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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 December 31, 2004. For writer's guidelines, visit www.ldaa.ca/Newsletter.

After a summer that really never arrived, it is hard to believe that we are already well into fall, and with it the routines that seem such a part of the new 'year'. Whether it is children starting at a new school, adults starting at a new job or, the provincial board moving in new directions, fall does seem to be a time of change and fresh beginnings.

The LDAA Board had the opportunity to meet over the weekend of September 11th to reassess our direction and began to set priorities for the next couple of years. We have a number of key areas that we will be focusing on, including current and new partnership opportunities, and will provide updates as we proceed.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, one important focus that is already underway is that of developing a more collaborative approach with the chapters. A June Chapter Development Working Group meeting provided a starting point for discussion in this area. It was followed by a second meeting October 2nd. It is wonderful to have the opportunity to work with chapters on areas of common interest and concern. I really appreciate the commitment of the chapter and provincial representatives who have given up their time to meet and work together. I look forward to an ongoing dialogue with the chapter representatives.

At the September LDAA Board Meeting, Teddi Doupe from Edmonton, was appointed as a new board member. Many of you might remember Teddi from the 2001 provincial conference in Edmonton where she was one of the co-chairs. We are very pleased that she has agreed to share her time and expertise on the LDAA board.

At this time we bid 'goodbye' and 'thank you' to Elizabeth Gredley, who has been the communication Director at the provincial office. We wish her the best as she moves on to a new challenge. We welcome Dina Hendzel who has taken over the position.

The 2004 Provincial Conference, scheduled for November 18-20, 2004 at the Red Deer Lodge, is rapidly approaching. It has a wonderful mix of sessions and networking opportunities. The program is available on the Red Deer Website (www.ldaa-reddeer.ca) and includes Richard Lavoie as keynote speaker. Many of you may be familiar with his videos "How Difficult Can This be" and "Last One Picked". He has extensive knowledge of learning disabilities and the challenges that go along with them.

I look forward to seeing you in Red Deer next month.

LDAA President

From the Executive Director

Early identification and appropriate intervention with children has long been a concern of the LDAA. Subsequent to conversations with Lyle Oberg, Minister of Learning, and negotiations with the staff of Alberta Learning, the Association has received approval to implement a pilot project during this school year.

We know that children arrive at school at many different levels of school readiness. Some have learning disadvantages that are entirely unrelated to disability but are the result of unstable home environments, language barriers or hearing or vision problems.

With early identification and appropriate intervention, many of these children can be prevented from experiencing academic failure and quickly catch up with their peers. The key component for progress, however, is active intervention that is targeted and that does not rely on the child to catch up on their own.

The Dynamic Screening and Intervention Model of early screening and intervention with kindergarten students was developed by LDA Ontario. It provides a systematic approach to early intervention. Using the We-Based Teaching Tool (WBTT), the classroom teacher can quickly find the students that need extra support and teach them the way that they learn best. By screening all students, no one falls between the cracks and students with actual learning problems, such as learning disabilities, are found and assisted sooner.

We are very pleased that the Government of Alberta, through Alberta Learning, is enabling us to pilot the WBTT, during the 2004-2005 school year, with selected pilot sites in Alberta. The LDAA will be employing a part-time staff member to manage this project and provide support to the selected pilot sites, and will provide further information on this project as it proceeds.

A Partnership with Alberta's Promise

We are proud to announce that we are now a partnering organization with Alberta's Promise! Through partnerships between service providers, community funders, and community collaborations, Alberta's Promise's goal is to encourage investment in our children's future. As a partner, we will be able to further our commitment to children so that they can grow to their full potential.



"First it is necessary to stand on your own two feet. But the minute a man finds himself in that position, the next thing he should do is reach out his arms".

— Kristin Hunter —
O Magazine November 2003

Standards for Special Ed Now Mandatory

The Minister of Learning has issued standards for Special Education, amended June 2004 as a Ministerial order to ensure that school boards are aware of the mandatory nature of the standards contained in the document.

According to Valerie Keats, Director, Special Programs Branch, the document, “continues to promote consistent and enhanced quality of educational practice within Alberta, so that irrespective of locations, students with special education needs can access appropriated programs and services”.

Every parent of a child with special needs should have a copy of this document. It outlines the requirements for school boards regarding the delivery of education programming and services to children with special education needs in grades 1 to 12. The document starts with a list of definitions and ends with the sections of the School Act relating to special education.

The requirements themselves are organized into four areas: access, appropriateness, accountability, and appeals.

Access

This section clarifies informed consent and sets requirements for identification and assessment of students with special needs, parents’ right-of-access to student records, and the obligation of school boards to coordinate with other community services.

Appropriateness

Educational programming and services must be designed around the assessed needs of students and provided by qualified staff. Professional standards, parent involvement in decision-making, student placement, and individualized program planning (IPP) are covered in this section.

Accountability

The document outlines reporting requirements including reporting to parents, program monitoring and evaluation, and participation in provincial assessments.

Appeals

Here are the requirements for school boards to ensure timely, fair and open dispute resolution and appeals.

Alberta Learning revised the previous standards for Special Education to clarify when informed consent is required, enhance consistency of language with other Alberta Learning documents and clarify language used. You can download the new document from www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k_12/specialneeds. For print copies, contact the Special Programs Branch toll free in Alberta at 310-0000.

The path to our
destination is not always
a straight one. We go
down the wrong road, we
get lost, we turn back.
Maybe it doesn't matter
which road we embark
on . Maybe what matters
is that we embark.

- Barbara Hall -
Northern Exposure, Rosebud,
1993

Curriculum Handbooks Available

Do you know exactly what your child is supposed to be learning in school? Curriculum handbooks and summaries are available for kindergarten through grade 12 in both public and catholic school versions. You can download documents free of charge from www.learning.gov.ab.ca/parents/handbooks. To purchase print copies, call 310-0000 toll-free in Alberta.

Featured Websites

Child and Family Canada (www.cfc-efc.ca) is a public education website with resources from a consortium of fifty non-profit organizations headed by the Canadian Child Care Federation. Learning Disabilities Association of Canada is one of the partners. You can search a collection of 1300 documents for information relevant to children and families.

To learn what's what in adaptive technology, visit the University of Toronto's Adaptive Technology Resource Centre at www.utoronto.ca/atrc/. Select "Technical Glossary" from the menu for impartial information about the various devices that are available.

Did You Know?

- The Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta was first incorporated in 1968.
- One in ten Canadians has learning disabilities.
- Adults with learning disabilities, who have not received appropriate education and/or training, typically hold a job for only 3 months.
- Seventy-five percent of children with reading disabilities in grade three, who did not receive early intervention, continue to have difficulties learning to read throughout high school and their adult life.
- The male to female ratio of reported incidence of reading disabilities is 1.5:1.

For more statistics and references, visit www.ldac-taac.ca and select "LD in Depth" from the menu.

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



"Never seem more learned than the people you are with. Wear your learning like a pocket watch and keep it hidden. Do not pull it out to count the hours, but give the time when you are asked."

- Lord Chesterfield -
(1694-1773)