

Superintendent Communication

October is Dyslexia Awareness Month and I want to take this time to express my appreciation for a school system that supports the differentiated education we provide for students with dyslexia symptoms.

Dyslexia is a serious learning disability that makes it difficult for children and adults that are affected by it to learn how to decode words, spell, and read words accurately and fluently. Dyslexic individuals often have difficulty "breaking the code" of sound-letter association (the alphabetic principle), and they may also reverse or transpose letters when writing.

Hereford ISD has five full time dyslexia therapists: Kris Dollar, Billee Landrum, Linda Baird, Teresa Allen, and Jean McCathern. This year we have a dyslexia intern who is training to be a therapist: Christi Sims. These dedicated teachers are supported by our district reading specialist, Betty Coneway and the entire curriculum division led by Yolanda Gavina. These dedicated educators have both my thanks and gratitude for the work they do and the love of learning that they cultivate.

Our dyslexia therapists work with students in grade 3-12 across all eight of our campuses. They office in the "old" administration building that is connected to the high school cafeteria. The six talented staff that serves the needs of HISD dyslexic students are all certified teachers and have served Hereford ISD in a variety of capacities over their tenures.

In addition to their experience as excellent classroom leaders, these teachers have participated in comprehensive training conducted by the Scottish Rite Learning Center of West Texas. The two years of training to become a specialist in multisensory teaching techniques of the structure of the English language is purposefully designed for the student who is at risk for reading difficulty or who has been diagnosed as dyslexic. In order to provide the highest quality training possible, there is a limited number of individuals selected for the program each year. This means that Hereford ISD is both fortunate to have so many certified therapists, and thoughtful to have planned ahead to send interested teachers to the Scottish Rite Learning Center. Course content and techniques are based on the original Orton-Gillingham model, with additions and refinements including *Take Flight: A Comprehensive intervention for Students with Dyslexia* published in 2006. Completion of this two-year comprehensive program prepares an individual to receive a certificate of completion from Scottish Rite Learning Center with the title of Dyslexia Therapist.

Here are some facts about dyslexia that will help you better understand this learning disability:

- There is no cure for dyslexia.
- 1 out of 5 people suffer from dyslexia.
- Only 30% of dyslexics have difficulty with reversing letters and numbers.
- Dyslexia is evenly distributed across all ethnic, social, and gender groups.
- Dyslexia does NOT reduce or otherwise affect a person's ability to learn, comprehend or acquire knowledge through non-written medias. However, low reading skills obviously affect a person's ability to achieve where reading is required.
- All but the most severe dyslexics can learn to read at or above grade level

Parents that would like more information about the Hereford ISD dyslexia program can contact their campus Learning Facilitator.

Staff that would like to more about dyslexia training can contact Betty Coneway.

Kelli Moulton
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