

Suzanne O'Brien

Candidate for IBIDA President



IBIDA has been a part of my life for about fifteen years. My association began when I was an elementary school principal and a very frustrated parent of a struggling reader invited me to the October conference at Drury Lane. While at that conference, I had the good fortune to hear Roland Good as he was presenting his research on early identification of children with the potential for reading difficulties and his DIBELS system. The rest as they say is history. Since that time I have served IBIDA, as a board member, chair of the Executive Director Search committee, It Takes a Village committee, co-chair of the conference in 2009, and chair of the conference in 2010.

Presently, I am the Director of the Masters programs for Elementary Education for Lewis University. I have also developed our new Early Childhood P-3 degree programs for undergraduates and graduates which were recently approved by the Illinois Board of Higher Education. As a parent of a deaf child, a grandmother of several dyslexic children, a former principal and now as an educator who sees first-hand how reading is taught in our schools, I know how invaluable the IBIDA organization is and must be and how much more needs to be done. Both as a professional organization that supports children, families, schools and districts and as a provider of current research, IBIDA needs to extend its reach to educate our schools, legislative groups, universities, and state department of education. It is hard to believe that current reading instruction still includes already dispelled myths and downright poor reading educational practices.

It is the year 2011 and yet in terms of reading education for struggling readers, the world is still moving in slow motion. Our national IDA has a wealth of resources and information that communicates in what I would call 'whispers'. While I recognize that they have developed major financial issues that are consuming time and energy, it is no longer the successful engine deploying resources and support to drive change for our children. On the other hand, the Illinois Branch is one of the most successful and financially sound units in the United States, comprised of hard working, knowledgeable and articulate professionals who need a doable master plan designed to bring about the change needed in our educational systems. There is simply no reason for parents to continually have to argue for, stress out, pay tutors, and bring in advocates and / or attorneys to implore our schools to help their children learn to read appropriately.

Struggling readers and the children of Illinois have a basic rightthe right to learn to read with proven methods that can make a difference for them. I would be honored and privileged to serve as IBIDA's President and lead our branch in a continued effort to secure this fundamental right.

Suzanne O'Brien Ed.D.