

# *A Teachable Moment*



**What are your beliefs and values and the values you want to see in your children? A Teachable Moment** is a tool to help you begin some conversations about “hot button” topics and give you some ideas of how to respond to your children when questions come up. - Parent Diversity Support Team PDST-

**The Meridian School**  
Fostering an  
inclusive community

## How do we talk with children about supporting differences in our learning community?

**Our Teachable Moment:** On December 10<sup>th</sup> at our Monday Morning Meeting, students will see a Book It Repertory Theater play on Patricia Polacco’s book, *Thank You, Mr. Falker*. It is an autobiography about the struggles one person encountered when learning with Dyslexia. Faculty and students will be talking about learning differences and how we all have our own strengths and challenges. With this program, we hope to promote **a healthy learning environment that understands and supports learning differences and encourages effort, persistence, respect and empathy in our students**. Below are some ideas and questions we invite you to explore with your children:

### ➤ We all are unique and we all have different learning styles and needs

- What helps you to focus and to learn more easily?
- We all struggle with something at some point. What have you struggled with? How did you feel? What was helpful and what wasn’t? What did you learn? What could you do differently next time?
- How do our struggles and strengths make us each unique?
- What are the benefits of having people who learn differently in the classroom? Learning differences bring to the classroom a range of abilities and perspectives that enrich our learning.

### ➤ Working through challenges with effort and persistence makes us stronger

- We all can learn strategies to work with our challenges.
- How can you help yourself with your own learning?
- Who are some mentors in your life who have helped you through a challenge?
- How does tutoring help? What is a learning specialist?

### ➤ We shouldn’t judge or stereotype people based on their learning style.

Find ways to counter **biases and stereotypes** about learning differences.

- How do you stand up for yourself when others don’t understand your learning style or challenges?
- How do you stand up for others who have learning differences?
- People who struggle in one learning area present a variety of strengths in other areas. Many famous people and countless non-famous people with learning difficulties are very successful. Many of them like to think outside the box and are very creative people.
  - Famous people with dyslexia: George Washington, President; Alexander Graham Bell, Scientist/Inventor; Albert Einstein, Physicist/Mathematician; Leonardo Da Vinci, Artist/Scientist; Thomas Edison, Inventor; Tom Cruise: Actor; Keira Knightly, Actress; Tommy Hilfiger, Fashion Designer.
  - Famous people with speech/hearing challenges: Ludwig van Beethoven, composer; Joseph Biden, Vice President; Lewis Carroll, author of Alice in Wonderland; James Earl Jones, Actor; Marilyn Monroe, Actress.
  - Famous people with ADD/ADHD; Pablo Picasso, Artist; Michael Phelps; Olympic Swimmer; Wolfgang Mozart, Musician/Composer; Andrew Carnegie, Businessman.

**CONTINUED ON REVERSE....**

## Points to Consider and Resources:

- **Thank You, Mr. Falker focuses on Dyslexia.** Dyslexia is a term used when a person has a hard time learning to read or interpret words, letters, and other symbols. The eyes and ears take in the information correctly, but the brain mixes up the information. Reading with dyslexia takes effort, persistence and help from others, but people with dyslexia can learn to read and even come to love reading. Learn more at [www.dyslexia.yale.edu](http://www.dyslexia.yale.edu)
- To learn about other learning differences besides dyslexia see [www.nclld.org](http://www.nclld.org) and [www.ldonline.org](http://www.ldonline.org). Learn about how experiences can shape the brain at <http://changingbrains.org/>
- For a set of referrals and resources relevant to your area of interest please contact our Learning Specialist, Christina Drakos at [cdrakos@meridianschool.edu](mailto:cdrakos@meridianschool.edu)
- Children's books that feature a main character with learning differences: *Hank Zipzer* by Henry Winkler <http://www.hankzipzer.com/>; *The Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan.
- Books for adults: See the following recommendations from our Learning Specialist:

## Recommended Reading for Learning Challenges and Related Issues:

- *The Between the Lions Book for Parents: Everything You Need to Know to Help Your Child Learn to Read* by Linda K. Rath & Louise Kennedy
- *The Mislabeled Child: Looking Beyond Behavior to Find the True Sources and Solutions for Children's Learning Challenges* by Brock and Fernette Eide (also addresses ADD/ADHD, auditory and sensory processing, memory, giftedness, and handwriting)
- *My Dyslexia* a memoir by Pulitzer Prize winning poet Philip Schultz
- *The Myth of Laziness* by Mel Levine
- *Overcoming Dyslexia* by Sally Shaywitz
- *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain* by Maryanne Wolf
- *Reading in the Brain: The New Science of How We Read* by Stanislas Dehaene
- *It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend: Helping the Child with Learning Disabilities Find Social Success* by [Richard Lavoie](#)
- [www.readingrockets.org](http://www.readingrockets.org) Reading Rockets is national multimedia literacy initiative offering information and resources on how young kids learn to read, why so many struggle, and how caring adults can help.

This document was created with input from The Parent Diversity Support Team, The Faculty Diversity Committee and our Learning Specialist. Find an electronic copy in our Spyglass. December 6, 2012