

The Educational Therapy Center

Empowering struggling readers for 15 years | BY SUZANNE LEE-HERN • SUBMISSIONS FROM CATHY DENESIA



FOR OVER 15 YEARS, the Educational Therapy Center (ETC) has been a lifeline for children with dyslexia and struggling readers in the Kansas City metro area. Founded with a mission to support children and parents on their literacy journey, ETC has become a trusted resource for individualized tutoring and literacy support. What began as a parent support group in 2014 has now grown into a respected center that raises awareness for dyslexia and provides targeted solutions for students who face reading challenges.

Cathy Denesia began her career as an occupational therapist working in schools and then moved on to obtain a law degree, where she specialized in health law services. It was Cathy's personal journey that eventually led her to specialize in and become a strong advocate for fundamental literacy

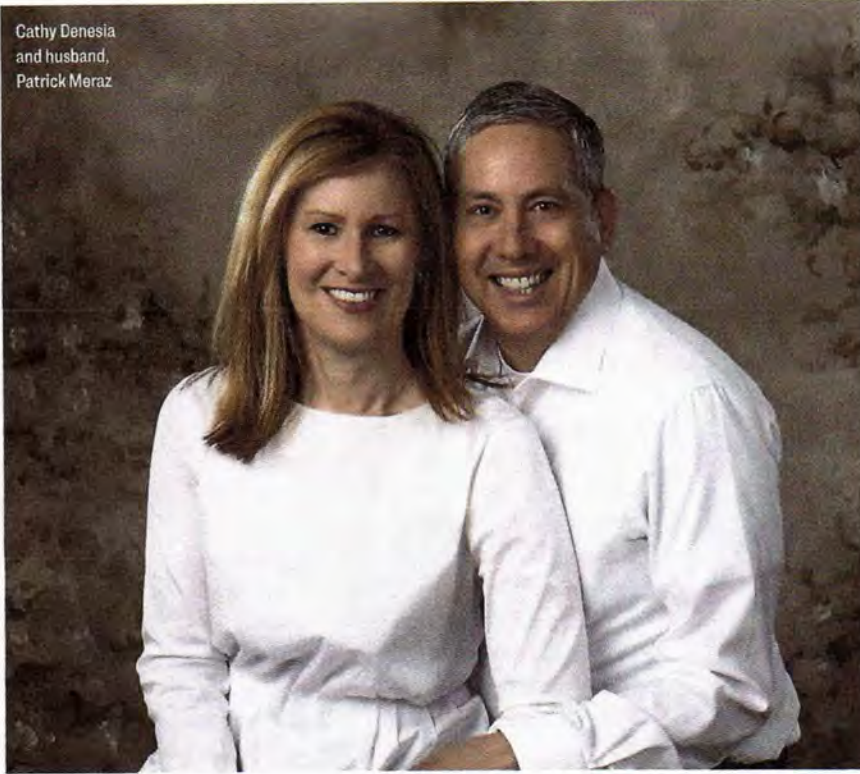
instruction for all students. A mentor of Cathy's, Lorrie Wolf, had already established and was running the ETC when she began working with Cathy's own children over 12 years ago. As a mother of three children with dyslexia, Cathy was determined to ensure they received the help they needed. Realizing the limited options available, Cathy worked tirelessly to bring attention to dyslexia. Her involvement as the President of the Kansas-Missouri International Dyslexia Association (IDA) starting back in 2017 sparked an annual metro-wide fundraiser and educator conference, drawing hundreds of attendees and showcasing the need for greater awareness. She also helped launch teacher training scholarships for educators who desire more training in dyslexia and structured literacy. These annual events continue to be offered annually in the KC metro.

**“Tell me & I forget.
Teach me & I
remember. Involve
me & I learn.”**

— BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

In 2022, her mentor and founder of ETC, Lorrie Wolf, was preparing for retirement. Cathy and her husband purchased ETC to keep it in operation and continue raising awareness and supporting those struggling with dyslexia. Cathy is now the owner and Director of ETC. Little did Cathy know when she co-founded a local dyslexia parent support group back in 2014, that it would eventually lead to operating this respected center.

Cathy Denesia
and husband,
Patrick Meraz



Thanks to the support of educators, diagnosticians, and parents, ETC's success has continued to grow. The center now offers locations in both Parkville and Overland Park, with tutoring services available throughout the day and evening for students, including homeschoolers, and pull-out sessions during school hours. The center offers a unique and helpful method of working with students using a "structured literacy program based on Orton-Gillingham principles with a multi-sensory approach". This is an evidence-based and gold-standard instructional approach for students with dyslexia. All tutoring is offered in a one-to-one setting where each session is customized so each student can move at their own pace. ETC has become a cornerstone in literacy education, providing a unique literacy skills assessment that helps parents strategize their child's next steps. Parents receive a free consultation with this skills assessment and can also schedule additional education consultations to further address questions about navigating dyslexia in the academic setting such as interpreting outside diagnostic evaluations, IEPs, and accommodations.

Cathy's passion for helping others is evident in her personal journey as well as her professional advocacy. Cathy has volunteered for several terms as the KSMO IDA Branch President, played a significant role in the KS Dyslexia Task Force, and has served as the Midwest Regional Representative for the International Dyslexia Association since 2020. Cathy utilizes these connections to train and maintain the competencies of the ETCs team of 20 tutors, who currently serve around 85 students & have served hundreds over the years across the metro.

Dyslexia affects nearly 20% of the population, yet it remains misunderstood. Only about 4.5% of students are identified with dyslexia. Although the achievement gap is evident as early as 1st grade, and the gap only gets bigger without proper instructional methods, many students are not identified until as late as 3rd or 4th grade. Third graders who lack proficiency in reading are four times more likely to become high school dropouts. This is why Cathy is passionate about early identification and intervention as research shows that proper intervention as early as 1st grade can

narrow or close the achievement gap. Despite some concerning statistics such as a higher dropout rate or knowing that nearly 60-75% of our prison inmates are illiterate, there are also some fun statistics about individuals with dyslexia. Most dyslexics have average to above-average intelligence. ETC works with many students who are twice exceptional, which means fit, and also unexpectedly struggle with print reading. Many dyslexics are outside-the-box thinkers, are hard workers, and are good at many other problem-solving methods. It is believed that 35% of self-made millionaires are dyslexic, entrepreneurs are 3 times more likely to have dyslexia and 50% of NASA employees are dyslexic. Most dyslexics are average to above-average intelligence.

Parents often feel embarrassed and judged or guilty when they know their child is struggling or cannot read. It's imperative for early detection and therapy. Cathy and the Education Therapy Center are committed to changing that narrative and providing families with the support they need to navigate the challenges of dyslexia. The new Overland Park location is now open, offering accessible and expert tutoring to families who are in need. Their motto: Together, we can ensure that every child struggling with reading has the opportunity to succeed.



For more information or to inquire about services, reach out via email:

171 English Landing Drive
Parkville, MO 64152
7304 W. 130th Street, Suite 180
Overland Park, KS
website: educationaltherapycenter.com
email: info@etctutoring.org
816-584-8860

How are you making a difference?
[redacted]@gmail.com