



Orton Gillingham
Reading Specialists



Family Handbook
September 2023 – August 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome	page 3
Contact Information	page 4
OGRS 2023-2024 Academic Calendar	page 5

LEARNING AT OGRS

page 6

Sessions	page 6
Attendance and Rescheduling	page 6
Student Environment and Management	page 7
Behavior Expectations & Remediation NEW	page 7
Sessions on Zoom	page 8
Technology Issues	page 8
Practice Work	page 9
Materials	page 10
Assessments	page 10
Progress Notes	page 10

FINANCIAL MATTERS

page 10

Enrollment Periods	page 10
Application Deposit	page 10
Service Contracts	page 10
Tuition and Payments	page 11
Months with Prorated Tuition	page 11
Late Fees	page 11
Withdrawal from Services	page 11
Interruption in Services	page 11
Changes in Policies	page 11

PRIVACY, SAFETY, AND SECURITY AT OGRS **NEW**

page 12

Security	page 12
Safety	page 12
Cyber Security	page 12

Orton Gillingham



Reading Specialists

Dear OGRS Parents,

As we celebrate our 20th year of teaching students to read, write and spell, we are thrilled to have you with us! I know that this school year will provide you with the satisfaction of seeing your student improve their skills and learn to enjoy reading. We are constantly improving our programs and our reading specialists are constantly learning the most up-to-date pedagogy in structured literacy to give your student the most effective learning experience.

This Family Handbook will fill you in on all the details of working with us at OGRS. If you have been with us for a while, please make sure that you at least peek at the **NEW** items in these pages.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us. I hope that you enjoy your year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Sondag". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Karen Sondag, MA, F/OGA
Owner/Founder/Academic Director
Orton Gillingham Reading Specialists

Orton Gillingham



Reading Specialists

CONTACTING US

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 211122
Eagan, MN 55121

(952) 920-9280 – phone

Check out our beautiful new website at - www.ogreading.com!

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Karen Sunday, MA, F/OGA

Founder/Owner/Academic Director

karen@ogreading.com

Abbe Pedersen

Executive Director

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Kristin Dann

Finance and Operations Manager

kristin@ogreading.com

Pam Mehlin, C-OGRS-V

Training Supervisor

pam@ogreading.com

Katherine Englund

Team Lead/Master Specialist

katherine@ogreading.com

For **billing/financial** questions – contact Kristin Dann.

For **session rescheduling** sessions – contact your Reading Specialist.

For **assessment/progress** report questions – contact your Reading Specialist.

For **Reading Specialists** – email them at firstname@ogreading.com, or contact the office to leave a message. Reading Specialists cannot take calls during student sessions.

2023 – 2024 OGRS Academic Calendar

Calendar is also available at ogreading.com

Monday, September 4, 2023	CLOSED - Labor Day
Tuesday, September 5, 2023	First day of Regular School Year Sessions
Monday, October 9, 2023	OPEN – Columbus/Indigenous People's Day
Thursday & Friday - October 19-20, 2023	OPEN – MEA Week in Minnesota
Saturday, November 11, 2023	OPEN – Veteran's Day
Thursday, November 23 - Sunday, November 26, 2023	CLOSED - Thanksgiving – no sessions
Friday, December 22, 2023 - Monday, January 1, 2024	CLOSED - Winter Holiday – no sessions
Tuesday, January 2, 2024	Regular Sessions Resume
Monday, January 15, 2024	OPEN – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Monday, February 19, 2024	OPEN – President's Day
Friday, May 24, 2024	Last day of Regular Sessions for the school year
Saturday, May 25 – Sunday, June 2, 2024	CLOSED - Memorial Day Break – No Sessions
Monday, June 3, 2024	First day of Regular Summer Sessions
Wednesday, June 19, 2024	OPEN – Juneteenth
Monday, July 1 – Sunday, July 7, 2024	CLOSED – 4 th of July Break – No Sessions
Friday, August 23, 2024	Last Day of Regular Summer Sessions
Saturday, August 24 – Monday, September 2, 2024	CLOSED – Labor Day Break – no sessions

LEARNING AT OGRS

The **most important thing** when attending OGRS is **consistent attendance**. Your student will make the best progress if they don't miss sessions.

The **second most important thing** is consistent completion of **practice work** with your student.

Sessions:

- Sessions begin **on the hour** and are 55 minutes in length.
- We encourage you to sit in on your student's sessions every so often, but this is not a requirement. The more you know about what we're doing, the more easily you can do Practice Work with your student at home and advocate for your child at school.
- There may be Specialists-In-Training or other Reading Specialists observing a session with your child for their own learning.

Attendance and Rescheduling:

Attendance

- Please be on time for your session for your student's best progress.
- The Reading Specialist will remain online for 15 minutes from the start of your session. If your student does not appear within 15 minutes and there is no communication from you in that 15-minutes, that session will be considered a "no show" and is lost.
- If a student has consistently poor attendance, they may be released from our program.

Rescheduling

- If you need a **permanent** change to your schedule – please contact our Executive Director.
- If you **MUST** cancel and reschedule a session:
 - Canceling and rescheduling sessions is done by the parent - **online on TutorBird**. (Found on our website www.ogreading.com/Current Families.)
 - You will receive a username and password to access the portal when we set up your account, along with instructions on how to cancel and reschedule.
 - TutorBird automatically credits you for a session canceled **with** 24-hours-notice but will not issue a credit for a session canceled **without** 24-hours-notice – the session is lost.
 - TutorBird will allow you to make changes 30 days out, with your regular reading specialist.
 - If you are unable to find a date for a makeup session, **contact your Reading Specialist directly** and they will set up a time convenient to both parties.
 - Session credits in TutorBird that are unused after **30 days expire** and are lost.
 - If OGRS is **closed** (Thanksgiving weekend, for example) and you have a session during that time, we will automatically issue a session credit and you may reschedule.

Rescheduling sessions is strongly discouraged.
OGRS may limit the frequency and number of sessions rescheduled.

Student Environment and Management

If a student is dysregulated during an online session and cannot focus on learning, or if the student's environment is disruptive to the student and/or Reading Specialist, the Reading Specialist may call off the session. Some reasons that may result in a session being canceled:

Can be rescheduled (you will receive a makeup credit):

- Technology malfunction

May not be rescheduled (you will **NOT** receive a makeup credit):

- Refusal to participate
- Distraction to the point of not participating
- Eating and drinking
- Not sitting in a stable chair, or not at a desk or table
- Not having the proper equipment or refusal to use it
- Noisy, unsettled environment

Behavior Expectations and Conflict Resolution **NEW**

The educational program that we offer is only effective with the cooperation of the student. We understand that every student has good and bad days, things that trigger them, and special considerations and adaptations needed that are based on a student's neurology.

However, if a student's behavior continually disrupts sessions, for whatever reason, we have in place a procedure to help the student and reading specialist get the most out of a session, while also requiring accountability from the student and parents.

Behavior Intervention:

- Step One:
 - On encountering a difficult student behavior, the Reading Specialist will **tell the student what the behavior expectation is** for the session. If the student continues the behavior, the Reading Specialist will ask to speak to the parent or supervising adult. "I think we'll get more done if you sit in during the session." The Reading Specialist will record session issues in the student notes.
- Step Two:
 - If at the next session the difficult student behavior continues, even with the parent present, the Reading Specialist will ask the student to step out of the room. The parent and Reading Specialist will discuss the best way to modify the behavior.

- Step Three:
 - If the difficult student behavior does not change, then the parent will be contacted by the Executive Director to determine whether they feel the student should continue services or be released from the program.

**Online sessions are not appropriate for every student.
OGRS may discontinue services or a session at any time.**

Sessions on Zoom

Here are the requirements for a successful online student session:

Equipment:

- **Strong, fast, and reliable internet** connection.
- A **laptop** computer with a camera so that the screen can be tipped for the Reading Specialist to see what the student is writing (preferred) **OR a** desktop computer with a camera.
- Please do not use Chrome Book – they do not function well with Zoom.
- The student **MUST** be wearing **OVER THE EAR headphones with a noise-canceling microphone** at every session.
- For those who want more Zoom information – a link to [Zoom system requirements](#).

Environment:

- A **quiet, distraction-free** place that is **well-lit**.
- Students should be in a stationary chair at a **desk or table** cleared of clutter.
- The table must have enough room for their computer/screen and for writing on an 8 x 11 piece of paper, in front of the computer or to the side of their keyboard.
- Students may not lay on the floor, or their bed, or the couch, etc.
- An **adult nearby** to help with technical issues.
- No food or beverages.
- No animals or siblings in the room.
- Their **materials ready to go** next to them:
 - Wordbook
 - Spiral notebook or lined paper
 - **Dark pen (no pencils)**

Each student/family will be given their own Zoom link to use for their entire time with us. Even if you have a makeup session with a different Reading Specialist, you still use the same link.

Technology Issues

Our staff is not trained in technology support, but we are willing to troubleshoot minor Zoom issues or suggest tech solutions. If you have an ongoing technology issue, you will need to address it with your internet provider or other technology professional. If a student's technology issues cannot be resolved, services may be discontinued by OGRS.

Practice Work

Daily practice is essential for building the brain pathways necessary for fluent and automatic reading and writing skills. It is meant to maximize the program's effectiveness so that you see results as quickly as possible.

About Practice Work

- Do practice work every day, they do not have **a session**.
- Do practice work **WITH** your student.
- Look for the assignments in your **Lesson Notes** from your Reading Specialist.
- Please ask your **Reading Specialist** if you have questions about Practice Work.

Doing the Practice Work with your Student

Practice Work has two parts:

- 1. Assigned Work – 10 minutes**
- 2. Oral Reading - 15 minutes**

1. Assigned Practice Work

- Is assigned by the Reading Specialist
- Is repetition of skills already learned. (If it's unfamiliar to your student, skip it and let your Reading Specialist know.)
- Stop after **about 10 minutes**.
- May include:
 - handwriting (monitor letter formation)
 - playing a game
 - reading word lists aloud (monitor for correct pronunciation)
 - completing a worksheet, then reading it aloud

During Assigned Practice Work:

- **Check work and make corrections** as they do the work, for immediate feedback on errors.
- If your student is having **difficulty** figuring out a word, say, **“Let’s trace.”** The student **says each sound** in the word as they trace it on a solid surface with the first two fingers of their writing hand.
- If needed, have your student break down **multisyllable words** by using a pencil to divide the word on the paper, then pronounce the syllable.

2. Oral Reading

- Student must read for at least **15 minutes aloud to someone who can monitor**
- Specific reading material may be assigned by the Reading Specialist, or you may choose something.

- May include: (anything they can comfortably read)
books from school, menus, websites, signs on buses, newspapers, their regular homework, cereal boxes - use your imagination!

Materials

Except for pen and paper, all learning materials are supplied by OGRS and are included in tuition. Sometime after the first couple of sessions, we will mail an OGRS tote bag with a starter kit of various materials. If you need *replacement* items, they are available at an additional charge.

Assessments

We perform an initial student assessment at their first session, then perform an assessment three times per year, every four months from the start date. Results will be emailed to the adult student or parent that will compare the student's initial assessment and new assessment scores. We can arrange a time to discuss the tests and scores with you.

Progress Notes

Your Reading Specialist will send you progress notes, comments, and practice work instructions in your TutorBird portal. Doing this weekly allows us to connect with you on a regular basis and keep you up to date on your student's progress.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Enrollment Periods

There are two Enrollment Periods each year – Regular School Year and Summer. You must fill out an application for each Enrollment Period. We will send you an application link and reminders when it is time to apply for the next Enrollment Period.

Students will be assigned a Reading Specialist and session dates and times after filling out the application, paying the application deposit and signing the application.

Application Deposit

A \$500 non-refundable Application Deposit is required for each enrollment period. We apply this deposit to the first month's tuition each enrollment period.

Service Contract

The application for the enrollment period is your Service Contract and payment authorization. This application must be signed, and all payment accounts up to date to receive services.

Tuition and Payments

Tuition includes initial student assessment, services according to the **Service Plan** chosen, curriculum materials, reassessments every four months, progress notes, guided practice work, meetings with Reading Specialists, and communications via email and phone. Specialists are also available for brief phone calls or to answer emails from the student's school staff, if a waiver has been signed. Meetings with the student's school are an additional expense.

Payments are made automatically on the first of every month that you receive services and can be paid in two ways:

1. Recurring direct withdrawal from your checking account via ACH – no charge.
2. Recurring charge to a credit card – 2.5% surcharge to customer.

Months with Prorated Tuition

OGRS is closed several weeks of the year, for holidays or for program preparation. Your tuition **will be prorated for the weeks the center is closed**, and no makeup sessions will be necessary. Closed dates are on the OGRS Calendar, on our website, and in the calendar in this document.

Late Fees

All payments are due within 30 days of receipt of invoice. Payments not made within 30 days will result in a \$25 late fee. There is a \$25 fee for any payment which results in an insufficient funds error from your bank, **and** an additional \$25 late fee for that same transaction.

Withdrawal from Services

OGRS Services may be canceled by the adult student or parent of the student or withdrawn by OGRS at any time and without notice; however, there is no refund for sessions missed if the student withdraws after the monthly payment has been made.

Interruption of Services

If you withdraw from services for a period of one calendar month but wish to hold your reserved day, time, and instructor, there is a \$500 non-refundable fee. If the period is longer than one calendar month, you must cancel services and re-apply.

If you withdraw from services for any reason, then reenroll - your tuition for that enrollment period will be charged at the current tuition rate. e.g. – "Taking off for the summer." A new deposit may be required for registration in the new enrollment period.

Change in Policies

All policies listed in this Family Handbook are subject to change without notice.

PRIVACY, SAFETY AND SECURITY **NEW**

The privacy, safety, and security of our families, students, and employees is very important to us. We want you to know where we stand and what measures we have taken and/or will take to protect everyone involved.

Security

- Every person employed by OGRS signs a confidentiality agreement, protecting our families' personal and payment information.
- We do not share your information with anyone who does not need to have it to instruct your student.
- We do not discuss students with those outside our organization without written parental permission.

Safety

- Every person employed by OGRS undergoes a criminal background check.
- We do not record your student's sessions.
- We have a strict sexual misconduct policy. Behavior of a sexual nature has no place in the classroom or in a business environment. Sexual misconduct of any kind, occurring virtually or in-person before, during, or after a reading session, by parent, student, Reading Specialist, or any other person in the virtual vicinity, will be dealt with severely.
- Examples of behavior that will not be tolerated include, but are not limited to:
 - leering, staring, sexual flirtations or propositions
 - conversation containing sexual innuendo and/or of an overly personal nature
 - looking at or displaying sexual images or materials of any kind
 - sexual slurs, epithets, threats, verbal abuse, derogatory comments
- Any person who feels they have been the target of sexual misconduct or abuse within or while working with Orton Gillingham Reading Specialists should contact: Our Executive Director at 952-920-9280.

Cyber Security

We require our staff and our Reading Specialists to secure their electronic devices by:

- maintaining strong passwords
- having secure and encrypted Wi-Fi service, firewalls, and anti-virus software
- refraining from saving student documents on personal desktops
- having the latest security software, updated web browsers/operating systems