Forsyth County Reading Association Meeting

Tuesday, February 18, 2020 5:00 pm

Redeemer Church Cafeteria

Members enjoyed refreshments and visited with one another.

FCRA President Sabrina Secrest called the meeting to order at 5:15 pm.

She reminded members that our next meeting will be on **Thursday, March 19**.

Cindy Pavon will be our speaker, and she will be talking about using multicultural books, resources, and

activities in the classroom.

Sabrina reminded everyone that the North Carolina Reading Conference will be held March 22-24, 2020 in

downtown Winston-Salem.

She encouraged all members to attend—if only for just one day of the conference.

* + There will be speakers from all over the country and workshop opportunities.
  + We have been awarding $25 scholarships for attending the conference as door prizes throughout the year and will give the last one tonight.

Sabrina shared that we will be needing new officers for next year. Anyone interested should talk to her.

Open positions include: Door prizes/Snacks Coordinator, Vice-President, Treasurer, Membership

Coordinator, and a Grant Writer.

Jeannie Evans provided the Secretary’s Report from our last meeting. It will be posted on the FCRA webpage.

Cheryl Key provided the Treasurer’s Report.

Our starting balance for February was $1037.55.

Our ending balance was $1072.55.

She announced that FCRA was awarded a $300 grant to be used for our service projects.

Jan Van Swearingen introduced herself and passed out flyers about her tutoring services. She specializes in

helping students with special learning needs.

Cheryl introduced our speaker for the meeting, Psychologist Dr. Bill Michielutte. Dr. Michielutte has been in

practice for decades in Winston-Salem and specializes in psychoeducational testing.

Dr. Michielutte’s talk was on **Recognizing and Identifying Characteristics of Struggling Learners**.

The following are some tidbits from his talk…

He used the image of a computer to discuss the learning processes of children and talked about the

importance of identifying the specific nature of a problem in order to figure out how to help:

* + **Input issues**--Is what they are learning meaningful? Are they having trouble hearing or seeing?
  + **Processing issues**—Are they able to integrate new info with previously stored info? Can they manipulate info to make sense out of it?
  + **Output issues**—Do they struggle with verbal or written expression in demonstrating what they know?

Kids don’t have reading /math problems. They have underlying problems that interfere with these tasks.

Any deficiency one part of the system affects the efficiency of the whole system.

**Reading/Language Issues**

Dr. Michielutte doesn’t diagnose children as having dyslexia. Instead, he describes and addresses the

underlying problems.

It is important to look at the individual component scores of intelligence tests—not just the global scores. The

global score doesn’t look at emotional, social, and other intelligences. It is important to look at the

total child—not just numbers on a page.

Boys outnumber girls in having learning disabilities.

Auditory Channel Function deficits are the top cause of reading difficulties.

* + Phonological awareness (understanding how oral language can be broken into components) is essential in developing basic reading skills.
    - This includes auditory discrimination, sound blending, and auditory closure.
    - Speech pathologists can help with weaknesses in these areas.
  + Can be seen in difficulties understanding and complying with oral directions.
  + These students need long-term help and need teachers to teach phonics in a sequential format.
  + These problems develop rapidly from infancy to age 3 and can be exacerbated by ear infections.

Visual Processing Issues

These are seen from 3-4 years to early elementary school and are more difficult to identify.

Characteristics of this deficit include problems with perceiving meaning, discriminating visual symbols,

weaknesses in long-term vs. short term memory, spatial relationships, visual closure, letter

reversals & transpositions, spelling, and copying.

Dr. Michielutte recommended computer programs like *Book Share* and *Learning Ally* as good resources for students who struggle with reading to themselves.

**Math Issues**

Visual difficulties can contribute to spatial challenges.

It is important to help students develop reasoning skills to figure out which functions to use at a given time.

**Written Expression Issues**

Some kids struggle with fine motor issues and thus letter formation.

It is very important to get pencil grip corrected as early as possible.

Help students to develop structures (introductory and transition words and phrases) to use in their writing.

**What to Look for in Identifying Learning Issues**

Some learning issues may overlap with ADD or Auditory Processing Disorder (difficulty processing language

itself—different from Auditory Channel issues)

Red flags for preschoolers include challenges finding the right words to say, slow language development, using

vague words like “thing” and “stuff”, difficulty rhyming, not interested in storytelling, trouble with sequence memory, difficulty identifying size, shape, & color, distraction, and problems with cause & effect.

Red flags for elementary students include slowness in recognizing letters & sounds, difficulty retelling stories, difficulty telling time & counting money, letter reversals & transpositions, substituting words, number transposition, trouble following directions, and reliance on memorization.

Red flags for 6th-12th grade include problems with long-term planning, multitasking, avoidance of reading and writing, misreading information, difficulty summarizing, problems with inferential thinking & open- ended questions, and difficulty learning a foreign language (Spanish is usually the easiest for them.)

**Ways to Help Struggling Students** (Dr. M. provided additional ideas that are linked [here](../LD%20Modifications%20&%20Accomodations%20from%20Dr.%20Bill%20Michielutte.pdf).)

Encourage verbal language by asking questions that require sentence answers.

Practice rhymes.

Take dictation when students are young.

Play reasoning games.

Encourage divergent thinking. Ex.: How many ways can use \_\_\_\_?

Don’t say “it’s a girl thing” or “it’s a boy thing”. That reinforces their sense of inability to do something.

Don’t dismiss problems as developmental.

Always find out **why** a child is struggling. That’s what good evaluations do.

Provide classroom accommodations and modifications as possible.

If needed, provide the child with counseling to address self-esteem issues.

The meeting ended at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeannie Evans, Secretary