

FEATURE ARTICLE

Helping Students with Disabilities Meet Secondary-Level Writing Standards Using Research-Based Writing Interventions and Technology

By Lauren L. Foxworth, Ph.D. and Andrew Hashey, Ph.D.,
SUNY, Old Westbury

Students with Learning Disabilities (LD) are responsible for meeting the standards of the regular education curriculum. In most states, teachers of students with LD are required to ensure success as defined by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; 2015). At the secondary level, CCSS for writing are intended to support college and career readiness. Students are required to write arguments and informative/explanatory texts based on discipline-specific content. Additionally, students are expected to produce narrative essays based on historical events and to incorporate narrative elements across other writing genres (i.e. persuasive, informative/explanatory). Technology tools are increasingly available for students to produce and publish their writing (CCSS, 2015).

Students with disabilities, however, often have difficulty with many of the skills necessary for meeting college and career readiness standards; students with LD often experience problems with self-regulating their writing and often produce shorter, less structured essays than their peers (Taft & Mason, 2011). Research-based instructional approaches and strategies

can provide support for teachers who are seeking methods for strengthening student writing at the secondary level and can help students with LD meet college and career readiness standards. Technology tools can be paired with well-established methods for writing instruction to enhance positive effects of research-based writing instruction and allow for ease of implementation in the classroom.



Lauren L. Foxworth



Andrew Hashey

Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) is a research-based instructional approach designed to promote self-regulation and academic skills. SRSD instruction has proven effective for facilitating writing skills for students with LD at the secondary level (Mason & Graham, 2008). SRSD involves six stages for academic strategy acquisition. The six stages for strategy acquisition involve (a) developing prerequisite skills, (b) discussing the strategy and explaining how the strategy will improve writing, (c) memorizing the strategy steps, (d) providing an explicit model, (e) providing guided practice, and (f) providing ample independent practice and opportunities for generalization (Mason, Reid, & Hagaman, 2012). In addition, explicit instruction in self-regulatory processes (i.e. goal setting, self-monitoring, self-reinforcement, self-instruction) is embedded throughout SRSD instruction.

continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- » EVERY CHILD ACHIEVES ACT PAGE 6
- » 2015 FLEISCHNER AWARD PAGE 6
- » 2015 OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR AWARD PAGE 6
- » EFFECTIVE PRACTICES/USING META-ANALYSES PAGE 7
- » RESEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATES PAGE 8

Editor:
Mira Cole Williams, James Madison Univ.
Co-Editor:
Sarah J. Watt, Miami University
newsletter@TeachingLD.org

Helping Students with Disabilities Meet Secondary-Level Writing Standards...

continued from page 1

SRSD instructional procedures have been successfully used to teach genre-specific writing strategies to students with LD at the secondary level across persuasive, expository/informative, and narrative writing genres (De La Paz & Graham, 1997; Graham & Harris, 1989; MacArthur & Philippakos, 2010). Several genre-specific writing strategies have been developed and proven effective using SRSD instructional procedures (Mason et al., 2012). Choice of which particular genre-specific strategy to teach may depend on student needs and curricular demands. A new strategy, POW (Pick my genre then my idea, Organize my notes, Write) + STACS (Setting, Tension, rising Action, Climax, Solution; see figure 1) was developed based on current secondary-level narrative writing standards and was found effective for improving narrative essay writing skills of students with disabilities and struggling writers in a randomized pre- and post-test pilot study and in a single-case design study (Valasa, Mason, & Hughes, 2015).

The first part of the strategy, POW, is an open-ended planning strategy that can be utilized across genres to assist struggling writers with strategy selection, idea generation, and organization of prewriting notes. Students at the secondary level are often required to respond to text-based essay writing prompts without information about writing genre (PARCC, 2014). Thus, it is important the student can identify when to apply a genre-specific writing strategy as well as know how to apply the strategy. *Pick my genre then my idea* provides support in differentiating between genres so students may select the appropriate genre-specific writing strategy for the intended writing genre. A graphic organizer is used to *Organize notes* (see figure 2, on page 3) and is slowly faded as students master the strategy. Following note organization, students learn to *Write* their essay.

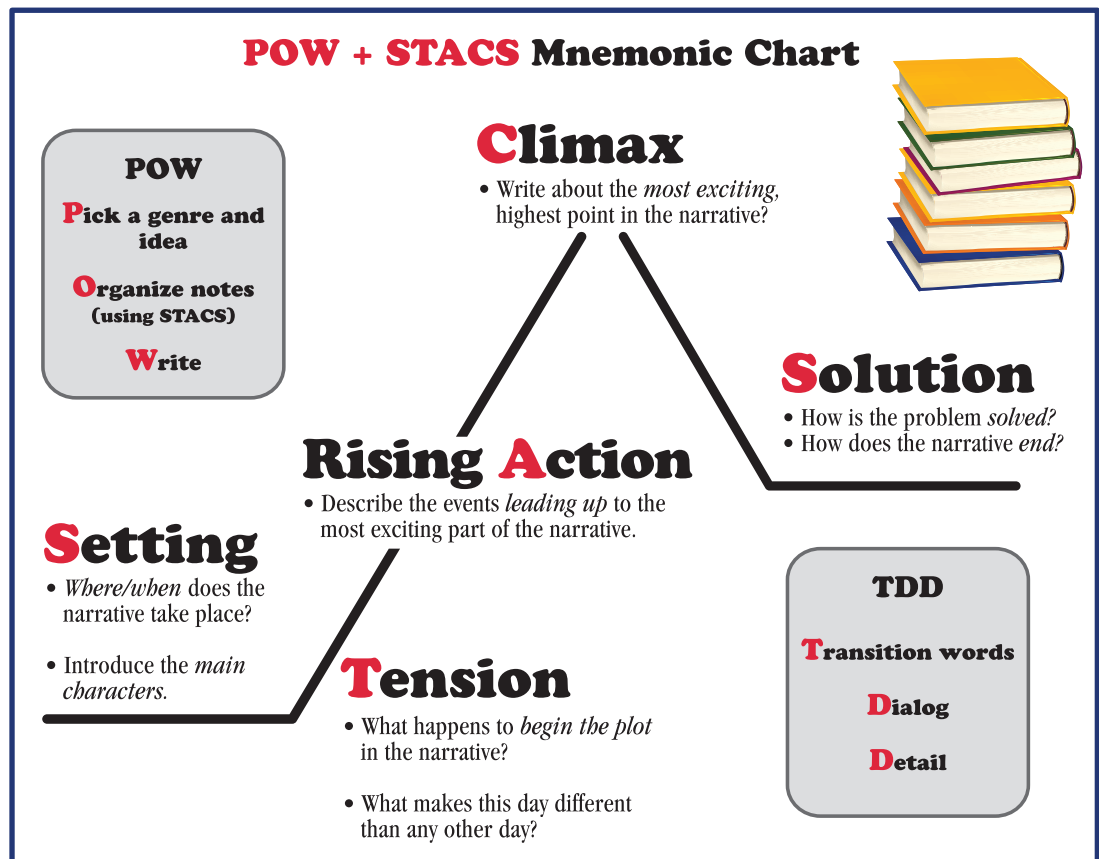


Figure 1. POW + STACS Mnemonic Chart

The second part of the strategy, STACS, outlines basic narrative structure and sequence. Explicit instruction in narrative technique (i.e. use of transition words, dialog, and detail), as emphasized in secondary CCSS (2015), is embedded throughout the lessons. Lessons follow the six SRSD stages for strategy acquisition, and self-regulation instruction is integrated throughout the sequence of lessons. For example, students set goals for narrative writing, self-monitor using an age-appropriate histogram (see figure 3, on page 4), develop positive self-instructions, and self-reinforce progress toward their goal with positive self-statements.

In addition to using evidence-based approaches to writing instruction, the ubiquitous technology available in today's classrooms offers educators opportunities to further strengthen students' writing skills. Indeed the National Educational Technology Plan (2010) has called for increased technology access and infrastructure to support both teaching and learning. In order to maximize the affordances of such technology, these tools must be thoughtfully integrated into effective instructional approaches in ways that help students with disabilities circumvent the most persistent barriers to

continued on page 3

continued from page 2

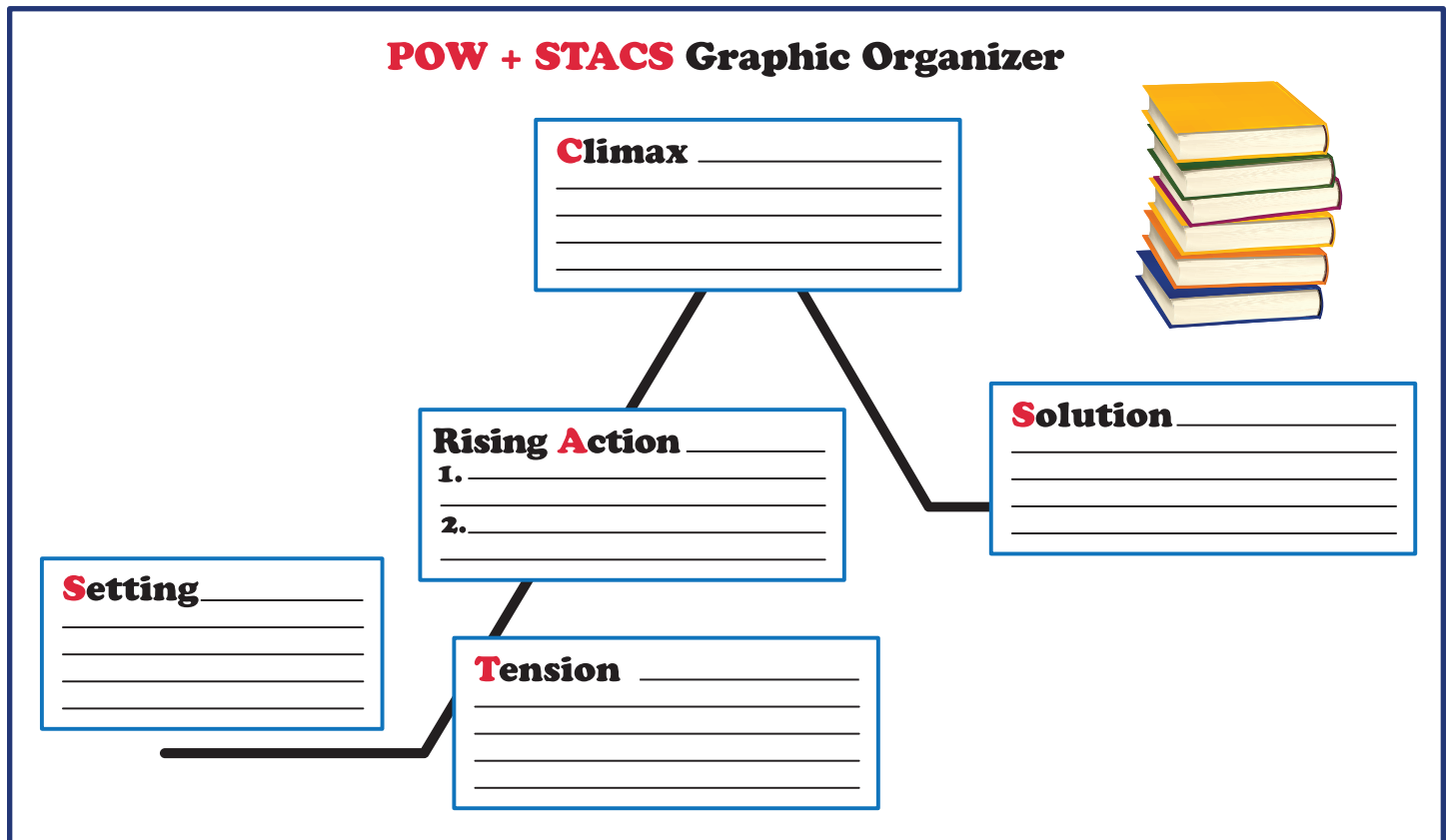


Figure 2. POW + STACS Graphic Organizer

writing, not take the place of good instruction (Hasselbring, 2010). Writing difficulties often manifest themselves in multiple aspects of the compositional process (Troia, 2006), and the myriad features available on most tablet computers offer a remarkable set of supports in challenging areas (e.g. organization, text production, and self-regulation). In order to make use of technology in the writing context, educators must remain aware of the nature of their students' writing difficulties in order to best align the supports with students' needs.

While many excellent resources exist to help identify appropriate assistive technology (AT) devices (e.g., WATI Assistive Technology Planning Guide), educators can also utilize the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework to reduce barriers many students with disabilities face while writing. UDL centers on three guiding principles (a) providing content through multiple means, (b) ensuring students have multiple means for action and expression, and (c) engaging students in the learning process through multiple means (Rose & Meyer, 2002). While technology is not a necessary component of the UDL framework, leveraging technology with the goal of implementing the guiding principles of this framework can make the process more achievable. Of particular importance to teaching a skill as complex as writing

is the reality that technology affords educators the ability to provide in-time supports that are so vital to the success of struggling writers (MacArthur, 2009).

Technology tools can be used in tandem with the paper-based materials and content associated with research-based writing strategies. For example, graphic organizers are commonly used during SRS instruction to off-load organizational demands of a task as students generate ideas for their compositions. Apps such as Notability can add flexibility to graphic organizers, allowing students to utilize keyboards or speech-to-text capability as they transform their thoughts into text. An example from a pilot study conducted by Hashey (2014) is presented in Figure 4 (*on page 5*), where students used Notability to plan their persuasive essays with the STOP (Suspend judgement, Take a side, Organize ideas, Plan more as you write) + DARE (Develop your topic sentence, Add more supporting ideas, Reject arguments for the other side, End with a conclusion) strategy. Word processing apps can also serve as a compositional platform as students transcribe their planning notes into writing. Students with disabilities tend to have difficulty with lower-order writing processes such as spelling, grammar, and legibility (Troia, 2006), and while word-processing tools can directly assist students struggling in these areas, the technology has also

continued on page 4

continued from page 3

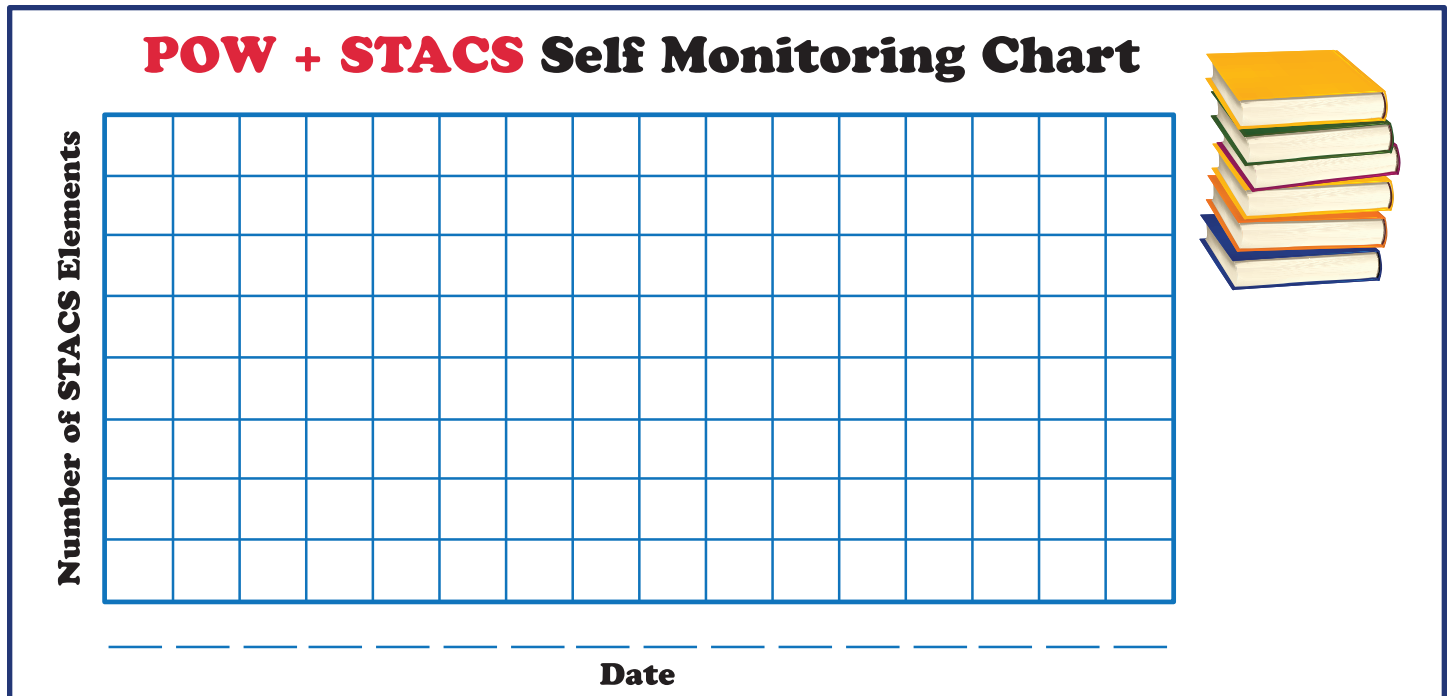


Figure 3. POW + STACS Self-Monitoring Chart

been associated with improvements in students’ higher-order writing processes (Cullen, Richards, & Frank, 2009; Silio & Barbetta 2010).

Another useful way technology might be harnessed in support of SRSD instruction is by providing in-time supports as students begin to memorize the steps of a particular mnemonic chart. In this case, applications such as **iBooks Author** enable educators to embed multimodal supports onto mnemonic charts through the use of text, audio, and video widgets. In the POW + STACS strategy, for example, teachers could embed a brief audio prompt which secondary-level students could click if they are confused, or provide a video model students could access if they needed additional reminders about how to use the mnemonic. These types of supports can help students internalize the strategy at a more individualized pace by offering in-time scaffolds for students when and where they encounter difficulty during the writing process. Researchers recently explored the effects of a technology-infused SRSD instructional approach for students with emotional and behavioral disorders in two recent studies (Hashey, 2014; 2015). The studies highlighted important ways writing instruction can be enhanced through the use of digital scaffolds and other writing supports available through iPad mini tablets. Participants reported a high degree of satisfaction with the opportunity to plan and compose their writing without being hindered by their persistent difficulty with legibility, spelling and grammar. Moreover, students who reported frustration with writing tasks revealed they were more engaged in technology-based writing envi-

ronments that provided flexibility and choice in the way they composed their planning notes and compositional texts.

The positive results associated with early integrations of technology-based supports into SRSD instruction warrants further exploration. Emerging technologies will continue to proliferate, and their capabilities await thoughtful incorporation into research-validated writing practices. Researchers and educators can utilize technology in tandem with research-validated writing approaches and strategies, including SRSD for the POW + STACS strategy highlighted above, to help secondary students with LD meet rigorous writing standards set for by the CCSS. 📖

References

Common Core State Standards Initiative (2015). <http://www.corestandards.org>.

De La Paz, S., & Graham, S. (1997). Effects of dictation and advanced planning instruction on the composing of students with writing and learning problems. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 89, 203-222.

Graham, S., & Harris, K. R. (1989a). Components analysis of cognitive strategy instruction: Effects on learning disabled students’ compositions and self-efficacy. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 81, 353-361.

continued on page 5

continued from page 4

The screenshot shows an iPad interface with a brainstorming sheet titled "Brainstorming Sheet" and the instruction "Suspend judgement. Brainstorm ideas for and against the topic." The sheet is divided into two columns: "(for)" and "+ (against)".

(for)	+ (against)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some students have a slight problem with stealing - without being accompanied by an adult there's no telling what a child might do - kids running through the mall without being accompanied by an adult - mall security might be worked too hard and are for the right to restrict access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no, some kids our age have a well paying job - what if we want to walk and hangout with our friends - some students under 18 not only have a job but have a permit/license so have every right to be there - some malls need to step up on security and surveillance

Below the table, three instructions are listed:

- T**ake a Side. Place a (+) at the top of the box that shows the side you will take.
- O**rganize Ideas. Decide which ideas are the strongest, and which you will reject.
- P**lan More as You Write. Remember to use all 4 essay parts, and keep planning.

Figure 4. Student Sample of STOP + DARE Graphic Organizer

References (cont.)

Harris, K., Graham, S., Mason, L., & Friedlander, B. (2008). *Powerful writing strategies for all students*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing Co.

Hashey, A. (2014). *Leveraging technology in self-regulated strategy development writing instruction: Improving persuasive writing in adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders*. Manuscript in preparation.

Hashey, A. (2015). *A technology-enhanced approach to self-regulated strategy development: Engaging adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders in argumentative writing* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY.

MacArthur, C. (2009). Reflections on research on writing and technology for struggling writers. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 24*, 93-103.

MacArthur, C. A., & Philippakos, Z. (2010). Instruction in a strategy for compare-contrast writing. *Exceptional Children, 76*, 438-456.

Mason, L. H., & Graham, S. (2008). Writing instruction for adolescents with learning disabilities: Programs of intervention research. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 23*, 103-112.

Mason, L. H., Reid, R., & Hagaman, J. (2012). *Building comprehension in adolescents: Powerful strategies for improving reading and writing in content areas*. Baltimore: Brooks Publishing Co. Inc.

U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *National educational technology plan*. Washington, D.C.: Authors.

Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (2015). <http://www.parcconline.org/>

Rose, D. & Meyer, A. (2002). *Teaching every student in the digital age*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Silió, M. C., & Barbeta, P. M. (2010). The effects of word prediction and text-to-speech technologies on the narrative writing skills of Hispanic students with specific learning disabilities. *Journal of Special Education Technology, 25*, 17-35.

Troia, G. (2006). Writing instruction for students with disabilities. In C. MacArthur, S. Graham, & J. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Handbook of Writing Research*, (pp. 324-336). New York: Guilford Press.

Valasa, L. L., Mason, L. H., & Hughes, C. A. (2015). *Improving narrative writing skills of secondary students using self-regulated strategy development* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The Pennsylvania State University, University Park.

Every Child Achieves Act

On July 16, 2015, the U.S. Senate passed the Every Child Achieves with a vote of 81-17. This bill is the new reauthorization of No Child Left Behind.

The House had previously passed their own version of NCLB, which they called the Student Success Act (HR 5). The two chambers must join in conference to resolve the differences and create one bill. If they are able to do that, each chamber will then vote on the new bill. Lastly, President Obama will decide whether to sign the bill into law or to veto it.

The bill passed by the Senate has many protections for students with learning disabilities, including:

- students with disabilities are included in annual assessments;
- the participation in alternate assessment is capped at 1% of all students;
- provide professional development for educators to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

The Senate bill has a provision that allows for the establishment of a Comprehensive Center to help students struggling with literacy. This Center would provide

resources to educators and parents so they can better support and instruct children who are at-risk of not attaining full literacy skills due to a disability, or disabilities related to reading, writing, language processing, comprehension, or executive functioning.

For more information about the specifics of the bill, please review the following links:

Summary of the Bill

https://www.nsba.org/sites/default/files/file/April_2015_Senate_Every_child_Achieves_Act.pdf

U.S. Senate Passes Every Child Achieves Act, End of NCLB Era Draws Closer on NEA Today at

<http://neatoday.org/2015/07/16/u-s-senate-passes-every-child-achieves-act-end-of-nclb-era-draws-closer/>

Every Child Achieves Act Summary at

http://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/The_Every_Child_Achieves_Act_of_2015-summary.pdf

Revising the No Child Left Behind Act: Issue by Issue on Education Week at

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2015/07/revising_the_no_child_left_beh.html

2015 Fleischner Award:

Rollanda O'Connor, Ph.D., is a Professor and Eady/Hendrick Chair in Learning Disabilities at the Graduate School of Education at the University of California at Riverside. She has worked to advance the field of learning disabilities as a special education teacher, scholar, and professor. As a scholar, she conducted ground breaking work in: Early identification of reading disabilities, early intervention, phonological awareness instruction, reading instruction, response to intervention, and reading fluency. As a professor, she has prepared teachers to serve children with learning disabilities, guided and mentored graduate students in Ph.D programs, and worked to create a new generation of scholars. As a leader in the field, Randi has served as an officer in the American Educational Research



Association special education SIG and as president of DLD. She has also developed widely used instructional programs and practitioner texts on teaching reading to struggling students.

2015 Outstanding Educator Award:

Amanda Giorgi, is a special education teacher in the Bristol-Warren Regional Unified School District in Rhode Island where she has worked to successfully implement intensive intervention for students with learning disabilities. She also serves as a leader on her school's Response to Intervention team, helping to develop staff capacity to support students with severe and persistent learning and behavior challenges. Her colleagues describe her as a collaborative and dedicated team player who has been instrumental in bringing about improvement for all students, including those with disabilities.

Using Meta-Analyses to Identify Effective Practices

By Leslie Novosel, University of Hawaii

It seems as if there is a research study to support just about any practice, even those that are ineffective.

How do I know which practices are actually research-based?

Practitioners frequently use web-based searches to determine what works in education, which typically result in an overwhelming number of hits and may include studies that are not based on sound empirical research. No research study is perfect; in fact, some are seriously flawed. Therefore, it is important to avoid basing instructional decisions on the results of a single study. Rather, the ideal is to consider findings from all relevant studies. The process of analyzing findings across studies is referred to as meta-analysis.

What is a meta-analysis?

In essence, meta-analysis is “research about research.” Conducting a meta-analysis involves identifying all relevant studies (e.g., all studies that examined the effectiveness of an instructional practice on an outcome for a population of

learners) and calculating an average effect size across the studies reviewed. Because meta-analyses suggest an average effect of an intervention across multiple studies, the findings are more credible than the results of an individual study. Moreover, reading a meta-analysis is more time-efficient than searching, identifying, reviewing, and analyzing all of the research on a particular practice.

What is the best way to search for a meta-analysis?

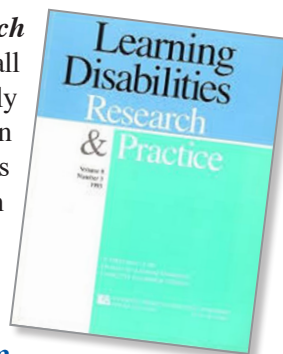
Meta-analyses can be found by inputting relevant search terms (e.g., meta-analysis, math, learning disabilities) into a search engine (e.g., Google Scholar, Education Resources Information Center). An efficient alternative is to review the structured abstracts developed by the *National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities* (NICHCY) available through the *Center for Parent Information Resources* (CPIR) repository (<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/topics/research/>). The CPIR houses a number of published meta-analyses in special education in the form of brief, structured abstracts that include research question(s), participant characteristics (e.g., disability type), description and duration of targeted intervention, findings and overall effect sizes, and conclusions and recommendations.

In summary, meta-analyses systematically review multiple studies and result in an average effect size that indicates the general effectiveness of a practice (or lack thereof). Because meta-analysis is a trustworthy and efficient tool, special educators can use meta-analyses to help make informed instructional decisions. 🍌

News for LDRP

The Learning Disabilities Research and Practice (LDRP) journal is now all set to start publishing articles via Early View. When you're ready, you can begin exporting articles to Wiley as soon as they are ready rather than waiting for each issue.

Go to <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com>



CALL FOR STUDENT POSTERS

You are invited! The Executive Board of the **Division for Learning Disabilities** invites interested university undergraduate and graduate students who are members of DLD to submit proposals for poster presentations. These posters will be displayed during the DLD Reception at the CEC Convention in St. Louis. Be on the lookout for the official call for proposals which will go out in early December. Questions? Contact Alex Miller, DLD Student Representative, at StudRep@TeachingLD.org. Visit TeachingLD.org for additional information about this and other initiatives of the Division for Learning Disabilities.

Research Committee Updates

This summer, **Michael Dunn** (Washington State University) and **Mary Little** (University of Central Florida) rolled off the DLD Research Committee after serving their three-year terms. DLD thanks them both for their years of service. We are pleased to welcome **Alison Boardman** (University of Colorado at Boulder) and **Jessica Toste** (University of Texas at Austin) to the committee. They join current committee members **Leslie Novosel** (University of Hawaii), **Emily Solari** (University of California at Davis), **Michael Solis** (University of Virginia), and **Jade Wexler** (University of Maryland) on the Research Committee.

The Research Committee is soliciting applications for this year's **DLD Outstanding Doctoral Research Award**. The award comes with a \$500 cash award and up to \$500 toward travel to receive the award at next year's CEC conference. Applicants must be (a) current doctoral students who have had their dissertation proposals approved or (b) recent graduates who received their doctoral degree no earlier than 10/1/2013. The research, which should focus on learning disabilities, must have been conducted while the applicant was a doctoral student. Applications for the award must be received, via email, no later than 1/1/2016. The recipient will be selected and notified by 2/15/2016.

See <http://TeachingLD.org/awards> for more details. Send inquiries and applications to Res@teachingld.org.

The Research Committee continues to work with the Division for Research to produce *Current Practice Alerts* (<http://TeachingLD.org/alerts>). Topics of *Alerts* that we expect to be completed and published in the near future include *Content Enhancement Routines*, *Self-Management*, and *Peer-Mediated Instruction*. We will also begin updating older *Current Practice Alerts*, the first of which was published way back in 1999. We are targeting the *Current Practice Alert* on co-teaching as the first to be updated.

We are also pleased to have begun writing brief columns in *New Times for DLD* on topics and resources related to research that are useful for practitioners to know about. For example, in this issue, **Leslie Novosel** provides a brief overview of meta-analysis and why/how they provide important information for determining the effectiveness of instructional practices. Topics covered in previous issues of the newsletter include the *What Works Clearinghouse*, evidence-based practices, and *The National Center on Intensive Intervention*. Please contact us (Res@teachingld.org) if you have recommendations for research topics that you think are important for practitioners to understand and which you'd like to see us discuss in future issues. 🍷

Tips of the Trade

New Times for DLD is introducing a new column that is geared toward graduate students in special education. We welcome 100-150 word "tips of the trade" that will help promote the successful completion of graduate programs. Sample topics include, but are not limited to, setting timelines for dissertation research, balancing family and school work, tips for developing partnerships with schools, and/or resources for passing advanced level statistics courses. Submissions may be sent to **Sarah Watt** at wattsj@miamioh.edu, along with your name, institution, research area, and your expected completion date.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR VICE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY

Nominations for the positions of secretary and vice president are now open and will be accepted through 15 December! Self-nominations are welcome. Nominees must be members of DLD. If you are interested or know of others who might be, please send names and contact information to PastPres@TeachingLD.org.

Subdivision Contact Info

FLORIDA – Diana Morales
Florida@TeachingLD.org

IDAHO – Margaret Gross
Idaho@TeachingLD.org

ILLINOIS – Elizabeth Mackie
Illinois@TeachingLD.org

KANSAS – Irma Brasseur
Kansas@TeachingLD.org

MISSOURI – Sarah Bates
Missouri@TeachingLD.org

NEW JERSEY – Marie Segal
NewJersey@TeachingLD.org

NEW YORK – Dee Berlinghoff
NewYork@TeachingLD.org

OHIO – Janice Kelley-Stafford
Ohio@TeachingLD.org

ONTARIO – Amy Shannon
Ontario@TeachingLD.org

PENNSYLVANIA – Carolyn Berenato
Pennsylvania@TeachingLD.org

SOUTH CAROLINA – Susan Thomas
SouthCarolina@TeachingLD.org

UTAH – Dan Elbert
Utah@TeachingLD.org

WISCONSIN – Jackie Blumberg
Wisconsin@TeachingLD.org

Officers

PRESIDENT
Laurie deBettencourt

PRESIDENT ELECT
Linda Mason

VICE PRESIDENT
Stephanie Al Otaiba

PAST PRESIDENT
David Chard

SECRETARY
Jeanne Wanzek

TREASURER
Margaret Weiss

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
John Lloyd

Committee Chairpersons

PUBLICATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

William Therrien
Shaqwana Freeman-Green
Kristen Ashworth
Delinda van Garderen
Douglas Dexter
Hank Fien
Abby Carlisle

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Bryan Cook

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, STANDARDS, AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

Rebecca Zumeta Edmonds
Devin Kearns
Sarah Conoyer
Chris Lemons
Stephen Ciullo

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Michael Faggella-Luby
Michael Hebert
Diana Morales
Debbie Holzberg
Miriam Ortiz

PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

David Bateman

CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

Diane Rodriguez
Michael Orosco
Regina Brandon

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Alexandra Miller

Editors

JOURNAL EDITOR
Linda Mason

WEB EDITORS
Margaret Weiss
John Lloyd

NEWSLETTER EDITORS

Mira Williams
Sarah J. Watt

**Meet our Officers,
 Committee Chairs,
 and Editors.**

Go to: <http://teachingld.org/officers> and click on an officer's name (if highlighted) to view a brief biography. To contact a member of the executive board, visit: http://teachingld.org/contact_forms/new