

NOTES AND NEWS

November/December, 2018

An update from the Scottish Rite Charitable Foundation
Learning Centres for Children - Halifax Vol. 12 No. 5

THE ART OF WRITING

*The art of writing is the art of discovering
what you believe. Gustave Flaubert*

It's a stormy, Maritime morning and I'm sitting at my computer by the window, determined to be productive for as long as the battery allows. I've neglected my newsletter duties for far too long - so long that several followers have communicated that they are no longer receiving them or must have been removed from my list...not so! I've composed numerous reflection pieces in my head and have no end of note worthy news to share, but the process of taking those thoughts to the next level, is not so easy.

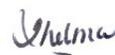
I say that as one for whom writing is a pleasure. I choose from a rich vocabulary of words, spell with confidence, type with automaticity, (and on-going appreciation for that grade 11 typing class) and review my grammar with some level of expertise. The roadblock to my writing is largely time and space - the quietness of surroundings and of my thoughts.

As I reflect on my struggles in getting to this stage with my writing, I am connecting with so many of our children, and the very real struggles they experience with the writing process every day. Think about all the elements of written language that need to be incorporated: the motor component, spelling, mechanics, syntax, vocabulary and text structure. A writer needs to consider both the audience and the context for their writing.

William Van Cleave uses the analogy of a stovetop to help us understand the importance of developing a solid foundation of writing skills with children. There are 4 burners on a stove: 2 in the front and 2 in the back. The things on the front burners require most of our attention - we must be concentrating actively to manage them. The back-burner things are automatized...we don't need to be actively thinking about them. For many of our children, letter formation/handwriting and spelling are taking up space on the front burners.

While technology seemingly removes much of the effort of the writing process, there are crucial cognitive benefits that are lost when we step away from handwriting. The very act of forming letters by hand engages more of the brain and there is much research to support that we remember things with more detail and accuracy when we have written them down. (I've confirmed that myself, a few times, when I've left my carefully written grocery list on the counter!) When the motor component of writing sits on the back burner, we are able to put more focus and energy into communicating our message, spinning our stories and sharing our dreams.

Write on!



SHHH...SILENT AUCTION UNDERWAY

A wonderfully varied assortment of items has arrived in our Centre over the past few weeks and spirited bidding is well underway.

Stop by to check things out!
Join us for Hot Cider on **Saturday, December 1 between 9 AM and 1 PM.**
Bidding closes at 1:00.

Huge thanks to the generosity of all our contributors!

CENTRE CALENDAR

Please note: Our last tutoring sessions for 2018 will be Saturday, December 15.

The Centre will reopen on Monday, January 7, 2019

January 5, 9 AM – 3:30 PM Tutor Training, Senior Class

January 12, 9 AM – 3:30 PM Tutor Trainee, Module 4

January 22, 7 PM Board Meeting

May 3-4: Annual Spring Workshop

This year's presenter is Marcia Henry. Read on for more information.

THANK YOU

To the Scottish Rite Valley of St. John's who hosted a Gala Dinner and Silent Auction in recognition of their 50th Anniversary last month. We received almost \$2000.00 in proceeds and donations from this special event. What extraordinary support from our Newfoundland friends!

CONGRATULATIONS

To our newest group of Graduates who were honoured at our Celebration of Achievement on November 4.



From Left to Right: Back Row: Livia, Bella, Zoelle, Stuart; Middle Row: Orlaith, Ben, Courtney, Cameron; Front Row: Noah, Isabella, Walton, Sophia and Will.

Here are a few words of appreciation from Livia:

I just wanted to thank all the amazing volunteers at the Learning Centre. And thank you so much to Mandy for stepping in for my initial tutor who couldn't finish working with me for health reasons. I have come so far in my time with the Learning Centre 3 years ago. I hated writing and reading because I was embarrassed of my dyslexia and now it's one of my favourite things to do. The work that everyone at the Learning Centre does, from the volunteers who work the desk, always with a smile on their face, and all the amazing tutors and other volunteers, and of course Thelma who does so much behind the scenes at the Learning Centre, all means so much to me. So just thank you to everyone involved with making this possible.

GIVE THE GIFT OF LITERACY

Would you like to avoid the chaos and confusion of the retail world this holiday season? Give a gift that lasts a lifetime - and never needs dusting: a donation to our Learning Centre.

We can provide a charitable tax receipt for all donations and have a seasonal card you may use to signify the gift you have made.

Contact the Centre if this is something you would like to do! (902-405-3895)



POSTCARDS FROM CONNECTICUT

I didn't make a commitment to daily postcards from the International Dyslexia Association Conference this year, but I did write a summary of some of the big ideas - and a few links that will take you where you need to go for more! If you're interested, please just ask and I'll send it your way!

There are some consistent "take-aways" from this Conference that are always worth naming:

- The connections to current research and best-practice.

- The calibre of people with whom you get to connect and converse - the common language and passion shared is inspiring and affirming.
- The modelled commitment to ongoing learning by presenters who could be leading your first workshop of the day and sitting beside you in the second.

THOUGHTS OF SPRING

We are thrilled to be welcoming Marcia Henry to Nova Scotia as she provides leadership for our 2-day workshop in May!

I've thought long and hard about how to explain the thrill of this opportunity to the "uninitiated" among you. I told our Board Members this week, it's like finding out you can do a hockey workshop with Sidney Crosby, a fiddling lesson with Natalie MacMaster or have book club with J.K. Rowling!

For almost 60 years, Dr. Marcia Henry has worked in the fields of reading and dyslexia as a tutor, diagnostician, professor and author. Her book, **Unlocking Literacy: Effective Decoding and Spelling Instruction**, is considered a key text for teachers seeking a systematized, effective method of reading and spelling instruction and focuses on morphemic awareness, letter-sound correspondences and syllable patterns. The second edition was published in 2010.

She is also one of the foremost experts on Dr. Samuel T. Orton and his landmark work, which began in the early 1920s at the University of Iowa. In the early 1930s he worked with educators Anna Gillingham and Bessie Stillman while at

Columbia University in New York. Marcia is co-author of Dyslexia: Samuel T. Orton and His Legacy.

Dr. Henry is a past president of the International Dyslexia Association (1992-1996) and in 2000 was the recipient of the IDA's prestigious Margaret Byrd Rawson Lifetime Achievement Award.

Workshop topics are:

The History and Structure of
Written English

Morphology Matters

When Anna Met Sam:
The Story of Anna Gillingham,
Samuel Orton, and
Other Pioneers

Dr. Henry's presentations will be interspersed with opportunities for small group practice and reflection. Our goal is to make this both practical and informative with the pacing of the days geared to meet the needs of the group.

Registration information will be ready shortly but, to help you plan, here are the rates:

Early Bird Special

Register By March 1st - \$300

After March 1st - \$400

Student Rate Available - Contact the Centre for Details

Times Are A-Changin' - Part Deux

*"Come gather round people,
Wherever you roam...
For the times they are a-changin'"*
Bob Dylan

Our search for a new home for the 2019-20 year continues. It looks like wherever we go, our rental budget will significantly increase. As a Board, we strive to be fiscally prudent and live within our means. In order to do so in the years to come, it is apparent that we will need to increase our fundraising. Remember, we now have the ability to receive small monthly donations through CanadaHelps.Org. Based upon our friends and family, if we were able to build a sustaining member program I am sure that we will easily meet the financial challenges ahead.

We plan to establish a Fund- Raising Committee early in the New Year and invite any of you who may have ideas or energy for this work to be part of it.

Remember, nothing will change for our 2018-19 academic year. The current lease for our Learning Centre runs out in September 2019 and we are working toward securing a new home well in

Be Safe and Happy over the Holidays!

Kent Clarke, Board Chair

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