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Providing support to people with learning disabilities so that they can develop to their full potential.

## President's Message

### LDAA Office

#145, 11343-61 Avenue  
Edmonton, AB T6H 1M3  
Phone (780) 448-0360  
Fax (780) 438-0665  
info@ldaa.ca  
www.ldaa.ca

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The provincial newsletter is published three times a year as an Alberta supplement to the **National** newsletter of the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. It is distributed to all members of the LDAA and its chapters.

Contributions are welcome. Deadline for the next issue is March 30, 2005. For writer's guidelines, visit [www.ldaa.ca/newsletters](http://www.ldaa.ca/newsletters).

Here it is the start of 2005, the centennial year of the province of Alberta and a time to celebrate how far this province has come in the past 100 years.

It is also time to celebrate the 37th anniversary of the incorporation of what began as the Alberta Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, and is now the Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta. Today we know that the challenges faced by those with learning disabilities cross the entire lifespan.

That recognition was clearly evident at the November Provincial Conference on Learning Disabilities in Red Deer where the program offered a wide range of sessions. The Red Deer organizing committee did a first rate job of organizing a wonderful conference which addressed many of the current and emerging issues across the broad continuum that makes up learning disabilities.

Work at the provincial level continues in a number of important areas, including an early assessment and screening pilot project that we are working on in conjunction with Alberta Learning. Designed to identify at risk student, it is based on a model that has worked successfully in Ontario. We are excited about the impact that this project can have for kindergarten teachers as they look for reliable methods to identify such children so that strategies can be put in place as early as possible.

We are also continuing to watch the next steps related to the Assessment and Identification of Special Needs Students draft that was released last spring by Alberta Learning. A follow up focus group session was held mid December to discuss concerns raised by professionals who reviewed the initial draft. We are hopeful that this will result in significant changes to the document.

As we look ahead to the New Year, the board will be exploring how we can better meet the needs of individuals across the province with learning disabilities. Recommendations have come forward from the Chapter Development Working Group related to a new approach in how we support those who live in small urban and rural communities. I am excited about where this discussion will lead us.

As your membership comes up for renewal, I hope that you will choose to stay involved and be a part of a new year filled with exciting challenges. Please join us as we continue our work to "support people with learning disabilities so that they can develop to their full potential".

LDAA President

## Congratulations!

There were two Awards of Achievement presented at the 2004 Provincial Conference during the President's Breakfast. These award recipients are well deserving of this recognition due to their long standing contributions to people with learning disabilities, and we are proud to have their support.

### Judy Craig

Judy Craig is well known within the Edmonton area for her focus on students with learning disabilities. Judy has served as principal of the Academy at King Edward and is now Principal/Consultant providing service in the area of high school education at the Centre for Education, Edmonton Public Schools. Judy received her B.Ed. From Chicago Teacher's College and her M.Ed. at the University of Alberta. She is a lifetime member of the Association and has been a strong advocate for LD students and their families. One of Judy's recent concerns is the second language requirement being proposed by Alberta Learning and the potential to negatively impact the education of students with learning disabilities.

### The Calgary Learning Centre

The Calgary Learning Centre offers many programs, such as the programs they offer for children, parents, and adults; the professional development sessions that they provide to regions across the Province and beyond; the extensive work they have done in the area of best practices as it related to teaching students with special needs; and their expertise in the area of complex assessments and, more recently, in the area of assistive technology. In addition, over the years, the Calgary Learning Centre has been a wonderful friend and partner with the LDAA.

## 2005 National Conference in Saskatchewan

The Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta will not be having a provincial conference in 2005 as the National conference will be held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on September 28-30, 2005. Keep informed on further developments for this conference through their website at:

<http://www.ldas.org/events.htm>

The Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta will continue with an annual conference in Edmonton for 2006. We will keep you posted on the details of the 2006 conference later in the following year.

"Knowledge is like a painter's pallet; untouched by a brush; opportunities are missed and resources are squandered. However, with the right brush and proper application, you can create a masterpiece...a portrait of success."

~Author Unknown~

## Web Based Teaching Tool (WBTT) Pilot Project

In collaboration with Alberta Learning and the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO), the Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta is proud to be implementing the WBTT as a pilot project at several sites in Alberta. This project, designed for teachers and first implemented in Ontario, has met with much success, and we are confident that this tool will prove valuable to Alberta's teachers.

The WBTT is one of the products developed in response to the 1999 McCain-Mustard Early Years Report "Reversing the Real Brain Drain". It is a highly secured multi-functional database created as an informal tool for screening and early intervention in grades K-4 students. Quick and easy to use, the WBTT will quickly track the level of each student in the classroom so that potential students at risk can be flagged, interventions used, and their progress monitored.

Interventions are in the form of suggested teaching strategies to improve on the identified areas of need in the student. Delivery of the interventions varies, accommodating one on one instruction, small groups, or classroom learning. Interventions also include classroom & behavioral management strategies, and games and exercises that can be done at home with parents.

Teachers may incorporate interventions in with lesson plans, based on their needs and curriculum. Several weeks or months after intervention(s) are applied, student's responses can be measured and recorded on the database to monitor their advancement. If no gains are made in identified areas of need, additional interventions may be sought from the database. In this way, the child is continuously supported throughout the year, and his or her progress can be followed over time.

There are many benefits of the WBTT. It facilitates early informal identification and support for at-risk students, it ensures that no student "falls through the cracks" in the educational system, it promotes parent-teacher communication, as well as parental understanding of their child's specific strengths and areas in need of improvement. It aids in overall classroom assessment and reporting, and it validates teacher's concerns at an early stage in a child's learning, thus likely expediting remediation (as appropriate). Finally, and most importantly, with early intervention, remediation will begin before a school-based learning problem is manifested, eliminating the student's discouraging experiences of failing at school.

"The great aim of education is not knowledge but action."

~Herbert Spencer~



*"Identification without remediation is more harmful than the absence of identification".*

*(Centre for Studies for Children at Risk, McMaster University)*

# Writer's Block: Overcoming Adversity Writing Contest

## *Positive Stories from People with Learning Disabilities*

The Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta is proud to present their first annual writing contest for individuals with learning disabilities. The writing contest will be launched **March 1, 2005, and we will be accepting entries until May 31, 2005.** Stay tuned for more information about this contest in the months to come, and we hope that you will participate.

### Details are below:

**Writer's Block: Overcoming Adversity** writing contest is an opportunity for individuals with learning disabilities to share stories where a success was achieved and/or a skill or talent was recognized. Don't forget to introduce yourself, and tell us a little bit about you as well!

Story ideas may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Did you work really hard at achieving something and found you were successful at it?
- Did you win an award for something you created, or performed in a talent contest?
- Did you write a story or article that made the newspaper or was published in a newsletter?
- Did you draw a picture that you later sold to a friend or stranger?
- Were you recognized for your outstanding service at work or as a volunteer for an organization?
- Did you make a difference in someone's life that caused him or her to achieve something that would not have happened without your support?

Contest guidelines and entry forms will be available on the website on March 1, 2005. Stories received without the entry form will not be accepted.

[www.ldaa.ca/writers\\_block.htm](http://www.ldaa.ca/writers_block.htm)

**Good Luck!**

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**In Memory...**

The staff and Board Members of the LDAA were saddened by the news of the sudden death of Carol Yaworski, Executive Director of the LDA Ontario. She will be greatly missed.

"There is only one way to defeat the enemy, and that is to write as well as one can. The best argument is an undeniably good book."

~Saul Bellow~  
(1915- )

# A Duty to Accommodate: What You Should Know

*From the Alberta Human Rights Commission*  
~ Publication Review ~

The Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission has developed a publication “Duty to Accommodate Students with Disabilities in Post Secondary Educational Institutions” to inform students and service providers of their rights and responsibilities around this sensitive issue.

An “accommodation” for a students with disabilities is an “...adjustment(s) or alternative arrangement(s) in the educational environment to ensure that it does not have a discriminatory effect on a student because of a student(s) disability(ies)”. However, although it is the student’s right to have an accommodation, it is at the service provider’s discretion as to the method of accommodation provided, as long as it is within the policy, rules, and standards handed down through the Supreme Court of Canada.

This publication outlines these standards as set forth by the Supreme Court of Canada, and provides excellent, detailed information to both students and service providers as to their responsibilities to each other to ensure that an appropriate and mutually agreeable accommodation plan can be established.

Additionally, this publication outlines the legal framework from which the “Duty to Accommodate” was developed from, which includes specific sections of the *Human Rights, Citizenship, and Multiculturalism Act*, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, as well as Case law. Examples of important cases are introduced, with information regarding where to find the final decisions and outcomes included where possible.

Lastly, the publication lists resources along with contact information that may be useful to students with learning disabilities. These resources are in the area of funding, programs and services, and who to contact for more information and/or to file a complaint.

This comprehensive document explains is easy to follow and gives detailed explanations of all aspects of the Act. It is very informative and provides excellent information on programs for students with disabilities in post secondary studies.

The complete document is available on the Alberta Human Rights and Citizen Commission Website (<http://www.albertahumanrights.ab.ca/>), and can be downloaded free or charge (PDF format). Upon request, the Commission will provide this document in other format for those who do not read conventional print.

“Journey is the purpose  
of life,  
If you travel too fast, you  
miss the adventure of  
your journey.  
So set your own pace..”

~Author Unknown~



## A New Non-Stimulant Medication for ADHD Available

Eli Lilly Canada Inc. announced a new non-stimulant oral medication, Strattera (pronounced “Stra-tair-a”) for the treatment of ADHD. It received Health Canada approval on December 24, 2004 and is expected to be commercially available in Canada by the end of March 2005.

You can find more information on Strattera here:

<http://www.strattera.com/index.jsp>

## Internet Sites Worth Visiting

The Internet has become the tool of choice for finding information quickly. It is important, though, to assess the credibility of the information source and apply your own judgment. Anyone can publish a website. Happily, universities, governments, professional organizations, journals, magazines, and individual experts are increasingly publishing information for the public to access freely.

Below are some websites that you might find interesting. Please remember that the LDAA has no control over the information published on other websites, and does not endorse any products or services on these sites.

### **Persons with Disabilities On-line**

[www.pwd-online.ca](http://www.pwd-online.ca)

The section on Learning and Education (choosing Alberta as the province) has 14 topics to choose from, each having a brief description on what information you will be able to find when you follow the link to the page, usually on a different website altogether.

Find out about scholarships and student loans programs; learn how you can find out about the disability related services at different post-secondary institutions; and explore opportunities through the Youth Employment Strategy Programs (YES). This site is packed with information and resources too good to miss out on!

### **Youth.gc.ca**

[www.youth.gc.ca](http://www.youth.gc.ca)

Youth.gc.ca is a site directed to connect youth between the ages of 15 and 30 to programs and services, serving as a “hub” of information by referring visitors to the appropriate website based on the chosen menu topic.

*“To acquire knowledge,  
one must study, but to  
acquire wisdom, one  
must observe”*

*~Marilyn vos Savant ~*

## Internet Sites Worth Visiting Continued...

The Education section of the site provides information on educational planning, links to schools, information on studying abroad, finding affordable student housing, and “survival tips”. Although this site does not have much information for disability-related needs, it does a wonderful job of responding to other areas of concern when acquiring a post secondary education. As a whole, this site has value in that youth can access other information about jobs, money and travel, to volunteer opportunities, Canadian information, and the environment.

### **Jobs Etc.**

[www.JobsEtc.ca](http://www.JobsEtc.ca)

This is a site that enables Canadians to connect to information on jobs, learning, and career information. While very informative, it appears to be geared more toward career counselling, and less on supporting learners who have already made steps toward training. This would be an excellent resource for teachers and professionals who work with adult learners toward a training or employment goal.

### **Canada Benefits**

[www.canadabenefits.gc.ca](http://www.canadabenefits.gc.ca)

In financial need? Look no further! This site is your “one-stop shopping” information guide about federal, provincial, and territorial government. benefit programs and services for individuals.

### **The Daily Motivator**

Persist, and efforts pay off that otherwise never would.

Persist, and time begins to work for you rather than against you.

Persist, and the obstacles fall away, one by one.

Persist, and the goals that seemed impossibly distant come streaming into view.

Persist, and what once held you back becomes a force that moves you forward.

Persist, and you achieve what no one thought you could.

Persist, and weakness turns to strength.

Persist, and valuable knowledge replaces ignorance.

When it seems you are making no progress at all, persist.

For that's when a breakthrough is close at hand.

What once was impossible can indeed be yours. Persist, and you'll be there.

~ Ralph Marston ~

The LDAA website is part of the communications project made possible by a grant from the Wild Rose Foundation.



“Success often arrives at such a late hour that only the ones who continued believing, in spite of all worldly evidence to the contrary, remain to greet her”.

~Author Unknown~