

President's Letter: July 2005

John Wills Lloyd, Ph.D.
President, Division for Learning Disabilities



www.TeachingLD.org

Writing this statement about my term as president of the Division for Learning Disabilities of the Council for Exceptional Children gives me a fleeting glimpse of the difficulties that some students with Learning Disabilities encounter when they have to write an essay. I messed up a lot.

I did not do a good job of the pre-writing stage when I should have planned my essay; there were so many things I wanted to write that I did not know where to start. As I composed content, I kept losing sight of my goals (which I never clearly established in the first place); thus, although I have experience with writing paragraphs, those that I drafted seem disorganized and uncoordinated. And some of the necessary tool skills—my typing!—were even failing me; the ideas were jumbled and coming faster than I was able to record them. So I had to discard a lot of my precious prose.

It must be tough to be a student with a Learning Disability.

In contrast, it is not so tough to serve as president of this organization. Indeed, I am honored to take office as president of DLD, because the women and men who have held this office previously represent many of the finest contributors to Learning Disabilities research, practice, and policy. I hope that my term in office will be consistent with their efforts. With the well-reasoned guidance of those who have preceded me and other officers, DLD has taken leadership positions on many critical issues. I want to continue that effort.

In fact, therein lies one of my foremost goals as president. I have a high-priority item on my agenda for my year as president, and it grows from DLD's previous efforts.

Since well before the idea became popular with others, DLD argued for the importance of employing research to guide practice. DLD collaborated with the Division for Research on development and distribution of the Alerts series. DLD offers a unique annual conference where sessions go into sufficient depth to show people how to implement practices that have solid research support; the sessions are more like workshops than typical conference presentations. And DLD has invested in TeachingLD.org to disseminate research-based practices via the Web.

In the coming year, I hope to initiate another effort to promote evidence-based practices in Learning Disabilities. DLD is the largest professional organization devoted to LD, but its 7000 members represent only a fraction (perhaps 3-5%?) of the number of special education teachers who work with students with Learning Disabilities. If DLD is to serve the students who have Learning Disabilities, we need to reach more of the people who work with these students. DLD needs to reach out to other teachers and professionals concerned with Learning Disabilities and convey to them the importance of employing effective instructional practices.

In hopes of accomplishing this, I plan to initiate a multi-year effort in which DLD will seek collaboration with other organizations—research centers, governmental agencies, and philanthropic organizations—in a substantial effort to disseminate practical information about high-quality instructional methods suitable for students with Learning Disabilities. We shall have to develop some new alliances and probably have to use new technologies, but DLD already has

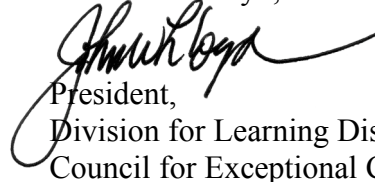
much of the content needed for this endeavor. We simply have to repackage it and deliver it in compelling ways.

I have discussed this initiative with Karen Rooney and Kathleen Marshall, the next two people who will be faced with writing presidential columns for DLD, and they have indicated a willingness to pursue this effort over the coming years. Other members of the executive board also support the effort. I hope that the members of DLD will agree that it is a worthy direction for the organization.

Over the coming year I plan to submit additional statements about DLD's progress in disseminating effective teaching practices as well as other topics (e.g., making "highly-qualified teacher" something better a slogan). Watch this space.

Perhaps you will even see improvement in my writing!

John Wills Lloyd, Ph.D.



President,
Division for Learning Disabilities
Council for Exceptional Children

The Division for Learning Disabilities (DLD) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) works to secure access to appropriate education for students with Learning Disabilities and to promote evidence-based practice by professionals serving those students. Learn more about DLD by visiting the organization's Web site at <http://TeachingLD.org>.

About the author

John Wills Lloyd, Ph.D. serves as DLD's President. He is a professor at the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. Before joining the U.Va. faculty in 1978, he taught at Northern Illinois University and at schools serving students with disabilities in southern California.

