



A Message from the Chair

No sooner have we settled into our Fall work and school routines, we are suddenly into excitement of the holiday season. For our families who are living the LD “life”, we hope you are taking some time in the midst of the holiday festivities to reflect upon what has worked well and how to meet the challenges ahead – and to count our blessings as members of a caring LDA network who are there for support when you call upon them. Our priorities at the National office continue to support the work of our LDA network and the LD communities. Wishing you all a wonderful holiday season and a very happy and healthy New Year!

Thealzel Lee
Chair, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

A Message from the Executive Director

There is a cheery song about this season being “the most wonderful time of the year.” As Canadians, we might sometimes question that while shoveling the inevitable white stuff we face with the approach of winter, but it is the season when family and friends get together to celebrate and embrace. From all of us at LDAC, we wish you all a wonderful holiday season and a very happy and healthy New Year!

Below are a few highlights from the national office.

Policy on cannabis/marijuana use in pregnancy and during breast feeding
With the federal legalization of marijuana next year, LDAC’s Health Policy Advisor raised concerns about cannabis/marijuana use in pregnancy and during breast feeding.

With that in mind, Barbara McElgunn has developed a draft policy that will be presented to the board of directors at its next meeting in mid December. The terms marijuana/cannabis refer to a product (recreational marijuana, consumable marijuana products, or exposure to side-stream marijuana smoke) containing THC or tetrahydrocannabinol, the chemical responsible for the product’s psychological effects. Once adopted, the policy will be distributed widely.

Case for Support and E-blasts

Scott Patterson, the LDAC Fund Development Director, has been working hard sending out electronic newsletters to our web subscribers, developing the LDAC’s Christmas direct mail campaign and working with a consultant to develop LDAC’s *Case for Support*, a document that tells prospective donors and funders



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what our organization hopes to accomplish with their philanthropic gifts/grants. As well, Scott is working very closely with our web designer to freshen up LDAC's website.

Canadian Survey on Disability

Statistics Canada has just completed collecting the data for the Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD). They anticipate the results of the data survey to be released on December 3, 2018. The CSD will include new data on learning disabilities.

Optional Protocol

On November 30, 2017, the Government of Canada tabled in the House of Commons, the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Optional Protocol would allow individuals in Canada to make a complaint to the United Nations if they believe their rights under the Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities have been violated.

The Convention protects and promotes the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. In 2010, Canada became a Party to the Convention and committed to promoting, protection and ensuring the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities.

Accession to the Option Protocol would provide added protection by allowing the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to consider complaints against Canada. The Committee is a specialized committee with expertise in disability issues.

For more information please visit:

https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2017/11/the_government_ofcanadatablestheoptionalprotocoltotheunitednatio.html

Claudette Larocque

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Committee Reports

Research Committee

The Research Committee would like to provide short features for the newsletter on Canadian research and researchers in the field of learning disabilities. This time we are featuring Dr. Sterett Mercer.

Sterett Mercer is an Associate Professor in Special Education and School Psychology at University of British Columbia (UBC). He also serves as a Special Advisor to the Learning Disabilities Association of Vancouver (LDAV). Two recent studies and ongoing research projects have focused on assessment and intervention in written expression.

The first study, “A Preliminary Component Analysis of Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) for Persuasive Writing in Grades 5 to 7 in British Columbia,” found large overall effects for SRSD on persuasive writing quality, writing duration, and student self-efficacy for writing. These results are encouraging for more widespread implementation of SRSD in Canada.

The second study, “Generalizability theory reliability of written expression curriculum-based measurement in universal screening,” found that multiple, long duration writing samples are needed for reliable estimates of student skill, which is a challenge for efficiently and feasibly scoring writing samples for large numbers of students, as is done in universal screening.

An upcoming research project will investigate the use of computer scoring to evaluate the skill growth of students with LD as they experience a year of intensive SRSD writing instruction. The project will also address if low-cost online training is sufficient for LDAV interventionists to successfully implement SRSD, and if SRSD yields positive outcomes for students.

If you are interested in receiving a copy of either of the studies mentioned in this article or would like to be part of the Community Partner Network for updates on the upcoming project with LDAV, please email Dr. Mercer at sterett.mercer@ubc.ca

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee has been more active than usual in the past few months helping with the work being done on a website refresh and the development of a Case for Support for fundraising purposes. However, LDAC staff, Scott Patterson and Claudette Larocque, have done most of the heavy lifting on these efforts.



We also pulled together and sent out the fall and winter newsletters and are supporting Claudette in investigating opportunities to collaborate nationally with the provinces on LD Awareness Month as well as with the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Bob Cram –Chair

Members: Lorrie Goegan, Brendan O’Neill, Claudette Larocque, Scott Patterson, Brent MacPherson

Provincial/Territorial Updates

Saskatchewan

I am so pleased, on behalf of the Board of Directors of Learning Disabilities Association of Saskatchewan, to introduce Wayne Stadnyk as the new Executive Director. Wayne will start with LDAS on January 22, 2018. He comes to us from Saskatchewan Polytechnic where he worked in a variety of positions since 2005 and most recently as the Interim Director of Student Development. Wayne provided management, leadership and direction to the programs, services and operations of the Student Development portfolio at the four Saskatchewan Polytechnic Campuses. Wayne has six children and among his many interests are martial arts, traveling, reading, restoring muscle cars and weight lifting.

After twenty-six years of working for LDAS, I have decided to retire from my job as Executive Director to take on a different role of being Granny to two sweet and wonderful toddlers, Hayden and Jude. Being part of the growth and development of LDAS has been an amazing journey. I was hired in 1991 as the part-time office assistant and was one of two staff members. Today we are a staff of 50. I will always remember the people both nationally and provincially with whom I have associated over the years. National projects such as Destination Employment, Screening for Success and the Parenting Project allowed me to grow and learn along the way. I am also grateful for this wonderful team in Saskatchewan who are so dedicated to the work that we are doing here and I wish them the very best in the future.

Dale Rempel
Executive Director
LDAS

Events, Conferences and Other News

[Learning Disabilities Association of America 55th Annual Conference](#)
February 21-24, 2018, Atlanta, Georgia



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<https://ldaamerica.org/events/annual-conference/>

Readers interested in a primer on assistive technology for those with Learning Disabilities may find the article, *Assistive Technology 101*, helpful:

http://www.ldonline.org/article/Assistive_Technology_101.