The Windward School

The Beacon

The Windward School Newsletter for Professionals, Parents and Faculty

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IN THIS ISSUE

Dyslexia–What Is It, Really?

Personal Reflections and Scientific Fact

by G. Emerson Dickman III, J.D.

For over thirty years, G. Emerson Dickman, III has enjoyed a career as an attorney specializing in the representation of children with disabilities. He has been a member of the Board of Directors of the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) for 13 years, and recently served as its president. Mr. Dickman was the project leader of the scientific consensus meetings to develop a research definition of dyslexia for the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), in association with the IDA, in 1994 and again in 2002. His published works have dealt with such topics as dyslexia; the link between learning abilities and behavior; educational advocacy; and other topics in the field of learning, law and disabilities.

Mr. Dickman delivered the fall Community Lecture at The Windward School, and his discussion topic was "A New Look at Learning Disabilities."

Four out of ten children have difficulty learning how to read. Almost half that number has so much difficulty that they need direct and explicit instruction by knowledgeable instructors using informed methods of instruction if they are ever to be efficient at breaking the code.

In this day and age, literacy skills are required if we are to effectively provide for our family, our community, and ourselves. There was a time when reading was not necessary to be a successful provider. Two hundred years ago, if you could track an elk, shoot straight, and figure out how to get it back to camp you were a hero and community leader - reading didn't matter.

The Internet has recently made keyboarding skills a necessity for everyone wanting access to the "information highway." It wasn't too long ago when only secretaries needed to know how to type. The time will come again when reading will not be a required skill; but, for the foreseeable future, "reading is the foundation upon which all scholastic success depends." R.E. v. Jersey City Bd. of Ed. OAL DKT NO. EDS 7018-97 (N.J. 10-30-97).

WHAT IS A LEARNING DISABILITY?

Surprisingly, there remains significant disagreement among laymen regarding the concept of "learning disability." In order for what I have to say to be meaningful to you, we must have a common understanding of what I mean when I use the term "learning disability."

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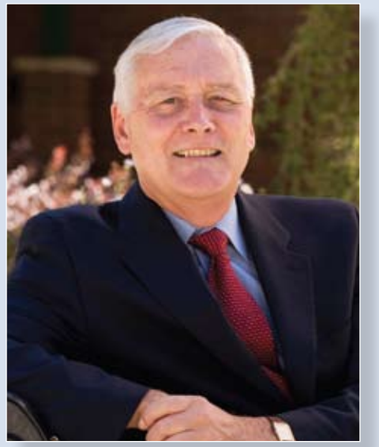
HEAD LINES

They told me I had to read digitally; I said no, no, not so fast!



Dr. John J. Russell, Head of School

Recently, I attended a meeting at the offices of one of New York's premier law firms. I was ushered to the top floor of a skyscraper in Manhattan. The floor was filled with conference rooms, all of them with extraordinary views of Midtown. When I commented on how impressive the space was, my host informed me that this was the former location of the law library of the firm. He explained that with the advances in technology a physical library was deemed no longer necessary. In current planning for the construction of new schools, there is invariably a discussion about the necessity of dedicating valuable space for a school library. Kindle, Nook, and other digital reading devices are touted as the inevitable replacements of "old-fashioned" books. Many schools are providing students, including very young elementary students, with iPads and laptops. Ubiquitous reports in the media chronicling the exponential growth of digital reading make it seem that any forward thinking educator would have to embrace the new reading technologies. In fact, encouragement for even greater use of technology in schools is not just coming from media and technology companies, but from the federal government as well. Speaking at a recent conference (2013), Richard Culatta, Director of the Office of Educational Technology for the United States Department of Education, pointedly asked school officials, "How can we leverage tools and technology to completely reimagine, rethink and redesign learning?" There is an Orwellian tone to Mr. Culatta's question that demands close scrutiny. While not particularly surprising, coming as it does from a technologist, it does scream out for caution and closer examination by parents, educators and cognitive scientists.

Research conducted in 2013 by the National Literacy Trust in Great Britain reveals that "39% of children and young people read daily using electronic devises including tablets and eReaders, but only 28% read printed materials daily. The number of children reading eBooks has doubled in the last two years (from 6% to 12%)." In addition to verifying the increased use of digital reading, the research of the National Literacy Trust also examined the effect of technology on students' reading abilities and their enjoyment of reading. Their findings are troubling: "...those who read daily only on-screen are nearly twice less likely to be above average readers than those who read daily in print or in print and on-screen (15.5% vs. 26%). Those who read only on-screen are also three times less likely to enjoy reading very much (12% vs. 51%)."

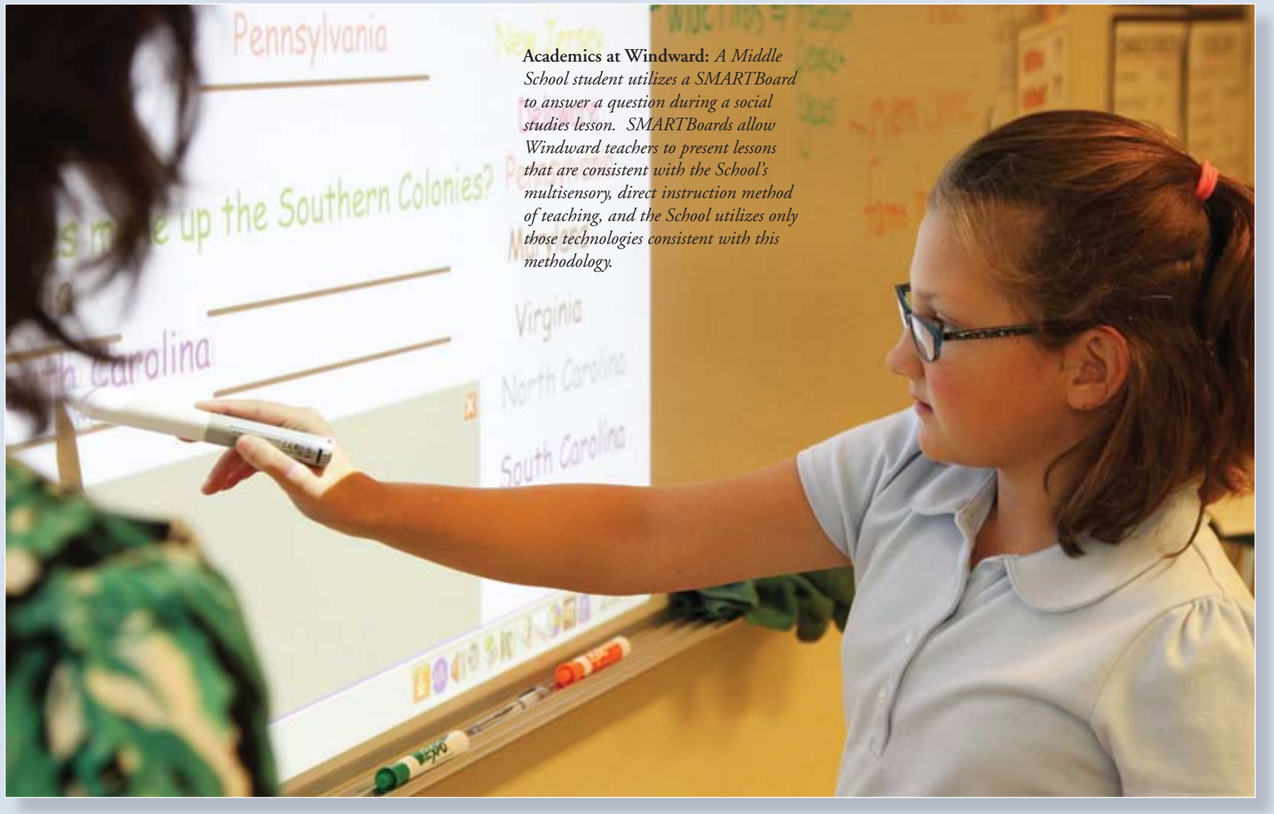
The April 2013 edition of *Scientific American* echoed these findings. Ferris Jabr reported that, "Before 1992 most studies concluded that people read slower, less accurately and less comprehensively on screens than on paper. Studies published since the early 1990s, however, have produced more inconsistent results: a slight majority has confirmed earlier conclusions, but almost as many have found few significant differences in reading speed or comprehension between paper and screens." These results provide further support for concerns that Dr. Maryanne Wolf, the Tufts University neuroscientist, and her colleagues raised in their article, "The Importance of Deep Reading" (2009), which was reprinted in the spring 2013 issue of this newsletter. While recognizing the remarkable capability of digital media to provide "...efficient, massive information processing; flexible multitasking; quick, interactive modes of communication...," Dr. Wolf and her colleagues also questioned how well suited digital reading is for deep reading, which they define as "...the array of sophisticated processes that propel comprehension and that include inferential and deductive reasoning, analogical skills, critical analysis, reflection and insight." These are the higher-order thinking skills that correlate closely with academic success.

In addition to these concerns, huge investments in technology have failed to produce the kind of academic improvements that were envisioned by many pundits. Over the last several decades, American schools have spent ever increasing sums on technology, yet reading and math scores on standardized tests such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NEAP) have remained dismal. While many factors could contribute to this stubbornly poor performance, there are too many concrete examples of the failure of technology to produce anticipated gains in student achievement to continue blindly investing in it. In a September 2011 article, *The New York Times* reported that a 2005 investment of $33 million in technology by the Kyrene School District in Arizona failed to produce hoped for results. Between 2005 and 2011, reading and math scores stagnated in Kyrene while statewide scores rose. In the same article, Stanford education professor, Larry Cuban, states that the research does not support these kinds of outsized investments in technology. While other studies have found positive effects of technology for specific uses such as social interaction/communication and entertainment/exploration, research on the effect of technology on student academic outcomes has yet to demonstrate that it has a significant influence on academic performance.

It is worth noting that many Silicon Valley executives send their own children to decidedly low tech schools. A 2011 *New York Times* article, "A Silicon Valley School That Doesn't Compute," reported the popularity among Silicon Valley technocrats of schools that do not ascribe to the use of technology for elementary students. Alarmingly, schools like these have more and more become outliers despite the lack of research to support the massive infusion of technology into our schools.

Without question, digital media and educational technology hold great promise. At The Windward School, we are continuously exploring the potential use of emerging technologies that are supported by scientific research and that are consistent with the School's mission and program. This approach may be too slow for some, but educators and parents need to question the hype of technophiles and rely more on solid research from educators and cognitive scientists. The expenditure of limited funds and the allocation of precious instructional time to support technology initiatives require a careful cost/benefit analysis. Most importantly, the education of our students, especially our youngest ones, demands a careful and reasoned approach to the widespread use of technology in our schools.

"AMERICAN SCHOOLS HAVE SPENT EVER INCREASING SUMS ON TECHNOLOGY, YET READING AND MATH SCORES ON STANDARDIZED TESTS SUCH AS THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (NEAP) HAVE REMAINED DISMAL. WHILE MANY FACTORS COULD CONTRIBUTE TO THIS STUBBORNLY POOR PERFORMANCE, THERE ARE TOO MANY CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF THE FAILURE OF TECHNOLOGY TO PRODUCE ANTICIPATED GAINS IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT TO CONTINUE BLINDLY INVESTING IN IT."



Academics at Windward: *A Middle School student utilizes a SMARTBoard to answer a question during a social studies lesson. SMARTBoards allow Windward teachers to present lessons that are consistent with the School's multisensory, direct instruction method of teaching, and the School utilizes only those technologies consistent with this methodology.*

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Sally Shaywitz, M.D., has referred to a learning disability as "a weakness in a sea of strengths." In essence, each of us is expected to have skills and abilities that fall within a predictable range above and below our average potential, i.e., a normal distribution of skills and abilities. It is the unexpectedness of the deficit that distinguishes a child with a learning disability from children with more global or pervasive developmental delays whose specific skills are not unexpectedly deficient.

Research conducted by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) at the National Institute of Health (NIH) indicates that 17 to 20 percent of children exhibit a significant reading disability. Of children that are reading disabled in the third grade, 74 percent remain disabled at the end of high school.

There have, in addition, been a number of empirical studies of the correlation between IQ and reading achievement. The results of these studies converge on the conclusion that IQ is only weakly and nonspecifically related to achievement in the early grades. To these findings, however, I must add a sobering afterward. Whereas IQ and general cognitive skills seem not to have much bearing on early reading achievement, early reading failures seem to result in a progressive diminution in IQ scores and general cognitive skills. In the words of Keith Stanovich, who has developed this argument with scholarship and force:

"Slow reading acquisition has cognitive, behavioral, and motivational consequences that slow the development of other cognitive skills and inhibit performance on many academic tasks. In short, as reading develops, other cognitive processes linked to it track the level of reading skill. Knowledge bases that are in reciprocal relationships with reading are also inhibited from further development. The longer this developmental sequence is allowed to continue, the more generalized the deficits will become, seeping into more and more areas of cognition and behavior. Or to put it more simply–and sadly–in the words of a tearful nine-year-old, already falling frustratingly behind his peers in reading progress, 'Reading affects everything you do.'"(Adams, 1990, pp. 59-60).

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

The concept of unexpectedness helps explain an unfortunate and often experienced side effect of having a learning disability. Concomitant to unexpected weakness is unreasonable expectations and concomitant to unreasonable expectations is failure. Failure is a relative concept. Expecting an "A" and getting a "B" is as much a failure as expecting a "C" and getting a "D". The messages we hear from our environment are: "If you would only try harder you could do it." "You don't care enough." "You are lazy." "You are unmotivated." As we enter into adolescence, the belief that we can do "it," is being challenged by an emerging understanding that we can't do "it." These incompatible beliefs eventually create an uncomfortable (downright painful) psychological state known as a cognitive dissonance. In order to resolve the dissonance between a belief in one's competence and efficacy ("I'm smart") with emerging beliefs of lack of competence and efficacy ("I'm stupid"), the adolescent will often add a variable to explain the failure without challenging self-image. The variable most often introduced is effort. "If I don't do my homework, if I don't study for tests, if I don't go to school, my failure is explained and I can remain smart." Barry Lorinstein, a well-known neuropsychologist, refers to such a child as preferring to be seen as unwilling rather than unable.

"WE HAVE GAINED ENORMOUS INSIGHT INTO FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESSFUL READING ACQUISITION AND EXPLAIN FAILURE."
–Bonita Blachman, Syracuse University

Academics at Windward: *A Middle School student participates in a reading lesson. Direct and explicit instruction using scientifically proven methods of teaching, of the kind offered by Windward, is considered by experts to be essential in the proper education of struggling readers.*

ACHIEVEMENT DISCREPANCY

In order to qualify for special education services, Federal Regulations require that the pupil exhibit "a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability." Thus, the criteria for eligibility are not the existence of a learning disability (a weakness in a sea of strengths) but a failure to achieve. In other words, a pupil with dyslexia can't get special education assistance until and unless other children of similar intellectual potential are reading significantly better. This formula has been roundly criticized:

"The formula for identifying children with learning disabilities under the Federal law (IDEA) is a 'wait and fail model.' The way we define kids as learning disabled is invalid and immoral."

–Tom Hehir, Director, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education, the agency responsible for implementing, interpreting and enforcing the Federal regulations.

This formula virtually guarantees failure and a struggle with cognitive dissonance. Administrative convenience is not a sufficient reason to continue the use of this invalid and archaic construct. If you wait until a cancer patient actually shows signs of illness, it is often too late. Early detection and early treatment is the goal of the medical doctor, and it must also be the goal of the educator.

REMEDIATE, COMPENSATE, ACCOMMODATE, PROMOTE

My personal profile of unexpected deficits includes problems with phonological processing, memory, and processing speed. I also have unexpectedly strong visual spatial skills. A plan to address weaknesses should be to remediate that which can be remediated, then to compensate for those problems that can't be remediated, and lastly, accommodate those needs that can be neither compensated for nor remediated. The difference between these concepts is important. If you fill in a pothole, it is remediated. If you learn to take yourself around the pothole, you are

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compensating for its existence. If you need help to get around it, you are asking for an accommodation. My profile involves a phonological processing deficit that can be effectively remediated, memory problems that can be reasonably compensated for by using digital recorders, taking notes and by finding a wife with a good memory and all of the skills that I lack. My processing speed deficits require that I have to request the patience of others (such as those who await this article). Of course, opportunities to promote unexpected skills should never be overlooked.

DYSLEXIA

The learning disability profile known as dyslexia consists of:

- Deficits in phonological processing
- Unexpected difficulties with single word decoding
- Conspicuous problems in reading, writing and spelling
- Difficulty attending to auditory stimulation as compared to visual and tactile stimulation
- Relative strengths in perceptual, visual spatial skills and math concepts (as compared to arithmetic calculation and language-based problem solving)

"RESEARCH FOR THE LAST TWENTY YEARS IS CONVERGING ON THE ELEMENTS THAT COMPRISE INFORMED, EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION FOR DYSLEXIA: DIRECT AND EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION THAT IS STRUCTURED, SEQUENTIAL, CUMULATIVE, PHONICS-BASED, AND MULTISENSORY."

DYSLEXIA

The following is the research definition of dyslexia developed by the International Dyslexia Association and adopted by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Dyslexia is one of several distinct learning disabilities. It is a specific language-based disorder of constitutional origin characterized by difficulties in single word decoding, usually reflecting insufficient phonological processing abilities. These difficulties in single word decoding are often unexpected in relation to age and other cognitive and academic abilities; they are not the result of generalized developmental delay or sensory impairment. Dyslexia is manifest by variable difficulty with different forms of language, often including, in addition to problems reading, a conspicuous problem with acquiring proficiency in writing and spelling.

Dyslexia is not diagnosed or defined as a visual problem or one that necessarily involves reversals, transpositions, and mirror writing. The task of the reader is to break the code, to map symbols to sounds. If a child can't differentiate subtle differences in sound he or she cannot break the code.

The inability to break the symbol to sound code and read efficiently is, all too often, seen as a measure of intelligence. What if we were dealing with a color to sound code? Would intelligence be correlated to color blindness?

INFORMED INSTRUCTION

Research for the last twenty years, and practice for the last fifty years, is converging on the elements that comprise informed, effective instruction for dyslexia. To wit: direct and explicit instruction that is structured, sequential, cumulative, phonics-based, and multisensory. The one aspect of such instruction that is most often discussed, most often overlooked, and most often misunderstood in the multisensory element, especially the use of tactile/kinesthetic input. Kinesthetic memory accounts for the fixed action patterns that help us through the hundreds of movements repeated in the same order without apparent conscious thought. One word written with a finger on the palm of the opposite hand will unlock the door to long term memory and permit the retrieval of not only the single word, but also the whole concept it was intended to represent. If you know this trick, there is no good excuse to interrupt when another is speaking or to forget the "great idea" that came during a lonely ride in the car. The importance of reinforcing direct instruction with tactile/kinesthetic input should not be underestimated.

Adapted from an article by the author.

"THE KNOWLEDGE CHILDREN NEED TO MASTER IN ORDER TO SUCCEED AT READING IS WELL DOCUMENTED, AND THE KINDS OF INSTRUCTION METHODS THAT ARE EFFECTIVE HAVE ALSO BEEN VERIFIED."

–Brady and Moats, 1997, "Informed Instruction for Reading Success: Foundations for Teacher Preparation"

NEWS FROM WTTI

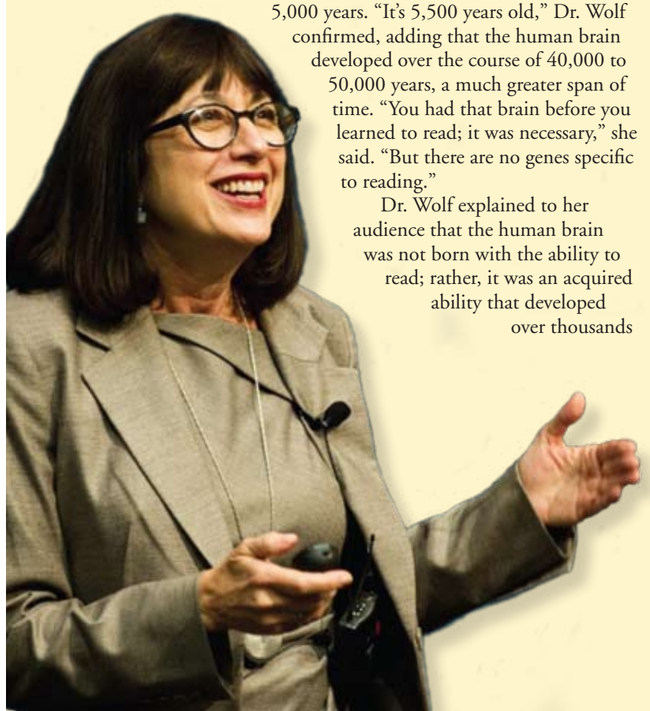
"There Are No Genes Specific to Reading": Dr. Maryanne Wolf, Neuroscientist and Researcher, Delivers Annual Schwartz Lecture

The Windward School hosted a distinguished researcher and cognitive neuroscientist to campus this past spring. Dr. Maryanne Wolf, the Director of the Center for Reading and Language Research at Tufts University and author of *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain*, delivered the School's annual Robert J. Schwartz Memorial Lecture on the evening of April 10.

Established to honor the memory of Mr. Schwartz, a dedicated member of Windward's Board of Trustees who passed away in 1997, the Schwartz Lecture seeks to bring prominent scholars to campus to share their knowledge and expertise with the community. Dr. Wolf, who holds a doctorate from Harvard University, has devoted her professional life to studying the developing reading brain, the genetic basis for dyslexia and the future of the reading brain in the 21st century's digital culture, among other topics. Dr. Wolf brought her extensive knowledge of reading research to the Windward community for the Schwartz Lecture. Her lecture, titled *How Can Knowledge of the Reading Brain Advance Instruction and Change Our View of Dyslexia?,* was delivered to a large audience of Windward parents, faculty and educational professionals.

Following an introduction by **Dr. John J. Russell,** Head of School, Dr. Wolf addressed the nearly 600 people who had come to hear her speak. "How old is literacy?" she queried, with an audience member volunteering an estimate of 5,000 years. "It's 5,500 years old," Dr. Wolf confirmed, adding that the human brain developed over the course of 40,000 to 50,000 years, a much greater span of time. "You had that brain before you learned to read; it was necessary," she said. "But there are no genes specific to reading."

Dr. Wolf explained to her audience that the human brain was not born with the ability to read; rather, it was an acquired ability that developed over thousands of years. She compared the brain's ability to forge the necessary circuits that enabled it to read with the squid, a shy, elusive animal whose famous neurons are often studied by scientists. "It's an analogy, the squid," Dr. Wolf said, referring to the title of her book. "Reading is like the squid in that it teaches us how in the world the brain could do something it wasn't born to do." Acclaimed French novelist Marcel Proust also factored into Dr. Wolf's explanations. "Proust, more than any other neuroscientist, really understood the heart of reading," she said. "Reading changes us; the text is our platform for our best thoughts. This is what we want for our children."



She emphasized that while it took many generations for human beings to acquire the ability to read and write, modern educational systems expect children to pick up these skills in only a few short years. "It took all these years to get there as a species,

"READING CHANGES US; THE TEXT IS OUR PLATFORM FOR OUR BEST THOUGHTS. THIS IS WHAT WE WANT FOR OUR CHILDREN."

but a child is given approximately 2,000 days to get the same insights," Dr. Wolf said. "Each child has to build his or her own reading circuit." During the first five years of a child's development, parents can help build this circuit by taking the time to read with and talk to their children. "We need to make sure children hear good language over and over, at the supper table, at pre-kindergarten, everywhere," she said emphatically. Otherwise, she cautioned, the development of reading ability becomes a veritable "tale of two childhoods," in which some children acquire reading skills easily, while others do not.

"Think about this circuit we are developing," Dr. Wolf said. "Children of professional families have heard more words, but the children of families of low socioeconomic status often have parents who have very little chance to talk to their children. We're talking about brains that come to kindergarten different, and what children come in with at the start of school too often predicts their success through the end of high school. But we can change this; it's not inevitable."

Early exposure to the rich world of language, as found in even the most primary forms of children's literature, can mean the difference between reading success and reading failure later on, Dr. Wolf added. She intimated that if a child cannot master reading at the most basic level, then he or she will be ill-equipped for the deep reading required of everything from higher level academics to the sweeping novels of Proust.

"If you aren't reading fast enough at the word or sentence level, then you can't enjoy reading," she said. "The stuff of language is so essential, and no one does it better than Windward. In the classrooms, there is great emphasis on understanding all levels of oral and written language. What I saw was so indicative of what I believe is necessary for children to learn."

FACULTY PROFILE: LESLIE ZUCKERWISE

Helping Set Windward's Lower School Students on the Road to Success

Mrs. Zuckerwise, pictured during the Windward graduation ceremony at which she spoke as the Stone Award *winner, has enjoyed a career at both the Middle and Lower School campuses.*

On the first day of school, as Windward's youngest students exit buses and cars to begin the new academic year, faculty and staff on both campuses personally welcome the children back to school. Leslie Zuckerwise, Head of Lower School, is one of a cadre of faculty who greets the students and helps them settle into their new school and classrooms.

"They are wonderful little people," she said of the 210 students she oversees in grades one through four. "Little people are happy people, and we try to make the Lower School a happy place where learning and friendships develop."

Although Mrs. Zuckerwise has been working at the Lower School for the past three years, she began her Windward career as an assistant teacher at the Middle School. It is a career she has loved, and one which took an unexpected turn from her early years as a paralegal with the law firm of Davis Polk & Wardwell.

"I was a certified paralegal, and I had thoughts of law school," she recalled. "That was my intention. However, I just didn't feel the passion."

Somewhere during her seven years at the law firm, Mrs. Zuckerwise found herself slowly gravitating towards a more instructive role. In addition to her regular paralegal duties, she found herself working with the firm's technology staff during a critical period: the introduction of individual computer workstations into legal and business settings.

"Businesses in the 70's were just starting to install computers, and I was fascinated by it all. It was fun, it was exciting, it was the future," she said. "I ended up acting as a liaison between the legal staff and the technology staff; I had to learn to speak both their 'languages.' It was really my first foray into teaching because I taught the technology staff what the lawyers needed, and then wrote instructional guides and taught the lawyers how to use the computers and software."

A place in a more traditional educational setting came later. When her twin daughters, Lisa and Gail, started elementary school, Mrs. Zuckerwise accepted a job as an aide at Fox Meadow Elementary School in Scarsdale, NY. For the next several years, she worked with kindergarten and fifth grade students, and quickly derived a sense of satisfaction from her daily work.

"There were times when I would have clusters of children around my table asking for help with something, and I realized that I liked what I was doing," she said. "I could help the students and make a difference in the classroom.

"It wasn't until I got to Windward that I pursued a permanent career in teaching," she added. In 2001, Shelley Donato, a Windward faculty member and friend, made an appointment for Mrs. Zuckerwise to interview with Barbara Landau, then the Head of Middle School. Despite having spent several years in a classroom, Mrs. Zuckerwise accepted a job as an assistant teacher.

"I knew something was different about Windward and I knew I had to acquire a whole new set of tools and strategies. I took just about every course the WTTI offered, some more than once. My husband, Peter, supported every decision, including my enrollment in graduate school."

Mrs. Zuckerwise was just as nervous as any new student when she began her first day at Windward. She assisted in eighth grade social studies and science classes and although it was new territory for her pedagogically, she fast displayed a talent and dedication to her students.

"I was really petrified the first time I was asked to teach a lesson to the social studies group, because these children were so bright and had so many specific needs. Even though I had watched my mentor teacher for months, I had to go home and over-plan. I had to anticipate every question and I wanted to have every answer at my disposal. It was a big rush instructing those students, and the fact that I could motivate them and have them be responsive to my teaching style–well, I was hooked. I couldn't wait to do it again!"

At the start of her second year at the School, the Red Oak Lane campus opened and Mrs. Zuckerwise was given a sixth grade social studies class and a skills group. She found herself bringing her enthusiasm and love of history to students getting their bearings at the new Middle School.

"I had always had a passion for ancient civilizations, especially anything having to do with ancient Egypt and Greek mythology," she said, and found it especially rewarding to have the chance to share those interests with her sixth grade students, whose academic studies included a year-long examination of ancient civilizations. Her vibrant nature and excellent teaching skills did more than simply bring history to life, however: she gave her students the confidence that they could succeed in the classroom.

"One year I had a language arts group of sixth graders who were all new to the School," she recalled. "They were very bright kids, but they had tremendous difficulty with decoding. I spent many, many days getting them to trust me; getting them to allow themselves to realize they could be successful; and getting them to 'buy into' the program. Once I established all that, they soared. These were students who wouldn't look me in the eye on the first day of school, and by the end of the year they couldn't wait for the summer reading list."

Mrs. Zuckerwise's commitment to her students was furthered by her own commitment to pedagogical excellence. She recalled a social studies lesson she presented on the ancient Egyptian class system that made her appreciate the fact that teachers, like their students, always learn something in the classroom.

"The students were so involved in the lesson, and when it was over, I took a deep breath and thought, 'That was great!' Then I looked at the chalkboard and said, 'That's a mess.' There was writing all over the place and it was visually distracting. Then I remembered the importance of a teacher's personal reflection. We have to reflect on a lesson to appreciate our strengths and recognize what still needs work."

For Mrs. Zuckerwise, that reflection eventually led her back to her interest in technology. Although she had started out using an overhead projector to organize and incorporate multisensory elements into her lessons, a grant permitted the installation of several SMARTBoards into Windward's classrooms, and Mrs. Zuckerwise was the recipient of one.

"After the introduction of the SMARTBoard, it became apparent that this technology could benefit our students," she said, "because the visual is so important for understanding concepts, conducting review activities, and so many components of the writing program." The opportunity for students to view each step of a lesson as a teacher delivers it is a critical part of Windward's multisensory, direct instruction curriculum.

She quickly became adept at using the SMARTBoard and eventually became a certified SMARTBoard trainer. When the School created an Instructional Technology Support position, Mrs. Zuckerwise was the ideal candidate. In this position, she conducted numerous technology workshops and training seminars for Windward's staff development program. This enabled her to train fellow teachers in the use of interactive whiteboard technology, which is now available in every Windward classroom.

Following nearly ten years as a classroom teacher, Mrs. Zuckerwise's transition to Assistant Head of Lower School was initially bittersweet for her. Although she had taught everything from fifth, sixth and eighth grade language arts and social studies to seventh grade math, the woman who had been honored with the *Isabel Greenbaum Stone Master Teacher Award* for her pedagogical prowess was nervous about this new step in her career.

"I was very worried about working with the younger students after teaching in the Middle School for all of those years," she recalled of her early days at the Windward Avenue campus. "I had to learn a whole different way to relate to the children at the Lower School." However, the joyful nature of the School's younger students won her over almost immediately.

"Within the first week of school, I realized these young children just need some confidence, skills and self-awareness. Their intentions are always to do good and to do right, and they work so hard during the day," she said. "The children deserve a lot of praise, because what they are being asked to do is difficult for them. That's why the small successes are monumental."

She has equal praise for the School's administration, which she said has been invaluable in terms of mentorship and support of her career path.

"We have tremendous resources, and I learned that there is always someone to run a question by–the administration has fielded so many questions and guided me until I felt comfortable moving forward on my own," she said. Mrs. Zuckerwise gave particular praise to Dr. Russell, Head of School, and to her predecessor, Dr. Roberta Solar, who assisted her in making a smooth transition from Assistant Head to Head of Lower School. "As a classroom teacher, not everyone realizes what goes on behind the scenes and how much thought goes into decisions."

Windward, Mrs. Zuckerwise emphasizes, is a place that provides opportunity not only for its students but for its faculty as well. "I started here as an assistant teacher, and the fact that I am now division head speaks to the fact that opportunities are there," she said. "I never would have dreamed that I would have taken this path, and I'm grateful for every chance that has come and will come in the future."

Those opportunities include the chance to see firsthand the impact she is having on her students and on her fellow faculty, something that she finds greatly rewarding.

"Whether it's a kind word or an interest in their success, I realized that I was having an impact on students every day," she said. "While I will always love my time in the classroom, it's far-reaching to be able to work with the faculty and help them appreciate what will be most successful. Taking the administrative path enables me to have a greater impact on our teachers, which then filters down to the students. I'm no longer just reaching the children in my class; I'm reaching, in an indirect way, the 210 children at the Lower School."

But at the end of the day, Mrs. Zuckerwise is most proud to be affiliated with a School that takes the education of its students so seriously.

"Our program works," she said. "These students come in and they feel downtrodden and they think they don't have the ability to be successful. My daughter once shared the quote, 'You can't change the direction of the wind, but you can adjust your sails to reach your destination.' I think we help our students realize that they *can* be successful, they just need our help adjusting their sails to get there."

"WHETHER IT'S A KIND WORD OR AN INTEREST IN THEIR SUCCESS, I REALIZED THAT I WAS HAVING AN IMPACT ON STUDENTS EVERY DAY... THE CHILDREN DESERVE A LOT OF PRAISE, BECAUSE WHAT THEY ARE BEING ASKED TO DO IS DIFFICULT FOR THEM. THAT'S WHY THE SMALL SUCCESSES ARE MONUMENTAL."

FACULTY NEWS

Windward Honored by National Center for Learning Disabilities with Prestigious Rozelle Award

The Windward School has been selected by the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) as the private school winner of the *2013 Pete & Carrie Rozelle Award*. Named in honor of the founders of NCLD, the award recognizes schools that are successful in addressing the academic, social and emotional needs of students with learning disabilities.

The *Rozelle Award*, a cash prize of $2,500, is to be spent by winning schools in a manner that supports students' success. In order to be selected for the award, a school must be committed to educational excellence; demonstrate that its students display extraordinary learning outcomes; provide ongoing professional development opportunities to its staff; demonstrate planned transition activities for its students that lead to academic success in secondary school; and maintain a commitment to data-based decision-making and monitoring of students' progress.

This definition of the *Rozelle Award* represents the very foundation of Windward's mission and values. Windward is committed to providing a transformational academic program based on sound scientific research; the School's reading and writing programs give students with language-based learning disabilities the skills they need to become successful. Approximately 98% of Windward alumni perform at the average or above average academic level after they leave the School. In order to help the students become fluent readers and writers, the School provides ongoing professional development to its faculty through the Windward Teacher Training Institute (WTTI), a nationally renowned teacher training center. Each year WTTI trains hundreds of teachers in the School's research-based instructional methods, and Windward's faculty consistently enroll in coursework to further their pedagogical skills.

Dr. Judith Hochman leads a Teaching Basic Writing Skills *class at Windward Teacher Training Institute. WTTI trains hundreds of teachers a year in the multisensory, direct-instruction methods of teaching utilized in every Windward classroom. The School was honored with the* 2013 Rozelle Award *for its commitment to educational excellence.*

The School also takes pride in its Outplacement Department, which assists students in selecting an appropriate public or independent school to attend after Windward. The careful work of the Department's staff, in tandem with the students' teachers and members of the administration, allows the School to help students in making appropriate, successful transitions to a variety of secondary schools.

Windward is particularly pleased to share the *2013 Rozelle Award* with New Dorp High School, the public school honoree for this award. Based on Staten Island, N.Y., New Dorp High School and Windward have a common connection: Dr. Judith Hochman. Last year, the faculty at New Dorp implemented aspects of Dr. Hochman's *Teaching Basic Writing Skills* program in their classrooms, with outstanding results. Dr. Hochman supervised the New Dorp teachers in their implementation of the *TBWS* program, which is utilized in all Windward classrooms. NCLD will honor Windward and New Dorp in November at its fourth annual "Celebrating Our Schools" luncheon in New York City.

"THE ROZELLE AWARD REPRESENTS THE VERY FOUNDATION OF WINDWARD'S MISSION AND VALUES. WINDWARD IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING A TRANSFORMATIONAL ACADEMIC PROGRAM BASED ON SOUND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH."

ALUMNI CORNER

Stormjames S. Lipton '13

Stormjames Lipton '13, attends SUNY Maritime College on a full scholarship and looks forward to a career as a captain of an ocean vessel.

I survived being born at home, unexpectedly, having been delivered into this world by my father. When I was six and a half months old, it was discovered that I had a major blood vessel malfunction in my heart, which was depriving my heart of oxygen-rich blood. Successful open heart surgery saved my life. I have no recollection of either of these events.

What I am conscious of is how The Windward School saved my life. I remember the shock and panic I experienced in the third grade. As my school work became more complex and demanding, I encountered major difficulty reading and processing multi-syllable words. I had been an excellent student in my first two grades. I scored high on aptitude tests. My teachers told my parents I was slacking, not living up to my potential. I lost recess time. I began to learn ways to compensate, to get by; however, I was no longer receiving "A's" on my school work or on my report card.

My parents were concerned. As the third grade was ending and the fourth grade began, they enrolled me in an educational tutoring program run by Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS), not far from where we lived in Hartsdale, NY. I enjoyed the support and help that I was receiving; however, it became apparent that I was suffering from a reading processing disorder. After a series of diagnostic tests and assessments, I was diagnosed with dyslexia. It was suggested by Mrs. Albin, the director of WJCS's educational center, that I would be a good candidate for admission to The Windward School.

My parents went to visit the School for an informational session. They met with Ms. Sweeney, the Director of Admissions. I visited the School and spent a morning in one of the classes. We were all impressed with the program. I even went back to my school and told my friend that I had just visited my new school. I don't even think I was actually admitted at that time. Eventually, I was admitted to Windward in my fifth year of grade school.

Over the next five years, I flourished. I flourished right from the beginning. I flourished because of the encouragement and expertise of the School's staff. What was inculcated–that's a word I learned while at Windward–in me was the value of "never giving up" when I tackled an educational or learning challenge. I learned to read and comprehend what I had read. Small class sizes and individual attention were instrumental to my progress and success. I was taught the Windward method to write meaningful and cogent essays.

After the ninth grade, I was accepted at the Soundview Preparatory School in Yorktown Heights, NY, from which I graduated this past June. The learning skills and strategies that I acquired at Windward served me well.

This fall I began my college studies at SUNY Maritime College on a full scholarship. My goal is to become a captain of a large ocean vessel. I imagine that I was destined to do so since I have always been around or in the water as a competitive swimmer, fisherman, and sailor. I know that the educational learning skills and strategies that I learned at Windward have and will continue to serve me well in college. I am also aware that, without my Windward experience, none of what I have achieved or hope to achieve would have been possible. I could not be more fortunate or more grateful for all that The Windward School has done for me. They have played a major part in helping me to chart my course.

"I COULD NOT BE MORE FORTUNATE OR MORE GRATEFUL FOR ALL THAT THE WINDWARD SCHOOL HAS DONE FOR ME. THEY HAVE PLAYED A MAJOR PART IN HELPING ME TO CHART MY COURSE."

The Windward School

The Beacon

The Windward School
Newsletter for Professionals,
Parents and Faculty

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