



A Message from the Chair

Winter holidays are approaching! This holiday season brings extra anxiety as our families across the country do their best to cope with their plans for school and seasonal festivities under the shadow of a deadly global pandemic. In spite of rising cases of COVID, we are hearing about successes from creative educators and supporters that are addressing the inequities in the learning environments uncovered – and exacerbated – by the pandemic. These teachers are working together to provide a safe learning environment for all our students. For example, businesses in many communities have chipped in to buy equipment for students so they can continue to learn remotely. More good news is on the horizon as we hear about advancements in vaccines and treatments for COVID. We look forward to the time when we can all safely get together with friends and family. From our dedicated staff and volunteers, we wish you all safe and happy holidays!

Thealzel Lee
Chair, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

A Message from the Executive Director

It is a great pleasure to address all of you in the learning disabilities community from across Canada. The past three months since my last report have been extremely active. Since starting in the role in July 2020, my priorities have been:

- Getting a handle on LDAC's operations and onboarding our IT and staff as we shifted away from our previous Executive Director's operational set up
- Setting and establishing a solid financial footing for the national association by developing partnerships to further LDAC's research initiatives
- Renewing LDAC's strategic plan

Of similar importance, on direction of the national board, I have set in place monthly meetings of Executive Directors of Learning Disabilities (LD) associations from each of the provinces and territories of Canada. I have thoroughly enjoyed the discussions I have had with my counterparts and look forward to a productive working relationship with them in 2021.

Key among the priorities established from LDAC's new strategic plan, your national association is keen to increase its relevance to LD associations across Canada. As LDAC re-centres its efforts in building its own financial stability and



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finding a unique place in advocating for the needs of those with learning disabilities, I look forward to further engaging with my counterparts. Together we can build a national association that adds to the important work you do and puts learning disabilities on the national stage of dialogue where it belongs.

Mark Buzan, APR
Executive Director, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada
Email: mark@ldac-acta.ca



A Couple of Requests

Research Assistance Request from C. Julieta Aguilera Vasquez, M.A., Ph.D.
Candidate, School/Applied Child Psychology, McGill University

Calling all postsecondary students! Do you live with a disability and would like to share about your experience? Complete this survey for a chance to win one of 10 gift certificates of a 50\$ value each (Amazon, iTunes, Chapters)! Please note that survey materials are in English.

If you are interested in participating, please visit:

<https://surveys.mcgill.ca/ls/542928?lang=en>

Video Recommendation Request from Martin Dutton, Executive Director,
LDAPEI

Martin has been looking for videos that show what LDs look like from the perspective of the LD child, teen and adult. Many of you will be familiar with the old (and now dated) video by Richard Lavoie where he has a mock classroom populated by professionals, parents, students and demonstrates quite vividly how a student can feel in learning situations:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3UNdbxk3xs>.

Of its time it was good, but it would be great to find some modern equivalents that are equally effective and do not use terminology like “mental retardation”.

If you have any suggestions, please send them to bobcram21@gmail.com. I will make sure they get to Martin, and I will include them in the next newsletter for the benefit of all of you.



Committee Reports

Research Committee

The Research Committee has been providing summaries of recent research going on in Canada. This report provides a summary of research on mindfulness in education.

Mindfulness as Practice: Shifts in Teacher Awareness and Identity

Sonal Kavia, M.Ed, University of Saskatchewan

This research highlighted the following questions: What are the effects of mindfulness practice on teacher identity and awareness? How does mindfulness increase a feeling of peace and compassion in schools and larger communities?

Briefly defined, mindfulness is paying attention to what is happening in any present moment with kindness. Mindfulness is practiced for ourselves and to deepen our connection with others. It can be especially helpful in a growing culture of anxiety and stress in schools, family groups, and organizations.

A simple ten-minute daily practice of finding a quiet space to intentionally listen or pause to notice from our senses makes a difference to the pace of our day. Bringing our attention to our senses while we experience our immediate environment, in any given moment, focuses our attention and decreases our anxiety.

This research highlighted teachers who, over time, cultivated a practice of pausing throughout their days and noticed their own ability to expand their commitment to nurturing a compassionate culture at their school. Being present for youth in Kindergarten to Grade 12 and into post-secondary is of utmost importance with rising rates of disconnection, youth suicide, and limited access to mental health. If educators collectively seek to practice mindfulness this can facilitate healthy behaviour and brain development, both of which are invaluable to individuals.

Citations

<https://harvest.usask.ca/bitstream/handle/10388/12262/KAVIA-THESIS-2019.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=1>



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Communications Committee

Our committee last met on September 9, and we will be setting up another meeting in the very near future. Our committee and the Research committee have set up a joint working group to recommend some changes to improve the website. We also continue with our other work related to social media and the newsletter.

It has also been great working with Mark and Lorenzo who are always ready to help out.

Bob Cram – Chair

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



Provincial/Territorial Updates

New Brunswick

On October 22nd, LDANB hosted our first LDANB Awards Gala. While Covid-19 restrictions at the time prohibited us from holding the larger public event we had hoped for, we were so pleased to be able to safely gather with our award recipients and their families to celebrate their accomplishments, as well as the accomplishments of LDANB over the past 50 years. To see the complete list of recipients please check out our October Newsletter found at - <https://mailchi.mp/020392e975e5/october-newsletter-bulletin-doctobre>

LDANB is excited to be working with four Renaissance College students for the 2020-2021 school year. The RC students chose to work with LDANB as part of their Community Problem Solving course. The Community Problem-Solving course is about facilitating change within our community. This course is meant to introduce students to change processes using a structured problem-solving approach that focuses on using assets rather than liabilities and opportunities rather than obstacles. An integral part of the course is a community-based problem-solving project that includes basic research, planning, implementation and evaluation. Essentially, this course is meant to be an opportunity to put the theories about problem-solving that we learn in class, into practice within the context of an existing community group.

Click here to read the student biographies - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gAx7sJGw1hiwEPizUyW7qKti3vKBdBqo/view>

Ainsley Congdon
Executive Director
LDANB

Newfoundland and Labrador

LDANL has had a busy fall with continuing business as well as new projects coming on stream.

We have acquired funding to hire an Assistive Technology tutor/mentor (two individuals in a job share) to work with children, families, teachers and/or adults with LD to help them learn more about how Assistive Technology can enhance their lives. These sessions are free and are offered at a beginner level through to advanced. So far the response has been very positive.



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During November, LDANL hosted a webinar, the first in what we hope will be a series, entitled: Learning in a Time of Covid. Our first offering featured local speaker, Lisa Pinhorn, and the topic was: *Think “Co-regulation & Connection” Before “Compliance & Consequences”*, which examined how children experience and respond to stress, and how parents and teachers can make things better or worse depending on how they respond. The approximately 100 participants included parents, teachers and other professionals and the response was extremely positive. We are working with a group of professors at Memorial University on our next session, which will be on the topic of Post-Secondary learning during Covid.

Tutoring continues to be online and is gaining momentum, while all office staff are still working at home. This will continue through the winter term and will be reviewed in spring.

Edie Dunphy B.A., B.Sp.Ed., M.Ed. (Curr. and Instr.), M.Ed. (Couns. Psych.)
Executive Director, Newfoundland and Labrador

Prince Edward Island

As with many organizations, LDAPEI has been impacted heavily by the pandemic. Although we provide advocacy and other support services, a significant amount of our work has been tutoring using remediation programs. We have made changes and now offer in-person and online tutoring. We are running at about 50% compared to last year at the same time, but in exceptional times we all have learned to adapt. Anecdotally, the feedback on online tutoring is positive. In particular students with both an LD and ASD generally find the online format supports them better than working in person.

Our focus at the Board level is to complete our Strategic Plan, taking in to account the pandemic and future implications. Several Board members have stepped down and, whilst regretting the loss of experience we are seeing, this is an opportunity for fresh energy with the aim of bringing on board those more with lived experiences of LDs.

A couple of funded projects have been delayed including more adult tutoring, research specific to LDs in PEI, a coffee table video for University/College students to take into schools to encourage academic perseverance. All will be completed during 2021!

We are also supporting a new organization ADHDPEI. While we acknowledge significant numbers of our students co-occur with LDs and ADHD, we believe



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supporting a separate organization, specific to ADHD, maintains our focus.

So, after an 'interesting' nine months, we are still looking positively forward. LDATEI wishes all those in the rest of Canada a Happy Christmas and a Healthy New Year.

Martin Dutton
Executive Director
Learning Disabilities Association PEI

Alberta

We continue to focus on moving our programs and services online and hosted our first webinar, "*The Science of Reading: What School Psychologists Need To Know*", earlier this month. The webinar was co-hosted by the Psychologists Association of Alberta, and we had over 40 people participate. This was our first webinar, and we anticipate hosting a series of follow-up sessions in the new year.

Our online Right To Read (RTR) Program continues to be a great success and the new session starts January 1, 2021. 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>.

It is exciting that having an online course in place has opened several unexpected opportunities. The Calgary Board of Education has signed on to the RTR Program and will be sponsoring over 100 of their K-1 Teachers to take the course in January. They hope to have all of their teachers certified in the program over the next two years. This is a great opportunity for us to engage one of the largest school boards in the province in our program. We are viewing this as a pilot project and hopefully will be able to engage other larger schools board across the province in the program.

We are continuing to revise our website and enhance our social media strategy. While it is a very busy time for the Association, it is also an exciting time for all of us. In many ways we are at a crossroads. I will keep everyone informed as these developments unfold.

We wish everyone a happy holiday season and please stay safe.



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For more information please contact Toby Rabinovitz, LDAA Executive Director at: execdir@ldalberta.ca

Toby Rabinovitz
Executive Director
Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta (LDAA)



Events and Other News

The Ontario Human Rights Commission released a five-minute video at the end of October providing an update on its continuing inquiry into whether the Ontario school system is providing appropriate support and teaching to students with reading disabilities. The video is on this page: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/right-read-public-inquiry-on-reading-disabilities>

The Yale Centre for Dyslexia and Creativity has provided these strategies for students with dyslexia from students with dyslexia: <https://dyslexia.yale.edu/resources/dyslexic-kids-adults/tips-from-students/>

LDA of America is going virtual with its 58th Annual Conference, Feb. 18-21, 2021: <https://ldaamerica.org/events/annual-conference/>.

Quebec's Institut des troubles d'apprentissage will hold its 46th annual conference online, March 24-26, 2021: <https://institutta.com/formations/congres-annuel-2021>. This conference includes both English and French language components.