

Dyslexia: What's Your Fight Song?

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In a previous article, [Dyslexia: Hear Us Roar](#), I made a statement that we need to be louder and less polite. Well, we are getting there. It is a very exciting time to be part of the dyslexia community. There are grass roots movements like [Decoding Dyslexia](#) and [Literate Nation](#) that are making progress at a pace I have never seen. Three movies about dyslexia were released just last year. Assistive technology is gaining more acceptance as a legitimate way to help a student with dyslexia access the curriculum they are so capable of learning. I love it. It makes me happy. Ah, but there is always more to learn right? I do see a missed opportunity and I am here to call you to action.

Visualize this, you are in a band and your band has been practicing in your home for a long time. You feel like you are ready to perform live so you invite your friends and family and play for them. They totally get it, love it and tell you how great it is...you are going to be stars. But, of course they would love it because they love you. They get it already. What we need to do as the dyslexia community, is remove ourselves from the safety of our friends and family and play in front of a hostile audience to truly make a difference. We need to be the punk band playing at a country music festival. We need to stand out and provoke a conversation about dyslexia. Debunk myths. I have created a blueprint to help us reach out to the communities who need to meet us and learn from us.

First, attend teacher/reading conferences.

Last year, Tracy and I attended the [International Reading Association \(IRA\) conference](#) as exhibitors, we were one of two dyslexia-related exhibitors (Harvey Hubbel was the other). One of two, out of hundreds at a *reading* conference. There was not one dyslexia-related workshop – not one. So, what happened? The participants, more than 7000 educators, flocked to our table. They were hungry for our information and desperately wanted to talk to someone about the struggling kids in their classes. They want us there. Here is a list of just a few conferences you can attend. Attend the workshops, wear your [dyslexia is real t-shirt](#), or any other dyslexia regalia, and make sure you ask a question in each workshop related to dyslexia. If you can, have a booth and disseminate information.

IRA – New Orleans, May 9-12, 2014: <http://reading.org/annual-conference-2014>

IRA – Local events: <http://reading.org/general/calendar>

Council for Exceptional Children, Philadelphia, April 9-12 2014: http://www.cec.sped.org/Professional-Development/Annual-Convention?sc_lang=en

This is just a start. Take some time and google: teachers, principals, school psychologists, school administrators + conferences and see what is near you. Perhaps you just place an ad in the brochures or submit a proposal to do a presentation. Go for it.

Second, prepare some questions to ask:

How might this help a child with dyslexia?

Do you believe dyslexia is real?

Can a child with dyslexia benefit from this?

Third, prepare your elevator speech:

Now that you are walking around these conferences with your shirt or other identifiable outerwear and someone will inevitably ask, “So, what is dyslexia?” What are you going to say in the 30 seconds that you have this person’s attention? You need to be prepared so you do not waste the moment you have. The reality is that you never know who you are talking to; it could be a policy maker, another parent in need of support, a teacher who wants to help a child in his or her class or someone who truly does not believe in dyslexia.

So, where will you debut your band? We will be at IRA. We will have our [t-shirts](#) on, our elevator speech ready, our sign that screams “Dyslexia is Real,” standing tall behind us, and we will be hosting a [Dyslexia for a Day Simulation](#). Will you be there or somewhere similar? Out of your comfort zone? See you there!