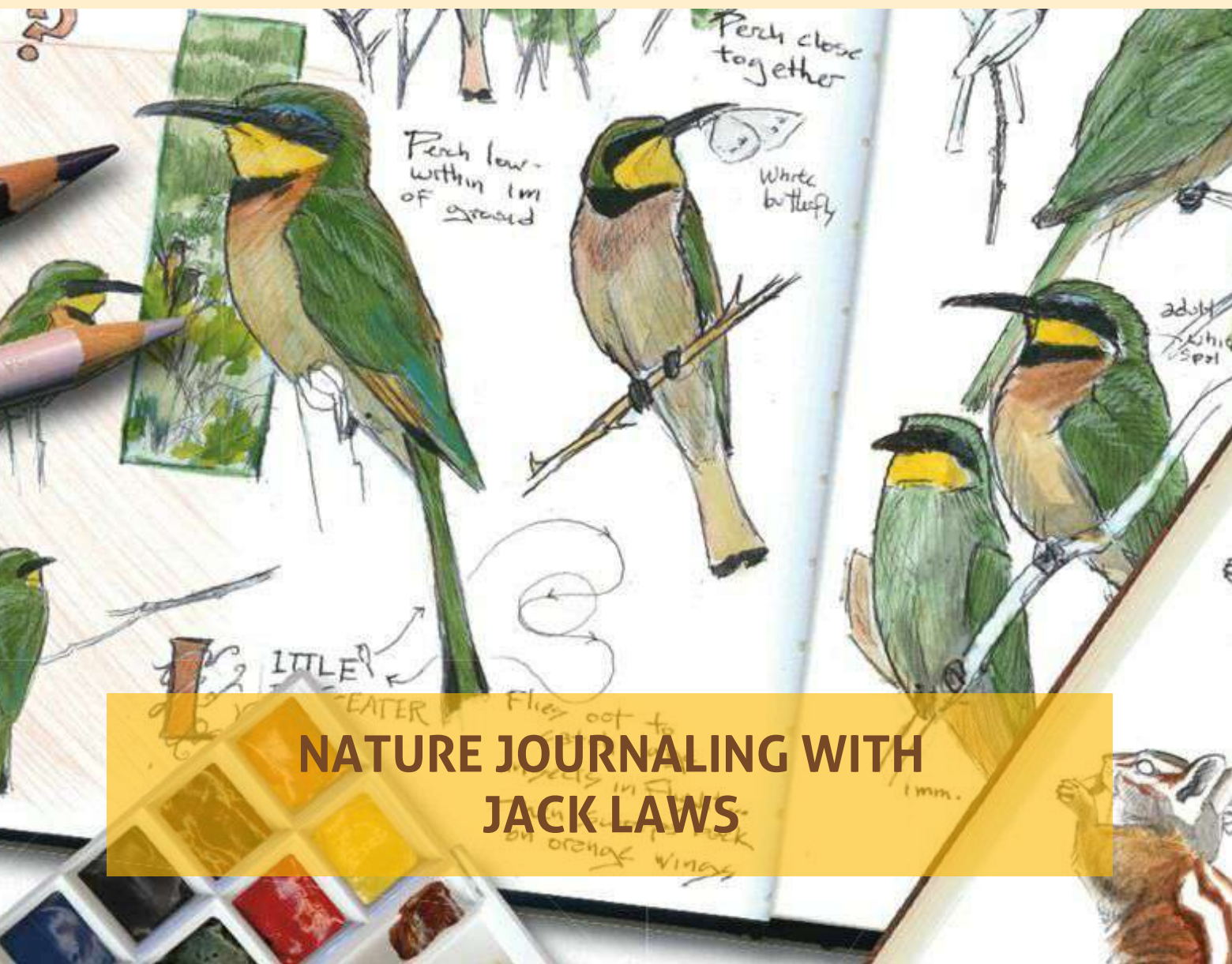


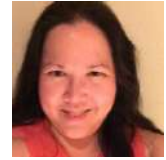
Dyslexic Advantage

NEWSLETTER



NATURE JOURNALING WITH JACK LAWS

- WEAK STUDIES CHALLENGE
- ORTON-GILLINGHAM INTERVENTION
- DAILY THINKER FUNDRAISER
- BERYL BENNACERAF ULTRASOUND PIONEER
- CLASSROOM READING FLUENCY
- DYSLEXIC NEWS



Fernette Eide MD, Editor

Dear Friends,

As we head into this Thanksgiving season, we realize how thankful we are to all of you who have become part of our Dyslexic Advantage community. Thank you for all your support and love. Fernette and the Dyslexic Advantage team

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The app may be used to identify and qualify for services such as Benetech's huge free library of e-books.

Thanks to Shelley Wear, Trish Seres, Michelle Williams, Cheryl Kahn, and Jack Martin. Thanks to Lady Grace Belarmino for design and layout and Andi and Freshea for their social media and admin help!

PREMIUM

Editor's Note: to make our publications easier to read, we will avoid use of italics and certain types of fonts.

Newsletters can be read online **HERE**. This issue will be available on the Joomag site for 3 months and can also be downloaded as a pdf file.



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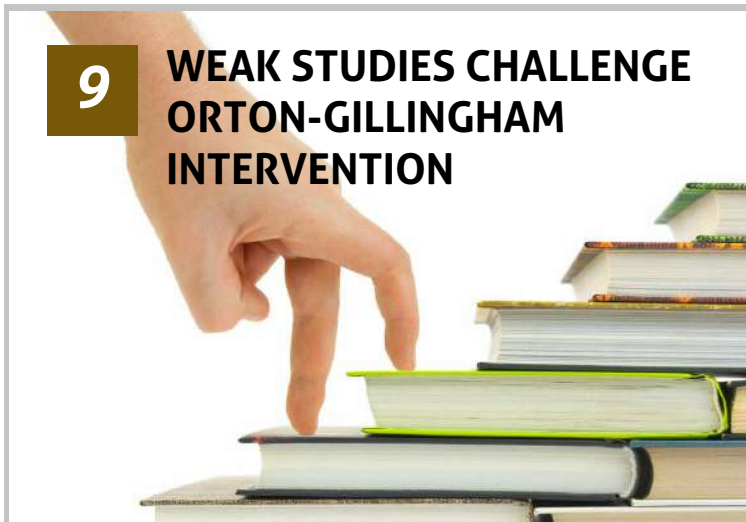
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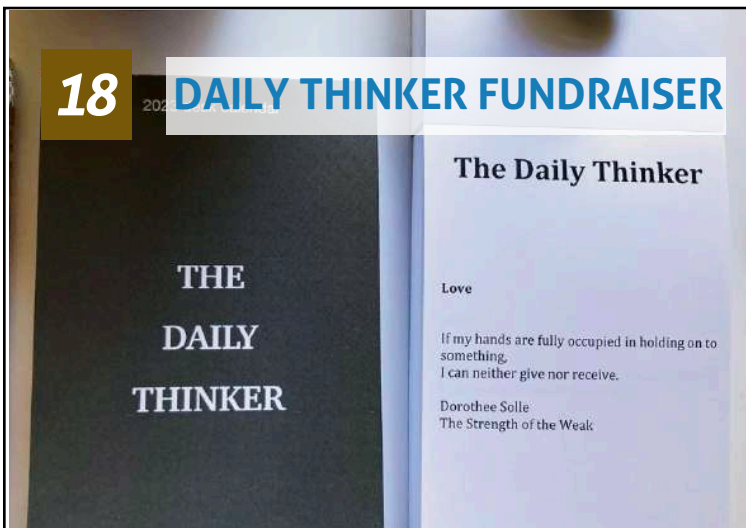
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DYSLEXIA NEWS





NATURE JOURNALING with JOHN MUIR LAWS

"I notice, I wonder, it reminds me of" are powerful prompts that lead you to observe more deeply, ask better questions, and make interesting connections."

- John (Jack) Muir Laws

This is a great time to get outdoors and draw. Even if you're a backyard nature watcher, trees and animals may be changing their appearance and tremendous shifts may be happening in migrating birds and other animals.

We first got to meet Jack in person at our first Conference on Dyslexia and Talent almost a decade ago. He mesmerized us with his personal story (**see video at the top of the next page**) and approach to creating a more user-friendly field guide, Laws Guide to the Sierra Nevada.

Flash forward to today, and Jack has launched an international movement of nature journaling that has so much of his unique way of observing and discovering embedded in it. He's clearly got a lot of people hooked and it's also exciting seeing how many in younger generations are contributing their unique perspectives and voices. **At the bottom of the next page**, you'll find Jack and Fiona presenting their unique birding observations to the California Audubon society.

Check out the video to see what a stimulating cognitive exercise it is! When I was younger, my simple efforts and journaling didn't go as deep as Jack and Fiona. There is so much questioning and reflection with what they do - it's quite an inspiration!





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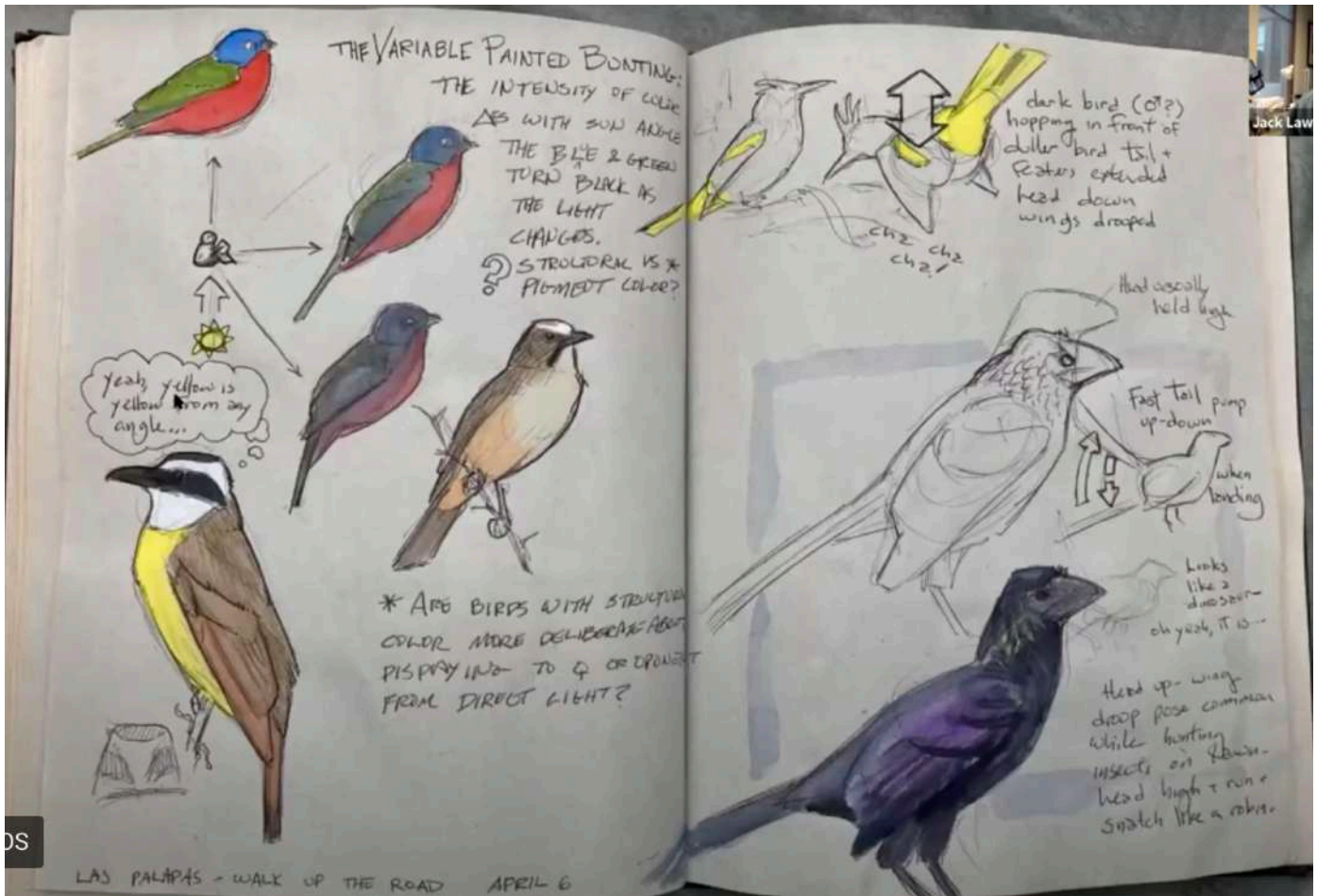
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INSPIRATION



In the above example from Audubon, Jack jots down his visual observations of the Painted Bunting and how its colors change in direction to the sun. He also adds the question of whether these birds deliberately display their colors at their brightest when there is a prospective mate? He wasn't able to answer this question on this trip - but by jotting down the notes in a journal, he increases the chances he'll remember to look for answer to questions on a future outing.

On the next page, see how he also takes brief sketch notes of the movements and behaviors of birds that he is watching - one making a tail display by pitching its head down, while the other keeping its head steadier while flicking its tail.

On the bottom Jack's free associations watching the movements of a crow or raven hunting insects. I like the note, "looks like a dinosaur, oh yeah it is."

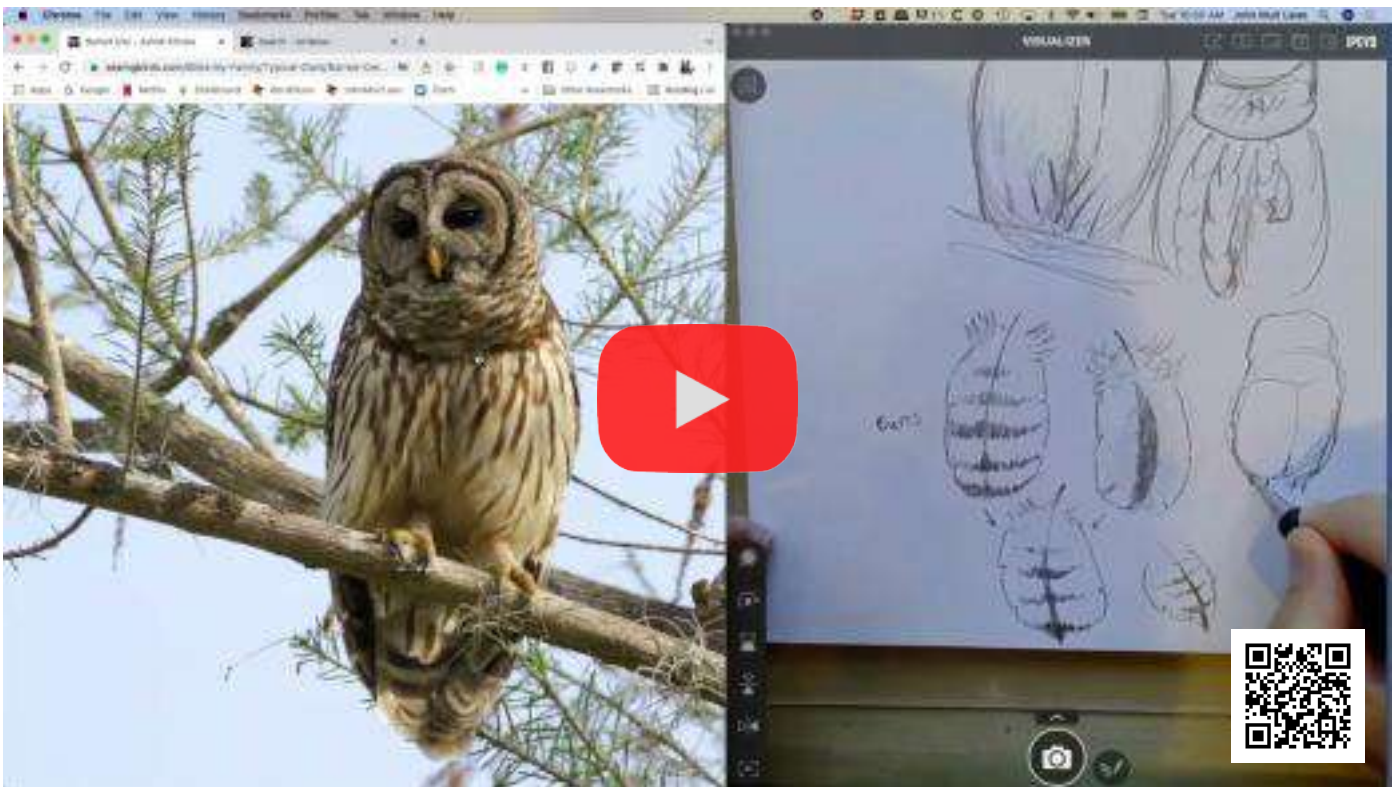
INSPIRATION

If you're thinking of trying out Nature Journaling, you can check out Jack's books. [The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling](#) is a great place to start, but Jack also has a lot of blog posts and step-by-step video lessons on his website, <https://johnmuirlaws.com>.

He has regular free "Ask Jack" video sessions as well as online meetings (all ages) and even spawned a grassroots movement of Nature Journaling Clubs based on his ideas ([here](#)).

Jack even has a Nature Journal Club for Teens that meets online with different prompts each month through Facebook. Check out some journal examples and get more information about this [here](#).

Below is a recent video blog post of Jack's on Drawing Owls.



WEAK STUDIES CHALLENGE ORTON-GILLINGHAM INTERVENTION

After all the hard work increasing dyslexia awareness and passing laws to improve teacher training (some of the efforts just beginning), one small paper has attracted some attention in the media, attempting to push back against the benefits of Orton-Gillingham/Structured Literacy instruction in public schools.

The paper (Stevens et al., 2021) unfortunately has already begun to echo in the general media (including NPR). The danger is that may interfere with literacy training efforts that were only just approved or begun, setting back programs that might have been one of the few bright spots facing dyslexic students struggling with decoding.

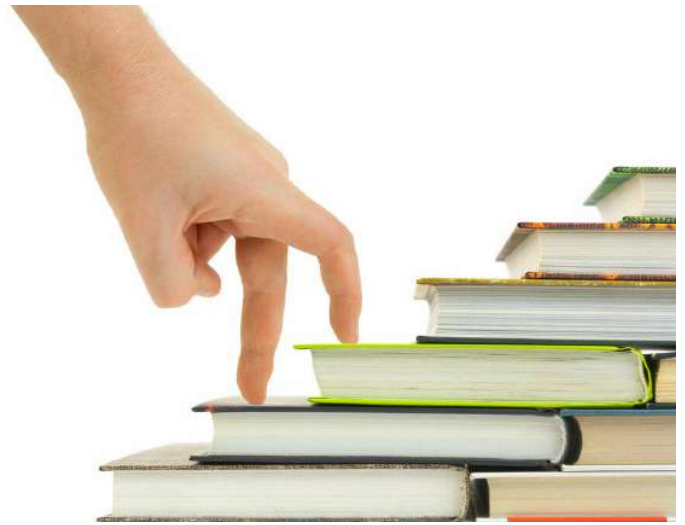
There are many problems with the study, but a glaring mistake was the authors' decision to NOT restrict their review to students with dyslexia, but instead to include, "struggling readers performing in the bottom quartile on a standardized reading measure."

GROUPING DYSLIXIC AND NON-DYSLIXIC POOR READING STUDENTS MAKES THE CONCLUSIONS UNINTERPRETABLE

It is very unfortunate that the authors chose to group "participants formally diagnosed with dyslexia" with "struggling readers performing in the bottom quartile on a standardized reading measure." This approach means that formally diagnosed dyslexic students would be grouped with struggling readers with global intellectual disabilities, severe brain injury, chromosomal impairments, and those with severe language impairment. They stated that their, "findings suggested Orton-Gillingham reading interventions do not statistically significantly improve foundational skill outcomes (i.e., phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, spelling; effect size [ES] = 0.22; $p = .40$), although the mean ES was positive in favor of Orton-Gillingham-based approaches." (Fernet: Just imagine what they might have found if they just focused their study on students with dyslexia!)

LITERACY

Unfortunately, the study also uses many phrases that were intended to bolster its importance, like its title "Current State of the Evidence..." or its discussion of excluding certain studies that lacked "rigor" or showed "bias." However, the worst bias of all in this paper was assuming that the outcome of dyslexic students would be no different from low-IQ struggling readers.



Somewhat shockingly, the second paper cited in the NPR article, that of [Hall et al., 2022](#) commits exactly the same error. In their analyses, they did not identify dyslexic students with specific disability profile, but instead just analyzed the lowest quartile readers in schools. So like the other study, it would like include students with global intellectual disabilities, severe language impairments, brain trauma, and significant genetic disorders. Do these teams believe that dyslexic students' needs are no different? If so, therein lies a serious problem.

There are many within the public education system who oppose the formal identification of dyslexic students because, at least some argue, there are low-level readers who don't meet criteria for dyslexia - but also need support.

They do need support, but not identical support.

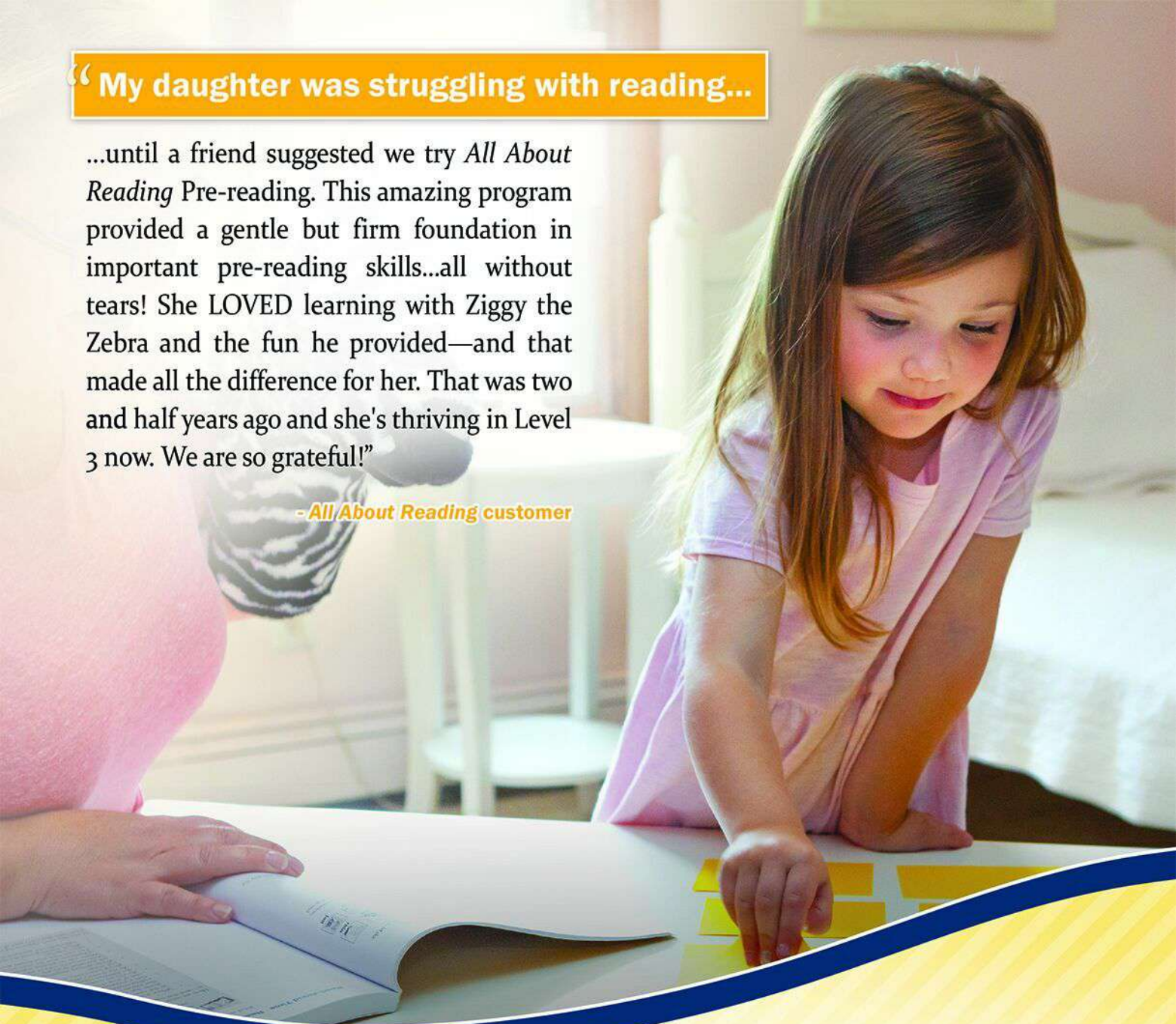
It is not an either-or situation re: considering the educational needs of dyslexic and non-dyslexic struggling readers.

Both groups should be supported by education, but it is important to recognize that their needs are different. Dyslexic students have a much higher likelihood of developing average or above average reading comprehension as the result of structured literacy. Their difficulty is more limited and so their remediation... especially to the point of grade-level reading comprehension is more complete. That is why it is especially important that these students receive appropriate intervention. They will respond and benefits may be seen within months.

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LITERACY

From a [Cambridge University study](#),

"In the children with dyslexia, the atypical trajectory in the onset oddity task suggests that phonological development in dyslexia is not simply delayed, but different.... Low IQ poor readers also show well-documented difficulties in phonemic tasks (e.g., phoneme deletion. However, the trajectories analysis used here identifies delayed rather than atypical... Therefore, rather than lying at the core of poor reading in low IQ children, phonological awareness may be reading-level appropriate for this group."

The paper continues:

"Our low IQ children were very poor on the phonological short term memory task used here. In comparison, the children with dyslexia showed a parallel developmental course to typically developing children over chronological age, but a function with reading age that merged over time with the typically developing function."

These differences between average and high IQ dyslexic children and low IQ poor readers should have obvious implications in the classroom. Students with extremely poor short term memory and below average IQ should have simplified information presented in small chunks. In comparison, dyslexic students should have standard or above-level intellectual content with alternative ways to access information (if needed) as well as remediation for specific difficulties.

Dyslexic students should not be pitted against non-dyslexic ones. The "appropriate education" in federal law 34 CFR § 300.101 means that every student is entitled to have an education that means their unique needs. For dyslexic students that means remediation for weaknesses as well as education for their intellectual strengths.

It's difficult to know how much impact these flawed articles would have on educational policies, but its mention comes at a time when students with LD need more support than ever ([Vanderbilt University](#)).

If your dyslexic student has suffered significant learning loss over the past two years of the pandemic, then you will likely have greater support for specific



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National Center for Learning Disabilities, the International Dyslexia Association have evaluated the Sondag System(r) and deemed that the program contained the required elements for teaching reading identified by the Nation Reading Panel.

BERYL BENNACERAF ULTRASOUND PIONEER

"What helped me was realizing that there was silver living, that it wasn't all negative....in radiology...pictures just speak to me. I can look at a picture and I can see the pattern. I can see things that nobody else can see." - Beryl Bennaceraf, MD



With great sadness, we learned that Dr. Beryl Bennaceraf, a legend in the field of ultrasound medicine passed away. Condolences to husband Peter, their children and grandchildren.

Beryl had generously spoken to Brock and I about her dyslexic journey and the strengths she found in radiology. She helped over 350,000 women over her years in practice, and had legendary spatial expertise that she attributed to her dyslexia.

You can learn about Beryl [here](#) and [here](#).

About her dyslexia, Beryl reflected:

"After all these years, I've come to the conclusion that it is a gift. I sure struggled with the other side of it, not being able to read properly, so now this gift is understanding the flip side of this whole problem." - Beryl Bennaceraf

Beryl was born in Paris (her native language is French) and came to the US when she was 8 years old, without knowing any English. Her dyslexia was not recognized in her formal school despite the fact she had trouble reading in both French and English. Many just assumed her difficulties were due to the fact that she was bilingual. She managed to read well enough to get back into the regular classroom, but she always found reading laborious and admitted that she has trouble spelling in French.

Beryl admitted to struggling with standardized tests like the SAT and MCAT, and was helped if a school didn't require exams (like Columbia Physicians and Surgeons) in addition to string-pulling perhaps by her father Baruj. Her father would eventually win a Nobel Prize for his work in immunology and she believed he was dyslexic as well but in a milder form. He had also had significant struggles getting a position in medical school, but got in when someone put in a good word for him at the Medical College of Virginia. Later Baruj would be offered faculty positions at universities that had rejected him for his medical training.

Beryl recalled that the academic side of college was difficult but she enjoyed living away from home for the first time and working at three radio stations as she explored what she might want to do.

"I'm a very very slow reader. It's not that I can't read, but it's very slow and laborious." - Beryl Bennaceraf

Although Beryl initially may have had some trouble getting into medical school, she excelled once she was there and found out how she could learn:

"...you can get through medical school by going to all the classes, by listening, by watching. The books have a lot of graphs and images, and charts. The fact is that if you're attentive at all that, reading the actual wordage doesn't add that much, for me anyway. I got around that way, and I ended up graduating from medical school AOA (honors!)...

The asset that I'm talking about, you know is a right-brain dominance, which makes you much more able to think in images, in flow charts, in looking at the big picture. I'm not a detail-oriented person. I don't get mired in details. I immediately can step back and assess the entire problem, and boil it down. Beryl's brilliance at being able to interpret ultrasound images was noted by a radiology professor who told her "You have a gift that I've never seen before." He insisted she go into Radiology. She didn't follow his advice at first, pursuing an internship in surgery, but ultimately she changed her mind and the rest became history.

There will be no one who can take the place of Beryl Bennaceraf, but the field that she helped give rise to will need more brilliant spatial people like her. There has

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Michelle Lucas, M.Ed., AT



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IN MEMORIAM



long been an observation that spatial expertise in the brain may exist as a trade-off with words. If we aren't careful, verbal experts in charge of school policies and design of high-stakes tests may keep nonverbal experts out, but we dearly need them.

I remember when venture capitalist David Hornik spoke at one of our events; he light-heartedly recalled how his mother would be surprised how he landed himself into a job that mainly involved talking (and not writing). As it turns out, there are a lot of jobs in the real world that require talents we need that don't depend on repeating back information and writing essays and papers.

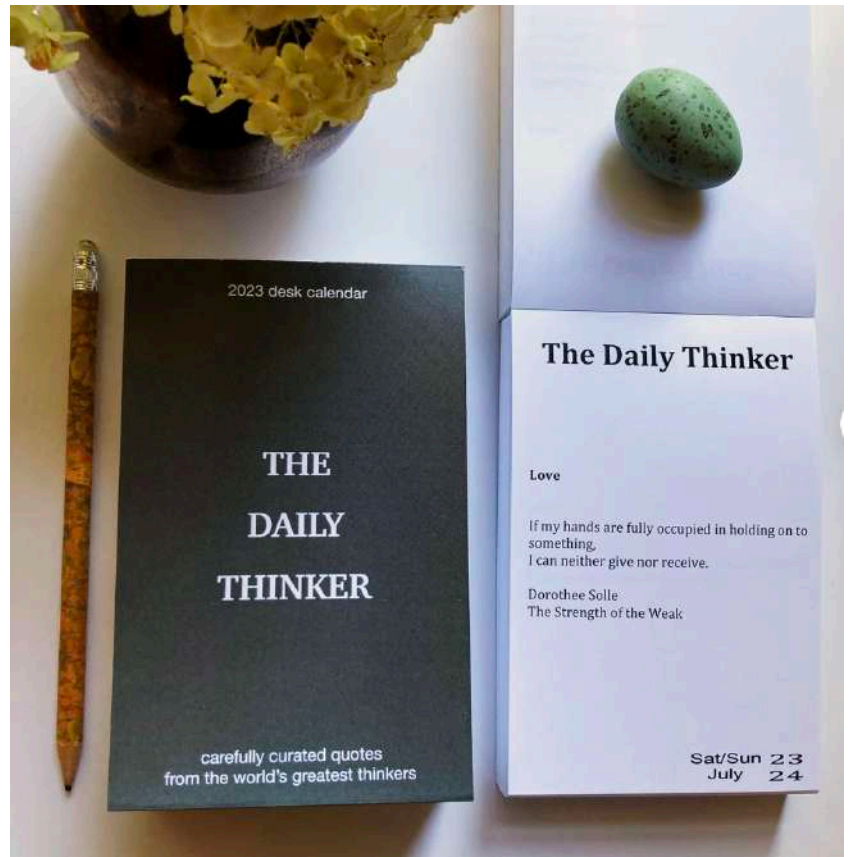
As Beryl shared in her conversations to us, she was grateful that she had found her niche. She found things that helped save lives and helped many avoid more invasive and potentially injurious tests. On a practical level, Beryl's work involved looking at moving pictures all day, looking for unexpected images and generating hypotheses about what she was seeing. She also noted that although she seemed to have natural talents in this line of work, she also continued to get better at it as she pushed her talents and technology to learn more.

Beryl's life journey also tells us of the importance of others in recognizing the talents that so often accompany dyslexia, but can be selected against in school and work policies. What if Beryl had been excluded from a top college on the basis of her SAT verbal score? What if her father had given up after so many medical school rejections?

The way of dyslexia is not easy, but it has life-saving gifts to bring the world.

DAILY THINKER FUNDRAISER FOR DYSLEXIC ADVANTAGE - THANKS PRESTON!

Recently, we were contacted by a member of this community, Preston Ausbrook, who told us that she has been making The Daily Thinker quote calendars for family and friends since 2018. She asked if she could now donate all profits to Dyslexic Advantage! We were very touched and said yes! They are now for sale in her newly created Etsy store [HERE](#).



Preston said the idea for the calendars came from her dad who was a writer and had a love of "all things literary" and was able to recall quotes from all different books. Preston said she never became a writer, but loved collecting other people's words.

When she had her own child, she would buy little quote calendars, and they had a regular routine of reading the quotes (it's a good tradition for dyslexic kids because the reading is usually pretty manageable, but words or thoughts really have a point to them).

As her son got older, though, Preston realized that it would be nice to have some quotes that encouraged their readers to go a little deeper - and Preston's Daily Thinker calendars were born!



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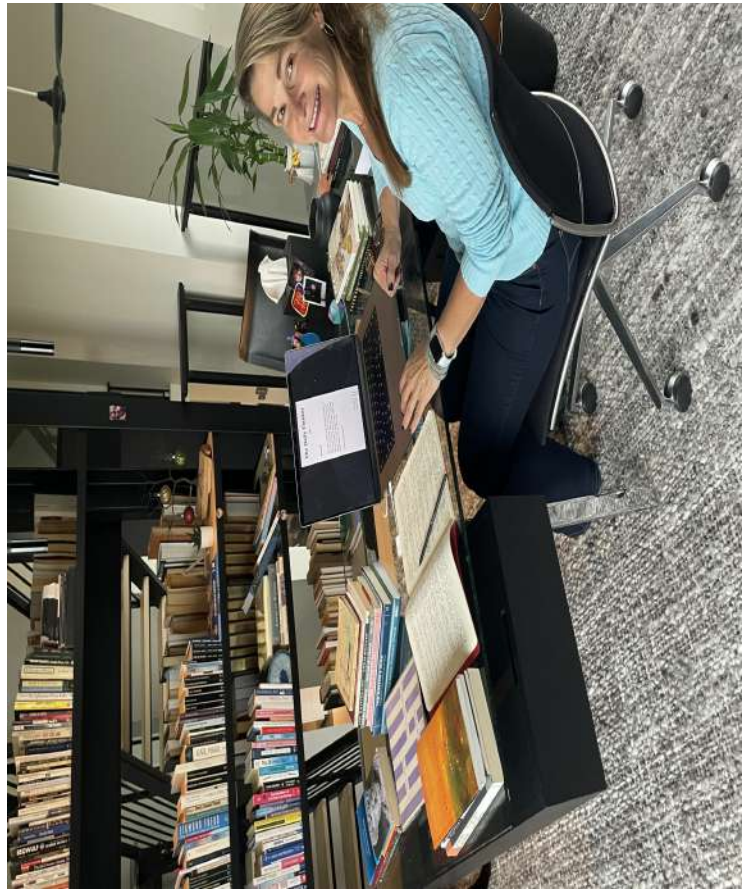


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INSPIRATION

Besides becoming a nice daily ritual to share with her son, Preston found that good quotes made them want to know more about the speakers and their books. Sometimes, a thought-provoking quote might lead them to talk about whether they agreed or not and interesting discussions followed.

I told Preston that our daughter Karina loved collecting quotes and she even traded favorite quotes with her friends. Those in high school debate know that quotes are pithy ways to distill down points. She was also a little wordsmith who admired well-turned phrases.



Here are some sample quotes from The Daily Thinker (present and past):

"The world is changed by your example, not by your opinion." - Paulo Coelho

"There is joy in the pursuit of anything." - Robert Henri The Art Spirit

"Sunshine all the time makes a desert." Proverb

Some of Karina's favorites (not in Preston's calendar):

"Borrow money from pessimists - they don't expect it back." - Anonymous

"Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm." - attributed to Winston Churchill but perhaps not ?

"Remember no man is a failure who has friends." - Clarence from It's a Wonderful Life



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WHERE CLASSROOM READING FLUENCY PRACTICE CAN GO WRONG

Reading fluency is defined as an ability to read texts with accuracy, a good rate, and good expression (sometimes the latter two are referred to as automaticity and prosody).

Strong reading fluency is a goal that all children should have on their path to becoming independent readers, but reading fluency practice is not sufficient to remediate dyslexic students.

Students must reach a certain level of decoding before reading fluency can be meaningfully assessed. Decoding is the process of translating printed words into speech.

READING FLUENCY PRACTICE IS NOT SUFFICIENT FOR DYSLEXIC STUDENTS STILL WORKING TO DECODE

The idea that simply exposing students to reading quality texts and modeling fluent reading would be sufficient for an overwhelming majority of students is a failed theory that doomed many students to struggle lifelong with reading and never effectively learning how to decode.

In a study by researchers at the Educational Testing Services ([Wang et al., 2019](#)), evidence was presented which suggested that in order for students to truly comprehend what they are reading, their decoding ability had to reach above a certain threshold.

For dyslexic students who are still at the decoding stage, it means more fluency practice won't cut it. They need more time and practice with decoding.



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STUDENTS WHO ARE UNABLE TO DECODE SHOULD NOT BE FREQUENTLY TESTED FOR READING FLUENCY; CONSIDER SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS LIKE LEARNED HELPLESSNESS

I recently spoke at school district meeting in Texas. A teacher who said she was neurodiverse herself said how frequent reading fluency tests were required - and yet were demoralizing to students who were not yet at the level of decoding.

Some school districts mandate reading fluency weekly without regard to whether a student is even able to decode. Teachers put passages in front of students that they cannot possibly read, then they have to sit out the timed period until the allotted time is over.

One could imagine why the district wants every one tested in order to make sure they have all the data they need in order to make educational decisions, but testing individuals on impossible tasks is known to take a significant psychological toll - often in the form of learned helplessness.

READING FLUENCY

The principles of [learned helplessness](#) developed after psychological experiments 50 years or so ago which today many deem morally questionable.

What they discovered is if animals or people are subjected to pain that they cannot escape, they learn helplessness - and will not try to escape anymore. They learn that they have no control over their circumstances and they stop trying to do anything in response to the challenge. The impact of these punishing experiences affects motivation (actions to change), emotions (depression, anxiety), and cognition (believing that their situation is impossible to change).

At just the time when we need to encourage and motivate students for the hard work they need to learn how to read, poorly-planned mandatory policies may make success harder to attain.

The last two decades have seen an explosion of research into the impacts of learned helplessness in education.

Learned helplessness in poor student readers ([Butkowsky et al., 1980](#)) found the following characteristics: failure to ask for help, frustration, giving up, lack of effort, low self-esteem, passivity, poor motivation, and procrastination.

Have things changed for today's students? Too often, I fear, the answer is no.

Having a more thoughtful policy for reading fluency testing is an obvious initial action to take - but a more comprehensive educational policy that takes their average and high intelligence into account will be one that will truly meet the definition of an "appropriate education."

It is important for all - but especially those with severe dyslexia to be given access to interest-based content on their intellectual level that they will enjoy, be motivated by and answer their hunger for complex stories and ideas.

Parents and teachers should look for opportunities for their students to shine and enjoy their intellectual and creative strengths in and out of the classroom. Reading fluency is only one literacy tool which should be used at the right time and in proper situations.



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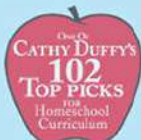
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Former Education Journalist: How I Missed the Phonics Story

Atlanta Journal Constitution



Hamza Yassin of Strictly Come Dancing Talks About His Dyslexia and Honorary Masters in Zoology

Birmingham Mail



Architecture Beginning to Recognize Dyslexia as an Enhanced Ability

RIBA Journal



Dyslexia Linked to 42 Genetic Variants

New Scientist



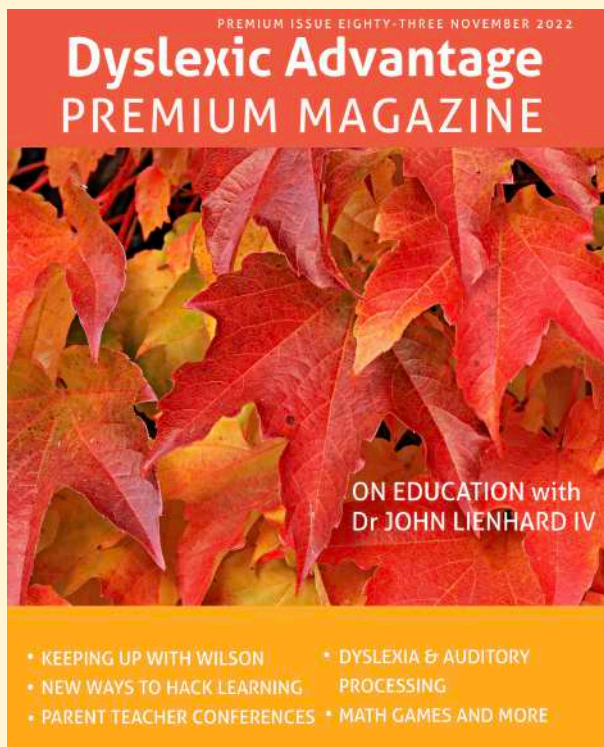
Dyslexia is Common - Why Doesn't California Screen For It

LAist



Weston Dyslexic Teen Creates Million Dollar Mug Business and Supports Dyslexia (he's supported Dyslexic Advantage too! Thanks Max and congrats!)

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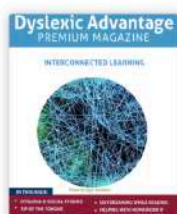
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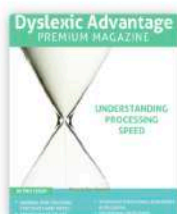
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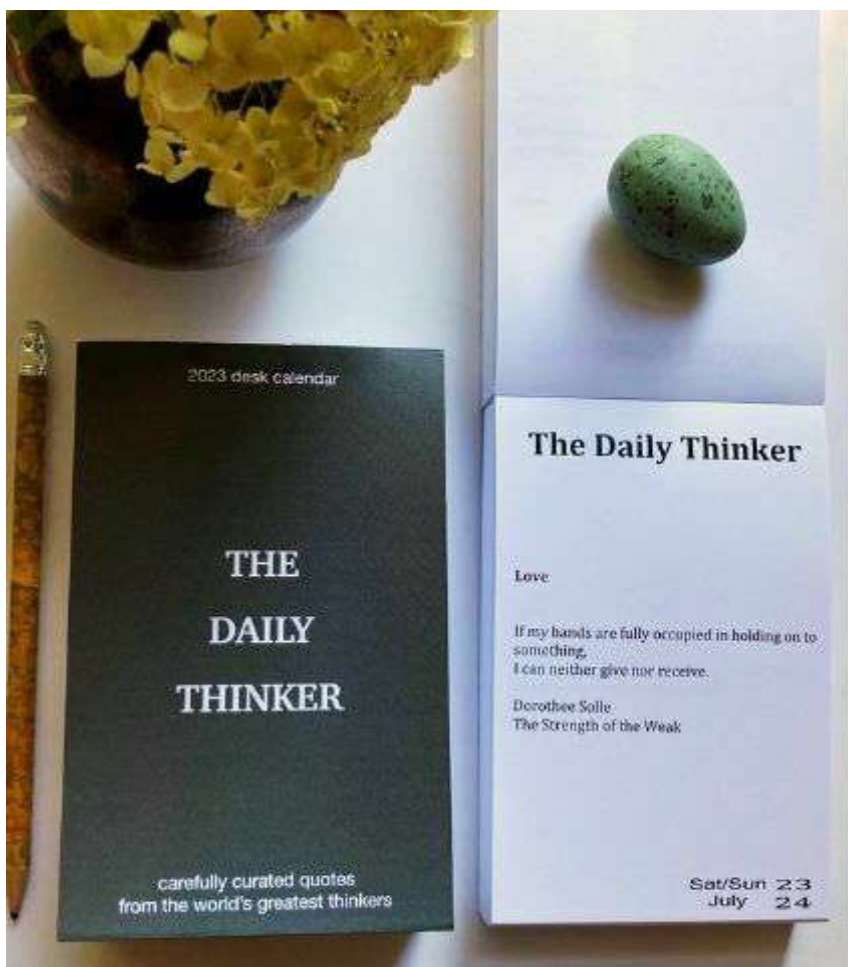
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- Beryl Bennaceraf, MD