

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Michael Faggella-Luby

Welcome to DLD, where we stand together (even when six feet apart).

We are 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. COVID-19 has raised questions about how to effectively educate students with learning disabilities, created new roles for parents as learning coaches, and left us all uncertain about what form our annual fall back-to-school experiences will look like.

Together
BUT SIX FEET APART



The majority of this issue will share information and resources for our members to meet these changing needs. Look for articles exploring our new context and changes in national conversations about individuals Right to Literacy.

Finally, as educators we are problem solvers—and COVID-19 has handed us some serious pedagogical and social challenges. As always, we hope you will turn to updated resources and links at TeachingLD.org as we all work to improve outcomes for children with learning disabilities.

FEATURE

Online Instruction for Students with Learning Disability and the Role of Universal Design for Learning

Online learning, virtual instruction, and digital learning are terms used to describe teaching and learning through the use of the internet (Burdette et al., 2003; Coy et al., 2014; Digital Learning Collaborative, 2020). With advancements in technology and availability of online classes and schools, student engagement in online learning has increased rapidly

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in the U.S. over the past decade. Though fewer than 1% of all K-12 students in the U.S. attend fully online schools, many students engage in at least some online learning, and

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Online Instruction for Students with Learning Disability and the Role of Universal Design for Learning

this number has grown over time. In 2010, for example, an estimated 1.5 million K-12 students engaged in at least some online learning (Wicks, 2010). By 2015, that number rose to 2.7 million (Gemin et al., 2015). From 2011 to 2019, the number of students enrolled in full-time online learning also rose, by about 100,000 to a total of 350,000 enrolled students (Digital Learning Collaborative, 2020; Wicks, 2010). Every state now offers online classes as an alternative to the traditional classroom for K-12 students and families, attracting younger generation of students and students with disabilities with every passing school year (Burdette et al., 2003; Queen & Lewis, 2011). Clearly, online learning is a growing enterprise with no signs of waning.

The prevalence of online learning across districts in the U.S. sharply increased when “virtually all” K-12 students lost face-to-face instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 (Soland et al., 2020). Thus, the online learning that was once mostly a choice for many families¹ became a necessity for a nation of children. Given the prevalence and necessity of online instruction and learning in the COVID-19 era of K-12 schooling, the purposes of this article are to (a) to clarify areas of difficulty that students with learning disabilities (LD) may have with online learning, and (b) describe how the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework might be used to guide teachers when designing online instruction.

Online Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities

With the increase in online learning, it is important for teachers to be aware of research-based practices and online teaching and learning tools, to ensure high-quality instruction is provided to all students (Coy et al., 2014; Picciano et al., 2012; Smith & Meyen, 2003). This is particularly true for teachers of students with LD who often experience differences in cognitive processing and working memory that impact how they access content delivered through instruction (Coy et al., 2014). These differences affect students’ use of language, executive functioning, problem solving, and reasoning skills (Grabinger et al., 2008), which can impact their ability to understand information, recall key details, transfer learning from one context to another, and follow both printed and verbal instructions (Geary, 2004; Johnson, 1995; Jordan & Hanich, 2000; Marino, 2010; Swanson & Saez, 2005).

In the classroom, teachers support the needs of students with LD by using evidence-based practices and providing instruction using verbal/auditory, visual, and kinesthetic representations of material. Teachers provide tangible supports for students, such as cue-cards, task lists, visual schedules, and graphic organizers. Teachers provide opportunities for students to respond to instruction and practice skills in various formats, followed by in-the-moment scaffolding for students who demonstrate difficulty. Teachers also provide frequent positive and corrective feedback to guide learning and engagement. Often, these efforts delivered face-to-face, positively impact student learning.

Teachers without training in online instruction and learning may find providing quality instruction online exceedingly difficult. Fortunately, however, there are many ways to support the learning of all students, including students with LD, in online learning environments. These include use of accessibility features (such as text to speech, text enlargement, and annotation tools), online programs, and software designed to support academic goals. Many of these programs and tools offer benefits for students with LD, such as (a) extra practice and retention of basic skills, (b) flexible options for students to communicate their understanding of content (e.g., text processing, document upload, audio/video upload), and (c) problem solving and simulation activities to support attainment of learning objectives (Edyburn, 2001; Smith & Meyen, 2003; Wissick & Garner, 2002). Other technology-based and online features including online text, hyperlinks, graphics, digital pictures, animations, audio and video clips, and multimedia applications may support teachers in designing effective instruction (Smith & Meyen, 2003).

Universal Design for Learning and Online Instruction

While technology tools to support online learning are useful, without a framework for organizing instruction, teachers might feel overwhelmed by the numerous options. To support teachers in planning and organizing instruction, we recommend teachers explore the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, which was designed by researchers at CAST (www.cast.org) to improve and optimize teaching and learning (CAST, 2018). The objective of UDL is to reduce barriers to learning for all students during instructional planning, *before* difficulties arise.

¹We recognize that many families, especially in rural areas, may have limited choice in schooling.

Authors of the UDL framework drew on research of how individuals' brains learn, as well as on elements of effective teaching practices to develop its three core principles:

- provide multiple means of engagement (i.e., the why of learning),
- provide multiple means of representation (i.e., the what of learning),
- provide multiple means of action and expression (i.e., the how of learning; Meyer et al., 2014).

Nine guidelines designed to support implementation of UDL are organized across these three core principles; a

thorough description of the principles and guidelines can be found at <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>. The nine guidelines were built upon the latest research in technology and instruction and can be used to support teachers as they provide instruction to their students with LD in an online environment (Hitchcock & Stahl, 2003; King-Sears, 2009; Rose & Meyer, 2000).

Tables 1, 2, and 3 outline the three core principles, nine guidelines, and examples of how the guidelines can be used to design effective instruction in an online environment.

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Table 1: UDL's Multiple Means of Engagement's Guiding Principles and Strategies to Support Online Instruction for Students with LD

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING			
PROVIDE MULTIPLE MEANS OF ENGAGEMENT			
Guiding Principle	Checkpoints	Classroom Examples	Online Instruction Examples
ACCESS Provide options for recruiting interest	Optimize individual choice and autonomy Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity Minimize threats and distractions	Allow learners to provide feedback on classroom activities that will be used for instruction Provide activities that allow for active participation and experimentation Vary the length of work sessions and sequence of classroom activities	Allow choice in sequence of activity completion where able, and clarify choice within online module Design online modules and classroom webpages using a consistent, navigable structure Create a visual calendar of assignments and due dates, with embedded reminders. Set up automatic messaging reminders of upcoming due dates
BUILD Provide options for sustaining effort and persistence	Heighten salience of goals and objectives Vary demands and resources to optimize challenge Foster collaboration and community Increase mastery-oriented feedback	Display the learning goal in multiple ways Vary the degree of difficulty in core activities Create cooperative learning groups with clear goals, roles, and responsibilities Provide feedback on students' patterns of errors to model success in the future	Clarify the connection between activities and learning goals/objectives with labels Create short videos and live demonstrations of instructional strategies to support students in learning the lesson objectives (e.g., audio recording, live demonstration, student examples) Create and manage a discussion forum where students can post questions for clarification and ask for peer support on assignments

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Guiding Principle	Checkpoints	Classroom Examples	Online Instruction Examples
INTERNALIZE Provide options for self-regulation <i>Note.</i> Adapted from “UDL Guidelines”, by Meyer et al., 2014, <i>Universal Design for Learning: Theory & Practice</i> , http://udlguidelines.cast.org . Copyright 2014 by CAST.	Promote expectations and beliefs that optimize motivation Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies Develop self-assessment and reflection	Provide reminders, guides, rubrics, and checklists that focus the task completion for students that are easily distracted Model real life situations or simulations to demonstrate coping skills Embed activities that include a way for learners to get feedback in a timely manner	Provide estimated duration of assigned activities to help students plan time Vary use of automated and personalized feedback to maximize frequency and efficiency of feedback Offer video conferencing calls with students after submission of assignments to provide specific feedback regarding strengths and areas of improvement and clarification on items misunderstood

Table 2: UDL’s Multiple Means of Representation’s Guiding Principles and Strategies to Support Online Instruction for Students with LD

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING			
PROVIDE MULTIPLE MEANS OF REPRESENTATION			
Guiding Principle	Checkpoints	Classroom Examples	Online Instruction Examples
ACCESS Provide options for perception	Offer ways of customizing the display of information Offer alternatives for auditory information Offer alternatives for visual information	Display information in a flexible format (e.g., layout of visuals) Provide written transcripts for videos Provide descriptions for all images, graphs, and videos	Organize classroom websites with clear labels and predictable formatting to supporting students in locating information Use changes in font style, size, and color to help organize content Create videos (with closed captions) with auditory and visual representation of information Provide ppt slides and other resources referenced in videos Provide directions and explanations in verbal, visual, and auditory format as often as able
BUILD Provide options for language, mathematical expressions, and symbols	Clarify vocabulary and symbols Clarify syntax and structure Support decoding of text, mathematical notation, and symbols	Preteach vocabulary Highlight how complex terms, expressions, or equations are composed of simpler words or symbols Clarify unfamiliar syntax grammar with previously learned content	Create an online virtual dictionary of key terms and concepts of learning goals Embed hyperlinks to vetted webpages with more information or alternative explanations about difficult concepts

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Guiding Principle	Checkpoints	Classroom Examples	Online Instruction Examples
	<p>Promote understanding across languages</p> <p>Illustrate through multiple media</p>	<p>Offer clarification of notation through lists of key terms</p> <p>Embed pictures and videos for visual, non-linguistic supports for vocabulary clarification</p> <p>Present key concepts in one form of symbolic representation with an alternative form</p>	<p>Embed word definitions and pictures in text or using hyperlinks or call out boxes</p> <p>Use annotation tools to highlight important content or links between content (e.g., between text and charts or diagrams).</p>
<p>INTERNALIZE</p> <p>Provide options for comprehension</p> <p><i>Note.</i> Adapted from “UDL Guidelines”, by Meyer et al., 2014, <i>Universal Design for Learning: Theory & Practice</i>, http://udlguidelines.cast.org. Copyright 2014 by CAST.</p>	<p>Activate or supply background knowledge</p> <p>Highlight patterns, critical features, big ideas and relationships</p> <p>Guide information processing and visualization</p> <p>Maximize transfer and generalization</p>	<p>Use advanced and graphic organizers</p> <p>Highlight or emphasize key elements in text, graphics, diagram, and formulas</p> <p>Chunk information into small elements</p> <p>Offer opportunities over time to revisit key ideas and linkages between ideas</p>	<p>Embed links to previous lessons within each online module to reinforce previous concepts and allow for recall of learned lessons</p> <p>Provide digital or virtual graphic and content organizers to help organize information</p> <p>Progressively release modules in a lesson based on mastery of foundational concepts, rather than allowing access to all modules at once</p> <p>Use digital quizzes for review and practice of content</p>

Table 3: UDL’s Multiple Means of Action and Expression’s Guiding Principles and Strategies to Support Online Instruction for Students with LD

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING			
PROVIDE MULTIPLE MEANS OF ACTION AND EXPRESSION			
Guiding Principle	Checkpoints	Classroom Examples	Online Instruction Examples
<p>ACCESS</p> <p>Provide options for physical action</p>	<p>Vary the methods for response and navigation</p> <p>Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies</p>	<p>Provide alternative in the requirements for rate, timing, and speed required to interact with instructional materials</p> <p>Select software that works seamlessly with keyboard alternatives</p>	<p>Create assignments that provide students with options to upload a video explaining a concept, upload a drawing, provide a written response, or upload an auditory recording of their response</p> <p>Support students and families in using assistive technology (e.g., voice to text; changing screen brightness or color, using external mouse, headphones and mic)</p> <p>Find and promote use of free applications that support student expression (e.g., video editing, document scanning, voice recorder)</p>

Table 3 continued from page 5

Guiding Principle	Checkpoints	Classroom Examples	Online Instruction Examples
BUILD Provide options for expression and communication	Use multiple media for communication Use multiple tools for construction and composition Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance	Use social media and interactive web tools (e.g., chats, discussion forums) Provide spellcheck, grammar checkers, and word prediction software Provide scaffolds that can be gradually released with increasing independence and skills	Support students to use dictionary, spell-check, and word prediction tools Use student responses from online pre-test concept quizzes to design instruction Provide access to virtual manipulatives Provide feedback that is differentiated in content and media presentation (e.g., text, voice, video), to meet students' needs and preferences
INTERNALIZE Provide options for executive functions <i>Note.</i> Adapted from “UDL Guidelines”, by Meyer et al., 2014, <i>Universal Design for Learning: Theory & Practice</i> , http://udlguidelines.cast.org . Copyright 2014 by CAST.	Guide appropriate goal-setting Support planning and strategy development Facilitate managing information and resources Enhance capacity for monitoring progress	Post goals, objectives, and schedules in obvious places Provide guides for breaking long-term goals into achievable short-term goals Provide checklists and guides for note-taking Use of assessment checklists, rubrics, and student examples	Help students set goals and track using virtual tracking sheet (graphs in excel or online software) Embed a manipulative checklist of upcoming assignments and events for students and families to keep track of and organize time spent on each assignment Clarify long-term learning goals and short-term goals. Design modules that address short term goals and build toward long-term goals Provide digital rubrics and clear and concise directions on assignment requirements, which can be referred back to throughout the lesson

Conclusion

The use of some form of online instruction to support learning for K-12 students has been around for decades to some degree, but prevalence has been increasing (Hashey & Stahl, 2014). Although teachers have access to tools and strategies to support students in online learning, knowledge about how to best teach students with disabilities in online learning environments is still evolving (Coy et al., 2014). UDL can be used as a framework for planning online instruction so instruction is accessible for a wide-range of learners (Zascavage & Winterman, 2009)—and accessible online instruction is certainly a critical need in this new world of online learning (King-Sears, 2009). 🌟

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DLD: STANDING TOGETHER AGAINST RACISM

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.

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*.

For more on DLD’s steps for taking action, please see our open letter to members posted at [TeachingLD.org](https://teachingld.org)

SAVE THE DATE: MAR. 8, 2021 - MAR. 13, 2021 CEC 2021 Convention & Expo is going virtual!

The Council for Exceptional Children Convention & Expo is the largest special education professional development event for all educators! It’s also a great opportunity for you to access high-quality, evidence-based professional development all in one place.

CEC’s Learning Interactive Virtual Event (L.I.V.E.) will transform the Convention & Expo from an in-person gathering to an online experience while keeping what you love about this great event.

From the comfort and convenience of your home with reduced registration rates and flexible scheduling, CEC L.I.V.E. will bring you: All the FUN you expect from CEC Central and the Expo Hall, including prizes, drawings, swag, games, and more!

Registration and program information coming soon. For conference details go to: <http://www.cecconvention.org>

Special Education & COVID-19: The Challenges of Service-Delivery During a Pandemic

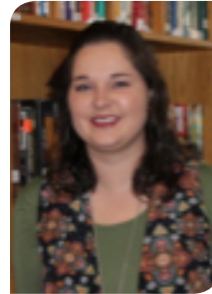
By Shameeka Wilson, M.Ed., Grace Vaughan, M.Ed., and
Amanda Hinshaw, B.S.Ed.



Shameeka Wilson



Grace Vaughan



Amanda Hinshaw

students rise to the task and achieve their IEP goals is a heartwarming feeling that words cannot easily describe. All of these things, rhythms, and “normals” paused as school was closed to ensure everyone’s safety.

Seventy-two hours.

That was the amount of time we had to get all student information updated and corrected, add students and their parents/guardians to our new Remind groups, print out any resources needed to go home and to organize lessons and have them posted to our online learning platform. It was a time crunch, but no one was anxious because it was only going to be for 3 weeks. Surely, we could do anything for 3 weeks, right? As you all know, 3 weeks became 3 months, and there were some unanticipated challenges ahead. We were now genuinely building the boat as we were sailing. As teachers of exceptional children, we knew that our students were already at a disadvantage compared to their typically developing peers when it comes to accessing the school environment.

Fortunately, we can adapt and change the environment to meet the best needs of our students. In-person, we can see when a child is struggling; they can ask questions and we can provide immediate feedback if we observe them doing something incorrectly. This lack of formative assessment is the biggest challenge of the online learning environment. Not only are teachers now in an unfamiliar environment, but the students are as well. In addition, we had to quickly determine how we would honor the service-delivery required by their individualized education program (IEP) with a “good faith effort.” The State provided vague guidance and without parameters, we had to determine what we felt was “good enough”. Remote service-delivery, including formative assessment, was very challenging because it was difficult to gauge whether our efforts were sufficient.

Service delivery, by far, is the best portion of our days. We spend a significant amount of time meticulously crafting a schedule that maximizes the academic needs and service times that our students require. Finalizing this variable jigsaw puzzle-like experience, when completed, merits a badge of honor as it is no easy feat. Once in place, the time comes to implement the schedule. We get into our special education and resource rhythms. Grab this cluster at this time, grab these students at this time, and so forth. The interactions with our students, which take place during their service delivery times, are the absolute best portion of the day. Watching the

What do we do now? How will we deliver specially designed instruction (SDI)? Through distance learning – that’s how. In addition to the upper elementary grade students (3-5), our schooling context ensured that every student with an IEP had a laptop in preparation for distance learning. One of the biggest challenges was ensuring confidentiality when working with students via platforms such as Google-Meet, etc. We were asked to, if having a live GoogleMeet session, to have this session in a 1:1 fashion. This information was daunting because we were barely squeaking by in an 8-hour workday to carry out all of our small group instruction. Take that and multiply it by the total number of students on a caseload times 5 days a week for 45 minutes; I calculated that there was not enough time in the day to achieve this objective. This does not take into account the needs of students in lower grades (K-2) who required far more support with the fundamentals of technology. For example, they needed guidance on the basics such as logging into the computer compared to our upper-grade levels (3-5). Thankfully, there was a bit of flexibility in the implementation of SDI.

As teachers, most of us have never had a formal course on online teaching, much less teaching during a pandemic. We were, however, given the green light to take a more in-depth look at how our students accessed instruction. Options for what SDI *could* look like included (a) providing materials in bi-weekly packets that were sent out with the entire school, as long as students returned the assignments for teacher provided feedback; (b) establishing and assigning students to a Google Classroom; (c) recording instructional videos and uploading them to Google Classroom; (d) establishing daily virtual office hours and inviting students/families to meet for assistance with assignments. The broad nature of what SDI *could* look like was overwhelming.

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Achieving such flexibility *was* overwhelming; however, it allowed us to maximize on differentiated instruction. As we all know, the needs of one student compared to another can be vastly different, and, often, no two students have the same needs. Documenting service delivery was a formidable challenge. Documenting service delivery required multiple checks and balances. For instance, we had a time log from the State (i.e., good faith effort log), we had to ensure students' IEPs were in compliance, and students were able to access accommodations whether they were completing packets or engaging in online instruction. Barriers to service delivery included the many packets that were not picked up or returned, technology failure or lack of access to technology, availability of parents/guardians to support their students' learning (i.e., parent/guardian work schedules), and overwhelmed parents/guardians due to the numerous phone calls regarding instruction. How, as an educator, do you get upset when people were literally trying not to die in a rapidly spreading pandemic? You do not. More than ever, it was up to us to consider the whole child, especially their socio-emotional well-being – especially as their worlds were upended with little preparation. We were all grieving the sudden loss of our routines.

Furthermore, the multi-tiered support systems (MTSS) evaluation process was abruptly halted (e.g., initial meetings, re-evaluations, obtaining parental consent for specific assessments in the evaluation process) leaving many students hanging in the balance; many in need of SDI, but who were unable to receive those services because their evaluations were not completed.

On March 16, 2020, our world as educators of children who receive special education services was turned upside down and, essentially, paused. At that time, the State Department of Public Instruction informed us that we could not facilitate any of the required meetings for the next 2 weeks. Concern for students crept in while the inner voice of compliance was screaming about timelines, deadlines, legalities and the possibility of missing one of these sacred timetables. In short, district-wide panic set in surrounding the IEP process, adhering to timelines, and scheduling meetings while constantly deciphering information from district representatives regarding said meetings that were as clear as a windshield in a torrential downpour. Instantaneously, the rug was pulled out from underneath our feet, all control lost, and our equilibriums needed re-centering. This quote sums it up:

“You can’t calm the storm...so stop trying. What you can do is calm yourself. The storm will pass.” –Timber Hawkeye

A storm cloud moved in and, thus, it called for a new normal and a shift in perspective: virtual IEP meetings.

Virtual IEP meetings. What are these? Will they work? If so, how do they work, and aren't we supposed to have these meetings in person? Around March, there were a mixture of initials, re-evaluations, and annual IEP meeting for a total of eight meetings left and all of which had to be held virtually. The very idea of this was aversive because of my experiences of trying to obtain parents/guardians, a general education teacher, local education agency (LEA), school psychologist, a representative of other related services, and interpreters (when necessary) was about as easy as herding cats. Shifting to virtual team meetings was accompanied by the expectation of more chaos; but, to my surprise, virtual IEP meetings worked!

You mean to tell us all this time, Google Calendar and Google Meet were the keys to getting everyone in the same place, at the same time, and on time? Who knew it was as simple as a click of a button?! By no means was it perfect; however, we mitigated barriers such as transportation issues. Parents/guardians had the option to join via a telephone call or video conferencing if they wanted. For many already concerned parents/guardians, walking into a room with 5-7 strangers, at one time, can be pretty intimidating.

Special educators are famous for “acronym abuse.” We use acronyms for everything and we are used to people keeping up with our lingo. However, we have to remember to switch gears when meeting with parents who may not understand the jargon. In addition to our acronym abuse, we must consider the position of parents/guardians who are not native English speakers – and the intimidation and anxiety that can add to their experience.

Virtual IEP meetings gave parents/guardians a safe space to receive information without the overwhelming stimuli of 10-14 eyes simultaneously staring at them. The option to conduct virtual IEP meetings empowered parents/guardians to make the best decision that suited their needs and safety as far as which method to join the meeting (i.e., phone or video). Necessary evils such as recording meeting minutes were more straightforward. In our school, one administrator is assigned to each special education teacher for the year and serves as the LEA for the duration of the year (except in the event of unforeseen circumstances). Prior to scheduled meetings, a prefilled GoogleDoc template of the meeting minutes was sent to the assigned administrator who was responsible for recording meeting minutes. This enabled them to type more information ameliorating the potential for missing small, but important details. While the special education teacher facilitated the meeting, another team member (e.g., the Exceptional Children's [EC] Program Facilitator)

added information about parental/guardian concerns, aspirations for the student, related information to the draft IEP documents, and other meeting documents such as Prior Written Notice (PWN). This collaborative effort was quite helpful in facilitating a smooth transition.

Further, delegating which team member was responsible for this task, before the meeting, strengthened communication and understanding. Since participants attended virtually, wet ink signatures were not required on the documents.

Given the ease of access and increased parent/guardian participation in virtual IEP meetings, if security/confidentiality could be ensured, this option would be viable whether meeting face-to-face or remotely.

Deadlines and Time Constraints

Regarding deadlines and time constraints, remember to breathe and be kind to yourself. It is a befitting quote for this time of life and this period of teaching:

“Focus on what you can do rather than focus on what you have no control over.” – Catherine DeVrye

As much as we crave more control of our surroundings, we are experiencing ever-changing, unpredictable, and unprecedented events. Focus on things which can be controlled. Focus on giving parents/guardians 10-day notice when scheduling meetings. Focus on facilitating meetings to the best of your abilities with the information obtained from various measures of service delivery and student work samples (i.e., data-based decision making). Ensure that all documentation is carefully verified. Send requests for further assessment(s) to the school psychologist and appropriate personnel and determine the most accessible way to deliver paperwork (i.e., electronic or paper).

Accept that because this virus is beyond our control, some timelines will be out of compliance, but work to ensure your students’ needs are being met and that you are doing your best to deliver SDI. You are teaching during a pandemic. Be kind to yourself. This task is not for the faint of heart, but you are doing it, and you are doing a great job.

A Spark of Hope Vignette – One Teacher’s Perspective

My caseload is in the resource setting for grades 2-5, with most of my students served under the LD category. I am responsible for approximately 50 services (e.g., social skills, reading instruction, math instruction) per day. The sudden

shift to online learning tasked me with determining how to reach my students and ensure service delivery.

Each grade level and classroom teacher was using different resources, communication platforms, and working from a schedule different from our meticulously crafted resource schedule. Goal-specific materials for each IEP goal were assembled into packets for each student. I began making instructional videos for Corrective Reading practice for my 2nd and 3rd graders. I established a Google Classroom and enlisted collaboration from general education teachers on how to best contact my students. In order to accommodate all of my students’ needs, I met with some via phone and some using online platforms.

Unfortunately, in many cases, I felt “ghosted.” In spite of multiple attempts to reach students and their families, I was unable to successfully serve them (aside from offering my support and packet resources). Despite feelings of defeat, there was *one* student that felt like a complete success story and kept me grounded in my passion for education.

Sarah¹ (pseudonym) was a 4th grader that is near and dear to my heart. She struggled to complete assignments in school; we have worked for the past 2 years to build up her confidence. I serve her in reading and math, but more than that - I am her “person.” Whether proud, irritated, defeated, or sad, Sarah trusts that she can communicate these feelings to me. She thrives on social relationships and has a great sense of humor. We first began communicating through Google Classroom. In meetings with her classroom teacher Sarah was over-stimulated and too inattentive to meet with her classmates. I worked with Sarah 1:1 through Google Meet two or more times each week. We quickly became tech-savvy, sharing our screens to show methods or working within a shared document to power through her assignments.

Some sessions were just downright hard; distractions at home, lack of motivation, and the weight of the news impacted her. Sarah was stressed and overwhelmed but taking assignments one step at a time helped her realize they were manageable. Sarah has three other siblings and both parents work; focus was a struggle as her younger brother chased her around all day; therefore, we had to set reasonable target goals.

Things went smoothly through April, but then we hit a speed bump. Sarah’s mom contacted me to let me know they no longer had Internet service. After my initial panic, I let her mother know the district had Park and Learn - open wifi in

¹A pseudonym was used to ensure confidentiality.

our school parking lots from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. After a full day of work, Sarah's mother took her and her siblings to the school parking lot in order to ensure her children's educational needs were met. While I juggled my own children and dinner time chaos, we worked on math, reading, or sometimes just chatted about her fears surrounding COVID-19, or simply about how much she missed her friends. A couple of weeks later, Sarah's family got their Internet back and we continued meeting 2-4 times a week. At some point in May, Sarah discovered the joy of Google Hangouts – that began our daily check-ins. Although Sarah didn't complete every assignment, and all of our meetings weren't focused on academics, I felt like I was supporting her in many ways through this pandemic. Sarah gave me hope for the future and the potential for continued virtual learning.

For my other students, I held 1:1 virtual meetings or conducted phone calls. I checked in with parents through Class Dojo to help them better understand their child's assignments. I sent links to my instructional videos or suggested websites to help their child with specific skills. Through all of this, I realized there is no formula. You have to meet each child where they are, determine the resources available, and help them work at a realistic pace. My schedule with parents/guardians, through the pandemic, was a moving target. Those appointments changed based on their schedules which meant I had to embrace flexibility.

While I never gave up on my “ghost” students, I decided to focus my energy on what I could control. I could make sure they were provided with materials. I could continue to offer my support. I could let parents know that I, too, understood the daily struggles and fears they faced. If nothing else, I could tell my students that I missed them, and I will always be here for them – whether it's face-to-face or through a computer screen.

So, what would I suggest to teachers facing these challenges?

- Communicate with the general education teacher. I found this to be the best way to know how and when to reach students.
- Ask parents/guardians and students for feedback on how information is being delivered. There are many excellent digital platforms available, but they aren't beneficial if no one is connected.
- When determining a feasible amount of work for students, approach this task as a collective unit with fellow specialists (AIG, Reading, Math, EC/EL, etc.). Instead of each teacher sending their materials, collaborate and decide what materials will most impact the student. Our students don't need additional work to complete; they need meaningful work and more support to complete that work.
- Last, and perhaps most importantly, ensure accommodations are communicated to parents/guardians. If a child has modified assignments or read aloud in the school setting, they should also have this during distance learning. Although parents/guardians attend IEP meetings, we must remember that they have never been responsible for implementation.

In conclusion, the most successful approach is teamwork between you, your colleagues, and your families. 🤝

Call for Award Nominations and Grant Submissions

DLD administers award, grant, and loan programs that recognize excellence in the field of learning disabilities and help promote activities to support the goals of the organization. Each program is described on our website: <http://teachingld.org/awards>

Applications are due **October 15th** of each year.

PUBLICATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

Dear Members,

For this fall update, I would like to begin by thanking Dr. Linda Mason, current editor of *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, Dr. Paul Haspel, copyeditor, and the incredible team of researchers and practitioners who make up the *LDR&P* editorial review board for their service to the journal and the division. *LDR&P* has grown in excellence and impact over the past several years, and we are so grateful for your important work.



Dr. Mason's term as editor is set to expire in December of 2021. Thus, the Division for Learning Disabilities is currently searching for the next editor(s) of *LDR&P*. Please send nominations (name and email address) to Kristen Beach at kbeach4@uncc.edu by November 1st 2020. Nominated individuals will be invited to submit an application to serve as editor (or as a co-editor team) by January 1, 2021. Decisions will be made in spring 2021, with transition during summer and fall 2021. The new editor's three-year term will officially start in January 2022.

In the January 2020 newsletter, I shared the fantastic news about the strength of our journal, *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*. Specifically, I noted that the journal's impact factor rose from 1.25 in 2016 to 2.07 in 2018, and that world-wide access to the journal is increasing by way of institution subscriptions across the globe.

This trend of increasing visibility of the journal continued for 2019. The number of institutions world-wide with subscriptions to *LDR&P* increased by over 1,000 from 2018 to 2019. Article downloads were also up in 2019 by 27%. *LDR&P* is currently a top-ten-ranked journal in both Special Education and Rehabilitation.

What does this mean for you? Publishing your work in *LDR&P* results in global visibility and impact. Your work can be accessed by members of more than 12,000 institutions world-wide through their paid subscriptions or low-cost/free access provided to developing world institutions. Importantly,

the *LDR&P* posted articles for early online access within an average of 17 days of article acceptance in 2019, and it took an average of 92 days for accepted articles to appear in print. These quick turn-around times honor the urgency of your work getting into the hands of readers to maximize impact. Please consider *LDR&P* as the outlet for your next research- or practice-oriented manuscript that focuses on students with Learning Disabilities (diagnosed or undiagnosed), or students with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (inattentive and hyperactive-impulsive subtypes).

At this time, I want to take a moment to congratulate the authors of the top-most downloaded article in Wiley Online Library in 2019. *Examining the IEPs of English Learners with Learning Disabilities for Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness* was written by John J. Hoover, Jennifer R. Erickson, James R. Patton, Donna M. Sacco, and Le M. Tran. This article was accessed 1,623 times on Wiley Online Library alone in 2019, and also was the Kirk Award winner for best practice article of 2019. You can access the article through Wiley Online Library, Google Scholar, your subscribing institution, or using this hyperlink: <https://doi.org/10.1111/ldrp.12183>. Congratulations to the author team for these impressive accomplishments!

Finally, I would like to welcome the newest member of the Publications and Communications committee, Dr. Kelly Williams of Indiana University Bloomington. We are so thankful for your service.

Stay tuned to DLD's website, teachingld.org, *LDR&P*'s website, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/15405826>, and our Twitter, @TeachingLD, for important news and updates! 🍷

Sincerely,
Kristen D. Beach

Chair of the Publications and Communications Committee

DLD Student Poster Abstracts, CEC 2020

Ayman Mohammed Alsuwayl,
Washington State University

Examining Teachers' Knowledge of, Use of, and Attitudes toward the Integration of Mobile Technology for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) and Struggling Learners in Saudi Schools

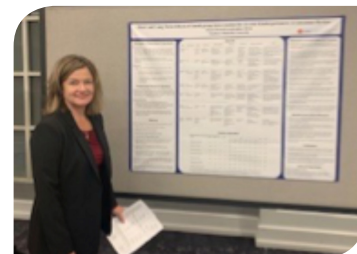
In Saudi Arabia, the use of mobile devices in everyday life is fairly prevalent. Purpose of this study was to examine teachers' knowledge and attitudes toward the use of mobile devices, exploring both their knowledge of mobile learning (M-Learning). Results stated and future limitations are shown in this research.



Dayna Russell Freudenthal, *Southern Methodist University*

Short- and Long-Term Effects of Small-group Intervention for At-risk Kindergarteners

This presentation explores the short- and long-term effects of small-group kindergarten interventions provided to students identified as at-risk for reading disabilities. Findings support the effectiveness of early identification and intervention. The results endorse the use of small-group interventions to accelerate the reading trajectory of most kindergarteners at-risk for reading disabilities.



Divya S. Deshpande,
The Pennsylvania State University

Understanding the Pythagorean Theorem: A Think Aloud Analysis of High School Students With and Without Disabilities

A think aloud analysis was conducted to understand how high school students with and without learning disabilities approach mathematical problem solving with the Pythagorean Theorem. Findings confirm the hypothesis that students with learning disabilities make fewer productive verbalizations, providing a rationale for instructional strategies that target cognitive and metacognitive verbalizations.



Elizabeth Thomas, *University of Missouri-Columbia*

Jiyung Hwang, *University of Missouri-Columbia*

Fidelity of MTSS: Tools Currently in Use

This poster will present findings from a search of State Systemic Improvement Plans (SSIP) for reported use of tools to measure fidelity of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). Sixty percent of states reported the use a fidelity tool in their SSIP, though review of the existing tools indicate a need for the development of a valid and reliable tool that comprehensively measures the fidelity of integrated MTSS implementation. The SSIP search process and results will be presented.



Marissa Filderman, *University of Texas-Austin*

Using Student Data to Improve Response to a Multisyllabic Word Reading Intervention

For students who show inadequate response to evidence-based intervention, intensification using data-based individualization (DBI) is recommended. There is a noted paucity of research for DBI in the upper elementary grades, particularly for word reading interventions. Moreover, it is unclear the level to which data must be used in order to promote improved outcomes. As such, this controlled experiment investigated a small-group multisyllabic word reading intervention and the relative effects of (a) initial customization based on student skills, (b) initial customization with later DBI for inadequate responders, and (c) business-as-usual on multiple reading outcomes.

Kaitlyn Hope Partin, *University of Oklahoma*

Are Students with MLD Receiving a FAPE?: Insights from Rural Individualized Education Programs

This presentation reports results from a descriptive review of 89 IEPs for students eligible to receive special education and related services due to mathematics learning disability attending 15 rural school districts. Results suggest both procedural and substantive errors that may jeopardize the provision of FAPE. Implications for practice are shared.



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Tiffini Pruitt-Britton, *Southern Methodist University*

Samantha E. Bos, *University of Texas-Austin*

Elizabeth R. Thomas, *University of Missouri-Columbia*

Erica N. Mason, *University of Missouri-Columbia*

The Development of Tailored Professional Development Media

While video used as a medium for delivering professional development to teachers has become popular in recent years, this project focuses on professional development that is systematically developed and tailored to the individual needs of teachers. The creation of a database of videos will be highlighted. Presenters will discuss the research-based justification and peer-review processes required prior to the recording of each video. Additionally, presenters will describe the technological affordances of using a Lightboard studio.



Finally, presenters will expound how the videos are produced and used just-in-time during on-going instructional coaching.

Sarah Salinas, *Arizona State University*

Reframing Least Restrictive Environment for Dual Language Learners with Disabilities

This conceptual research focuses on US special education and interrogates what least restrictive environment means for opportunities for dual language learners with disabilities. The main argument of this paper is that as special education researchers we must seek to re-conceptualize and re-define least restrictive environment in an expanded way that acknowledge students face other types of restrictiveness especially for students with intersectional language and learning needs. This paper is organized around two central questions: 1) How have current definitions and understanding of least restrictive environment afforded and constrained educational opportunities for dual language learners with disabilities? 2) How is restrictiveness in other language education policy conceptualized in practice for Dual language learners with disabilities? In this poster/ paper I provide an overview of LRE literature (tensions and perspectives), highlight critical special education and language policy work concerning restrictiveness and educational opportunity for DLLsWDs, and discuss an expanded notion of restrictiveness and implications for future policy and practices in the classroom. This paper contributes to generative discourse for a foundation and future special education work attending to students' multiple needs.



Stacy M. Hirt, *University of Missouri-Columbia*

Jiyung Hwang, *University of Missouri-Columbia*

Tiffini Pruitt-Britton, *Southern Methodist University*

Coaching Teachers to Utilize Instructional Practices and Data-Based Individualization in an Algebraic Readiness Systematic Framework

Project STAIR is a systematic framework for supporting the algebra-readiness of students at-risk or identified with a specific learning disability in the area of mathematics. Presenters will communicate preliminary findings of the impact of Project STAIR coaching on data-based individualization (DBI) and instructional strategies (i.e. explicit instruction and multiple representations) within the context of general and special education classroom settings. Presenters will highlight key components of the Project STAIR coaching protocol, decision making, and multi-site implementation.



Stacy Hirt

Tiffini Pruitt-Britton

Lindsay Watkins, *George Mason University*

We Have to START Somewhere: An Accessible Instructional Planning Guide for Special Education Teachers

Describes the design of the START instructional guide. This guide combines "tables of specification" (TOS) with self-regulated learning (SRL) to unite content standards with frequently assessed skills when planning instruction for students with disabilities. We provide findings from the analysis and exploration design phase for this guide.

Call for Student Proposals

In addition to the its awards, grants, and loans, DLD also sponsors special competitions for **students to present their research** during the DLD's reception at the annual meeting of the Council for Exceptional Children. The Executive Board of the Division for Learning Disabilities (DLD) invites interested university undergraduate and graduate students, who are members of DLD, to submit proposals for poster presentations. Be sure to submit by the **October 15th** deadline!

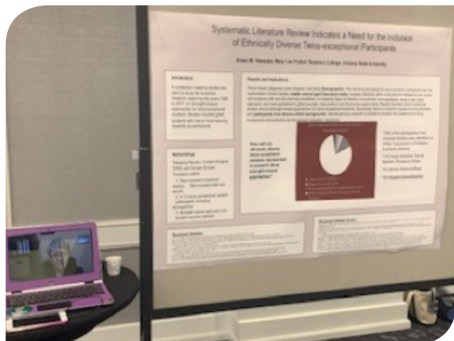
Questions? Contact, DLD Student Representative, Abigail Allen, at StudRep@TeachingLD.org.

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Anani Vasquez, Arizona State University

Systematic Literature Review Indicates a Need for the Inclusion of Ethically Diverse Twice-Exceptional Participants

This presentation includes information that could be used to improve education for individuals with exceptionalities from racial, ethnic and cultural communities. This systematic review of literature focuses on practices that attend to unique learner characteristics. A systematic mapping review was used to study the empirical research, spanning the years 1988 to 2017, on strengths-based approaches for twice-exceptional students. Studies included gifted students with one or more learning differences as participants. Study participants were from six countries and included K-12 twice-exceptional students, twice-exceptional adults and some of their parents, teachers and administrators. Through content analysis, findings indicated that the following demographics were prevalent: participants from the northeastern United States, middle school aged White males, students identified gifted using general intelligence test scores and students with specific learning disabilities. Most studies were qualitative, using a case study approach, and were published in gifted journals. Results illustrate a lack of empirical studies around strength-based approaches for twice-exceptional students. Specifically, there is a need for studies involving females and participants from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Interdisciplinary research is needed to broaden the audience and bring inclusionary interventions into the general education classroom.

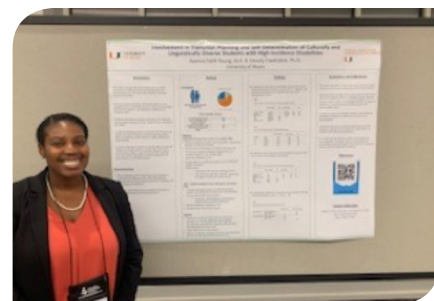


Ayanna Young, University of Miami

The Influence of Student Involvement in Transition Planning on the Self-Determination of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students with High-Incidence Disabilities

This study addresses disproportionately negative transitional outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students with exceptionalities. To advocate for and improve the life outcomes for diverse students with exceptionalities, it is important to better understand the strengths and challenges of the transition from high school to college and career.

This study examined the relationship between student involvement in IEP and transition planning and self-determination for CLD high school students (N = 190) with high-incidence disabilities. We utilized the Student Involvement Survey (SIS; Cavenish, 2006) and the Arc Self-determination Scale (ASDS; Wehmeyer & Kelcher, 1995) to answer the following research questions: (1) what is the group differences (Learning Disability/OHI, EBD, and IND) in level of involvement in IEP and transition planning and self-determination scores? (2) What is the correlation between student involvement in transition planning and self-determination? Our findings identified a statistically significant correlation between student involvement and self-determination ($r = .22, p < .01$) and group comparisons revealed significantly lower self-determination scores for students with IND, $F(2, 168) = 10.51, p < .001$. We provide implications for practice for teachers and school personnel to facilitate student involvement and provide opportunities for students with IND to develop self-determination as they meaningfully plan for their future.



Group Candids:



THE YEAR THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

Welcome, 2020. This year has proven to be a year of what its name suggests—clarity, vision, and focus. We began the year 2020 convening in Portland, Oregon, for our annual meeting of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). I'm sure some of us traveled with masks tucked away in our carry-on item to use if we saw others with masks on in the airports or other modes of transportation. Surprisingly, very few people had on masks, and it seemed even fewer at our conference! We embraced each other, ate meals together, and enjoyed those precious moments together as we caught up with old friends and made new friends.

That seems like so long ago when the need to “unplug” already existed. We now find ourselves immersed in video conference calls, video-conference professional conferences, online workshops, and teaching online while still trying to stay in balance. You see, sometimes we take small things for granted until those liberties are taken away. When to others, those “small” things have always been “big” things like thinking, learning, and looking differently. As special educators, we can relate to this just thinking of the students we serve. Even now, there is a story coming to your mind. You remember just like it was yesterday...

Our New Normal

How many of us have received emails, phone calls, and texts for direction on how to proceed with this academic school year? Have you been asked to speak on topics or perhaps asked questions that made you feel uncomfortable? It is okay not to have all of the answers. Rushing to get “something” done can lead to band-aid solutions becoming permanent complications in our education system. As special educators, we are pioneers in the field of education. Our teaching, research, and service has shaped the teaching of students across the world. Some of the most successful education initiatives have come from us as a collective body (e.g., Headstart, PBIS: Positive Behavior Intervention Support,

RTI: Response to Intervention). It is time once again to take our place as the leaders we are!



Write the new vision for our educational system, make it plain by devising actionable items, and make it fair by including others from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This intentionality helps ensure everyone has a seat at the decision-making table and is not just in the working field where consequences are received. As special educators, we have to examine the motives behind our decisions by remembering who we are serving and why we are serving because **EVERYONE** is someone's child. Amid racial battle fatigue, we all have a responsibility to encourage and foster positive relationships and looking to the literature on restorative practices may be helpful in these efforts.

Our Roles and Responsibility

As we prepare, meet, and plan for ALL of our students moving forward, I encourage us to consider the literature on culturally and linguistically relevant practices. As special educators, we have seen that focusing on the most marginalized group (i.e., individuals with disabilities) can lead to positive educational impacts for the population as a whole! This message is a call from me to you. Join the fight to end systemic racism in special education! Welcome others who may not look like you, celebrate differences that can bring us closer together, and accept new educational research and practices in this area. As a field, I urge us to view the future with renewed hope for intentional positive change. Our students with specific learning disabilities are counting on us!

Yours in service,
Shaqwana Freeman-Green, PhD
Editor, New Times for DLD

Please contact us at newsletter@teachingld.org; we would love to hear from you! 🍷



Joining DLD Requires Membership in CEC

If you are not currently a member of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), please...Join now! Visit and Explore CEC's new website: <https://exceptionalchildren.org>

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Subdivision Contact Info

Several jurisdictions have active DLD subdivisions. Many of these organizations have conferences and other activities for teachers. All subdivisions can provide more information about learning disabilities at the state, province, or local level. Please contact the representatives listed below for more information. If you are a DLD member and are interested in forming a subdivision in your state, contact DLD's Membership chair.

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Go to: <https://www.teachingld.org/about-us/our-people/> and click on an officer's name (if highlighted) to view a brief biography. To contact a member of the executive board, visit: <https://www.teachingld.org/about-us/our-people/dld-executive-board/>

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