



Tracey Ely shows off Tutor Eau Claire's *Helpful Hints for Reading*, -a guide to sounds, syllables, and spelling rules- available at all Richland Libraries and as a free download from tutorec.org.

Trying harder is futile. Determination to stick with a stalled reading or writing effort only adds to the levels of frustration experienced worldwide by millions of young learners struggling with the kind of language processing difficulties now commonly associated with dyslexia.

Frustration frequently gives way to loss of motivation, and not being able to keep up regularly leads to low self-esteem in students, even though research verifies there is no parallel between dyslexia and intelligence.

Help in special, very specific, and structured approaches enable students to develop strategies and skills they will need to succeed and be productive for the rest of their lives. Such life skills are vital because of how dyslexics process information.

*Putting
the key to
literacy
into hands,
small and
large*

Every summer for the past five years, through a program called Summer Surge, a staff of professional educators and volunteers at Tutor Eau Claire (TEC) have sent happier, more confident children back to classrooms where they can keep pace with other students in area schools.

“We have so many success stories—our students keep us buoyed,” said Tracey Ely, who has directed TEC for 16 years. “Just the other day, Tony Pear came by to see us. He will be graduating from college next semester with a degree in Sports Management. When we met him 16 years ago, he was a failing fourth grader. No one really knew why he acted out in school and got suspended so often. Many thought Tony, a gifted athlete, simply wasn’t applying himself. Yet our informal assessment assured us he was confronting dyslexia. He became our first student. He told us when he came by recently that even though college is very difficult for him, there has been no question—he has to finish his degree. ‘I am your showcase,’ he said. ‘I’ve got to do this!’”

“How rewarding it is to be part of changing the trajectory of students’ lives by helping them gain the skills necessary to become successful readers,” said Ely, who explained that TEC is the literacy outreach of Eau Claire Shalom Ministries, a 5013c organization located in Columbia. The broad-based community ministry has been a passion of Ely’s for nearly two decades.

By serving the community and taking a community, or “village” approach, Ely and those with whom she works have been able to reach individuals one-on-one, a tactic that makes up for its poor economy of scale by producing lasting results.

According to Margaret Rawson, founding member of International Dyslexia Association, “Dyslexic students need a different approach to learning language from the approach employed in most classrooms. They need to be taught slowly and thoroughly, the basic elements of their language—the sounds and the letters which represent them—and how to put these together and take them apart. Dyslexic students need lots of practice in having their hands, eyes, ears and voices working together for the conscious organization and the retention of their learning.”

To cover so many essentials, tutors at Tutor Eau Claire Dyslexia Resource Center structure their teaching very specifically, and, in a rotation that begins with general life skills instruction during summer camps, then breaks into individualized learning sessions: reading, writing, spelling and speaking. Young learners also get frequent snack and brain breaks.

Although dyslexia has been diagnosed and studied for more than a century, deeper understanding of the reading disorder through brain research in this century is leading to more widespread awareness within education hierarchies, breakthroughs and gains

for students, and encouragement for families.

“We employ the Orton-Gillingham Approach to reading instruction,” Ely said. Developed early in the 20th century, this language- and phonics-based approach is considered the gold standard in dyslexia education. This multisensory, structured, sequential, cumulative, cognitive, and flexible approach allows our tutors to individualize instruction for each student. Before learning strategies for tackling whole meanings of words, students in our program learn the basics of word formation through three learning modalities, or pathways: visual, auditory and kinesthetic.

Technology and more strategic instruction have become important allies in young learners’ quests for reading efficacy. “Our use of Lexia Learning®, a technology-based learning program, allows our tutors to individualize instruction that predictably increases reading proficiency for all students, from kindergarten through fifth grade (Lexia CORE 5®).”

Ely said the animation and color that characterize the web-based lessons make learning fun for young students, “and the program’s built-in self-assessment provides both tutor and student immediate feedback, and thus an opportunity to correct, repeat or rejoice.” For older students, 6-12, and adults who are At Risk, Lexia’s Strategies for Older students also is effective.”

Tutor Eau Claire’s commitment extends well beyond the confines

By Rachel Haynie

Rachel Haynie remains interested in education, following teaching, tutoring, and academic advising earlier in her career. Now a writer, the USC graduate’s books include: First, You Explore: The Story of the Young Charles Townes, and Charles H. Townes and A Beam Straight to the Stars.

Annabeth Hunt enjoys a Lexia Core5 activity during Summer Surge 2015.



of the classrooms on Muller Avenue, space generously donated by Eau Claire Presbyterian Church. “We probably are known primarily for providing individual and group tutoring programs that improve reading proficiency. But we also advocate for improvements in our educational system and for strong legislation on behalf of people with dyslexia and related learning disabilities,” Ely said.

Ely said the center’s advocacy initiatives also call upon the team to partner with schools and community groups to raise awareness of dyslexia. “Our focus is on helping dyslexic students; and our activities are broad in scope. We offer on-site workshops dyslexia discussion groups and tutor training; provide dyslexia simulation events for parents, educators and the community; and support parents through consultation, workshops, assessments and referrals. We also offer affordable access to web-based Language

Therapy (Lexia®) and maintain a Dyslexia Resource Library.

Thanks to generous support from the Central Carolina Community Foundation, the Academy of Columbia Fund, and Women in Philanthropy, private donors and volunteers, there is help year-round for young learners and those who have struggled for much of their lives.

This fall Tutor Eau Claire will pilot a morning tutorial program similar to Summer Surge that will be available to home school families. In the afternoon, an after-school tutorial will be available.

For information about Tutor Eau Claire Dyslexia Resource Center, registration details, or volunteer opportunities, please contact Michelle Keiffer at Tutorec.info@gmail.com. *RDC*



Tracey Ely plays a syllable division game with Angel Robinson during Summer Surge 2014.



“Clapping syllables” increases phonological awareness for Karmen Robinson during Summer Surge 2014.



Instructor Sarah Brennecke models handwriting strokes for student Angel Jones during Summer Surge 2015.



Summer Surge student Sophia Horne proudly displays a reading activity she has completed with her volunteer tutor, Dorrie Dunlap.