

## **President's Letter: July 2007**

Kathleen J. Marshall  
President, Division for Learning Disabilities



Dear DLD members

It is a pleasure to say hello to all members of DLD. As the new president, I am awed by the responsibility of guiding this organization through what is certain to be an interesting and possibly challenging year.

Before I begin talking about the future, however, I would like to recap some events from the past year. Our past-president, Karen Rooney, provided us with strong leadership through a turbulent time. The board of DLD, under Karen's leadership and with a little help from our friends, has worked hard to put forth explanations and recommendations about the construct of learning disabilities, the application of RTI, and recommended procedures for identifying children with learning disabilities. Our voice, as a division, is as strong as it has ever been.

Last year we also continued our work of identifying the best strategies for teaching students with learning disabilities. This work is ongoing, of course, but now there are several new products that are near or at completion. These include two new ALERTS – one on reading comprehension and one on graphic organizers, a paper written jointly with NJCLD on adolescent literacy, and a booklet for teachers on Response to Intervention. The RTI booklet we hope will be particularly helpful to you as RTI models are implemented in schools. In the coming year, you will hear about other activities and materials.

I would like for DLD to focus on two new goals for our organization this year. The first is to develop a strategic plan to increase and retain membership in DLD. If we are successful in developing and implementing a strategic plan, we will attract and keep more active and involved members. We can only do this if membership in this organization is relevant to you. We will continue our efforts to demonstrate to you that we are becoming more effective communicators and that we are giving you – as teachers, parents, and students - the support you need.

The second new goal for this year will be to reduce the often-described gap between research and practice. As you may know, our annual conference is titled "Bridging the research to practice gap." Professionals in learning disabilities are leading the

way in demonstrating to all of us how important it is to integrate research and practice. We are so fortunate to have a number of preeminent researchers who are great communicators and teachers as part of the DLD board. Together, we will all work to stay at the cutting edge of knowledge and practice of good instruction, and work to effect a seamless transition from good research to good practice.

In addition to future goals, we must continue our work in a couple of critical areas. One of the major goals of the division from last year was to protect the construct of learning disabilities. This goal will continue to be a centerpiece of our efforts this year. In order to do this, we must also continue our emphasis on developing relationships with other professional organizations and government agencies. We will participate in meetings that can affect policy, serve as advocates for individuals with learning disabilities, and offer commentary, statements, and manuscripts as necessary, to support our field. We do want to hear from you – your perspectives, your experiences, and any thoughts you might have about how we should proceed. In order for our voice to be heard, we will attempt to increase our involvement in shaping federal legislation.

It is somewhat ironic that we are devoting such effort this year to discussing the construct of learning disabilities. This year is the 25th anniversary of the Division for Learning Disabilities. As everyone does at anniversaries, we will reflect on where we've been, where we are, and where we are going. We hope to celebrate this anniversary at the 2008 CEC national convention in Boston. Come join us! Speaking of conferences... our annual DLD conference will be held November 1 and 2, 2007 in fabulous San Antonio! Please check out the program and registration forms on the website. We have a great program planned and we know you will have a great professional experience as well as a great time.

Finally, I want to encourage you to send me any ideas, concerns, or recommendations you have for me or for the work that DLD does. Remember, our board and committees are made up of the people in our organization – members just like you who have something to say and who want to participate. Step up – we need you!

Thanks and have a great summer!

Kathleen J. Marshall  
President, DLD