



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Decoding Dyslexia MD hosts Town Hall Panel Discussion: Why Aren't All Maryland Students Learning to Read? How to Close the Reading Gap

More than half of Maryland's public school students fail to read proficiently

Columbia, Md., September 29, 2015 —Decoding Dyslexia Maryland will host a Town Hall Panel Discussion, “**Why Aren't All Maryland Students Learning to Read? How to Close the Reading Gap,**” on **Saturday, October 10** from **3:30-6pm** at Howard County High School Auditorium, 8700 Old Annapolis Rd., Ellicott City, MD 21043. From 2:45-3:30, resources and refreshments are available from 22 Town Hall Community Partners with expertise and resources on dyslexia and reading difficulties

Decoding Dyslexia Maryland (DDMD) is a grassroots movement of parents, teachers, students and related professionals concerned with the limited access to educational interventions for struggling readers and students with dyslexia in Maryland public schools.

According to DDMD, there are more than 850,000 students in Maryland's public schools and more than half fail to read proficiently. Reading failure makes no distinctions in race, ethnicity or income level. In 2013, the National Assessment for Educational Progress showed that 55 percent of Maryland's fourth grade students were at or below the basic level in reading.

“We are a fortunate state. Why are so many capable students failing to read and write? It's a crisis that is being played out in schools across the state, but there are solutions that can help close the reading gap,” said Lisa Blottenberger, State Leader for Decoding Dyslexia Maryland and a member of Governor Hogan's Dyslexia Task Force. “For these solutions to be successful, Maryland teachers, parents, students, the Maryland Department of Education and elected officials must work together. It is our hope that this Town Hall will enable us to educate our policy makers about reading, literacy and the challenges our children face in school.”

“I taught first grade for many years and my teacher training at the college level didn't prepare me to work with struggling readers,” said Blottenberger. “Little has changed in teacher training for more than 20 years — colleges should provide appropriate teacher preparation in reading. Then, and only then, will teachers be able to identify and remediate reading struggles before a student begins to fail.”

Attendees of the Town Hall will hear testimony from struggling students, parents and teachers, along with proposed solutions from expert panelists. Deborah Weiner, a local news anchor who has a daughter with dyslexia, will deliver the Keynote. Panelists include Dr. Donald Bolger, University of Maryland; Mary Stowe, M.Ed., School of Education, College of William & Mary; Amy Siracusano, Calvert Co. Public Schools; and Marilyn Zecher, former Prince George's County public school teacher and Certified Academic Language Therapist/teacher trainer. **To register, go to: <http://bit.ly/1QACGBT>.**

“What many public school teachers find is that there are students we are unable to reach,” said Lavaunda Roundtree M.Ed, panelist and public school teacher/special educator. “There are students who never excel in reading even after receiving instruction from teachers who have been endorsed by the state of Maryland as reading instructors.”

“Even though Maryland is ranked very highly, we can no longer afford to have teachers who aren't prepared to teach students at risk for reading failure,” said Roundtree. “Teachers need to truly understand the structure of the English language and the necessary practices that make all students successful. That will help close the reading gap.”

About Decoding Dyslexia Maryland

Decoding Dyslexia Maryland (DDMD) is a grassroots movement of parents, teachers, students and related professionals concerned with the limited access to educational interventions for struggling readers and students with dyslexia in Maryland public schools. Several Decoding Dyslexia members were recently appointed by Governor Hogan to the new Dyslexia Education Task Force. To learn more, please visit: <http://decodingdyslexiamd.weebly.com>.

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**Please Join Us on Saturday, October 10 for a
Town Hall Panel Discussion:
Why Aren't All Maryland Students Learning to Read?
-How to Close the Reading Gap-**

Town Hall Details

REGISTER TODAY!

DATE: Saturday, October 10, 2015
TIME: 2:45--6:00 pm (Panel Discussion: 3:30-6pm)
PLACE: Howard High School Auditorium
8700 Old Annapolis Rd., Ellicott City, MD 21043

REGISTER: <http://bit.ly/1QACGBT>
CONTACT: Laura Schultz
PHONE: 703-477-4847
EMAIL: DecodingDyslexiaMD@gmail.com



Schedule

2:45-3:30 Information Tables // Refreshments
3:30-3:40 Lisa Blottenberger: [Decoding Dyslexia Maryland](#)
3:40-3:45 [Dr. Fran Bowman](#): bowman educational services, inc.: Introduction
3:45-4:00 **Keynote Speaker:** [Deborah Weiner](#), News Anchor, WBAL 11 News, Baltimore
4:00-4:10 [Katharina Boser](#): Glen Elg School, Moderator: Panelist Introductions
4:10-5:30 Panelist Questions
5:30-5:45 Audience Questions & Answers
5:45-6:00 Closing Remarks: DD-MD Call to Action

Panelists

How to Close the Reading Gap: The Problems

Student with dyslexia: Paul Nebel, St. Mary's County Public Schools

Parent of Student with dyslexia: Christine Bellotti, Montgomery County

Teacher of students with reading struggles & dyslexia: Lavaunda Roundtree, Special Educator, Anne Arundel County Public Schools

How to Close the Reading Gap: The Solutions

The Neurological Underpinnings of Reading: [Dr. Donald Bolger](#), Associate Professor in the Department of Human Development and Quantitative Methodology at the University of Maryland.

What Teachers Need to Know to Teach Reading to all Students: [Mary Stowe](#), Reading, Inclusion Specialist, William & Mary School of Education, Training and Technical Assistance Center

How to Identify and Provide Effective Instruction to Struggling Readers: [Marilyn Zecher](#), Certified Academic Language Therapist and President of the DC-Capital Area Branch of the International Dyslexia Association. [Amy Siracusano](#), Teacher/Vice Principal/Teacher Trainer, Calvert County Public Schools

Literacy by the Numbers:

- Federal dollars appropriated for Adult Education: \$563,955,000 in 2014
- 66% of 4th-grade students in the US read below proficient on the NAEP assessment in 2013
- 55% of MD 4th grade students read BELOW proficient, NAEP 2013
- 72% of MD 4th-grade students with disabilities read below proficient
- 78% of MD 4th-grade black students read below proficient

Who is the GAP? S.E.E.D.S

Students who are capable of learning to read and write must have the opportunity to learn. Maryland higher education facilities must provide teachers with the skills and competencies needed to reach a variety of complex learners including **S**truggling readers from all social constructs, **E**conomically disadvantaged students, **E**nglish language learners, students with **D**yslexia, and students with other **S**pecific learning disabilities (SEEDS)

ABOUT DECODING DYSLEXIA MARYLAND

Decoding Dyslexia Maryland is a grassroots movement of parents, teachers, students and related professionals concerned with the limited access to educational interventions for struggling readers and students with dyslexia in Maryland public schools. Decoding Dyslexia members were recently appointed by Governor Hogan to the Dyslexia Education Task Force. DD-MD State Chapters include: Anne Arundel, Central MD, Northern MD, Howard, Southern MD, PG and Montgomery Counties.

To learn more, please visit: <http://decodingdyslexiamd.weebly.com/>. Like us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DecodingDyslexiaMd> and Follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/dyslexiasomd>