

## **President's Letter: August 2008**

**Rollanda O'Connor**  
President, Division for Learning Disabilities



Dear DLD Members,

Welcome to a new year and hello to you all! As DLD's new president, I hope you will take advantage of the opportunities membership provides to teachers, administrators, parents, and researchers. Of all the divisions in the Council for Exceptional Children, DLD is among those that are growing!

DLD works as an independent organization within CEC, and also in collaboration with other organizations that focus on individuals with learning disabilities. As examples, last year members of DLD researched, wrote, and published a user-friendly guide called *Thinking About Response to Intervention and Learning Disabilities: A Teacher's Guide*, which is available through DLD's Web site (TeachingLD.org) and CEC's bookstore. This booklet summarizes what we know and don't know about RtI, and how teachers of students with LD can contribute to the process as schools consider whether and how to begin. As a member of the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJLD), DLD has contributed to recent papers that highlight older students with LD, including adolescent literacy and transition from high school to college.

We are mindful of the many challenges students with LD face throughout their schooling and what their teachers do every day to help. To help teachers keep up with current research, DLD provides two on-going publications for members. In addition to our newsletter, DLD publishes useful and current information in the flagship journal, *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice (LDR&P)*, and the *Current Practice Alerts*. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice* was founded to support teaching and to disseminate research in the field of LD, and includes two kinds of articles. The research portion of the journal publishes research that explores the construct of learning disabilities and tests instructional procedures that can support teachers' efforts to teach as effectively as possible. The practice portion includes information important to teachers and administrators, with articles that address current issues and provide summaries of research that can be applied directly to daily life in schools. As an example of the practice section of the journal, this summer's issue of *LDR&P* includes an article on adults with LD in the workforce with important implications for high school transition programs.

The *Current Practice Alerts*, published in collaboration with CEC's Division for Research, provide informed judgments on the effectiveness of practices in the field. For professional practices with demonstrated effectiveness, you will see the green *Go For It*, which is your assurance that the practice has research support behind it. For practices with mixed results or sparse research, you will see the yellow *Proceed with Caution*. Three new Alerts have just come out on *Functional Behavioral Assessment*, *Fluency Instruction*, and *Phonics Instruction*. All three tell us to *Go for It!* If you have not already received these Alerts in the mail (they are a benefit of your membership in DLD), you can find them online at TeachingLD.org.

Our annual national conference provides a unique opportunity for teachers and administrators to learn to implement some of these practices. Titled Bridging the Gap between Research and Practice, each session is delivered by individuals skilled in implementation and ready to provide the hands on knowledge you will need to get going. At this year's conference, we have designed the program to include sessions that will be important for teachers of younger and older students with LD, teachers who teach reading, math, and content areas, teachers of English Learners with LD, and teams who are considering implementation of Response to Intervention in their schools or districts. As a participant, you sign up for four 3-hour sessions that provide depth and opportunity for interaction. This year's conference takes place in Philadelphia, PA, on October 24 and 25, 2008. You can find more information on the sessions and registration on our Web site, and I hope to meet you there.

This year will bring new lawmakers and a new executive branch to Washington, DC. DLD will be your voice in the discussions that shape the future of LD and how we go about teaching our students. Let us hear from you! DLD offers avenues to keep you up-to-date on issues, trends, and findings in the field of learning disabilities. Membership in DLD will also keep you informed of opportunities to become more involved through our many committees, the newsletter, and the conference. Ultimately, DLD members share the same goal: the best possible life outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Thank you for your work toward this goal!

Rollanda O'Connor  
President, DLD