



THE OG UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2021

NEW YEAR AND NEW COHORT

(submitted by Kate Quijano)

We are so excited to welcome our 2021-2022 cohort of tutors and students. Our donation-based OG tutoring program consists of volunteer tutors who are in the process of becoming certified in the Orton-Gillingham methodology of reading and writing instruction. Tutors will meet one on one with their students three times per week throughout the school year and must complete a total of 100 hours of instruction.

In preparation for this cohort, I had the pleasure of meeting with all of our incoming students and their parents to talk about our program and to do an assessment of each child's reading and spelling skills. These assessments will be passed along to our tutors so that they can plan appropriate instruction for their students. One very important aspect of OG is that it is individualized! Each tutor will be planning instruction to meet their child's specific and unique needs. They will be creating their lesson plans and all of their own materials just for their student.

Tutors began with us on August 13th for a Meet and Greet and facility tour. Then we spent the next week together for their initial OG training. They learned all about different syllable types, sounds, and rules and how to differentiate instruction and error-correct. At the end of the week, they received all the information on their students and got a chance to call their students' families. They will spend the next few weeks reviewing all the new information they learned, analyzing all of their students' assessments, and planning their lessons. Tutoring will begin the week of September 13th. We look forward to seeing everyone put their new knowledge into practice with their students.

We are fortunate to have a group of tutors with very different backgrounds and experiences that they bring to the table. Many are full-time teachers. Many are parents who have children with learning disabilities. Each of them has been able to bring a different perspective to our trainings. They will spend the next year learning together and supporting one another in their OG journey. We asked all of our tutors to provide some more information about themselves so that we can all get to know them better. Please read on for all of their biographies.



September 9th 7:00-8:00pm OR September 11th 9:00-10:00am
Virtual Parent Orientation Meeting; link will be emailed

Tutoring begins the week of September 13th

September 21st 7:00-8:00pm
Virtual Office Hours with Karen; email kmicciche@literacynassau.org for link

October 2nd & 3rd
NO Tutoring Sessions; Associate Training Seminar for tutors

TUTORS IN TRAINING



Karen addressed the group before their training started.



OG tutors working together for the first time in-person.



Karen (Executive Director) helping the tutors plan their first lesson.

RICHARD AIZER



I got my Masters in Special Education in January, 1989. I have spent the bulk of my career at P.S. 193, Gil Hodges Elementary School and for the last five years, I have been the IEP teacher and my role has been primarily as a reading interventionist. I have been trained in the S.P.I.R.E reading program; the author Sheila Clark-Edmands is

an OG Fellow. I am looking forward to increasing my skill set and knowledge as a Special Education teacher.

As a fun fact, I was born six weeks premature weighing 3.5 pounds. I believe my prematurity led to some early school learning delays, but the principal in my school always put me with the best teachers to meet my needs. So, my philosophy as an educator is to support all students with learning differences both emotionally and socially; as well as providing the best practices in pedagogy.

NEHA BAJAJ



I have served on various education-focused boards including the Great Oaks Charter School, Code2College and the Garden City SEPTA, where I have been both VP of Curriculum and co-president over the past several years. I have a passion for literacy and special education and believe strongly in the potential of all students, of all abilities.

I believe that literacy is the key to equity. I also have personal experience as a mother with a struggling reader, so I know how critical it is for children to have explicit instruction in research-based methods and this is what drew me to OG.

In junior high school, I remember approaching my lacrosse coach to tell her I was going to quit the team because I wasn't that good and the long days were too much for me. She refused to let me quit. That year I won most improved player and continued playing lacrosse for four more years.

KAITLYN BELECKAS



I have experience working with both middle and elementary school students and am working as an Early Intervention Coordinator for Hagedorn Little Village School. I believe that it is important to put students on the right paths early to promote future success.

I chose to become an OG tutor, since I have witnessed firsthand with my own daughter, who was diagnosed with dyslexia in third grade, the difference that good reading instruction can make in the life of a child. When I was a child, I was diagnosed with a speech delay. I am grateful for the intervention that I received and learned that hard work does pay off. I try to instill the same motivation and perseverance in every student that I work with.

Although this summer continues to be different, I was glad to experience some normalcy on July 4th. It was great to enjoy the day with a parade and a beautiful fireworks display.

WENDY CHIU



I graduated from Columbia University with a Master's degree in Occupational Therapy and have been a licensed OT for over 10 years. I am fascinated by the use of incorporating a multi-sensory and systematic, scientific-based OG approach to tutoring students. I believe in empowering the

individual with dyslexia with grasping the fundamentals of reading, spelling and writing so that they can get that "Ah-Ha" moment and wave goodbye to the fear, anxiety, and judgement that so often comes with a learning disability.

My best summer moment was watching my 7 yr old son gain confidence from not willing to jump into the pool to now being able to swim across it. My 2 going on 3 year-old daughter surprised me recently with saying Triceratops, Stegosaurus, and Pterodactyl. I was shocked with her dinosaur vocabulary and beaming with pure joy! It's the small moments that count!

ANDREA CLIFFORD



In 2018 I retired from teaching and I have been enjoying my retirement. Previously, I taught high school English and Health to general and special education students for over ten years at P256q located at Mercy First. (Mercy First is a residential treatment center which provides a structured and nurturing experience for children who have

serious emotional and/or behavioral difficulties that requires separation from their home.) Throughout my life reading and books have always been a hugely important positive force. Many people who struggle with learning disabilities are unable to access that positivity and with the right tools I know I can make a beneficial impact in their lives. I am ready to learn OG and look forward to working with a younger generation.

This September is my 35th wedding anniversary. My husband and I have five children, and family is everything to me.

HELEN DAWSON



I decided to train to become an OG tutor because my son, daughter-in-law and grand children are dyslexic. I went through a lot when my son was younger and now we are going through the same thing with my grandchildren. I am frustrated that not much has changed in the years in between. My resolve was even greater during the lockdown.

I offered free Math tutoring while we were teaching remotely. So many students struggle with Math in person, I thought how difficult this must be on Zoom. I couldn't believe how many requests I received for reading help in the elementary grades. This convinced me that I am doing the right thing.

My best summer memory is absolutely being able to see my grandchildren in person. I spent 14 months living alone. Thankfully my four sons convinced me to get a smartphone the year before. What would we do without facetime!?

MICHELLE DRUCKER



I have been teaching at the South Country Central School District since 2001. I consider myself a strong teacher, but every year I had students that made less than expected progress in reading and writing, which I found very frustrating, but it was my role as a parent that brought me to learn about the Orton-Gillingham approach.

I have a son with an IEP who struggles with reading and writing. In order to best support him I began researching approaches to reading instruction. As soon as I learned about Orton Gillingham, I knew I had to become certified. I have seen first hand, with my son, how hard it is for children that struggle with reading and writing and I believe that every struggling student is just one properly trained teacher away from significant reading improvement. I want to be that properly trained teacher that can help my students.

ALLISON GERBERT



For the past three years I have served as a self-contained K-2 teacher in East Rockaway. I chose to train to become an OG tutor because I know it will give me the opportunity to reach more of my students with Dyslexia and other reading challenges. The OG approach keeps surfacing as highly effective.

As an educator, I want the tools to help my children succeed. School was always a challenge for me as I have suffered from generalized anxiety disorder. Staying focused and completing tasks was always quite difficult. Round robin reading, drills, and oral presentations, are just a few examples of experiences that gave me feelings of dread and panic. It wasn't until college that I had developed the tools and strategies to no longer let it stand in my way.

This summer I took a whale watching cruise out of Brooklyn and experienced my dream of seeing a Humpback Whale!

IZABELLA KATZ



I recently graduated from Farmingdale State College with a bachelor's degree in Psychology. I have had many friends in both school and work settings that have struggled with dyslexia. I have participated in an English class with a friend who refused to read due to her dyslexia. She would've preferred to have no participation grade. The

teacher we had told us he was also dyslexic. This gave her the confidence to give it her best try at reading aloud to the class. I've seen how dyslexia impacts someone's trust in everyday situations. Becoming an OG tutor, will give me the tools to help those facing the same obstacles my friends have. I also struggled with reading and spelling. My confidence was always low in the classroom, with my fear of getting the answers wrong. I want to make sure all kids have the opportunity to feel as confident as they can in all settings.

AMIE KLEPACK



I graduated from NYU business school and worked in finance and marketing at an investment bank until I had my children. After becoming a mother, I started exploring a career in education and assisted in Early Education at the Waldorf School.

My twin sons were struggling readers and we were thankfully guided to Orton-Gillingham tutoring early on. OG tutoring was a game changer, they both took to it right away and the progress they made in a short time was astounding. They never complained about tutoring sessions; the sessions, even over Zoom, were always fun and engaging and a far more natural way for their brains to learn to read. Witnessing their journey made me want to be part of the Orton-Gillingham world and spread this method of learning into all corners.

A fun fact about me is that I love Spain!

RENEE MACDERMOTT



I have been an elementary educator for the last twenty years, with experience teaching Kindergarten through 6th grade. I am also certified in gifted and special education. My favorite grades to teach are 1st & 2nd grades because I love seeing the growth during those important academic years.

Years ago my son was diagnosed with dyslexia and dysgraphia. Even with my background, I realized that he needed more specific reading instruction that would teach him the rules of phonics in a way that would make sense to him. I discovered Literacy Nassau and he worked with an amazing tutor. Along the way I learned so much that helped me understand appropriate reading instruction. After seeing the incredible gains he made, I was inspired to continue my literacy training so that I can help other children like my son.

I love hiking some of the highest mountains in New York!

DINA MAIELLA-MARRO



I discovered my love of literacy during my years as a classroom teacher in NYC, and I've since followed this passion into the pursuit of sparking the same in others. I struggled with reading and writing when I was younger and often speak of the joy I found in literacy once the door was unlocked for me. I have a Masters of Arts in Education from NYU, and was awarded a fellowship at Fordham for further intensive literacy studies.

I would like to be able to use OG to help those who need it. I found it a challenge to sit in class all day. I just wanted to be outside. I often got notes on my report card indicating that I talked too much in class. I just wanted to interact with all of the people around me and it felt like torture to have to be quiet.

I have gotten into biking this year, and have a 10 mile ride I try to do daily. It's become one of my favorite parts of each day. I wouldn't have imagined that a year ago!

STACEY POPKIN



I have a learning disability that was not uncovered until high school. It is a memory and perception-based disability which caused me to have to study twice as hard as my peers. I was determined to never let anything keep me down and am very proud of my accomplishments. Although I am not dyslexic and do not have a reading disability, two very dear children in my life struggle with reading. One of them receives OG training through Literacy Nassau.

After seeing the difficulties these children face I decided I wanted to get involved and help other children the way our tutor Melissa has been helping. I want to give back to others and feel there needs to be more OG tutors to help as many in need as possible.

A fun fact about me is that I love to read and have read over seven books so far this summer.

MARYBETH THOMAS



I have been a teacher at the Waldorf School for over 10 years. I am a master teacher, which means I brought my first class from 1st through 5th grade and took two classes from 1st through 3rd grade. I teach with love, utilizing a multifaceted approach, catering to each individual student's needs. I am

passionate about providing my students with the necessary tools they need to succeed academically.

The OG approach is the path which will give children with dyslexia an equal opportunity to shine amongst their peers. It also will help my students grow in reading, spelling and writing. As a child, I struggled with spelling, often forgetting the patterns and rules. I dreaded quizzes and remembered studying and struggling to recall the proper spelling of words.

My best summer moment was my reunion with three childhood best friends, with whom I have known since 1st grade!



Our new Orton-Gillingham cohort (absent from photo, Richard)

RENEE REMI



I am currently a special education teacher in the Great Neck Public School District and have worked there for the past four years. I want to be trained to become an OG tutor because I am deeply interested in adding to my repertoire of strategies to teach children how to read. I am always looking for ways to improve as an educator and I feel that

learning the Orton-Gillingham approach will greatly help me support my students' diverse needs in reading.

I also have a personal connection to becoming an OG tutor because I have cousins that were recently diagnosed with dyslexia and I know that they are now being taught to read using OG in their school.

A fun fact about me is that I swam with sharks three times (cage diving twice and free diving once). My best moment of Summer 2021 is getting engaged to my fiancée, Joe in June.

Literacy Nassau's OG Tutoring Center Calendar

2021-2022

September '21							October '21							November '21						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	S
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							31													

December '21							January '22							February '22							
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March '22							April '22							May '22						
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June '22						
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Hours of Operation

Mondays	9:00-8:00
Tuesdays	9:00-8:00
Wednesdays	9:00-8:00
Thursdays	9:00-8:00
Fridays	9:00-5:00
Saturdays	9:00-12:00



- Closed/ Holidays
- Daytime Hours Only (9:00-4:30)
- Tutor Seminars – Closed
- Office Hours: Karen (Tuesdays) or Kate (Thursdays) from 7:00-8:00 pm; email for ZOOM link.

CLASSES BEGIN – Monday, September 13th
For snow closings, refer to the Wantagh UFSD website.