



The Reading Center

DYSLEXIA INSTITUTE OF MN

Spring 2021

Founded in 1951

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The Reading Center

2010 Scott Rd NW,
 Rochester, MN 55901
 (507) 288-5271 (office)
 (507) 288-6424 (fax)
www.TheReadingCenter.org

Tutoring in the Time of COVID

For all of us, 2020 was a year we will never forget. It meant upheaval in almost every facet of our lives. But for Reading Center families, a job loss or furlough meant the added uncertainty of having kids not be able to continue in tutoring.

Back in the spring of 2019, Natalie and Jorge Ramirez’s concerns about their oldest son had reached its highest point. Jared, a twin, had been born 3 months premature and had always had learning struggles. But the added workload of fourth grade was causing anxiety and increased negative self-talk. Natalie is a teacher but didn’t quite know why Jared struggled so much. Was it because they were raised in a bilingual home?

The Ramirez’s had Jared evaluated by Olmsted Medical Center where he received a diagnosis of a learning disability in reading (dyslexia). OMC referred him to our summer Best of Basics program. Jared attended in the summer before fourth grade and took to the structured reading instruction immediately. He entered our tutoring program that fall.

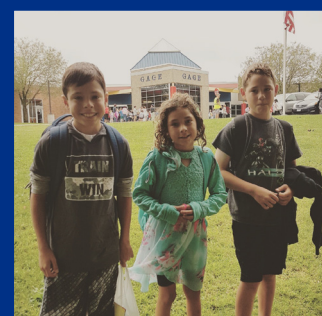
Natalie says that Jared changed for the better almost immediately after starting tutoring. She says the entire dynamic of their family changed after only two lessons when Jared began tutoring with his friendly and empathetic tutor, Nancette Stucky. Jared’s anxiety about reading decreased and he was so proud that he was learning to read.

While Jared’s struggles in school were more significant than his siblings, the Ramirez’s knew that dyslexia is often found in families. They had twin brother, Jonavan, evaluated at The Reading Center followed by younger sister, Naya. Now, following a diagnosis of dyslexia for all three kids, all are enrolled in our tutoring program – with Nancette!

Nancette says of the Ramirez children, **“The greatest attribute that all three of these kids have, especially now as we maneuver through such chaos every day in this world, is their kindness. They are the kindest of humans that I know, and they give me great joy.”**

Natalie and Jorge are incredibly grateful for what The Reading Center has done for their children. Jorge experienced a COVID related job furlough in 2020 and the family was uncertain about their children’s future in our tutoring program. **Fortunately, due to generous support of Reading Center donors, the Ramirez family benefitted from a scholarship so that all three children could remain in tutoring.**

The futures of Jared, Jonavan and Naya are bright thanks to their hard work and the strong intervention available at The Reading Center.



Strategic Planning – Guiding The Reading Center into 2022 and Beyond: Chuck Brust, Board Chair

The Reading Center is embarking on a new Strategic Plan – one that will guide the organization’s priorities for the next five years. This organization has done incredible work since its last strategic plan was approved five years ago. Our new building went from inception to built and fully funded by the end of 2019. Our programs have experienced unprecedented growth and we are serving more students each year than ever in our 70-year history.



Chuck Brust
Board Chair

As we look to 2022 and beyond, The Reading Center will need to prepare and position itself to

meet the needs of an ever-growing diverse community in Rochester and Minnesota as a whole.

Earlier this fall, eight Reading Center staff, tutors and board members began a deep dive into understanding and addressing the structural and other barriers that exist for families of color, inside and outside our organization, that prevent them from accessing our services for their dyslexic learner. This is important work and will help us to understand the reasons why we have not been as successful as we would wish in enrolling students of color into our programs nor hiring them as tutors.

We continue to explore partnerships to expand impact on more struggling readers in Minnesota. This includes our continued work with Rochester Reading Champions, which began in 2014, our new partnership as of last September with south Minneapolis based Urban Ventures and a second new partnership as of last November with the Jeremiah Project in Rochester.

We look forward to finishing our new five-year plan later this year and will share it with you on our website.

Reading Center Partnerships

- Rochester Reading Champions - serving all ages (Rochester, MN)
- Urban Ventures - serving families from cradle to career (Minneapolis, MN)
- Jeremiah Project - serving mothers and young children (Rochester, MN)

2021: Back to normal?

The Reading Center programming transitioned successfully to all online programming considering COVID-19 a little over a year ago. **We are pleased to report that our online programming is of the highest quality, and for most students it works as well as in-person programming, but with more flexibility.**



Cindy Russell
Executive Director

We plan to maintain services in a mostly online format at least through summer 2021 until conditions are safe for our tutors, students and trainees.

• **1:1 Orton-Gillingham tutoring** is online, live between student and tutor. Some tutoring occurs in person on a case by case basis.

• **Educational evaluations** are being provided online, live between student and tester. Some in person testing is available on a case by case basis.

• **Orton-Gillingham Training**

Institutes are all online, including the student practicum portion.

- 1:1 sessions and small group classes during **Best of Basics** are online, except for a small cohort of students in grades 1-3 that will be in person.
- Reading Club for 4 – 6-year olds is available 1:1 online, or in small groups for the older students.
- **Dyslexia 101 for the Classroom Educator** remains available at no charge for Minnesota educators and teachers in training. 5 clock hours of professional development are granted with successful completion. **Hurry – free access ends April 30, 2021!**
- Our popular and highly useful **Digital Orton-Gillingham Lesson Planning Hub** is available by subscription for trained Orton-Gillingham Practitioners.

While we look forward to the day when we can invite students, parents, trainees, tutors and staff to our new facility, we are confident that the services offered online are helping our students make reading gains and are enabling our trainees to learn this most effective teaching approach.

If you or a family member have questions about services, **please contact our Program Navigators to learn how to get enrolled.**

Our physical office remains minimally staffed during regular business hours, while we are fully staffed with staff and tutors working from home.

2020 Year in Review

224

Students served 1:1 in our Orton-Gillingham tutoring program in 11,166 individual sessions

93%

of all tutoring sessions were delivered online beginning March 2020!

41

Students took one of our classes – Best of Basics, Reading Club, Writing Class & Study Skills

134

Students were tested or screened for learning disabilities

55

Adults were trained in our Orton-Gillingham Institute in one of 6 entirely online trainings

\$83,926

In scholarship dollars were awarded to students and trainees – a 46% increase over 2019.

84,000+

People visited our website looking for information on dyslexia and structured literacy

619

Families received guidance from our program navigators

3,409

Educators took our FREE Dyslexia 101 course last year impacting 85,700 students

78

Students were served through our partnerships with Urban Ventures and Rochester Reading Champions

Orton-Gillingham Digital Hub – COVID subscription rate extended!

Are you looking for digital resources to help bring Orton-Gillingham concepts online to your students? **The Reading Center is offering a year-long subscription to thousands of pages of materials curated by Fellows of the Academy**, including Jean Osman, Terri Peterson, and Fay Van Vliet. These resources will make offering online Orton-Gillingham lessons more turnkey and efficient. Visit the Training page on our website to learn more about what is included in this online offering.

Please Support our 2021 Bright Futures Campaign

This has been a hard year financially for many of the families we serve, and we have had many more families in need of scholarships to keep their students in tutoring. We are spending twice as much for student scholarships today as we were a year ago due to COVID related needs. **We are now running 40% over our even more generous 2021 budget for scholarships, causing us to pause these as the requests continue to mount.**

We need to raise \$100,000 to support scholarships and programs through the 2021 Bright Futures Campaign to keep our students who need scholarships on the path to skilled reading.

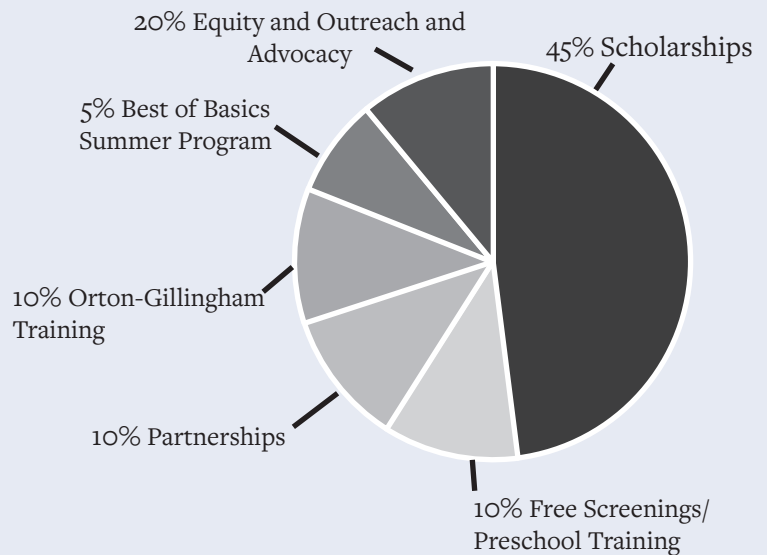
Please consider making a donation or pledge to The Reading Center in 2021 to support our scholarship program and to help support all the important work that we do year-round. A giving envelope is enclosed. You can also donate online at www.TheReadingCenter.org/donate

Thank you to our 2021 Bright Futures Leadership Team: Ginger Holmes (Campaign Chair), Carl Anderson (Board Campaign Chair), Lora Keller (Staff, Tutor Campaign Chair) and Jennifer Gowin (Friends Campaign Chair).

Donate online or in the enclosed donation envelope!

2021 Needs

Scholarships	\$45,000
Equity and Outreach and Advocacy	\$20,000
Orton-Gillingham Training	\$10,000
Best of Basics Summer Program	\$5,000
Partnerships	\$10,000
Free Screenings/Preschool Training	\$10,000
TOTAL	\$100,000



Legislative Update – Focus on In-Service Teacher Professional Development

The Reading Center continues to advocate for all of MN’s dyslexic students and their classroom teachers at the state capitol. While we are hopeful that our 2019-20 legislative wins that included mandatory screening for characteristics of dyslexia AND adding a focus on structured literacy/dyslexia in teacher training programs, there is still more work to do.

We are advocating for the use of state money to fund a grant program through the Minnesota Department of Education that would pay for in-service teachers to take LETRS training. LETRS is Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling and was authored by Louisa Moats, a well-respected champion for dyslexic learners. Adding new money would make more permanent an existing pilot program already training teachers through MDE on structured literacy methods (like Orton-Gillingham) that we know is the best method for literacy instruction for ALL students.

This bill was created in partnership with stakeholders over several years including bipartisan members of the House and Senate, as well as Education Minnesota (teacher’s union) and the Minnesota School Board Association.

Access to solid literacy instruction in our public schools is the best way to reduce the achievement gap in communities of color and even the playing field for families that cannot afford to seek outside help for their child to learn to read. While The Reading Center is proud of the 224 students we worked with in our tutoring program last year, there are many more we are unable to reach.

Please reach out to your state representatives to urge their support for LETRS training for teachers. Your voice at the capitol matters on this issue!



L-R: Rep. Edelson, Sen. Nelson, Rep. Darnie, Sen. Youakim

Upcoming Events in 2021

2nd Annual Student Honor Roll

We had hoped to welcome families to The Reading Center last spring for our first annual Student Honor Roll celebration. That was not to be in person – but many students participated last year in our virtual celebration that we recorded and released to families Memorial Day weekend. We are planning a second virtual celebration for this May. Parents, please “opt-in” so your student can be celebrated and recognized.

Our second annual event will again celebrate the hard work and progress of our students and the commitment of their families.

Through this event we hope to inspire in our students continued commitment to hard work and individual growth. We also seek to bring students and families together with each other to help foster relationships within our community.

We know that every student who comes to The Reading Center is committed to putting in tremendous effort. We also want our students to know they are not alone and that their hard work has not gone unnoticed.

If you had a Reading Center student between January 2020 and March 2021, we invite you to opt into this event by sharing some special and unique information about your student AND a photo.

Thank you, Reading Center families, for sharing your students with us! The video will be released Memorial Day weekend.



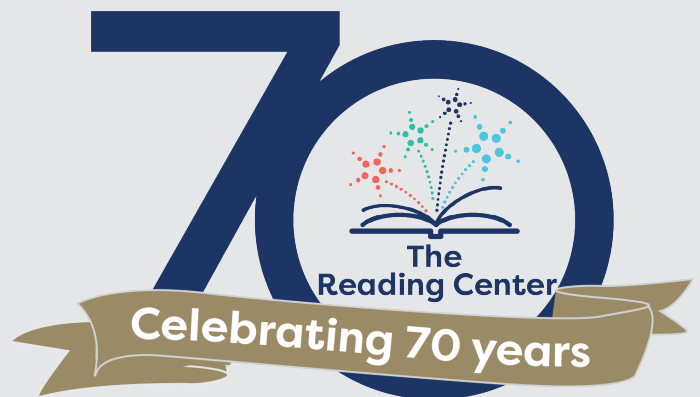
For more information visit the Events tab on our website.

70th Anniversary Celebration – we need your stories and photos/videos!

This year marks our 70th year. In that time, we have taught over 10,000 students and trained more than 2,000 educators. We have already begun the planning stages for a fall event that highlights our past but also celebrates our future.

We need your help! We hope to share stories, photos and updates on our alumni throughout the year and at our event this fall. But we need you to share those details with us. Visit our website and upload your photos, videos and stories. Tell us how The Reading Center impacted your life. Share with us where you are now. Give advice to the younger generation of dyslexic students. We look forward to reconnecting and learning more about our alumni – wherever they are.

Save the date for the anniversary celebration Saturday, October 9th!



For more information visit the Events tab on our website.

Newsletter Donor List

July 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020

We would like to acknowledge and thank all of you who have so generously pledged or donated to The Reading Center. We strive to list our donors accurately, but occasionally we make a mistake. If your donation has been omitted, your entry is misspelled or put in a wrong giving level, please contact Sarah Carlson-Wallrath at scarlsonwallrath@thereadingcenter.org.

If you would like to make a contribution, please use our secure online server at www.TheReadingCenter.org, contact us at 507-288-5271, or use the enclosed envelope.

Paula Rome Legacy Society Those honoring The Reading Center with a planned gift

Mike and Joy Fogarty
Kevin Kvale
Tony Love
Leone & Thomas Mauszycki
Jean Osman
Joe Powers
Lois Saxton
Marguerite K. Smith
Erik and Eileen Thorpe
Bruce Wolfson and Mary Elliott

\$25,000 and Up

Drs. Terri and Brooks Edwards *
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Harper Family Foundation
Greg and Denise Nesler
Rochester Plumbing and Heating

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Jeff and Barbara Brown *
Mike and Joy Fogarty *
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Benefactors \$2,500 - 4,999

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In memory of Jean Osman

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In memory of Jean Osman

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In memory of Trish Vickman,
My sister, a teacher & advocate
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The Reading Center

DYSLEXIA INSTITUTE OF MN

2010 Scott Road NW
Rochester, MN 55901
website: www.TheReadingCenter.org
email: Read@TheReadingCenter.org
(507) 288 - 5271

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Monday through Friday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

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SAVE THE DATE!

SPRING

**Reading Center Student
Program Open House (online)**
Mon, May 11 at 7pm

**2nd Annual Student
Honor Roll video release**
Fri, May 28

SUMMER

**Basic Orton-Gillingham
Training Institute (online)**
Jun 1 - Aug 22, 2021

**Advanced Orton-Gillingham
Training Institute (online)**
Jun 1 - Aug 8, 2021

**27th Annual Best of Basics
Summer Program**
Jul 12 - Aug 4, 2021

**Basic Orton-Gillingham
Training Institute (online)**
Aug 30 - Nov 21, 2021

FALL

**70th Anniversary/Bright Stars
Celebration (online)**
October, Oct 9

**Advanced Orton-Gillingham
Training Institute (online)**
Nov 29 - Feb 20, 2022

**Basic Orton-Gillingham
Training Institute (online)**
Nov 29 - March 6, 2022

**4-6-Year-Old Screening &
Reading Club**
Ongoing, call for times