



Growing Times January 2021



Promoting the maximum development of the whole child and adult through innovative, individualized and comprehensive brain-centered programs and services.

Doing Everything In Her Power

“As a kid, I had a harder time reading,” says Leah, a veteran educator currently with the Eau Claire, WI school district and a long-time S.M.A.R.T. advocate, whose passion for teaching and love for her students are palpable. “And I want to do everything in my power to prevent others from struggling.”

Her first teaching experiences with 4th and 5th grade bi-lingual students, convinced her that early education was where she belonged: “My highest reader was at a 2nd grade level and the rest of the students were at pre-primer. I needed to be somewhere where I could make a difference before these kids even start to learn how to read. So, I moved to kindergarten the following year, which was perfect because then I could give them a solid foundation.”

After several years in the classroom, Leah found herself in a position to support other teachers – as an educational consultant, instructional coach, literacy coach, Title I teacher, among other roles. While teachers were telling her that student behavior was their biggest problem, as a literacy coach and Title I teacher, she noticed that many children were having reading issues. “I had several kids, I could actually see their eyes doing different things on the pages, or they’d look at me and their eye would bounce, and I thought ‘something is going on there.’” Then she attended a training for a movement-based program that dealt with dyslexia. Her original teacher training had included very little about brain-related issues or the importance of movement to development. This new perspective changed her. “I started telling parents, ‘you might want to get their eyes checked, I’ve been noticing some things’ and parents wrote to me to say, ‘There was an issue, thanks for telling us!’ I thought, this is knowledge that everybody needs to have. It’s great and more students could be helped.”



Learning Ladders in Leah’s classroom

Story continued on page 2



Great Deals on Prescription Glasses!

ACTG’s Vision Clinic has great deals on glasses! Metal, plastic, metal-free, and no-break frames available in sizes to fit the whole family! Special packages with lenses, anti-scratch and anti-reflective coatings starting at only \$70! Transitions, blue light blockers and polarized lenses also available. Already have a pair? Consider a computer pair, sunglasses, or maybe a second pair just in case! Call us today at (612) 789-1236 or email vision@actg.org to learn more!

Several years later, when she attended a three-day S.M.A.R.T. training, it was revelatory: “Every time I heard a story I thought ‘oh, that was that kid! I remember having an a-ha moment: They showed us how the alligator crawl is really good for reading comprehension, and I thought, ‘why have I not been doing this the whole time with the struggling readers?’”

She brought S.M.A.R.T. home as a summer program first. “I had about six kids – two of my own and four other kids. I did a S.M.A.R.T. circuit, for an hour and a half, with stations, and some reading interventions as well. A few kids had dyslexia and I remember, when they did tactile trackers, [they’d say] ‘oh my eyes they hurt!’ and I said ‘well good, that’s what you want! This is the right activity for you!’ Their parents said, ‘This is amazing, more schools need to be doing this.’ One parent, who was a special ed teacher at the high school level, said ‘Leah, more kids could benefit from this,’ I said, “I know, I agree!”



Pencil Rolls are an essential activity in Leah’s S.M.A.R.T. course.

more concrete, and if you can address those things, they might go away or minimize.”

The knowledge Leah has gained through the S.M.A.R.T. training has given her a different perspective on her own children. “I wish I would have had this training before I had kids because I feel like I would have done a better

Movement Anchors Learning!

Movement influences the ability to concentrate in a classroom and to learn to read and write. The body is designed to move. Research shows purposeful, specific, and systematic physical movement can affect the brain in a very positive and dramatic way. Physical activity helps create an optimal learning condition for the brain by:

- Increasing dendrite branching and creating more neural connections.
- Stimulating the brain to produce faster connections.
- Feeding the brain glucose and oxygen, which are brain food.

Leah began to advocate for all teachers in the district to incorporate S.M.A.R.T. into their classrooms. Last year, district administrators went all in, arranging for all teachers and assistants to get trained. “The first time through the training, some of [the teachers] said, ‘oh my gosh, I thought this kid was doing this because they were misbehaving but really, they had this sensory or auditory processing or vision issue.’ They started to see behaviors differently, which I think is amazing.”

Her S.M.A.R.T. training continues to inform her practice. When her colleagues say, “This child has ADHD” she asks, “Have you tried spinning? Or balancing? Or pencil rolls? Let’s start with some of those.’ I say to parents, do you ever notice them spinning? And they say ‘yeah.’ And I say, ‘let them, they need it, their bodies are telling them they still need to move.’”

She says, “When parents are asking [about a child’s behavior], they know there’s a problem, so it’s a matter of letting them know that there’s a reason why that’s happening. These behavioral issues might have a basis in something

job when my kids were toddlers, and it breaks my heart. As a parent, I would say it’s a life-changing training that teaches you movements that we often want to skip because they are doing it so fast. My oldest went straight from sliding on his belly to minimal amounts of crawling to running, so he missed most of the crawling, and he has struggled with reading and writing.

“We are a container society, we are putting our kids in car seats to highchairs to bouncy seats and they are never getting those experiences on the ground, and those experiences are the ones that lead to academic success. We should tell parents ‘Don’t rush them, there are a lot of stages we try to rush through, and quite honestly they need to be on the ground moving.’”

For parents of older children that are having problems academically or behaviorally, Leah says, “There’s a lot of brain-based activities that we can be doing, even at upper levels. My favorite video to show people is The Brain Highway (visit ACTG.org to view video), because there’s always someone who says ‘oh, yeah, I get it!’ when they see it.”

The first S.M.A.R.T. and S.M.A.R.T. Pre-K Workshops of the 2021 are right around the corner! Don't miss your chance to boost your students' learning readiness skills. Our instructors will provide you with everything you need to implement this brain-stimulating program in your classroom this year! If you are an educator working with Pre-K - 3rd graders, this program is for YOU! [Register today at ACTG.org/workshops](https://actg.org/workshops).

S.M.A.R.T. Workshop

- February 23-25, 2021

S.M.A.R.T. Pre-K Workshop

- March 2-4, 2021



All workshops will be held at A Chance To Grow in Minneapolis, MN. Register two weeks in advance and save \$25! S.M.A.R.T. Workshops are following all the safety guidelines provided by the Minnesota Department of Health. Training room is set for social distancing so space is limited. Register today to ensure your spot!

Online Training: Finding Calm and Focus with Audio-Visual Entrainment

Tuesdays: January 26 and February 2, 9, 16 | 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM

Change Your Brain, Change Your Life!

Are you feeling overwhelmed, tired or maybe just looking for a little peace of mind in the chaotic world around us? Join us for a **4-week virtual workshop** titled, "*Finding Calm and Focus with Audio-Visual Entrainment (AVE)*," and discover a noninvasive brain-training program designed to help users regulate their emotional states. Attendees will learn how to implement specific entrainment programs, like energize, meditate, sleep and mood boost, from ACTG's Director of Neurotechnology, Kelly Pittman.



Registration is NOW OPEN at ACTG.org

This course also includes an overview of how entrainment works in the brain, access to a private Facebook group for ongoing discussion, and a complimentary neurofeedback session.



Attendees are encouraged to use their own AVE systems during the training. However, if you do not have an AVE system, rental units are available. Please indicate on the registration form if you are interested in a rental unit. **AVE systems are for sale on ACTG.org**. For more details about the workshop, or questions about AVE systems, please call (612) 706-5551 or email neuro@actg.org.

In-Home Neurofeedback Units Available to Rent

A Chance To Grow currently has Neurofeedback units available to rent! Relieve stress, improve focus, and train your brain in the comfort of your own home, whenever you want it and whenever you need it! In-home neurofeedback is great for individuals of all ages, especially for families that have more than one person participating in the program. Clients will participate in a one-hour training session, covering the details of the rental contract, precise hook up of the sensors, and how to start the system and run sessions. Please note that assessment forms and waivers will need to be filled out before taking the system home for the first time. To learn more and to get started, please contact us at neuro@actg.org or visit the Neurofeedback Rentals page on our website.



Stay updated about current brain-based workshops, seminars and events!
www.facebook.com/AChanceToGrow/



A Chance To Grow's Clinical Services offer in-person, one-on-one sessions for ALL our services, including Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, the Neuro Integrative Clinic (pictured), Audiology and Vision/OptomEYES Therapy. Our therapists follow all the recommended safety guidelines from the MN Dept. of Health, including wearing masks during sessions and sanitizing the therapy space before each appointment. Additionally, we offer Teletherapy Services for our OT and Speech clients. Our goal is to ensure the safe, effective and appropriate delivery of our services to keep our clients as healthy as possible.



If you or a loved one could benefit from one or more of our integrated services, we invite you to visit our website at ACTG.org and complete a Symptoms Checklist or Scheduling Request form. Let our amazing team of therapists and clinicians help you reach your full potential!

Need Help Caring For a Loved One?

Are you struggling to care for a family member with special needs? If so, we invite you to consider ACTG's Home-Based Services, featuring **personal care assistants (PCA)**, **homemaking** and **respite care**. Our dedicated team is committed to helping families achieve positive outcomes by providing custom plans tailored to each situation. Even better, our services allow clients to hire a family member or a friend so that your loved ones are cared for by someone they know. To see if you qualify, call us at (612) 789-1236 to find the right program for you!



Thank You for Supporting ACTG's Holiday Gift Auction

Last month, ACTG held its first online Holiday Gift Auction fundraiser and we are thrilled to report that the event was a smashing success! Thank you to all the organizations and individuals for their generous donations, especially the Wedum Family Foundation, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and the Northeast Minneapolis Kiwanis. We would also like to thank all of the bidders for their participation. Your support allows us to continue to provide life-changing programs and services to help individuals reach their highest potential. We are truly grateful.

Will you support A Chance To Grow's programs and services?

Visit ACTG.org, click on the "Donate" tab on the homepage and fill out the form. Your contribution makes a difference in the lives of children and adults with learning disabilities, developmental delays and brain injuries. All donations are tax-deductible. Thank you for your generosity!

Want to view our newsletter online? Visit ACTG.org and sign-up to receive news and updates from A Chance To Grow.

Equal Employment Opportunity

A Chance To Grow provides equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants. Employment is based upon personal capabilities and qualifications without discrimination because of race, color, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy, age, national origin, disability, gender identity, genetic information, service in the military or any other protected characteristic as established by law. This policy of Equal Employment Opportunity applies to all policies and procedures relating to recruitment & hiring, promotion, compensation, benefits, termination, layoff, recall, transfer, training and all other terms and conditions of employment.



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