

When special services are required, MSU answers the call



“Brain research has paved the way for better intervention. We know so much more about the brain.”

Mary Wines first noticed her son’s reading problems in the first grade, and by the time he was a sixth-grader, problems were apparent with his spelling. Then at the suggestion of a teacher, Wines had her son tested for special education. But those test results weren’t indicative of her son’s reading progress. He scored in the highly gifted range and his reading difficulties were not from the lack of trying.

So, Wines and her son set off to the Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children (TSRHC) in Dallas, where they would finally find the answer to her son’s classroom struggles: dyslexia.

But while they had an answer, they didn’t necessarily have the solution or tools to help him overcome his disabilities. And so began Wines’ journey into the world of dyslexia and her passion for helping not only her own child but other children and adults who face the same frustrating path of connecting to the reading world.

“I can’t talk to you without seeing some of those faces. They can’t hide the pain in their voices or their faces,” Wines said. “My passion for working with struggling readers and now training teachers is grounded in compassion for my son and those I have encountered over the past 30 years.”

Her journey has brought her full circle, as she now trains and prepares today’s teachers to become dyslexia therapists, Certified Academic Language Therapists (CALT), through MSU’s Master of Special Education Specializing in Dyslexia degree.

Midwestern’s dyslexia program is one of nine in Texas to offer the certification, and the only public university offering the program. The other university-based facility is SMU. After completing MSU’s degree plan, teachers qualify to apply for professional certification upon completion of the Alliance Exam.

Dr. Edward Schultz, graduate coordinator of the special education program, and Dr. Millie Gore, professor of counseling and special education, were instrumental in getting the program off the ground before Wines started at Midwestern.

“We couldn’t do the program without Mary, or a qualified instructor, which there are very few trained under TSRHC’s program,” said Schultz. He also says that Wines is one of the most respected names in Texas when it comes to dyslexia education.

In addition to her 30 years of teaching experience and her CALT certification

Contrary to what many think, **dyslexia is not about reversing letters.** Dyslexia is a neurological “glitch” and has nothing to do with a person’s IQ. In fact, many dyslexics display insightful, impressive talents for “thinking outside of the box.”

through TSRHC, Wines is also certified as an International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council Qualified Instructor. “This certification allows me to set up an IMSLEC certified teacher training center in which I train certified teachers to become certified academic language therapists,” she said.

While Texas doesn’t require districts to hire a CALT, more districts are hiring these therapists for dyslexia, Schultz said.

Through this program, Midwestern is helping the void and indirectly providing assistance to those children with the language-based disorder.

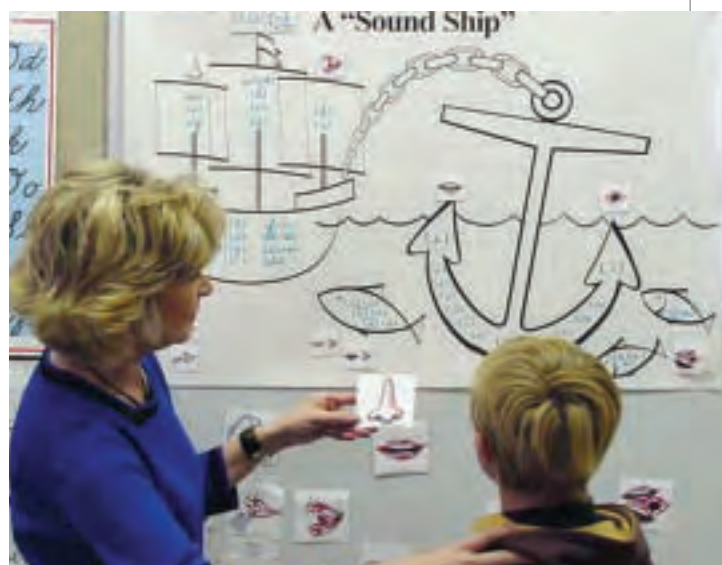
MSU’s program prepares its students to provide structured, sequential, multisensory instruction using the *Take Flight: A Comprehensive Intervention for Students with Dyslexia* curriculum written by the staff of the Luke Waites Center for Dyslexia and Learning Disorders of Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children in Dallas. Karen Avrit, a former MSU student from 1978-1981, is the lead author of the curriculum.

“My goal from the beginning was to provide all opportunities possible to help students with dyslexia reach their highest potential,” said Avrit, Director of Dyslexia Education at the Luke Waites Center at TSRHC. “The goal for *Take Flight* is to provide students with dyslexia the tools and strategies needed to become accurate and efficient readers with good comprehension.”

According to a press release issued by TSRHC, *Take Flight* contains the five components of effective reading instruction supported by the National Reading Panel and mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind Act: phonemic awareness, phonic skills, vocabulary, reading fluency, and reading comprehension.

Wines emphasizes that appropriate instruction is important not because of the mandates, but because it works.

With *Take Flight*, students learn all 44 phonemes of the English language, 96 grapheme-phoneme correspondence rules and 87 affixes. They also learn spelling rules for base words ►



Multisensory, structured language approach: What is it?

Teaching uses all learning pathways in the brain (i.e. visual, auditory, kinesthetic-tactile) simultaneously or sequentially in order to enhance memory or learning. All levels of language are addressed, often in parallel, including sounds (phonemes), symbols (graphemes), meaningful word parts (morphemes), word and phrase meanings (semantics), sentences (syntax), longer passages (discourse), and the social uses of language (pragmatics).





About dyslexia

continued from page 5

and derivatives. Practice opportunities are also provided to improve oral reading fluency. *Take Flight* introduces comprehension and vocabulary building strategies for both narrative and expository text in the context of oral reading exercises, preparing them to become independent readers.

Both Schultz and Wines are quick to credit the advances in brain and reading research for the progress and programs now being made in the field of dyslexia. "Brain research has paved the way for better intervention," Schultz said. "We know so much more about the brain."

MSU's first cohort began in summer 2008, and another group of teachers is scheduled to begin this summer. The program typically takes about three years to complete.

"We have 11 teachers in this first cohort. I'm so blessed to have these teachers; they will make such a difference in the lives of so many children," said Wines. ☀



The first cohort in the Master of Special Education Specializing in Dyslexia began last summer.

What is dyslexia? It is a language-based disability and refers to a cluster of symptoms that result in people having difficulties with specific language skills, particularly word recognition, reading fluency, spelling, and writing. It is not because of either a lack of intelligence or a desire to learn. With appropriate teaching methods, those who have dyslexia can learn successfully. Dyslexia affects individuals throughout their lives, but its impact can change at different stages in a person's life.

What causes dyslexia? The exact causes are still not completely clear, but brain imagery studies show differences in the way the brain of a person with dyslexia develops and functions. Moreover, most people with dyslexia have been found to have problems with identifying the separate speech sounds within a word and/or learning how letters represent those sounds, a key factor in their reading difficulties.

How widespread is dyslexia? Perhaps as many as 15 percent of the population as a whole have some of the symptoms of dyslexia, including slow or inaccurate reading, poor spelling, poor writing, or mixing up similar words. Most of these are likely to benefit from systematic, explicit instruction in reading, writing, and language. Dyslexia occurs in people of all backgrounds and intellectual levels. People who are very bright can be dyslexic. They are often capable or even gifted in areas that do not require strong language skills, such as art, computer science, design, drama, electronics, math, mechanics, music, physics, sales, and sports. In addition, dyslexia runs in families.

What are the signs of dyslexia? The problems displayed by individuals with dyslexia involve difficulties in acquiring and using written language. It is a myth that individuals with dyslexia "read backward," though spelling can look quite jumbled at times because students have trouble remembering letter symbols for sounds and forming memories for words. Other problems experienced include:

- Learning to speak
- Learning letters and their sounds
- Organizing written and spoken language
- Memorizing number facts
- Reading quickly enough to comprehend
- Persisting with and comprehending longer reading assignments
- Spelling
- Learning a foreign language
- Correctly doing math operations.

Not all students who have difficulties are dyslexic. Formal testing of reading, language, and writing skills is the only way to confirm a diagnosis of suspected dyslexia.