

Academic Language Therapy Association®
Dedicated to the remediation of written-language skills.

bul•le•tin

Fall

2005

The bul•le•tin is a quarterly publication of the Academic Language Therapy Association (ALTA), and is free to its membership.

Soliloquy Reading Assistant and the Promise of Automatic Speech Recognition for Literacy*

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This paper is an abridged version of: Adams, M.J. (2005). The promise of automatic speech recognition for fostering literacy growth in children and adults. In M. McKenna, L. Labbo, R. Kieffer, & D. Reinking (Eds.), *Handbook of Literacy and Technology, Volume 2*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. The author wishes to thank Soliloquy Learning's Field Director, Patti Sullivan-Hall, for her collaboration and assistance; The Carlisle Foundation, for their generous support of the Framingham Reading Project and the staff and students of the Framingham Public Schools.

The Need for One-on-One Reading Support

Few challenges are more important in the classroom than that of ensuring that every student invests adequate time and attention to reading. At the same time, unfortunately, few challenges are more difficult for the classroom teacher.

Many different classroom tactics have been tried in the hopes of engaging children in reading, yet none of these tactics is fail-safe. Until children can read comfortably on their own, they need someone or something to keep them engaged – to help them across the difficulties, to support their on-going understanding, and to allow them to sense and enjoy their own progress and accomplishment. Speech recognition technology shows great promise in helping to meet this need.

Research has amply demonstrated that virtually all children are able to make normal or accelerated progress in reading given early and adequate one-on-one support.¹ Of special value is the practice of engaging children, one-on-one, in reading aloud to a helpful listener. Moreover, the benefits of such read-aloud sessions are substantial at least through grade 4 or 5 for virtually all students and well beyond for students who are struggling.^{2,3}

As documented by the National Reading Panel³, such read-aloud sessions promote not just fluency, but also word recognition, comprehension, and full-scale reading scores.

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Nancy Coffman

President's Letter

Dear ALTA Members,

Twenty years ago a group of persons met to discuss the possibility of forming a professional association for those who work with children with reading, writing, and spelling disorders. Thanks to the efforts of this pioneering group, the Academic Language Therapy Association was born and officially chartered in 1986. As we approach our 20th anniversary we now boast of over nine hundred members nationwide, thirteen accredited training centers, and membership in The Alliance for Accreditation and Certification of Structured Language Education. CALT's, and those currently in training, serve students in private therapy, private and public schools, special and general education, and hospital settings. Just think if each member taught only six students that would be 5,400 lives changed. That alone should make us very proud!

Our 20th anniversary celebration will take place at our annual conference on Saturday, April 22nd at the Hilton Lincoln Center in Dallas, Texas. Michelle Bufkin, our Vice President of Programs, has confirmed Dr. Reid Lyon, Dr. Louisa Moats, and Richard Lavoie as our keynotes. You will definitely want to register early to hear these incredible speakers. Michelle and her committees would also welcome additional volunteers to help in a variety of ways. If you are interested in assisting with the conference, please contact Michelle via the ALTA website.

Speaking of conferences, many of our ALTA members will be in attendance and/or speaking at the 56th Annual Conference of the International Dyslexia Association to be held November 9-12, 2005 in Denver, Colorado. For more information on this conference, "Reading in the Rockies", you can go to the IDA website at www.interdys.org. At this site, you can also access IDA branch events which may be eligible for CEU credit.

On behalf of the ALTA Board of Directors I would like to extend our heartfelt thoughts and prayers to the ALTA members in the southern coastal states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Alabama. May your recovery from the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita continue and enable you to become even stronger than you were before.

Sincerely,



Melanie Royal, CALT, QI
ALTA President

It's Back!

The ALTA Garage Sale will return at the 2006 Conference!

What is it? A chance for therapists to clean out and share materials they no longer need with other therapists.

How can I help?

- (1) Start your own cleaning frenzy now. Collect your items. Contact Linda Byther or her committee members for drop-off instructions.
- (2) Volunteer to help with the booth on the day of the conference.

Questions? Contact Linda Byther, Garage Sale Committee Chair • Linda_Byther@yahoo.com • 972-618-1335

Why Oral Reading?

When a child is reading aloud it is far easier to be sure that she or he is staying on task. Because listeners can hear difficulties as they happen, they can offer help exactly when it matters most—that is, exactly when the child is attending to the difficulty and exactly where its resolution best supports and is supported by the meaning of the text. Similarly, because listeners know exactly where the child is in the text, they can choose optimal moments to probe understanding, to elicit predictions, or to invite reflection or discussion.

How Much Guided Oral Reading do Children Need?

Research affirms that in the general education classroom one-on-one reading sessions are generally both rare and brief.⁴ An observational study⁵ found that, except for purposes of clarifying information, checking for understanding, or answering specific questions, classroom teachers rarely ask individuals to read to them and, when they do, the readings generally last less than one minute. Further, by all indications, the amount of classroom time spent reading is only less in poorer schools and with poorer readers.⁶

The National Reading Panel's³ urging that classroom teachers find ways to increase the time they engage their students in guided oral reading on a regular basis is thus well taken. But how much time is enough? Unfortunately, a hard answer to this question awaits further research. In the meantime, however, there are reasons to suspect that provided it is well spent, precious little additional time on text would make a huge difference in students' reading growth. Extrapolating from a study of first-graders,⁷ it would appear that even struggling beginners need only 10 minutes a day of active reading time in order to catch up and keep up with grade-level expectations across the first grade. Similarly, data collected by Anderson et al⁸ indicate that 10 minutes additional reading per day would more than double the independent reading of middle-class fifth graders. (See the full-length paper for details about the extrapolations.)

The Classroom Challenge

Ten minutes per day doesn't sound like much, but for a teacher with an average of 22 students in the classroom, it is logistically impossible to give each student ten minutes of one-on-one reading support.

In recent years, much emphasis has been placed on improving the effectiveness of early reading instruction, and especially alphabetic basics, with the promising result that children from historically low-achieving schools are leaving first grade with reading scores that are at or above national norms. Many had hoped that such early success would snowball, compounding itself across the school years. To the contrary, however, where follow-up data exist, they indicate that even among students from highly regarded and well-controlled programs, reading progress tends to slow across the elementary school years, such that by the middle grades many students are once again behind despite their strong start.⁹

The data from the fourth-grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tell a similar tale. Since 1992, reading achievement has increased consistently and significantly among more advantaged children.¹⁰ In contrast, scores of the lowest performing children have slightly but significantly declined. Alas, the gap has only widened. This redoubles the social urgency of finding ways to increase the availability of supported reading. After all, public schooling was invented exactly and only to ensure all children full educational opportunity, regardless of what their homes could offer.

The Reading Assistant: One-on-One Reading Support

Reading Assistant has been under development in various forms for 15 years. In the fall of 2004, Soliloquy Learning released *Reading Assistant v3*. Designed for both PCs and

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Mark Your Calendars!

ALTA Spring Conference

Saturday
April 22, 2006

Location:
Hilton Hotel
Dallas,
Lincoln Centre

speakers:

Dr. G. Reid Lyon,
former Chief, NICHD

Dr. Louisa Moats, author

Rick Lavoie, M.Ed.

Conference brochures
containing all registration
details will be mailed in
December. Make plans
now to attend!

Macs, *Reading Assistant V3* is the product of 18 months of effort and incorporates a new, custom speech-recognition and reading-diagnostic suite built from Carnegie-Mellen's Sphinx2 Toolkit. Because analyses of data from research sites showed that recognition failures were most frequently due to problems with the audio input, *Reading Assistant V3* also includes continual monitoring of the audio signal.

When automatic speech recognition and reading are used in the same sentence, many people instantly think of a phonics application. We may at some point create phonics support, but for now the instructional focus of the *Reading Assistant* is on the development of fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. When a child mangles or struggles with a word, the machine produces it, asking the child to repeat it and continue reading. Problem words are then listed in the performance reports and marked in the text itself for review. The emphasis during reading sessions is squarely on providing the ongoing assistance to enable students to continue reading with comprehension, as well as the audience and feedback, both online and cumulatively, to motivate them to do so.

The key attribute of the *Reading Assistant* lies in the support it provides for students themselves to read. Specifically, by virtue of its speech-recognition layer, the software listens to the student as she or he reads aloud. Monitoring for signs of difficulty, it autonomously provides assistance when the student stumbles or gets stuck. In the background, meanwhile, it builds ongoing records of what the student has read and reread, of her or his fluency on each reading, and of the specific words and segments of text with which the student had difficulty. Tied to each text is a **Progress Report** that summarizes fluency, comprehension, and amount read, lists problem words, and displays the student's **Personal Glossary** (i.e., text words whose meanings the child has looked up). In addition to **Progress Reports** for the students, the software includes a **Review Mode** in which miscues are color-coded in the text so that students can selectively focus on difficulties, playing, practicing, repairing, and replaying their readings to their own satisfaction. Through the **Read to Me** mode, students also have access to a fluent, expressive reading of each text by a professional narrator.

The *Reading Assistant* provides the teacher with more detailed reports of students' performance, including accuracy, fluency, amount read, problem words, comprehension, and usage statistics. These reports are available cumulatively and for each separate reading and title and, indeed, in the **Network Version**, collapsible almost any which way one wants (classrooms, titles, groups, weeks, marking period, etc.). The software also maintains digital recordings of the student's reading so that teachers can build **Performance Portfolios** for monitoring growth or sharing with parents. Because these recordings are tied to the text and the performance reports, teachers can listen to them selectively, using the **Review Mode** to identify and access segments of special concern or lesson-relevance. The **Network Version** also gives teach-

ers the option of assigning specific titles to individuals or the class. Our hope is that these features will help teachers tailor reading opportunities for their students and knowingly choose books and challenges on which to focus during the precious one-on-one time they can schedule with each.

Diagnostic Sensitivity.

In engineering the *Reading Assistant*, our greatest challenge has been to teach it how to distinguish genuine difficulties from, e.g., accents, missing teeth, confident repairs, coughs, snuffy noses, and the incessant background voices and racket of the classroom. To find out how well it is doing, we established a "ground truth," by asking two experienced reading teachers to listen and, as necessary, rewind and re-listen to the children's readings and to indicate for each content word whether they would have intervened or tagged it for review or whether, flawlessly delivered or not, they judged the word to be secure to the student. Table 2 compares the computer's judgments to those of the teachers.

Table 2. A comparison of the *Reading Assistant's* error judgments with those of two reading teachers.

Diagnostic Sensitivity of the <i>Reading Assistant</i>			
	% FN	% FP	Text Words
Grade 2	2.19	2.30	1040
Grade 3	2.60	1.96	5078
Grade 4	1.50	2.03	1040
Grade 5	1.60	0.89	624
Grade 6 (all)	1.60	1.39	11177
Grade 6 (ELL)	1.66	1.10	2289

The numbers in Table 2 are based on the oral reading of 349 passages representing 153 children in Grades 2-6. The children attended a public elementary (grades 2-5) or middle school (grade 6) in districts of median income and educational achievement in the Boston Metropolitan area. English is the second language for about 15% of the grade 2-5 students and 38% of those in grade 6. In addition, many of the others had fairly strong Boston accents. False Positives are instances where the teachers felt a word warranted intervention or review, but the machine did not. False Negatives are instances where the teachers judged a word to have been read with acceptable comfort, but the machine flagged it for intervention or review. Totaling the False Positives and the False Negatives, the machine agreed with the teachers on upwards of 95% of the words. By comparison, the teachers ultimately agreed with each other on nearly 98% of the words. We are still working, but we are getting close.

Classroom Efficacy

The most important question, of course, is whether the *Reading Assistant* does indeed promote students' reading growth. To

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begin to ask this question, we undertook a study using the *Reading Assistant V2* with mainstream Grade 2-5 classrooms in the famously representative town of Framingham, MA.¹¹ We used school achievement-test profiles and demographics to choose two schools that were matched as nearly as possible. The *Reading Assistant* software was provided to second- and third-grade classrooms in one of the schools and to fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms in the other. The complementary grades in each school served as the control population for the study and were promised the software for the following school year. All children who obtained parental permission participated, equaling 97.2% and 91.6% of the eligible children in the intervention and control classrooms, respectively. In addition, 4.7% and 3.3% of the children in intervention and control classrooms moved away during the course of the year. The number of students and teachers who completed the study is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Number of teachers and children participating in the *Reading Assistant* field test.

Condition	Grade				Total
	2	3	4	5	
Reading Assistant					
Teachers	3	3	2	3	11
Students	59	63	43	63	228
Control					
Teachers	3	3	2	2	10
Students	48	57	42	35	182
Total					
Teachers	6	6	4	5	21
Students	107	120	85	98	410

Importantly, the question we were asking through this study, was whether having students read for a few more minutes per week with the help of the *Reading Assistant* would boost their reading growth. We were not asking whether the *Reading Assistant* might supplant classroom reading instruction. Sessions with the *Reading Assistant* were therefore held during the students' scheduled computer time. Software use began the first week in December and continued for 17 weeks through March. Through February, the students worked with the *QuickReads Technology Version*¹²; in March, tradebook titles from Charlesbridge Publishing's *Insights*¹³ collection were made available. (Both applications are powered by Soliloquy's *Reading Assistant* technology.) Each participating class scheduled the computer lab for 30-minute sessions as often as twice a week, and usage of the software was observed through periodic visits to the schools and measured by means the student usage records maintained by the software.

Using Edformation's *Standard Oral Reading Fluency Assessment Passages*¹⁴ with standard paper and pencil procedures, the children's fluency was pre-tested in November and the post-tested in June. To analyze the children's fluency gains we used a Group (2) x Grade (4)

x Pre-/Post-Test fluency (2) repeated measures analysis of variance, where Treatment and Grade were between-subjects while the comparison of Pre-/Post-test fluency in correct words per minute was within-subjects. The main effect of Group was not significant ($F(1, 402) = 0.189, p = 0.66$), indicating that the overall reading levels of the software and control classrooms were quite comparable. Regardless of Group, fluency increased with Grade-Level ($F(1,402) = 48.76, p < .001$) and between the Pre- and Post-Test (from fall to spring) ($F(1, 402) = 1,085.9, p < .001$) with the size of the Pre-/Post-Test gain depending on grades ($F(3,402) = 5.13, p < .002$).

Most importantly, as shown in Figure 3, fluency gains were significantly greater for those children who had worked with the *Reading Assistant* than for those who had not ($F(1,402)=12.11, p < .001$).

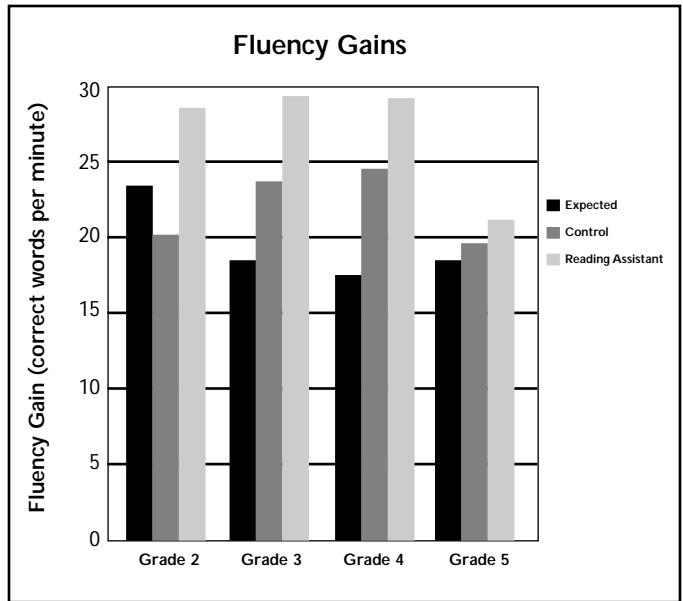


Figure 3. Fluency gains in correct words per minute for children who read with the *Reading Assistant* twice a week from December through April as compared to control classrooms and gains as predicted by fluency norms.

In Figure 3, the fluency gains for the children in our study are also compared to normative expectations as based on the average of two large, national samples.^{14,15} Before averaging, fall to spring gains from each norm were adjusted for the total number of weeks between the dates of the pre-test and post-test, i.e., 22 weeks for the children in Grades 2 and 3 and 24 weeks for those in Grades 4 and 5). As can be seen, the gains of the children who worked with the *Reading Assistant* were consistently greater than predicted from the norms, where the relative advantage was 20%, 63%, 71% and 19% for children in grades 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively.

Table 4. *Reading Assistant* usage for each grade including mean number of sessions, mean reading time per session, and mean total reading time across sessions.

Reading Assistant Usage			
	Number of Sessions	Reading Time (minutes)	
		Per Session	Total
Grade 2	14.8	8.8	131
Grade 3	20.3	7.5	152
Grade 4	24.3	7.9	192
Grade 5	23.4	8.4	197

Given that the maximum possible number of sessions with the *Reading Assistant* was 34, these would seem healthy gains. But, of course, due to snow days and other realities of school time, none of the classes used the computer lab for all of its scheduled sessions. Nor, obviously, could the children have read for the full 30 minutes of any session. Exactly how much did they read? The answer, collated from the *Reading Assistant's* User Logs, is shown in Table 4, totaling a little more than two hours for the younger children and a little more than three hours for the older children. The actual number of sessions for which students used the software ranged from about 15 for the younger children to about 24 for the older children, with actual reading time, as measured through the software, averaging only about 8 minutes per session. The remaining time per session was spent not just in miscellaneous and transition activities, but also a number of instructionally and cognitively critical activities, including teacher-led text and task discussions, selecting and browsing the selections, comprehension activities, review of progress and problems, and thinking. Indeed, for much of the remaining time per session, the children had their books open and looked, for all practical purposes, like they were in fact reading.

That the children averaged only about 8 minutes of actual reading per half-hour session seems a bit surprising at first. But then, we must ask: How much reading do they, themselves, actually do when we sit and read one-on-one with them for a half hour? When we conduct choral reading sessions? When we set aside a half hour for them to read on their own?

In Conclusion

To the question of how much reading must children do to make a difference, these data again indicate an answer of “surprisingly little.” Indeed, the questions provoked by this sort of technology are almost innumerable. But so, too, is the technology’s potential for helping us answer them. Soliloquy *Reading Assistant* affords precise tracking of when, what, how much, and how well students have read, as well as of the words and textual segments with which they had difficulty, whether they received help and, if so, exactly what kinds. Soliloquy *Reading Assistant* offers an unprecedented platform for melding research and practice and, hopefully, for making real contributions to the vital challenge of closing the literacy gap.

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ALTA Member Honored for Initiative

Lucy Smith, CALT, QI will receive 2005 Governor's Most Innovative Program Award to be awarded March 31, 2005 at the regularly scheduled Criminal Justice Board meeting in Austin, Texas

In 1997, Lucy Smith founded Texas HOPE Literacy, a unique faith-based non-profit organization dedicated to empowering at-risk children, youth, and adults to become productive citizens in today's world. For over seven years, the HOPE non-profit service oriented corporation has significantly contributed to the criminal justice system by funding peer driven educational programs that target functional illiteracy.

New to HOPE is the concept of *city governance* whereby offenders learn to govern themselves while under the auspices of prison governance. This prototype is operative at the Dawson State Jail in downtown Dallas. Since Dawson has limited programming space available, Warden Keeton asked Lucy Smith to implement the program in a dorm setting of 54 female offenders. In order to provide quality programming in this type of environment, there needed to be a structure that would engage the offenders to take ownership in the HOPE program.

The intent is to give the offenders autonomy and teach them to coexist in a community comparable to the free world. In this environment, they are able to assume responsibility and be accountable for their behaviors and actions to plan and think before speaking or acting out to maintain respect for the staff and their peers, to encourage and uplift others in the dorm, to become positive role models, and to make necessary adjustments in their lives prior to release.

Volunteers, knowledgeable in city government came to Dawson to help the ladies learn how to campaign to elect their own Mayor, City Council members, and City Manager. Following the election, the ladies formed Boards so that each member of the community would be an active participating member. The 54 female residents in Dorm 10A held an voted to name the city *Unity*. The Dorm was further divided into three neighborhoods and nine families, with names

being voted on for each. Permission was granted for the ladies to paint their walls with pictures that would visually depict HOPE. *Unity City* has enabled HOPE to implement the educational component in an effective manner. Needless to say, the ladies are very excited about the potential for growth with this innovative concept. The best news is that Warden Keeton says it is his best dorm on the unit.

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A New Home for the ALTA Conference

By Michelle Bufkin, VP/ Programs

One of my all-time favorite songs is "Just a Spoonful of Sugar" from *Mary Poppins*. Perhaps you remember it, too. Under the charm of Mary Poppins' enchanted finger snapping and singing, Jane and Michael Banks discover that one way to make their required chores go faster is to find happiness, fun and humor in their work. In no time at all, the Banks children have turned a difficult task into something enjoyable and almost magical. This scene from *Mary Poppins* is a wonderful metaphor for what it was like working on this year's conference with so many talented and enchanting ALTA members. With almost 600 guests in attendance, ALTA's 19th Annual Spring Conference was fueled by the time, talents and energy of many of our dedicated ALTA members.

The relaxed and elegant tone for the weekend was established on Friday evening during the Pre-Conference Dinner. Hosted by Meg and Peter Carlsen



The preconference dinner was held in the home of Meg and Peter Carlsen. Seated, ALTA president Melanie Royal with (l to r) Michelle Bufkin, conference chair, and hostess Meg Carlsen.

in their lovely home, the dinner and warm conversation between guests and our charming speakers was only surpassed by the Carlens' hospitality. On Saturday, almost 600 guests entered our new location at the Hilton Lincoln Centre and were greeted and welcomed by the many volunteers who arrived early that day to begin the conference arrangements.

The move to a hotel setting created many logistical issues, all of which were handled capably by this year's Conference Committee. Elegant luncheon decorations were arranged for and displayed by **Jana Jones**, who also served as a calm and invaluable mentor as conference plans (and surprises) unfolded. Door prizes became the buzz this year, as **Nora Moore** used her creative talents to solicit and display wonderful gifts. Nora went above and beyond in establishing our first silent auction, a popular area that will be repeated next year. The Exhibits area looked professional and ran smoothly and efficiently, thanks to the hard work and preparation

of **Ginny McCrea** and **Juancita Petro**. Regarding efficiency, did you notice how smoothly registration ran this year? **Helen Macik** and **Gina Mitchell** put their years of experience to work in setting up many new procedures to help this area of our conference appear seamless.

Book signing

activities proved profitable for ALTA, thanks to the courtesies extended by our speaker's publisher. This area was busy most of the afternoon and ran smoothly because of **Terri Zerfas** and her helpers. **Terri** also graciously agreed to direct all activities for the Program Brochure, which was a new addition this year. Many conference updates, forms, maps, parking instructions and evaluations were placed on the ALTA web site by **Anita Bruck**, who worked diligently to see that items appeared regularly for our membership. **Chris Wylie** did a wonderful job of placing and editing many conference announcements in our newsletter. Behind each of these ladies stood many volunteers who executed the necessary details of our conference with precision and flexibility.

Our speakers this year provided the inspiration and tools that drive the agenda of ALTA's annual conferences. Dr. Marilyn Adams' research on fluency and advancements in the field using software programs was astounding and delivered in her warm and audience-friendly manner. Shirley Kurnoff's presentation, especially the panel discussion among parents interviewed for her book, proved to be inspiring for many. Having ALTA's founding president, Jamie Williams, on the panel, made this part of the morning especially meaningful for veteran therapists in the audience. Afternoon breakout speakers represented a broad base of ALTA's accredited training centers and provided a wealth of information for therapists in all settings. Conference surveys continue to indicate that afternoon breakout sessions provided by ALTA members are the mainstay of our conference and show the talent within our own organization.

Many thanks to those of you who contributed many thoughtful comments on

See **New Home** on Page 9

the conference evaluation and on the ALTA home page link. Every single evaluation was read and logged in order to track where our conference needs refinement and improvement. Audio quality issues and improvements for next year have already been addressed by the Hilton's service provider. Discussions are under way on timing issues, especially ensuring that our conference begins promptly and as scheduled. Detailed suggestions regarding speakers and topics were especially meaningful information for future conference chairs. If you did not take advantage of the ALTA web site for conference information, let me encourage you to do so. As we move towards on-line registration, the web site will become our instant link to ALTA members in getting out conference updates, maps and other important information. Conference registration will be confirmed next year by email only.

Next year's conference will mark an important milestone in ALTA's history. Our 20th Anniversary Spring Conference is set for Saturday, April 22, 2006, at the Hilton Lincoln Center. Our speakers will include Dr. G. Reid Lyon in the morning with Dr. Louisa Moats and Rick Lavoie following in the afternoon. **Dr. Karen Vickery** and her committee are already hard at work, putting together special presentations and displays to celebrate ALTA's 20-year influence on literacy. It is an event that every ALTA member will want to attend. Moreover, it is a perfect time to contribute your own time and talents to this important function of our organization.



2005 ALTA conference speakers (l to r) Shirley Kurnoff and Marilyn Jager Adams.

Consider contributing to the success of our conference in the following ways:

- (1) Mark your calendar now to complete your early registration by the deadline (mid-February). This helps ALTA with meeting hotel contract requirements.
- (2) Make a list of the companies, agencies, or individuals you know who would make suitable door prize and silent auction donors, exhibitors, or program brochure advertisers. All areas of our conference will be augmented for next year's special event, making the advertising exposure even more desirable for conference participants. Consider items you can solicit or donate yourself.
- (3) Even if you live in the Dallas area, consider staying at the host hotel for Friday evening. Every room booked

by ALTA members helps to keep the final cost of our conference within our budget. Conference evaluations were almost unanimous in their praise of the Hilton facility and staff, especially the evaluations from guests who stayed at our host hotel for Friday and/or Saturday evenings. The Hilton will continue to offer our organization reduced rates on our block of rooms.

- (4) Share your talents with any of the committees that make our conference run. Our Conference Committee still needs volunteers for our Program Brochure and the ALTA Garage Sale.

Just like Mary Poppins, your Conference Committee is working hard to make our conference "practically perfect in every way." We welcome your suggestions and look forward to seeing you at next year's event!

Alliance Field Test Report

The Alliance for Certification and Accreditation for Structured Language Education, Inc. sponsored by the International Dyslexia Association distributed field test packets to twenty-three participating test sites during the month of May. Field tests were conducted from June until August 2005. Fourteen states were represented by various multisensory structured language approaches from California to Massachusetts.

Beck Evaluation and Testing Associates, Inc. (BETA) sent two consultants to guide the exam committee through the writing process. Representatives from various multisensory structured language approaches contributed test items for the field test. BETA is currently gathering data from the summer project.

The outcome of the field test will be a registration exam which includes information presented in multisensory structured language training that meets the quality standards the Alliance organizations has promoted and maintained. This new exam is a broad instrument which covers the knowledge a teacher or therapist should attain in their training in any MSLE training course and any MSLE approach.

The professionally written certification exam will continue to be administered by ALTA and the current application and administration guidelines will remain the same.

The Alliance would like to thank following test sites for their participation in this project.

Neuhaus Education Center, Fairleigh Dickenson Orton Gillingham Dyslexia Specialist Training Course, Stratford Friends School, Knight Education, Inc., DuBard School for Language Disorders, The Hill Center, Hardman & Associates, Inc., Atlantic Seaboard Dyslexia Education Ctr., Spaulding, Shelton School Outreach, Slingerland, Scottish Rite Learning Center of West Texas, Literacy Education & Academic Development, Inc./LEAD, Southern Methodist University Learning Therapist Program, Greenhills School, Simultaneous Multisensory Institute of Language Arts, Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children, FUNdamental Learning Center, Mississippi College Dyslexia Therapy Program, Mass. General Hospital Orton Gillingham Training Course, Masonic Learning Center – Allentown, and Payne Education Center.

Online with ALTA

Help ALTA When You Purchase From Amazon.com

When you purchase your books, music, videos, etc. using the www.amazon.com link found on the ALTA web site, you help ALTA with its web site operating expenses. ALTA receives 5% of the purchase price when you buy an item by visiting www.altaread.org first, then clicking on the link for amazon.com. In addition, ALTA receives 15% of the purchase price when you visit the book review section of the ALTA web site and make a purchase. Once you review a book and decide to purchase it, click on the link for www.amazon.com. Consider www.amazon.com through www.altaread.org when shopping for professional reading material, children's books, music, and videos and help ALTA with operating expenses.

Access the ALTA Bulletin On-line

You may now access the Academic Language Therapy Association newsletter, ALTA bulletin, on-line. Go to ALTA's web site at ALTAread.org and click "Resources" from the menu selections. You will then click "Newsletters." You may choose to view the most recent newsletter, or perhaps a past newsletter.

Newsletters will download to your computer. They are in Adobe Acrobat PDF format and, due to their length, may take a few minutes to download.

Update Basic Membership Information Online

As you may have already noticed, www.ALTAread.org received a facelift this summer. One of the new features of the site extends the capability to members to update their basic member information themselves. By basic information we mean name, address, phone number, and email address. You may also change your password if you desire. Here's how it works, from the home page of ALTAread.org, click "Member Login" from the selection menu. Type in your member number and password. (If you don't remember your member number and/or password click the "Contact Us" selection and drop us an email, we'll get that information back to you within 48 hours of receipt.) Once you are logged-in, select "My Account" from the selection menu. Immediately to the right of "Profile Information" you will see "edit profile." Click "edit profile" and this will take you to the place where you can make changes.

ALTA Board Recommends Bylaws Changes

Last spring, the ALTA Board of Directors approved several changes to the current bylaws. These changes are being recommended in order to raise the standards for inclusion in the ALTA directory, as well as to broaden the scope of and increase our membership base. Currently there are a variety of multisensory programs across the nation which adhere to the same high level of standard that ALTA promotes. A person who is in and/or has completed training in one of those courses is eligible and encouraged to join ALTA. The proposed changes are as follows:

- Change “Certified Academic Language Therapist” in the second paragraph of the Mission Statement to read “Member”.
- Change “perform” to “provide” in the second paragraph of the Mission Statement.
- Article III, Section 2 – re-ordered the descriptions of membership to follow a continuum of training involved.
- Article III, Section 2 – added the term “Multisensory Structured Language” (MSL).
- Article III, Section 2a – changed the CEU requirement to be aligned with that currently used by IMSLEC, documentation of 30 hours every three years instead of the current 20 hours every two years. Both groups require ten hours each year. Change would be beneficial to audit rotation for both groups.
- Article III, Section 2b – Changed “Student” membership level to “Associate Level” (Academic Language Teacher). This

inures that everyone in the directory has had a minimum level of training.

- Article VI, Section 2b – Added, “The diversity of the board should be maintained in terms of membership levels and number of years served on the board. The composition of the board in relation to membership levels and the number of years served on the board is outlined in the policies and procedures.”
- Article VI, Section 2c – Deleted “a non-voting student representative from each accredited therapist in training center.”
- Article VII, Section 1 – Changed one year to two years to maintain consistency.

The board of ALTA believes these proposed changes would strengthen ALTA by assuring that everyone in the directory has had some training, that our membership base would be increased, and that our membership would expand nationally. With these goals in mind more individuals with dyslexia would be served and our public would have more confidence in knowing who to call for quality intervention. For more information regarding these changes you may contact one of the following Bylaws Committee members: Melanie Royal, Nancy Coffman, Suzanne Carreker, Kay Peterson, or Edith Hogan.

ALTA FOUNDATION

Please keep the ALTA Foundation in mind whenever you consider giving a memorial, scholarship money, or simply a charitable donation. The ALTA Foundation is a 501(C)(3) non-profit entity established to accept donations and contributions which support ALTA's educational mission. Through the financial support provided by the Foundation, Academic Language Therapists benefit from continued education in the most current research based information emphasizing strategies and techniques most effective in clinical and school settings. The Foundation also supports programs to help students with dyslexia, their peers, and public at large to better understand dyslexia and to demystify the disorder. Other Foundation activities include opportunities to provide and support best practices among our members and maintain high levels of professionalism in the field. For more information, or to make a tax-deductible donation, please contact the ALTA national office.

Milestones

The **ALTA Centers Council** is proud to announce the accreditation of **Fundamental Learning Center** of Wichita, Kansas. Fundamental Learning Center was founded in 2000 to provide a continuum of programs and services for Kansas's children experiencing difficulty in read, writing, and spelling. The Center's founders, Gretchen Andeel and Jeanine Phillips, deliver consultative and educational services to private, parochial, and public school systems. The center has trained over 200 Academic Language Therapists who are now engaged in direct intervention instructional activities. The goal of the center is to ensure that children with learning difficulties succeed in school and reach their full potential. "All kids reading, all kids succeeding" is the motto of the center. With the inclusion of Fundamental Learning Center, ALTA CC now has thirteen accredited centers dedicated to the highest quality therapist training. There are centers in seven states spread across the nation. Fundamental Learning Center is a strong addition to a strong group!



Southwest Multisensory Training Center in Allen, Texas, applauds the 14 trainees in its Introductory Alphabetic Phonics held the first two weeks of June. Teacher-trainees begin working with students while they are in training. Pictured are David and Meagan Kennedy, sitting in mascot KoKo's lap. KoKo was a real gorilla who learned sign language, and the first part of the training is teaching the origins of language. Students love the story of KoKo and his kitten.

dents using a structured, sequential approach. The former logo showing how to pronounce "Neuhaus" with the open syllable ni- and a picture of a house reflected this emphasis on the instruction that is beneficial to students with dyslexia. As research demonstrated that all students benefit from a comprehensive, direct, and systematic approach to literacy instruction, the Center's focus broadened to include the successful teaching of all readers. New curricula and classes have provided teachers of students of all ages scientifically based methods for teaching the basic literacy skills of reading, spelling, and writing. The Center's hope is that the new logo represents its dedication to literacy for all students, including those with Dyslexia, which gives the opportunity to all students to become better readers with brighter futures.

CONGRATULATIONS, NEW QUALIFIED INSTRUCTORS: Patricia Goodemote, Drenda Haddock, Deborah

Martin, Nancy Patton, Judy Rockley and Babette Zacks.

WELCOME, NEW CERTIFIED ACADEMIC LANGUAGE THERAPISTS: Emily Adney, Vickie Baker, Sarah Bell, Ellen Bennett, Janet Brontke, Bonnie Brumagim, Jane Chancellor, Harriet Cherny, Jane Collins, Sharon Curran, Jean DeVre, Nancy Donley, Jaci Earnest, Elizabeth Flory, Karen Frey, Dana Gilliland, Dixie Gilson, Jane Hayes, Jamela Hemphill, Olive Hester, Cherie Howell, Patricia Hunt, LaTonia Kennedy, Deborah Kremer, Mary Langdon, Sharon Leonard, Alexis Mavridis, Susan McAlister, Mary McCarty, Wilmet McLin, Dana Michener, Allyson Palmer, Michelle Peckham, Ann Philpott, Terri Pyeatt, Katie Robles, Paula Scherry, Georgette Schmaltz, Katie Simpson, Georgia

Stewart, Donna Talbert, Margaret Tufts, Kathryn Voth and Elaine Whitley.

WELCOME, NEW STUDENT MEMBERS: Karan Bain, Debra Barcena, Jane Bick, Katherine Bosworth, Kirsten Brenna, Tara Chapman, Sarah Daughters, Nancy Davis, Celina Dodd, Marilyn Elliott, Tiffany Gantt, Amanda Gray, Deborah Harrington, Joy Hays, Kathleen Hoyt, Diane Isom, Deirdre Kelly, Amy LeClaire, Andrea Lee, Diane Lee, June Levitt, Sandra Lindeman, Delinda Lucke, Charlotte Mahler, Jessica Martin, Janet Nelson, Donna Ostermann, Pamela Prince, Kathleen Rhein, Jeanne Schaefer, Paula Schneider, Edward Schoen III, Lori Shultze, Karen Skinner, Ardeth Still, Gretchen Tolnay, Kimberly Warneke, Susan Wharton and Shelley Yeater.



Is it a bird? Is it a butterfly? Is it an open book? It is **Neuhaus Education Center's** new logo! Neuhaus Education Center recently celebrated its 25th birthday, and in looking ahead to the next 25 years, the Center chose an image that reflects the ways in which the organization has evolved. When the Center was founded in 1980, its focus was on providing professional development for therapists and teachers of dyslexic stu-

bul•le•tin Calendar

November 9-13, 2005 International Dyslexia Association Conference, Denver, CO

November 17, 2005 Southwest Multisensory Training Center, Allen, TX: Workshop for Alphabetic Phonics Introductory Course, 8:30 AM-4 PM. Contact 972/359-6646.

January 2006 Southwest Multisensory Training Center, Allen, TX: ALTA Registration Exam, January 14, sign-in 8:30 AM; Workshop for Alphabetic Phonics Advanced Course, January 19, 8:30 AM-4 PM; Workshop for Alphabetic Phonics Introductory Course, January 26, 8:30 AM-4 PM; Alphabetic Phonics Introductory Course, January 30-February 10, 8 AM-4 PM. Contact 972/359-6646.

February 10, 2006 Scottish Rite Learning Center of West Texas, Lubbock, TX: C.J. Davidson Memorial Lecture Series, Lubbock Civic Center Theater, 8:30 AM - 4 PM, Jeffrey Black, M.D. and Martha Sibley, speakers. Contact 806/794-2210.

February 2006 Southwest Multisensory Training Center, Allen, TX: Workshop for Alphabetic Phonics Advanced Course, February 16, 8:30 AM-4

PM; Workshop for Alphabetic Phonics Introductory Course, February 23, 8:30 AM-4 PM. Contact 972/359-6646.

March 24, 2006 Southwest Multisensory Training Center, Allen, TX: Video lab for therapists to videotape themselves. Contact 972/359-6646.

April 20, 2006 Southwest Multisensory Training Center, Allen, TX: Workshop for Alphabetic Phonics Advanced course, 8:30 AM-4 PM. Contact 972/359-6646.

April 22, 2006 ALTA Annual Conference

June 5-16, 2006 Southwest Multisensory Training Center, Allen, TX: Alphabetic Phonics - Introductory and Advanced courses, 8 AM-4 PM. Contact 972/359-6646.

June 2006 Scottish Rite Learning Center of West Texas, Lubbock, TX: Introductory Therapist Training, June 12-30, 8:30 AM-4 PM; ALTA Registration Exam, June 21, sign-in 8:30 AM. Contact 806/794-2210.

ALTA members are responsible for maintaining their own personal CEU records for possible audit. Twenty contact hours which equal 2 CEUs are required every two years.

CEU Calendar

- Date:* October 21, 2005
Time: 9 AM - 12 Noon
Cost: \$15
Contact Hours: 3
Topic: **The Way They Learn!**
Speaker: Diane Newton, CALT, QI
Sponsor: Neuhaus Education Center
Location: Neuhaus Education Center, Bellaire, TX
Contact: Cathy Lorino, (713) 664-7676
- Date:* October 22, 2005
Time: 9 AM - 3 PM
Cost: \$100
Contact Hours: 5
Topic: **Fluency and Comprehension**
Speaker: Valerie G. Tucker, M.Ed.
Sponsor: LEAD (Literacy Education & Academic Development, Inc.)
Location: Argyle, TX
Contact: Valerie G. Tucker, (940)-464-3752
- Date:* October 22, 2005
Time: 9 AM - 11 AM
Cost: Free
Contact Hours: 2
Topic: **My Experience with Dyslexia**
Speaker: Dr. Garth Vaz M.D.
Sponsor: Scottish Rite Learning Center of Austin; Austin area branch of IDA
Location: Scottish Rite Learning Center of Austin, Austin, TX
Contact: Linda Gladden, (512) 472-1231
- Date:* October 28, 2005
Time: 9 AM - 12 Noon
Cost: \$15
Contact Hours: 3
Topic: **Why Doesn't My Child Understand What He Reads?**
Speaker: Suzanne Carreker, CALT
Location: Neuhaus Education Center, Bellaire, TX
Contact: Cathy Lorino, (713) 664-7676

- Date:* November 7-8, 2005
Time: 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM
Cost: \$195
Contact Hours: 10.5
Topic: **4th Annual Texas Dyslexia Conference**
Sponsor: Council of Educators for Students with Disabilities, Inc.
Location: DoubleTree Hotel, 6505 IH-35 N, Austin, TX
Contact: Marianne Elam, (512)-219-5043
- Date:* November 9-12, 2005
Time: 8 AM - 5 PM
Cost: Varies
Contact Hours: 23.25
Topic: **The Challenge of Change: 41st Annual Conference by the Learning Disabilities Association of Texas**
Sponsor: Learning Disabilities Association of Texas
Location: Renaissance Austin Hotel, Austin, TX
Contact: Ann Robinson, (512) 458-8234

*Please check our website at www.ALTA.read.org for updated CEU opportunities

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ALTA CENTERS COUNCIL (ACC)

By Nancy Coffman, MS, CALT, QI
President, ALTA Centers Council

Who are you?

When, as a CALT, you are asked, "What do you do?" How do you respond? Do you say that you are a **tutor**? If you do, I'd like to ask you to reconsider your answer. According to Webster's New World College Dictionary, a tutor is "a teacher who gives individual instruction to a student, a private teacher." This indicates any instruction given in a one-on-one situation. There is no mention of extensive training or of on-going assessment of the needs of the student to determine curriculum delivery. When I hear the term tutor, I think of someone that assists a student in a particular subject with homework.

Back to Webster. Therapist is defined as "a specialist in a certain form of treatment of disease or disorder." "Specialist" does imply that intensive training. "Treatment" implies the diagnostic and prescriptive nature of academic language therapy, or dyslexia therapy. Intensive, diagnostic, and prescriptive are all core qualities of the reading interventions that we provide, whether you provide Alphabetic Phonics, Basic Language Skills, the Association Method, Sequential English Education or any other program provided by an accredited center.

Certified Academic Language Therapist (CALT) communicates to the consumer a high level of training and expertise. It is our duty to educate the public as to what we do. Use the initials CALT after your name with pride. Word of mouth is the best advertisement and satisfied customers the best endorsement. The parents and students need to know where and from whom they can receive the

best quality service. So, when someone asks you, "What do you do?" respond, "I am a therapist, a CALT."

If you know someone who is interested in this high quality training, please refer them to one of the following accredited centers.

ALTA ACCREDITED CENTERS

Centers for Youth & Families

Stacey Mahurin
PO Box 251970
Little Rock, Arkansas
72225-1970
(501) 660-6886 x 1129
smahurin@aristotle.net

Fundamental Learning Center

Jeanine Philips
917 S. Glendale
Wichita, KS 67218
(316) 684-7323
jphilips@fundamentalllearning.org

LEAD

Valerie Tucker
406 Country Club Rd.
Argyle, TX 76226
(940) 464-3752 phone
(940) 464-7293 fax
lead1234@gte.net

Multisensory Language Training Institute of New Mexico

Sandra Dillon
6344 Buenos Aires N.W.
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87120
(505) 898-7500 phone
(505) 890-4119 Fax
sandraddillon@msn.com

Neuhaus Education Center

Kay Allen
4433 Bissonnet
Bellaire, TX 77401
(713) 664-7676 phone
(713) 664-4744 fax
kallen@neuhaus.org

Payne Education Center/OK City

Janet Riggan
3240 W. Britton Rd., Ste. 104
Oklahoma City, OK 73120
(405) 755-4205 phone
(405) 755-4281 fax
info@payneeducationcenter.org

The Scottish Rite Learning Center of Austin

Linda Gladden
1622 E. Riverside
Austin, TX 78741
(512) 472-1231
Fax (512) 326-1877
lgladdensrlc@sbcglobal.net

The Scottish Rite Learning Center of West Texas

Doris Haney
602 Avenue Q
PO Box 10135
Lubbock, TX 79408
(806) 794-2210
(806) 765-9150
haney@nts-online.net

Southern Methodist University LTP

Karen Vickery
Learning Therapy Program
Southern Methodist University
5236 Tennyson Pkwy., Bldg. 4-108
Plano, TX 75024
214) 768-7323 phone
(972) 473-3442 fax
kvickery@smu.edu

See ACC on Page 15

Southwest Multisensory Training Center

Beverly Dooley
600 S. Jupiter
Allen, TX 75002-4065
(972) 359-6646 phone
(972) 359-8291 fax
bev@patrickodooley.com

Stratford Friends School MSL Teacher Training Program

Sandra Howze
6 Llandillo Rd.
Havertown, PA 19083
(610) 446-3144 phone
(610) 446-6381 fax
showze@stratfordfriends.org

Teachers College, Columbia University

Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills
Mary Rowe
Dept. of Curriculum & Teaching
PO Box 31
New York, New York 10027
(212) 678-3080 phone
(212) 678-3237 fax
mcr30@columbia.edu

Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children

Karen Avrit
Luke Waites Child Development Center
2222 Welborn Street
Dallas, TX 75219
(214) 559-7885 phone
(214) 559-7808 fax
kavrit@tsrh.org

Plano ALTA Group

Fresh ideas, therapy techniques, updates on counseling, medications for ADD, and study skills are just a few of the topics drawing Academic Language Therapists to the Plano ALTA Group. Twenty five to thirty meet quarterly to earn CEUs and stay current in their profession. The Plano ALTA Group has been meeting for nine years. Chairman, Jean Fortune, with help from regular attendees, organizes the meetings held at the Southfork Hotel in Plano. Half of the members meet for a light meal which before the program which begins at 7 p.m. and runs two hours.

There are great benefits to networking with other therapists. Serving our clients more effectively is the most obvious. We know each other and often know time schedules and desire for more students. If one therapist gets a call and cannot meet the time demands of that client, then she can refer with confidence to another. Personal contact with each other allows sharing of ideas and encouragement. "We even share materials form time to time", said Mimi Grant. One stimulating program involved four therapists sharing their best ideas of games, drills, and manipulatives. We are currently working on a program with in-depth focus on spelling. Two very helpful workshops taught us how to construct a dyslexia profile form diagnostic scores.

The Plano ALTA Group would enjoy hearing from other groups around the country and the results of their networking efforts. We would hope similar blessings would result... We welcome other therapists in the Dallas- Fort Worth area to our Monday night meetings. Contact Jean Fortune, fortsearch@aol.com or call 972-527-3215.



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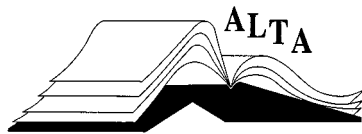
Can You Keep a Secret?

A special surprise is planned for ALTA's 20th Anniversary Conference in 2006. But we need your help to pull it off.

We are looking for photos of ALTA members from the past and present in all types of settings. Of particular interest are:

- Photos of ALTA's founders and early members
- Photos of "the early days" at Dean Learning Center and TSRH
- Photos of ALTA Accredited Training Centers
- Photos of CALTs in training classes
- Photos of training centers' graduating classes
- Photos of therapists in classrooms, private therapy settings, presenting at conferences
- Photos of any ALTA related event that would trace our history

If you have any photos of these types in your files, please share them with us! Please email photos to Karen Vickery, kvickery@smu.edu. Start cleaning out those scrapbooks and photo albums now and share them with ALTA. You will be pleasantly surprised!



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13140 Coit Road
Suite 320, LB 120
Dallas, TX 75240-5737