

# Dyslexic Advantage

## NEWSLETTER

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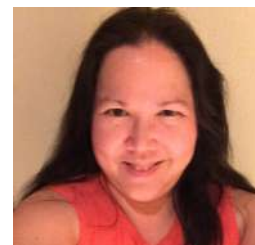
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Fernette Eide MD,  
Editor

Dear Friends,

Best wishes to all for the start of a new school year - we should all be better informed and better prepared to confront the challenges before us.

- Fernette Eide

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Thank you to volunteers Trish Seres, Dayna Russell Freudenthal, Michelle Williams, and Shelley Wear for their tireless proofing and feedback. Thank you Lady Grace Belarmino for her beautiful design work and admin support by Sarah Macapobre.

Thanks also to volunteer Dyslexic Advantage Board members Tom West, Tanya Wojtowych, Joan Bisagno, and Brock Eide.

Editors' Note: To ensure that our dyslexic members are able to read our publication without difficulty, our editorial policy is to avoid the use of fonts or typefaces, such as italics, that can impede readability.

If you're reading a print copy of this issue, you can find the digital copy with all the interactive features here: <https://joom.ag/SJle>





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## TALENTSHARE



# THE CALM BEFORE SCHOOL

When it comes to big picture wisdom, one of our favorite people to listen to is Dr. Michael Ryan, who has a life counseling practice in Michigan. He came to our first Dyslexia and Talent Conference, now many years ago (video on opposite page) and for years we've enjoyed his various letters and blog post.

From his "On Being Dyslexic":



**Now that I've worked with hundreds of dyslexics and raised two daughters who are dyslexics, I know that most dyslexics are exceptional. In short, if I could find that magic pill, no way I would take it! I enjoy being dyslexic. I love the way my mind works. The crazy way I combine ideas and understand the world. I love that I can see humor in almost any situation, even if it gets me into trouble. You have to pay a price, I work harder than most of my colleagues and I know I'm hard to live with. But, I love my creativity and the fact my desk looks like New Orleans after Katrina.**

**Every dyslexic has a unique set of strengths. One of my daughters is gifted in mathematics and my other daughter is an exceptional artist. Most of us are visual thinkers, creative, persistent and have great empathy for others. There are now many videos on dyslexia. However few capture the joy of being dyslexic. The one exception is a video made by a group of English teenagers, "Dyslexia, the Unwrapped Gift" (see opposite page).**

**- Dr. Michael Ryan**

It's good to talk about gifts and joy before heading into the school year. Because once it's underway, there can be many more distractions and details that take over planning.



*Dyslexia, the Unwrapped Gift with Dyslexic Advantage Board member Tom West  
(n.b. the film suggest 1 in 25 are dyslexic, but peer-reviewed research today suggests 15-20%)*



*Family Panel at the Dyslexic Advantage Conference on Dyslexia and Talent*





Here are 5 of Michael's suggestions to start a successful school year:

1. Ask for help.
2. Advocate early.
3. Use Technology.
4. Lighten your class load.
5. Work hard.

To read all of his posts, visit [HERE](#).

**1. ASK FOR HELP.** "My freshman year in college I insisted in hiding my dyslexia. I tried functioning like everyone else. It was not a complete train wreck, but it was pretty darn close. I worked much harder than my friends and only got C's. Furthermore, my freshman literature teacher wrote at the end of my first in-class essay, "How did you get out of first grade?"

At the beginning of my sophomore year, I decided I was no longer going to bang my head against this invisible wall. Instead I found some ways around these barriers. I started asking for help.

I began by going to the professors who I liked and trusted and explain my situation. They seem genuinely interested and asked what they could do. I sheepishly asked if I could take the midterm orally. I felt like a real cheat.

I couldn't believe they agreed. (One professor later explained to me that almost all professors have had to take an oral exam for their PhD. They know how difficult it is to take an oral exam, because the tester can ask for more explanation. You really have to know the material.)

The difference was remarkable. I enjoyed my exams and instead of barely eking out C's, I got A's. Furthermore, my professors seemed to think I had good ideas.

Learning to ask for help is difficult. You have to learn to forgive your weaknesses and find other ways to show your strengths. Furthermore, you have to learn to trust others; and the more often you take this risk, the more your trust grows.



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## BIG PICTURE

**2. ADVOCATE EARLY.** "Meet with your instructors at the beginning of the semester and let them know that you have a learning disability and what accommodations you will need.

If you wait till you're struggling in the class, your teacher might see this as an excuse or a manipulation. This demands that you understand your learning style and what accommodations you will need.

If your instructor is uncooperative consider talking to your counselor or switching classes. "

**3. USE TECHNOLOGY.** "Technology, technology, technology. Technology levels the playing field for dyslexics. However, not all technology works for everyone. You have to use trial and error to decide which accommodations are most effective in your learning. "

**4. LIGHTEN YOUR CLASS LOAD.** "Dyslexics almost always need to take a lighter course load. In high school this may mean an extra study hall and in college 12 hours per semester is a full load. This gives us more opportunities to study material in depth and integrate our knowledge.

Study groups and discussing ideas with professors are particularly helpful in this integration. Also, hands-on project based activities are critical.

I also believe that in college dyslexic students should take no more than two classes that are hard for them."

**5. WORK HARD.** "As school gets more demanding, dyslexics have to work two or three times harder than their friends.

I know that this is not fair...The payoff is that if we learn to work hard now it will help us be successful in later life. I believe this is one of the reasons dyslexics make such great entrepreneurs. It is hard work starting your own business and dyslexics already know how to work hard."



To all this, I guess I might add: **6. SCHEDULE BREAKS AND RESTS**, and **7. MAKE TIME FOR PASSIONS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL**.

**6. SCHEDULE BREAKS AND RESTS.** This might seem self-explanatory, but surprisingly all too often, it is forgotten. Dyslexic students work so hard, and the workloads seem so impossible, that there can be little time to really take a break, sleep, and catch up - but that's exactly what they need. Just as research studies show that later start times for high school students [result in higher grades](#), we wouldn't be surprised if later starts and shorter school days would help more dyslexic students too.

Chronic sleep deprivation, physical exhaustion, anxiety, and depression all take their toll on working memory and everything that follows. Some students may be able to opt out of certain classes like math if they can substitute an online program such as [ALEKS](#). Such a class typically would take less time than a standard 45 min period, so it could add to aim of more frequent breaks.

**7. MAKE TIME FOR PASSIONS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL.** Spending time away from school - especially as it develops students' strengths increases school success rather than the contrary. Look for opportunities to develop interests and passions by finding time for electives, after school extracurriculars, volunteering, or internships. Recently, we spoke to Jay Plasman, an educational researcher at UC Santa Barbara. He [found](#) that students with learning disabilities who took challenging applied STEM classes in high school were MORE likely to stay in school, get good grades, have positive comments about school, and pursue higher education. Click on the button below to listen to my interview with Jay. One example of an applied STEM course is a course where students learned to build a house. They built it and sold it!



# BACK TO SCHOOL WITH DYSLEXIA



When it comes to 'Back to School', for parents for students with dyslexia, there's more shopping for school supplies, new lunches, and adjusting sleep times.

There's also 'the letter' introducing your student, requesting audiobooks, and asking for essential accommodations. Your student may also be coming off a good year or a really bad year with teachers or fellow students.

In many respects, the upcoming school year should be the best ever because the natural course of dyslexia for a student who receives appropriate remediation and accommodations is that skills are mastered, challenges get more manageable, and strengths blossom and grow as children grow up. Also new dyslexia laws are sweeping the country to the point that states without them are the exception instead of the rule.

There are notoriously tricky years in school - like 3rd grade (the transition to reading to learn), 5th grade (more writing) and 7th and 9th when first entering middle school and high school. But even these years can be hurdled - if appropriate expectations and accommodations are in place.

Young people today should be growing up with a much healthier positive context about being dyslexic and thanks to all the successful innovators and world changers who are coming out about their dyslexia, there are more positive role models than ever.

I've been wondering lately, if part of every back to school ritual for dyslexic families should be a course in negotiation and conflict resolution - something for kids to take as well as parents. Different challenges and opportunities arise from

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## BACK TO SCHOOL - NEGOTIATION

a student and parent's perspective, but ideally if you are both on the same page heading into the school year, the outcome will be good.

Here's an entrepreneur talking about tips for negotiation - the tips apply quite well to school situations except the last one (that is unless, you're able to switch teachers or switch schools).



### Negotiation Tips:

1. Build Emotional Connection
2. Envision How the Conversation Will Go
3. Listen
4. Know Your Outcome
5. Be Flexible in Your Approach
6. Believe in Your Position
7. Be Prepared to Walk Away

## BACK TO SCHOOL - NEGOTIATION

Especially at the start of the year, don't jump too soon before you or your student has had a chance to make a positive emotional connection to the teacher. You and the teacher both should both have the same goals - for your student to be successful.

If accommodations are documented in your IEP plan, then bring a copy and highlight the relevant parts. If accommodations that you need aren't in an IEP or 504, then print up a copy about an accommodation that you need, highlight the relevant parts and then request the accommodation in writing. For example, in our June newsletter (see Dyslexic Advantage Newsletter Archives [HERE](#)), we wrote about partial read aloud accommodations being beneficial for students with reading disabilities. It is a reasonable accommodation that a teacher can provide - by letting a student initially take the test with her class - then finishing up later in a free period or after school.

If an accommodation is NOT granted after it is first requested, and the test goes poorly, you have further data that it is a necessary accommodation to provide.

From Harvard research associate Katie Shonk (full article [HERE](#)).

1. Avoid Being Provoked Into An Emotional Response
2. Don't Abandon Value-Creating Strategies
3. Use Time to Your Advantage

It's these negotiating tips that are especially important in the big picture. Many teachers may take a wait-and-see approach. The important point to remember is that the follow-up is where the important work gets done.

Plan for the *long-term*. Once you've found that a new accommodation really works, then work with your teacher to have it added to your IEP or 504.





# CHAT and GIVEAWAY with ALL ABOUT LEARNING's CEO MARIE RIPPEL

First of all, thanks to Marie Rippel and her All About Learning Team for being a generous sponsor for the programs at Dyslexic Advantage. We've heard from many community members who benefited by your materials and also excited about a giveaway that you given us.

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### How did All About Learning Press begin?

My son was nine years old when he was diagnosed with severe dyslexia. Experts told me that he would never be able to read or spell, but I refused to believe them. I poured all my energy into figuring out how to teach my son to read and spell and in the end, the Orton-Gillingham approach helped my son overcome all odds.



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## CHAT AND GIVEAWAY

I began tutoring other students who learned in alternative ways, and this became my life's work. I discovered that my son's situation wasn't unique—there were many other parents and teachers who were desperate to help their students, too. The lesson plans I developed during this time now form the cornerstone of All About Reading and All About Spelling. Thanks to a comprehensive, mastery-based approach, these programs have helped thousands of students achieve success in reading and spelling—just as my son did.

At All About Learning Press, our #1 goal is to take the struggle out of reading and spelling. It's as simple as that. We work every day to make reading and spelling easy to teach and easy to learn, and we strive to equip parents, teachers, and tutors with the tools and resources they need to help students succeed.



### What Makes This Approach Work?

The Orton-Gillingham approach is fantastic because it takes the mystery out of reading and spelling. It focuses on why words are spelled the way they are. By teaching the basic phonograms and the rules and patterns that apply to the vast majority of English words, the Orton-Gillingham approach takes the guesswork out of reading and spelling. It instills confidence and makes it easier for students to learn to read, including students with dyslexia and learning challenges.

I believe strongly in the power of multisensory instruction, and that's why every single lesson in All About Reading and All About Spelling includes opportunities for students to learn through sight, sound, and touch. When a student simultaneously uses multiple senses while learning, the neurons in the respective parts of the brain fire at the same time and wire together to create neural networks. These neural networks allow the brain to store and retrieve information much more effectively and efficiently.

To maximize learning and retention, it's critical that each lesson builds on previous lessons, assuring a "no gaps" approach in the learning process. I like to envision each lesson as a ladder with precisely placed rungs that make it easy for students to climb to the top, regardless of age or ability.

Review is also essential for making learning "stick," and that's why cumulative review is another cornerstone element when working with kids who struggle. Consistent review is the key to getting material to "stick." Teaching something once or twice does not mean your



## CHAT AND GIVEAWAY

has actually mastered it. Mastery takes time and practice, but regular review makes it possible for students to permanently store information in their long-term memory.

When students are explicitly taught everything they need to know about reading and spelling, no guessing is required. And when you give kids interesting ways to apply what they've learned, they're actively engaged in thinking, processing, and growing in their abilities. Steady and continual progress is encouraging to students and they relish the satisfaction of mastery and success.

### Do you have a favorite tip for parents and teachers?

If I had to choose one piece of advice, it would be this: persevere! You absolutely can teach your student to read and spell! Don't let anyone discourage you from your goal of helping children succeed in these important subjects. It may take time, and at times it might seem like you're never going to reach your goal. But you will. You and your student can do it! I'm reminded of a story a woman recently shared with me. Her daughter has struggled with dyslexia. She was told by an expert that her daughter's case was hopeless, that there was currently no clinically effective treatment for her daughter's form of dyslexia, and that reading beyond a first-grade level would likely never happen. But Rachél knew her daughter was bright, creative, and capable, and she was determined that her daughter would succeed.

"We ordered All About Reading Level 1," Rachél told us. "It was slow going at first. Truthfully, it was slow going the first two years. It took us a school year and a half to complete Level 2. There were a lot of tears. Fluency sheets were dreaded! It was so bad that I put a chocolate chip on top of each word that she could eat after she read the word. Every five lessons resulted in a prize marked off on the progress sheet. There were lots of hugs and reassurances that this struggle did not mean that she was stupid.

"Thankfully our girl is a fighter. Fast forward four-and-a-half years and she can read fluently at grade level. Thank you for equipping me to do what 'professionals' told me would not be possible. I tell everyone I meet how much we love your program, and if they want to start their kids out on the right foot, then there is no better program than All About Reading. My daughter read a book for fun today. It was the very first time. I wasn't sure if this day would ever arrive. It did!"

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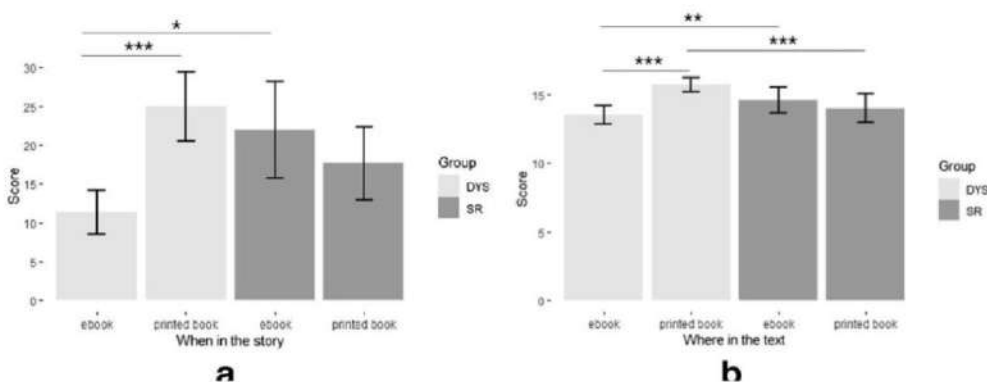
# WHY PRINTED IS BETTER THAN E-BOOKS - College Students

## + How Dyslexic College Readers Outperform Non-Dyslexic Classmates!

Dr. Jean-Luc Velay was kind enough to share his [paper](#) called E-book reading hinders aspects of long-text comprehension for adults with dyslexia. The paper's an important read as there is substantial evidence that reading on a screen and reading a printed book is not the same. There was another surprising finding in the paper (emphasis mine below):

**"with the printed book, dyslexic adults performed similarly to skilled readers in both literal and inferential reading comprehension tasks. Moreover, they performed at the same level or **higher** than skilled readers in tasks assessing spatiotemporal aspects of reading (localization of events and plot reconstruction)."**

Look at the data:



**Fig. 4** Average scores (and standard deviation) on the “Where in the text” (a maximum score = 18) and “When in the story” (b distance range from 0 = similar, to 190 = dissimilar) tasks as a function of group and device. On “Where in the text” (a), the mean for DYS was 13.5 (SD = 1.4) on e-book and 15.7 (SD = 1.0) on printed book, for SR the mean was 14.6 (SD = 1.9) on e-book and 14.0 (SD = 2.1) on printed book. On “When in the story” (b), the mean for DYS was 11.3 (SD = 5.6) on e-book and 24.9 (SD = 8.9) on printed book, for SR the mean was 21.9 (SD = 12.4) on e-book and 17.6 (SD = 9.4) on printed book

Dyslexic college students were BETTER at answering "Where in the text" or "When in the story" questions for a challenging test of over 10,000 words and time flashbacks in the story lines.



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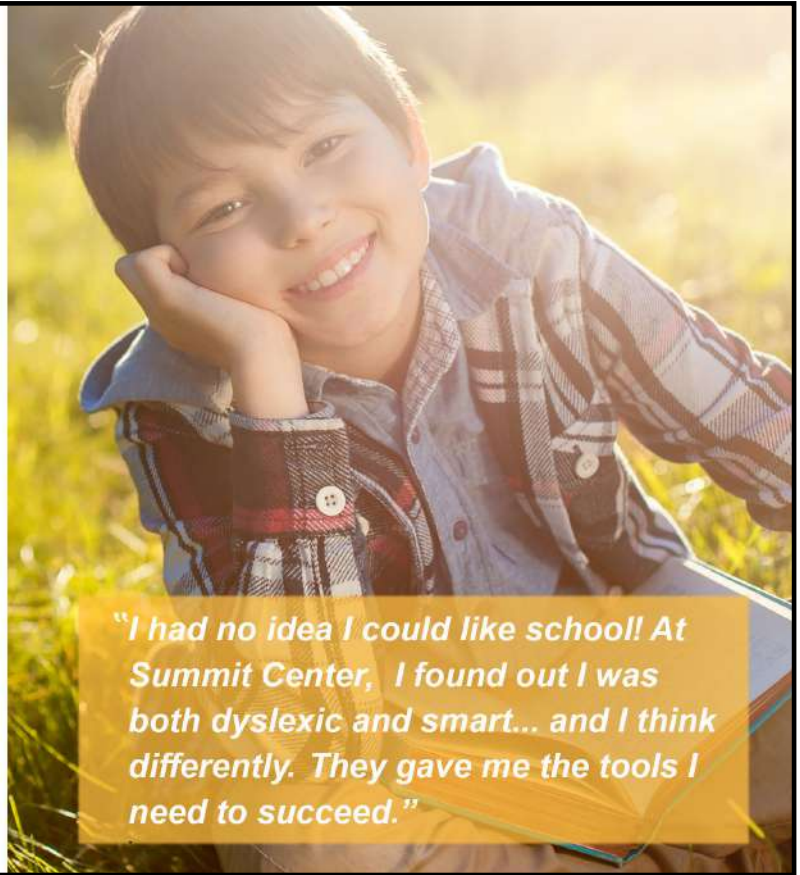
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*"I had no idea I could like school! At Summit Center, I found out I was both dyslexic and smart... and I think differently. They gave me the tools I need to succeed."*

The authors of this report don't offer substantial reasons for why this result was observed, but one could speculate that dyslexic readers experiencing the text as multisensory scenes rather than verbal descriptions might be better able to recall the events as experienced during the reading.

Another major finding of the study is that the college dyslexic group performed worse in the e-book setting compared to print books. This finding does caution educators, schools, and workplaces to not equate reading on paper with computer displays, but to really inform policy, more research needs to be done.

In this study, study subjects had no prior use with e-book reading and they were given a Kindle paperwhite for the e-book situation. The displays were not optimized for individuals (for instance, to reduce visual crowding or reduce the number of words on a page) and font choice and color were also not adjusted for readers' preferences. The fact that dyslexic readers seem to have more trouble reading on the e-book should make us pause if we had been expecting students

## READING AND TECHNOLOGY

or adults should be able to seamlessly transfer reading between the printed page and a digital screen... like a student who is asked being assigned to do Accelerated Reader on a computer terminal or standardized testing.

Some students lose their place more easily because they can't sweep their fingers across lines of text. These students might fare better if they can use an on-screen ruler like the [Google Chrome Reading Ruler](#).



Although the findings raise interesting questions, it's premature to conclude that print books are necessarily better for dyslexic students. This study didn't look at reading along with text to speech, for instance, or reading with a scanning pen like the one seen in the ad on the opposite page. These formats

of reading can potentially improve reading comprehension of complex texts because of the lookup functions on the pen or on computers or mobile devices.

Some readers may be less efficient with e-books at first as they get accustomed to the different display and formats. If test subjects were frequent readers on the Amazon Kindle, one wonders, would the differences in e-books and print be as great?

Regardless, there were several interesting take-home points from this paper:

1. With print books, dyslexic college students did **just as well** as skilled readers in both literal and reading comprehension tasks (students were given unlimited time).
2. With print books, dyslexic college students were **BETTER** than skilled readers with the localization of events and plot reconstruction in the text (students were given unlimited time).
3. Dyslexic college students performed worse with e-books than printed books in this study - but this was their first experience with e-books and no optimization was made regarding the print display.





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### SCHOOL DISTRICT DYSLEXIA THERAPIST

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# CALCULATOR ACCOMMODATION AND **DYSLEXIA**



Dyslexic children and adults have a high incidence of math difficulties; calculator accommodations should probably be in place for a majority of them.

The US Department of Justice Office of Civil Rights ([HERE](#)) wrote a letter clarifying the appropriate use of calculator accommodations for individuals with disabilities in 2014:

## "What Testing Accommodations Must Be Provided?"

Testing entities must ensure that the test scores of individuals with disabilities accurately reflect the individual's aptitude or achievement level or whatever skill the exam or test is intended to measure. A testing entity must administer its exam so that it accurately reflects an individual's aptitude, achievement level, or the skill that the exam purports to measure, rather than the individual's impairment (except where the impaired skill is one the exam purports to measure).<sup>3</sup>

Example: An individual may be entitled to the use of a basic calculator during exams as a testing accommodation. If the objective of the test is to measure one's ability to solve algebra equations, for example, and the ability to perform basic math computations (e.g., addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division), is secondary to the objective of the test, then a basic calculator may be an appropriate testing accommodation. If, however, the objective of the test is to measure the individual's understanding of, and ability to perform, math computations, then it likely would not be appropriate to permit a calculator as a testing accommodation."

The example of allowing use of a calculator in Algebra is an especially important distinction as this is a common obstacle that college-bound dyslexic students face. It is especially important to have such an accommodation included in an IEP or 504 because the SAT recently added a "calculator-free" section of its exam, and dyslexic students with dyscalculia would be at a serious disadvantage if a calculator were not allowed. This section of the exam in fact includes Algebra as well as other advanced math topics. It is not intended to be a test of basic arithmetic. Please note that the ACT has no calculator-free section.

In past 15 years, neuroscientists and educational researchers have demonstrated the link between math fact retrieval difficulties and these findings support the need for math accommodations for a majority of dyslexic students. A high incidence (40%) of dyslexic students had been reported by Lewis, Hitch, and Walker in 1994, but more recent studies suggest an even higher incidence and similar neuroscientific profile ([Peters et al., 2018](#); [Skeide et al., 2017](#)) for math challenges, particularly related to speed and accuracy of math fact retrieval.

**A significant body of evidence now ties difficulties in math fact retrieval with phonological processing, a core weakness in dyslexia. This would support calculator accommodations for dyslexic students in classroom tests as well as standardized exams such as the SAT.**

Since the institution of the new SAT and the "calculator-free" section, we have heard of numerous dyslexic students denied calculator accommodations on this test; with the clear connection between dyslexia and math retrieval difficulties, this policy would seem to be discriminatory and not consistent with ADA policy.

It's also worth noting that the studies that demonstrated a direct tie between dyslexia and impairment in math fact retrieval difficulties also selected dyslexic test subjects that were not formally identified with dyscalculia and were found to perform well on untimed math problem solving tests.

Findings such as these reinforce the importance of formally identifying *dyslexia* and advocating for specific requirements in educational policy.

# DISCOVER YOUR LEARNING DISABILITY



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**"I always had a kind of dyslexia when I was a kid..."**  
**Paul McCartney**

**WOMC Radio**



**Signs an Adult Should Be Tested for Dyslexia**

**Neurolearning**



**Superintendent Ignores Dyslexia Panel**  
**Choose Non-Dyslexia Software - North Carolina**

**Notes from the Chalkboard**



**Washington Students Need More Explicit Instruction**

**Seattle Times**



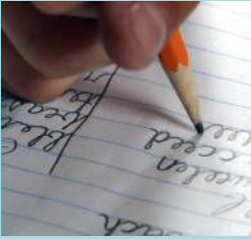
**Getting Past Anger - Henry Winkler**

**Dyslexic Advantage**



**We Need to Talk About Dyslexia at Work**

**BBC**



**Medford parents frustrated by dyslexia screening**  
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**How parents of dyslexic kids took to their statehouses**  
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**Time.com**



# PREMIUM

## TECH ISSUE



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<https://go.fastbridge.org/augda2>



**FastBridge**  
Learning



maths explained

Video tutorials to help with dyscalculia and mathematical learning difficulties

## Why Maths Explained?



Devised and delivered by an internationally regarded expert in the field of maths learning difficulties.



The structure of the programme and the principles that drive it are based on research from around the world on how people learn, and fail to learn, maths.



Each video uses carefully designed visual images, matched to the relevant maths vocabulary and concepts in order to enhance understanding.



The videos develop an understanding of maths by addressing and circumventing the barriers that handicap learning. They are about using that understanding to support memory.

## Visual images and building understanding

Linking images to symbols/numbers



$$5 + 5 = 10$$

$$2 \times 5 = 10$$

$$10 \div 2 = 5$$

Inter-relating numbers and operations + - x ÷

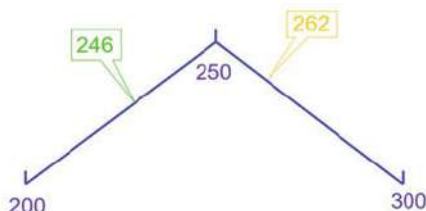
Reversing



$$10 - 1 = 9$$

$$9 + 1 = 10$$

## Estimating: to the nearest hundred



[CLICK THIS AD TO WATCH OUR SAMPLE VIDEO TO SEE OUR APPROACH](#)







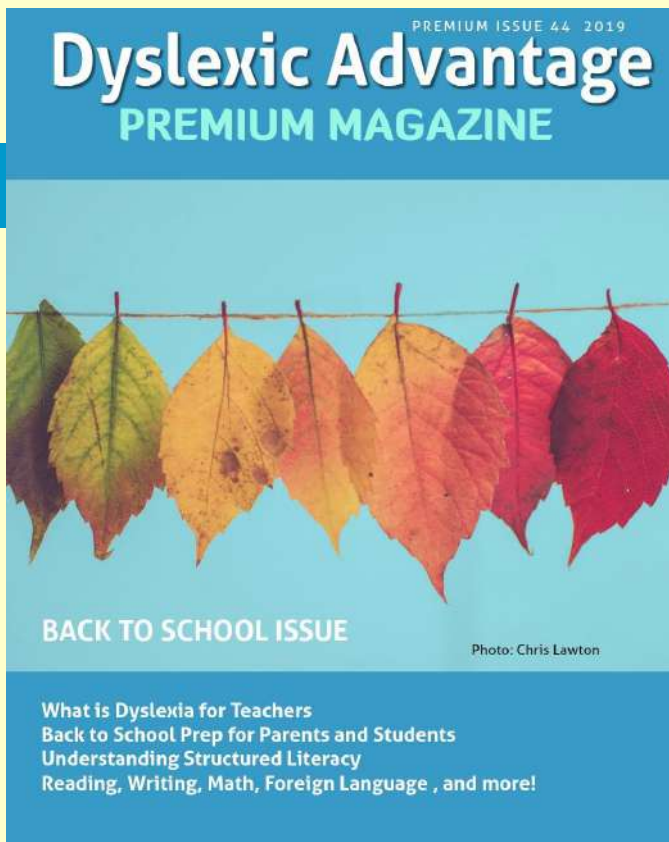
**I worried my dyslexia would hold me back until I got my degree apprenticeship**

**The Guardian**



**I love big words, but I can barely spell any...  
OneNote Learning Tools Empower**

**The Guardian**



## PREMIUM RECENT ISSUE



### BACK TO SCHOOL!

What teachers need to know  
Sample letters for teachers  
Structured literacy  
Dyslexia and math  
Dyslexia and foreign language....  
and more!

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*"I had no idea I could like school! At Summit Center, I found out I was both dyslexic and smart... and I think differently. They gave me the tools I need to succeed."*

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assessment | consultation | treatment

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Congratulations to this month's winners! It's Donovan for his beautiful botanical photos and Andrew for his incredible fruit tart. Please feel free to share a photo of your student's talents for an upcoming newsletter [HERE!](#)

**Donoven, 11.** Bowling Green, VA.  
A Day at Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens

Small prizes will be given away!



**Andrew, 13.**

My son loves to cook/bake. He also is dyslexic. But that does not define him! He continues to amaze us with his delicious food! Here is a fruit tart he recently made. Yum!





# PREMIUM UPCOMING ISSUE



- DYSLEXIC INVENTION
- HOW TO DISCLOSE IN AN INTERVIEW
- CREATIVE & COGNITIVE CONTROL
- SPELLING: TEACH TO STRENGTHS OR WEAKNESSES?
- DYSGRAPHIA: UNRECOGNIZED UNDERACHIEVEMENT
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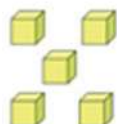


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[CLICK THIS AD TO WATCH OUR SAMPLE VIDEO TO SEE OUR APPROACH](#)



Got a comment or suggestion for a future issue? Share it below:



A high-resolution satellite image of the Earth from space, showing the Western Hemisphere. The Americas are prominent, with North and South America visible. The oceans are a deep blue, and white clouds swirl across the globe. The image is set against the black background of space.

"The conservationist's most important task if we are to save the Earth, is to educate."

- Sir Peter Scott, Founder of the World Wildlife Fund