

ORIGIN: At its 1998 annual session held in Alexandria, Louisiana the Grand Lodge of Louisiana, F. & A.M. adopted a resolution establishing instruction and training of children affected by dyslexia as its primary philanthropy and authorized the establishment of a pilot program at 5800 Masonic Drive, Alexandria. In 1999 the Grand Lodge authorized expansion of the program. Units are now in operation in every part of Louisiana under the auspices of the agency of the Grand Lodge designated as the Masonic Learning Center of Louisiana.

PURPOSE: To establish and operate a number of training units throughout Louisiana to furnish special instruction to dyslexic children who are not otherwise receiving adequate services to permit them to cope successfully with their condition.

DEFINITION OF "DYSLEXIA": Dyslexia is a learning disability or difficulty in intelligent persons who, without other limiting physical or emotional problems are, nevertheless, unable to learn to read, write, spell and comprehend the language as would be expected from a conventional classroom experience.

MANIFESTATIONS: Dyslexia manifests itself in many ways. It is more than merely seeing words backwards, e.g., the word "SAW" appearing as "WAS" or scrambled as "ASW". It includes poor reading with substitutions, omissions, additions, reversals of sounds, letters, syllables or words, poor spelling and sometimes confusion as to sequences [days of the week, months of the year, etc.] and directionality [left-right, up-down, etc.].

CAUSE: Dyslexia is not a disease. Dyslexia is not the result of retardation or low intelligence. The exact causes of dyslexia have not been established. Recent research has defined certain differences in brain function of dyslexic persons. Science presently presumes that the origin of dyslexia lies in atypical neurological development, perhaps in the transmitters of the brain, which makes language skills, especially reading and spelling, more difficult.

INCIDENCE OF DYSLEXIA: Estimates of the number of persons affected range from 2% to 30% of the total population with 10% of the total population being the more commonly accepted figure. Occurrence appears to be slightly greater in boys than in girls. Statistics seem to indicate that the condition may be somewhat hereditary. Often more than one member of a family may be affected.

EFFECT ON CHILD: Although the trend is now away from such treatment, dyslexic children are frequently characterized as "lazy", "not too bright", "slow", "learning disabled" or even "stupid". The dyslexic child is especially affected in a negative way by such characterization. The child knows that he or she is not stupid but realizes that he or she is not successfully competing with his or her peers. The child may lose self-esteem, become rebellious and be prone to unacceptable conduct because of the resulting frustration and acquired self-doubt. Without special training, these reactions may persist throughout the life of the individual.

TREATMENT OF DYSLEXIA: Dyslexic children who are not limited by other disabling conditions can learn language skills when the information is presented to them in a structured and sequential manner through a process of multi-sensory instruction. More often than not, success is achieved when the student, with reasonable individual attention, is led through a process by which he or she sees, hears, speaks, writes and perhaps feels the letter, phrase or word.

DYSLEXICS CAN SUCCEED: Inasmuch as dyslexia is not caused by lack of intelligence, dyslexics can succeed. Persons with dyslexia often excel at hands-on activities. Dyslexics may succeed in all walks of life. A list of famous people who have exhibited characteristics of dyslexia includes such names as Winston Churchill, Albert Einstein, Gen. George Patton, Nelson Rockefeller, Pres. Woodrow Wilson, Bruce Jenner, Tom Cruise and Whoopi Goldberg.

THE DYSLEXIA TRAINING

PROGRAM: The Masons of Louisiana propose to assist qualified children who are affected by dyslexia in very small classes which meet after school hours five days per week except for holidays which are observed by the public schools in the vicinity. Classes are conducted by a teacher/facilitator who is a certified teacher and who is given some special instruction in the presentation of this program. The program of instruction used is the Dyslexia Training Program developed especially for training dyslexics by the Texas Scottish Rite Hospital in Dallas, Texas. The course of instruction is multi-sensory, emphasizes phonics, and is presented by the use of a number of teaching aids including 350 video-tapes, workbooks, writing frames, linkage paper, three-dimensional letters, flash cards, wall charts, dictionaries, etc. No charge is made to the student, parent or guardian for testing, material or instruction. Parents are, however, responsible for transporting the child to and from the classes.

ADMISSION TO PROGRAM: Admission to the classes is by application only and is subject to certain limitations. Students who are in grades four, five or six, who have not yet attained the age of thirteen years and who have no history of other limiting conditions are considered for admission. Unfortunately, the child who lacks requisite intelligence or who is seriously affected by hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder or limiting physical or psychological conditions cannot be accepted. Admission is determined by a screening panel which takes into account the findings of independent examining professionals.