

BROOKLINE EDUCATION FOUNDATION
Teacher Grant Application for 2017-2018 Academic Year
Cover Page

APPLICATION MUST BE TYPED

Project Title	Attending the International Dyslexia Association's (IDA) Annual Conference Nov 8-11, 2017.
Name of Applicant(s)	Dinan Messiqua
School and Grades/Subjects You Teach	Driscoll School, Special Education Teacher in the LAHB program (District-wide program for students with Language Based Learning Disabilities), Grades 3-8.
Home Telephone Number(s)	(617) 710 1742
Email Address(es)	dinan_messiqua@psbma.org
Years Teaching in PSB, Total Years Teaching	This is my third year in PSB. I have been teaching for 16 years.
Amount Requested	\$1550
Are you applying for the Charlie Baker Legacy Award?	No
Please list previous BEF grants (year, title, teacher/collaborative)	NA

I understand that, should the Brookline Education Foundation fund my grant application, I am obligated to submit a written evaluation of my project at its completion and present the results of my grant at a BEF sponsored event. Evaluations of projects completed during the summer will be due by December 31, 2016. Evaluations of projects completed during the school year will be due by May 31, 2017. I further understand that only educators employed by the Brookline Public Schools at the time the project is undertaken are eligible to receive funds.

Acknowledgement of Applicant(s): Dinan Messiqua

Date: March 5, 2017

For online submissions, please acknowledge that you have read and agreed to the above statement.
I have read and agree to the above statement. DM

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 Project Description Section

1. Project Summary (1-3 sentences)

Based on my role as a special education teacher working with students with severe language-based learning disabilities at Driscoll in the Language and Academic Home Base (LAHB) program, I would like to attend the 2017 Annual International Dyslexia Association Reading, Literacy & Learning Conference. This is the premier professional development conference in this country, (and probably in the world), for best practices to teach students with dyslexia and related learning disabilities. The conference features educators from around the world who are working in both the theory and practice of dyslexia. I will learn about the latest research and most current hands-on practical techniques to help students with dyslexia.

2. Goal Statement

What are your explicit goals for the project? What would be the best outcome for the work you propose?

There has been great progress in the field of dyslexia over the past fifty years. A huge amount of research has gone into the neuroscience of dyslexia and the development of reading programs. However, there are still many students whose struggles in reading are not being adequately addressed. Thus, there is a great need for innovative teaching methods to better support all students.

With this in mind, my goals for this conference are following:

- To learn the most current hands-on practical strategies to help students who have dyslexia. Dyslexia is a learning disability that affects a student's ability to read and write. Students with dyslexia have strong cognitive abilities. The wiring of the brain for language processing needs reconfiguring and with proper interventions, the brain's language 'tracks' can be reset. Thus, the plasticity of the brain allows for corrective adaptations. There is a huge variation in how dyslexia presents itself in students. Because of this, a diverse toolkit of strategies is needed to reach the great breadth of students with language-based learning disabilities. Attending this conference could change the lives of students in our school district who continue to struggle to read and write and who require innovative teaching methods.

- To learn about the most current neuroscience research in the field of dyslexia. Having a better understanding of how language is processed in the brain will help me to better comprehend how all my students learn and will therefore enhance my teaching. Additionally, the more I understand about the advances in brain research, the more I will be able to help my colleagues, as well as parents who want to better understand how their children learn.
- To network with other teachers, researchers, scientists, psychologists, and parents who are passionate and curious about dyslexia. Talking and collaborating with other dedicated educators energizes me and is integral to my professional development!

In sum, attendance at this conference would enable me to better help students in the Brookline LAHB program.

I would share these strategies and latest research with my colleagues, administrators and families of students.

3. Context

a. What experiences or needs have led you to apply for this grant?

When I was about six years old I used to memorize stories that were read to me. When my parents and teachers asked to read these stories out loud I pretended I could read them and was able to fool everyone! This worked until I was about eight, when my teachers noticed I couldn't read and recommended that I get tested for dyslexia. I was diagnosed with dyslexia and started to get help in third grade. Even though I got help early on, reading was always hard for me. I was a slow reader throughout school and college, which led me to focus on science and math - numbers, symbols and pictures were easier for me than words! I was lucky for the help I received early on. My teachers in school were supportive and never made me feel different even though I felt I was. I wanted to give back what was given to me and this led me to become a special education teacher.

I want my students to have the best, most up-to-date strategies to help them. I want to expand my toolkit so that I can help ALL students, not just those students who have the more typical dyslexic profile. Now, more than ever, it is imperative to teach all students how to read critically, synthesize massive amounts of information

and communicate their own ideas clearly. This is complicated for everyone, but particularly difficult for students with dyslexia.

b. How have your education, training, and/or classroom experiences prompted the interest in or need for this project?

I am a special education teacher, working with children with moderate disabilities. For the past thirteen years I have been working with children who have reading, writing, expressive and receptive language issues. Prior to joining Brookline Public Schools I taught for ten years at the Carroll School in Lincoln, a school for children with language-based learning disabilities. During my time at Carroll I came to understand the importance of professional development to keep abreast of new neuropsychological research to better teach students who struggle with reading and writing. I currently work at Driscoll, which is the home of the LAHB program, a district wide program for children with language-based learning disabilities, mainly dyslexia. Many students come into the LAHB program with dyslexic profiles that don't present themselves as the 'typical' profile. For example, there are students I am working with this year, and will be working with next year, whom I know would benefit from the innovative techniques that I would learn at this conference. One of these students has had two years of intensive phonics, (learning the sounds of letters), and is still struggling to read three-letter words in isolation. I have another student who is reading and writing almost at grade level but whose reading comprehension and expressive and receptive language skills are poor. This conference will give me the opportunity to explore new strategies and will expand my repertoire of skills in the classroom. This conference could open up a world of possibilities for these students and others.

The last time I attended this conference ten years ago it changed my approach to teaching. I was delighted to discover such a vast range of knowledge about dyslexia at all levels, (from the neuroscience to hands on teaching strategies). The conference had a significant impact on my professional career as I walked away with a wealth of knowledge and tools that I could put into practice. Over the past ten years much has changed in the field of dyslexia. Advances in brain neuroimaging have shed light on where language is processed and this has impacted teaching practices. These new findings are changing how we teach our

students. I want to benefit from the most current and most effective ways to teach our students.

4. Project Description

Describe the structure of this grant. What is your time frame? When and where will you be working? With whom will you work? You may include copies of supporting material (e.g., conference brochure, tour itinerary). Links to websites may be used for supporting materials and are preferred, if available.

The International Dyslexia Association Conference is a three and half day conference that takes place next fall November 8-11, 2017, in Atlanta, Georgia. I will be going on my own to the conference, but look forward to meeting other special education teachers, parents, psychologists, and scientists who are as passionate as I am about helping children with dyslexia. Below is a link to the conference website and a link to last year's conference brochure. (The 2017 conference brochure has not been published yet.)

www.dyslexiaida.org/conference/ (2017 conference website)

<https://app.box.com/s/2e4rtjllbrwuqbcam03oonb26z6w7rta> (2016 conference brochure)

5. Impact

Describe as specifically as possible the impact of the work you propose. As part of this description, please let us know how you might evaluate that impact.

- **On Yourself - How do you expect this project will change you as an educator? How might this work impact future professional activity?**

This conference will introduce me to the latest reading and writing techniques/strategies for teaching children with dyslexia and it will deepen my knowledge of dyslexia. Because this conference covers such a large range of subfields in the field of dyslexia, (from the neuroscience of dyslexia, to its psychological impact, to practical teaching strategies), it will broaden my knowledge of dyslexia and help to me think about problems I encounter from multiple viewpoints. Furthermore, this conference might give me further exposure to skills I could utilize in the field of language-based learning disabilities.

- **On Your Colleagues - What impact will your project have on your professional community, either directly or indirectly?**

Attending this conference will affect my fellow teachers directly as I plan to share what I learn at this conference, (new reading and writing strategies, the neurological research, etc.), with my colleagues as well as with the special education department at my school and at the district level. As part of my work I teach small

group reading and writing classes and I also coach regular education teachers on how to more effectively reach their students with learning differences. Thus, I will share my knowledge with both special education and regular education teachers.

• **On Your Students - How will your students benefit from this project in the short or long term?**

My students will benefit from this conference in the short term and long term. First, I will be bringing back practical strategies to help them in their learning. Second, I will have learned more about how their brains process language so I will understand more about how my students learn. Lastly, I will be professionally rejuvenated from having networked with people in my field and thus bring even more positive energy into my teaching.

6. Evaluation

How will you evaluate the success of the project? For example, will you create a before and after study, conduct a survey, collect and examine work products, engage in peer observation?

I will understand the benefits relatively quickly and be able to adjust my classroom work accordingly by implementing new techniques with my students and sharing them with my colleagues as well. My colleagues and I will tailor what I have learned to the needs of my students. I will compare work samples, both in reading and writing, from before and after the conference and compare progress. The evaluation will be especially useful when looking at effects of the new techniques on students whose dyslexic profile have been more 'atypical'.

7. Dissemination

How will you share your learning with others in your school and district community? For instance, will you share results in departmental meetings or on departmental wikis, or design other forms of dissemination of your project?

I will bring back to Brookline new strategies and knowledge I have learned that I think will most benefit the students who struggle in reading and writing. I will share this information with: 1) my colleagues in the LAHB program, 2) special education teachers in my school, 3) regular education teachers that I work with, 4) parents, and 5) at special education departmental meetings.

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 Budget and Finances Section

Expense	Purpose	Cost
Consultant	NA	
Materials and Supplies	NA	
Travel and Accommodations*	Airfare: Hotel:	\$250 \$740 (4 nights X \$185, staying at conference hotel. Since the conference starts at 8am on Wed Nov 8th, I would need arrive on Nov 7th.)
Conference Fee	Conference Fee:	Between \$450-\$500 (Last year's fee was \$450. This year's fee has not been published yet. As the fee has not gone up in the past two years, I am anticipating that it will increase some and am approximating it at \$500.)
Other	Transportation to and from hotel using taxi or shuttle from airport.	\$60
Substitutes**(please indicate days/hours needed)	Will take 0 day.	No cost
TOTAL		\$ 1550 (Approx.)

* **Single rooms are acceptable if preferred by the applicant.**

****The BEF's ability to pay for subs is limited; requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.**

Please be as specific as possible.

Finances

a. **Will there be additional funding from other sources? Please describe.**

No

b. **Are resources needed to continue the work of the project after BEF funding ends? If yes, please describe how these resources will be obtained. If no, please describe how the work of the project will be funded or continued after completion of funding by the BEF.**

No money is needed after the conference.

c. Do you foresee any potential challenges /obstacles and, if so, what is your strategy for dealing with them should they occur?

No

d. Will you be able to complete the project if only partial funding is available? Yes No
If only partial funding is available, would you be able to redesign the project? Yes No
Please explain:

I would very much like to attend the whole conference. I believe that I will get the most out of the conference if I can attend the entire three and a half days. However, if I only get partial funding I could shorten the length of my stay.

e. For groups of three or more educators applying together: If the BEF can fund only a subset of your group, is there a reason this would pose a problem for you? Yes No
Please explain:

Charlie Baker Legacy Award If you are applying for the Charlie Baker Legacy Award (fully described in the Call for Proposals), please indicate how the additional \$1,000 funding would extend and/or enrich your project. Please limit your response to one page.

