

Cat Heale

Personal Statement to be an Individual Trustee Representative of the BDA

I believe I have the 'lived experience' of every angle of the dyslexic world. I could be a practical, passionate and positive voice for all dyslexics, parents of dyslexics, teachers of dyslexics and trainer of teachers of dyslexics!

I was that child. An undiagnosed dyslexic struggling with most aspects of literacy, with my academic self-esteem at rock bottom. I did however, have a vision of how I would like a teacher to be and so persuaded St Lukes, Exeter to take me on to their B.Ed course.

I am that teacher. Initially, my positive attitude, high expectations, support and understanding of a dyslexic's difficulties made me a good teacher, but it wasn't until I achieved a distinction in the Hornsby Diploma that I really understood how much difference a teacher could make. I have supported all age levels from primary to dyslexics in work, including excluded teenagers in West London, running my own study skills holiday school for dyslexics and being an assessor and support tutor at Roehampton University. I have also written a creative writing course for dyslexic prisoners, called 'Write Inside' which I had trialled at HMS Erlestoke, to great success, just before Covid struck.

I was that parent of two dyslexic children. I experienced all the heartache, advocacy and pride in their achievements and resilience. They are both now brilliant educators in their own right.

I was/am that Teacher Trainer Lecturer at both at Roehampton and Bath Spa University. I am passionate about inspiring students to be the very best dyslexia-friendly teachers they can be; my sessions are considered lively, practical, fun and multisensory.

I have an international perspective too, in that I was on the executive committee of the HKBDA, have taught in multilingual schools in Tokyo, HK and the UK. I have trained teachers at both primary and secondary level in state, private and International schools, to be more dyslexia friendly. I have attended numerous CPD, some of the highlights being from Dr Gavin Reid, Dr Loretta Giorcelli, Neil Mackay and Steve Chinn.

I have been an AMBDA since 2012. I would support the BDA in any field relevant to my skills and experience, helping it to develop and grow. Now is the time for dyslexics to thrive, with many of the difficulties encountered by previous generations, taken care of by IT. Now is the time to recognise and teach to the strengths of the neurodiverse dyslexic and their very distinct gifts that are needed in the job markets of the future.

I would like to be at the centre of making this positive change happen and I consider that being a trustee, with my 'surround sound' view and experience of dyslexia, would be the very best way to achieve this. I believe I could make a considerable contribution to the BDA.