



Academy of
Orton-Gillingham
Practitioners
and Educators

AOGPE Overview

Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators
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AOGPE Overview

PURPOSES OF THE ACADEMY

- to establish and maintain professional and ethical standards for practitioners and educators of the Orton-Gillingham Approach for the treatment of dyslexia
- to certify individuals who have met Academy standards by demonstrating competence as practitioners and instructors of the Orton-Gillingham Approach
- to accredit programs that meet Academy standards to train Orton-Gillingham practitioners and educators
- to accredit instructional programs that meet Academy standards in schools, camps, clinics, and summer programs
- to sponsor and disseminate research relevant to Orton-Gillingham instruction
- to broaden public awareness of the role of the Orton-Gillingham Approach
- to broaden public awareness of the nature and educational needs of people with dyslexia

LEVELS OF ACADEMY MEMBERSHIP

- A **Subscriber Member** has taken an introductory course approved by the Academy.
- An **Orton-Gillingham Classroom Educator Member** has met the Academy's standards at the Orton-Gillingham Classroom Educator level.
- An **Associate Level Member** has met the Academy's standards at the Associate level and continues to work as an Orton-Gillingham practitioner under the guidance of a Fellow.
- A **Certified Level Member** has met the Academy's standards for functioning independently as an Orton-Gillingham practitioner, and is eligible to become a Fellow-in-Training working directly under a Fellow's aegis.
- A **Fellow Level Member** has been certified as meeting Academy standards as an independent Orton-Gillingham practitioner and as an instructor of teachers in the Orton-Gillingham Approach.

THE APPROACH IS DESIGNED FOR:

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|----------------|----------------|-------------|
| • Individuals | • Primary | • Secondary |
| • Small Groups | • Elementary | • College |
| • Classrooms | • Intermediate | • Adults |

Early intervention is important, but it is never too late to begin.

ACCREDITATION

Accreditation is a process leading to recognition of education organizations and their affiliated professional programs as having a level of performance, integrity, and quality that entitles them to the confidence of the educational community and the public they serve.

Academy accreditation also requires that the instructional leadership of the program be vested in a staff member who is a Fellow of the Academy or whose program is under direct supervision of an Academy Fellow.

□ *Training Programs*

The Academy has established standards for the accreditation of Orton-Gillingham programs at two levels of training. At the **Associate Level**, programs are reviewed for their preparation of individuals for entry level Orton-Gillingham practice. At this level, the program provides ongoing instruction and supervision to the practitioner learning to use this Approach. At the **Certified Level**, programs are reviewed for their preparation of individuals who will become independent practitioners. Through a supportive process, based on a self-study approach, the Academy works with the program to achieve these goals at the level of the standard. The Academy accredits the Orton-Gillingham training program of an institution but not the institution itself.

□ *Instructional Programs*

Schools, camps, and clinics may also be accredited as providing an instructional program designed to meet the needs of dyslexic students. Only schools that have already been accredited by national and/or state certifying organizations are eligible to apply. The Academy accredits the Orton-Gillingham instructional program of an institution but not the institution itself.

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ORTON-GILLINGHAM APPROACH

- Diagnostic and Prescriptive:** Always the teacher seeks to understand how an individual learns and devises appropriate teaching strategies. Each lesson is planned for a particular student. Infinitely adaptable, Orton-Gillingham is flexible; it is an approach rather than a program.
- Direct and Explicit:** The instructor presents the material in direct and explicit fashion. Never is the student expected to know anything that has not been taught and practiced.
- Language Based:** The Orton-Gillingham Approach is based on a technique of studying and teaching language, understanding the nature of human language, the mechanisms involved in learning, and the language learning process in individuals.

- ❑ **Multisensory:** The Orton-Gillingham Approach is multisensory. Sessions are action-oriented with auditory, visual, and kinesthetic elements reinforcing each other for optimal learning. Spelling is taught simultaneously with reading. In this respect, Orton-Gillingham differs from traditional phonics instruction.
 - ❑ **Structured, Sequential and Cumulative, but Flexible:** The elements of the language are introduced systematically. Students begin by reading and writing sounds in isolation. These are blended into syllable and words. The various elements of the language – consonants, digraphs, blends, and diphthongs – are introduced in an orderly fashion. As students learn new material, they continue to review old material to the level of automaticity. The teacher addresses vocabulary, sentence structure, composition, and reading comprehension in a similar structured, sequential, and cumulative manner.
 - ❑ **Cognitive:** Students learn about the history of the language and study the many generalizations and rules that govern its structure. Repeatedly, they are encouraged to think, rather than to guess.
 - ❑ **Emotionally Sound:** Because old material is constantly reviewed and new material is introduced systematically, the student experiences a high degree of success in every lesson and gains in confidence as well as in skill. Thus, self-esteem develops directly from the student's achievement and learning becomes a positive experience.
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CRITERIA FOR MEMBERSHIP

The Board of Trustees meets twice a year, in the spring and in the fall, to approve applications. To provide the Certifying Committee time to review applications, submissions must be submitted by January 10th (for the spring review) and July 10th (for the fall review). Orton-Gillingham Classroom Educator and Subscriber applications are processed upon receipt.

Each applicant must have completed all requirements of the Academy's curriculum at the level of membership the applicant has applied.

All criteria are subject to review.

Note: In each case, the initial registration fee covers the basic cost of credentialing and the first year's membership.

SUBSCRIBER MEMBER

A Subscriber member has completed a survey course of at least 6 hours on the Academy's required curriculum. The course is an overview of the Orton-Gillingham Approach presented by a Fellow/AOGPE covering the following topics: Introduction to Orton-Gillingham; Characteristics of Dyslexia; Neurological Basis For Multisensory Teaching; Phonology; History and Structure of the English Language; and The Orton-Gillingham Lesson.

The subscriber course is an introduction to the Orton-Gillingham Approach. Subscriber members are informed consumers but are not qualified to teach using the Orton-Gillingham Approach.

Subscriber members have access to the member section of the Academy's website, and the online membership directory. They receive emails including conference announcements, and newsletters.

Subscriber Application fee: \$50

Annual Membership: \$50

CLASSROOM EDUCATOR MEMBER

A Classroom Educator Member has completed the following requirements:

1. Bachelor's Degree or higher (in any area of study)
2. At least 30 hours of coursework instructed by a Fellow/AOGPE based on the Academy's required curriculum at the Orton-Gillingham Classroom Educator level.
3. A minimum of 50 hours in a supervised practicum teaching in a group or classroom setting. The practicum is under the direction of a Fellow/AOGPE and includes a minimum of 5 entire 40-60 minute lesson observations.
4. Practicum and coursework must be spread out over a 1-year period (no less than 8 months).
5. Evidence of completion of the Required Readings at the Classroom Educator level.
6. Two letters of recommendation. One recommendation must be from the Principal Training Fellow/AOGPE.

The Classroom Educator has knowledge and training to deliver beginning literacy instruction in the classroom or small groups.

Classroom Educator members have access to the member section of the Academy's website, and the online membership directory. They receive emails including conference announcements and newsletters.

Classroom Educator application fee: \$100 (includes \$25 non-refundable fee)

Annual membership dues: \$75

ASSOCIATE LEVEL MEMBERS

An Associate Level Member will have completed at a minimum the following requirements:

1. Bachelor's Degree or higher (in any area of study)
2. **Option A.**
 - 60 hours of coursework instructed by a Fellow/AOPGE based on the Academy's required curriculum at the Associate level.
 - 100 hours in a supervised practicum teaching one-to-one under the direction of a Fellow/AOGPE.
 - A minimum of 10 entire 40-60 minute lesson observations, on-site, unedited video or via the Internet.

or

Option B.

- 60 hours of coursework instructed by a Fellow/AOGPE based on the Academy's required curriculum at the Associate level plus 10 hours of coursework focusing on adapting the Orton-Gillingham Approach to group or classroom instruction.
 - 100 hours in a supervised practicum; 50 hours teaching one-to-one and 50 hours teaching in a group or classroom setting. The practicum is under the direction of a Fellow/AOGPE.
 - A minimum of 10 entire 40-60 minute lesson observations, on-site, unedited video or via the Internet.
3. Practicum and coursework must be spread out over a 1-year period (no less than 8 months).
 4. Evidence of completion of the Required Readings at the Associate level.
 5. Two letters of recommendation. One recommendation must be from the Principal Training Fellow/AOPGE.

Associate Level Members may tutor individuals using the OG Approach while continuing to work under the guidance of a Fellow/AOGPE.

Associate members have access to the member section of the Academy's website, and the online membership directory. They receive emails including conference announcements, and newsletters. Associates also receive referrals for tutoring, with proof they are under the supervision of a Fellow.

Associate application fee: \$175 (includes \$60 non-refundable fee)

Annual membership dues: \$90

CERTIFIED LEVEL MEMBERS

A Certified Level Member will have completed at a minimum all the requirements for the Associate level. In addition to the above requirements, the Certified Member has completed the following:

1. 100 additional hours of coursework instructed by a Fellow/AOGPE based on the required curriculum at the Certified level (for a total of 160 hours).
2. 200 additional hours in a supervised practicum under the direction of a Fellow/AOGPE over a 2-year period (for a total of 300 hours).
3. A minimum of 10 entire 40-60 minute lesson observations, on-site, unedited video, or via the Internet (for a total of 300 hours of practicum). This totals 3 years experience as an Orton-Gillingham practitioner under the direction of a Fellow/AOGPE.
4. Evidence of completion of the Required Readings at the Certified level.
5. Two letters of recommendation. One letter must be from the Principal Training Fellow/AOGPE.

Certified Members are considered independent practitioners qualified to tutor individuals and to teach small groups in the Orton-Gillingham Approach.

Certified members have access to the member section of the Academy's website, and the online membership directory. They receive emails including conference announcements and newsletters. Certified members receive referrals for tutoring. Certified members are invited to attend the annual Fellow Seminar.

Certified application fee: \$275 (includes \$85 non-refundable fee)

Annual membership dues: \$150

FELLOW LEVEL MEMBERS

A Fellow Level Member will have completed at a minimum all the requirements for the Certified level. In addition to the above requirements, the Fellow Member has completed at a minimum the following:

1. Master's degree or International equivalent.
2. 90 additional hours of coursework instructed by a Fellow/AOGPE based on the required curriculum at the Fellow level (for a total of 250 hours of Orton-Gillingham coursework).
3. 300 additional hours in a supervised practicum (for a total of 600 hours of practicum) with a minimum of 6 years as a practitioner under the direction of a Fellow/AOGPE.

4. Evidence of continuing professional development.
5. Evidence of completion of the Required Readings at the Fellow level.
6. Two letters of recommendation. One letter must be from the Principal Training Fellow/AOGPE.

Fellow Members are qualified to train and supervise other professionals in the Orton-Gillingham Approach. A Fellow must attend a Fellow Seminar/Webinar at least every 2 years of membership.

Fellows have access to the member section of the Academy's website, and the online membership directory. They receive emails including conference announcements, and newsletters. Fellows receive referrals for tutoring and training, and an invitation to the annual Fellow Webinar and Fellow Luncheon at the Academy's conference.

Fellow application fee: \$500 (includes \$140 non-refundable fee)

Annual dues: \$250

PHILOSOPHY

□ *Dyslexia*

The word dyslexia is derived from the Greek, **dys**, difficulty with, and **lex** (from *legein*, to speak), having to do with words. Words in their many forms are encountered in listening, speaking, reading, spelling, writing, in mathematics, and in organizing, understanding, and expressing thought. Based on information from neuroscientific and linguistic research, the definition can be summarized as difficulty in the use and processing of arbitrary linguistic/symbolic codes. This is an aspect of a language continuum that includes spoken language, written language, and language comprehension.

Individuals with dyslexia are those who, despite traditional classroom teaching, have failed to master the basic elements of the language system of their culture. Since language is the necessary tool upon which subsequent academic learning is based, such individuals often encounter difficulty in all educational endeavors.

□ *Historical Background*

The four people whose work resulted in the development of the Orton-Gillingham Approach were Samuel T. Orton, his wife June Lyday Orton, Anna Gillingham, and her associate, Bessie Stillman. By 1925, each was already established: Dr. Orton as a neuropsychiatrist and pathologist, June Lyday Orton as a psychiatric social worker, Anna Gillingham as an educator and psychologist with a superb command of the language, and Bessie Stillman as a master classroom teacher. By reason of their various specialties, they provided strength in

neurobiological science, medical evaluation, and in the psychology and pedagogy of education. Adherence to these sound principles has continued to assure stability and efficacy in the total Approach, together with openness to change and improvement in light of newly developing knowledge and practice.

Dr. Orton was a pioneer in focusing attention on reading failure and on related language processing difficulties by bringing together neuroscientific information and principles of remediation. As early as 1925, he had identified the syndrome of specific language disability in his papers from 1925 to 1948. In his book, *Reading, Writing, and Speech Problems in Children* (published in 1937), Orton distinguished language learning disabilities from mental defect, emotional disorder, sensory deficits, and brain damage. He offered a neurophysiological explanatory theory and posited a favorable prognosis based upon his success with the teaching principles and techniques that he had devised.

In agreement with Dr. Orton, Anna Gillingham and Bessie Stillman compiled and published comprehensive instructional material, which included the manual, *Remedial Training for Children with Specific Disability in Reading, Spelling, and Penmanship*. This general Approach and its derivatives have also been adapted for teaching people with problems in mathematics and with other learning difficulties.

Research continues to provide increasing validation for the sound teaching practices encompassed in the Orton-Gillingham philosophy. The Academy looks forward to contributing to ways in which this Approach, dynamic and growing, can be made even more effective. It should be noted that these fundamental views accord well with the findings of international research.

□ Perspective

The Orton-Gillingham philosophy is based on a technique of studying and teaching language and on an understanding of the nature of human language, of the mechanisms involved in learning, and of the language-learning process in individuals. Inherent in the language acquisition process is emphasis on the meaning and comprehension of the material that is written and read.

Speech, where words are formed, is a primary communication system for conveying meaning. In turn, spoken words may be represented graphically by the symbols of a writing system. Where such a writing system is based upon the alphabetic principle, rules specify how symbolic letters shall correspond with sounds and their order in spoken words. Words are sequenced according to an established rule structure (grammar) to form meaningful sentences. Sentences are then arranged according to rules of paragraphing and thematic composition in increasingly sophisticated levels of organization. In the language of mathematics, a different code and system of symbolic relationships need also to be mastered.

The application of the Orton-Gillingham philosophy is based also on human neurophysiology and psychology, which indicate that it is appropriate to use a multisensory approach in teaching language. Each phonetic unit and sequence in spoken and/or graphic form is learned through

hearing, speaking, seeing, and writing; these skills are learned and practiced simultaneously and in coordination with one another. Auditory, visual, and kinesthetic patterns reinforce each other for optimal learning through different channels. This educational methodology embodies teaching strategies, which are biologically and linguistically sound and beneficial to all language learners. As a general principle, knowledge for understanding and sufficient practice for mastery promote efficiency of language acquisition. For the dyslexic person, the emphasis on step-by-step development of skill has proven essential to both early success and lasting results.

□ Teaching

Teaching and learning have many dimensions. While we, the educators, are keeping the structure of the language in mind, we need to remember the learner's need for instruction that is at once multisensory, phonetically based, structured, sequential, cumulative and rational. As a logical consequence of the Orton-Gillingham history, the type of instruction that has developed is based on teaching the language continuum to an individual from birth to mature competence. We need both education for understanding the principles of the language, and training to make the learned elements retrievable and the processes automatic. "These skills need to be acquired through all the sensory avenues of learning open to the student – visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile - in interactions summarized as a multisensory approach. While all the input and output modalities are being used, there is the full realization that clear vision, sharp hearing, and controlled muscles are but the necessary servants. The mind is the master. It is in the end not just the eye, the ear, the voice, or the hand, but the brain that learns both to read in order to understand and to write that others may read. Therefore, we teach the language as it is to the individual as he or she is – a human nervous system with a unique configuration as a thinking, learning person." (Margaret Byrd Rawson).