

Dyslexic Advantage

NEWSLETTER

BACK TO SCHOOL

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY

- DYSLEXIA IN HIGHER ED
- HELPING SCHOOL WORRIES
- UNDERSTANDING MATH VS. PROCEDURAL FLUENCY

- WINSTON IN COLLEGE
- CHAT WITH TABITHA MANCINI
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Dear Friends

If you have questions about your students heading back to school, join us for an online **BACK TO SCHOOL Parents Q & A** that will be perfect for families new to dyslexia as well as anyone who has questions before new school year starts.. The event is FREE for PREMIUM subscribers and otherwise \$30. Gift a friend? It all goes to support Dyslexic Advantage: September 23rd 9 am PDT / 12 noon EDT. Sign up [HERE](#).

Huge shout-out of thanks for our sponsors, Premium subscribers, and donors for life-changing resources they provide. If you're enjoying our book, please add a review at Amazon, Audible or somewhere else. It helps spread the positive message - and thank you! This issue: <https://joom.ag/PvJd>

The **NEUROLEARNING** Dyslexia Screening App is \$79.99 and available for children and adults 7-70 years old. iPad, iPhone, Android, and Kindle Fire.



The app may qualify for services such as Benetech's huge free library of e-books. Bulk discounts available for higher ed.

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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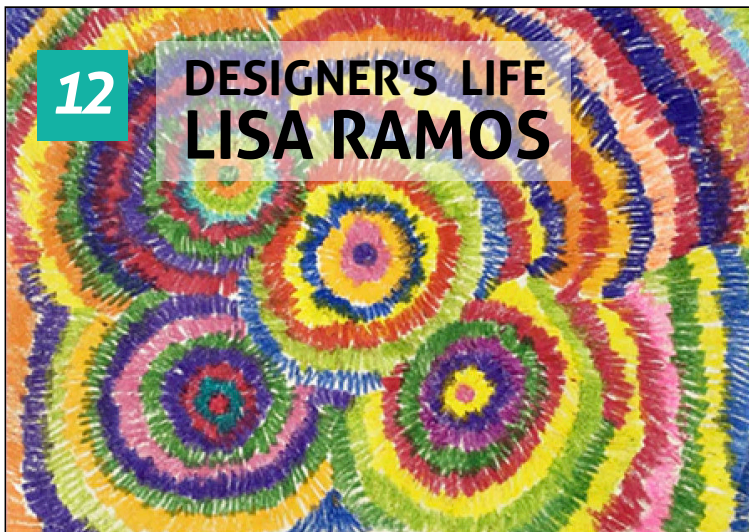
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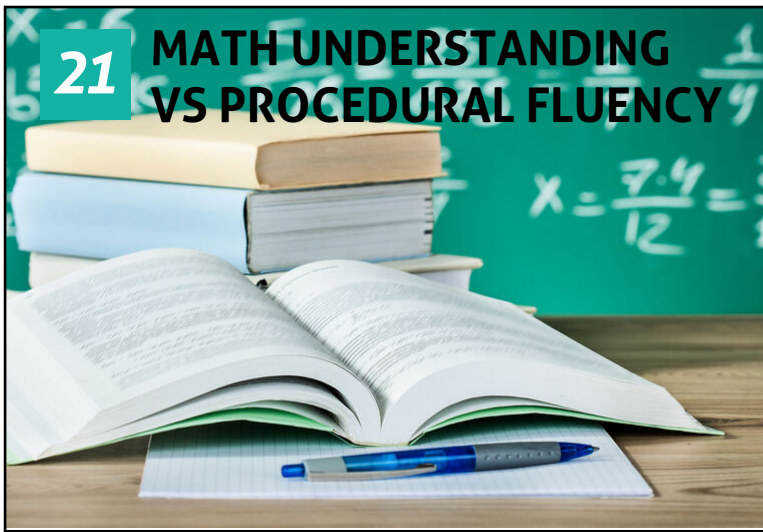
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DYSLEXIA NEWS



COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES SHOULD BE IDENTIFYING DYSLEXIA



"A GradNation report recently released by Civic Enterprises and the Everyone Graduates Center at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education shamefully found that "... students with disabilities graduate at a rate nearly 20 points lower than the average [high school] graduation rate for all students."

- [Stephanie Knight, Beacon College](#)

A MAJORITY OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN COLLEGE DO NOT INFORM THEIR SCHOOL

Only about 1/3 of students with disabilities informed their school, according to research by the NCES or National Center for Education Statistics, although not disclosing put these students at increased risk of not completing their programs and graduating. Reasons for this may vary - but freshman students frequently underestimate the increased difficulty of college work, the quantity of reading and writing required, and the impact of college life (dorm and general college socializing) on studying, homework, and studying for tests.

Most students who disclose to their colleges will receive supports like tutoring, help at writing centers, study groups, and assistive technology.

Students who may have had strong supports in school from parents and teachers, may struggle greatly in a new school, far from home, in large classes where they have little routine contact with their professor.



MOST US COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES DO NOT IDENTIFY DYSLEXIA

In the US, many colleges and universities do not test or screen for dyslexia although unrecognized dyslexia may place these students at increased risk for failure and dropping out without supports and accommodations in place.

The United Kingdom has more free dyslexia assessments and financial support for higher education students

In the UK, free dyslexia screening and designated dyslexia specialists are much more common in higher education. In addition, students identified with dyslexia are given a [DSA or Disabled Students Allowance](#) - money that can be used toward a new computer with specialized software like text-to-speech, spellcheck and grammar check, scanning pens, or dyslexia coaches and tutoring. If you are buying a new computer, you will have to pay the first £200.

Students are eligible for DSA support whether they are full-time or part-time.

DYSLEXIA TESTING MAY BE DIFFICULT TO OBTAIN FOR HIGHER ED STUDENTS

This past week, Brock and I attended the [AHEAD](#) (Association of Higher Education and Disability) Annual Convention. We spoke with many college and university disability support specialists who told us they had limited resources for identifying dyslexic students and often no psychologists on staff. With the cost of comprehensive dyslexia testing by a psychologist ranging from \$3000-\$5000+, few students could afford testing if they hadn't had it before in their K-12 years. Some rural schools didn't have local psychologists who were available to test adults, and some counselors even admitted that even if a student got tested, the report wouldn't provide sufficient detail to tell the school or student what was needed. One of the reasons why Brock and I and Nils Lahr formed a social purpose corporation and the low-cost [Neurolearning](#) dyslexia screener was to make dyslexia identification more cost-effective and accessible to individuals who could not afford testing for thousands of dollars.

HIGHER EDUCATION

I spoke with one disability director at a state university in New York, and he said he had a stack of students who would benefit by using Bookshare, but he had no way to give them access because of insufficient documentation.

HOW MUCH DOCUMENTATION IS NECESSARY?

The US Department of Justice (Civil Rights Division) published [this letter](#) that clarified issues regarding the documentation presented to qualify for accommodations.

Tests include high school entrance exams (for example IEEE), college entrance (SAT, ACT), graduate school exams (MCAT, LSAT, GRE), and trade exams (like cosmetology).

The letter states "proof of past testing accommodations in similar test settings is generally sufficient to support a request for the same testing accommodations for a current standardized exam or other high-stakes test."

The letter then proceeds to give examples of students with prior accommodation in middle school being granted accommodations later in high-stakes tests, evidence of prior IEP or 504 in public school (but the letter also states that having an IEP or 504 previously is not required), and the fact that testing services should defer to documentation by a qualified professional who has done an individual assessment with the student.

These are guidelines set by the Department of Education and the recent [Department of Justice settlement with the Educational Testing Service](#). The Department of Justice recognized that "ensuring that private entities offering such examinations do not discriminate on the basis of disability is an issue of general public importance."

For those who have been denied accommodations or are concerned that their documentation is insufficient, we would recommend reading the entire document. The DOJ statement has made a strong settlement. This does not mean that individual students will not encounter problems - it does mean that there will be stronger recourse on appeal.



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HIGHER EDUCATION



The DOJ also made a strong statement about the implications for other testing services: including, but not limited to, the SAT, ACT, GMAT, LSAT, and MCAT).

It also noted that students previously approved for testing accommodations not be required to have repeat testing and that it should be sufficient for a student to check a box state that they have an "ongoing need for the same testing accommodations."

Other good things in the settlement include a requirement that test proctors be trained in the administration of test accommodations and this statement:

"ETS shall update its test taker communications to include additional information specifying where test takers may (i) seek additional information regarding obtaining documentation irrespective of ability to pay; and (ii) find resources available for test takers with financial constraints."

STRONGER PROTECTIONS REGARDING TEST ACCOMMODATIONS

All this is important news for testing students and employees pursuing higher certifications that will act as a gateway to higher paying jobs.

For far too long, burdensome and expensive requirements for additional testing have excluded many from accommodations and free resources that would help them in the careers.

The decision was only published online earlier this year - so institutions and testing organizations may still be in the midst of planning policy changes. Understand your rights and be prepared to self-advocate!

TABITHA MANCINI, MEd, DIRECTOR OF WINSTON IN COLLEGE ONLINE

Recently, I had the pleasure of talking to Tabitha Mancini, Director of Winston in College Online. Winston recently became a sponsor of this Dyslexic Advantage community, but I've known Tabitha for over a decade. She's been active in the learning support of dyslexic and other neurodiverse students for over a decade. When I first met Tabitha, she was a learning strategy instructor at the University of Connecticut and we had talked about how she helped students and how it was important for students to have a positive understanding of their strengths and differences. Later when our paths crossed again, she was a director of the dual degree program at Landmark College. Because Tabitha is also dyslexic herself, she is in a unique position to advise dyslexic students.



COLLEGE SUPPORT

Winston Prep is a network of 8 schools for students with learning differences - the first school was founded in the New York, and now there are schools also in Connecticut, New Jersey, Long Island, and in Marin County, California.

Their physical campuses are for students ages 8-21, but their resources will help many families with their 1:1 support of college students, many of whom will be away from their families and traditional sources of support for the first time in their lives.

The first year of college can be a vulnerable time for many students; many students don't request accommodations and if their first tests and courses don't go well, they may decide to leave school and wrongly conclude that higher education is not for them.

In the Winston in College Program, students meet 2-3 times per week and specialists provide subject support, but the program is also very attuned to social and emotional support; there are so many unique challenges that take place on college campuses and for some students, difficulties can grow in there isn't close communication with students on a regular basis.

Tabitha recently hosted a webinar What to Expect in College where other college disability professionals share their advice for incoming or college students.

The professionals represented here were from University of Illinois-Urbana, Yale University, and University of Connecticut.





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AN ARTIST'S LIFE: HANDBAG AND JEWELRY DESIGNER LISA RAMOS

"Most recently, learning about my dyslexia has been both life changing and surprisingly comforting to me. Creating with my hands has led me on an interesting journey of uncovering my dyslexia and helped clarify why my childhood academics were such a struggle." - Lisa Ramos

Thanks to Lisa for allowing us to share an excerpt from her story. For the full post, visit [here](#).

I Never Felt Smart Enough

As a child academics were extremely difficult. I hated classroom settings. My many childhood struggles included pronunciation, memory, writing, reading and of course focusing. In school, I dreaded being called upon in class to answer questions and feared reading out loud. My academic shortcomings created tremendous amounts of endless childhood anxieties. I never felt smart enough. I quietly labeled myself as the "stupid kid" in class and far too many of my classroom experiences echoed that sentiment.



I remember many uncomfortable elementary school moments. Every Tuesday in class I would nervously wait for the bright blue metal door to swing open, followed by a teacher's aid calling my name. Immediately, my heart would start pounding. I would quickly get up from my desk. Every step I took towards the door delivered the walk of shame.

I thought "here we go again, the stupid kid going to the learning center." I constantly worried about what my peers were thinking when I had to attend these special classes. Another uncomfortable childhood school experience that haunts me, telling my classmates I am repeating kindergarten. It was embarrassing explaining to kids and adults I have to stay back in kindergarten. That experience certainly did not help boost my self confidence. It only contributed to my severe sensitivity with academics.

I learned during early childhood that incorporating humor with difficult situations was a healthy coping mechanism. Humor helped my confidence building and it simply felt good to laugh when I was stressed. I enjoyed making others laugh and it comforted me during tough times. I was determined to get through my challenges and tried to focus on the things I really enjoyed.



My joyful childhood memories included my social life, making delicious nachos, dreaming about inventions, storytelling, jewelry making, listening to music, my art and photography classes. As I grew into my teenage years the more accepting I became with my academic challenges. and I found ways to work around it. Not being like other kids was the reality whether I liked it or not.

College is Tough

Regardless of my learning differences, I went on to college. I was determined to get a bachelor's degree. My first two college years I attended Diablo Valley College in Concord, California. Although initially I wanted to go away to a state college, I did not think it could be a reality. I picked a junior college instead to avoid taking the SAT test. Timed exams were difficult for me. I usually scored poorly and never had adequate time to finish. That created too much anxiety, resulting in constant distractions. My learning differences also included noise sensitivity which meant I was easily distracted in testing environments.

INSPIRATION

College consisted of both negative and positive experiences. My first two uncomfortable college experiences started with my English and math classes. I remember working really hard on an English paper only to find out it was poorly written. After my English professor told me my writing skills were horrible, I questioned staying in college. A little voice inside said "Don't give up, just keep at it". Therefore, I continued working on improving my studies. Another reminder about not feeling smart enough happened after taking a college math exam. Being nervous about taking the test was an understatement. I was scared of failing. I had to pass this test in order to graduate college. That put a lot of pressure on me. I studied really hard and tried to remain positive about my test results. My main concern, finishing the exam on time. Sure enough, when the test day came I barely finished in time. As I waited nervously in the upcoming weeks for my test results, I prayed for a miracle. When I finally received my test results, I was crushed. I had failed miserably. My next plan, quit college.

Before giving up on my college degree, instinct said, "Something doesn't feel right. I know I had several of the math answers correct." After a few days of misery, I decided to call the testing office. A patient lady answered the phone. After telling her, I was preparing to leave college due to my failed test she wanted to help. She put me on hold to find my test. I nervously awaited. With little confidence, I prayed for another miracle. After 5 minutes on hold, she found my test. Then she started looking it over for the next 10 minutes. She noticed something off and believed to have found the problem. Ironically, I had written in the wrong test id - choices were A or B. Then she delivered the most unbelievable news I could have ever imagined. A miracle, I passed the test. A bonus, my test score was average. I was so relieved and over the moon. I learned a huge lesson that day, to follow my gut and persistence pays off in life. I happily remained in college.

There were a few college courses that delivered great joy and enriched my academic studies. My favorite college subjects were the history of art and architecture. My history professor was incredible. His courses captivated my attention. The professor's teaching style allowed me to easily comprehend and retain the subject matter. He used visual aides and detailed storytelling

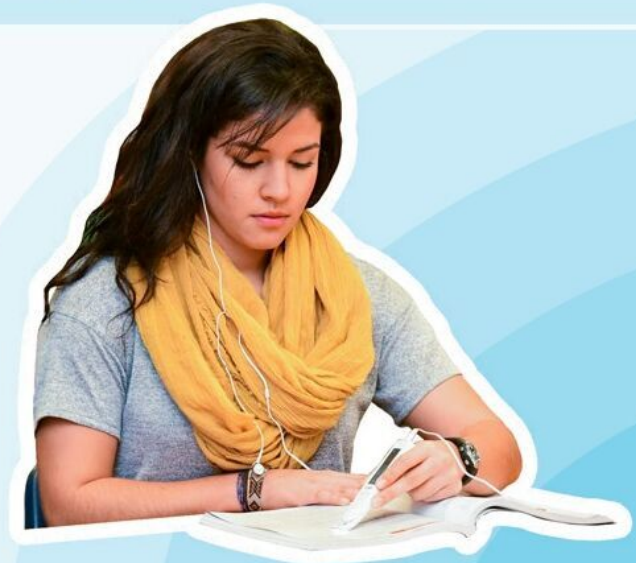
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INSPIRATION


teaching techniques. His courses kept me on the edge of my seat, wanting to learn more. Surprisingly, the class tests were not difficult for me and I passed exams with flying colors. I continued taking more of his classes, scoring A's in all of the courses. I was thrilled with my grades. At the time, I was baffled why I did so well in his classes and struggled in most other courses. Today, it all makes sense now. I thrive on visual learning and storytelling. I retain information using episodic memories. I struggle with semantic memory, which is how the majority of my teachers taught. Therefore, most of my schooling environments were not ideal in order for me to thrive...

Life After College

Although I no longer had the stress of school, I still ran into other anxiety provoking experiences after college associated with my learning differences. In my early adulthood, I still struggled with self-doubt and had to overcome some hurdles. One of the toughest for me, my grammar. I had one experience that really shook me up while teaching preschool in my twenties. Reflecting back it feels like a minor experience, but at the time it had a lasting effect. The experience occurred while having a conversation with a child's father. During our conversation the dad rudely interrupted me in front of all the other parents to correct my English. I was mortified. That embarrassing moment delivered an abundance of self-doubt about not being smart enough. I felt like that "stupid kid" back in class walking to the blue door to attend resource classes. That uncomfortable experience made me self-conscious about my grammar for years to come. At the time, all I could do was move past it. Today, I look at that experience and remind myself that what one says to others can affect their mental health, therefore think before you say...

Lastly, I am grateful for finding this book, "[The Dyslexic Advantage](#)". It helped to unlock the mystery of why school was incredibly tough for me. It revealed how the neurology side of my dyslexic mind works. It clearly explains why most classroom environments were not ideal for my learning differences. The book has encouraged me to be more self-accepting with my learning differences."





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Back to School
DYSLEXIA Q & A Sept 23rd

<https://bit.ly/school-DA>



INSPIRATION

The silver lining, today I appreciate my gifted dyslexic advantages - big picture thinker, visual memory, imagination and identifying patterns. Working through my learning differences over the years ironically led me to the world of art. In my forties, after discovering I could thrive learning independently, that opened the door to designing handbags and jewelry. Once I started learning new skills and saw the results, I had to keep going. Eventually, my hard work developed the foundation for starting my business, MONOLISA. Today, my inspiration for designing, just keep learning and doing the work. I can't wait to see what is next!

I am hoping my candid story about self-doubt, learning differences and anxiety can help others. Thank you for reading about my journey. Until we meet again.

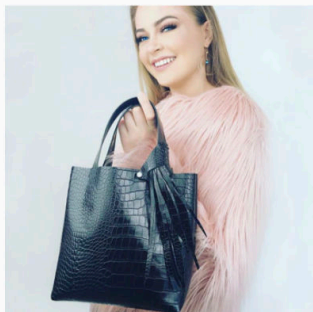
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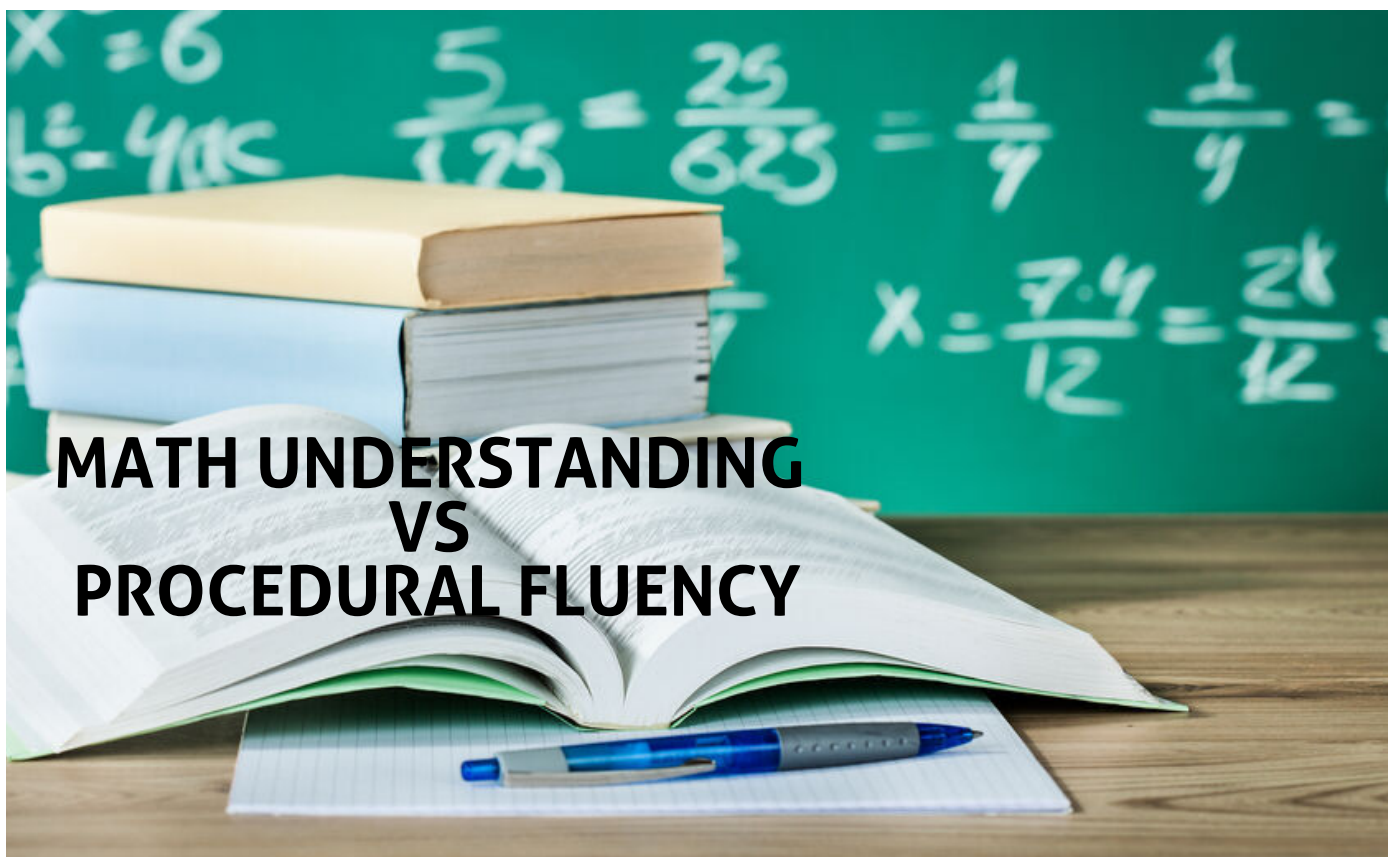
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MATH



MATH UNDERSTANDING VS PROCEDURAL FLUENCY

"We need to shift the emphasis from answer-getting to the problem-solving process. We also need to model for students--and encourage them to pursue--multiple solution strategies rather than prescribe a standard procedure. In essence, we need to make the most of opportunities to deepen students' conceptual grasp of math and build their procedural fluency. We need to help students understand math rather than just do math." - Dan Ginsberg, Education Week

For dyslexic students especially, it's important that they learn the why of math and not just as procedures that must be memorized.

UNDERSTANDING OVER REPETITION OR SPEED

It's important that math concepts be fully understood before working through problems. Just as explicit teaching is an effective way for teaching students to read, explicit instruction in math can help students learn more effectively and deeply.

A photograph of a woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a pink long-sleeved shirt, sitting at a desk and reading a book with a young girl. The girl has curly brown hair and is wearing a light blue shirt and dark overalls. They are both looking down at the book with interest. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor setting.

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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.

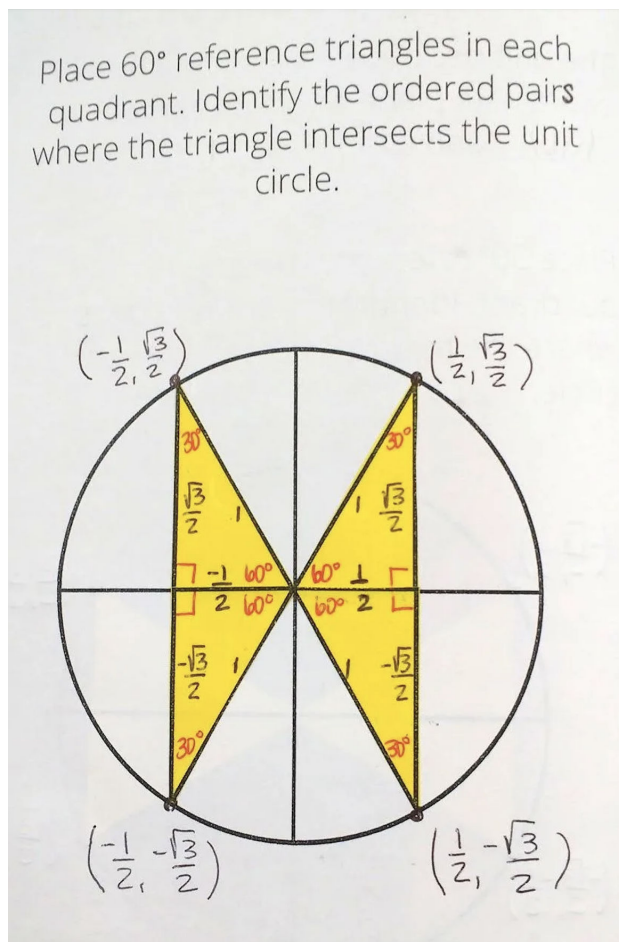
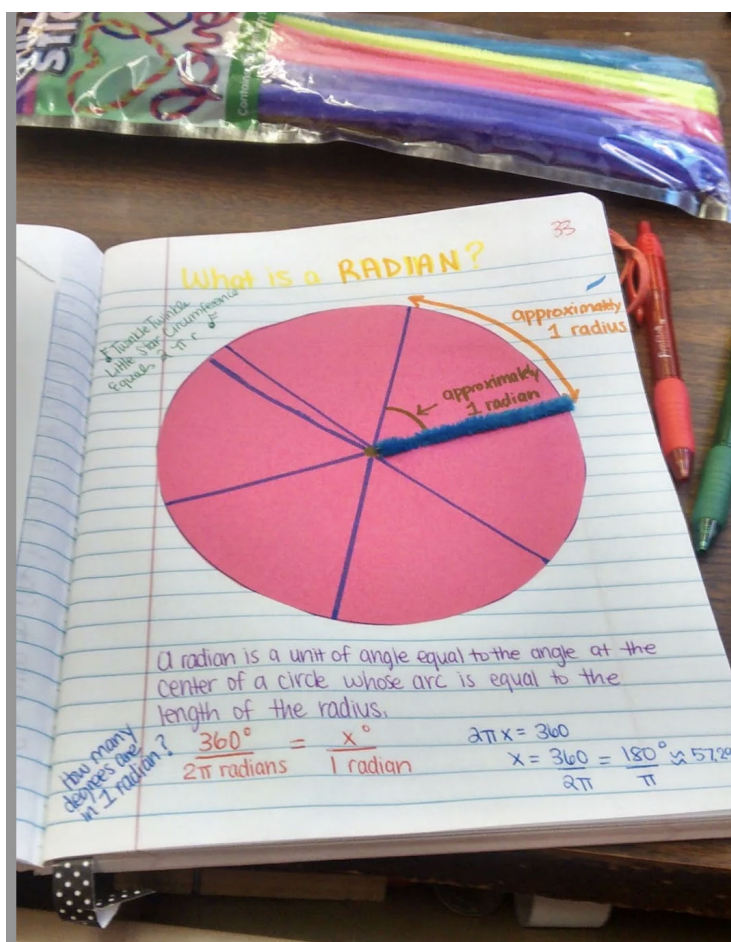
MATH

TEACH MATH CONCEPTS THROUGH MODELING

Teach math with physical materials and manipulatives and model concepts rather than relying on verbal descriptions alone. In the beginning, this might mean using counters or linking cubes. The CRA or Concrete-Representation-Abstract approach to math moves from physical materials to visual representations (like grids that are colored in), to numbers and symbols.

Manipulatives are not just for elementary school students; middle and high school students can benefit by physical materials as well and IEPs and 504s can include accommodations to allow students to use manipulatives in classrooms and for tests.

As an example, high school math teacher Sarah Carter has some wonderful hands-on activities for subjects like high school trigonometry:





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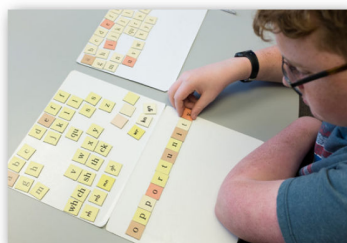
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BACK TO SCHOOL HELPING YOUR CHILD WITH WORRIES

It's that time of year again and anxiety is common.

Dr. Tamar Chansky is the author of a number of helpful books such as, [Freeing Your Child From Negative Thinking](#) and [Freeing Your Child from Anxiety](#).

In a back-to-school post, she points out that many of the first words that come to mind, like "Relax. you're going to be fine.." are not the most helpful or supportive, despite their good intentions.

Instead of trying to talk a child out of their fears, she says, help them narrow down their worries and get their rational minds back:

- Normalize your child's fears—every child is feeling the same thing as they are—even the teachers feel nervous at first when school starts.
- Share a story of your own about going to school or another new situation.
- Let your child know that things don't stay new forever. Help them think of a time when they were faced with something new and got used to it. How long did it take?
- Help the adjustment: Arrange a pleasant visit at school, eat a snack in the playground, check out the library, say hello to the teacher.
- At home, play "school" switch off roles letting your child be the teacher and himself.

PSYCHOLOGY

- Have your child make a list of fears on one side of the page, then help correct the distortions and misperceptions and have the “facts” on the other side of the page. Fold the paper and keep the facts side up.
- If your child is feeling afraid, help him to reduce the power of his worries by saying them in a silly, squeaky voice.
- Give the worry a name like the “worry bug” and practice using a firm voice to boss back the worry.
- If there are concrete issues think up strategies for finding the right bus line, finding a seat in the cafeteria.
- Fight the Fear with Fun! Turn the school preparation process into a fun and even social event—go shopping with friends for school supplies or lunch boxes, decorate books together.
- Work on lunch menus together, young kids can create or decorate a menu.
- Work on the backpack—put phone numbers, bus numbers in a safe place, find a picture or trinket to bring some of home into school with you.

For younger children, see if it's possible to talk to your student's teacher or teachers before the school year begins. I liked to put together a 1-page letter introducing my student (as well as our family), that included a photo of the student, contact information (cell phone and email) and "diagnoses" and accommodations that your student will need.

Many teachers say that they would like to observe the student themselves before the school year begins, rather than have accommodations in place - but if your student needs it - she or he should not have to fail in order to have appropriate accommodations in place.

Be careful not to lose your temper if you're prone to doing that, but also insist that accommodations be in place if they are essential for your student to be successful. Share the [letter](#) from the Department of Education if it supports your student. Being successful from the start can help your student start off on the right footing for the whole school year.

DYSLEXIA NEWS



Educating Dyslexic Students Should Start with Educating Teachers About Dyslexia

Education Week



Dyslexia Helps Filmmakers Think Differently

Lwlies.com



What Federal Education Shows about LD Students in the US 2023

Pew Research Center



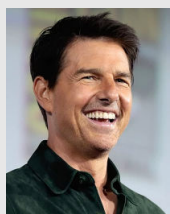
Grammarly's New AI Tool in Beta

Grammarly Go



Wisconsin Moms Push Passage of Right to Read Law

WUWM NPR



Tom Cruise and I and Dyslexia

MooseJaw.com



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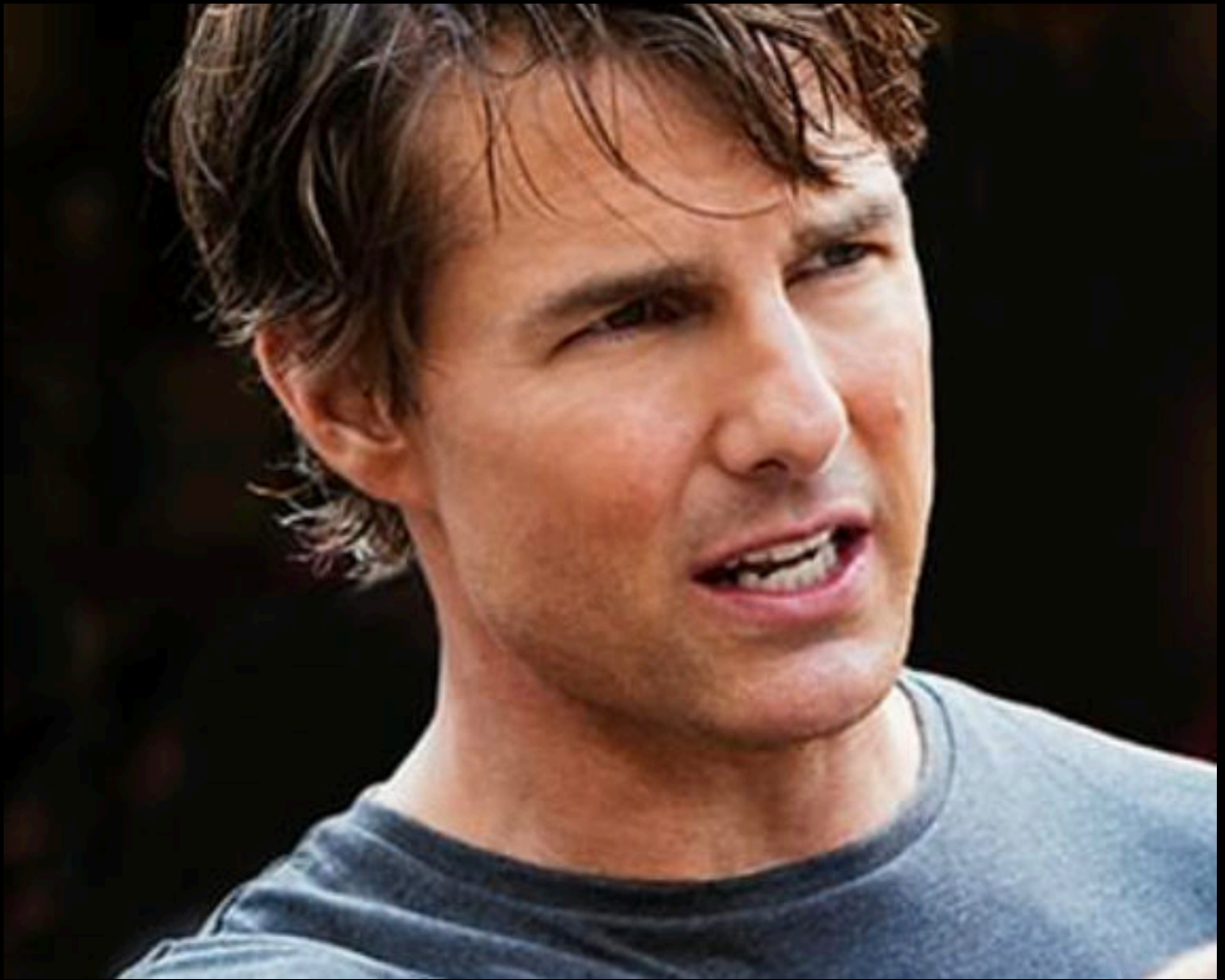
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"I had to train myself to focus my attention. I became very visual and learned how to create mental images in order to comprehend what I read." Tom Cruise