

## Patricia Eddy Recognized



Patricia Eddy was presented with a plaque by Charles Thibodeau on behalf of the North Country Directors of Special Services at their November meeting. Pat was recognized for her service and commitment to special education in the North Country over many years.

## 27 Schools to Read Three Cups of Tea

In last month's newsletter we announced the opportunity for high schools to take advantage of the Oristano Family Foundation's offer to provide copies of the *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace...One School at a Time* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin. Twenty-seven schools, including several from the northern area of the state, responded and will be receiving books in January. A collective total of 1,235 copies of the book will be distributed. A blog will be set up for students, teachers and others interested in the book as tool to help spread the awareness of cultures and what one person can do to build bridges.

## Media Center Update

A frantic tangle of Christmas lights strung on the porch to light the night. The wreaths and electric candles are then hung in the windows; after unscrewing and replacing the bulbs until all are the same color – white, blue, yellow or red. An inflatable snow globe is set up on the front lawn. In kitchens everywhere, there's digging through the cupboards for cookie cutters and rolling pins; then, baking and filling the house with delightful smells. At the school, carols are sung by the chorus, voices spilling out of the music room; and the band rehearsing one more time before the concert. After school, heading outdoors for sledding and ice skating, heads back, catching snowflakes on our tongues. Shopping for children's presents: roller blades, bicycles, wagons.

And how do we explain all this activity? Why, with science, of course.

Well, yes it is all about the holidays. But the lights, the fan on the snow globe, the oven, that's electricity and engineering. The light bulb screws, rolling pin, cookie cutters, wheels – the wagons, roller

blades, bikes – the sledding hill: all are simple machines. The sounds of the seasons: acoustics. Baking: chemistry. Snowflakes: crystal formation and meteorology.

A recent gift to the Media Center was a collection of books and kits, with an emphasis on pre-engineering and physics; many of these were donated from the Boston Museum of Science. They include lesson plans, story books, and classroom activities; all are available for use by anyone and cover K-12.

Other "gifts" to you include the purchase of the DVD and booklet entitled "Including Samuel", as well as the book by Judith Ringer "Unlikely Teachers." To learn more about these and other new materials, go to the NCES website and click on "About the Media Center."

Let the Media Center help you and your students explore our wondrous world. Happy Holidays!

**Vicky McGillicuddy**  
Media Center Coordinator  
library@ncedservices.org

## Instruction for All



The Instruction for All course taught by Louise Thompson concluded in November. Twelve teachers participated in the class which began in August.

Pictured (left to right) in the front row are Sophie Lowe, Tricia Perras, Kelly Styles, Louise Thompson, Christine Forest and in the back row are Kelly Schutt, Amy Kopp, Nora Beaton, Denise Leslie, Christine Smith, Caroline Carr, Marie St. Martin, Chris Dupont.

## Writing Across the Curriculum in Middle School and High School

In Writing Across the Curriculum, David Yacavace of TeachingLearningConnections (TLC) will lead participants in how to teach the writing process through implementation practices in specific content areas. This course will teach you how to use writing as

- 1) a teaching tool
- 2) a learning strategy
- 3) an assessment measure

Geared to practical classroom practices, this course on writing in the content area will teach you strategies that minimize teacher correcting time by engaging students in the correction/evaluation process. Not simply an add-on to an already overloaded teaching agenda, the strategies you will take away from this course create the time necessary for a teacher to monitor 'students at work.' Major topics include: the writing/reading connection, teacher correcting and peer editing, Collins types of writing, open response strategies, graphic organizers, rubrics, and portfolios.

All tools, practices, and techniques emphasize process over product as well as measurement of progress over time rather than a one time testing strategy. Concentrating on the learner-writer as opposed to the master-writer, writing in content specific disciplines emphasizes the role of the coaching-teacher in contrast to the teaching-sage.

**Instructor:** David A. Yacavace

**Dates/time:** Full day in early January (call for date), January 16 & 17, February 6 & 7 from 4:00 to 8:00 and 9:00 to 3:00 for the last class on March 31, 2008.

**Location:** NCES PD Center, Gorham

**Cost:** \$400 Members, \$450 Associates and \$500 for Non-Members

**Registration:** Contact Becky at 466-5437 or [becky@ncedservices.org](mailto:becky@ncedservices.org).

**Credit option:** Three credits available through Plymouth State University for an additional \$430.

## Digital Tools Grants

### No Child Left Behind, Title II-D Enhancing Education Through Technology (E2T2) Phase III: Digital Tools Grants

New Hampshire has a total of approximately \$450,000 available in 2007-08 for Digital Tools Grants. High need school district teams are invited to apply for grants (\$10,000 plus adjusted amount based on district size and poverty percentages) to improve the level of technology integration within their districts. Between 20 and 40 grants are expected to be awarded in this phase.

#### What are digital tools grants?

Many types of digital tools can be used effectively in schools to engage students and improve student achievement. Districts applying for digital tools grants are encouraged to first review current research on tools that can have a positive impact, and then design a project to acquire specific tools and engage teachers in professional development activities to effectively use the tools within their classrooms.

Some examples of digital tools that could be used in projects funded by these grants are listed below. The Request for Proposals include examples and research on these tools, but other digital exist.

- Classroom Response Systems
- Digital Games and other Thinking Tools
- Interactive Whiteboards
- Personal Digital Devices
- Web-based e-Texts
- Web-based Portfolio Systems

When writing proposals, consider ways to design a project that can later be replicated across the district and at other schools. Proposals will be reviewed with the intent to fund those that show potential to demonstrate effectiveness and to be replicated in subsequent years with additional federal, state, or local funds.

**The Request for Proposal can be found at:**

<http://www.nheon.org/oet/nclb/PhaseIII/index.html>



## Workshops for Speech-Language Pathology Assistants

Green Mountain Speech and Hearing Services, Inc. has developed a series of workshops for the Speech-Language Pathology Assistant (S-LPA). These are designed to provide the basic vocabulary and concepts to work more effectively under the supervision of the S-LP. They are not designed to train the S-LPA in specific diagnostic or therapeutic techniques.

**Cost:** \$115/session

**Registration:** To register contact Green Mountain Speech and Hearing Services at (802) 223-6119.

### Key Concepts in Language & Literacy for the Speech -Language Pathology Assistant

**Date:** Jan. 25, 2008 from 9:00 to 3:00

The role of the S-SPLA and the S-LP in supporting literacy and to present the key vocabulary that they use in common

### Key Concepts in Voice for the Speech -Language Pathology Assistant

**Date:** May 2, 2008 from 9:00 to 3:00

How voice is produced and described to help when doing observations for a S-LP.

## Differentiated Instruction: Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners

Teachers will explore ways to provide multiple pathways to learning so that both advanced and struggling learners are challenged yet not frustrated and ways to scaffold instruction for struggling learners, divergent learners, and second language learners.

Learn how to:

- Use pre-assessment and task analysis to plan differentiated instruction
- Gather and use on-going assessment data
- Scaffold instruction
- Build in student choice
- Teach students to self-assess and self-adjust

**Instructor:** Louise Thompson

**Dates/time:** March 11, April 1, May 8 & 28, 2008 from 8:00 - 3:00

**Location:** NCES PD Center

**Cost:** Members \$460, Associate Members \$510, Others \$560  
(includes textbook and meal)

**Credits:** Two graduate credits at PSU: additional \$135 total (in-state)

## PSU CAGS Course at NCES in Gorham

**LEGAL ISSUES IN  
POLICY MAKING**  
EP7060.NF CRN: 20042

**Instructor:** Theodore Comstock

**Location:** NCES, Gorham, NH

**Dates/Time:** Thursdays 5:00 to 9:00 on 1/3, 1/10, 1/17, 1/24, 2/7, 2/14, 2/21, 2/28/2008. This course has an online component using Blackboard (WebCT).

This course presents a discussion of ways institutions and their communities must deal with the legal and political environment in which they exist. Topics include current legal issues and how the stakeholders in society can use the law as a tool for social change. Institutions must advocate for positive change through the development of thoughtful legal policies and practices.

**Registration information:**

<http://www.plymouth.edu/graduate/>

## CAGS Advising

Possibly interested in joining the North County cohort for the CAGS program? The core program courses are being offered in Gorham at NCES. Cheryl Baker will be available to advise potential M.Ed. or CAGS students at NCES on Thursday, January 10 and Thursday, March 13. Appointments are typically 20 and 30 minutes and are available from 3:30 – 5:30. Those interested in an advising meeting should call Plymouth State Graduate Studies at 535-2636 to set up an appointment.

## DonorsChoose.org: Funding for student materials or experiences

DonorsChoose.org is a simple way to fulfill needs and foster innovation in our public schools. At this nonprofit web site, teachers submit ideas for experiences and materials that their students need to learn. The process is quick and easy and offers teachers the opportunity to bring their most creative ideas to life in the classroom. These ideas become classroom reality when concerned individuals, whom we call Citizen Philanthropists, choose projects to fund. In the past seven years, using this simple plan, DonorsChoose.org has raised and directed more than \$14 million to public school classrooms in seven states and four metropolitan areas. As a special offer to get North Country teachers involved, from now until December 20th, any new proposal submitted by a NH teacher will automatically get \$50 in funding - guaranteed!



# What is Dyslexia?

The term dyslexia has become part of the common lexicon. From comedians telling jokes to celebrities telling all, people toss the word around with regularity. While public awareness of disabilities is a positive thing, misunderstandings and myths abound.

Many people are under the impression that dyslexia is a specific type of reading disorder. Dyslexia is the medical term for reading disability. Other learning disabilities have alternative medical terminology as well, although these are less well known. Dysgraphia refers to writing disabilities, dyscalculia to math disabilities, etc. The word "dyslexia" is defined as: *reading difficulty*. That is all that the word means. It is the broad term that encompasses all types of reading problems. Yet, many people ascribe a set of specific symptoms to this word.

The most entrenched myth is that dyslexics see words, letters/numbers backwards. Direct research has shown that this is simply not the case. What research has discovered is that children who demonstrate persistent "reversals" typically have rapid naming problems. Their difficulty is not in how they perceive information, but in their ability to rapidly, automatically recall or name it. Rapid naming is a cognitive ability affecting a child's ability to efficiently retrieve information from long-term memory stores. Consider that commonly reversed letters and words are highly similar (p,b,d and saw/was). Children who have inefficiently stored this information in memory have difficulty rapidly determining the proper symbol/word association. If children actually perceived visual information backwards, they would make these error types on all words, not to mention the problems they would have maneuvering around their environment. Young children commonly make reversals as they are learning and just beginning to store this information in long-term memory. This is a normal part of development. In her book, [Overcoming Dyslexia](#), author Sally Shaywitz, one of the leading researchers into reading disabilities states, "Reversals are irrelevant to the diagnosis of dyslexia". In her research, 88% of dyslexics demonstrate auditorily based, phonological processing deficits. Phonological processing refers to the ability to perceive and manipulate the sounds that make up language. It is these deficits that are primarily, but not exclusively symptomatic of reading disabilities.

The educational field places dyslexia within the category "learning disabilities". In order to diagnose a reading disability (or dyslexia) the criterion for a learning disability must be met. This involves a battery of assessments that measure cognitive processing and achievement. Learning disabilities are neurologically based disorders. As such, a cogni-

tive deficit that can be directly related to an achievement deficit must be identified. It must also be determined that poor achievement is not primarily due to other handicapping conditions, poor environment, or lack of appropriate instruction. In the case of reading disabilities, deficits in reading skills, reading comprehension and/or reading fluency must be established. It is the **cognitive processing deficit** that defines the reading disability and suggests the course of instruction. It is also the presence of a cognitive processing deficit that separates learning disabled readers from remedial readers. Remedial readers are those children who learn normally (without the impact of a cognitive deficit), but at a slower rate, or who are delayed due to environmental factors, such as lack of access to instruction. Remedial readers typically make steady progress with reading materials common to the regular classroom, while disabled readers need specialized instruction and/or materials.

Identifying processing deficits and their impact on reading is a complex process that can be highly individualized. There are, however, some generalities.

## Deficits in reading skills:

- The primary cause of reading skill deficits is phonological processing deficits and this is the most common form of reading disability. Phonological processing deficits can involve phonemic awareness and phonological memory/short-term auditory memory. In these cases, readers have a difficult time perceiving, discriminating and/or retaining the sound units that make up words. Direct instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics is commonly prescribed. For those children with short auditory memory spans, direct phonics is recommended, but with a focus on phonogram chunks to reduce the amount of information to be held in memory.
- Some reading skills deficits are caused by poor visual recognition. This can slow the acquisition of a strong fund of sight words. For this type of deficit, speeded word work and drill is typically prescribed for the most frequently occurring words. Overlearning phonics skills is taught in parallel so that the child can utilize a rapid decoding process to assist in poor recognition.

## Deficits in reading comprehension:

- One typical cause of reading comprehension problems is deficits in verbal/language processing. Tests of verbal comprehension, vocabulary and semantic reasoning are used to measure this possibility. Instruction typically involves word knowledge building, direct instruction in reading comprehension strategies and use of vocabulary controlled materials.

- Another common cause of poor comprehension is a slow rate of reading fluency. In this case, a processing deficit for fluency would be diagnosed (see below) and the comprehension problems would be considered secondary. In this case, the fluency is addressed through specific training.

## Deficits in reading fluency:

- Areas of cognitive deficit that affect this area include slow processing speed and/or cognitive fluency, which include problems with word retrieval and rapid naming. Children can improve their word finding abilities with phonetic clues. As such, it is often recommended that children engage in strong phonics programs so that their decoding becomes automatic and gives them a tool to assist their retrieval. Repeat reading and choral reading can improve children's reading rate. Speeded word work can also improve their performance.
- There is also some evidence that some visually based problems may contribute, although there is debate as to whether these problems are due to cognitive processing weaknesses or vice versa. These include poor visual tracking/scanning and visual convergence problems. This appears to be a current and somewhat controversial finding however. An eye examination is required for a learning disability diagnosis; however, the type of screening usually completed by the school nurse will not suffice. If visual issues are suspected, a thorough eye exam by an optometrist is suggested. Corrective lenses are often prescribed, but programming as described above has been successful in many cases, with or without the use of lenses.
- Of course, poor reading skills are a factor to be considered in diagnosing fluency problems. In this case, the fluency problem is secondary to the reading difficulty. The reading skill deficits are addressed with plenty of opportunity for fluency training using materials at low, easy levels.

Children with reading disabilities can and do improve with good, appropriate instruction. Few disabled readers however, achieve the ease and fluency of nondisabled readers. Even very successful adults tell of their continuing struggle with some aspects of reading. Learning disabilities tend to be lifelong, but through good instruction we can teach children the skills and strategies they need to become successful, reading adults.

**Tamra Eastman, M.Ed.: Sp. Ed; LD**  
Associate School Psychologist, NCES  
Learning Disabilities Specialist  
Reading & Writing Specialist