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

President's Message

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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, 2006. For writer's guidelines, visit www.ldaa.ca/newsletters.

A new calendar year has begun and once again we are in the midst of some exciting changes at the Provincial level. We begin 2006 with a new location and a new Executive Director. After many years in our little house at #145, the office has had to move due to the extension of the LRT. We are were fortunate to secure space in the Alberta School for the Deaf and our new address will be effective by the end of January.

At this time we are very pleased to announce that our new Executive Director is Bob Ward. Thank you to the selection committee for all of their work in the search process. Bob has an extensive business background and we look forward to the expertise that he will be able to share with us as we move forward as an organization.

Our fall road show was a great success and I extend my sincere thanks to the chapter and provincial staff and volunteers who worked to coordinate the evenings. Thank you also to Janssen-Ortho for their financial assistance in making the roadshow a reality. Presentations were made in Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Calgary, Red Deer, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, and Fort McMurray. The response from attendees across the province was very clear. There is much to be done to provide appropriate supports for students with LD. We are now in the process of planning our next steps as we look to meet the specific needs identified.

We continue to watch the direction of the Ministry of Education around the issue of coding special needs students. We have been advised that a new document should be forthcoming later this spring as a result of extensive revisions to the 'Assessment and Identification of Special Needs Students' draft document that came out in 2004. The provincial board feels very strongly that the coding system needs to be a part of any future identification process and will continue to share that view with the Minister's office.

On a sad note we must advise that John Stirling, one of our board members, passed away suddenly in November. We extend our sincere condolences to Julie and the entire Stirling Family.

As a new membership year begins, I encourage you to renew your membership. There is strength in numbers and there is still much that we need to do to ensure that all Albertans who face the challenge of learning disabilities have the supports that they need to be successful. Please choose to continue to be a part of LDAA.

Together we can make a difference.

LDAA President

Introducing our New Executive Director Of the LDAA

The LDAA is pleased to welcome our new Executive Director, Bob Ward. Bob has over 27 years experience working with indigenous communities in Canada and overseas. His primary focus has been to assist communities and organizations build their capacity so that they will be better able to achieve their aspirations. He has considerable business experience.

Bob's combination of skills will be an asset to the LDAA as we move forward in the New Year to help individuals with learning disabilities develop their full potential.

Mark your Calendars!

The 2006 conference will be held in Edmonton on November 16-18, 2006 at the Coast Terrace Hotel. The theme for the conference is "Extending our Visions" and promises to be very informative with a wide cross section of speakers addressing various topics and issues related to learning disabilities.

The keynote speakers will be:

Dr. Edward Hallowell, MD, Arlington MASS, USA

Author of "*Delivered from Distraction—Getting the Most Out of Life with Attention Deficit Disorder*".

Linda Siegel, University of British Columbia, Vancouver B.C.

Professor of Education and Counseling Psychology and Special Education

Brenda Robinson, Sherwood Park, Alberta

"Expanding Visions Through Humour, Family, and Experience"

Make sure to visit our website regularly at <http://www.ldaa.ca/conference.htm> for updated conference and registration information.

Success is like going
from failure to failure,
without losing
enthusiasm.

~Winston Churchill~

Education Planning for Students with Special Needs "The Effective I.P.P. Process"

I.P.P.s or 'Individualized Program Plans' are "...written commitments of intent by education teams to ensure appropriate planning for exceptional students. They are working documents and records of student progress" (*Key Components of Programming for Students with Learning Disabilities, page 28*). An I.P.P. is a tool to help ensure that your child's learning needs are addressed, tracked and evaluated at school. It needs to be constantly updated as your child grows and their learning style develops.

Who decides or determines that your child will have an I.P.P. for the school year? Every student identified as having special needs is required to have an I.P.P. If you are concerned about your child's achievement in school, talk to their teacher. It may be that an I.P.P. is warranted.

As a parent or guardian of your child, it is important that you take an active role in your child's learning and the development of an I.P.P. These are some of the ways that this can be accomplished:

1. Know your child's teacher and principal. Introduce yourself at the first opportunity and make an effort to chat with them each time you are in the school. Meet with them at parent-teacher interview night. Keep current with your child's progress and follow up on any concerns you have immediately. Most importantly, keep your interactions with teachers and the school positive.
2. Share information. It is very important to keep all of your child's information such as assessments, previous I.P.P.s, medical history, successful learning strategies, etc. Share this information with your child's teacher (give out copies of the information, never the original!) to help the teacher understand "the big picture" so that he/she can better determine the best way to approach your child's learning needs. Sharing your child's information is a big step in the I.P.P. Additionally, it is difficult for a teacher to know everything about every disability so share any research information you might have on the disability and highlight the areas that affect your child.
3. Be a part of the school community and be a volunteer. This is a great way to get to know other parents and may be a good way to develop supportive friendships with parents who have children who are also experiencing difficulties. This support network might be able to help when you go to meetings about your child. Meetings at the school can sometimes be overwhelming and emotionally charged, so it is good to have someone to attend these meetings with you. Have them take notes of the meeting so that you can read through them at a later time.

50% of students receiving special education services through the public schools are identified as having learning disabilities.

~24th Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2002 ~

4. Support learning at home. This is important if you want to ensure success in school. Have a certain time after school when you talk about school with your child. Be open and non judgmental. Find out what your child is learning and how easily or well they are learning it. Help practice new skills and studying strategies and recognize your child's accomplishments. Creating a positive learning atmosphere at home will help your child to achieve his/her potential.
5. And finally, know that success can be measured in different ways. Try to learn what your child needs to succeed. It takes time to overcome obstacles and achieve success, but if you, your child, the teacher and the school work hard together, your child will have a better opportunity to become successful in school and in other important areas of his/her life.

Curriculum Handbooks Now Available!

The 2005-06 Edition of *Curriculum Handbooks for Parents and Curriculum Summaries for Kindergarten to Grade 12* are now available through Alberta Education. Alberta Education has worked with parents and teachers to develop these resources in an effort to provide information to parents about what students are expected to learn from Kindergarten through Grade 12.

These annual publications are examples of Alberta Education's commitment to increase parental involvement in education. They are part of an ongoing commitment to ensure the education system is open and accountable.

The handbooks and summaries are available on the Alberta Education website at:

<http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/parents/handbooks/>

These handbooks are also available for purchase from the Learning Resources Centre for a nominal fee. To contact the Learning Resources Centre by telephone, please call (780) 427-5775 (toll free within Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first).

Chocolate Festival, Wine Tasting & Silent Auction Fundraising Event

Treat your sweetheart this year to an exciting evening of chocolate desserts and fine wine at the Sutton Place Hotel (10235-101 Street) on February 11, 2006 from 6:30 p.m. –10:00 p.m. Join the Edmonton Chapter of the Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta with internationally recognized special guest William Bincoletto, to an evening of wine tasting specifically designed to compliment chocolate. There will be a silent auction and door prizes during the evening. Tickets are just \$50.00 per person and can be purchased by calling the provincial office at (780) 448-0360. Proceeds from the event will go toward expanding the programs and services offered through the Edmonton chapter.

We are not powerless
specks of dust drifting
around in the wind,
blown by random
destiny. We are, each
of us, like beautiful
snowflakes – unique,
and born for a specific
reason and purpose.

~ Elizabeth Kubler-
Ross ~



Learning Forum Closes with a Commitment to Action: Hancock Pledges to Move Forward on Three Fronts

Advanced Education News Release November 2, 2005

At the Learning Alberta forum on November 2, Advanced Education Minister Dave Hancock pledged to use the input received to chart a new course for advanced learning in Alberta.

The Forum, which brought together 250 Albertans at the Shaw Conference Centre, was designed to help create a vision and framework to guide advanced education into the 21st century. According to Hancock, "The Forum was about direction-setting and transformation and I am impressed by the depth of the discussion around the issues and the hundreds of ideas put forward. There is work to be done but we now can move forward with a common sense of where we're headed and a clear commitment to action."

Hancock said immediate action would be taken in three priority areas:

Learning Foundations – taking more education opportunities to communities, addressing the needs of diverse groups of Albertans, and setting clear targets for improving literacy rates. He suggested a target of cutting Alberta's illiteracy rates in half in the next 5 years.

Support for Aboriginal learning – establishing a new Aboriginal education division within the Advanced Education department to lead Aboriginal education strategies.

Transforming the advanced learning system – defining the role' and responsibilities for institutions, while allowing them to become world-class leader in specific areas; putting top priority on research and innovation; expanding the number of graduate students in all areas including social services and humanities; and focusing on new ways for tradespeople to learn in their communities.

Specific initiatives include:

- Implementing a common student application system for public post-secondary institutions;
- Developing a new tuition fee policy by Spring 2006;
- Improving recognition of degrees, prior learning, and transfer of credits;
- Adjusting funding formulas to promote collaboration among institutions; and
- Re-aligning the administrative structure within Advanced Education to support a new vision

Hancock encouraged all participants to maintain the momentum generated by the forum. "This process will continue," said Hancock. "I'm prepared to work with everyone in the room today and with all Albertans to achieve the goals we set – a learning society with the best advanced learning institutions in the country."

The second discussions focused directly on action and initiatives to achieve the vision of a Learning Alberta. A five-person panel kicked off the discussion.

More than 27% of children with learning disabilities drop out of high school, compared to the 11% of the general school population.

~24th Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2002 ~

Graham Lettner, President of the Student Union at the University of Alberta, identified three areas for action: “horizontal learning” – extending learning opportunities to smaller communities; excellence in collaboration – providing strong leadership and building vibrant partnerships with cities and rural communities; and commitment – reinforcing Alberta’s commitment to advanced learning and setting a target of investing 2.5% of Alberta’s GDP in advanced learning.

Donna Allan, educator and former President of Lethbridge College, recommended an expanded role for community adult learning councils; a review of credit and non-credit programs and how programs are funded; changes to student finance to reflect the realities of adult learners; and using technology to expand opportunities in rural communities.

Maureen Saunders, Executive Director for the Centre for Family Literacy in Edmonton, called for a focus on literacy, addressing the reality that more than one-third of adult Albertans don’t have adequate literacy skills. She suggested that a comprehensive literacy campaign, expanded opportunities for adults with low literacy skills, and a family approach to literacy.

Linda Gale, Executive Director of Saamis Immigration in Medicine Hat, focused on the role of community education councils as a portal to learning in communities. She suggested an alternative approach, moving away from a focus on buildings and campuses to learner-driven, community-based education.

Terry Fortin, President of Quality Learning Solutions, Inc. identified key initiatives in Aboriginal education. In his words, there have been lots of studies in Aboriginal education. The question, he said, isn’t what to do, it’s when to do it. Action includes increasing numbers of Aboriginal people in leadership positions in education, improving information on Aboriginal student performance and participation, establishing a place for First Nations and Metis Institutions, and preserving indigenous languages.

Following discussions, a number of key themes emerged:

- Achieving sustainable funding
- Placing a higher priority on literacy
- Taking a major initiative to improve high school completion rates
- Establishing a new framework for Aboriginal education
- Expanding capacity, not just with additional space but also through expanded use of technology
- Increasing opportunities for advanced education and centres of excellence in rural communities
- Investing in social services and humanities
- Changing government structures to reduce barriers between departments and levels of government
- Harnessing the potential of the Supernet and libraries
- Setting bold targets (e.g., all Alberta post-secondary institutions should be in the top five of the country, every parent should be able to read to their child, and Alberta should invest a fixed percentage of GDP in advanced education.)

If you can't fly, then
run.
If you can't run, then
walk.
If you can't walk, then
crawl.
But whatever you do,
just keep moving.

~ Martin Luther King
Jr. ~



Victory in B.C. Court for Student with Learning Disability Implication for all students with learning disabilities across the country

The following is an excerpt from a Press Release issued by the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada on December 22, 2005. It is expected that this decision will be challenged by government and that the final outcome and implications across Canada will not be known for some time but, at the same time, it is a decision that affirms the value of our mission and energizes our struggle to support people with learning disabilities so they can develop to their full potential.

The B.C. Human Rights Tribunal ruled that the B.C. Ministry of Education and the District School Division discriminates against children with learning disabilities by making cutbacks that disproportionately impacted children with learning disabilities and by failing to provide them with necessary programs and services.

The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, an intervener in this case, hails it as a significant, major victory for children with learning disabilities across Canada. In a decision arising from the particular circumstances concerning Jeffery Moore, a young boy in the mid 90's who was identified as having severe learning disabilities and did not receive the services he required, the tribunal ordered the ministry and the district to reimburse the Moore family for tuition fees and other out of pocket expenses they paid during the nine years Jeffrey attended a private school for children with learning disabilities.

“What happened to Jeffrey is happening to thousands of young people with learning disabilities across Canada through a systemic failure by ministries of education and school districts by not providing the needed services to enable these children to fully benefit from services provided by the educational system,” states Yule Henteleff, of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Honorary Solicitor of the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada and its counsel in this matter.

“Failure to provide appropriate support and accommodations to a vulnerable group could not be justified on the basis of cost. Public schools are required by law to provide an education for all students to the point of undue hardship,” wrote tribunal chairwoman Heather MacNaughton in her 309 page ruling. Chairwoman MacNaughton also ordered that a range of optional services both inside and outside the regular classroom be available for students with severe learning disabilities.

For a complete transcript of the decision, please visit the B.C. Human rights Tribunal website at:

www.bchrt.bc.ca/decisions/default.htm

Only 13% of students with learning disabilities (compared to 53% of students in general population) have attended a 4 year post secondary school program within two years of leaving high school.

~National (U.S.) Longitudinal Transition Study, 1994 ~

Definition of Learning Disabilities

(Adopted by the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada on January 30, 2002)

Learning disabilities refer to a number of disorders that may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual deficiency.

Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning. These include, but are not limited to: language processing, phonological processing, visual spatial processing, processing speed, memory and attention, and executive functions (e.g. planning and decision-making).

Learning disabilities range in severity and may interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following:

- oral language (e.g. listening, speaking, understanding)
- reading (e.g. decoding, phonetic knowledge, word recognition, comprehension)
- written language (e.g. spelling and written expression)
- mathematics (e.g. computation, problem solving).

Learning disabilities may also involve difficulties with organizational skills, social perception, social interaction and perspective taking.

Learning disabilities are lifelong. The way in which they are expressed may vary over an individual's lifetime, depending on the interaction between the demands of the environment and the individual's strengths and needs. Learning disabilities are suggested by unexpected academic under-achievement or achievement which is maintained only by unusually high levels of effort and support.

Learning disabilities are due to genetic and/or neurobiological factors or injury that alters brain functioning in a manner which affects one or more processes related to learning. These disorders are not due primarily to hearing and/or vision problems, socio-economic factors, cultural or linguistic differences, lack of motivation or ineffective teaching, although these factors may further complicate the challenges faced by individuals with learning disabilities. Learning disabilities may co-exist with various conditions including attentional, behavioural and emotional disorders, sensory impairments or other medical conditions.

For success, individuals with learning disabilities require early identification and timely specialized assessments and interventions involving home, school, community and workplace settings. The interventions need to be appropriate for each individual's learning disability subtype and, at a minimum, include the provision of:

- specific skill instruction
- accommodations
- compensatory strategies
- self-advocacy skills

Whether you think you
can or can't, you're
right.

~Henry Ford~



Alberta's Promise
A Partnership with Children and Youth



\$11.50 each (includes shipping & handling)

* For copyright reasons we can only offer this resource within Canada.*

ORDER NOW!

The Parent Advantage: Helping Students from grades 1-9 Become Successful Learners.

Originally designed for parents of children with learning disabilities, this handbook covers a variety of strategies that are useful for ALL students.

The Organization Advantage: Set goals for school success in class and at home in the area of time, study environment, and note taking. Use the helpful worksheet included to write down your goals and see how your child progresses throughout the year.

The Reading Advantage: Discover new ways of helping your child to read by playing simple and fun reading games, or by using other exercises, with your child.

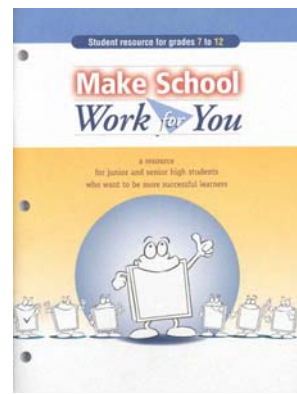
The Writing Advantage: Develop strong writing skills with your child in this step-by-step detailed section on the writing process.

The Spelling Advantage: Build a strong “spelling memory bank” with your child using several fantastic strategies in this section.

The Mathematics Advantage: Create a variety of strategies for problem solving in math with your child in this section.

The Test Advantage: Form effective “active” study habits with your child to ensure success in test taking.

The Project Advantage: Construct an A+ project with this easy guide that you and your child can follow to create an effective class project.



Starting at \$9.50 each

(includes shipping & handling)

For copyright reasons we can only offer this resource within Canada.

ORDER NOW!

Make School Work for You: A Resource for Junior and Senior High Students Who Want to be More Successful Learners

This resource is aimed for children in grades 7 to 12, but may be an effective tool for students in post-secondary studies as well. In this 112 page easy-to-read handbook are several strategies (some include worksheets) that students may use to be effective and successful in these areas:

- Know Yourself
- Get Organized
- Make Every Class Count
- Use Tests to Show What You Know
- Present Your Learning
- Get Along with Others
- Get People on Your Side
- Stay Motivated

This resource is available in a Student Handbook, or Teacher Implementation Guide. It is available in French and also in audio CD format for those students with print disabilities.



LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF ALBERTA
TROUBLES D'APPRENTISSAGE—ASSOCIATION DE L'ALBERTA

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 Phone: (780)448-3360 Fax: (780)438-0665 E-mail: info@ldaa.ca



Supporting
 people with
 learning
 disabilities
 so they can
 develop to
 their full
 potential.

LDAA Resource Order Form

Please send me:

- _____ copy(ies) of the **Student Resource** of the Parent Advantage (\$9.50 each)
- _____ copy (ies) of the **French Translation** of the Parent Advantage (\$9.50 each)
- _____ copy(ies) of the **Student Resource** of Make School Work for You (\$11.50 each)
- _____ copy(ies) of the **Teacher Implementation Guide** of Make School Work for You (\$11.50 each)
- _____ copy(ies) of the **French translation** of Make School Work for You (\$11.50 each)
- _____ copy(ies) of the **audio CD version** of Make School Work for You (\$11.50 each)

Please send my purchases to:

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

Please enclose your cheque or money order, made payable to the Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta, and mail it to 145, 11343-61 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T6H 1M3. Please allow 2-3 weeks for delivery.

___ Please check here if you do NOT want the LDA A to add you to their mailing list. We will not share or sell your information to other businesses or agencies.

Siobhan Isabella Reid Memorial Scholarship

Application deadlines for the Siobhan Isabella Reid Memorial Scholarship is May 30, 2006. Scholarships will be awarded to student(s) who meet the below criteria and will be attending an Alberta University for the following academic year.

Criteria For Application

1. Student must be enrolled full time at a university in Alberta during the university year in which the scholarship is received.
2. Student must have completed two full academic years at either a university or at a junior college at which courses are acceptable by a university as applicable toward a university degree.
3. The scholarship is open to undergraduate or post graduate students enrolled in any faculty at a university in Alberta.
4. During the scholarship year, the applicant must be enrolled in a program which will lead to that individual being able to assist children and adults with learning disability.
5. The applicant must submit:
 - (a) an official transcript of his or her academic record for the student's last university or college year;
 - (b) three letters of reference from non-relatives;
 - (c) an outline of his or her contributions to that applicant's community as well as to campus life;
 - (d) an outline of the program the student wishes to undertake during the scholarship year.
6. The applications will be reviewed according to the following criteria.
 - (a) the student's contributions to his or her community and to campus life;
 - (b) a satisfactory academic record;
 - (c) the student's future educational program leading toward assisting children and adults with learning disabilities.

Applicants may be chosen for interviews by the Siobhan Isabella Reid Scholarship Committee with the scholarship recipient to be announced following the interviews. Presentation of the scholarship will be made at a suitable occasion. The scholarship will be payable to the recipient following the receipt of proof of registration for full-time attendance at an Alberta university.

Additional information and application package is available on the web-site at:

http://www.ldaa.ca/awards_scholarships.htm

Additional scholarship opportunities can be found on our website at:

http://www.ldaa.ca/more_scholarships.htm

More than 27% of children with learning disabilities drop out of high school, compared to the 11% of the general school population.

~24th Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2002 ~

Additional Free Resources Through the LDAA Website

Looking for information on standards for special education or information on accommodations for post secondary students? The Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta has all of this information in their “Free Resources” page on the LDAA website. New downloadable resources available on this page are **Guide to Education for Students with Special Needs (1997)**, and **Special Ed Coding Criteria 2005/2006**. Keep this page book marked as new free resources will be added as they become available:

http://www.ldaa.ca/free_resources.htm

Albertans Invited to Celebrate Teaching

News Release from the Alberta Government October 28, 2005

Albertans across the province are invited to recognize current exceptional teachers or principals in their community by nominating them for a 2006 Excellence in Teaching Award. Students, parents, teacher-colleagues, principals and community members all have the opportunity to nominate teachers or principals who have demonstrated excellence in their profession.

“The contributions of our teachers are vital to student success,” said Alberta Education Gene Zwosdesky. “The Excellence in Teaching Awards program provides Albertans with a wonderful way to say thank you and recognize the important work being done by teachers and principals in schools across our province today.”

This year, 134 finalists will be selected from the eligible nominations received. From that group of finalists, 20 Provincial Excellence in Teaching Awards and three SMARTer Kids Foundation Innovative Use of Technology Awards will be awarded. In May 2006, award recipients will be honoured at a dinner and awards ceremony in Calgary.

“Alberta’s Centennial reminds us of the lasting impact individuals can have on a province and it’s people,” said Zwosdesky. “I encourage every community in Alberta to nominate a special teacher and/or principal whose outstanding efforts have inspired those around them and impacted the future of our young citizens.”

Nominations will be accepted until February 3, 2006. Nomination packages along with details on eligibility and the selection criteria may be obtained by calling toll free 1-866-590-1660. Requests may also be e-mailed to kbelanger@gov.ab.ca.

Alberta education is proud to present the 18th Annual Excellence in Teaching Awards with the support of XEROX, the SMARTer Kids Foundation, the Edmonton Journal, the Alberta School Boards Association, and the Alberta Home and School Councils’ Association.

The principles you live
by create the world you
live in;
If you change the
principles you live by,
you will change your
world.

~ Blaine Lee~

