

Dyslexic Advantage

NEWSLETTER



THE DYSLEXIA CRISIS IN SCHOOLS

- MANAGING UNCERTAINTY
- TONY BENNETT'S LAST CONCERT
- SUPPORTING YOUNG DYSLEXICS
- DR VARZI: CREATIVE ANTHROPOLOGY
- PRINCESS BEATRICE - DYSLEXIA GIFT



Fernette Eide MD, Editor

Dear Friends,

Here we go. As we dive into another school year, there are warning signs that dyslexic students are getting left behind. Do what you can to educate yourself to help your students or someone else's. Support the community by becoming a **Premium Subscriber** and discover the most comprehensive resource on dyslexia on the web. You can sign up for an individual subscription or gift a school with institutional subscription. Don't forget there is a **Homeschooler's** course for parents and for teachers, a clock hour course that provides professional development credits (**Dyslexia for Teachers**).

You don't have to go it alone!

The **NEUROLEARNING** Dyslexia Screening App is \$39.99 and available for children and adults 7-70 years old. iPad, iPhone, Android, and Kindle Fire.



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

Thank you volunteers Shelley Wear, Trish Seres, Dayna Russell Freudenthal, and Michelle Wiliams for their astute critique and proofing. Thanks to Lady Grace Belarmino for beautiful design and layout.

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.

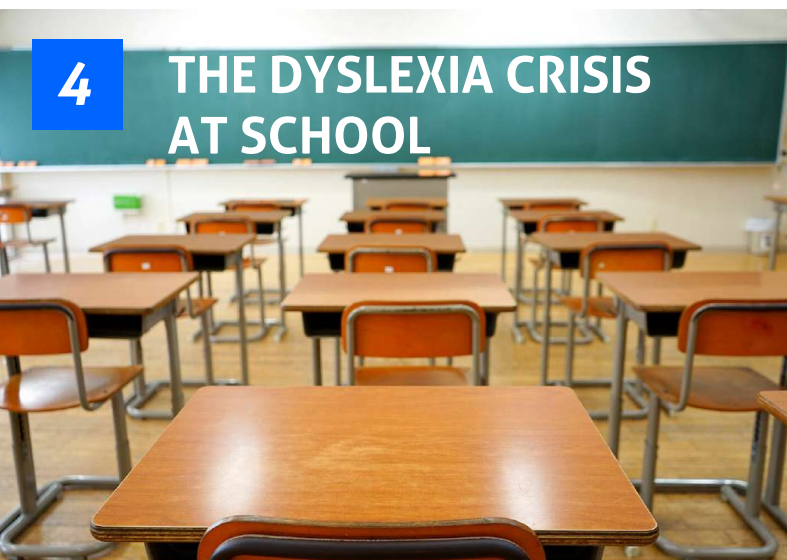


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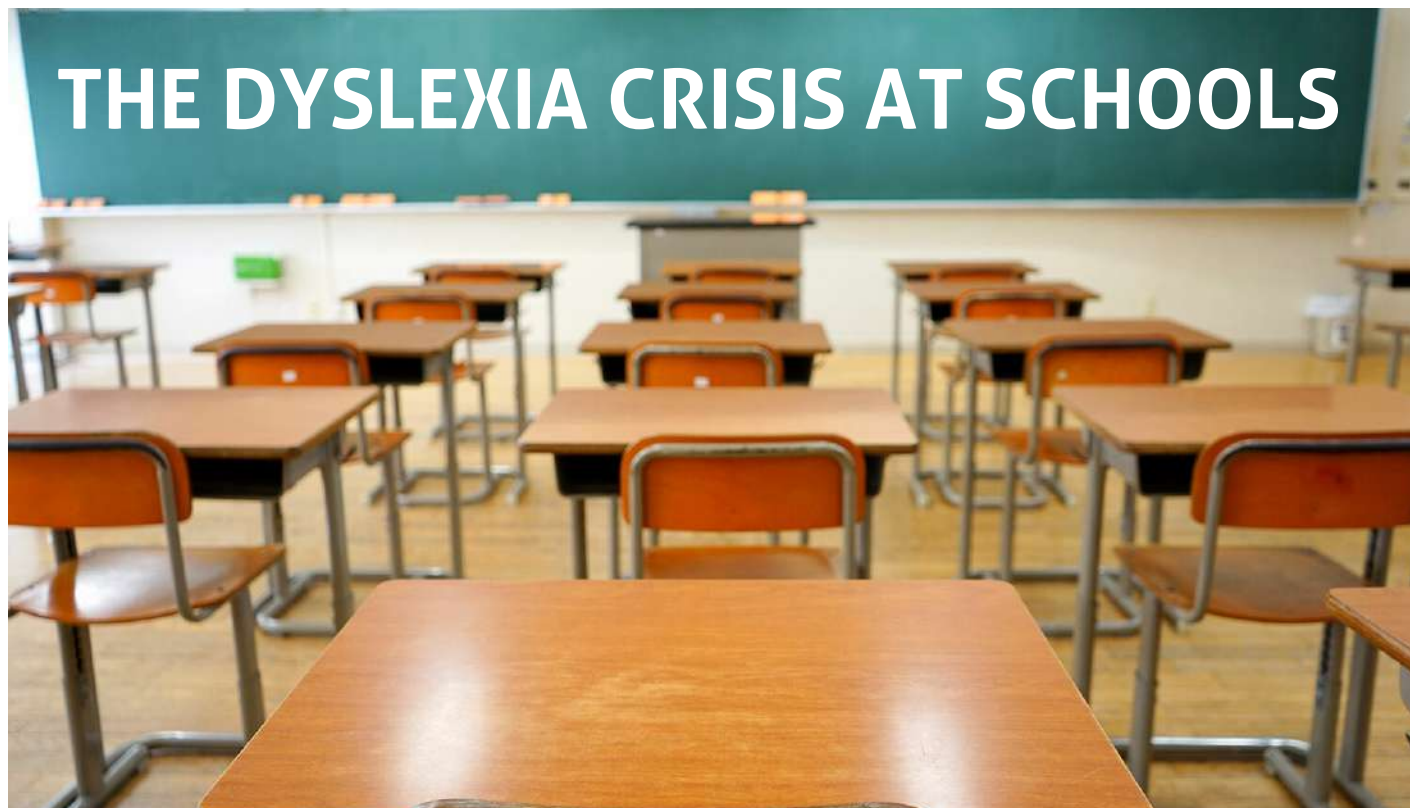


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DYSLEXIA NEWS



THE DYSLEXIA CRISIS AT SCHOOLS



The house is on fire.

There is a conflagration of factors coming together that are affecting dyslexic students in public school beyond COVID.

COVID certainly has its share of blame and breaking the camel's back when it comes to providing essential services to dyslexic students. If you have a student in public schools now, get informed and be prepared to advocate and supplement your student's education if necessary.

The San Francisco Examiner recently [discussed](#) the devastating consequences for dyslexic students in the midst of the pandemic.

COVID CLASSROOMS - HARD FOR STUDENTS TO HEAR AND SEE

With the requirement to distance and wear a mask, it is harder than ever for dyslexic students (who often have auditory, visual and motor imitation difficulties) to accurately register the correct sound pronunciations that are required for fluent and automatic reading. Some classrooms have plexiglass barriers which also create sound dampening and distortion and worsen auditory perceptions.

SHORTAGE OF SPECIALISTS, PARA-EDUCATORS, SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

With the shortage of specialists like reading specialists, speech language pathologists, paraeducation professionals, and school psychologists, it is even less likely that students who need frequent intensive remediation will get it.

With extreme shortages in school psychologists, long waitlists are arising for students to get tested and some districts are resistant to getting classrooms or even students at-risk to be assessed because they worry that too many students will be identified.

SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS REGARDING DYSLLEXIA BEING WAIVED DUE TO PANDEMIC

Despite successful dyslexia laws being passed, some pauses are being put in place due to the "unprecedented pandemic", while other implementation laws are being tabled (like California SB 237) in the setting of other educational priorities.

As a result, if your student is at a critical point in his or her needing to receive remediation in dyslexia, they may not receive the attention or intervention they need.

MISTAKES IN DYSLLEXIA SCREENING

Despite high hopes after initial waves of dyslexia legislation, the bar in dyslexia screening has been lowered to such a degree in some cases that it becomes pointless. Some reading software companies have rebranded reading placement tests as "dyslexia risk screeners" although they do not identify dyslexia and consequently won't make specific recommendations regarding intervention, accommodations, or assistive technology.

Professionals with a comprehensive understanding of dyslexia know that dyslexia is much more than reading. There are writing and spelling implications, but also many aspects of learning specialized subjects like foreign language. A student is not formally identified won't receive the appropriate level of support and education or accommodations to show the depth of their knowledge and understanding on standardized tests, college entrance exams, and professional licensing exams.



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CRISIS

Universities have also made fundamental miscalculations in their planning for school screeners. In the idea that screening tests might be able to test for dyslexia risk before students even started school (pre-kindergarten), resources were thrown behind screening 5 and 6 year olds instead of older students who are fallen behind and otherwise seem to have no hope of catching up. If these programs are to develop their tests for older students, now they will have to deal with potential confounding effects that the pandemic has had on all students in terms of setting new norms.

Over-emphasis or even exclusive emphasis on pre-kindergarten screeners was a mistake magnified by the fact that there have been huge drops in preschool and kindergarten enrollments. Read more about this in [The Pandemic Exodus: Kindergarten Enrollment Drops](#).

IT'S UP TO YOU

The intent of this article is not to point any fingers, but rather wake the community up about the crises that affecting the education of dyslexic students.

If you have a student who has languished in basic skills of reading, writing, and spelling, then get your student assessed and develop a plan to target weaknesses. Dyslexia can be screened using the inexpensive [Neurolearning App](#) and more extensive testing can be performed by a learning specialist, educational psychologist, or even private school for learning differences (school may do this as a service, and not require enrollment). Being equipped with knowledge can help you know how to design your student's education.

Be careful about relying on "adaptive" software programs. Some students may do well with them, but many students learn best by 1-on-1 experiences, so working with a tutor, parent, other relative, or friend of the family. Working regularly, even just a few minutes a day can lead to tangible successes and a reset on learning. There are many outstanding curricula and programs that are designed for new homeschooling parents or tutors. Some have online training and coaching.

If you need more in-depth knowledge about dyslexia than this newsletter, you can also become a [Premium Subscriber](#) or enroll in one of our courses. Also feel free to ask questions by email or discussion forums at [DyslexicAdvantage.org](#). Every bit of information you gain can help your students.



TABLET-BASED DYSLEXIA

- **Dyslexia Subscale Scores range from 1 to 10.**
- **A score of 5 is average on each subscale.**
- *Higher scores indicate which processing systems or skills are contributing most to elevating your Total Dyslexia Score, and to any dyslexia-associated challenges you are experiencing.*

Your Dyslexia Subscale Scores Are:



Sub Word Processing: 7



Working Memory: 7



Naming / Retrieval: 10



Visual Attention: 7

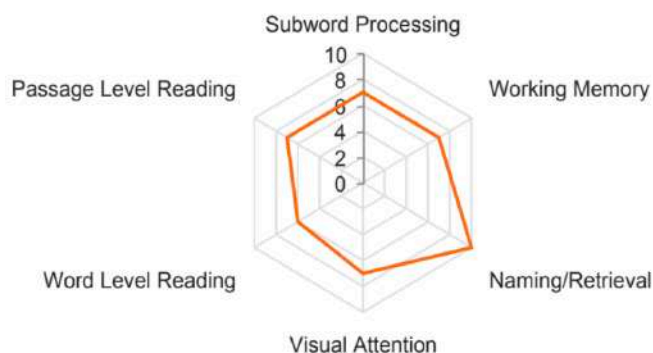


Word Level Reading: 6



Passage Level Reading: 7

Dyslexia Subscale Scores



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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PRINCESS BEATRICE

THE GIFT OF DYSLEXIA

"Even referring to it as a diagnosis, I feel, does a disservice to the brilliance of some of the most fantastic minds that we have... just shifting the narrative a little bit towards something that is positive, something that is impactful, can really help everyone."

-Princess Beatrice



Princess Beatrice (Wikipedia)

Princess Beatrice is expecting her first child and she spoke about how she sees dyslexia as a gift.

From an [interview](#) with Giovanna Fletcher:

"I was very lucky that when I was first told that I had dyslexia, not one person around me ever made me feel like it was a 'lesser than' scenario. It was always about moving forward, it was always about what you could do. Never about what you can't. And that's something that's really, really important to me. I find it very inspiring every day to talk about it. Because if you can just change one little idea in someone's head, then you've done a great thing..."

I remember feeling really confused – an overwhelming sense of, 'Why does this all feel a little bit muddled? Why do I feel like these words on the page are just a bunch of... What is going on here? What am I expected to do with this?' ...

My husband's also dyslexic so we'll see whether we're having this conversation in a couple of months' time with a new baby in the house, but I really see it as a gift. And I think life is about the moments, it's the challenges that make you...

...having dyslexia and reflecting on where I am right now in my career path, and also as an older person looking back, it definitely has allowed me to look at things in a new way and come up with solutions."

INSPIRATION



A short excerpt from Princess Beatrice's interview:



Princess Beatrice has shared that she had moments where she thought, 'I'm not good enough, I'm not smart enough, why am I not like the others?'," but those moments were ultimately helpful later. Now she reflects, "... if I could say to my younger self... 'Do not be defined by those moments that happen to you in that exam or that classroom, because they are lifelong learnings and they build you up to be who you are'."

Prior to the pandemic, the princess had been working for a software company in communications and strategic partnerships. The position, she [said](#) at the time, played to her strengths because it allowed her to focus on her communication skills rather than "sitting behind a desk."

MANAGING UNCERTAINTY

This pandemic is battle of endurance - for mind as well as body.

There is nothing that is certain...except for uncertainty. For many of us that includes what work, education, or free time will look like. As dreadful as all that seems, I do know that some members of this community are at there best in uncertain and constantly changing times - and that is a good thing!

This article from Harvard Business Review put it's finger on the overwhelmed feeling some of business leaders are feeling at this continually changing dynamic:

"...leaders we work with often report feeling stuck, ill-equipped, or overwhelmed as they face the growing challenges of their roles."

The Business Review simplifies down to 6 recommendations:

1. Embrace the Discomfort of Not Knowing
2. Distinguish Between Complicated and Complex
3. Let Go of Perfectionism
4. Resist Over-Simplifications and Quick Conclusions
5. Don't Go It Alone
6. Zoom Out or Focus on the Big Picture.

It seems that all of those points can apply no matter what level of uncertainty we are dealing with.

What I would add is that periods of uncertainty can also lead to new insights and opportunities for solutions.

If you still have family members who are working their way through the educational system, some external pressures of timing (like keeping up with peers, the sheer quantity of homework and studying for tests) may be softened.

WELL-BEING

Dyslexic students may have difficulty hearing sounds when their teachers and even fellow students are wearing masks, so if you haven't jumped in to help your student 1:1, this is a great time to help.

If you are a parent, develop a regular routine of listening to your child read.

If reading is very effortful, develop a practice of overviewing a new book first and reading the first few pages or chapter which helps the students recognize the setting and characters for the story. Sometimes you may want to read the descriptive parts of the story (usually more difficult to read), allowing your student to follow along looking over your shoulder, while they read the dialogue or sound effects which tends to be easier.

If you are taking a more active role in building your student's fluency, then consider doing echo reading or repeated reading (having the student improve reading fluency by reading the same passage aloud 4 times).

In the example at right, the teacher is timing the student, but if this creates anxiety at home and the passage is short, don't time.



As this pandemic wears on-an-on, don't put off your learning about technology and ways to simplify your learning or workflow. Look for and enjoy the unplanned positives that may come out of pandemic changes. Take care of yourself - that will help you take care of others.

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DR ROXANNE VARZI: CREATIVE ANTHROPOLOGIST

I recently had the chance to talk to Dr Roxanne Varzi, a writer, anthropologist, and filmmaker who was also the first Fulbright Awardee since the Islamic Revolution for research in Iran.

She's doing such interesting work that is creative on many levels that I wanted to share some of what she does with you. She is also gifting us with her audiobook, *Last Scene Underground: A* Ethnographic Novel of Iran, that we'll be doing a random draw as a giveaway later this week.

Interested? Send an email to:
team@dyslexicadvantage.org

From the description of the book:

"Leili could not have imagined that arriving late to Islamic morals class would change the course of her life. But her arrival catches the eye of a young man, and a chance meeting soon draws Leili into a new circle of friends and artists. Gathering in the cafes of Tehran, these young college students come together to create an underground play that will wake up their generation. They play with fire, literally and figuratively, igniting a drama both personal and political to perform their play - just once...."

Roxanne is not a traditional academic. Usually professors work their way toward tenure with research papers in academic journals, but after writing a book on young people coming of age in the Islamic Republic, she made an experimental film on mourning and martyrdom, then a sound art project called *Whole World Blind*, an audionovel, *The Last Scene Underground*, and additional video documentaries.



Like many adult dyslexics, Roxanne discovered her own dyslexia through her son. As a child, Roxanne and her family fled Iran when she was 8 and classroom challenges mainly presented with spelling difficulties and math.

Because she was not formally identified, she had a great deal of trouble with Calculus, failing it twice. The worst thing about her university not taking into account a possibly unrecognized LD is that it threatened her scholarship and ultimately she was not allowed to take an honors poetry class because her GPA was so low due to her Calculus grades.

But Roxanne eventually found her niche in Anthropology which was such an enjoyable interdisciplinary field for her. As a graduate student, Roxanne also found she did well in seminars that tended to reward deep and out-of-the-box thinking. One of Roxanne's breakthroughs in college was finding a mentor who encouraged her to design her own major. Sometimes she had to argue for specific substitutions - like instead of Microeconomics which had a lot of mathematics, she took Poverty and Culture and worked taking life histories from homeless people which was more personally meaningful to her as well as relevant to solving real problems in the world.

Roxanne's general predicament may be more common than we realize among students in this community. Degree requirements by their definition are mandatory; and courses, depending on how they are taught, may prioritize book learning, memorization, and exercises over real world creative problem solving.

If you or a student you know has had to leave a program over course requirements, look into the possibility of designing your own program or major or transferring to another institution that might allow you to do so. Roxanne was also able to sidestep the standard microeconomics course by substituting an independent study elect with a professor in her own discipline that she could talk directly to and have questions answered.

One of the most important take-home points I had after talking to Roxanne is that it's important to know yourself, know what you need, and advocate for yourself when you encounter obstacles or roadblocks that weren't designed for you. Dyslexics, as a group, are strongly contextual and creative learners. They may need to learn through direct experiences and those experiences may ultimately be a source of their unique contributions to the world.



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SUPPORTING YOUNG DYSLEXICS DURING THE PANDEMIC



With all the continued upheaval due the pandemic, here's some advice for trying to keep the big picture of the coming school year:

DYSLEXIC DEVELOPMENT HAS ITS OWN TIME TABLE

There can be a very late bloom for a lot of the younger years for dyslexics - so don't compare or expect that connecting the dots in the early years will at all predict life in the future. The pandemic of course has created chaos of its own so a lot of people will be in a similar boat.

Fewer assignments, more time, less testing - these are all positive things for young dyslexic students.

TAKE CARE THAT PANDEMIC REQUIREMENTS DON'T IMPAIR LEARNING

As we're heading off into more lockdowns and mask requirements, be aware that dyslexic students may be disproportionately disadvantaged when it comes to hearing their teacher and following what is being said.

If your student is still working on decoding, think about learning how to help at home. Students who are making mistakes with sounds, need to learn sounds slowly, clearly, and often watching mouth positions to distinguish similar sounds. Coordinate with your student's teacher so you can review learning at home (with masks!).

If your student is learning a lot online, also be aware that sounds and out of sync video can cause significant troubles. Ask your student how the sound is for remote lessons. Are headphones needed or a better connection? Are there school funds available for any upgrades?



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PANDEMIC LIFE

Some tutors are meeting in-person (outside, distanced) or remotely, and if you are a parent who is not confident in your ability to help your student, see whether the curriculum you are planning to use has parent coaches or tutors who can help you find your way to help.

Many tutors will also allow you to sit in remote sessions or record them so you can see what activities your tutor is doing with your child.

Regular short practice every day during the week can reinforce formal lessons or tutoring sessions if your student has them only once a week.

If sessions aren't too long and are manageable, usually most kids will do them... and as they notice they are making improvements, it will get even easier to do. Avoid long sessions and work with a manageable incremental stepwise structured literacy curriculum.

LISTEN TO YOUR STUDENT AND LISTEN TO YOURSELF

Research from UCSF suggests that dyslexic students are more emotionally sensitive to other people and situations than their non-dyslexic peers. In the midst of the ongoing stress of this pandemic, make sure that you listen and look for signs of stress and unhappiness, and seek professional help if your student may need it.

If you are homeschooling, you probably already know this, but school activities don't need to be full school days. You may often be able to get what you need done in little time spurts - 20 minutes here, 10 minutes there. When we were homeschooling, our son could focus on math after physical exercise or taking a walk around the neighborhood.

Take care of yourself as well as your kids. Give yourself and your kids breaks when needed and look into positive psychology practices for getting through all the twist and turns the coming school year may send your way. Be grateful for little and big things; ideas for a gratitude journal are [here](#).

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SINGER TONY BENNETT'S LAST CONCERT

"To me, life is a gift, and it's a blessing to just be alive. And each person should learn what a gift it is to be alive no matter how tough things get."
- Tony Bennett

Tony Bennett really sounds great at 95 years old. Check out his duets on [page 25](#) with Lady Gaga. After two sell out concerts at Radio Music Hall in New York City, though, his doctor has finally convinced him to retire.

Tony's won 20 Grammy Awards, a Lifetime Achievement Award, two Primetime Emmys and was honored as both an NEA Jazz Master and Kennedy Center Honoree. He's sold over 50 million records worldwide.

Tony grew up during the Great Depression and lost his father when he was 10 years old. His mother worked as a seamstress to support the family and he said he got his start as a singer and entertainer when extended family members would come over to the house on Sundays and he would get to sing for them and make them happy.

He attended the High School of Industrial Arts in Manhattan and further developed his love of singing and painting.

About his dyslexia, Tony has said: "I've always had a bit of dyslexia, so it's hard for me to read proficiently. It's very difficult. My eyes bounce, so it's difficult for me to follow musically that way. I have to do it instinctively and intuitively.

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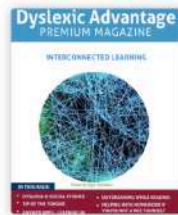
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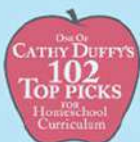
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INSPIRATION

"I just have to work a lot slower. It comes a lot slower. But good learning takes a long time," he says. "To really learn something, you have to keep doing it until it appears effortless. So it takes time."

Tony has been friends with Lady Gaga for years and she shared how he "saved her life" and convinced her to keep singing when she was thinking of giving it up completely.

He told her that she was a sophisticated lady and that personally he would never give up singing. It made her think and today she credits him with helping her enjoy singing again.

Tony was discovered by Generation X when he appeared on MTV in the early 1990's. He would go on to sing duets with Dixie Chicks, Elton John, Stevie Wonder, K.D. Lang, Celine Dion, John Legend, and Diane Krall. In Duets II, he sang duets with Amy Winehouse, Natalie Cole, Faith Hill, Andrea Bocelli, Carrie Underwood, and Lady Gaga.

Here's Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga in CBS Good Morning.

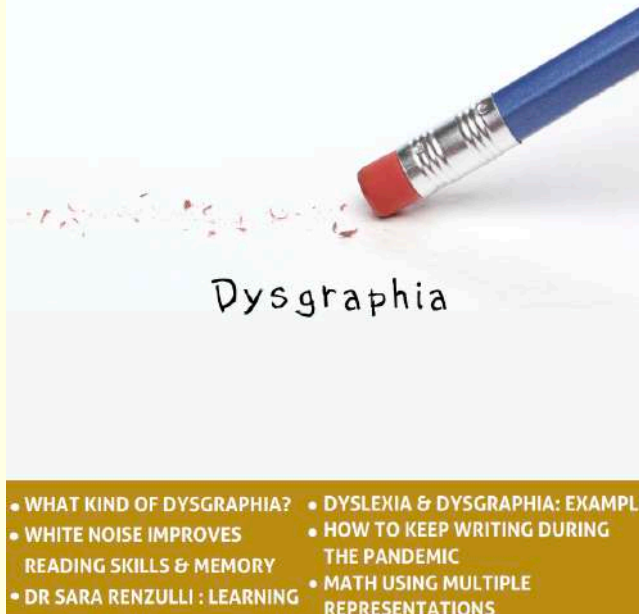


PREMIUM



PREMIUM ISSUE SIXTY-NINE SEPTEMBER 2021

Dyslexic Advantage PREMIUM MAGAZINE



THE DYSGRAPHIA ISSUE

- What Kind of Dysgraphia?
- White Noise Improves Reading & Memory
- Dr Sara Renzulli on Learning
- Dyslexia and Dysgraphia
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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. Thank you!"

INSPIRATION



Tony in his studio Benedetto Arts ([Benedetto](#) is his original family name).

"My whole life has been just singing and painting. I just do those two things."
- Tony Bennett



"Last Year was Devastating..." SPED San Francisco

San Francisco Examiner



The Pandemic Hurt These Students Most

NY Times



Teacher Comes Full Circle, Inspires Students to Pursue Dreams

KLTV.com Channel 7



The Pandemic Made it Hard to Spot Students with Disabilities - Now Schools Must Catch Up

EdWeek



Chuck Close Portrait Painter Dies at 81

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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. Thank you!"



"Singing intimately is almost like thinking into a microphone,
so it helps to have the song buried inside you."

- Tony Bennett