

Written in Honor of Sandra Dillon.

There would be no Multisensory Language Training Institute of New Mexico (MLTI-NM), no *Sounds In Syllables* program, and no Southwest Branch of The International Dyslexia Association (SWIDA).

It was Sandra's tenacity in searching for answers as to why some of her brightest students could not read that led to her studying with many of the pioneers in the field of dyslexia. After being inspired by the works of Dr. Samuel T. Orton and Anna Gillingham, Sandra traveled to Seattle to study with Beth Slingerland and Bev Wolf, (*The Slingerland Adaptation*), then to Dallas to study with Aylett Cox and Dr. Lucius Waites (*Alphabetic Phonics*), followed by training with Patricia Lindamood (*Auditory Discrimination in Depth*) in San Luis Obispo, California. With the support of the first special education coordinator for Albuquerque Public Schools (APS), Dr. Jane Blumenfeld, Sandra opened the Albuquerque Public Schools Language Clinic in 1977, which she directed for 27 years. During this time she continued to hone her approach, *Sounds In Syllables*, to meet the needs of students who were severely dyslexic, and *seemed* "intervention resistant."

In 1985, Sandra spear-headed the formation of the New Mexico Branch of the Orton Dyslexia Society (now SWIDA). In 1987, she founded the Multisensory Language Training Institute of New Mexico (MLTI-NM) to train others in her approach and she established the S.I.S. Publishing Co. to provide her materials.

Outside of New Mexico, Sandra trained teachers, therapists and Qualified Instructors at the Atlantic Seaboard Dyslexia Education Center (ASDEC) in the late 1990s, and at the Maharashtra Dyslexia Association in Mumbai, India beginning in 2012.

Throughout her career, Sandra has served on the local SWIDA Board, and the national ALTA and IMSLEC Boards. She has received numerous awards at the local and national level, including the Aylett Cox ALTA Educator Award in 2009, and the prestigious Etoile DuBard Award from IMSLEC in 2016. In February 2020, SWIDA presented Sandra with a Lifetime Achievement Award at its annual conference. Former students of hers flew in from all over the country to honor her.



Sandra stepped down as the Director in MLTI-NM in 2019 and sold her SIS Publishing Co. to ASDEC in 2023. She now lives in Oceanside, California where she continues to consult on dyslexia therapy and enjoys long walks on the beach.

In this age of online training and online meetings, the current MLTI-NM instructors have great respect for Sandra's willingness to travel throughout the country to train with some of the pioneers in the field of dyslexia, and her decades of traveling to board meetings to support both IMSLEC and ALTA in their early years of formation.

Sandra is shown here with Dr. Martha B. Denckla (right), who were both Washington DC IDA Conference speakers.