December 2020 ISSUE 60 Dyslexic Advantage NEWSLETTER

DYSLEXIA AND FRACTAL

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As this year comes to a close, all of us at Dyslexic Advantage want to thank you for helping make this one of the most important voices about dyslexia. If you know a child, adult, or professional who would benefit from our **Premium Magazine** or **Online Courses**, please spread the word! With all the unpredictability of COVID, dyslexic students and their families are at risk of being caught up in the disruption. We are here to help.

Blessings to you all! 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.



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/boUC





HONORING JAMES REDFORD



READING: FROM GUESS TO KNOW DR LUCY CALKINS TURNS TOWARD STRUCTURED LITERACY

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DYSLEXIA NEWS

4 MUSIC



What is the connection between dyslexia and music? If you ask some families, dyslexia and musical talent go hand-in-hand. There can also be challenges in music, in particular with reading music; however, the strengths can be seen in areas such as musicality, performance, musical interpretation, improvisation, and composing. Sometimes we hear that music helped unlock some of the difficulties students were having in school; <u>here's</u> an example from a musical teen, Katie:

"Music is like a different part of my brain, where I don't have to think about the words I'm singing," she said. "I put that word to that note. It was more of teaching us by voice versus reading a book, and that's when it started clicking." In elementary school, Katie learned music through the solfege method, where notes are learned as Do-Re-Mi like in Sound of Music instead of A, B, or C. As different notes are learned, there are also hand motions, so very multisensory! Katie a "little songs" to help her remember things in her schoolwork — particularly in history, which is full of many unfamiliar proper names."



Could there be a reason why many dyslexics have a particular talent in music? One reason is that some of the same brain areas associated with the enjoyment of music and emotional aspect of music are areas that are particularly active in dyslexic people (parts of the default mode network).

As mentioned, there are also challenges associated with dyslexia that can make reading music and in particular, sight reading difficult, but many people compensate (for instance first learning to play be ear) and find their own ways of learning and creating music.

Carly Simon is a multiple Grammy award winner and the first artist to win a Grammy, Academy Award, and Golden Globe Award for a song composed and written, as well as performed, entirely by one artist Carly is also a powerful positive dyslexia advocate and has talked about her own experience with dyslexia. She also has multi-talented children, including the multi-talented Sally Taylor who <u>spoke</u> at one of our conferences on Dyslexia and Talent. Sally's husband is Dean Bragonier, Founder and "Executive Dyslexic" of <u>Noticeability</u>.

Many of us grew up singing the songs of Carly Simon. Timothy Crouse of Rolling Stone magazine said that Carly's songs <u>reminded</u> him of John Updike or JD Salinger short stories written to music.

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The stories Carly's songs are remarkable for how much they can convey in little vignettes with the meaning, music, and feelings all rolled into one.

Like many people with dyslexia, Carly stuttered as a child.

Stuttering occurs in about 1% of the general population, but one <u>recent study</u> of dyslexic adults found 30% had a history of stuttering.

As a child, when Carly tried to speak she stutter, but also had facial tics causing her a great deal of anxiety and eventually desire to quit going to school...but her mother had a great <u>advice</u>:

"When my nervous system was bad, my mom would just say "Sing it." I started living an opera beginning when I was 7. I would sing as much as I could or start tapping my hand on my thighs. As long as there was a rhythm, I could get through it."

Music was a godsend.

Carly's family was very musical and she grew up in a New York apartment building where many family members lived. She had two uncles who lived in the basement and loved jazz. One taught her her first song on the ukelele. In high school, she started singing with her sister and her sister also taught her to play the guitar.

Another prolific singer songwriter who's been outspoken about his dyslexia is Marc Jordan. As a songwriter for performers and bands like Diana Ross, Manhattan Transfer, Chicago, Olivia Newton John, and Natalie Cole, he's sold over 35 million records.



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MUSIC

He's described his dyslexia as a "kind of blessing" because although school was difficult and frustrating, music was his outlet. Marc's father was a part-time cantor at Holy Blossom Templer and although he struggled with reading music (notes swam around on the page), he figured out the trick of asking his teacher to play the upcoming piece he was supposed to learn after the lesson. "I would run home and try to remember it. So I developed a good ear for music." He later described listening to popular songs as the radio as "my school."

Marc talks about his music as being cinematic and over the past few years, he has starting painting and selling works that try to capture the movies in his head.

Marc's latest album includes a **nod** to the music he heard growing up:

"This is not a thematic album. The songs on it are ones I have loved, in some cases since I was a kid. The American songbook songs are ones my father, Charles Jordan, sang in the 40s and 50s in New York. I grew up with them, and they've informed my songwriting to this day."

To get a taste of Marc's creative talents in musical interpretation, listen to his Both Sides Now below. He recognized that the song will speak to you differently depending on the time of life when you're hearing it.



Marc had to overcome some hurdles in the recording of this album; he wanted to recall the sound of Frank Sinatra singing in the middle of an orchestra, but he couldn't sing in the middle of the orchestra which is based in Prague. The song is even more remarkable knowing how it was done.

On Marc's latest album, besides his interpretation of classics written by other composers, he includes two originals, including a tender "He's Going to Break Your Heart" that he wrote for his teenage daughter when she started dating her first boyfriend.

"I saw them together, and I thought was he's going to break your heart. That's an emotional thing for me. As her father I knew that the time had come for me to stand back and let her live her life her own way. But I felt it so strongly that I wrote the song and then put it away. I didn't feel that I even could record it at that point. But now it feels right."

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Once I read Summit Center's report, I finally understood why my son was so frustrated. We made the changes he needed, and everything is better now. Tha<u>nk you!</u>"

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WINTER FRACTALS and DYSLEXIA

Fractal geometry is not just a chapter of mathematics, but one that helps Everyman to see the same world differently....Clouds are not spheres, mountains are not cones, coastlines are not circles, and bark is not smooth, nor does lightning travel in a straight line."

- Benoit Mandelbrot

Whenever it's starts to snow, I always think of fractals.

Fractals are infinitely repeating patterns that underlie all of nature, like the repeating patterns in a snowflake or tree roots, or length of a coastline.

An interesting thing to know is that the first person to put a name to fractals was the dyslexic mathematician named Benoit Mandlebrot.

Treehugger has collected some beautiful picture of fractals in nature. The examples at right include budding broccoli, copper crystals forming, ice crystals forming, and plexiglass exposed to a strong bolt of electricity.

These similar patterns were always around us, but it took a dyslexic person to recognize the similiar patterns and explain why these patterns were formed. Isn't that cool?

So what was Benoit's story? There was a dangerous epidemic going on when Benoit was a child, so his parents decided to school him at home.



References: Rum Bucolic Ape/flickr, Paul, Schnobby, and Bert Hickman, Wikimedia Commons

His uncle wasn't working so he had the responsibility for schooling him at home. Apparently his uncle had strong ideas about education and decided not to teach him the alphabet or multiplication tables. Benoit had said even as an adult multiplication gave him problems.

Much of his school of atypical (for instance playing chess and reading maps, but he did urge Benoit to "pay attention to miscellaneous facts". Benoit recalled being interested in mathematics and especially shapes as a young student, but another uncle who was a mathematician suggested that Geometry was a "dead" field.

With the threats of Nazi Germany, his family moved often and Benoit was unable to be schooled formally, instead taking odd jobs. Once as an apprentice toolmaker, he had a chance to work with different shapes again. He found he was good at making train parts from scrap steel.

Benoit was able to get through college and pursued advanced work under different supervisors at different universities, but his interests were so broad and in different disciplines that it looked as if he was failing by switching fields too often. <u>Recalled</u> Benoit:

"I must have appeared quite undisciplined, frequently dropping a topic in the middle of writing about it to pursue a new interest in a totally foreign field."

What really helped Benoit's development was gaining a fellowship at IBM.



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

INSPIRATION

Benoit found an supervisor who recognized the potential in his work and gave him time and resources to develop his ideas. Benoit still faced many obstacles in his newly created field; each time he tried to discuss why his findings had applications in other fields, he was rejected.

Benoit again: "...while working on economics, I was dying to mention that my methods were also pertinent to physics, but the referees of my papers told me to remove this broader philosophy. Later, when I studied turbulence (which, because of its unpredictability, resembled the stock market), my broader comments were again removed, and many papers were totally rejected."

Benoit recognized an opportunity to unify his ideas when he was invited to give a major talk in France. The talk was a major success and fractal geometry was accepted a few years later!



The video above is an introduction to fractals from the BBC. If you'd like to make a fractal Christmas Card --->

Print instructions HERE.



HONORING JAMES REDFORD

James Redford, director of the pioneering movie, The Big Picture Dyslexia, recently passed away at the age of 58. Both he and his wife, Kyle Redford have been leaders in the dyslexia movement and there are many in this community who have been profoundly touched by their work.

Like many in this community, James and Kyle first came to their awakening about dyslexia when one of their children, Dylan, had problems in school: James: "Like many dyslexics, Dylan is intelligent, thoughtful and intellectually curious – a "big picture" thinker. But at the age of ten, he was barely able to read and write. To say that school was difficult for him is beyond understatement. Now that he is grown and thriving, there are many things that I wish I had known about dyslexia at that time – things that would have helped me understand that his struggle in lower and middle school was not the final verdict on his academic or intellectual ability or ambition. When I was given the extraordinary opportunity to make a film about understanding dyslexia, the mission was simple: make the movie I wish my family could have seen when Dylan was functionally illiterate in 4th grade...

It was not easy to cast my wife and son in this movie. We are typically private people, and those who know us will be greatly surprised to see this film. However, the opportunity to help other families in turmoil was important to all of us, particularly my wife, Kyle, who is a life-long educator and now an expert regarding dyslexics and education." Today, Dylan is a documentary filmmaker like his father and grandfather before him. Enjoy these wonderful excerpts from the Big Picture documentary. The world is grateful for the gift of this movie.





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MICROSCHOOLING FOR DYSLEXIA

As the pandemic wears on, pods or microschools are becoming more common options for students with more individualized needs in their schooling...like dyslexic students.

WHAT'S HAPPENED IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

Public school experiences vary widely depending on whether closings have occurred again and how much hybrid or remote school are in place for different grades. Many teachers are reporting that homework isn't getting turned in (not surprising) and small group time is greatly reduced, making it harder to know which students are struggling.

MICROSCHOOLING AND PODS

What are microschools or pods? Microschools, nanoschools, or pandemic pods also vary, but they are based on a compromise between in-person school and 100% parent only or virtual homeschooling. Recognizing that children need socialization and can't just be on Zoom classes all day, some families have chosen to join small group (for instance 3-4 other families with similarly aged children or similar needs) to have students learn together and jointly hire a teacher or tutors to offload parents as teachers.

In some respects, it's like a small one room school house in rural communities. The approach is a way of reducing viral risk, but also offloading parents and responsibilities and allowing parents to keep up their full-time work responsibilities.

It can also vary the school routine which can also be helpful.

For dyslexic students, the are potential opportunities as well as caveats.

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EDUCATION



Today Show talks to families about pandemic pod learning.

Parents are finding each other through Facebook, Nextdoor, the PTA, and in the case of dyslexia, wherever groups of dyslexic students can be found - like tutoring centers, tutor client lists, and private schools for dyslexia.

Microschools are also not limited to individual families outside the school systems. Pods are also being created within private, charter, and some public schools.

WHAT CAN MICROSCHOOLS AND PANDEMIC PODS OFFER DYSLEXIC STUDENTS?

The possibility of small group learning for dyslexic students may a positive because structured literacy relies on immediate feedback for mispronunciations and other mistakes. The caveats are similar to ones impacting general classrooms: are the dyslexic students' needs identified within their pod and is a hired teacher or tutor prepared to meet them?

For those with students who have not been formally identified, you might want to consider having your student tested using the Dyslexia Screening App from

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Neurolearning (a formal partner of Dyslexic Advantage) or other virtual option. The app is available for any smartphone (iOS, Android) or digital tablet (iPad, Android, Kindle Fire) and has US-English and UK-English options. Test results designated as "Very High" for dyslexia qualify for free Bookshare resources. Those who qualify for **Bookshare** also can qualify for **LearningAlly.**

But what we especially like about Neurolearning's test compared to other short screeners, it that it comes with a detailed report explaining and making recommendations for areas that need them the most. In the example posted on the opposite page, this student's weakest area is in naming and retrieval, for instance.

General teachers or tutors who are hired to lead a microschool but who haven't had specific training to meet the needs of dyslexic students can take our **Dyslexia for Homeschoolers** course or **Dyslexia for Teachers** course, both of which provide big picture surveys of dyslexia as well as practical strategies for education. The Teachers course is more in-depth and also qualifies for teacher clock hours or graduate student credit through Seattle Pacific University, if those are desired.

If a teacher or tutor will be working through a structured literacy program with a student (like Sonday, All About Reading, Barton, or Wilson), then virtual training specifically how to use those materials are available.

If you student needs more repetition or reinforcement for the dedicated intervention that takes place in the pandemic pod, then ask the teacher / tutor for permission to record the lesson. Listening a second time may not always be necessary, but having the options for replaying the lesson can help clarify when a student learned something wrong or when a parent wants to understand what their student has been learning.

If your student has a significant amount of online work, be aware of the visual fatigue from blue light from computer screens and the added demands of reading and writing in online forums. If sessions are being taught online, then having copies of physical materials or manipulatives will also support learning.





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Dyslexia Subscale Scores



Visual Attention

The radar graph of your scores provides a quick overview of your Dyslexia Subscale Scores. The further a particular score is from the center of the graph, the greater the likelihood it represents a dyslexia-associated processing trait.



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READING



READING: FROM GUESS TO KNOW DR LUCY CALKINS TURNS TOWARD STRUCTURED LITERACY

After a public battle of words and criticism by educational press, Dr. Lucy Calkins of Columbia University Teachers College has announced that changes will be made in their curriculum.



For parents of dyslexic students, the change can be a game changer.

For decades, the Columbia Teachers College has dominated the reading instruction and curricula adopted by public schools across the US. But the curricula alone allowed the reading needs of many students to be passed over as they were systematically taught to "guess" about meaning based on picture and story cues, rather than decode words in a systematic and structured way. Without really being able to learn words without outside cues, many students fell off the map, passed from grade to grade without ever actually learning how to read.

For a summary of this debate between advocates of balanced and structured literacy, visit The Reading Wars: Will Dyslexic Students Be Helped? in our dyslexia library or articles.

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<u>APM Reports</u> applauds the changes, but also takes a more combative tone "Calkins' changing views could shift the way millions of children are taught to read. Her curriculum is the third most widely used core reading program in the nation, according to a 2019 Education Week survey. In addition, her group at Columbia works with teachers in at least 30 countries, including Mexico, Singapore and Japan....

The United States has long struggled with teaching kids to read; 65 percent of fourth graders read at a level considered basic or below, according to the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress. Reading scientists say part of the problem is that popular curriculum materials, including those written by Calkins, rely on a disproven theory about how people read....

Calkins, who once minimized the importance of phonics instruction, started selling a phonics program in 2018. But that program retained the cueing strategies. In a statement last November, Calkins lashed out at her critics, calling them "phonics-centric people" and denying that her materials promote cueing.

The new statement seems to mark a shift in her organization's understanding of the scientific research. In addition to acknowledging problems with cueing, the statement says Calkins' group has recently become convinced that instruction that benefits students with dyslexia also benefits all students, something reading scientists have long known.

Calkins' work has drawn fire from experts for years, but the criticism didn't seem to dent the popularity of her products. Now, in a series of high-profile moves, educators, policymakers and parents have begun turning away from her materials."

As APM notes, some state departments and planning committees have made statements to reject any curricula with cueing strategies and recently Dr. Calkins provided additional information that her group is adding a year-long phonological awareness curriculum as well as decodable books.

The changes, while welcome, will take years to trickle down to students.

Because of the shift to more remote learning, many parents may be in the situation of suddenly realized that their student can't read on grade level.

DECODABLE vs LEVELED READERS

To review, decodable books are books written to focus on a particular phonetic pattern or word family, while leveled readers are books more generally categorized by the difficulty of text.

When dyslexic students are still struggling with decoding words, they should be enrolled in a structured literacy program that provides incremental multisensory learning of word parts in conjunction with decodable books. It helps the information to stick. When students are reading decoding books in parallel with their language learning, they are more likely to try to figure out what words they are reading based on patterns that they learn, instead of guessing based on context.

Read more about decodable books in this article on Education Week.

Decodable books may be less interesting than leveled readers, but they are provided much needed practice and reinforcement for phonetic learning.

If you aren't sure what type of books your student is using in school, ask.

Talk to your student about the different types of reading (including 'ear reading') and help them to understand why decodable books are important. Once they recognize they are learning to crack the reading code, their hard work will become more appreciated.



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DYSLEXIA NEWS



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Dyslexia Can Be a Blessing



Daily Mail (UK)

Balanced Literacy Needs "Rebalancing"

Education Week

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Bipartisan Support for Dyslexia Legislation in Michigan

Michigan Radio



Interview with Dr Fernette Eide

Dyslexia Explored

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Teachers, Schools Fear Liability if Remote Classes Fall Short

Ed Source



Octavia Spencer and "Self-Made" Octavia is dyslexic, but no mention in this interview. Inspiring interview though Today Show



Jewell Discusses Dyslexia



Rolling Stone

Some Students Still Opt to Take SAT ACT

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Kansas Delays Dyslexia Services Due to Pandemic

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