



**IDA Georgia Board of Directors
NOMINEES for TERM BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2024**

Matt Carter, Ph.D.

I have over ten years of experience in higher education. I am a tenured, full professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at Valdosta State University. I conduct regular research into the early signs and symptoms of dyslexia. In addition, I serve as the coordinator for our Scottish-Rite Foundation-funded dyslexia program, which provides free literacy-based services to the community throughout the year. I also have been the co-owner/operator of South Georgia Dyslexia Specialists since 2019. We specialize in the assessment of literacy-based disorders such as dyslexia.

I would like to better serve my region and state by being plugged into the amazing network of professionals at IDA-GA. As part of my work at Valdosta State, I have started a dyslexia clinic that provides evaluative and therapeutic services free of cost to the local community. We also provide regular in-services and continuing education sessions for those in South Georgia. As a result of these efforts, I am frequently relied upon to serve as a liaison between parents, activists, teachers, and administrators in regard to all things dyslexia. Although I regularly serve on GADOE committees, I feel as if I could fulfill this aspect of my career far more effectively if I were more involved at the grassroots level. For this reason, I would be most appreciative of the opportunity to serve alongside the board members of Georgia IDA.

Lama Farran, Ph.D.

I am interested in serving on the IDA-GA Board of Directors to contribute to and advance the important work and progress IDA-GA has made in recent years and explore avenues for more IDA-GA members to connect with and become involved in the work of the association. As such, maintaining and increasing member involvement is key. This can be achieved by identifying barriers and facilitators to involvement for members across disciplines and backgrounds (e.g., cultural, linguistic, etc.). As a voice for IDA-GA members, I view my role as addressing common threads across settings while differentiating the needs of dyslexia professionals in preschools, schools, private practice, and clinics. One of my goals is to increase cross-disciplinary collaboration and our collective engagement to translate evidence-based research to practice, ultimately shaping policy and resulting in positive developmental outcomes for all children who are at risk or identified with dyslexia in Georgia.

I am an ASHA certified, Georgia licensed speech-language pathologist with many years of clinical experience. After working nine years as a clinician, I decided to pursue my doctorate in early childhood with a cognate in neuroscience. Currently, I am a professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders with teaching and research expertise in language as a basis of reading in typically developing children as well as those who are at risk or diagnosed with dyslexia. I am particularly interested in the earliest identification and treatment of dyslexia and related disorders in culturally and linguistically diverse

populations. With my background as a trilingual, bicultural, individual, I understand the importance of examining cultural, linguistic, and environmental factors (caregiver input, socioeconomic status, parent education, etc..) in the identification and treatment of dyslexia. A couple of my research projects examine caregiver input to very young children and use widely available, free materials (books, websites that demonstrate how to talk to infants and young children) to facilitate access and improve the language and literacy environments for at-risk children, while empowering the parents in the process. I've also conducted a recent research project that targets teacher knowledge about dyslexia, the results of which will be used to inform professional development for teachers.

Rhonda Mitchell, M.Ed.

As an early childhood professional, I aim to amplify the research about the foundational skills necessary for and best practices of early language and literacy development. This is important to complement the current social-political movement around reading development in the early elementary years. I believe I can add perspective to the work being done by the International Dyslexia Association, and I am eager to join this group of professionals in supporting individuals with emerging and identified reading difficulties.

I have been an early childhood educator for 21 years. My undergraduate degree is in Economics, and I had a short career in commercial banking before returning to school for my M.Ed. in Early Childhood Education and Reading Endorsement from the University of Georgia. I was fortunate to be in school after the National Reading Panel's report was published and to have been part of a program that applied the findings to its teacher preparation courses. I began my teaching career at Trinity School as a Kindergarten teacher with an understanding of reading development and immediately received training in the Orton-Gillingham approach through my employer. After several years in the classroom and developing the school's student portfolio process, I became the Early Elementary Division Head at Trinity, responsible for directing and managing the Preschool through First Grade. During that time, I focused on implementing evidence-based practices and horizontal and vertical alignment of the curriculum, especially related to literacy development. This included the introduction of universal screeners and a multi-tiered system of support that allowed us to develop programming designed to prevent, identify, and provide targeted intervention for children with reading difficulties. Currently, I am the Director of Saint Anne's Day School, working to build similar systems at the preschool level. In this role, I collaborate with an Advisory Council of members interested in supporting the Day School's mission and lead the school on behalf of the church's governing body. Also, I am a graduate of the United Way VIP Board Training Program. These experiences allow me to see nonprofit board work from various angles. I want to use my experience with literacy education and nonprofit boards to further the work of the International Dyslexia Association.