

Note: Tracy was one of the tutors that is attending the tutor training currently taking place at the Children's Dyslexia Center-Madison. The training was made possible in part by the Wahlin Foundation grant.

Acquiring the Tools to Make an Impact: Tracy's Story

Tracy has spent much of her life teaching children to read—particularly helping children who struggled with reading. She worked for many years as a special education teacher and then more recently as a reading intervention teacher. As she worked with these students, Tracy felt she needed additional tools to really help them move forward.

Tracy was already somewhat familiar with the Orton-Gillingham approach, the approach tutors at the Children's Dyslexia Center-Madison (CDC-M) use when working with children in one-on-one tutoring sessions. Tracy knew this approach had a proven track record of being effective with struggling readers. She had even taken some training before, but did not feel confident enough to use it. So when Tracy across CDC-M online one day, she was intrigued. She called the Center and spoke with Kelly Kuenzie, Director of CDC-M. After learning more about the tutor training program, Tracy knew it was a good fit for her. “I knew it was a high level of commitment, but I liked that because I felt like it would give me the understanding and knowledge I was looking for,” Tracy said.

Tracy began training this past fall. Training includes eight 6-7 hour classroom instruction sessions. During the classroom sessions, Tracy listened to instruction, practiced with a partner, presented to the group, engaged in conversations and then had the chance to ask questions. “The environment was very supportive and encouraging,” Tracy said. As part of the training, she also took on two students to tutor on her own. Tracy was assigned a mentor to help her as she develops individualized lesson plans for each student. At first, Tracy found developing lesson plans to be challenging, but her mentor helped guide her in the process. “Now I have a better understanding,” Tracy said. “I’m able to see the bigger picture of how the parts all fit together to reinforce the goal for each lesson.”

The most rewarding part for Tracy has been watching her students make progress. One of the students she was tutoring faced significant challenges. With the help of her mentor, Tracy was able to help him gain the foundational skills he needed to move forward. “Those first few times that he really understood it, he and I would look each other—and we both knew. Those were very rewarding moments.”

Overall, Tracy has found the tutor training to be an incredibly positive experience. “I like being part of a program that is so supportive and where success is shared among everyone,” she said. She loves that everyone is focused on the same goal: helping students get the tools they need to succeed.

