



### **A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR**

Cool and crisp autumn days overtake the memories of our hot and sunny summers. This past summer has been particularly challenging as families navigate through our COVID pandemic reality. Despite the obvious inequities for our families without adequate equipment nor reliable internet connectivity, our ever-creative educators have been working hard to ensure a safe learning environment for all our students. As our schools cautiously re-open, expect more hybrid in-person and online classrooms and programming for our families living with LD! Keep well and stay safe!

I would like to give a warm welcome to Mark Buzan, who is our new Executive Director at the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. We're very pleased and happy to have Mark on board. We look forward to the benefits his great energy and ideas bring to our LDA network.

Thealzel Lee  
Chair, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

### **A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

It has been my great pleasure to serve these past two months as the Executive Director for the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. It has been an amazing opportunity to meet with a number of my colleagues, the Executive Directors of the various Provincial and Territorial Associations. I'm inspired by the work that you do, and really do look forward to continuing the dialogue I've had with many of you thus far.

While it has only been two months that I've been in the role, we've been moving very expeditiously on growing LDAC and making sure that it is relevant to you.

Going forward, we have an ambitious program of events and activities. For example, our AGM is on September 10th, 2020. I am pleased to welcome, along with the board of directors of LDAC, four new board members:

- First, Mr. Michael Tepper, who'll be representing Quebec
- Mr. Richard Coutts, who'll be representing Manitoba
- Ms. Sarah Zurel, who will be representing Newfoundland and Labrador, and
- Mr. Simon Williams, who'll be representing Alberta.



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We are so grateful to members of the board directors who served previously and who've been with us for so long and are now moving on to better and brighter things.

Immediately moving forward, after our AGM, we'll be starting to work on the development of a brand new strategic plan. I believe I can speak on behalf of the LDAC team and board that we are all keen to renew LDAC with new vigour. Going into the new year, opportunities for new board members to join the LDAC board will likely be opening. If you have ideas for candidates as well for board members at large, please do communicate them to myself and to Thealzel Lee, board Chair of LDAC.

This fall, we have also dropped our fall mailer, a fundraising mailer across Canada. This is now the first fundraising call or appeal that we've made in the last 18 months. I'm hoping to bring a renewed emphasis on fund development over the next number of months.

We have also negotiated a new partnership with our main funder, HRSDC, and a partnership with the Institut des troubles d'apprentissage du Québec (ITA) for the development of an English program at their conference in March 2021 adding to their very successful annual conference as well.

Our goal in this initiative is to build upon what is arguably the largest francophone conference on learning disabilities and bring content to the rest of Canada. We look forward to building a fruitful partnership with ITA and, hopefully with your help, bringing this amazing event to the rest of Canada with English content that parents and advocates can use in their communities. We're so excited for this opportunity!

We will also keep strengthening the emphasis that we have placed on opening lines with our Provincial and Territorial Executive Directors of associations across Canada. We really hope that you can be part of this new development. We've already opened up a Slack channel to improve communications and encourage you to reach out on this initiative.

On a final note, I want to welcome a new member to the team, Lorenzo Yun Li, who is assisting the board and me in administrative and project initiatives for LDAC. We are here to help in any format at all possible, and certainly welcome and appreciate all your input and continued support towards making this a better Canada for those with learning disabilities. Thank you.

Mark Buzan  
Executive Director, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada  
Email: [mark@ldac-acta.ca](mailto:mark@ldac-acta.ca)



## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### Research Committee

Kim McLean, a member of the LDAC Professional Advisory Council and a Principal at Foothills Academy, a school for students with learning disabilities in Calgary, developed this list of best practice recommendations in consultation with a number of school educators and administrators.

The 'summer slide' of knowledge and practices will be magnified this fall. Expect to see an amplified loss of automaticity. Reading fluency, word recognition, math facts and rules will all need extra review before new skills acquisition can begin.

New expectations and routines will require repeated repetition. At school, staying in one's space and respecting others' spaces, mask protocols, and ongoing sanitation practices will require consistent reminders. At home, learners will need to adjust to daily online expectations including log on procedures, use of the mute function and expectations around working independently while spending more time online to complete what, in most cases, will be an increased workload from the spring. Teachers, and parents when possible, can expect to spend more time modeling and supporting these new behaviors.

Curriculum may have to be pre-empted, at least temporarily, by a need for teachers to reassure students and address fears and concerns that they may have in these new environments. With masks at school and screen challenges for those at home, teachers will need to watch for body language cues from their students that they are comfortable in this learning environment and, if not, to work through those concerns so that active learning can occur.

Patience, intentionality and regular reinforcement will be key in supporting all students, but especially those with LD.

### Communications Committee

Our committee last met on June 23, which was a joint meeting with the provincial and territorial executive directors to continue planning for Learning Disabilities Awareness Month.

We have been a bit less active during the summer, which is normal, although I have been fairly busy as Chair in ongoing communications with LDAC's new Executive Director, Mark Buzan, and his assistant, Lorenzo Yun Li, who is going



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to be providing support to our committee in different ways. We have struck up an excellent working relationship, and they have been very fast learners and supportive colleagues.

I will be setting up another meeting of the committee in the very near future so that we can focus on work on the website, which needs some updating, and all of our other work related to social media, the newsletter, and Learning Disabilities Awareness month.

Bob Cram –Chair

Members: Brendan O’Neill, Brent MacPherson, Simon Williams, Sarah Zurel, Mark Buzan, Lorenzo Yun Li

### PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL UPDATES

#### Alberta

Like everyone else it has been an incredibly challenging six months as we had to cut costs and decrease hours for staff in response to COVID 19. We have decided to take this opportunity to focus on shifting our program delivery model to online and resource development. It has been a challenge, but the good news is that we are making progress and hope to start to offer a series of webinars and increase our Right To Read RTR online courses in the fall.

We had a successful program launch in May 2020 and have had over 40 participants go through the program. The RTR Program (Catching Children before They Fail) focuses on early identification and intervention for at-risk learners. The RTR Program includes a Reading Readiness Screening Tool and intervention strategies teachers can use to support their students as they learn to read. The course is designed for practicing teachers, tutors, or homeschoolers. LDAA has partnered with Foothills Academy Society to offer the online version of the course. For more details and course registration go to: <https://foothillsacademyoutreach.org>. Cost for the course is \$300/participant and there are group discounts. We can also set up separate cohort sessions if you would like to have a number of staff go through the course together.

For more information please contact Toby Rabinovitz, LDAA Executive Director at: [execdir@ldalberta.ca](mailto:execdir@ldalberta.ca)



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### Quebec

During this special back-to-school period, the ITA is excited to brief you on some new developments:

- Relive the online Summer Conference

Following the success of our online Summer Conference “Back to school, things will be fine!” viewed by over 1,850 participants, we are offering you the chance to relive the event. From August 24 to October 31, 2020 inclusively, you can register and watch a replay of more than 35 presentations, including those by Rose-Marie Charest, Ron Canuel, and many others.

[Discover the program \(in French\)](#)

- New membership offer

The ITA surveyed several stakeholders in the education and healthcare communities to better target their needs for the coming year. Based on the answers received, a new membership offer was designed in order to better meet their expectations in terms of continuing education. Among many benefits, membership provides a one-year access to all our asynchronous (offline) training sessions along with our next annual conference.

[Learn more about our membership offer](#)

- Regional support network for parents

While the parents of children with a learning disability are always first in line to help them, they often lack support and information. It is with this in mind that the ITA is launching a Facebook group where Quebec parents will be able to support each other. This online space is designed to encourage discussions among parents as well as the sharing of tips and information.

[Join the self-help group for Quebec parents](#)

Institut des troubles d'apprentissage du Québec (ITA)

### Saskatchewan

I hope all is well and that everyone is staying safe and healthy during these unprecedented times.

Since my last submission LDAS been making many adjustments in programming in order meet the needs of the various populations we serve. We had closed operations in Prince Albert and Regina but have recently reopened. In Saskatoon we have stayed open through the last number of months, offering a variety of services to our clients both through a remote online delivery as well as in house.



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We have just recently started Psychological Services and Neurofeedback again, and we hope to soon see a return of these services to full capacity. We continue to strategize to offer most of our programming for children and adults (Arrowsmith, Tutoring, Coaching) through online delivery methods and in person but our numbers are still well below our targets. LDAS Saskatoon has been fortunate to offer our Summer Sunshine Day Camp for the past 7 Weeks, and the community is grateful that we maintained a safe and healthy environment for these children.

As we start planning for the next academic year and implementing new ways to offer our many services we will be maintaining strict COVID protocols and guidelines to keep everyone safe. Along with our Day Camp that we are offering for Essential Service employees and their families, LDAS is also going to be offering a FLEX Ed program that will allow students an opportunity for an online delivery of K-12 programming that will be housed within our Saskatoon location. We are excited to see how this new program will enhance the clients we serve.

Along with several scholarships LDAS provides on an annual basis, LDAS will be offering two MacRae Memorial Scholarships to recipients on World Suicide Prevention Day, Sept. 10, 2020. LDAS is hosting this event as part of the MacRae Legacy for Life, the Memorial Fund Scholarship that was created to recognize the hard work and dedication necessary to complete a high school diploma. The scholarships will support individuals with learning disabilities in their pursuit of a post-secondary education. Mr. MacRae died by Suicide in 2018 and had been a student at LDAS who had hoped to pursue post-secondary education. These scholarships are in his memory. This event on Sept. 10, 2020 will bring awareness to reducing the stigma of being different, having a learning disability and that it is okay not to be okay in these unpredictable learning environments.

I wish you and your colleagues and families health and positive well being.

Wayne Stadnyk, Executive Director  
Learning Disabilities Association of Saskatchewan



### **EVENTS AND OTHER NEWS**

A Facebook Group, The Science of Reading—What I should have learned it College, may be of interest to educators, parents and others. The Group is briefly described as follows: The purpose of this group is to connect research to practice. Dr. Mark Seidenberg defines the “Science of Reading” as a body of basic research in developmental psychology, educational psychology, cognitive science, and cognitive neuroscience on reading, one of the most complex human behaviors, and its biological (neural, genetic) bases. This research has been conducted for decades in the US and around the world. The research has important implications for helping children to succeed, but it has not been incorporated in how teachers are trained for the job or how children are taught. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/704498996666615>

Our newsletter readers may also be interested in a new book by Dr. Jan Hasbrouck, Ph.D., entitled *Conquering Dyslexia: A Guide to Early Detection and Intervention for Teachers and Families*.