

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

# bulletin

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Academic Language Therapy Association®  
 14070 Proton Rd., Suite 100, LB 9  
 Dallas, TX 75244-3601

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



*"A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step." Lao Tzu*

Dear ALTA members,

A single step taken years ago by ALTA – the dream of licensure – became a journey of several years for our organization. It is both exhilarating and humbling to announce the conclusion of this portion of ALTA's journey. After six months under the Texas Capitol Dome, House Bill 461 successfully cleared both chambers of the Texas Legislature and was signed by the Governor of Texas on June 19, 2009. This is an historic moment for our organization, for you, as ALTA members, and for our field.

As the motivators for this legislation, ALTA members can be very proud of this historic moment in our organization's history and in our field. ALTA has long been known as an organization focused on reaching beyond our boundaries for the good of the field we serve. The goal of HB 461 - to increase public awareness of the high levels of training which back up your credentials as CALTs, AALTs, QIs and IAALTs - speaks to this ALTA tradition of excellence. With a strong endorsement of the licensing process, that public awareness can occur.

It has been said that a journey is best measured in friends rather than miles. Our journey through the Texas Capitol was made easier by our dedicated and tireless lobbyist, Courtney Hoffman. She guided us through every obstacle and vocalized our cause among friend and foe alike. ALTA is fortunate to count Courtney Hoffman among our champions.

Additionally, our friends in the Legislature proved themselves sincere supporters of HB 461. On the House side, Representative Rob Eissler remained focused through the ups and downs of the bill's process and his staff was patient and dedicated assistants for our bill. Representatives Lois Kolkhorst, John Zerwas, and Jim McReynolds of the House Public Health Committee offered meaningful input on our cause and listened to our needs as well. On the Senate side, Senator Joan Huffman, mother of a dyslexic son, proved to be an eloquent and staunch supporter of our bill. Her sincerity as a parent involved in this realm spoke volumes among her colleagues. Likewise, the continued and respected support of Senator Bob Deuell, our champion from previous sessions, provided the important transition from previous efforts to the current one. Finally, Senator Jane Nelson, Chairman of the Senate Health and Human Services, professionally guided our bill through the committee process with an efficiency and energy that was a delight to watch. I strongly encourage you to individually thank these champions who endorsed HB 461.

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During hearings at the Capitol, key witnesses for ALTA provided important testimony at critical points in our bill's process. In House hearings, Joyce Pickering and Terri Zerfas began the education process for the House Public Health Committee and laid the groundwork for the path ahead. In Senate hearings, Linda Gladden, Karen Monteith, Terri Zerfas and Susan Hinton proved to be the Fabulous Foursome, each providing valuable rationale for the passage of HB 461.

At its root, the legislative process depends upon facility with language and an abundance of patience. In both regards, Judy Echols, ALTA's Licensure Committee Chairman, and her committee performed feats of daring, discipline and dedication on our behalf. As I shared at our annual conference, not a single syllable has slipped past Judy's careful watch, and our bill and this process became stronger because of her special attention to ALTA's needs.

You - the ALTA membership - showed tenacity and perseverance throughout this process. In total, over five awareness campaigns this session, you facilitated over 3,000 emails, phone calls and letters sent to our public leaders, telling them your stories and passion for our cause. You also reached out to those you know, especially those you have touched in your work, and asked for their support of our cause. In the low moments of this endeavor, it was many of those letters shared from your personal experiences as well as your eagerness to assist that lifted the sails of those working closely on the bill. Thank you for answering each call to action with professionalism and focus.

What can licensure mean for you as certified ALTA members?

First, licensure will bring increased awareness to the quality of training which backs up your credentials as CALTs, AALTs, QIs and IAALTs. As the public and other professionals adopt the vocabulary of HB 461's requirements for licensure and their link to our own member standards, parents, teachers and the public will begin to recognize the value of our own professional credentials as well as the titles protected in the bill: Licensed Dyslexia Therapist and Licensed Dyslexia Practitioner.

Second, licensure will raise recognition of our field to a new level. With each additional professional licensed by the State of Texas, the public can become accustomed to a new professional title which will represent the professionalism and expertise we have subscribed to as ALTA members for over two decades.

Third, licensure and the successful passage of this bill will carry with it increased focus on our organization

and its rich history as a leader in the field of dyslexia. In recent weeks, this effect has already become apparent as those outside our ranks have begun asking about ALTA membership and our organization's link to this licensure movement.

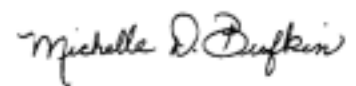
Finally, HB 461 opens the door to a conversation between the State of Texas and those whose lives and life's work have revolved around dyslexia. The Dyslexia Interim Study Committee mandated by HB 461 - one of only seven such committees authorized during this legislative session - offers a unique opportunity for ALTA members and those who understand our work to influence public policy related to dyslexia in Texas.

ALTA's journey is in no manner finished as there is continued work to be done in order to implement HB 461. While the signing of our bill signals the end of the legislative process, the work has just begun for our organization. Increased recognition carries with it increased responsibility. Establishing the licensing process will involve multiple steps over several months. Preliminary planning has already begun with the agencies which will oversee the licensure process. In coming weeks, a web and phone line will be established to answer questions about the licensure process. Alongside these efforts, our organization must plan and mount a public awareness campaign so that others in our realms of influence share in this opportunity. Finally, the relationships we forged during this legislative session with the champions for our bill must be maintained and strengthened during the interim period.

ALTA has long been known for stepping forward with initiatives important for our field. The passage of HB 461 is a moment of great celebration for ALTA and those we serve. It also marks a new era for our organization in terms of recognition and responsibility. Each of the tasks we must now pursue will require a commitment from our entire membership in order to carry this significant achievement forward.

These are exciting times to be an ALTA member. Please join me as we celebrate this legislative victory and begin yet another new trail for ALTA. Thank you for your service to ALTA, to this important initiative, and to those we so passionately serve.

Warmest regards,



Michelle D. Bufkin, M.P.A., CALT, QI  
President  
Academic Language Therapy Association

## Retrieval, Automaticity, Vocabulary Elaboration-Orthography (RAVE-O): A Comprehensive, Fluency-Based Reading Intervention Program- Part 2

By Maryanne Wolf

The systematic development of fast, accurate letter-pattern recognition is the central goal of this component of the program and is the basis of many RAVE-O activities. Based on the earlier described work of McClelland and Seidenberg (1988) and memory research on “chunking”, RAVE-O was designed to address each of the components described by McClelland and Seidenberg (1988) with a range of activities described below.

The treatment package includes one-half hour of a phonological program and one-half hour of RAVE-O. The focus moves from the phonological program’s introduction of single phonemes to RAVE-O’s introduction of predictable letter patterns using those phonemes: for example, onset-rimes, consonant blends and digraphs, and common affixes, each of which are gradually introduced as strategies with their own mnemonics. Children in the same session, therefore, are taught in the phonological program to analyze a selected group of phonemes, and in RAVE-O to use these same phonemes to perceive sublexical chunks that speed up word recognition. In this way RAVE-O both reinforces and also expands work on word attack.

Several concrete examples illustrate this interconnected application of phonological and orthographic skills. A child is introduced to the vowel “a” and the consonant “m” in the PHAB program. In RAVE-O the child learns several core words with the “am” rime. After the multiple meanings of the core words are discussed, the words are taught on **Rime cards** with separable **Starter (onset) cards** that are color coded. Students learn to segment and recompose a set of approximately five core words introduced each week, and also to identify other words with the same rime patterns. They begin to recognize the segments (chunks) in words and to become more flexible in their ability to recognize multiple other examples of taught patterns.

**Orthographic Pattern** cards (that is, the Rime, Starter, and Ender cards) offer a high level of teacher control so that they can individualize the materials to match the student’s level of achievement. By manipulating the total number of cards and pat-



terns, the teacher creates activities that can challenge children and can assure success. Additional starter or onset cards or onset and/or rime patterns can be added to generalize to new words and to help the learner discriminate between new and previously learned rime patterns.

As accuracy for core words is mastered, two fluency-related activities occur. First, the knowledge of each rime pattern is generalized by adding additional starter cards. The goal of this activity is an insight by the child in which they begin to realize that they have power over letters to “make words”. The ability to create new words, in turn, facilitates the student’s ability to distinguish one word from another, thus building both word identification and word attack skills.

Second, in order to facilitate the underlying components of orthographic pattern recognition, an evolving computerized set of games, called **Speed Wizards**, was designed in conjunction with Gordon Goodman at the Rochester Institute of Technology. The computerized game format permits the increased facilitation of 1) visual perception of teacher-selected, common orthographic patterns;

2) visual discrimination of similar sublexical patterns; and 3) visual-auditory matching (through games that use a voice component to have students match word on the screen to announcer's auditorially presented word). Thus, the computerized Speed Wizards games have been designed to provide simultaneous attention to the sublexical-level skills discussed by McClelland and Seidenberg (1989) and to word-level skills.

Speed Wizards provides controlled timed practice of the most common rime patterns in four levels of difficulty. Practice can be constrained to only one or two rimes (e.g., "am", or "am" plus "an" rime words) or can include an entire vowel family of rime patterns. The auditory stimulus reinforces phoneme discrimination. There are 5 general game formats - one for each vowel. Each format extends from CVC to compound and multisyllable words that employ the embedded root rimes. Very importantly, children work to increase their individual speed of word recognition from relatively slow to rapid rates. At any point the teacher can have the child work on a particularly difficult speed for a given rime pattern or on a strategy for dealing with longer words.

**Other Activities.** Multiple other activities reinforce these same orthographic skills and strategies. Our guiding principle here is that a range of imaginative activities that teach the same skills in different formats are our best tool to helping children tolerate drill and routine. Like Reitsma (1983) and Levy and Bourassa (1998), we seek to provide maximum exposures to common orthographic patterns, but in constantly varying ways.

For example, the orthographic pattern cards can also be used in card games such as adaptations of Go Fish, Rummy or Memory to add both a nuance of fun and a decrease in structure. Orthographic cards can also be incorporated into writing activities. Timed sorting or recomposing activities can add the speed dimension to push the development of automaticity.

**Sound Sliders** are another game-like component that provide a next level of scaffolded practice of orthographic patterns. After the week's rime patterns are learned, sliders are often introduced. Sliders are easily made and consist of a list of known patterns with a "sliding" initial phoneme. This allows students to match different possible starters with the "am"-family rime. This activity combines visual, auditory, and also semantic knowledge bases, as students generate lists of both real words and non-words. Adding a timed component encourages the development of automatic responses to orthographic patterns.

Dice games are an activity that can reduce teacher scaffolding by succeeding degrees. **Spelling Pattern Dice** are composed of rime patterns for a single vowel or for two vowels. Starter Dice have single consonants or consonant blends. Students can be guided in more controlled activities to use the dice as "blocks" to make words. Paired with a writing activity, it brings mastery over "the system" of words to a somewhat higher level. By the end of the first year, most RAVE-O students enjoy the less scaffolded activity of dice games in which they roll a selection of dice and then compose as many words as possible in a designated amount of time. Variations of solitaire vs. partner play and timed vs. untimed conditions incorporate dimensions of automaticity and play.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF FLUENCY THROUGH SEMANTIC FACILITATION AND LEXICAL RETRIEVAL STRATEGIES

##### Semantic Facilitation:

Although the activities discussed above concentrate on the orthographic basis of words, they are never used in isolation from semantic activities designed to strengthen students' vocabulary knowledge base. RAVE-O is grounded in the belief that orthographic recognition is facilitated by semantic knowledge (Beck, et al., 1982; Beck et al., 1987; Kameenui, et al., 1987; Segal & Wolf, 1992; Wolf & Segal, 1993; in press) and that these components are interactively connected. In the initial introduction of words, therefore, RAVE-O puts almost equal emphasis on the semantic component. This is based on pilot research begun ten years ago on the relationship between vocabulary and retrieval in dyslexic adolescent readers (see Wolf & Segal, 1993; in press). As alluded to, core words are first introduced through a discussion of children's prior knowledge of their definitions and then linked to their own experiences. Idiomatic usage and even jokes are used to concretize this other aspect of linguistic flexibility. Accentuating the fun that words can provide is one part of the third, overarching goal -- to win students' affection for language itself.

As discussed, **core words** were selected on the basis of both their sublexical patterns and their multiple meanings. Most words have three (or more) common meanings. For example, the word "jam" has four relatively well-known meanings. The week begins with **Image Cards**, that have pictorial representations of the word's uses selected from popular children's literature or drawn in an engaging manner by an artist. These cards give students common visual representations of two or more definitions and provide a visual mnemonic to reading-impaired children, some of whom are dysnomia in varied

degrees (see review of word-finding difficulties in dyslexic children in Wolf, 1982; Wolf & Goodglass, 1986; Wolf & Obregon, 1992; Wolf & Segal, 1993). Beyond their introductory function, the Image Cards are used in adaptations of Memory and various sorting games to consolidate the breadth and depth of meanings possible from any group of words.

There are two important reasons for RAVE-O's emphasis on multiple meanings. First, many reading-impaired children begin with or develop a particular inflexibility towards words. Children who become progressively disenfranchised from their language are more likely to cling rigidly to what they know. Dysfluent readers literally don't have time to process alternative meanings to words and thus miss out on more and more of the richness of our language. RAVE-O stresses the richness of written language from the start to combat this natural consequence of dysfluency. In addition, we wish to give all children a "set" towards the multiple-layered nature of written language. Over the last few years we have seen some RAVE-O students' understanding of this level of semantic flexibility open the doors to a geometrically increased understanding of oral and written language.

Word Webs (a weekly changing wall chart) offer a different method for increasing children's understanding of semantic connections. Each week students create a Word Web for one core word by "brainstorming" their associations to the word's multiple definitions. The resulting graphic "web of meaning" dramatizes the many facets words can have. As the year progresses, webs change subtly to be able to teach such concepts as hierarchical relationships within semantic associates. The overall goal of web-work is to increase the children's appreciation of a word's depth of meaning and its great breadth and connectedness to other words. Children begin to realize that if you know one word very well, you know a hundred more.

Minute Stories are very short, "short stories" written for the RAVE-O curriculum that utilize only the cumulative words in the program and that emphasize the particular week's core words with their multiple meanings. Minute Stories meld orthographic and semantic representations of words and incorporate direct work on comprehension and fluency in connected text. Through the controlled vocabulary in the stories, students have an opportunity to apply the week's particular orthographic and semantic strategies and to build fluency in a contextual reading activity. The stories are short enough to be attended to without interruption and interesting enough to be reread to build fluency and automatic recognition. Repeated reading practice, a main

component in other fluency programs (Samuels, 1985; Samuels et al., 1992; Stahl et al., 1997) is easily incorporated in these stories. Students' ability to demonstrate mastery in these stories is both a source of pride and accomplishment to the children -- the third goal throughout RAVE-O.

Companion writing activities sometimes accompany Minute Stories and push students to another level of recognition of orthographic patterns in their own spelling. Work focuses on vocabulary use, reading comprehension, and self-expression and is incorporated by the teacher according to student capability.

### Lexical Retrieval Strategies

Several references have been made in this paper to the difficulties that some reading-impaired children have in word retrieval. Indeed some of the original work on naming speed emerged from a more general study of lexical processes and the word-retrieval difficulties experienced by many dyslexic readers (see Bashir & Scavuzzo, 1992; Wolf, 1982). As noted in several recent papers, word-retrieval problems in language-impaired (Lahey & Edwards, 1996) and in reading-impaired children (Wolf & Obregon, 1992; Wolf & Bowers, in press) can be based on a variety of underlying sources, ranging from simple lack of vocabulary knowledge to phonological issues and lexical access and retrieval. The precursor to the present program, RAVE (Wolf & Segal, 1993, in press), sought to address the range of possible sources of retrieval problems through a combination of semantic development activities and explicit strategies for lexical storage and retrieval.

The lexical-retrieval activities in the present RAVE-O program are based on theoretical principles and findings from this original RAVE vocabulary-retrieval program. The two central axes are: 1) the employment of several modalities in the introduction and practice of core words to enhance storage; and 2) a metacognitive approach to the retrieval of words that are difficult to "find". First, with regard to storage, as discussed in the last section, Image Cards that depict the multiple meanings of the core words provide a visual mnemonic. Second, core words are sometimes presented for brief exposures as concrete objects and then covered with a cloth. Attempts to recall the covered objects help both storage and retrieval. The color-coded orthographic pattern cards for teaching core words are often given a kinesthetic dimension through letters made of sand. Vivid associations are elicited through word-web activities and often pictorially presented on evolving wall charts. The cumulative, multi-modality effect of these storage activities is aimed to aid long-term memory and easier retrieval.

A more metacognitive approach to retrieval is exemplified in the **Sam Spade strategies** for “finding” elusive, but known words. Developed within the precursor RAVE program, Sam Spade is a Word Detective who gives the children a set of four questions, each of which begin with an “S” to help find clues for the words they cannot retrieve. The image of the detective and his ability to use clues to find words “on the tip of the tongue” has proven to be a powerful one for adolescents (Wolf & Segal, 1993) and younger children. The questions are: 1) Starts with? That is, what sound does the missing word start with? 2) Sounds like? That is, what core word does it sound like? Do you know the rime inside it? 3) Similar to? What word has a similar meaning? Do you know any associated word from a word web that can lead you to it? 4) Short word? That is, is the word a long Fatrat word or a short simple word?

The children play deduction games with the teacher and among themselves to locate the “missing word.” The Sam Spade strategies help provide clues to the missing word. By the second or third clue, the children often deduce the missing word, or find an acceptable alternative. Either result helps them feel more in charge and more capable of using language to help themselves. Ultimately, the children internalize these Sam Spade clues and use them not only for oral word-finding difficulties, but also when they encounter unknown written words. For, these strategies integrate orthographic (rime pattern clues), phonological (phoneme onsets), and semantic information that is useful in both oral and written contexts; in addition, these tools give the children the psychological confidence to try, to persevere, and to find alternatives when confronted with “gaps” in their knowledge of words. As such, the Sam Spade strategies contribute to two of the overarching goals of the program: increased fluency in underlying component skills, and a sense of flexibility and growing linguistic prowess over a language system that has heretofore blocked them at too many turns.

### Summary

The RAVE-O program is a comprehensive approach to reading fluency that is based on a connectionist model of reading development. There is a simultaneous, dual focus: on fluency in reading outcomes like word attack, word identification, and comprehension; and on automaticity in the underlying phonological, orthographic, semantic, and lexical retrieval skills that collectively contribute to (or impede) overall reading fluency. Systematically introduced, game-like activities address both accuracy and automaticity in each reading outcome and in each underlying component skill, such as let-

ter and letter-pattern recognition, auditory discrimination of phonemes, and semantic facilitation. Within the component skills, orthographic pattern recognition is particularly emphasized; numerous opportunities for practice are provided through imaginative activities and a specially designed set of computer games, called Speed Wizards. The program is conceptualized as one-half of an intervention treatment package that moves daily from a phonological-analysis and blending base to emphases on orthographic pattern recognition, semantic development, and retrieval strategies. RAVE-O has been designed, therefore, to supplement, reinforce, and extend reading programs that stress phonological decoding principles.

The major theoretically-based objectives of the program are to help children activate phonological, orthographic, and semantic information about words more automatically to facilitate fluency in word recognition and comprehension. The major pedagogical objective is to harness the imagination of children and teachers in the service of transforming linguistically disenfranchised, impaired readers into children who can see, use, and ultimately enjoy the power of human language.

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**Welcome, new CALTs** Rogena Alviola, Catherine Beardshaw, Lorna Belk, Kathleen Blair, Nancy Braum, Cynthia Bollman Brown, Jane Buerchner, Carol Burgin, Kim Burris, Betsy Cauley, Marian Cisarik, Krista Cone, Maria Culver, Sally Curtin, Belinda Day, Marlana Deatherage, Leigh Michele Dolezal, Jamie Donohoo, Carolyn Dutton, Melia Duzan, Karen Fenter, Anna Finley, Catherine Foster-Cobb, Susan Giles, Stacy Greene, Shonda Guthrie, Lisa Bishop Hamilton, Gay Hendrik, Faith Houston, Randall Johnson, Cynthia Johnson, Aliscia Long, Laura Ann MacDonald, Betsy Mata, Elesha McCarty, Deborah Meinwald, Anne Marie Miller, Julie Montgomery, Lorna Montgomery, Michelle M. Moon, Kristie Moore, Velma Moreno, Dawn Morris, Jo Ann Newburn, Kathleen Margaret Orr, Kathryn Palmer, Christine Palmquist, Kimberly Pugh, Lisa Marie Reddy, Marsha Richardson, Judith Riggs, Deb Robles, Melissa Ann Rodriguez, Jo Anne Sala, Stacy Salisbury, Cynthia Sallee, Frances Ellen Seagrave, Dianne Sebastian, Krisztina Shields, Jessica Smith, Regina Staffa, Ada Stehl, Kim Stern, Phyllis Swinney, Annette Talley-Bailey, Cynthia Temple, Marjorie Torrance, Sherri Turnquist, Angela Wachter, Sarah Warren, Nancy Maria White, Devon Williams, Tami Wojnarowski, Melissa Woodruff, Stephanie Worcester and Lesli Wright.

**Congratulations, new QI** Suzanne Hollingsworth.

### News from Scottish Rite Learning Center of Austin

On June 12th Alice Marsel represented Scottish Rite Learning Center of Austin (SRLC) at the Barbara Jordan Media Award Luncheon at the New Cowboy Stadium in Arlington. "Changing Children's Lives," the center's new informational video, was recognized for a Special Contribution from an Organization. SRLC and the producers of the video received Barbara Jordan Bronze Medallions for the video, one of five pieces selected for 2009. The Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities presents the Barbara Jordan Media Awards to acknowledge print, broadcast, and Internet media professionals who accurately and positively report on individuals with disabilities. The judges felt that the piece offered a balanced perspective by weaving "between a professional explanation of what the Scottish Rite Learning Center does, the parents' appreciation of the program, and the comments of the children themselves."

SRLC therapist and Director of Outreach and Development, Jessica Smith, kept a close eye on the progress of H.B. 461 for the center during the entire legislative session, attending all House and Senate hearings to register in support of the bill. In celebration of their graduation, she arranged for 10 of her students to serve as honorary legislative pages on two mornings shortly before the final vote on the bill. This was a wonderful way to make dyslexia and the benefits of the bill personal to legislators and others at the capitol!

At the 23rd Annual ALTA Conference on April 18th, SRLC learned that two of our trainees in the Dyslexia Therapist Program received Aylett R. Cox Scholarships to defray the costs of their second year of training. The recipients are Tara Cevallos who teaches after-school therapy classes at the center and Teresa Faircloth, mom of a dyslexic daughter who is pursuing her training despite obstacles such as a family transfer from Texas to Pennsylvania. Congratulations to both!

In May, SRLC celebrated two graduations. On Wednesday, May 6th, over 200 students, family members, therapists, and Masons gathered for dinner and a graduation ceremony in the Scottish Rite theater for the thirteen students who completed the after-school SRLC program, *Take Flight: A Comprehensive Intervention for Students with Dyslexia*. Each student received a certificate and personalized trophy in honor of their success. On Friday, May 15th, colleagues and family members celebrated with sixteen therapist trainees as they graduated from SRLC's two-year Dyslexia Therapist Training Program. Tears and laughter filled the theater as the new therapists shared their feelings and experiences with *Take Flight* and expressed their appreciation to the Qualified Instructors, the center, and the Masons.

In April, SRLC's contact at the Austin Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFBD) recommended the center for a grant for an institutional membership. The grant provides us with equipment and access to books that allow students to try out the RFBD services. This experience helps students to determine what services they may want to pursue through an individual membership in RFBD.

### Innovator Awards Announced at IMSLEC Council Meeting

The IMSLEC Innovator Awards are bestowed annually to educators and professionals in the field of multisensory structure language education. Phyllis Meisel, IMSLEC President, was delighted to announce the following recipients of the 2008 IMSLEC Innovator Awards at IMSLEC's annual Council meeting in Seattle.

- Outstanding MSLE Professionals: Arlene Sunday, Gladys Kolenovsky, David C. Winters
- Outstanding MSLE Educator in a College or University: Karen S. Vickery, Ed.D.
- Outstanding MSLE Teacher: Carole Wile
- Outstanding School Administrator: Earl B. Oremus

The Etoile DuBard Award of Excellence in the field of Multisensory Structured Language Education is awarded annually at the IMSLEC fall meeting, to a person who meets the ideals, professionalism and dedication exemplified by the life of Etoile DuBard. Nominations are taken from the Council. Phyllis was pleased to announce that the 2008 recipient is Joyce S. Pickering.

# MEET THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## MEET THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ALTA proudly presents these three new members of the 2009-2010 Board of Directors:

### CATHERINE GHASSEMI

**Education:** Masters of Science, Queens College, New York

**Family:** Husband: Sy, Son: Jonathan, Daughter: Jessica

**Years in ALTA:** 16

**Original motivation to enter this field:** Frustration! I could not find qualified professionals to whom I could refer students who desperately needed help in learning to read.

**Previous ALTA Board positions:** None

**In what positions have you used your training:** Private practice and teacher training at Columbia University, Teachers College

**Initial training at:** Columbia University, Teachers College

**My vision for ALTA:** I will be happy to see Alta continue promoting and maintaining high standards for professionals who are entrusted with the job of teaching academic language skills. Moreover, I would love to see ALTA gain more acknowledgment and be recognized across the country for the job that it does so well. Better recognition would enable individuals make better decisions as they seek professionals that are qualified to teach academic skills. I know that ALTA is better known in some areas of the country, however the New York area, public knowledge of ALTA's work and/or existence is sorely absent.

### LUCY SMITH

**Education:** MEd (Concentration in Learning Therapy - SMU), CALT, QI

**Family:** Husband: A. R. Smith, 4 grown children, 7 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren

**Years in ALTA:** 12

**Original motivation to enter this field:** looking to make a career change that would involve serving people, and would be intellectually stimulating, challenging, interesting, and rewarding

**Previous ALTA Board positions:** None

**In what positions have you used your training:** Private practice, Inservice training, Founder and President of Texas HOPE Literacy, Inc.

**Initial training at:** Edmar Associates (Margaret Taylor Smith & Edith Hogan)

**Related board experience:** 12 years – Texas HOPE Literacy

**My vision for ALTA:** State Licensure; that ALTA ensures that all LD children receive appropriate quality instruction they need at early ages; that those who did not receive this instruction early in life get the help they need so they can go to college; that ALTA set up scholarship fund for those who SES prevents them from receiving services; that ALTA is made aware that 85% of offenders' children will go to prison, and that a large percentage of their parents are undiagnosed LD, and still not receiving the help they need. I am extremely interested in any area that connects with LD and incarceration.

### KIMBERLY MULLINS

**Education:**

- B.S., Interdisciplinary Studies, Tarleton State University, Stephenville, Texas

- M.Ed., Reading, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas

- M.Ed., Learning Therapy, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas

**Family:** Clay my husband and Jack our son

**Years in ALTA:** 10 years

**Original motivation to enter this field:** I met an engaging young sixth grade student during my student teaching and knew there must be more that could be done to help him learn to read.

**Previous ALTA Board positions:** On-line Helpline Committee Chair, CEUs, and VP of Membership

**In what positions have you used your training:** I've worked in the public schools, as an instructor in the Learning Therapy Center at Southern Methodist University, and in private practice.

**Initial training at:** Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children, Dallas, TX

**Related board experience:** I'm currently working with technology initiatives for SMU that include on-line instruction.

**My vision for ALTA:** I see ALTA as a dynamic organization that has so much to offer the membership and those students we serve. Each of us represent the future of the organization and we are in the midst of exciting times. As our organization continues to grow so will our ability to have a greater impact. I'm always mindful that at the core ALTA has a true center that reminds us all that it is truly about our students and their success!

By Margaret Smith, M.Ed., CALT, QI

In order to understand the importance of state licensure to our profession, it helps to look at the history of how we came to be what we are today. In the late 50's, Aylett Cox responded to a friend's plea to help her son, Ned, who had been deemed mentally retarded by his school system. She went to Kansas City periodically to receive Orton-Gillingham training and began to teach Ned. Ned's progress rapidly spread through the parent grapevine, and soon she was overwhelmed with calls from other parents. The need became so great that Sally Childs helped Aylett start a teacher training program in the early 60's.

The public perception of this work was mixed. Many believed that dyslexia was only an excuse for rich children to get out of school work. The educational system and the public at large did not recognize dyslexia or the value of the remedial techniques. As late as the early 70's, most universities did not recognize dyslexia, and certainly did not include appropriate teaching techniques for dyslexics in their teacher training departments. Today, 2009, there are still university level reading department heads that not only do not recognize dyslexia, but they teach their trainees that phonics is bad for children. Wouldn't you say that we still have a way to go?

Even though a number of dyslexia therapists had been trained in the 60's and early 70's, there was still a lack of interest by public schools. Up until the time that a small public school hired Valarie Reynolds to start a dyslexia program, the work had mainly existed in the private domain. As public school personnel began to visit Valarie's classes, they became interested in what was happening there, although only a very few began to get teachers trained.

After the 1985 dyslexia laws were enacted, public awareness was still very slow in coming. Today, there are still some Texas school districts that say they have no dyslexics in their population. As the saying goes, "We're not there yet."

The purpose of licensure is to protect dyslexic individuals by assuring that they receive the best possible remedial instruction. Although we have made great gains in this respect through the foundation of ALTA and the subsequent establishment of standards for instructors and teacher training centers, there are still instances of individuals and/or organizations who do not meet all of those standards. In other words, not everyone involved in this work are certified. Since 1985, ALTA certification has stood for the highest standards for those working in the field of dyslexia and other written language disorders. Licensure opens another doorway created by your professional certification by ALTA.

Parents have always been the primary impetus for achieving change in public education. Those of you who are non-Texas residents, who become licensed by Texas, are in a great position to have influence in your own state. The parents of your students have the power; you have the knowledge and skills. Hopefully you are willing to become an instrument of change in your state by becoming licensed in Texas.

Licensure is the strongest and most recognizable form of credibility. Texas has been foremost in dyslexia education, and the eyes of other states are upon us. We can be instrumental in raising public awareness of the need for quality education for dyslexics beyond our borders.

As Certified Academic Language Therapists and Associate Academic Language Teachers, we are not only responsible for providing excellent instruction for our students, but we also have a larger responsibility to the wider community. State licensure is the strongest way to assure more widespread public awareness of what dyslexia is, and how to treat it.

## Licensure by the Numbers

**180** Days from filing to passage

**3,211** # of emails, phone calls, letters sent to legislators on behalf of HB 461

**131** # of Representatives voting favorably for HB461

**3** # of Representatives voting against HB 461

**42** # of Senators voting favorably for HB 461

**0** # of Senators voting against HB 461

**27%** Probability of a bill's passage in 4 previous Legislative Sessions

**18%** Probability of a bill's passage in the 81st Legislative Sessions

**7** Number of Interim Study Committees authorized during the 81st Legislative Session (HB 461 authorized one of these)

**Priceless**  
HB 461's passage and what it means for ALTA and those we serve

## Slating Committee: Your Opinion Matters!

By Helen Macik

As always, many ALTA members stepped up to the plate by participating and submitting names to the Slating Committee over the past year. As a result, the Slating Committee was able to hand over to the 2009 Nominating Committee many suggestions of interested people to fill the leadership positions as well as various committee positions. The nominating committee said it made their job much easier to know of people who were interested in serving our organization. Thank you to everyone who submitted names.

However, our work is not finished. The Slating Committee will continue in its role of surfacing interested ALTA members throughout the year for leadership positions in our organization. ALTA is fortunate to have so many talented and dedicated members whose primary motivation is serving others. The same talents which help foster literacy for the individuals we serve – expertise, empathy, focus and organization – are talents which are important for the strength of building our organization and profession as well.

Nationally, ALTA has become a highly recognized professional organization. Almost daily ALTA

receives requests about how to become a member. This is due to the dedicated work of members; especially those who have been and are in leadership roles. Do you have an interest in serving ALTA in some capacity? Do you know of ALTA members whose skill sets would be a perfect match for one of our organization's needs? If so, you now have a channel through which to submit suggestions for officers, directors, committee chairs and members.

The Slating Committee is looking for ALTA members with an interest in serving in the following areas:

1. ALTA Board of Directors;
2. ALTA Committee Positions – both Chairs and volunteers; and,
3. Nominating Committee members – to serve during the annual nominating process.

Please submit all suggestions for officers, directors and committee positions to the Slating Committee Chairperson, Helen Macik, at 972-225-2590 or hmacik@smu.edu

Your opinion matters, especially to ALTA!

## ALTA Foundation Announces 2009 I Believe in Myself Award



The I Believe in Myself Award is a scholarship opportunity for students who are receiving academic language therapy from an ALTA member. Students who have an interest in art and are in third grade and up submit an essay explaining why art is important in their life.

The ALTA Foundation is proud to announce that Ethan Kohnle was awarded the third annual Joan Hogge I Believe in Myself Award. Ethan is twelve years old and attends Southwest Academy in Allen, Texas. His mother and the school's director, Beverly Dooley, supported Ethan as he accepted the award at the ALTA Conference on April 18, 2009. His therapist, Peggy Brooks, reports that Ethan had been interested in art for many years. "He enjoys drawing keywords for all of the affixes. He has a happy disposition and is reading on grade level after intense intervention in a multisensory structured language education program". Ethan said, "I enjoy working with clay. Seeing my pottery coming out of the kiln is very exciting."

We look forward to displaying Ethan's art at the ALTA Foundation exhibit booth during the 2010 ALTA Conference.

## ALTA 2009 Conference Wrap-Up: Celebrate the Vision

By Paula Farish, M.Ed., CALT  
Vice-President – Programs  
2009 ALTA Conference Chairman

The 2009 ALTA conference, “Celebrate the Vision”, is over but the vision we share continues. As ALTA members, we strive to equip ourselves with the most current, research-based information in order to provide quality, professional services for our students with dyslexia and/or related disorders. We have dedicated ourselves to being life-long learners so we can pass this gift on to the students whose lives we touch. It is this vision that motivates us to get up early on a Saturday morning in damp weather, some traveling longer distances than others, to sit in a room full of people for most of the day. Some may call us crazy. I prefer dedicated, passionate, committed...

Fortunately, our speakers were top-notch and did not disappoint. Our keynote speaker Dr. Maryanne Wolf started off the conference by sharing the wealth of information she has accumulated as a result of many years of research and study. As I had the privilege to introduce Dr. Wolf, I shared with the audience my desire to be able to download Dr. Wolf’s brain into mine. She has such a vast store of knowledge and experiences which relate to the issues we encounter in our profession. Although it would not compare to the wit and entertainment Dr. Wolf provides in her presentation, if you were unable to attend the conference I highly recommend Dr. Wolf’s latest book, *Proust and the Squid: the Story & Science of the Reading Brain*, as well as any of a number of the articles she has written.

The afternoon provided the opportunity to attend two out of three breakout sessions. Dr. Timothy Odegard explained what his research has revealed regarding the use of brain imaging to guide the development of effective intervention. Kendra Thomas shared her success story as she overcame many of the challenges related to dyslexia to become the successful author and teacher she is today. Her latest achievement *Ravenheart* is a fantasy book for young adults. Rene’ King and her technology team, a talented group of students from Pleasant Grove Independent School District, demonstrated how dyslexic students can use the latest technology to enhance learning and navigate around the kinds of problems typically encountered by those who struggle with written language.

As always when putting on an event like this, no matter how much planning goes into it, unexpected problems arise. You just cannot plan for things like the book vendor’s coordinator needing an emergency appendectomy the day before the conference or our contact with the caterer coming down with pneumonia. Unless you have been a coordinator for such an event, you also cannot imagine how many people it takes for everything to come together on “game day”. I was blessed to have a number of talented, dedicated people working with me to make this event possible, some who signed on when planning began and others who stepped in during the last inning. For fear of leaving someone out or running out of space, I am not going to attempt to name everyone who so generously gave of their time and talents. I want each one to know how much I truly appreciate them. In particular, many thanks to the SMU School of Education and Human Development, the SMU Learning Therapy Center and the SMU-in-Legacy staff for their multiple levels of assistance with our conference.

As I reflect on this conference and look toward 2010, I remember a piece of advice bestowed on me by others who have held similar positions: “You can please some of the people some of the time, but you can’t please all of the people all of the time.” I appreciate those of you who shared your compliments and understand those of you who conveyed your criticism. I am extending an invitation to both, the complimentary and the critical, and anyone else interested. Planning for the 2010 ALTA Conference is underway, and there are plenty of roles to be filled. Contact me to let me know how you would like to contribute.



Jennifer Sellers, Treasa Owens, Kim Mullins, Jean Colner and Joyce Pickering are sworn in as new ALTA Board members.

# MEMORIES OF THE 2009 ALTA CONFERENCE

## Memories of the 2009 ALTA Conference



Speaker Dr. Maryanne Wolf is introduced.



Kathleen Blair assists Jo Ann Horton checking in.



Janna Curry helps at the MIA booth.



ALTA members looking for great deals at the garage sale.



Dr. Tim Odegard, Carla Proctor, Treasa Owens, and Karen Avrit



Edith Hogan, Terri Zerfas, and Margaret Smith

ALTA President Michelle Bufkin speaking at the conference.





Rene King presents her lecture and demonstration titled "The Second Step: Success Through Technology."



Dr. Maryanne Wolf presenting her lecture titled "The Past and Future Reading Brain: Implications for Reading Intervention."



Dr. Maryanne Wolf autographing her book *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain*.



King Technology Team-Students from Pleasant Grove ISD model how they use Rene King's instruction to be successful in school.

## 2009 ALTA Conference Exceeded Expectations

by Kathleen Blair and Susy Beliak

Living in the wonderful cocoon of SMU's Learning Therapy Program for two years made us wonder if there really were CALTs out in the real world and where did they find their support system. We wondered how ALTA could support us once we graduated, how many people were members and what we would glean from this conference. We soon found out. CALTs from all over the country appeared and everyone was bubbling with information. The opportunity to learn and the support system we saw were priceless.

We also chose to attend the conference in order to hear the keynote speaker, Dr. Maryanne Wolf, to attend afternoon sessions of particular interest, to shop the garage sale, and to explore the option of membership once we take the ALTA exam in June.

Having read Dr. Maryanne Wolf's book, *Proust and the Squid*, we were interested in hearing her speak on the reading brain. She was not only funny and entertaining, but energetic, inspiring and smart. After hearing her speak, we both decided that her book would be worth re-reading. We also decided that if Dr. Maryanne Wolf represents the caliber of speaker ALTA attracts, we wouldn't want to miss next year's conference featuring Dr. Rick LaVoie, author of *It's So Much Work to be Your Friend*.

In the afternoon, we chose to attend sessions featuring Dr. Timothy Odegard and Rene King and her Technology Team. Dr. Timothy Odegard from the University of Texas at Arlington spoke on reading interventions and brain imaging research. The difference in the brain scans of his patients after treatment was remarkable. His research continues to prove the power of learning therapy.

Rene King and her team of students demonstrated dyslexia technology used by elementary, middle, high school as well as college students. She and her students have experimented and discovered what they believe to be the most effective and productive technologies for dyslexic students. We found her information to be practical and informative; handouts and DVDs with specific software tools were made available at the end of the session.

We concluded that the ALTA conference was time well spent, and we look forward to joining the organization as soon as possible. The conference was well run, very professional and exceeded our expectations.

## ALTA Member Spotlight: Jo Polk, CALT Legacy School Calls Rockwall Home



Plans are underway to open a new school in Rockwall, a Dallas suburb, in fall 2009. The Legacy School of Rockwall is a non-profit Christian school serving students in 1st through 6th grades with dyslexia, ADHD, and related learning disorders.

The school's Board of Directors is led by Robert F. Mehl, III, PhD. Dr. Mehl is a clinical psychologist in private practice since 1981 with specialized expertise in ADHD and learning disorders. His career accomplishments include serving as a faculty member at Southwest Family Institute from 1984-1994, Clinical Assistant Professor at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center's Department of Psychology from 1998-2005, and Clinical Director of Youth Crossings drug treatment center. Dr. Mehl is a past president of the Dallas Psychological Association and has recently been elected to serve as President of the Texas Psychological Association. Dr. Mehl: "The Legacy School fills a need that has existed for some time in Rockwall and with the patients in my practice – a school dedicated to enhancing the untapped strengths of students with learning problems, and using those strengths to maximize learning potential."

The need for specialized education in Rockwall and the surrounding communities east of Dallas is substantial. There are more than a dozen specialized schools for students with learning differences in the greater Dallas area, but they are largely concentrated in northern Dallas County, resulting in an underserved area that includes Rockwall County, Rowlett, Garland, Mesquite, Forney, Terrell, and as far east as Greenville. While there are many good public and private schools in the targeted service area, The Legacy School offers something the others don't – an exclusive focus on serving students with learning differences in an all-day placement in small classes giving special attention to enhancing their strengths.

The new school has named Jo Polk, M. Ed., to serve as its Director. Ms. Polk is a Certified Academic Language Therapist and Professional Educational Diagnostician. In addition to providing diagnostic testing and consultation services, she has over 25 years of classroom experience in both private and public schools, having taught ten years in the Rockwall Independent School District. From 1993 to 1999, Ms. Polk served as the first Dyslexia Coordinator for the State of Texas. After leaving the Texas Education Agency, Ms. Polk became Director of the Learning Therapist Certificate Program at Southern Methodist University for two years, before re-establishing her private practice in Rockwall. Ms. Polk states that, "It has long been a dream of mine to establish a school like Legacy, which emphasizes the talents of LD students, while remediating their academic deficits."

The Legacy School's approach to learning differs from the traditional classroom. Legacy's curriculum and teaching methods are specially designed to match the unique learning needs of students with dyslexia, ADHD, and other related learning disorders. The school will emphasize discovering and enhancing each student's strengths while remediating their academic limitations. Legacy teachers are specially trained and experienced in using innovative, multisensory, evidence-based curriculum.

The site for the new school is still being determined. Rockwall-based architect, Wayne Mershawn, is heading up the school's efforts to secure and design the school's facilities. Mershawn has been designing and building commercial offices, churches and schools in the Rockwall area since 1979. Mershawn: "The Board is carefully evaluating several possible locations for a start-up facility. Our facility plans encompass short-term and long-term strategies that support both our immediate needs and future growth."

*continued on page 16*

### **Comprehension and the Dual Coding Theory**

**Date:** Monday, Sept. 14, 2009

**Time:** 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

**Location:** The Winston School  
5705 Royal Lane  
Dallas, TX 75229

**Sponsor:** DBIDA

**Presenter:** Shannon Dyer, Director of Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes

**Contact Person:** Bob Brooks

**Telephone:** 214-351-1985

**Email:** boblb97@sbcglobal.net

**CEU Contact hours:** 2

### **Dyslexia: A Mother's Retrospective**

**Date:** Monday, November 9 2009

**Time:** 7:00-9:00pm

**Location:** The Winston School  
5705 Royal Lane  
Dallas, TX 75229

**Sponsor:** DBIDA

**Presenter:** Sylvia Portnoy, Teacher Upper Elementary at Shelton School and Evaluation Center, Formerly Dyslexia Coordinator of Dallas ISD

**Contact Person:** Bob Brooks

**Telephone:** 214-351-1985

**Email:** boblb97@sbcglobal.net

**CEU Contact hours:** 2

### **Shelton Model for Teaching Social Skills Online Courses**

**Date:** Any Date

**Time:** Any Time

**Location:** The Internet of Your Computer

**Sponsor:** Shelton School & Evaluation Center

**Presenter:** Joyce Pickering, Hum. D., Executive Director of Shelton School & Evaluation Center

**Contact Person:** Cindy Angel

**Telephone:** 214-774-1772 x 227

**Email:** cangel@shelton.org

**CEU Contact hours:** 4

### **Dyslexia and Related Disorders Online Courses**

**Date:** Any Date

**Time:** Any Time

**Location:** The Internet of Your Computer

**Sponsor:** Shelton School & Evaluation Center

**Presenter:** Joyce Pickering, Hum. D., Executive Director of Shelton School & Evaluation Center

**Contact Person:** Cindy Angel

**Telephone:** 214-774-1772 x 227

**Email:** cangel@shelton.org

**CEU Contact hours:** 4

### **Shelton System for Organization and Study Skills**

**Online Courses**

**Date:** Any Date

**Time:** Any Time

**Location:** The Internet of Your Computer

**Sponsor:** Shelton School & Evaluation Center

**Presenter:** Joyce Pickering, Hum. D., Executive Director of Shelton School & Evaluation Center

**Contact Person:** Cindy Angel

**Telephone:** 214-774-1772 x 227

**Email:** cangel@shelton.org

**CEU Contact hours:** 4

### **Developing Accuracy and Fluency Online Class**

**Date:** On-going

**Time:** A three hour online class. Participants have 2 weeks to complete the 3 hours.

**Location:** www.neuhaus.org

**Sponsor:** Neuhaus Education Center

**Presenter:** Mary Lou Slania, CALT

**Contact Person:** Jennifer Schmidt

**Telephone:** 713-664-7676

**Email:** jschmidt@neuhaus.org

**CEU Contact hours:** 3

### **Structure of the English Language for Reading Online Class**

**Date:** On-going

**Time:** A three hour online class. Participants have 2 weeks to complete the 3 hours.

**Location:** www.neuhaus.org

**Sponsor:** Neuhaus Education Center

**Contact Person:** Jennifer Schmidt

**Telephone:** 713-664-7676

**Email:** jschmidt@neuhaus.org

**CEU Contact hours:** 3

### **Multisensory Grammar (Advanced) Online Class**

**Date:** On-going

**Time:** A three hour online class. Participants have 2 weeks to complete the 3 hours.

**Location:** www.neuhaus.org

**Sponsor:** Neuhaus Education Center

**Contact Person:** Jennifer Schmidt

**Telephone:** 713-664-7676

**Email:** jschmidt@neuhaus.org

**CEU Contact hours:** 3

### **Reading Comprehension Online Class**

**Date:** On-going

**Time:** A three hour online class. Participants have 2 weeks to complete the 3 hours.

**Location:** www.neuhaus.org

**Sponsor:** Neuhaus Education Center

**Contact Person:** Jennifer Schmidt

**Telephone:** 713-664-7676

**Email:** jschmidt@neuhaus.org

**CEU Contact hours:** 3

**Scientific Spelling Online Class***continued from page 14***Date:** On-going**Time:** A three hour online class. Participants have 2 weeks to complete the 3 hours.**Location:** www.neuhaus.org**Sponsor:** Neuhaus Education Center**Contact Person:** Jennifer Schmidt**Telephone:** 713-664-7676**Email:** jschmidt@neuhaus.org**CEU Contact hours:** 3**Neurobiology of Developmental Dyslexia:  
Implications for Teachers****Available:** For purchase on DVD**Cost:** \$10.00**Contact:** Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children  
Luke Waites Center  
2222 Welborn Street  
Dallas, TX 75219**Contact Person:** Katy Todora**Telephone:** 214-559-7800**Email:** katy.todora@tsrh.org**CEU Contact hours:** 2

"Rockwall has one of the best school systems in North Texas, but some children need an extremely individualized program to reach their highest potential. Legacy School will provide a caring and respectful environment for children who have outstanding promise but are struggling with learning difficulties. I am honored to be able to be part of this effort to add an asset of this quality to our vibrant community." Ms. Nielson is among a distinguished list of community and educational leaders that have signed on to serve on Legacy's Advisory Board. Other members include Geraldine "Tincy" Miller with the Texas State Board of Education, Drs. Karen Vickery and Terri Zervas with SMU's Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development, Rockwall Pediatrician Dr. Kurt Pflieger, Rockwall Pediatric Therapist Denise Bennett, and Heath City Council Representative Lorne Liechty.

Prior to opening its doors for school in the fall, The Legacy School will offer several community seminars for parents, educators and others on identifying and working with learning differences. The seminar will feature PBS documentary, "Misunderstood Minds". For more information about seminars offered at The Legacy School of Rockwall, call (972) 722-9342.

## AYLETT ROYAL COX MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

The ALTA Foundation proudly announces the recipients of the 2009 Aylett Royal Cox Memorial Scholarship. The scholarship is awarded to trainees interested in teaching level and therapy level courses offered by IMSLEC Accredited Courses. The scholarship awardees were announced at the ALTA Conference on April 18, in Plano, Texas. Congratulations to the 2009 awardees, Tara Cevallos and Teresa Faircloth!

Tara Cevallos is enrolled in her first year of the Scottish Rite Learning Center of Austin's Dyslexia Therapy Program and in graduate level work at Midwestern State University. Tara works as a teacher's assistant for The Children's School during the morning and provides dyslexia therapy at the Scottish Rite Learning Center in the afternoon.

Teresa Faircloth is enrolled at the Scottish Rite Learning Center of Austin and in graduate level work at Midwestern State University. She is a volunteer at two inner city Austin schools. She tutors students at the Sanchez Elementary School and at The City School. Teresa will continue with her training in Austin even though her family will be moving to Pennsylvania.

The ALTA Foundation is proud to award scholarships that will enable these two individuals to receive training in the field to which Aylett dedicated her life's work.

One of the highlights of the ALTA Conference was the presentation of the third annual ALTA awards. The ALTA Awards are given to recognize individuals who represent the commitment, qualities, high standards, and spirit of Jamie Williams, Aylett Cox, and Luke Waites.



### **Jamie G. Williams ALTA Founders Award**

The Jamie G. Williams ALTA Founders Award is presented to honor a current or former ALTA member who has made a significant contribution to the Organization. Peggy Thornton of Dallas, Texas, was this year's recipient. In addition to being one of the founding members of ALTA, this year's honoree is a past president of the Organization. She was instrumental in the inception of our Organization. Peggy served on numerous committees and gave of her own time and finances to help establish the standards to assure that the membership would provide quality professional services for students with dyslexia. She will always be grateful to her colleagues, mentors and students for the many ways in which they enriched her life. Managing the family business and finding time for her family takes most of her time and energy these days. Community service and church activities are still a big part of her life. It was a great honor to present the Founders Award to Peggy Thornton. We appreciate all her work in helping establish the ALTA Organization.

### **Aylett R. Cox ALTA Educator Award**

The Aylett Cox ALTA Educator Award is presented in recognition of the significant impact made on the lives of individuals with dyslexia. Sandra Dillon of Albuquerque, New Mexico, is this year's recipient. Sandra is the Director of the Multisensory Language Training Institute of New Mexico. An internationally known author and authority on dyslexia, she is a frequent presenter at state, national, and international conferences. IMSLEC, IDA, and ALTA appreciate the talent, dedication and excellence she brings to their organizations. Her work and influence has helped to make the Southwest Branch IDA Conference one of the largest and most informational conferences in the United States. In May she will again travel to India to train teachers. To quote her, "This amazing experience provides a sense of pride, and I feel confident that Aylett Cox would be proud to see how far her work has traveled. We are honored to have Sandra as a member of our organization and to present her with this award.



### **Luke Waites ALTA Award of Service**

The Luke Waites ALTA Award of Service is given to honor a person who has made a significant contribution to improve services received by individuals with dyslexia. This is a perfect description of this year's recipient, Jo Polk of Rockwall, Texas. She has published in journals, developed questionnaires, and created screening instruments. Jo served as the first Dyslexia Coordinator for the State of Texas Education Agency from 1993 – 1999. While in that position she created a statewide framework for serving the needs of dyslexic students. An 800 help line, state handbook, and numerous workshops/seminars were all part of the services provided by Jo and her office. Jo continues to serve as a consultant to school districts regarding their dyslexia programs. Jo's latest endeavor is establishing and opening the Legacy School of Rockwall. It is with a great deal of appreciation and honor that we present this award to Jo.

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