
2025
Annual Report
NELMS DYSLEXIA CENTER
BUILDING BRIGHT FUTURES
www.nelmsdc.org

Mission

The Nelms Dyslexia Center is dedicated to empowering people in the dyslexia community to achieve their greatest potential by providing training, therapy, information, and support.







Dear Friends & Partners,

Reflecting on the past year, we are inspired by the dedication and partnership that surrounds our mission. What we are building together is more than a dyslexia center — it is a community of educators, families, and partners connected by the shared belief that every individual with dyslexia deserves the opportunity to thrive.

2025 was our first full year of operation. Together, we expanded teacher training, established new school partnerships, increased student services, and strengthened collaboration across Arkansas. Through Academic Language Therapist and Academic Language Practitioner training cohorts, Tests of Dyslexia (TOD) training, community outreach efforts, and statewide events, we are working alongside educators and partners to build capacity and deepen dyslexia expertise across our state.



Melissa Duersch

From Melissa: *"In January 2026, I assumed the role of Director as Pam shifted her focus to teacher training, continuing to support the Center by helping educators become Certified Academic Language Therapists. My deepest appreciation to Pam for her expertise and guidance in laying the groundwork of the Center's mission which will allow us to expand opportunites in the dyslexia community."*

From Pam: *"It has been a joy and an honor to help establish the Center and work alongside so many dedicated educators, families, and partners. I am deeply grateful for the support and collaboration that has made our progress possible, and I am excited to continue the Center's mission of training dyslexia therapists."*

We are so thankful for the many donors who contributed to the development of the center. Because of you, teachers are better prepared, students are discovering their strengths, and families are finding hope.

The need across our state is significant and so is the opportunity. With continued partnership and shared commitment, we are confident that access to high-quality dyslexia instruction will continue to grow.

Thank you for partnering with us to empower people in the dyslexia community to achieve their greatest potential.

With gratitude,

Melissa Duersch, Director & Pam Henley, Director of Training



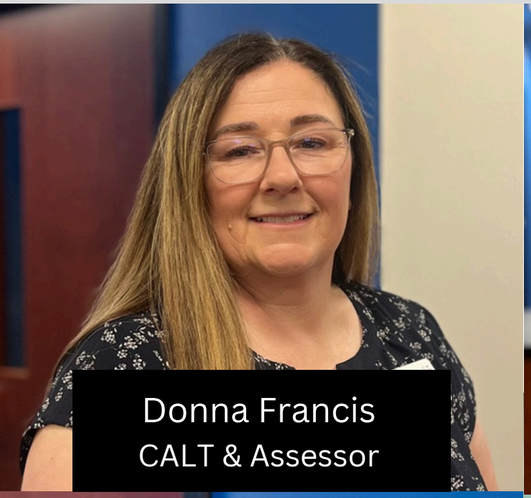
Pam Henley

Meet the team


Melissa Duersch
Director - CALT


Jen Carter
Center Coordinator-CALT

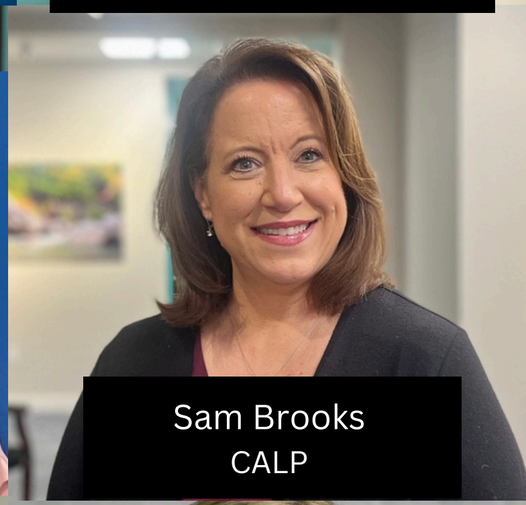

Pam Henley
Dir. of Training- CALT-QI


Donna Francis
CALT & Assessor


Jacquelyn Scalf
CALT-QI & Assessor


Jess Boggs
CALT in-training


Sarah Buchholz
CALP


Sam Brooks
CALP


Jalynn Willcutt
CALT


Christy Owen
CALT


Audrey Longing
CALT in-training


Angela Brasher
CALP


Mary House
CALT in-training



2024 - Nelms CALT Cohort & Springfield Center for Dyslexia CALT Cohort



2025 CALT Cohort



Qualified Instructors (QIs) and QIs in training.

Teacher Training & Support

Up to 20% of the population has dyslexia. This means, out of approximately 528,000 students in public, private, and home schools, **there are 105,600 students in Arkansas who need specialized reading instruction beyond the normal teacher preparation programs taught in higher education.**

The highest level of training for educators supporting students with dyslexia is certification as an Academic Language Therapist (CALT). CALTs are diagnostic and prescriptive in providing explicit, systematic, and multisensory dyslexia instruction. The two-year certification requires 200 classroom hours, 700 practicum hours, ten observed demonstrations, holding a Master's degree *(or obtainment within five years)*, and passing a national exam.

There are approximately 250 CALTs registered in Arkansas. **The need is much greater - roughly 1,500 - to ensure each school building is staffed with at least one CALT,** with larger schools needing more.

Every student with dyslexia deserves access to effective instruction. The Nelms Dyslexia Center is dedicated to training teachers in this most impactful instruction. Two active CALT cohorts are in training with plans for a third to begin Summer 2026, totaling 47 teachers in training.

Continued...

...Teacher Training Continued

- **Certified Academic Language Practitioner (CALP) training.** Twelve teachers have completed or are in training. The one year certification training requires 45 classroom hours, 60 practicum hours, 5 observed demonstrations, holding a Bachelor's degree, and passing a national exam. It's the next highest standard of providing effective dyslexia instruction.

- **Training in the Tests of Dyslexia (TOD)** - over 30 people trained. The TOD accurately assesses and identifies dyslexia and other reading difficulties. It measures skills and abilities in 3 key areas - reading & spelling, vocabulary & reasoning, and linguistic processing.

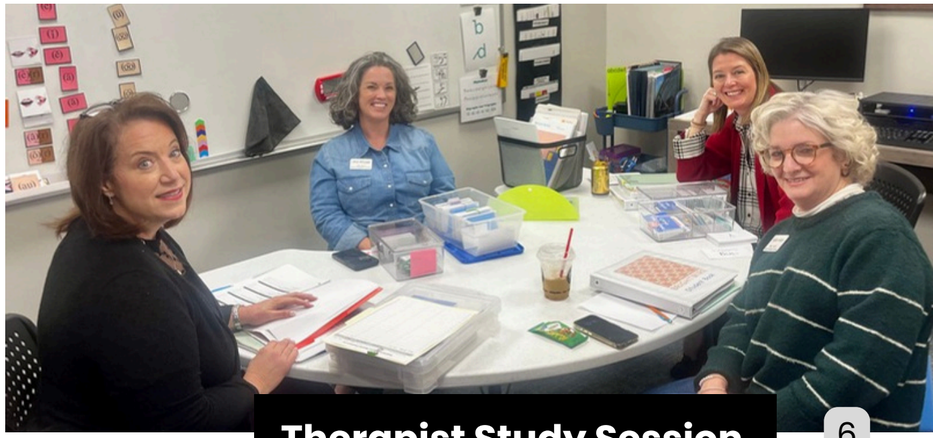
- **Training in several other effective programs and curriculums** designed for students with dyslexia. We love helping educators, administrators, and other professionals explore all the opportunities available to make significant, positive impact in the lives of the students they support.

Since 2024, **the Nelms Dyslexia Center has reached an estimated 700 teachers** through various training efforts at our center, in schools, and through partnerships.



CALP Training


TOD Training


Therapist Study Session

Student Assessment & Therapy

Our students are the best! We love seeing them grow in their reading and we find the most joy in celebrating their strengths and seeing their confidence shine as they recognize their true abilities.

The Nelms Dyslexia Center team works with each student over a two to three-year span building personal, family-like relationships.

Students Screened or Assessed: **290**
Students in therapy at Center: **59**
Students in therapy in schools: **37**
Total students served: **386**















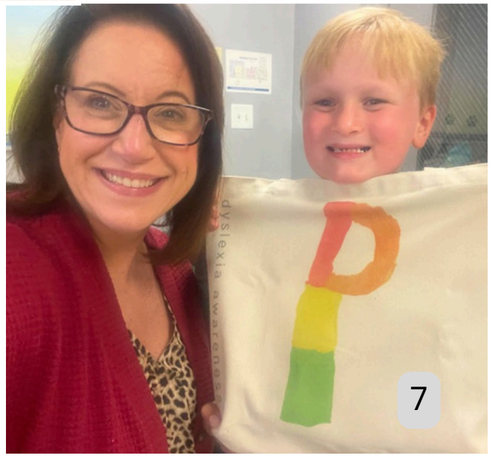












Meet Ashli & Ryli Clary

Ashli holds a special place in the history of the Nelms Dyslexia Center - she was our very first student. Ashli is a firefighter, studying to become a paramedic, and most importantly, the proud mom of Ryli.

"Growing up, I struggled with reading and spelling, but I've always been determined. After failing a written firefighter exam, my supervisor retested me by reading the questions and allowing me to answer orally. I was able to pass the exam with no difficulty."

Ashli noticed her daughter, Ryli, was having similar struggles in school, which spurred her drive to learn more and find help. While researching, she discovered the Nelms Dyslexia Center. After an assessment and educational diagnosis of dyslexia, she began reading therapy in September of 2024. Ryli began therapy at the center soon after.

Ashli will complete her dyslexia therapy in March 2026 and Ryli is on track to complete therapy by Summer 2026.

"Do not be afraid to ask for help. It is a game changer and it is a life changer - for yourself and for the world!" - *Ashli Clary*







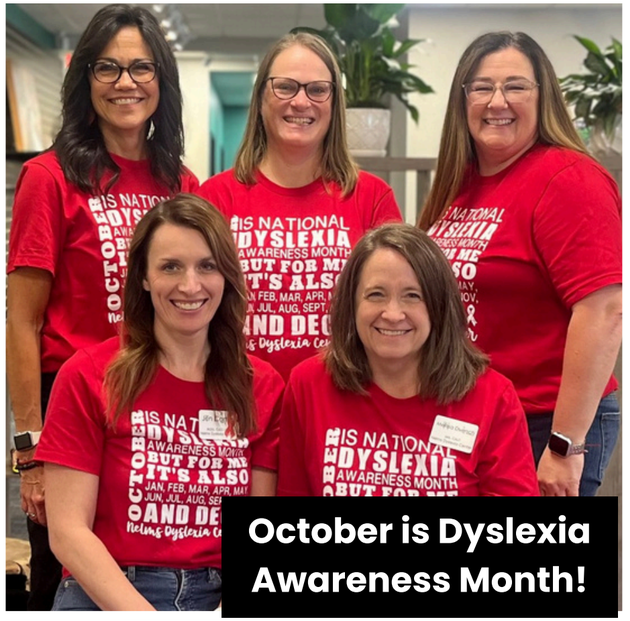


Community Outreach

We love spreading dyslexia awareness!

Throughout the year, the Nelms Dyslexia Center offers and hosts multiple learning opportunities in a variety of ways:

- Free dyslexia screeners (100+ students)
- Dysleixa 101 & other public presentations
- Peer & family support groups (held monthly)
- Corporate learning presentations (15+)
- Partnerships with other non-profits
- School partnerships & support (5)



October is Dyslexia Awareness Month!



"Dyslexia Doesn't Stand Alone" Community Presentation



504 & IEP - Community Presentation



Free Dyslexia Screener Bentonville Public Library



Fayetteville Public Schools - Superintendent Community Event



Dyslexia Awareness Month at Fayetteville Public Library



Dyslexia 101

Partnerships

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS | College of Education & Health Professions

ALTA® Academic Language Therapy Association
Certifying Dyslexia Professionals

FPS FAYETTEVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS Since 1871









OSD

Payne EDUCATION CENTER

ARKANSAS community foundation FAYETTEVILLE AREA

ARETE MOUNTAIN ACADEMY

Crossroads Learning
Changing Lives



Nelms team at the
2025 National ALTA Conference



Arkansas CALTs at the 2025 National ALTA Conference



ALTA-AR annual meeting held at
Nelms Dyslexia Center

Academic Language Therapy is the diagnostic and prescriptive application of Multisensory Structured Language Education to instruct students with written-language learning differences, including dyslexia.

The Academic Language Therapy Association (ALTA) is the professional credentialing organization which establishes, maintains, and promotes professional standards of education, practice, and conduct for Certified Academic Language Therapists (CALT) and Practitioners (CALP).

At Nelms Dyslexia Center our team consists of Qualified Instructors (QIs), CALTs, CALPs, and professionals in training. High-quality training leads to high-quality outcomes for students with dyslexia.

Nelms Dyslexia Center proudly partners with and promotes ALTA through joint training initiatives and community awareness efforts.

ALTA®
Academic Language Therapy Association
Certifying Dyslexia Professionals

Take Flight Recalibration

SCOTTISH RITE FOR CHILDREN
TAKE FLIGHT
A COMPREHENSIVE INTERVENTION FOR STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA

Statewide professional development held in partnership with ALTA-AR and Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children.
















380 Therapists & Educators!








In September 2025, a partnership between the University of Arkansas' College of Education, the Academic Language Therapy Association, and the Nelms Dyslexia Center was formed.

Thanks to this partnership, there is a graduate-level pathway at the University of Arkansas for Certified Academic Language Therapists (CALTs) or those working toward their CALT credential at Nelms Dyslexia Center to earn their master's degree faster and for less money.

Together, we will build a stronger, better-prepared workforce of dyslexia teachers to serve children and families across Arkansas. Thank you, University of Arkansas & the Academic Language Therapy Association!

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS | College of Education & Health Professions

ALTA® Academic Language Therapy Association — Certifying Dyslexia Professionals

NELMS DYSLEXIA CENTER
Building Bright Futures

The path to becoming a CALT or CALP requires extensive training that surpasses the scope of traditional higher education — requiring significant time, commitment, and financial investment.

We're grateful for our partners at the Arkansas Department of Commerce - Office of Skills Development and the Arkansas Community Foundation - Fayetteville Area Affiliate who provide grants in support of educators pursuing this necessary training.

Thank you for supporting these dedicated educators in their journey to make a lasting impact in the lives of students with dyslexia!

OSD

ARKANSAS community foundation
FAYETTEVILLE AREA

Grants received:
$162,260



Jen & CALT trainees

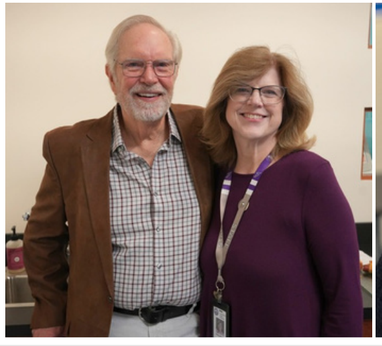

Intro CALT Cohort 2025



Donna & CALT trainees










Thank you for your partnership in building the Nelms Dyslexia Center!

- Kelly Brown, Fayetteville Public Schools
- Brenda Nahlen, Dyslexia Tactics
- Vicki King, AR Dept of Education DESE
- Steph Hicks, University of Arkansas
- Stacey Mahurin, AR dyslexia therapy pioneer
- Dr. Tim Odegard, Tennessee Center for the Study & Treatment of Dyslexia, MTSU
- Tori Williams, Jackson Prep (MS)
- Kay Peterson, L.E.A.D (Dallas), IMSLEC, Mississippi College
- Jan Hankins & Shirley Tipton, Mississippi College
- Kim Dodge, Audie Alumbaugh, Lizbeth Huggins, Amber Jones - AR dyslexia policy pioneers
- Patricia Elkins & Jill Henrich, Little Rock Chrisitan Academy
- Meredith Matlock & Mindy Boyd, First Presbyterian Day School (MS)
- Holly Stokes
- Ginger West
- Dodie Anderson
- Deana Brooks
- Kelly Cornelius
- Emily Stewart
- Susan Jeter
- Chandle Carpenter
- Cole Lester
- Jeff Lewis
- Krista Barker
- Amy Christian
- Lin Hodges
- Hannah O'Donnell
- David & Theresa Fender
- Elisabel Cortes
- Sarah Buchholz
- Drew Shover
- Karen Avritt & Lori Wendt, Scottish Rite Hospital for Children - Luke Waites Center for Dyslexia (TX)
- Crossroads Learning - Stacy Girdner (OK)
- Springfield Center for Dyslexia & Learning - Noel Leif (MO)
- Payne Education Center - Heather Johnson (OK)
- Reading Services of Arkansas -Brittney Mills
- Center for Reading - Dr. David Hurford, Michaela Ozier, Michelle Keiper, & Thomas Hurford (KS)
- Phillips Fundamental Learning Center - Jeanine Phillips, Tammy Kofford, Tammi Hope, & Sarah Collins (KS)
- Master Minds Dyslexia Center - Megan Givens & Morgan Berggren (MS)
- Northwest Arkansas Pediatrics - Dr. Meredith Mahan & team
- Margie Gillis, Literacy How, Inc.
- Dr. Susan Perry & Amy Thompson, University of Central Arkansas
- Brian Hyde
- Brittney Bair
- Cindy Young
- David Hanson
- Kaitlyn Luna
- Taylor Greer
- Millie Nelms
- Nancy Lang
- Jenny Mangham
- Felecia Pasley
- Donna Sorters
- Dr. Damon Lipinski
- Dean Bragonier
- Fran Free
- David Nelms
- Dennis Nelms
- Tyler Chadwick
- Danielle Hoffman

Financial Summary

In January 2024, Don and Millie Nelms donated a building in Fayetteville and funded the renovations needed to bring the Nelms Dyslexia Center to life. Their total investment of $2.65 million made this vision a reality.

The Don & Millie Nelms Foundation and Nelms family continue to support operations in both cash donations ($660,500 to date) and administrative support ($43,000/year) through their family's gifts.

Thanks to you, the Nelms Dyslexia Center is improving the lives of individuals with dyslexia.

Thank you!

Other donations received: $223,160

Adventure Subaru
Anonymous (5)
David & Theresa Fender
Dennis & Trude Moore
Junior & Tonya Lopez
London Shockley
Porter Mullins
Scott & Angela Simon
Subaru of America
Tim Jones
Tom & Linda Doll



Dennis, David, Millie, & Don Nelms

"School wasn't a comfortable place for me. Struggling to read and spell made me look like the dumbest kid in class. I didn't feel that way about myself because I had a wonderful safe place in my dad's auto repair shop where I was able to realize my strengths and abilities - it was my safe haven.

There are a lot of people in this world who are dyslexic and extremely successful. I would like to help other kids, with similar struggles I had, find their safe space."

- Don Nelms

2025 Assets

Current Assets:	$123,371.01
Fixed Assets:	$2,622,271.24
Total Assets:	*$2,745,642.25*

2025 Revenue

Dyslexia Services:	$423,303.58
Donations:	$465,946.16
Rental & Other:	$41,708.57
Total Revenue:	*$930,958.31*

2025 Expenses

Salaries & Benefits:	$608,562.65
Other Program Expenses:	$151,804.64
Financial Assistance:	$35,120.00
Other Operating Expenses:	$115,958.80
Total Expenses:	*$911,466.09*









Join Us!

If you are interested in supporting our work, please contact Scott Simon at **scott@nelmsfoundation.org**

www.nelmsdc.org

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