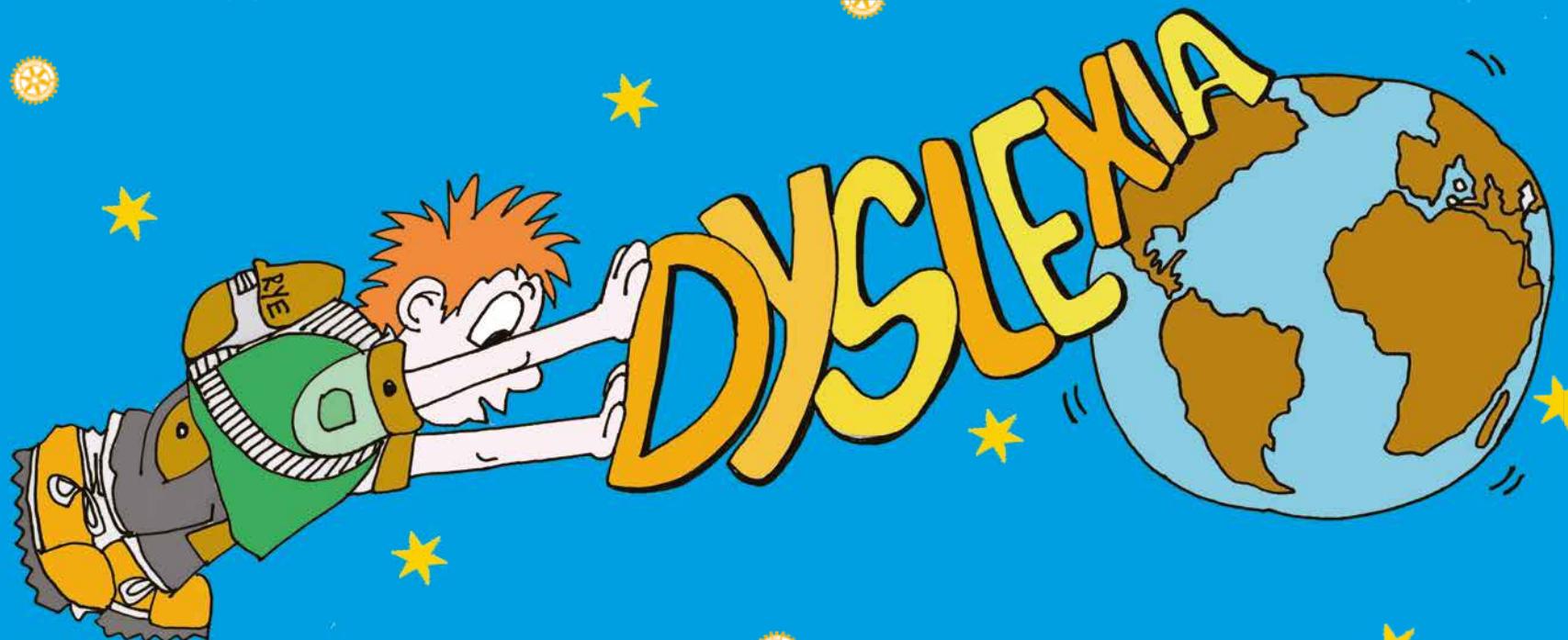


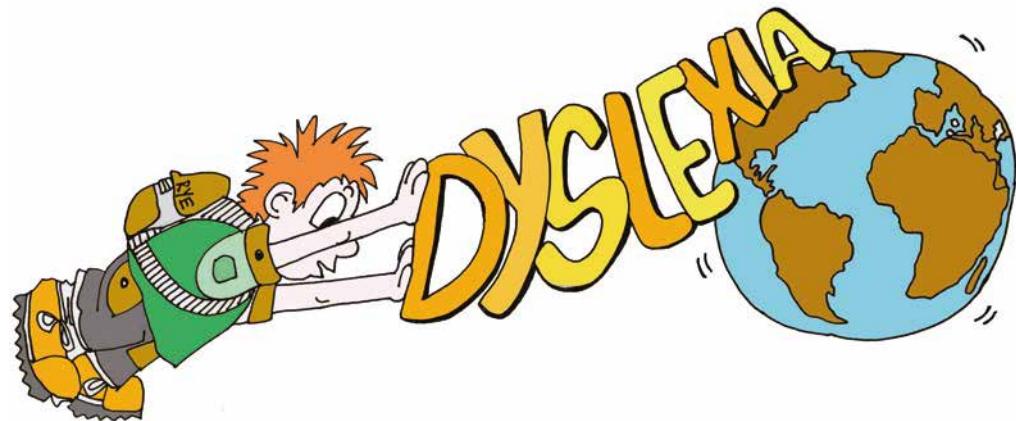
# RYE AND SLD\*



MICHELA BETTINELLI



# RYE AND SLD



Michela Bettinelli



**Rotary**  
DISTRETTO 2050 - ITALIA



If you want to read it with text to speech, you will find a pdf on rotary web site. If you don't have text to speech software on your computer, you will also find audio book at the same place in both languages (Italian and English).

Illustrator Letizia Bellini  
Graphic layout Amedeo Viciguerra



# Rotary

DISTRETTO 2050 - ITALIA

OMAR BORTOLETTI - Governatore 2015-2016



Rotary International and its Club are at the service of the communities all over the world, each of them with their own peculiarities and their special needs.

Rotarians, during decades, have improved their effort in solving these special needs, realizing a lot of different projects.

Following that idea, Rotary International representing 5th action road “young people”, and the RYE commission is part of that.

This new project perfectly meets the goals of that road: it promotes social, scientific, but best of all humane values, by opening a very selecting and carefully studied road for student with SLD to apply to RYE.

I think that working together, enthusiastic and keen to put our time and professionalism in helping people in needs, we can achieve any goals we desire. “ALL TOGETHER”, this is the magic word to change difficulties in opportunities. That way we are offering to this young people to experience success and joy of life, and to be witness all around the word about Rotarian project.

I wish to all the participants in this wonderful project to be successful and I promise them that they will always have Rotary's and my personal support.

**Omar Bortoletti**  
Governatore Distretto Rotary 2050

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# **Rotary Youth Exchange**

Rotary Youth Exchange (RYE) is a Rotary International student exchange program for students in secondary school. The parent Rotary organization, Rotary International, has instituted a Certification Program which assesses individual RYE programs with a primary focus on quality control and student safety. Rotary groups are not permitted to participate in RYE programs without first obtaining RI Certification.

Many Rotarians are involved in various aspects of the youth exchange program including student selection, compliance with immigration and Rotary regulations, hosting, and supporting students. Each student is sponsored by a Rotary Club and Rotary District in their home country and is hosted by a Rotary Club and Rotary District in their host country.

Students reap many rewards from an exchange experience, including:

- ⇒ serving as an ambassador for their country and community;
- ⇒ benefiting from immersion in another culture while adapting to a new way of life;
- ⇒ making lifelong friends, not only within the host country but also with other students from around the world;
- ⇒ learning about the practices and accomplishments of people in other countries;
- ⇒ returning home with a greater sense of the world and a deeper understanding of themselves and their culture;
- ⇒ assuming leadership roles shaped by lessons from the experience;
- ⇒ building memories that will be with them forever.

There are three types of exchanges:

- ⇒ Long-term: this exchange is open to students ages 15-19 and usually lasts 10-12 months. Most students are 16-18 years old during their exchange year. The student lives with more than one family in the host country and is required to attend school. Long-term exchanges may be extended to include part or all of the holiday/vacation periods immediately before or after the academic year.
- ⇒ Short-term: this exchange is open to students ages 15-19 and ranges from several days to several weeks. It often takes place when school is not in session, and usually does not include an academic program. Short-term exchanges typically involve a Rotary district-organized exchange of a son or daughter between two families, but they may also take the form of international youth camps or tours that bring together students from many countries.
- ⇒ New Generations: this specialized short-term exchange lasts from three weeks to three months and is open to young people ages 18-25. This program may include a vocational element.

Each district chooses the types of exchanges it participates in. Because each district administers its own Youth Exchange program, age requirements may differ from one district to another.

With this project RYE will become an opportunity also for young people with specific learning difficulties.

...There are ways  
To get there  
If you care enough  
For the living  
Make a little space  
Make a better place...

## PREFACE

Recent attention both national and international to the students with specific learning disabilities has led to observe that the incidence of this phenomenon is far from negligible. The prevalence of this disorder in Europe and United States is considerable.

**Italy 4%**

**England 4% - 10% (BDA)**

**France 6% - 8% (ffdys)**

**United States 10% - 15% (Dyslexia research institute)**

These numbers presuppose the necessity for specific and structured intervention respecting the social needs of students with SLD, with the goal to concretely support the different educational phases, unavoidable to reach intended results in all areas of education including school and therapy but also family and social life in general.

Autonomy is a concrete expression of the will and desires of each individual; it is a necessity in achieving certain goal. For students with SLD, autonomy is the most important point in process of informing, learning and communication in all forms, without depending and relying on parents, teachers or peers.

A lot of children with SLD after clinical assessment start therapy and “habilitation treatment”. However, they are starting their path with low self-esteem, without faith in future, they give up in front of difficulties,

avoid tasks and examinations. In order to cope with their everyday school life they are on the border of bullying and being bullied.

These closed circles produce feelings of failure and hopelessness. They believe that they have no control over the situation, even when they do. This learned helplessness in children with SLD leads to no expectation of success in any task before starting the task, minimal effort during accomplishing the task, attributing failure to internal causes and success to external ones.

## **WHAT IS SLD?**

The specific learning disorder stands for several complex disorders, which are the subject of specific research in psychology, educational science and neuroscience. In the last few years many considerably different interpretative models have been developed, based on different scientific positions. But, nowadays they can't be considered conflicting and antagonistic, rather supplementing and complementary.

Specific learning disorder includes dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia.

These are the definition we can find in DSM–V and definition from BDA (British Dyslexia Association):

*Specific learning disorder is overall diagnosis, incorporating deficits that impact academic achievement... The diagnosis requires persistent difficulties in reading, writing, arithmetic, or mathematical reasoning skills during formal years of schooling. Symptoms may include inaccurate or slow and effortful reading, poor written expression that lacks clarity, difficulties remembering number, facts, or inaccurate mathematical reasoning.*

*Current academic skills must be well below the average range of scores in culturally and linguistically appropriate tests of reading, writing, or mathematics. The individual's difficulties must not be better explained by developmental, neurological, sensory (vision or hearing), or motor disorders and must significantly interfere with academic achievement, occupational performance, or activities of daily living. (DSM - V)<sup>1</sup>*

*Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty which mainly affects the development of literacy and language re-*

*lated skills. It is likely to be present at birth and to be lifelong in its effects. It is characterised by difficulties with phonological processing, rapid naming, working memory, processing speed, and the automatic development of skills that may not match up to an individual's other cognitive abilities. It tends to be resistant to conventional teaching methods, but its effects can be mitigated by appropriately specific intervention, including the application of information technology and supportive counselling.* (BDA)<sup>2</sup>

Because of the learning differences described above it was necessary to modify already functional system of exchange and adjust it to necessities of students with SLD. This project tries to give opportunity to students with SLD to experience an exchange in a different country, a new life, a new family, a new culture and different school system. And that way widens the perspective of traditional exchange to specific group of students and positively affects society in general.

<sup>1</sup> DSM-5. Manuale diagnostico e statistico dei disturbi mentali.

<sup>2</sup> British Dyslexia Association: <http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>

## THE NEEDS



The increasing number of applications for the student exchange and the increasing number of diagnosis of SLD as a result of a widespread training of teachers and informing the families motivated RYE to make the project really accessible to all students.

It should be considered that many students with dyslexia have a low self-esteem and they think they are not able to afford a challenge like spending one year abroad.

Psychological studies show that students with SLD have negative perception of their own capacities, abilities and potentials and that perception spreads to all areas of their life.

This project emphasizes that students with SLD, when they are moved from scholastic context, show admirable qualities and talents which they need to learn to recognize and use. They are creative, intuitive and innovative. Many of them stand out with high ambitions and motivations.

Because of the negative perception that students with SLD have about their abilities and negative view of their classmates and teachers, they don't consider the programs of student exchange possible or available for them.

The posters about student exchange hanging in the hallways of the schools are an alien object that they are not even taking into account.

Moreover, very often students with SLD are not even informed of the existence of these exchanges for various reasons: they are not involved in direct communication about the exchange or the promotional materials are written in the way that students with SLD will never stop and read them.

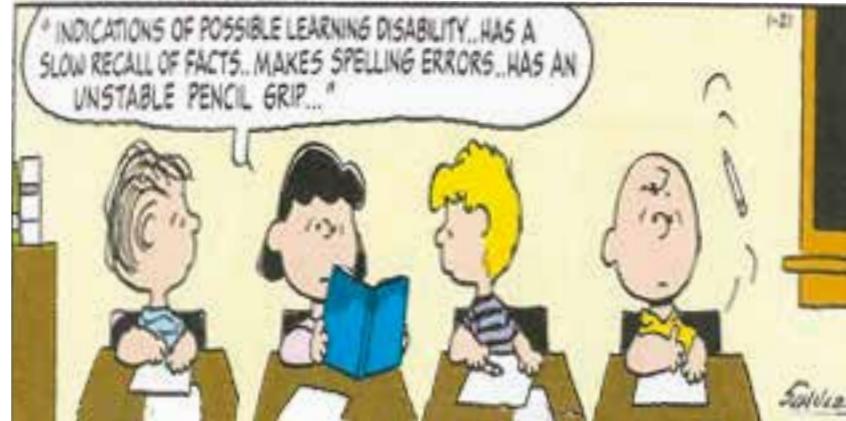
Even families, despite being aware of opportunities like student exchange, don't encourage their child to apply because they think he or she is not able to face that kind of challenge.

In some other cases, families really would like their child to apply for the exchange but after reading the selection criteria, they realize that some of them automatically exclude their boy or girl.

Sometimes the lack of communication about this possibility is made by teachers, because they are making a non-requested pre-selection by discouraging students with SLD to apply. Unfortunately, they are not considering at all that the exchange proposed by RYE is primarily a life experience and not a mere school experience-based exchange.

For this reason, these guidelines have been drawn up.

You can find inside this book directions which involve ROTARY committees, SCHOOL, and FAMILIES.



<sup>3</sup> Bettinelli 2015 "Disturbi specifici dell'apprendimento e Rotary Youth exchange", in DISLESSIA - Giornale italiano di ricerca clinica e applicativa, Erickson, pp. 217 - 227, V. 2 maggio 2015.

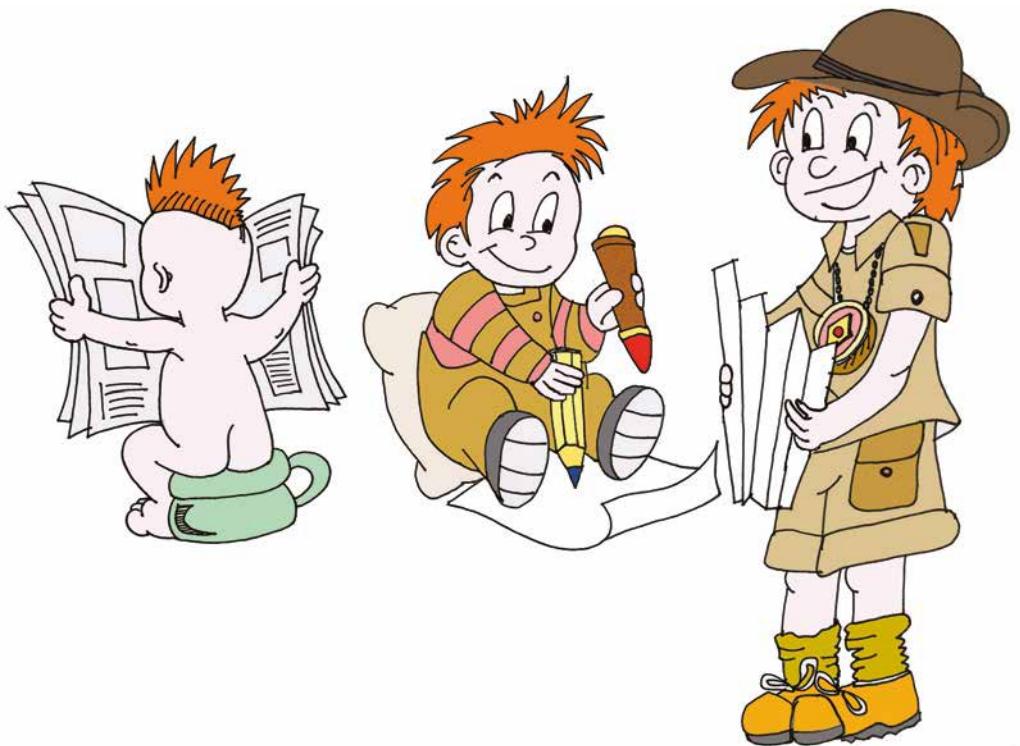
## THE FIRST EXPERIENCES

The project started in 2012, based on initial ideas of dr. Michela Bettinelli, specialized in learning techniques at University of San Marino, and in Minnesota, USA for English, and in Canada .

The project was shared with Giorgio Giambiasi, Rotary Youth Exchange Chairman district 2050 and introduced in setting of activities of District Commission for Actions and Projects for New Generations linked to the activities of RYE Commission in order to collaborate and make international exchange of students with SLD possible and give them the opportunity for individual growth, didactical and learning improvement and psychological confirmation.

To fulfill the goals of the project, scientific findings and practical experiences were taken into consideration.

Rotary Youth Exchange offered the appropriate institutional framework for initial exchange.



RYE Commission and Dr. Michela Bettinelli, responsible for teaching learning strategies in AID (Italian Association of Dyslexia) Afterschool in Cremona, started the program of exchange for students with SLD in 2011

## MICHELE'S STORY

Once upon a time there was a dyslexic student: Michele.

Michele was attending the 3rd year of a professional school in Cremona, Italy.

He had the typical peculiarity of a dyslexic student. He had an additional problem: at the end of the 3rd year Michele had to pass through the qualification exams of his school.

At the beginning, everything seemed very difficult and impossible to overcome: exams, dyslexia, not speaking English at all, not very good notes at school. His destination was United States.

Michele had a very long period of training to deal with this new challenge. Nothing was left to chance. We thought about what kind of learning strategies use at school and what kind of IC tools he could use during the year. Michele was prepared to have plan: A, B, C, D, etc ...

Working with him was really exciting and a way to learn many new things. Training was full of mutual trust and we tried to convince each other that: "it will be ok, everything will be ok!!!"





Michele Bertoglio

27 luglio 2012 - Clarion, IA, United States -

And now is over and I am on the way home... Anyway I need say that was a beautiful year here in the U.S.A., one year that I can't forget, one year started don't so good cause my English was so bad and so I could not talk to anyone, but anyway I have visited new country and see a beautiful thing, attended a great school with a beautiful teacher. Now I need say thanks so so so much for my host family that they bear me for 9 months and above all the last months that I was not always at home, a beautiful family, very very unselfish and generous, I will never forget what they have done for me. I have also known new people, people that I really want see again, but also people that was good see just for one year.

Half year I known she, a wonderful people, amazing, she helped me for everything, for my English, for make a new friends, she helped me in everything... ❤ i am already done this exchange, for many and many thing I want come back, but I also want stay here...

I will remember every single day this year in America...

And was the most beautiful experience of my life....

Thanks everybody...!!!! ❤ ❤

[Non mi piace più](#) · [Commenta](#) · [Condividi](#)

*“... In the past, years in school were very difficult because he didn’t have diagnosis and any support until the age of 13. In that hard period, Michele was particularly stressed, often depressed or reacting with rage. All these difficulties were always connected exclusively to school”.*

His story concludes here, with double end: for Michele his motivation and self-esteem is so grown that now he is attending second year at University (the goal that was hypothetically absolutely unattainable before the exchange). For Rotary: discovering new value in already well-established project and decision

After this long training Michele flew to IOWA in august 2011, with a bag full of hope, many learning strategies and some IC Tools.

The first time we used Skype to communicate, not only about school, but also about his new life in general, the conversation was really short. Michele got used to USA school very fast and all his potentialities were showing up, thanks also to USA school system. Everything he has done, he did it alone, with his own strength.

In his new life, one step at the time, he started to stand out for his excellent ability in hand craft and an amazing ability in photography. All his “art products” are now spread between his host family and school.

to walk determinately forward in helping students with SLD.

In this moment another girl just came back from USA with identical success and new perspectives in life.

Other boys and girls will leave and come and that way the project will develop for the well being of students with SLD but also schools they attend and families they visit.



## NATIONAL SETTING



Although in Italian context both legislative (law 170/2010 and the following Guide Lines) and learning settings for students with SLD are assured, there was a lack of project described above, which beside knowledge acquisition gives opportunity for individual growth and psychological confirmation.

## INTERNATIONAL SETTINGS



Also in international settings with a plenty of initiatives and organizations dedicated to mobility of youth in different nations, there are no formal and organized networks regarding this specific population, with analysis of specific needs, conditions of application and perspective for success. Since in some countries scholastic and educational environment and society in general is already highly informed and prepared for this form of disability, that guarantees fair, unprejudiced and suitable reception in the school and most likely also in the host family.

Moreover, almost every country has associations that deal with dyslexia, thus they can spread these guidelines to involve students with SLD in their country to this Rotary program.

Here you can find the most important international associations:

## **EDA**

*“The European Dyslexia Association is a European non-governmental umbrella organisation for national and regional associations of people with dyslexia and other specific learning differences, children’s parents, professionals and researchers.*

*The EDA currently has regional and national effective members in 21 EU countries plus Switzerland, San Marino and Norway and Adherent member organisations; in all 40 member organisations in 24 European countries.*

*The EDA is a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in official relation with UNESCO; a Full Member of the European Disability Forum (EDF); and has Consultative Status with the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA).”*

<http://eda-info.eu/>

## **IDA**

*“The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) is an international organization that concerns itself with the complex issues of dyslexia. The IDA membership consists of a variety of professionals in partnership with dyslexics and their families and all others interested in the Association’s mission.*

*We believe that all individuals have the right to achieve their potential, that individual learning abilities can be strengthened and that social, educational and cultural barriers to language acquisition and use must be removed.*

*The IDA actively promotes effective teaching approaches and related clinical educational intervention strategies for dyslexics. We support and encourage interdisciplinary research. We facilitate the exploration of the causes and early identification of dyslexia and are committed to the responsible and wide dissemination of research based knowledge.”*

<http://eida.org/>

## **ADA** (Australian Dyslexia Association)

*“To educate our society, schools, TAFE, universities and workplaces about why individuals with dyslexia learn differently and the type of language instruction, provisions and/or accommodations they require. To promote dyslexia friendly communities, schools, tertiary and workplaces.”*

<http://dyslexiaassociation.org.au/index.php?page=contact-ada>

# OBJECTIVES



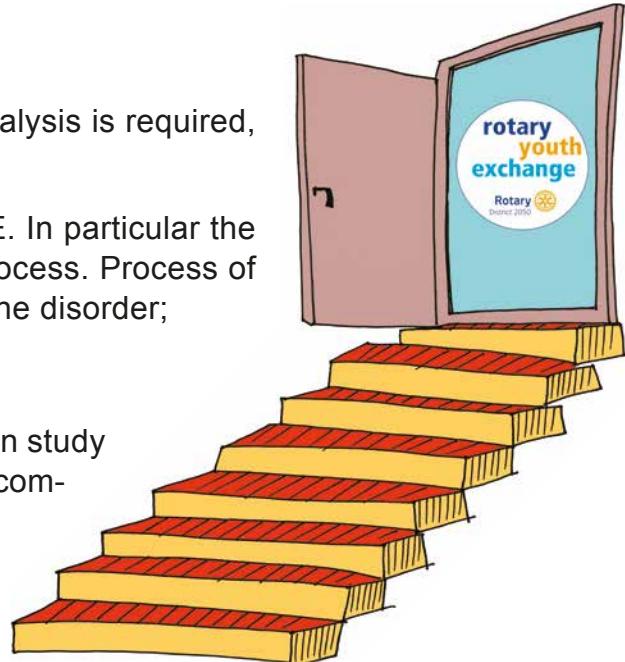
The aims of this project are:

- ⇒ To intervene in situations of learning disabilities:
  - ▷ Consolidation of learning in a different school system;
  - ▷ Learning the foreign language of the host country, not only as a school subject, but as a means of daily communication, based on oral communication and by providing the opportunity for successful development of the personality.
- ⇒ To widen the perspectives of the RYE through involvement in youth exchange of students with SLD, recognizing the qualities and sensibility of RYE relevant for this project.
- ⇒ To individualize the training of experts involved in the students exchange.
- ⇒ To organize suitable forms of monitoring and support during the exchange and formalize the feedback of experiences after the exchange.

# ROTARY GUIDE LINES

In order to start this project systematically some in-depth analysis is required, specifically about some main points:

- ⇒ to modify, with some flexibility, the rules of access to RYE. In particular the way we are considering school results in the selection process. Process of selection has to take in to account the characteristics of the disorder;
- ⇒ to acquire the functional diagnosis of the student;
- ⇒ to involve an expert (internal or external to Rotary) who can study the diagnosis and then inform the other members of the commission about strength and difficulties of the candidate;
- ⇒ to ask for a report made by the teacher or tutor who is following the student about his/her learning abilities and the way he/she is learning (if possible);
- ⇒ to organize an obligatory meeting of the candidate and the external or internal expert, to understand concretely how the student uses tools, computerized or not, and what kind of strategies and skills he/she developed during his/her school career. During that meeting expert will get an insight about candidates abilities and potentials;
- ⇒ to modify forms of communication to increase RYE effective accessibility also for student with SLD, because presentation can make a big difference, both to readability and initial visual impact;
- ⇒ to distribute printed guidelines to schools, local associations, neuropsychiatry;



- ⇒ to publish PDF on the web sites, with the opportunity to download and listen a recorded voices reading the text or use text to speech on pdf;
- ⇒ fonts should be rounded, allow for space between letters, reflect ordinary cursive writing and be “easy on the eye”. Fonts should space letters rather than running them closely together;
- ⇒ line spacing between paragraphs to break up text should be used;
- ⇒ text should be written in short simple sentences;
- ⇒ instructions should be given clearly;
- ⇒ long sentences of explanation should be avoided;
- ⇒ long and complicated sentences can be difficult for the reader to navigate and comprehend;
- ⇒ pictures should be used to evocate the concept that is being explained;

## **POST SELECTION**

### **OUTGOING**

After the process of selection student should be trained and informed. Rye should insure the quality of the training of appropriate strategies which are required for the exchange.

- ⇒ Depending on the destinations, the expert will provide tips about possible strategies and about some specific IT tools to use during the year abroad.
- ⇒ It is very important to provide at least one day of special training for outgoing students, to identify the specific skills of each of them and allow their development and success in the destination; to check the motivations; to support expectations.

- ⇒ Students should be instructed to prepare feedback about their experience at the end of the year abroad. Students are supposed to share their experience (not only within the club) and become promoters of this initiative. There are multiple benefits from this: talking about their experience increases their self-esteem while sharing the information with other students with similar disabilities can motivate their peers to apply for the project.

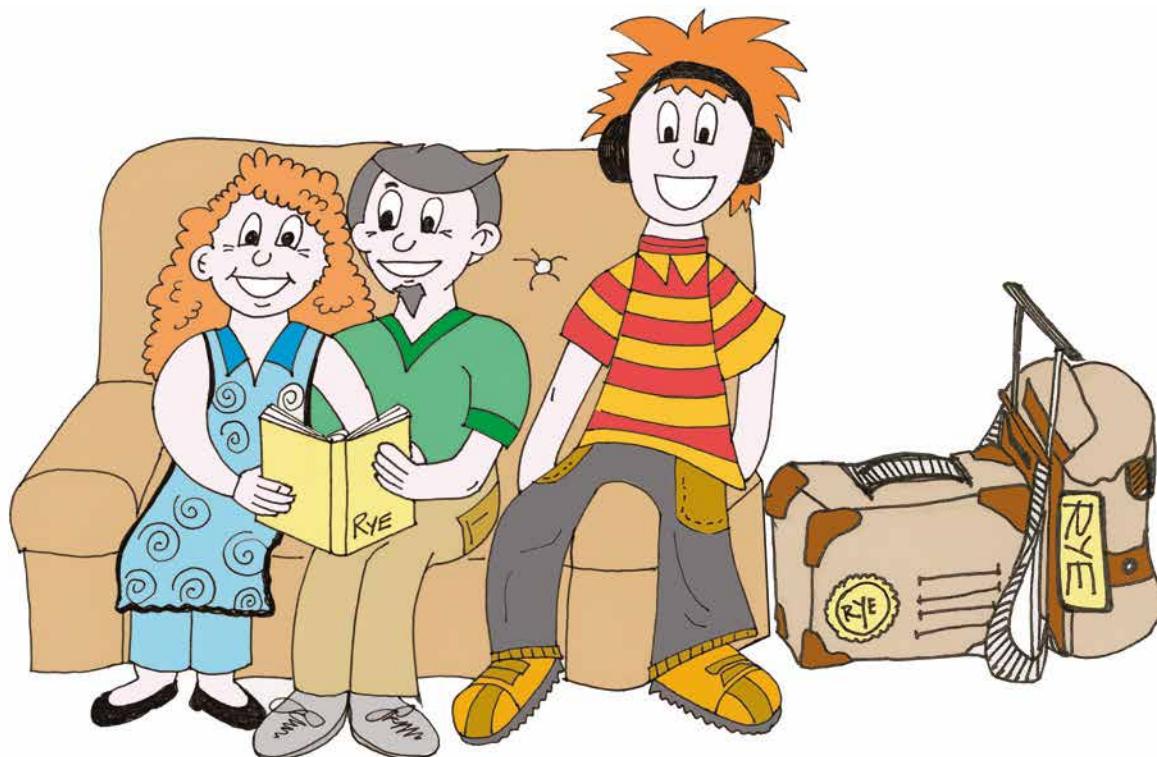
## INBOUND

It is important to guarantee the quality of experience through monitoring and support:

- ⇒ depending on the place of origin, provide students tips about possible strategies and about some specific IT tools to use during the year abroad;
- ⇒ hosting Rotary Club should provide at least one day of special training for incoming students, to identify the specific skills of each of them and allow their development and success in the destination; to check the motivations; to support expectations;
- ⇒ students should be instructed to prepare feedback about their experience at the end of the year abroad. Students are supposed to share their experience (not only within the club) and become promoters of this initiative. There are multiple benefits from this: talking about their experience increases their self-esteem while sharing the information with other students with similar difficulties can motivate their peers to apply for the project.

## FAMILY GUIDE LINES





# ORGANIZATIONAL LAYOUT



In order to participate in the exchange, families have to wait for the official announcement of their local district. This information can be found online in Rotary web site.

The call for participation will be promoted in different ways, through different channels, but mostly through the school and associations.

The family will receive more detailed information about the exchange before making a decision about the pre-registration and before the interview with the expert. The expert's contact will be reported by the district in ways that the districts will consider appropriate.

The family must provide during the process of application all the information about diagnosis:

- ⇒ SLD update diagnosis.

## OUTGOING STUDENTS FAMILIES



- ⇒ Creating an encouraging atmosphere in the family and thereby helping the student to make the decision to enter the program and to wait the exchange with enthusiasm and positive excitement.
- ⇒ Always show confidence in the possibility of success, noting that even a possible return home would not be a failure.
- ⇒ Avoid the word failure. Explain that everybody needs a period to get used to the new life.
- ⇒ Work with the student about tools and strategies and share with him.
- ⇒ Explain that the exchange will not be about how he/she is good at school, but it will be about changing life and being active participant in a new culture, finding new friends.
- ⇒ The school must not be the focus and the aim of the exchange.
- ⇒ Share with him/her any kind of decision and increase his/her enthusiasm.

# INBOUND HOST FAMILIES



- ⇒ Building a positive atmosphere and pleasant surroundings for communication.
- ⇒ Share the idea that the school is important but more important are the people.
- ⇒ The most important quality of the Host family is patience: if the exchange students can't express his thoughts in the new language, help them to communicate in different ways. Communication shouldn't become frustration!

## SCHOOL GUIDE LINES

To promote the opportunity of this exchange to student with SLD without a priori excluding them.

The school must be supportive in the moment of decision: conversations with the student can help to exploit his/her potentials and ability to succeed.

Teachers have the key role in the selection of the students because their obligation is to fill in the forms, which will be sent to the hosting school. We suggest adding to this form a special report about student potentials (and not reporting only about what he/she cannot do!).

This kind of report will be very helpful for the new teachers at the beginning of the experience in the new school.

If there will be another year of school at the end of the exchange, it is important to give information about preparation for the exams student will have to take when he/she will come back home.

Before examination we suggest to talk to the student and check if he/she has introduced some new tools, has changed the way he/she is learning and to investigate what kind of exams student was get used to.



# WELCOME FOREIGNER STUDENTS WITH SLD



TEACHERS have to take into account student's school achievements and qualitative results, as well as their compensatory mechanisms and strategies available to them.

- ⇒ Exchange of views with Rotary expert.
- ⇒ Talk to student to find out and understand the way he/she is learning and what kind of strategies and ICT tools he/she is using.
- ⇒ Help the student to choose correct and appropriate tools and strategies to approach to the new language and to manage with eventually new school subjects.
- ⇒ Giving continuous feedback on student learning process.

- ⇒ Trying to give the opportunity to the student to be an active participant during lectures.
- ⇒ Taking care about his/her learning differences and different school system from which he/she is belonging to.
- ⇒ By the way, all the good praxis teachers are usually doing with students with SLD in their country are most of the time the best one also for the incoming students.

## REMARKS ABOUT THE HOST COUNTRY CHOICE



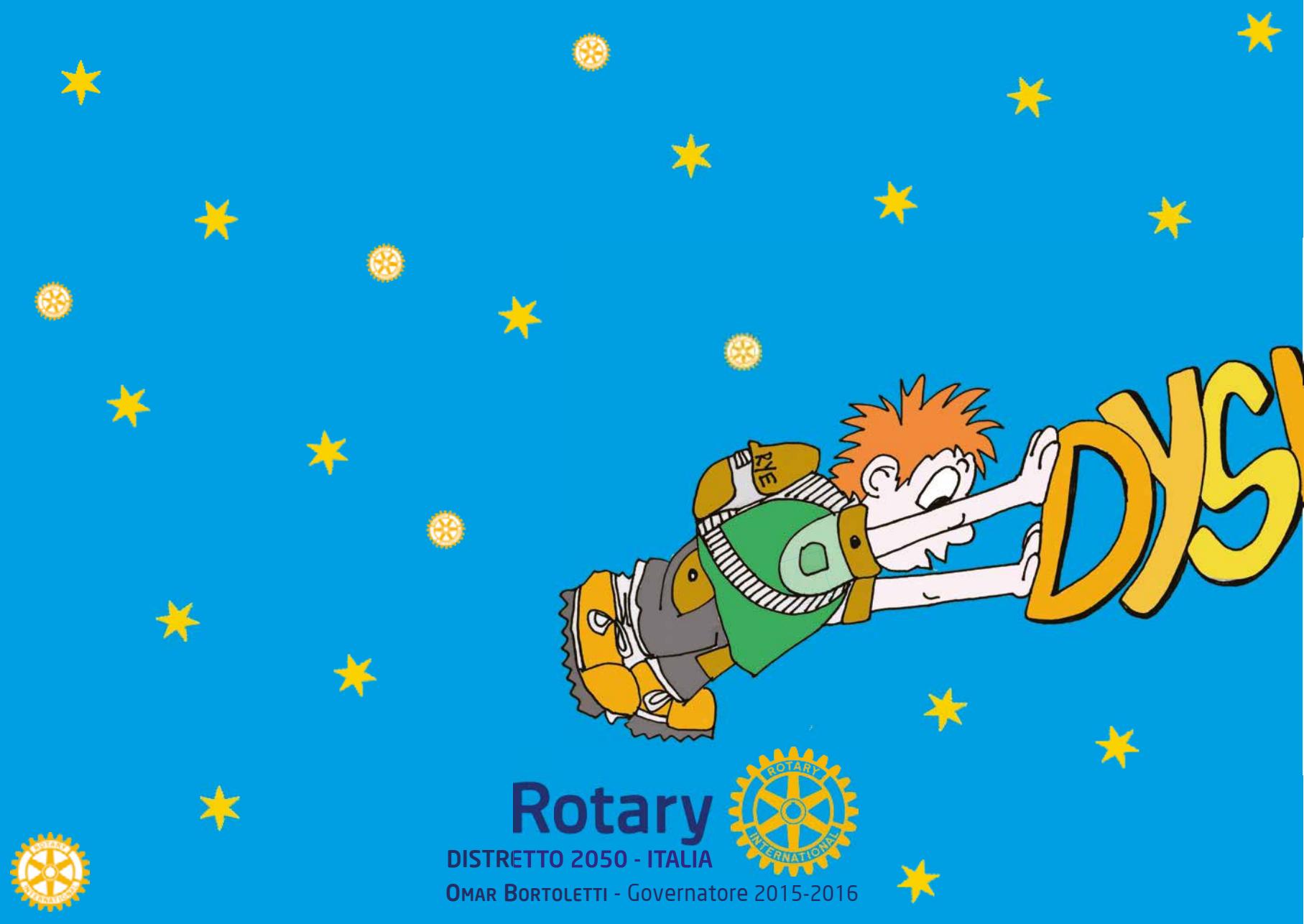
It's important to think carefully about the choice of destination, before selection and especially after the selection.

Although many countries are fascinating, it should be preferred to choose a place where school attendance is similar to that of the country of origin, to avoid problems of study at home at the end of the exchange.

For example, if an Italian student will chose a final destination which involves only three months of school and after that the school year ends, the student will have to take into account that he/she will have to prepare for more exams to be admitted in the last year of school.

Obviously, nothing is impossible, but awareness about what will happen at the end of the exchange it's essential to have a peaceful and fruitful year abroad. In this way there will be no "bad surprises" because of misunderstandings.





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