling to assist him in spelling difficult words. He has improved in his ability to spell unknown words, and he is proud of his increased spelling abilities. Working with Jack on a one-on-one basis has allowed him to focus on some of his difficulties. Together we are able to pinpoint areas that need to be further developed. He has been

able to grow in his decoding and encoding abilities greatly. I look forward to seeing growth in the future with Jack.”

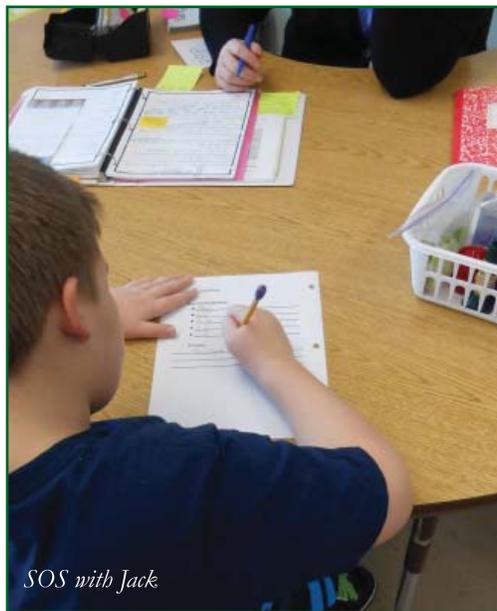
Allison, a reading teacher comments, “Even as a seasoned reading teacher, I benefitted enormously from the training I received in the

Orton-Gillingham Approach. The structured, systematic approach of introducing elements of language in a multisensory way has made a significant impact in my students’ reading ability. The positive encouragement and support that my mentors provided me has enabled me to grow as an educator, which in turn has made my practicum year a successful one. During a recent observation by my principal, she noted, “This lesson was an excellent example of when a student is provided with the right program, they can make huge improvements.” His homeroom teacher is thrilled because he is carrying this information over into his classroom. Orton-Gillingham is the right approach for this child, and I am confident with this continued support that he will continue to make great gains.

Oceanside teachers tell me there is no doubt that the Orton-Gillingham Approach is helping; they see improvement in their students’ decoding ability and reading scores. Many of them have commented that they are incorporating more and more O-G techniques into their repertoire.

Renee, a resource room educator, compares Orton-Gillingham to the Wilson Program. “When the Wilson Program and the O-G Approach are compared, I find that Orton-Gillingham is much more flexible. The Orton-Gillingham Approach is structured and sequential, but Wilson is sequential to the point where you cannot do the reading if you skipped over something. Because Wilson only uses controlled text, you can’t advance to something the children might be exposed to in other lessons because it really has to be done as prescribed in the manual. I use O-G in almost every group every day. My Sidewalks, a program required by the district, gives a limited amount of information each day and doesn’t provide a rule for my student. When I remind him of the Orton-Gillingham rule, he can apply it. The Orton-Gillingham Approach does it in a much more flexible way, and it’s easier to incorporate Orton-Gillingham strategies in the classroom to allow students to make connections.”

Emilie, a reading teacher said, “When I began working with Anthony, he was at a level twelve DRA. After using the Orton-Gillingham



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## Historical Perspectives

by Helaine Schupack, Founding Fellow, AOGPE

This article is dedicated to the two women who changed the direction of my life, both of whom died much too young: Mary Chaitillon, director of the Reading Disabilities Unit at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harriet Sheriden, Dean of the College at Brown University.

My first teaching job after getting my Master's degree in English was in an open-admission community college in a city that had been depressed since the textile mills went south in the 1940s. Many of the students were children of World War II GIs who couldn't afford to take advantage of the GI Bill; they had to go to work in the former mills, now individually owned sweatshops. Many were from immigrant families from Cape Verdi and the Azores Islands. Accumulating land was more important to their families than accumulating knowledge, but our students all had jobs and still managed to stay in school against the odds. There were also a handful of welfare mothers who lit up my life with their enthusiasm for learning and their zeal to get ahead and get off welfare. But my favorite student was Gil.

Gil, who came right from high school, would arrive for our 8:00 am English composition class looking like an unmade bed. His hair was unkempt. His shirt was buttoned incorrectly – a different way of incorrect each morning. And his fly was almost never zipped.

Papers flew out of his book bag higgledy-piggledy, and it always took a few extra minutes to find the right one for the right class. His spelling was the worst I had ever seen although his ideas were good. He wrote one paper about his aunt Theresa who was a nun in a leopard colony. He thought Oedipus was a good guy because he chased the finks from Thebes. When I spoke to his advisor in the Engineering department, he told me that Gil was the smartest engineering student he had ever had. Something was amiss, but I didn't know what.

I started tutoring Gil. When he read aloud to me, 50 % of what he read was incorrect, but the meaning okay: earth for world, soil for dirt, and function words were interchangeable. One day I had him copy the word g-i-r-l out of the dictionary. With his finger under the word, he copied g-r-i-l. I glared at him. "Would it help you to know I was dyslexic?" he asked. Oh, of course, that was the condition that caused you to write backwards, or was it upside down?

At the same time in my life, I met an interesting woman named Arline Gordon who told me she was an Orton-Gillingham teacher. She taught dyslexics in the Providence School system, but she had to do it on the sly because Rhode Island did not recognize dyslexia. It was a garbage word used for upper middle class children who

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## The Orton-Gillingham Approach in the Oceanside Central School District

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Approach for fifty-four lessons, he now reads on a level eighteen. He has made other tremendous gains in his confidence and his ability to encode and decode words. When we first started working, Anthony could only read basic cvc (consonant vowel consonant) words, and he had to slowly "sound spell" each word aloud. Now, he can read many multisyllabic words with long vowel patterns. He has internalized many of the phonics rules and spelling patterns as part of the O-G Approach and sounds out words internally. He is also reading chapter books and is thrilled! He has greatly benefitted from this approach, and I anticipate he will make further gains as the year continues."

Another resource room educator, Amy, reports, "Orton-Gillingham is helping my high school student in many ways. She has improved in the areas of decoding, fluency, spelling, and written expression. She is more willing to read aloud in class now. She pays attention to suffixes and prefixes now!"

Betsy, Director of the Oceanside Professional Development Center, said, "Adding Orton-Gillingham to the repertoire of strategies I use with ELL has transformed them. One of my older, male students who is a SIFE (Student with Interrupted Formal Education) has enjoyed remarkable success. He wrote his first paragraph at ten years old. His appetite is insatiable for books on his level. His entire attitude towards school has improved. I too feel as excited and hopeful as I did thirty years ago as a new teacher."

One principal of an elementary school in Oceanside who just observed an O-G lesson enthusiastically exclaimed, "I can't believe the improvement I see. I'm looking forward to the Orton-Gillingham

Approach being used district-wide next year".

More importantly, teachers report an increase in their students' self-esteem. Consider this from Ellyn, "Today Mrs. "R" came to observe my Orton lesson. She was thrilled beyond belief. It was a wonderful experience for me as well as her son. She wanted to learn the terminology used so she could carry through at home. She walked away with so much more. She told me "Orton" has changed not only the life of her son but the entire family. He loves to read now, and he is so proud of his accomplishments. Once again, I am so proud to be a part of this journey. The training has been beyond my expectations. My mentors are so dedicated to the process. The training provided twenty teachers with a chance to make such a difference not only in their selected student but in numerous other students. I personally have enhanced my ability to teach because of this. What a gift."

Sue had this to say: "I have been teaching for twenty-three years, and I have seen many approaches and programs come and go during my teaching career. I was a classroom teacher and reading teacher in NYC and am currently a reading teacher. I have come to see that the Orton-Gillingham multi-sensory Approach is a very useful component of the reading process for the dyslexic student. The supervised practicum was a great bonus as well. It ensured the authenticity and fidelity of the approach." She then added, "My principal really saw an improvement in Lucas and said it was a pleasure to observe! She mentioned she might be interested in having some more people trained."

Another principal from a nearby school observing a session described the success she saw in one word: "Amazing." It is simply that.

## Historical Perspectives

*continued from page 8*

couldn't learn to read. Arline encouraged me to go to Massachusetts General Hospital and talk to Mary Chatillon, head of the Reading Disabilities Unit. Mary gave me some books to read, encouraged me to apply for their next Orton-Gillingham class, and suggested I ask for a sabbatical from my job since I would need a year to learn O-G. I applied, was accepted, and got my sabbatical since I had been at the college almost ten years. Meanwhile I showed up at the college several times a week to tutor Gil and other students. I watched Gil change. He combed his hair. He buttoned his shirt correctly. He was never late for tutoring, and he zipped his fly. His spelling even improved. I was hooked on O-G.

I came back from my sabbatical ready to tackle the problems of illiteracy in the school only to be confronted by the Education department and the EOC – the department which offered tutoring services to the 40% of students who were admitted provisionally if they could bring up their skills to admissions level. The remediation consisted of a tachistoscope, a machine through which one viewed text with a little ball bouncing over the words.

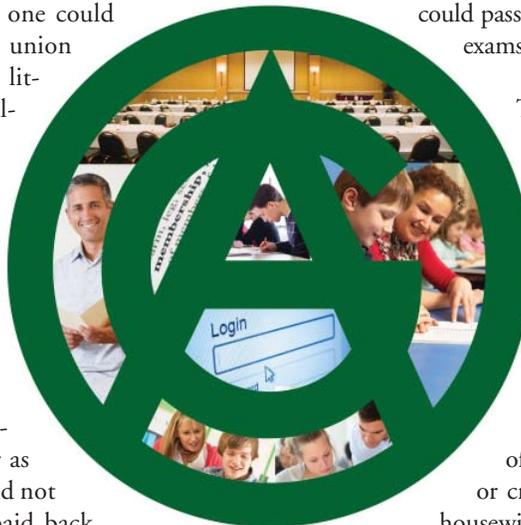
Progress was measured by how accurately one could read the words per minute. EOC filed a union grievance against me. I was hired to teach literature and writing, not reading and spelling. I was overstepping my bounds and infringing on their territory. Despite having the entire English department and a few deans behind me, I lost the grievance and was warned never to teach reading and spelling again. I went whingeing back to Mary Chatillon, who immediately offered me a job. The Reading Unit was expanding its adult population and needed someone experienced in teaching comprehension, writing, and grammar as well as basic decoding and spelling. They did not hold my academic credits against me. I paid back my sabbatical and started a decade of teaching at MGH, where I honed my skills in adapting O-G to everything I had to teach. I worked with patients ranging from basic illiteracy to graduate students at Harvard and MIT. I taught med students how to take their Board exams and high school students how to study for SATs.

When I began commuting to Boston in 1980, dyslexia was not recognized as a legitimate learning disability in Rhode Island. While at MGH and attending a New York Orton Society meeting, I met Harriet Sheridan, the Dean of the College at Brown University, and, ironically, a colleague of my husband. She mentioned that there was a dyslexia problem at Brown, and she would like to screen all students who were failing presumably with no cause. Thanks to a couple of courses in Tests and Measurements and the Wechsler Scales, which I squeezed into my commuting schedule, she hired me to test Brown students who were in academic difficulty. So in addition to commuting four hours on workdays, I spent my weekends testing Brown students. She gave me an official title, and when I finally decided the commute was killing me, she gave me an office on campus and promised me a steady stream of Brown and RI School of Design (a veritable treasure trove of dyslexics)

students. After Harriet died, another dean, Robert Shaw, stepped in as the Dean of Dyslexia

A conflict of interest did arise. During my years at MGH, my husband became Dean of the Graduate School at Brown. Whenever I recommended that a graduate student should be allowed the reasonable accommodation of taking a part-time class load at a commensurate reduction in tuition, he protested loudly. Federal regulations defined what a full-time student was, I presume, for financial aid purposes. Fortunately, his assistant deans, who were the ones who actually worked with the students, overruled him, stating that their job was to assist students in their studies, not to enforce federal regulations. Like most O-G teachers, I am grateful to all administrators who recognize and support our students.

I continued in private practice with an office abutting the Brown campus for years, working with all kinds of students, from those who didn't read at all, to high school and college students who needed help with papers and exams to medical students and doctors who could pass their practicums but tripped over their Board exams. It has been a rich and rewarding career.



The high point in my work, however, came because of a lawsuit I became entangled in. At MGH I routinely testified for the Reading Disabilities Unit for students who were suing schools in order to get their federally approved "reasonable accommodations." Once the hospital asked if I would testify in Rhode Island for a Rhode Island patient. I did and was left infuriated. After three days of grilling by the hearing officer and the town's lawyer, the hearing officer declared that I had no qualifications or credentials to diagnose or treat dyslexia: "Any housewife could attend a course somewhere and hang out a shingle proclaiming expertise." What he determined

was expertise was a degree in Education, especially with courses in Learning Disabilities. I was incensed, and the poor student was denied tutoring because the expert witness replacing me, with a Master's in Education, testified that dyslexia was a garbage word covering no specific educational problem. This, despite federal law 94-142 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973! When the Orton Society formed its Teacher Training Initiative and a group of those invited to its meetings decided to form an Orton-Gillingham Institute, in the mold of the Slingerland and Spalding Institutes, I signed on. Working with John and Kay Howell, Lucia Karnes, Angie Wilkins, Alice Garside, Margaret Rawson, Alice Koontz, Dorothy Whitehead, Roger Saunders, Amy Bailin, Marcia Mann, Jean Osman, Paula Rome and her daughter-in-law Sharon O'Connor Rome, Jean Foss, Arlene Sunday, and Diana King was not only intellectually stimulating but fun as we criss-crossed the country for six years to meet and hammer out the standards and by-laws of the Academy.

Today I still tutor but because of age, health, and sheer high-handedness (and because I no longer have to support an office), I choose my few students very carefully. And work pro bono.

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*The Academy congratulates the following new members*

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