



June 8, 2020

Dear DLD Members,

DLD is an international professional organization consisting of teachers, psychologists, clinicians, administrators, higher education professionals, parents, and others—we stand together unified by a shared [purpose](#): to improve educational outcomes for individuals with specific learning disabilities.

Yet we also know that educational outcomes are impacted by more than just what happens in classrooms or offices. Therefore, as we look around, we see daily reminders of the changing world in which we live and in which our students learn.

We are embroiled in a national reminder that not all individuals are safe when out in the community or even in their own homes. The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many others are grave reminders of more than inequity in our communities and schools. They are reminders of the brutal realities too often faced by individuals of color. We acknowledge that this pain is uniquely experienced by many members of our community, and we do not want them to feel alone.

**Therefore, DLD affirms our stance against all racism, hatred, and injustice in all environments. We believe Black Lives Matter.**

We stand together, because in doing so our voice is louder, and our shared cause strengthened. Moreover, together we can move our national consciousness, through education, to say “YES”: Yes, to dismantling the structures of inequity, social reproduction, and racism. Yes, to building our children’s self-determination, self-efficacy, and self-worth. And yes to building our members political self-efficacy so that their voices are heard locally and nationally.

While we may not be experts in dismantling racism or activism, we have long been connected to this work. The field of special education is grounded in the civil rights notion that no one be discriminated against, marginalized, or excluded based on trait. Yet more than 65 years since *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* (1954) brought the Civil Rights Movement to our schools, it is heartbreaking to find we have moved so little as a society. We understand that silence and passiveness in our current time is commensurate with complicity. Therefore, we seek to be effective allies, taking action to support the needs of those most impacted, moving forward together.

Actions speak louder than words, but in the current context it is clear that listening must inform action so that those most wounded and marginalized are at the center of moving forward.

Therefore, in the coming weeks, DLD will take the following steps:

- Host a meeting between leaders of disability organizations co-chaired by the DLD President Michael Faggella-Luby and chair of Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Committee Peishi Wang to surface critical issues across fields
- Survey DLD members with an Open Forum follow-up to listen to concerns
- Organize and promote a webinar for educators on the disproportionality of minorities in special education with particular emphasis on the designation of specific learning disabilities and dyslexia
- Partner with CEC's Division for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners ([DDEL](#)) to assess needs and co-plan a response for professionals and families
- Solicit and ensure representation on the DLD Executive Board of historically marginalized populations
- Provide a free module for members on training educators around issues of culturally response pedagogy and students with specific learning disabilities
- Provide updates on and advocacy around the *Right to Literacy* deemed fundamental for individuals to participate in society (see Public Policy section of the newsletter for more)

The issue of racism in America is not an issue about any one person, it is an issue that impacts all of us whether we choose to admit it or not. **As educators, we have a critical role to play in turning the tide by standing together for equality, interdependence, and justice.** Thank you for being part of DLD and part of making the world a better place for *all*.

Signed,

*Michael Faggella-Luby, President*

*Kristin Sayeski, Past President*

*Bill Therrien, President Elect*

*Paul Riccomini, Vice President*

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*Emily Solari, Membership*

*Michael Solis, Research*

*Peishi Wang, Cultural and Linguistic Diversity*

*Shaqwana Freeman Green, Newsletter Editor*

*Debra Holzberg, Newsletter Co-Editor*

*Kristi Baker, Student Representative*

*Sarah Watt, Publications Committee Member*