



Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta PROVINCIAL News

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

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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 November 30, 2005. For writer's guidelines, visit www.ldaa.ca/newsletters.

President's Message

As I sit down to write this President's Message, signs of autumn are all around. The leaves are beginning to fall, there is a chill in the air and the back-to-school advertisements are hard to miss.

For the provincial board, it is a time of change and some new opportunities as well.

The Annual General Meeting of the LDAA was held in Red Deer on May 28th. At that time a new board was approved. Returning board members include Elayne Harris Lorenz (Lloydminster), Janet Cox (Edmonton), Janice Mills (St. Albert), John Stirling (Red Deer) and myself from Calgary. We officially welcomed new board members Kim Gerritsen (Calgary), Teddi Doupe (Edmonton) and Cindy Berry (Cochrane). At this time we extend our sincere thanks to Lisa Ingram for her time and expertise, which she generously shared during her term on the board.

There will be further changes coming as Harvey Finnestad, our Executive Director since the fall of 1999, has advised that he will be retiring. Consequently we have a Selection Committee in place to search for a new Executive Director. We have been so fortunate to have Harvey as a key member of our team over the past six years and we will miss his wisdom and guidance.

Representatives from the provincial board had the opportunity to meet with Dave Hancock, Minister of Advanced Education in the late spring. We had a good discussion about the needs of students at the post secondary level if they are to be successful. We hope that this was just the beginning of an ongoing dialogue.

We have also requested a meeting with the Minister of Education to address a number of issues related to students in the K to 12 school years and hope to have a meeting date with him early in the fall. We are closely watching the second language requirement which is scheduled to begin to come into effect in September 2006 as well as the disappearance of targeted funding for students with LD.

With the start of a new school year before us, it is important to remember the need to assist those with learning disabilities to develop their self advocacy skills. As the parent of a university student with LD, I am repeatedly reminded of the need for her to be able to articulate exactly what her learning disability is and what kinds of accommodations she needs in order to be successful.

This understanding and confidence takes time and nurturing. Whether you are a parent, an educator or part of the larger community, I encourage you to support those initial attempts and to provide opportunities for students and adults with learning disabilities to gain the confidence and understanding to advocate effectively. Together we can make a difference.

LDAA President

WBTT Update.....	page 2
Congratulations.....	page 3
Learning Resources Centre.....	page 4
The Learning Team.....	page 5

SCREENING AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Web Based Teaching Tool (WBTT)

The evaluation of year one of the LDAA's pilot project to screen, identify, and support kindergarten children at risk of school failure has been completed by Alberta Education.

The WBTT was created for teachers to help them identify, as early as possible, kindergarten children that may be experiencing learning struggles; and to provide them appropriate, user-friendly interventions to address these difficulties. The WBTT goals are:

- Effective teacher preparation
- Accurate identification of children at risk of school failure
- Effective use of strategies
- Consistent tracking of screening, assessments and reporting

Some of the key findings of the evaluation of the WBTT were:

- 62% of teachers indicated they felt more familiar with learning disabilities in general
- 82% of the teachers felt the in-service was effective
- 100% of the teachers felt LDAA support was effective
- 95% of the teachers indicated the WBTT was always or usually accurate
- 73 of 284 children were flagged as not having met developmental milestones on one of the screening tests
- The average growth in points between the first and second screenings was significant.
- Class sizes ranged from 20 to 24 children and among these classes there was a range of 2 to 12 children identified by the WBTT as needing assistance.
- 25% of children screened were identified as needing assistance
- Children who were flagged showed a significantly greater gain from November to May than is expected for the average student.

Year two of the Pilot Project is set to start this school year with a substantial increase in the number of pilot schools. Training for participants will take place in October with sessions in Red Deer and Fort McMurray.

The LDAA is appreciative of the support from Alberta Education which allows an opportunity to demonstrate how appropriate early intervention assists in the prevention of school failure.

What lies behind us
and what lies before us
are tiny matters com-
pared to what lies
within us.
~ Ralph Waldo
Emerson ~



Congratulations!

Siobhan Isabella Reid Memorial Scholarship Winners

Two students were awarded the Siobhan Isabella Reid Memorial Scholarship for 2005. Christine Welton will be attending the University of Alberta in the Faculty of Graduate Studies, and Alisha Brown will be attending the University of Calgary. We wish them all our best for a bright future.

Writer's Block: Overcoming Adversity Writing Contest Winners

We would also like to congratulate our 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners for the *Writer's Block: Overcoming Adversity* writing contest.

Graham Parker from Edmonton, Alberta won 1st place and was awarded with a year membership to the Edmonton Chapter, the resources "The Parent Advantage" and "Make School Work for You", and a cheque for \$200.00!

Candace Steward from Lloydminster, Alberta won 2nd place and was awarded with a year membership to the LDAA and a cheque for \$100.00!

Heather Nicoll from Edmonton, Alberta won 3rd place and was awarded with a cheque for \$50.00!

The winning stories can be read on our website at: www.ldaa.ca/ld_month.htm

We also would like to thank everyone who entered the contest, as we received many entries throughout the province. The stories we received were touching, made us laugh, and made us proud.

LD Month has been changed, Nationally, to October. The next writing contest will occur in 2006. Hope to have you all enter!

LD Month Roadshow Across the Province!

The LDAA chapters will be hosting information sessions, or forums, for professionals and parents of children who have learning disabilities (LDs) and/or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). A panel of professionals: doctor, educator, and a parent of an LD/ADHD child, will speak to LD/ADHD issues and be available to answer questions from the audience.

The Roadshow will take place at the beginning of October in Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Ft. McMurray, Red Deer, Calgary, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat. For more information and details on these forums, please visit the LDAA website at:

www.ldaa.ca/ld_month.htm

"Perseverance is a great element of success. If you only knock long enough and loud enough at the gate, you are sure to wake up somebody."

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow -

Learning Resources Centre

Did you know that Alberta Education provides classroom reading resources in audio format to individuals with perceptual disabilities through the Learning Resources Centre?

The official definition of a perceptual disability is defined as a disability that:

...prevents or inhibits a person from reading or hearing a literary, musical, dramatic or artistic work in its original format, and includes such a disability resulting from an impairment relating to comprehension or the inability to hold or manipulate a book (excerpt from the Copyright Act of Canada).

This broad definition includes individuals who have learning disabilities. Therefore the Learning Resources Centre may be another fantastic resource for schools to further support adults and children with learning disabilities.

It all began in 1996 when Alberta Education established the "Audiotape Service for Students with a Print Disability" (now the "Audio Assistance for Students with Perceptual Disabilities") to sell classroom reading resources (i.e., textbooks on tape) to schools for their students to use. Through the Learning Resources Centre (LRC), Alberta Education sells books in audio format, on a cost recovery basis, to Canadian schools (only) for use by eligible grade 1-12 students. "Eligible" students are those students who have an Individualized Program Plan (I.P.P.), or it's equivalent in other Provinces, that identifies audio format as an appropriate accommodation for the student.

If you or your child is eligible to receive textbooks on tape, please contact your/your child's school to explore this option. While the LRC has numerous books available in audio format, it may not have the specific title that the teacher is using. The current catalogue, (<http://www.lrc.education.gov.ab.ca/rc/English/MRCPrintDisability.pdf>), has a listing of titles that are currently for sale. If the title that you are looking for is not listed in this catalogue, the school may contact the LRC to explore whether the book may be converted to audio format.

For more information on the Learning Resources Centre and their services, visit their website at www.lrc.education.gov.ab.ca.

Mark your Calendars!

The 2006 provincial 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. Make sure to visit our website regularly at <http://www.ldaa.ca/conference.htm> for upcoming speaker and registration information.

"Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come. You wait and watch and work: you don't give up."

- Anne Lamott -



The Learning Team: A handbook for parents of children with special needs

Start off on the right foot this school year by using this handbook to work with your child and your child's teachers. As a downloadable free resource through Alberta Education, this handbook takes you through the all-encompassing task of developing a "Learning Team" between yourself, your child(ren), and your child(ren)'s teachers.

The handbook addresses topics such as building your child(ren)'s learning team, meeting your child(ren)'s diverse learning needs, supporting your child(ren)'s social and emotional growth, planning for your child(ren)'s transition to post secondary school, and much more. It offers support and encouragement to parents through "Parent Notebook" sections where parents can find questions that they can ask their child(ren) and teachers to better gain an understanding of their child's learning needs and what supports are available within the school and the community to meet those needs. Also, this section is an area where parents may write comments and notes about their observations in their child(ren)'s progress in school.

Throughout the handbook, parents will find references in the margins where they may find more information on particular sections of the handbook, specifically the guide "Standards for Special Education" and legislation in the School Act. Definitions to common terms are also available in these margins as they are used.

Finally, the end of the handbook provides a multitude of further resources for parents in the areas of goal setting, checklists, and listings of provincial parent groups, government agencies, and also resources appropriate children's literature, and much more.

The learning team handbook can be found on-line at:

<http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/educationguide/spec-ed/partners/learning.pdf>.

It is not only an invaluable tool for parents with children with special needs, but would be useful for any parent with a child in school. With this tool, parents may be better able to take a leadership role in their child's learning successes within the school system and have access to further support within the community.

"People usually fail when they are on the verge of success. So give as much care to the end as to the beginning."

- Lao-Tzu -

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. Keep this page book marked as new free resources will be added as they become available:

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

Speak up! It's Your Turn!

When it comes to the educational supports that you or your child needs, do you feel frustrated that your voice is not heard and your needs are not met? Do you wish that you could have a forum within the government where your story and ideas would be heard toward making changes within Canada? Well, here's your chance.

Social Development Canada (SDC) is using new tools to consult Canadians on a range of topics. Through this online consultation, SDC wants to learn more about Canadians' experiences and thoughts on disability issues. This is your opportunity to help shape future policies and priorities.

The consultation survey on persons with disabilities can be found at <http://sdc-dsc.dialoguecircles.com/>, and we encourage you to participate. Please complete the survey and ask your colleagues (staff & volunteers), friends, families, and others to take part.

There are three ways to participate in this consultation:

1. By sharing your stories & ideas, or
2. By completing a consultation workbook

In order to participate in the consultation, you will need to choose which consultation format you would like to fill out, choosing from the options of: Caregiver Consultation, Persons with Disabilities Consultation, or Seniors Consultation. Before you participate in the consultation, the site asks you to follow the instructions and register; however, you may also participate anonymously as well.

Through this website, not only will your story anonymously be shared, but you can also read some of the other stories that have been submitted as well. This is a great opportunity for us to raise awareness of issues unique to living with a learning disability in Canada, and we hope that you will share your thoughts and views.

“A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities and an optimist is one who makes opportunities of his difficulties.”

– Harry Truman –

