



The Frostig Center Focus

*Helping Children with
Learning Disabilities
Reach Their Full Potential*

Issue 2, 2015

WHAT'S NEW

Conference at UCLA

Families and professionals will find many topics of interest at the International Dyslexia Association's one-day conference on May 2. Speakers will address assistive technology, music and learning, and more. For details go to: <http://www.dyslexia.org/current-events/>

School Tours

Frostig School conducts tours on the first Wednesday of every month at 10 a.m. During the summer months you may arrange for individual tours. Contact Jessica Gatlin at 626-791-1244 or Jessica.g@frostig.org

Summer Enrichment

Frostig School's summer program offers enrichment classes that are open to all children. Visit www.frostigschool.org for details.

Energy Surge for Frostig Research

By Chris Schnieders, Ph. D.

Director of Research

My first task as director of research at The Frostig Center has been to connect with the educators and researchers who are advancing our understanding of learning disabilities. Thank you to those

inside and outside of the center who have welcomed me as the new director. Our meetings and conversations have been positive and energizing.

Frostig has a long history of groundbreaking research. Dr. Marianne Frostig developed some of the earliest diagnostic tests for learning disabilities. Some years later the Research Department conducted a 20-year longitudinal study that identified a set of personal attributes that can lead persons with learning disabilities to successful life outcomes. Frostig's cutting-edge research related to assistive technology continues to be part of current practice. My ambition is to add to the record.

My career has been a blend of the theoretical and the practical. At The Frostig Center I served first as the Director of Teacher Training



for the school, then as Head of School. Prior to Frostig I worked in higher education, where I taught and conducted research in a multitude of areas, including parent/family issues related to the development of Individual Education Plans (IEP).

Since taking over the Research Department in July, I have immersed myself in the burgeoning field of brain research, with a special focus on executive function. Executive function is a cluster of mental skills that help people plan, organize and execute tasks at home, school or the workplace. Executive function deficits are commonly found in children with learning disabilities, ADHD, and autism spectrum disorders. Advances in brain research are deepening our understanding of executive function and pointing the way to effective interventions.

A vital part of my job is to translate research into effective educational practice. Earlier this year, I met with the Frostig School staff to share the latest literature on executive function and give teachers specific, concrete strategies for helping students strengthen their skills. Jenny Janetzke, head of school, tells me that her teachers immediately put those strategies to the test in their classrooms. I have also worked with our Consultation & Education Department to incorporate executive function into their professional development programs for public and private school teachers.

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THE SPOTLIGHT

BA, MA Spell Success for Frostig Alum

Frostig School alumna Lesley Fisher thought the mountain of assigned reading at University of La Verne was tough. Then she entered the graduate program at Mount St. Mary's University, where her professors required even more reading, more research and more essays.

Lesley succeeded at both universities because of her remarkable work ethic and the skills she learned at Frostig to manage her dyslexia. Lesley graduated from Mount St. Mary's in May 2014 with a master's degree in psychology and the ambition to work with children who have suffered trauma and abuse.

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Research

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Conversation and collaboration breathe life into our research. Dr. Oren Boxer, a clinical faculty member at the UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior, accepted our invitation to visit Frostig in October and discuss ways to improve executive function among school children. More recently, Lev Gottlieb, a neuropsychologist from UCLA, visited Frostig to learn more about our work and explore ways to collaborate on projects that will advance the understanding of learning differences.

I collaborated with Dr. Paul Gerber and Dr. Roberta Goldberg, director of Frostig's Consultation & Education Department, to update the research on factors that contribute to successful outcomes for people with learning disabilities. Goldberg was part of the Frostig team that conducted the 20-year study that identified the success attributes; Gerber conducted a separate study that reached similar conclusions. We have submitted an article to the Learning Disabilities Association of America for publication in its professional journal. We hope to follow the publication with a presentation on the practical application of the success attributes at the next conference of the Council for Learning Disabilities.

The Frostig Center is reasserting itself as a place where important research is conducted, discussed and shared. That's good news for children and families with learning differences.

Message from the Executive Director

People like to say Southern California doesn't have seasons, but signs of spring are all around us at The Frostig Center. The trees that line our campus are bursting with new leaves, birds are nesting in the eaves of our roof, and students are itching for spring break.

The Frostig Center is enjoying its own season of growth and renewal. School enrollment is increasing and we are implementing new programs. The Consultation and Education Department is working with new schools to train their teachers in best instructional practices, and Dr. Chris Schnieders is re-energizing the Research Department.

School enrollment now stands at 108 students; our goal is to serve 120 boys and girls by the end of the 2015-16 school year. Our school tours for prospective families are bigger than ever, and so many families need the specialized services that only Frostig can provide.

A larger school is good for the community and good for Frostig. As we grow, we will stay true to the Frostig culture, which values strong personal relationships. Our teaching, clinical and support staff will always be attuned to the unique interests and needs of each student.

Staying true to our roots doesn't mean we're stuck in the past. We are always updating our curriculum to incorporate the best practices for educating children with learning differences. This year we achieved 1-to-1 computing, meaning that every student is equipped with a laptop or iPad that they use throughout the school day. It was gratifying to see students of all ages using their iPads to research and present special projects to parents and peers at the Academic Fair.

Our investment in technology continues with the recent purchase of two 3D printers. These printers are the wave of the future and our students will learn important skills for the 21st century.

As always, please feel free to share your thoughts with me. You may reach me at 626-791-1255 or dean@frostig.org.



A blue ink signature of Dean Conklin, Ed.D., written in a cursive style.

Dean Conklin, Ed.D.

It's easy.
DONATE ONLINE

www.frostig.org

Frostig accepts credit cards, cash and checks as well as gifts of stock.

New Home for Frostig Collection

View the works of Nancy Rubins, Chris Burden, R. Kenton Nelson and other prominent artists who have created a series of works to support Frostig School's social skills program. Frostig closed the Frostig Collection Gallery at Bergamot Station on Jan. 28 and moved the pieces, including this sculpture by Frank Gehry, to The Frostig Center. You may arrange to see the pieces at the center, or view them online at www.frostigcollection.org.



Untitled, 2005
cast bronze with black patina
9 1/2" x 4 1/4" x 3 3/4"

"Celebrating the Students of Frostig- Courageous Hearts, Exceptional Potential" Frostig Benefit 2015

A Fabulous Success

Almost 200 friends of The Frostig Center shared an evening of dining, inspiring entertainment and camaraderie at the Altadena Town & Country Club on February 21. Among the evening's highlights were performances by Frostig students and one mother's emotional story of how the school changed the lives of her 7-year-old twins.

Frostig parent Heather Fung and Frostig Board of Directors Vice-Chair Nancy Hogg served as co-chairs for the event. They and their tireless committee of volunteers (below right), created a magical evening that exceeded all expectations. Money raised from the benefit will support the school's performing arts and FrostigBeyond, a new program that gives young adults with learning differences the support they need to succeed after high school.

Thank you to everyone who supported this special evening.



Photos by David Braun

The Frostig Center is dedicated to helping children with learning disabilities reach their full potential through an integrated approach of research, professional development and consultation, and the Frostig School.



The FrostigCenter

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In Memoriam



Earl Feldhorn
1938-2015

During his 23 years as a Trustee of The Frostig Center, Earl Feldhorn earned the respect and admiration of all who worked with him. Earl generously shared his time, talents and resources with Frostig. Everyone at Frostig who knew Earl will miss his soft-spoken manner, charming sense of humor, and unflagging commitment to children with learning disabilities.

Degrees of progress for Lesley Fisher

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The marriage and family therapist has come a long way from the young girl who struggled in school. "I was a slow reader and I couldn't do math," Lesley recalled. "My mom and I would do the times tables over and over. My mom wouldn't get mad, but she'd ask, 'Why don't you get it?'"

Lesley entered Frostig School in 1999 as a sixth-grader and soon learned why she didn't "get it." Frostig staff quickly identified her dyslexia.

Over the next three years, Lesley learned strategies to work around her learning disability. Just as importantly, Lesley's teachers exhorted her to be proactive—to make decisions, to engage with the world, and to advocate for herself.

"My teacher always said to be proactive and that's still in my mind," Lesley said. "She said to do things for myself and try hard. That was good to hear."

By the end of middle school, Lesley felt ready to leave Frostig. She attended high school in San Marino, then headed off to University of La Verne. With the words of her favorite Frostig teacher ringing in her ears, Lesley arranged accommodations for tests and quizzes, became a resident assistant in the dorms, and pursued her dream of becoming a therapist.

Lesley said she had to work harder than most students because of her dyslexia. "I used to stay up really late because it took me longer to read. And I did a lot of homework on weekends. I have a lot of discipline. I was never the kid with the messy room."

The Pasadena resident now reads for pleasure when she's not looking for her first job as a therapist. What would she tell young people with learning differences? "Try your best. And parents, be patient. Everything takes longer, but if you keep moving forward, everything will be OK and it will get done."