

The BEAR Bulletin

Vol. 4 March 2021



MEET OUR NEW TUTORS



Sarah McKee

Sarah McKee is a student tutor and an educator who loves engaging with reading challenges and supporting the acquisition of literacy skills worldwide. After years of teaching children and youth, her love of teaching special needs literacy developed from working with adult newcomers to Canada who, although illiterate in their first language, became keen to master literacy skills as they acquired English language skills. On a learning trip to Zimbabwe, Sarah was impressed and inspired by mothers and grandmothers trained to implement reading centres and print rich homes in their communities in an effort to raise a new generation of readers and build a brighter future. Upon returning home, Sarah sought to find a place where she could learn to better serve children with learning differences and give back to her community. She was delighted to hear about the Hamilton Learning Centre on CBC Radio Noon during a program focused on the "Right to Read" - Ontario Human Rights Inquiry and Decoding Dyslexia Ontario and subsequently reached out to the Centre to inquire about becoming a tutor.

"For me, reading is a joyful discovery that has opened opportunities but sadly, not everyone has access to acquire this ability. Learning to read should not be a privilege. I believe that all people have a right to learn the foundational skill of reading. Tutoring at the Hamilton Learning Centre gives me the opportunity to learn and share what I am discovering with a new generation of developing readers so that a world of possibilities can be better accessed by them in their futures."



Stacy Geddes

Stacy was born and raised in Hamilton. She has been a public school teacher for the last 12 years with a keen interest in supporting students to learn to read. Stacy heard about the Orton Gillingham Method and was interested in how it worked. She learned about the Learning Center and thought it would be a good match for her passion of teaching students reading. She is enjoying her time tutoring and seeing the growth in her student's learning and reading.



TESTIMONIALS FROM OUR CENTRE

- * "When I see a word I do not know, I know how to take it apart and read it." Paige (Child)
- * "Tutor Sarah has been an amazing tutor for my child. She worked hard to make a schedule for my child that worked and has included readings my child enjoys." Colleen (Parent)



dysLexia

What is Dyslexia?

- ◆ Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin
- ◆ It is characterized by difficulties with and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities
- ◆ It causes a deficit in the phonological component of language often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities
- ◆ Secondary consequences may include problems with reading comprehension because reduced reading affects the growth of vocabulary and its meaning
- ◆ Student needs effective classroom and individual instruction

The Child

- ◆ Child is normal to above average intelligence
- ◆ 1/5 children have trouble learning to read/spell because they have the inability to recognize and manipulate sound
- ◆ Affects boys and girls equally
- ◆ NOT a reflection of a child's intelligence
- ◆ Every child with dyslexia is unique to themselves; no two individuals are alike
- ◆ Child needs specific phonics training; OG is one proven program and is being offered by tutors, to individual students, one-on-one, presently online, at the Scottish Rite Learning Centre for Hamilton
- ◆ Orton Gillingham tutors at the Centre welcome communication between school and the Centre



Make a Difference!
DONATE

You can change
the life of a
child.

Volunteer staff and volunteer tutors manage the Learning Centre and work with the children. If you are unable to volunteer at this time please consider making a financial contribution.

Although our students are not in actual classes at the Learning Centre, the work continues and the Centre must be maintained. Please consider making a monthly or annual donation so that the children can come back when it's safe to a well-maintained centre.

Tax receipts will be issued for income tax purposes.

Please consider leaving an ongoing legacy with the Hamilton Learning Centre with a bequest in your will.

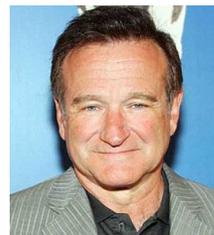
Donations may be made directly or through CanadaHelps.org



The Learning Centre operates entirely on donations.
Your continuing support is appreciated.

Famous People with Dyslexia

Robin Williams



His one-time role on the series *Happy Days* would mean more than any would ever think. It would lead to a starring role in the hit series *Mork and Mindy* and a new way the world would watch comedy. An impressive film career would follow with hits such as *Dead Poets Society*, *Good Morning, Vietnam*, *Aladdin* and *Mrs. Doubtfire*. In 1997, Robin won the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor for the film *Good Will Hunting*. He has also won two Emmy Awards, four Golden Globes, two Screen Actors Guild Awards, and five Grammy Awards.

<http://www.psychologydegree.com/50-famously-successful-people-who-are-dyslexic>

Trainer Meredith Hutchings Report March 2021



Meredith Hutchings

What an unusual but rewarding start to the tutoring year! Despite all the challenges of a global pandemic, the Hamilton tutors have stepped up and dug in deeply to provide our children and families with quality learning. What an accomplishment! Parents tell tutors about progress being made with their child's reading and writing skills, but also about how the children really look forward to their one-on-one time with their tutors. In a way, this may not be a complete surprise, as the Orton-Gillingham technique, whether delivered in our wonderful Centre or online, teaches our children the necessary skills that reduce the gap they feel between their academic performance and those of their non-dyslexic peers. However, our growing group of tutors, Nikki Brooks, Sarah McKee, Stacy Geddes, and Michael and Barbara Baxter must be applauded for their tenacity and devotion to their families. Our wonderful families have become an even more critical piece to the tutoring experience as parents need to

ensure not just that the child is where they should be at the right time, but that the equipment is working, and the learning materials have been rescued from younger siblings, or pets, or the mountain of other school materials. Families juggle clashing family activities which can be distracting. Then there is the snacking!

There is a more somber side, however, as some of our children struggle with extended online learning. Some have experienced darker feelings of being more isolated from friends and miss the many out of school activities. Here, the Hamilton tutors have really stepped up to uplift the spirits of the whole family. There have been many additional meetings and heartfelt exchanges. Thanks to all! Another surprise this year is the integral involvement of our monitors. Monitors now see what and how tutors rewire these wonderful children's brains. They remark that they also see progress with reading, spelling, and confidence. Recently, one girl simply did not want the lesson to end and had to be gently encouraged by the monitor to sign off! So, a big thank you to monitors.

Progress has been made on the training side as well. The new tutors have completed four and a half of the nine modules and are delivering excellent lessons. Our three more experienced tutors received their final training module at the end of January. We were very fortunate that the Baxters reached out to Dr. Michele Sala, a psychologist, who delivered part of

that final training. Dr. Sala did a wonderful job detailing the various tests and assessments required to diagnose dyslexia. We look forward to further collaborations with her. These three tutors can now begin to complete their final exam and move towards certification. A huge accomplishment! Over the winter, all tutors will continue to be observed delivering lessons and receiving feedback. Further training for the new tutors will resume in the spring!

I want to especially thank our wonderful directors, Barbara and Michael who have so warmly reached out to our Hamilton Learning Centre community to keep our Centre thriving! The Centre is growing and growing strong despite the challenges. We look forward to starting a new tutor training cohort as soon as a group of volunteers have been identified. We ask everyone to consider referring potential interested volunteers our way!





Board President's Message

Spring 2021

We have now completed two thirds of the 2020-2021 school year and continue to provide quality tutoring to our students given the limitations of the pandemic. The shift to virtual tutoring has somewhat hampered our ability to expand our base of tutors and volunteers but the solid and dedicated base we currently have will provide a solid foundation to build upon as we return to in person tutoring. All indications are that the return to business as usual will be appropriate for the 2021-2022 school year.

We have been pleased to share our successes and challenges in moving to an online format with the other Learning Centers across Canada. Collectively we have learned that while each Centre is very different in their circumstances we can all learn from each other.

Our twin challenges for the future will be engaging additional tutors and raising funds. We are working diligently to spread the net to engage potential tutors and other volunteers. Fundraising has become much more challenging with the absence of traditional fundraising events that many have attended in the past to support the Learning Centre. For those of you who have supported us in the past through those events please consider making your donations directly to the Learning Centre through one time or annual or monthly donations. Remember that stable and predictable funding and dedicated volunteer support will keep us open and growing to fill the needs of our students both current and future.

Mike Kirk

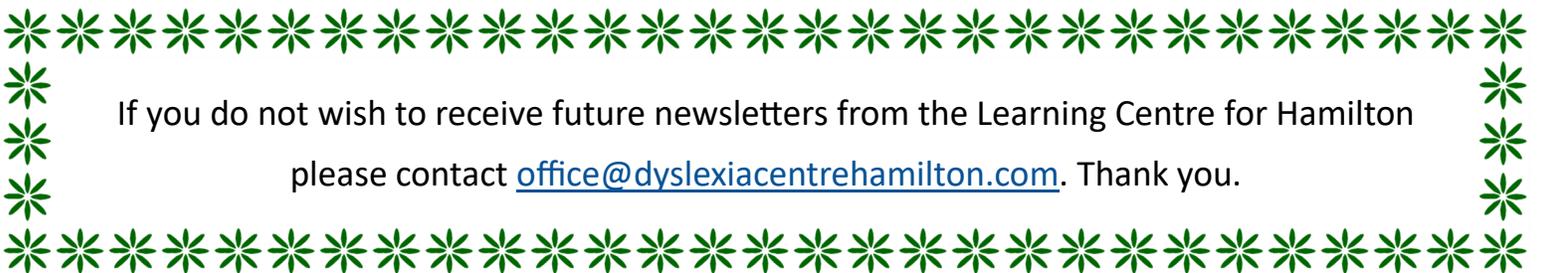
Co-Directors' Message

The Learning Centre for Hamilton began tutoring sessions again on January 12, 2021 after taking a four week break over the holiday season. Prior to the break all children except for our newest ones completed the annual Galistel-Ellis Test of Coding Skills. Test results showed that all of the children have made great progress in their reading and spelling skills since last tested and that our online program is successfully meeting their needs. As we move into spring, we will continue with our online tutoring and conclude our lessons on June 11, 2021.

Like all charitable organizations, the Learning Centre for Hamilton faces ongoing challenges. Our two main ones are recruiting new tutors and finding ways to raise funds which are always needed to keep the Learning Centre operating. We have a lengthy waiting list of families hoping to receive tutoring for their children. We have reached out to various school boards, post-secondary institutions and retired teachers groups hoping to attract volunteer tutors but have not had much success to this point. We can't stress enough how much we need new volunteers so that our programming can serve the needs of Hamilton and the surrounding area. Anyone who has an interest in helping children acquire the life skills of reading and spelling is encouraged to contact us for more information about how to become a tutor.

We would like to thank all of those who contribute to the success of our tutoring program. We are very fortunate to have an excellent group of hardworking tutors, volunteer monitors, executive, and board members. Without all of these people we would not be able to do what we do. Lastly, thank you to the children for working so hard during their sessions and to their families for their ongoing support. Have a safe, healthy and enjoyable spring season.

Michael and Barbara Baxter
Co-directors



If you do not wish to receive future newsletters from the Learning Centre for Hamilton please contact office@dyslexiacentrehamilton.com. Thank you.