

Marcia Mann, our guest speaker for the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Fling opened her presentation with the Margaret Byrd Rawson quote “Teach the language as it is to the child as he or she is”. In presenting “Language, Dyslexia and Navigating the Rules of the Road”, Ms Mann drew upon her more than 50 years of experience as a Speech Pathologist, Founding Fellow of the Academy of Orton-Gillingham and a Certified Master Trainer to provide an overview of the science, and the steps and considerations to effectively assist explicit language development by our dyslexic learners.

Ms. Mann began her discussion with a definition of Dyslexia as “an unexpected gap between the students potential to learn and academic achievement.” In addition, she noted that Dyslexia is a specific difficulty in dealing with language and is not just a reading problem.

In explaining dyslexia, she noted that while the difficulties are personal, the diagnosis is clinical, the understanding is scientific, and the treatment is educational. This is where we fit in as OG Practitioners. It is also critical to remember to work with

the whole child in terms of reading, writing, and speech, mindful of their social and emotional needs.

Beginning with the science of language, Ms. Mann discussed language development including early years' typical stages and benchmarks. Moving into the topics of Syntax, (the word order in sentences), Semantics, (the meaning of words and how they relate to each other), and then Morphology, Ms Mann, provided humorous and clear examples drawn from her own experience as an OG Practitioner. She also emphasized the importance to help the student step back and develop an understanding of how they learn. This is called metacognitive skills.

The final discussion of the day centred on Grammar, and Sentence Building leading to Paragraph Writing. Ms Mann clearly demonstrated sentence diagramming as a method to work through the many steps in building writing skills. She also noted that the key elements of paragraph writing include: Structure, Coherence, Unity and Sentence Skills.

Wrapping up her presentation, Marcia Mann emphasized the absolute need to provide explicit instruction in the earliest grades and continue to build layers while helping students use their metacognitive skills to better understand themselves and become increasingly more self directed and independent in developing their language skills.