



1. **Lisa Blottenberger and Laura Schultz founded Decoding Dyslexia Maryland in late 2012** after attending the International Dyslexia Association Conference in Baltimore. Both are parents of children with dyslexia and were frustrated that their children were capable of learning yet could not read or write to grade level expectations. Hundreds of Maryland families, along with teachers and related professionals, have the same experience and are members of Decoding Dyslexia Maryland (DD-MD). Others have the same experience but have no idea that there are solutions to the problem and shame of not reading as expected.
 - a. DD-MD **continues to grow** with regional groups across the state in Montgomery, PG, Central Maryland, Southern Maryland, Northern Maryland, Anne Arundel County and the Eastern Shore.
 - b. DD-MD is a **grassroots, parent-led organization** – the organization relies on partnerships, volunteers and the power of social media to advocate for change.
 - c. **Decoding Dyslexia US** – is active in 50 states and got its start in [2012 in New Jersey](#), quickly spreading across the country via social media. Learn more about this growing movement, who's driving it, why it exists and HOW parents are changing public education across the country.
2. **Literacy Crisis & Solutions:** 55% and 58% of all 4th and 8th grade students respectively, read below proficient levels in Maryland. These students are at risk for dropping out, underperformance, and adult illiteracy. There are solutions to the literacy problem in Maryland public schools that include **teacher preparation by Maryland institutions of higher education. Reading success** for a struggling reader is dependent on the teacher's knowledge of and practice in the foundations of language. When the teacher has the appropriate training, practice and certification in reading, he or she can be prescriptive and diagnostic and individualize instruction for students at risk for failure.

[Dyslexia Legislation in MD and the US](#)

- [Maryland Dyslexia Law](#): Originating from HB 278, which was signed by the Governor in May 2015, [A Task Force to Study a Dyslexia Education Program](#) is meeting now throughout the fall of 2015. The Task Force, which includes members of Decoding Dyslexia Maryland will develop a dyslexia education program and pilot. A report will be provided to the Legislature in June 2016.
- 9+ States have early dyslexia screening laws
- 14 states have in-service, professional development laws
- 17 states define dyslexia
- 9 states require dyslexia interventions
- 9 states require higher education, teacher training

[Faces of Dyslexia ~ Learning to Read at the Dining Room Table ~ Personal Stories](#)

1. "My daughter couldn't read like the others in her class so the teacher gave her a coloring book"
2. Reading Failure, to academic language therapy to successful college student: Daniel
3. Public schools need to identify kids at risk for reading failure: Lucas' Story
4. "My son was so frustrated because he couldn't read, he began to pull out his eyelashes".
5. "My son told me that when he looks at words and letters it feels like he has shampoo in his eyes."
6. "One thing that is very hard for ME, is to know that children that are diagnosed EARLY - before 3rd grade - can be

remediated quite easily. I started raising red flags in 1st grade. No one would believe me or help me. I wish I had fought harder.”

Teachers, Educators, Students

1. **Wye River Upper School:** Wye River Students apply lessons from their high school government class when they participated in Dyslexia Advocacy Day in Annapolis last March and in the Town Hall on the 10th. [Wye River is located in Queen Anne’s County](#) and serves students with learning disabilities on the Eastern Shore. The students will meet with their legislators to talk about dyslexia.
2. **Teaching Reading is Rocket Science!** Learn about our professional members, like the [Atlantic Seaboard Dyslexia Education Center](#), that trains teachers to teach students with disabilities like dyslexia, how to read. Many students and parents from public and private school take summer courses and after school classes at ASDEC located in Rockville.
3. **Former Prince George’s County Public School Teacher** uses her classroom training to help at-risk students throughout Maryland and the US. **Marilyn Zecher** is a former public school classroom teacher who received her specialized training in classroom based Orton-Gillingham structured literacy through Prince George’s County Public Schools in the 1970’s. As a high school teacher working in large public school classrooms, Ms. Zecher taught academically at-risk high school students how to read, helping many to graduate high school. Ms. Zecher travels the country teaching teachers how to use these techniques to teach at-risk students to read. Marilyn is also the Director of Multisensory Math training at the Atlantic Seaboard Dyslexia Education Center in Rockville. Ms. Zecher has developed the Multisensory Mathematics program that applies Orton-Gillingham instructional strategies to the teaching of mathematics. Ms. Zecher is the President of the DC Area Branch of the International Dyslexia Association, a member of the Levinson, Block, Henley Collaborative and maintains a private practice as an academic therapist. She is a frequent presenter at national conferences including the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the International Dyslexia Association, and the Learning Disabilities Association.
4. **Who Has the Knowledge to Develop Teacher Prep Programs? Dr. Joan Mele-McCarthy, Executive Director, The Summit School, Edgewater, MD.** Dr. Mele-McCarthy is currently the Chair of the Dyslexia Education Task Force, appointed by Governor Hogan in August. Previously she served as a university professor and clinical supervisor at several universities. She understands the educational needs of children and supervises and teaches staff to ensure they provide for those needs. She has developed course content at the university level based on the research. She has trained teachers across the country, has presented at numerous professional conferences at the national and local levels, has contributed to peer-reviewed publications, and has developed national research agendas for English language learners and children with learning disabilities.
5. **The [Dyslexia Tutoring Program](#) Provides Training for Reading Interventions to low income children who have dyslexia/reading failure.** The program is free to the student and family and tutors volunteer their time. Many students from Baltimore City Public Schools are referred to the program and the Maryland State Department of Education provides funding for the program.
6. **[Ben Shifrin, The Jemicy School.](#)** Mr. Shifrin is a Community Partner with Decoding Dyslexia Maryland and wants to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn read, write and spell. Mr. Shifrin also is a member of the Dyslexia Education Task Force, appointed by Governor Hogan.
7. **[Martha Sweeney, The Odyssey School.](#)** Ms. Sweeney, together with students and parents, helped to pass HB 278/SB 15 during the 2015 Legislative Session in Annapolis. The results of the legislation spurred the Task Force

to Develop a Dyslexia Education Program--Ms. Sweeney is also a Task Force member.

There are many stories in Maryland of triumph and failure of our education system. Decoding Dyslexia Maryland is a grassroots organization that relies on partnerships to change education. The following partners support the Town Hall Panel on Reading and each partner has a story to tell.

Please contact Decoding Dyslexia Maryland if you would like additional information.

Thank you,
Laura Schultz
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