



**ldawc** • Learning Disabilities  
Association of Wellington County

## **LDawc Family Conference 2017 Session Summaries**

### **OPENING - Reading Rocks Program, John McNamara and Hilary Scruton**

Reading Rocks is an 8-week one-on-one literacy program for children and youth 6- 12 years old who require support with their literacy skills. Through this effective instructional program, children are matched with a trained tutor who will adapt a poster board workstation and literacy program according to the child's specific needs. The program focuses on the essential literacy concepts of phonics, sight words, and fluency. Tutors will develop and implement engaging, hands-on literacy activities to address these areas and build children's motivation. Each week, children will set goals and graph their success in these areas on their poster board, contributing to self-regulated learning. One of the aims of Reading Rocks is to make reading fun!

Dr. John McNamara is an educational psychologist interested in studying young children with learning and reading disabilities. Currently his research involves working with various agencies across the province to develop and implement literacy intervention programs for vulnerable readers. Dr. McNamara also leads his LD Research Team at Brock University in a number of applied research projects aimed at better understanding reading and reading disabilities. Dr. McNamara is currently the principal investigator on a SSHRC Insight Grant funded initiative to study Reading Rocks – A literacy approach to support and motivate vulnerable readers. John, along with Hilary Scruton, is the co-founder of the Research Institute for Learning Differences

Hilary Scruton is a Ph.D. student and researcher in the department of Family Relations and Human Development at the University of Guelph. Her doctoral research has centred on how to support children with reading disabilities through effective interventions. She has published and presented internationally about the most effective ways to support vulnerable children. Hilary has also facilitated several programs within her communities that serve children with learning disabilities. More recently, Hilary is also a co-founder of the Research Institute for Learning Differences.

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER - Boys and Girls Learn Differently, Michael Reist

Gender differences have a profound influence on learning and behaviour. Boys' brains and girls' brains develop and operate very differently. Current brain research has revealed fascinating differences between the way males and females think and communicate. The implications for teaching and raising boys and girls are profound. Teachers and parents of both genders will benefit from this entertaining and enlightening workshop. (from [www.michaelreist.ca](http://www.michaelreist.ca))

Michael Reist is a nationally-recognized authority on the needs of children. He is the author of the Canadian bestseller *Raising Boys In A New Kind Of World* as well as *What Every Parent Should Know About School and The Dysfunctional School: Uncomfortable Truths and Awkward Insights on School, Learning and Teaching*. His most recent book is entitled *Raising Emotionally Healthy Boys*. He has published over 100 articles on topics ranging from education, spirituality and parenting to movies, books and popular culture. His newsletter "What Boys Need" reaches thousands of readers around the world each month. Michael's work has been featured on CBC Television and Radio, CTV, Global TV, CityTV, TV Ontario, The Huffington Post, The Globe and Mail, The National Post and the Toronto Star. He has spoken internationally to parent groups, public health agencies and teacher organizations on gender differences in learning, the influence of technology on kids and the emotional health of children. A classroom teacher for over thirty years, Michael now works in private practice where he is a mentor to young people and their parents. He specializes in working with children who face challenges in school and at home due to issues around attention control, high sensitivity, sensory processing and cognitive profiles that do not "fit" within the school environment. [www.michaelreist.ca](http://www.michaelreist.ca)

## MORNING BREAKOUT SESSION – 10:55 – 12:15, choose 1 of 4 sessions

### **Breakout #1**

#### **IEP 101 - Hands On Navigation, Sue Shaw**

Individual Education Plans (IEPs) can be complicated, whether you are new to the special education world or a "frequent flyer". There are many tips and strategies that can help. Parents need info to collaborate effectively with teachers and administrators and minimize intimidating situations. Bring your child's IEP to this IEP 101, Hands On Navigation session with Sue Shaw. She will take you through the components of an IEP and answer all of your questions. Learn exactly what information should be in your child's IEP, and some ideas to be able to craft an effective document to support your child education goals. Leave feeling more knowledgeable and fluent about your child's education plan.

Sue Shaw is a parent advocate and teaching innovator who has been working to provide education and training opportunities for over 10 years. Sue supports many different entities including: parents, administrators, teachers, government and service agencies, and

especially people living with special needs. Learning, mastery and exceeding expectations requires creative and innovative solutions to successfully navigate everyday school and real life situations - *FOR EVERYONE*. Come find out how you can improve your communication and writing skills to be part of the solution.

## **Breakout #2**

### **Benefits of Peer Networking, Gabriele Wright**

The LDAWC peer network aims to provide informal monthly opportunities to share local LD resources, experiences, challenges and successes. Living, learning and/or working with a LD, or supporting a family member with LD, has its ups and downs. Benefits of peer support include:

- Learn about relevant local resources, supports and strategies from others
- Insight into what has and has not worked for parents and families
- Learning you and your student are not alone through shared ideas and experiences
- Reduced stigma and stress

Gabriele Wright, a parent member of the LDAWC Board, has learned a few key things about LDs from the ground up – through her family’s experience with one daughter, two psychologists and well over a dozen teachers. From early primary to high school, Gabriele has found that not only reading about her daughter’s LD ...but talking with and learning from others was informative and helped bring clarity to their situation. As her family is now working on passing the (self-advocacy) torch to their daughter, it still works to share experiences and resources with others through informal peer networks.

## **Breakout #3**

### **LD & Anxiety, Rose Freigang and Linda DiNardo, Norfolk Psychological Services**

Anxiety can contribute to a student’s experience of learning and school performance in many ways. This is especially true for children and teens with a learning disability. This talk will describe how worry and anxiety can affect a student’s attention, memory and other cognitive abilities. In addition, we will touch upon how anxiety can emerge as a secondary problem related to a youngster’s self-confidence and beliefs about themselves. Most important, we will discuss ways in which you, educators and your child can work together to “talk back” to anxiety and reduce its negative impact.

Rose Freigang is a Registered Psychological Associate with the College of Psychologists of Ontario in the areas of Clinical And School Psychology. She has provided assessment and treatment services to preschoolers, school-age children, adolescents and adults in hospital, community agency and private settings for more than twenty-five years. Rose has a particular interest in and experience with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other Developmental Disabilities, Specific Learning Disabilities and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. Rose has

a strong commitment to early intervention and a family-centered approach. She can be a strong advocate, who understands both the triumphs and obstacles to living with lifelong challenges.

Linda Di Nardo is a Registered Psychological Associate. She received her Master's degree in Psychology from the University of Toronto. Linda has extensive knowledge and expertise in assessment, consultation, and working on many multi-disciplinary teams. She has worked in several school boards, and in hospital and mental health settings. Linda has been with Norfolk for over 10 years. Her primary interest is completing comprehensive psychological, psychoeducational and developmental assessments with children and adolescents. Her areas of expertise include Learning Disabilities, ADHD, giftedness, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and developmental issues. Linda has developed a strong interest in understanding the impact of anxiety in children's learning needs.

#### **Breakout #4**

##### **Chromebook 101, Janet Ragan**

Walking in to almost any classroom and you'll see technologies such as Chromebooks being used to support learning. Many school boards (including UGDSB and WDCSB) and teachers are utilizing Google classrooms, using Google docs, sheets, slides, and all the other easy-to-use Google apps that are accessible at school or at home or wherever a student accesses a Chrome browser. Because of their affordability and portability more students are using Chromebooks and Google Apps— helping to reduce the stigma of using assistive technology for students with LD. Google Read and Write are especially useful tools for the student with LD, and can be an alternative to Dragon Naturally Speaking and parts of Kurzweil with its text-to-speech, speech-to-text and word prediction tools. Join Janet Ragan as she explores the functionality of Chromebooks and Google Apps for Education.

Janet Ragan is a teacher and instructor in educational and assistive technologies. She believes that parents and others in a student's circle of support should have awareness of the technology tools the student is using, to help with their learning struggles. She has worked with students Grade 2 to university and ESL, one on one, and in small groups, as well as with teachers, parents and administrators. Janet believes that when specific technology tools are introduced to a student, their confidence to learn and express their ideas can be greatly enhanced. Janet also owns Metamorphosis Learning, an Educational Support Company whose aim is to assist students in maximizing students' learning potential through the use of AT.

## AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSION – 1:10 – 2:25, choose 1 of 4 sessions

### **Breakout #1**

#### **Current Trends in Math, Cathy Chaput**

Math! Many students love it; many don't. The province, with their renewed math strategy, is using math leads - in school boards across the province - to deepen teachers' knowledge of math - and for good reason. Our technology-driven world is changing rapidly, and students must have a wide range of skills and knowledge to succeed. Mathematics knowledge and proficiency is becoming more critical to success in school and work. Join Cathy Chaput, one such math lead and math lover – as she presents current trends in math, and how you, as a parent, can support your child in a way that enhances their understanding but is fun and engaging.

Cathy Chaput is currently a Program Coordinator with the Wellington Catholic District School Board, with responsibilities in mathematics. Mathematics is a passion of hers, and she's had the opportunity to engage in this through teaching math in the primary, junior and intermediate panels, working and learning with teachers using a variety of supportive resources, and leading afterschool book studies, workshops and summer programs. She teaches the Primary/Junior Math courses for teachers, has worked on numeracy projects with the Ministry of Education, presented at OAME, OECTA and WFMP conferences, and in fall 2017 became the president of the Ontario Math Coordinators Association (OMCA).

### **Breakout #2**

#### **Orton Gillingham – A Multi-sensory Approach to Reading, Kristina Campbell**

The Orton Gillingham approach is a highly structured program focussing on breaking reading and spelling down into smaller skills (letters and sounds), and then building on these skills over time. It also pioneered the “multisensory” approach to reading instruction and is considered one of the best approaches for teaching students with dyslexia/learning disabilities. Instructors use sight, hearing, touch and movement to enhance memory and learning. Orton–Gillingham also puts a strong emphasis on understanding the “how” and “why” behind reading. Once students know consistent rules and patterns, they're better able to decode words on their own. Orton–Gillingham has the most research of any program to support its approach.

Kristina Campbell is an Associate level therapist through the Academy of Orton Gillingham Educators and Practitioners. She works as a teletherapy clinician with Lexercise.com and in private practice as an educational therapist. She believes that one of her jobs is to find the key to unlock each student's learning potential, and she uses the OG approach as one of her tools. For more than 10 years, she have embraced students by teaching them foundational skills, instilling self-confidence, promoting health and character, cultivating their talents, and sending them on to bright and successful futures.

### **Breakout #3**

#### **LD & Anxiety, Rose Freigang and Dianna Gamble, Norfolk Psychological Services**

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Rose Freigang is a Registered Psychological Associate with the College of Psychologists of Ontario in the areas of Clinical And School Psychology. She has provided assessment and treatment services to preschoolers, school-age children, adolescents and adults in hospital, community agency and private settings for more than twenty-five years. Rose has a particular interest in and experience with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other Developmental Disabilities, Specific Learning Disabilities and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. Rose has a strong commitment to early intervention and a family-centered approach. She can be a strong advocate, who understands both the triumphs and obstacles to living with lifelong challenges.

Dianna Gamble is a Registered Psychological Associate. Dianna received her Masters in Applied Child Psychology from The University of Guelph (MA). Dianna previously worked at the Hospital for Sick Children and the Halton Board of Education, and has been at Norfolk for the last 15 years. Dianna provides comprehensive psychological and/or psychoeducational assessments of childhood and adolescent learning and attention issues. Her areas of expertise include Learning Disabilities, ADHD, giftedness, reading remediation, and transitions to post secondary education, including career counselling and vocational assessments.

### **Breakout #4**

#### **Learning the Tools Available Through Special Education, Upper Grand District School Board**

Navigating the Special Education system can be very complicated for parents, especially when their child is first showing difficulties in school. There's a pretty comprehensive path that schools and school boards take when a student begins to have difficulties, and this could be from extra support from the teacher, special education teacher to identification and formalized special education supports. Ideally, teachers, administrators and parents work collaboratively to make decisions that are in the best interests of the child/student.

Presenter Wendy Donaldson is the Assistant to the Superintendent of Program Services with responsibility for Special Education. Wendy comes to this role with many years experience as an elementary school administrator with the Upper Grand District school board. For this

presentation, Wendy will be joined by a variety of members of the Special Education department. The goal of the workshop is to not only support participants in learning more about the supports in place for students with special needs but also to enable them to meet and work with tools and equipment that is used in the UGDSB to support students with special needs. Some of the team members that will be attending this workshop include ABA facilitators, Inclusionary Coaches, Deaf and Hear of Hearing teachers, School administrators, Speech and Language Pathologist, etc.

### **PLENARY SESSION – 2:45-4:15 – Walk A Mile in My Shoes, Hayley Stinson**

Walk a Mile in My Shoes is an experiential workshop that is designed to give participants an understanding of what it is like to have learning disabilities. Geared to both caregivers and educators, participants engage in a series of exercises that simulate problems with memory, decoding words, or reading facial expressions. Through these exercises, participants gain knowledge about current thinking in the fields of LDs and a practical understanding of the implications for everyday life and mental health. Group discussion, led by a skilled facilitator, helps participants to integrate experiences with practical strategies and ideas for how to help.

Presenter Hayley Stinson is a registered social worker who works as a Child and Family Clinician and a Community Education and Engagement Facilitator with the Integra Program at the Child Development Institute. The Integra Program specializes in providing mental health services to children and youth with Learning Disabilities (LD) and co-occurring mental health issues. Hayley received her Master's Degree in Social Work from the University in Toronto and specialized in supporting children and families. Hayley currently provides education and training to caregivers, educators, students, professionals and community members to support children and youth with learning disabilities and co-occurring mental health issues.

The Integra Program of the Child Development Institute is the only accredited children's mental health agency in Canada to provide mental health services exclusively to children and youth whose mental health issues (MH) are complicated by learning disabilities (LDs). We provide family-centred, evidence-informed direct clinical services to children and youth with diagnosed LDs ages 8 to 18 years in the Toronto region. We also provide community education and training on topics pertaining to LDMH to audiences in the province and beyond.