



June 2004

Screening and Early Intervention .....	2
Alberta Learning Books.....	2
Meet the President .....	2
Meet Your LDAC Rep.....	3
Working Together .....	3
Grade 4 Achievement Testing.	3

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

### LDAA OFFICE

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

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### President

Lorrie Goegan

#### Vice President

Elayne Harris Lorenz

#### Secretary

Janet Cox

#### Treasurer

Janice Mills

#### Directors

Tisa Haesch

Lisa Ingram

John Stirling

### STAFF

#### Executive Director

Harvey Finnestad

#### Communications Director

Elizabeth Gredley

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 August 31, 2004. For writer's guidelines, visit [www.ldaa.ca/Newsletter](http://www.ldaa.ca/Newsletter).**

## President's Message

Spring is a season of change. This spring has seen changes in a number of areas at the provincial level.

At the May AGM, a new board was elected that includes several returning members and a couple of new faces. Continuing on are Janet Cox (Edmonton), Elayne Harris Lorenz (Lloydminster), Lisa Ingram (Calgary), Janice Mills (St Albert) and myself (Calgary). We welcome new members John Stirling (Red Deer) and Tisa Haesch (Edmonton). Thank you all for agreeing to share your time and expertise. I look forward to working with you.

At this time we say goodbye to Gene Kalita, who has completed his term as president. Thank you, Gene, for your commitment to the LDAA.

*continued on p. 4*

## Richard Lavoie Headlines Provincial Conference

The 2004 provincial conference promises to be an exciting event. Organized and hosted by the Red Deer chapter, it features well-known speaker Richard Lavoie.

Thursday evening offers people a pre-conference opportunity to hear Lavoie speak on "Roots and Wings: Parenting the Child with Learning Disabilities" and meet him afterwards at a reception. People who are not registered for the conference can buy a ticket for just the Thursday evening event. The conference proper starts Friday with Richard Lavoie's "Tales from the Road." On Saturday, Rob Chubb gives the keynote address, "The Person Who Laughs...Lasts."

The conference committee has worked hard to make the conference appeal to teachers and other professionals as well as parents. Breakout sessions on Friday and Saturday cover a range of topics addressing learning disabilities in all levels of schooling. Learning styles, transitions, assistive technology, classroom strategies and humour are just some of the areas discussed.

The conference takes place in Red Deer November 18-20. For more information, visit [www.ldaa.ca/Conference](http://www.ldaa.ca/Conference).

## Screening and Early Intervention

In the late fall of 2003 the LDAA arranged for representatives of the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) to join us in meeting with the Minister of Learning, Dr. Lyle Oberg, to discuss screening at the kindergarten and grade one level. The stated purposes of the screening program discussed were:

- to identify students at risk of school failure, including those with a learning disability.
- to move the time of identification and intervention to a stage in the student's life that would reduce the chances of school failure and the development of behaviour and other secondary problems.

We invited the LDAO to participate because they have developed and tested the Web-Based Teaching Tool (WBTT). The WBTT consists of a set of carefully selected, evidence-based screening and intervention activities designed to be delivered over the course of the kindergarten year.

The WBTT establishes a profile that serves as a starting point for intervention with at-risk learners. Based on a student's profile, the WBTT provides strategies and interventions categorized by curriculum areas to address deficits and build on strengths. Students who require more specific testing and intervention will be identified earlier and be less likely to develop secondary problems associated with prolonged failure. (For more information about the WBTT, visit [http://ldao.ca/ldao\\_projects/wbtt/](http://ldao.ca/ldao_projects/wbtt/))

The Minister expressed considerable interest in the Ontario program and in developing a similar one in Alberta. With the LDAO, our Association has proposed a pilot project in Alberta schools to test the effectiveness of the program. We are currently working with Alberta Learning staff on establishing the pilot project for the fall of 2004.

## Books from Alberta Learning

Most Alberta Learning publications are available online to download free of charge. A new book, *The Journey: A Handbook for Parents of Children Who Are Gifted and Talented*, contains a chapter on giftedness and learning disabilities. Another book to download if you don't already have it, is *The Learning Team: A Handbook for Parents*. You'll find links to both at [www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k\\_12/specialneeds](http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k_12/specialneeds).

## Meet the President

Lorrie Goegan of Calgary was elected president of the provincial board at the AGM on May 15, 2004.

Lorrie has been involved with the LDAA since 1998 and has served on both the Calgary chapter and provincial boards of directors. She was vice president of LDAA from 2002 until 2004. Her professional experience includes acting as co-chair of the provincial learning disabilities conference in 1999 and the national conference in 2003, being a contributing writer to two recent Alberta Learning publications, and presenting numerous workshops across the province to both professionals and parents. She has extensive skills in the areas of mentoring, partnering and advocacy.

Lorrie is committed to advancing LD issues and has both a professional (B.A., B.Ed., Cert. Sp. Ed.) and a personal (parent of a child with LD) involvement. She has seen firsthand the difference that proper supports and accommodations can make for people with LD, and has the time and energy to devote to the organization. She sees the need for the provincial organization to take on the challenges that are before us and create both a stronger provincial association and stronger provincial—chapter linkages.

## Meet Your LDAC Rep

Janet Cox of Edmonton was elected to the LDAA board of directors in January and became the Alberta representative to the LDAC in May.

She has been involved with the Learning Disabilities Association for over fourteen years. Born and raised in BC, she was the Surrey Chapter President for four years. She also worked at LDABC, the provincial office, on chapter development and parent support. She was an Advocate, Information Officer and Assistant to the Executive Director.

The mother of four children with learning disabilities ranging from slight to severe, her passion was ignited after her son was diagnosed with severe LD. His principal did not respond to any of her requests so she home-schooled him that year. To assist her in this task she took a tutoring course and joined the LD Association.

She now lives in Edmonton, working as a case manager/employment counselor in a program for women who have come out of domestic/family abuse. She has long seen the side effects of LD/ADHD, as well as the generational effects.

## Working Together to Achieve Our Mission

The Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta is a complex organization with a large territory to cover. We do that with chapters in local communities to provide direct services and advocate locally, and a provincial office to deal with Alberta Learning, liaise with the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada and coordinate and support activities province-wide.

Sometimes, we all get so busy with our own pieces of the puzzle that we forget there is a whole picture to complete. To help us more effectively support children and adults with learning disabilities, the Association—chapters and provincial office—has struck a Chapter Development Working Group to explore ways to work together and support each other.

Topics for resolution were identified at a preliminary meeting May 15 and include such areas as membership and media relations. The first working meeting is scheduled for June 26.

## Grade Four Achievement Testing

On May 13, 2004 the Minister of Education, Dr. Lyle Oberg, was questioned in the Legislature regarding Alberta Learning's intention to retest students who did not do well at provincial achievement exams at the grade three level. (see Alberta *Hansard* May 13, 2004)

Achievement testing is a very controversial issue for many parents who are concerned about the pressure it places on students, and the announcement of an additional test at the end of grade four was received very poorly by school boards and teachers.

A number of LDAA members have expressed support of the Minister's stated intention to utilize grade three achievement tests to identify students at risk of school failure and in need of intervention. Others are opposed to the re-testing, citing that the addition of another achievement test will do little to ensure students with learning disabilities are identified and served in Alberta schools.

The Association has long been concerned that schools and school jurisdictions be held accountable for identifying and appropriately serving students with learning disabilities. It is clear that achievement tests are only a small part of the process required to assess students and to determine if a learning disability is present. The question for consideration here is whether or not re-testing students in grade four will encourage schools to do more in early grades to identify and provide intervention for those students who appear to be at risk of school failure.

**President's Message** *continued from p. 1*

Dr. Harvey Finnestad, the provincial Executive Director, has returned from his four month "sabbatical" in South Africa. We are very pleased to have him back. In his absence, David Barnum stepped in to keep the office running. For those of us who are long-time LDAA members, we remember when David was the Provincial Coordinator. It was wonderful to have him back on board. Thank you, David, for keeping us on track in Harvey's absence!

We have a new Alberta representative to the LDAC. Janet Cox assumed those responsibilities in May and represented us at the 2004 LDAC AGM and meetings held June 4-6 in Ottawa. Congratulations, Janet, on your appointment.

Our provincial web site *www.lada.ca* continues to grow. Many thanks to Elizabeth Gredley for all of her work in this area.

The provincial board will be exploring more changes over the next few months. There is a retreat planned for September where we will be exploring some new directions and reviewing our strategic plan.

One important part of that new direction is to develop a more collaborative relationship with the chapters. To that end, an initial meeting took place May 15 to identify some key priorities. A Chapter Development Working Group meeting on June 26 will continue this initiative. An update will be included in the fall newsletter.

We have read with great interest and concern the Alberta Learning *Field Review Draft on Assessment and Identification of Students with Special Needs*. It is available on the Alberta Learning web site *www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k\_12/specialneeds*. The potential impact on students with learning disabilities is significant. The provincial board has made a formal response and we are currently waiting to hear what the next steps will be on the part of Alberta Learning. We will continue to follow this closely.

The program for the upcoming provincial conference in Red Deer, scheduled for November 18 to 20, is now available. The Red Deer planning committee has done a great job of putting together a wonderful mix of sessions and networking opportunities.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the Red Deer conference. In the meantime, have a safe and happy summer.



Lorrie Goegan

## LDAC PSAs

Watch and listen for public service announcements from the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada this summer. You can help us keep track of the coverage. Please clip any you see and send to provincial office. Make sure the clip includes the newspaper title and date.

Good parents give their  
children roots and  
wings. Roots to know  
where home is, wings to  
fly away and exercise  
what's been taught  
them.

Jonas Salk