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President's Message



Greetings, CLD Members,

As we move well into the spring semester, I would like to highlight some of the work that is currently taking place in CLD.

Planning is well under way for the **2015 conference**, with proposals currently under review and meeting logistics set.

Thanks to the Conference Committee and Local Arrangements Committee members for all your fine work. If you've ever worked on a conference committee, then you know just how much hard work goes into the planning. Special thanks to **Beth Calhoon** as she works toward finalizing the conference program. Make plans now to attend this conference on October 1st and 2nd in Las Vegas. And in case you haven't heard, the 2016 conference will be in San Antonio!

The **Membership Committee** has been tasked with developing a strategic plan for growing our membership to 600 over the next three years. This will ensure that our annual costs will be paid for by membership fees. Co-chairs **Minyi Shih Dennis** and **Heather Haynes-Smith** and their committee have been actively collecting data for a needs assessment that will help inform their strategic plan. They are working with **Linda Nease**, our executive director, on ways to facilitate membership renewals and to highlight the benefits of CLD in recruiting new members. One exciting area of focus will be on expanding membership internationally.

Attracting new members requires that we promote an image of CLD that showcases the benefits of membership. For this reason, I have asked **Diane Bryant**, our current president elect, to chair a **special committee** that focuses on **marketing CLD** in ways that put our best face forward. The committee is charged with exploring how best to disseminate the good work of CLD with others and making specific recommendations to the board. A second special committee has

also been created, and **Deborah Reed**, our incoming vice president, has agreed to chair it. This committee is charged with examining the current **planning processes and forms** used by CLD and making recommendations to improve these processes and make them more efficient. Thank you Diane, Deborah, and the members of the two committees for taking on this important work.

Finally, the **Professional Development (PD) Committee**, in collaboration with the **Diversity Committee**, will be offering TWO excellent one-hour webinars this spring. See the PD Committee's announcement on page 7 of the newsletter and mark your calendars! Thanks to the PD and Diversity committees for working together to present these excellent PD opportunities.

As I continue to say, it is a true pleasure to work with so many dedicated professionals who contribute so much of their time and expertise to CLD. I wish everyone a wonderful end to your semester!

Sincerely,

Steve Chamberlain
2014-2015 CLD President

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5 Ways To ...

Address the Needs of English Language Learners When Providing Interventions and Monitoring Progress

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The number of English language learners (ELLs; see Note) in the United States continues to increase (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013) while outcomes for this population of students are typically characterized by pervasive underachievement (Hart, 2009; Orosco & O'Connor, 2014), disproportionate representation in special education (Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, Osher, & Ortiz, 2010; Sullivan, 2011), and a reported lack of adequate progress among those receiving special education services (Zetlin, Beltran, Salcido, Gonzales, & Reyes, 2011). Response to Intervention (RtI) has been identified as an approach with the potential to increase student achievement and decrease inappropriate referrals of ELLs for special education evaluation (Hoover, Klingner, Baca, & Patton, 2008; Ortiz, Robertson, Wilkinson, Liu, & McGhee, 2011); however, there exists only limited research-based guidance on the implementation of RtI for this unique population of students (Klingner, Artiles, & Barletta, 2006; Kushner, 2008; Linan-Thompson & Ortiz, 2009). Many of today's educators—particularly those in special education—find themselves in the precarious position of having completed preparation programs that have not adequately equipped them to serve ELLs (Durgunoglu & Hughes, 2010; Zetlin et al., 2011) although they are still responsible on a daily basis for the design, delivery, and progress monitoring of interventions for such learners. This article highlights five suggestions for educators to improve the quality of the programs and services they provide.

1 Share Responsibility for Creating a Culture of High Expectations for ELLs. Research indicates that educators may be hesitant to serve ELLs, misunderstand the educational needs of this population, view the instruction of ELLs as the responsibility of others, and hold low expectations for ELL student success (Cheatham, Jimenez-Silva, Wodrich, & Kasai, 2014). Teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse learners with disabilities have also been characterized as having negative attitudes and low expectations (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008). While this is likely in part due to a misunderstanding of student background characteristics and the nature of second language learning, it may also be reflective of teachers' lack of confidence in serving such learners (Chu & Garcia, 2014). Given the self-fulfilling prophecy that exists between teachers who

have low expectations of ELLs and student outcomes (Zetlin et al., 2011), it is imperative that special educators and their colleagues embrace the idea that *all* students can learn and that it is the responsibility of *all* educators to ensure that they do (Garcia & Ortiz, 2008). This culture of high expectations and accountability will require development of a shared knowledge base regarding the education of ELLs, well-implemented bilingual and/or English as a Second Language (ESL) programs grounded in a common philosophy, and effective responses to student difficulties that are sensitive to students' background characteristics. Knowledgeable, committed educators will view students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds as rich resources to support "basic skill development in the context of higher order thinking and problem solving" (Linan-Thompson & Ortiz, 2009, p. 113). Educators committed to student success will continuously reflect on their own strengths and needs in serving ELLs, including those with disabilities (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008), and seek out inservice workshops, communities of practice (Mak & Pun, 2015), and other opportunities to increase their knowledge and skills.

2 Obtain, Analyze and Apply Knowledge of Students' Language and Culture. Effective ELL educators must make a concentrated effort to incorporate students' sociocultural and linguistic experiences into high quality instruction (Garcia & Ortiz, 2008; Orosco & O'Connor, 2014). By definition, ELLs need support to acquire the language skills necessary for academic success, and instructional decisions must consider language-learning needs along with the development of other knowledge and skills (Columbo, 2012; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2012). ELLs are a heterogeneous group that demonstrates varying levels of oral and written proficiency in both the native language and English (Garcia & Tyler, 2010; Zetlin et al., 2011). Tailoring instruction to address each student's unique language characteristics requires teachers to (a) understand the stages students go through as they acquire a second language, (b) evaluate current levels of conversational and academic language proficiency, and (c) gather information related to

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academic experiences in both languages to develop a profile of language strengths and needs (Garcia & Ortiz, 2006; Hoover, 2012). This profile, coupled with an understanding of methods to support first- and second-language acquisition (Garcia & Ortiz, 2006; Hart, 2009), should be used to design and deliver instruction that is comprehensible and simultaneously supports language development and academic and behavioral progress (Hoover et al., 2008).

Effective educators of ELLs must also develop the cultural self-awareness and intercultural competence necessary to provide interventions that are not only linguistically, but also culturally, responsive (Robertson, Garcia, McFarland, & Rieth, 2012). The cultural and experiential backgrounds of instructors, which may differ considerably from that of the students (Kushner, 2008), generally influence instructional curricula (Abedi, 2011; Hollins, 2008); cultural dissonance between school and home is often cited as a contributor to poor student outcomes (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008). Culture influences the way in which students “process information, use logic (e.g., spiral vs. linear), interact with others (e.g., collectivistic vs. individualistic), communicate (e.g., high vs. low context, indirect vs. direct), and learn (e.g., holistic vs. analytical)” (Garcia & Tyler, 2010, p. 116). In addition to gathering information regarding students’ language development and proficiencies, educators must explore students’ cultural backgrounds to be able to incorporate their norms, beliefs, experiences, and funds of knowledge into the selection of interventions, materials and procedures (Garcia & Ortiz, 2008; Gonzales, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Hoover, 2012; Orosco & O’Connor, 2014).

3 Use Strategies and Approaches Appropriate for ELLs. More research is needed to guide the selection of research-based interventions for ELLs, including students at risk for or identified with learning disabilities (LD; Klingner et al., 2006). In the meantime, educators should carefully consider what has proven successful for specific populations and in specific contexts (Klingner & Edwards, 2006). When selecting research-based interventions, the educator needs to examine the characteristics of the student population(s) that were the participants of a study (e.g., were ELLs included in the sample and were results evaluated in light of varying levels of English and/or native language proficiency?), along with the type and quality of the language supports provided. Reading interventions, for example, must be comprehensive, incorporating a focus on the components of literacy instruction that have been shown to be effective for both monolingual students and ELLs (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension) while recognizing that one size does not fit all. Interventions must further emphasize language development, and accommodations should be provided for varying proficiency

levels (August & Shanahan, 2006; Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Hoover et al., 2008).

It is important to remember that ELLs who have limited oral proficiency in both languages experience the highest rates of special education placement (Artiles, Rueda, & Salazar, 2005). Ortiz et al. (2011) found that (a) the majority of elementary-age ELLs with reading-related disabilities were referred to special education in second or third grade and (b) many were socially promoted and/or retained prior to referral. These same students had limited oral proficiency in both languages at initial school entry and at the time of referral, but early intervention efforts did not target oral language development. Given that a majority of ELLs experience reading difficulties in the area of comprehension, intervention efforts should include a focus on oral language development in the native language and/or in English with an explicit focus on vocabulary development (Ortiz, 2015). Consider, for example, a student with limited language proficiency who does not meet established reading benchmarks but has demonstrated consistent and steady progress in acquiring fundamental literacy skills; in such a case, additional intervention efforts should target language acquisition and development (Linan-Thompson & Ortiz, 2009). Regardless of the intervention selected, practitioners must ensure that additional instruction is provided in the area(s) of identified need and delivered consistent with the language of core instruction.

4 Interpret Program Effectiveness Along with Student Progress. Distinguishing between cultural and linguistic differences and disability can be challenging, and ELLs who have not received adequate instructional support often display characteristics similar to students with LD, including difficulties with comprehension, vocabulary, and the development of literacy skills (Hoover et al., 2008; Linan-Thompson & Ortiz, 2009; Ortiz et al., 2011). It is critically important to remember that (a) lack of progress may be a result of deficiencies in the teaching/learning environment (Garcia & Ortiz, 2008; Kozleski & Huber, 2010; Kushner, 2008; Zacarian, 2011), and (b) educators should always examine the provided program’s effectiveness and determine whether the student has had adequate opportunities to learn in a culturally and linguistically responsive context (Klingner & Artiles, 2003). At a minimum, educators should ensure that

- the core curriculum is appropriate for ELLs and incorporates best practices in native language and/or ESL instruction,
- instruction emphasizes the development of both basic skills *and* higher order thinking,
- opportunities are provided for meaningful language use across the curriculum,

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- students and teachers engage in joint productivity via cooperative learning,
- the culture of the home and community is valued and reflected in instruction, and
- screening and progress monitoring target both language development and academic skills (Hoover, 2012; Ortiz, Robertson, & Wilkinson, 2009).

If a majority of ELLs are experiencing difficulty, the focus has to be on improving instruction and ensuring that the curriculum is responsive to the unique needs of each student (Klingner & Geisler, 2008). This type of critical examination of school programs should enable educators to enhance their understanding of practices that are and are not effective for students with varying levels of language proficiency, different age groups, and so forth (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Hart, 2009). The exclusionary clause of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (34 C.F.R. 300.7(c)(10)ii) with respect to learning disabilities requires assurances that students' learning difficulties are not primarily the result of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. Educators must give this requirement serious attention and provide data to demonstrate that these factors have been adequately considered and appropriately addressed in the referral and eligibility process.

When assessing the progress of individual learners, it is important to consider both the quality and the quantity of the available data. Due to the complex school histories of many students and the variable approaches to providing language supports to ELLs (e.g., transitional bilingual education, dual language, ESL only), the most informative data documents will provide information on the development of language skills in each language along with academic and/or behavioral progress over time and across school years (Ortiz et al., 2011). Progress must be monitored using a variety of formal and informal assessments, classroom-based information and observations, and interviews with students and family members (Hart, 2009; Hoover et al., 2008; Klingner & Artiles, 2003). When determining whether a student is experiencing significant difficulty, it is important to compare performance to that of "true peers" (Brown & Doolittle, 2008, p. 68), students who have similar levels of language proficiency, cultural backgrounds, and educational opportunities, including the amount and quality of instruction received in each language (Hoover, 2012; Linan-Thompson & Ortiz, 2009).

Given the complexity of the decision-making process, substantive information is needed to support the referral and possible identification of ELLs as students with LD. Indicators that could support such decisions include

- multiple sources of data (including results of both formal and informal assessments and progress monitoring data) that document the specific student difficulty(ies),

- shared concerns between parents and educators,
- consistent school attendance and current placement enrollment that has been long enough for student to benefit from intervention,
- culturally and linguistically responsive interventions have not resulted in sufficient progress,
- student performance and response to instruction are significantly different from that of ELL peers, and
- significant life events (e.g., accidents, medical history, family crisis) and other competing hypotheses have been considered and eliminated as the source of the difficulty(ies) (Ortiz, 2015).

5 Collaborate with Knowledgeable Others—Educators, Family Members, Researchers.

Evidence indicates that bilingual/ESL and special education teachers rely on their discipline-specific knowledge as they design and deliver instruction, but few are prepared to address the interaction between cultural/linguistic diversity and disability-related concerns (Garcia & Ortiz, 2008). Coupled with a lack of personnel preparation programs focused on multicultural special education (Trent, Kea, & Oh, 2008; Waitoller, 2014), this results in very few teachers being adequately prepared to meet the needs of ELL students with or at risk of disabilities (Hart, Cheatham, & Jimenez-Silva, 2012). Educators therefore *must* have opportunities to share knowledge and expertise across program areas and accept joint responsibility for planning and implementing instruction to address the complex needs of ELLs who require more intensive intervention (Garcia & Ortiz, 2008; Garcia & Tyler, 2010; Linan-Thompson & Ortiz, 2009; Ortiz et al., 2011). Systematic, team-based approaches are recommended and teams should include representatives of general education, bilingual/ESL education, special education, other specialists, and family members (Hart, 2009; Hoover et al., 2008). Educators must work to develop quality, authentic partnerships with families by valuing their funds of knowledge and providing the supports necessary to ensure active participation of non-English-speaking family members (Gonzales et al., 2005; Hart et al., 2012; Robertson et al., 2012). As their children's first teachers, family members are in the unique position of being able to share information about students' linguistic, cultural, and other background experiences necessary for quality instructional planning and decision-making. Last, all educators committed to improved outcomes for ELLs should welcome opportunities to engage with researchers to understand the contexts and structures that best support positive student outcomes (Artiles & Kozleski, 2010) and to contribute to the emerging knowledge of research-based interventions for ELLs.

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Summary

Educators are increasingly expected to (a) design and deliver culturally and linguistically responsive interventions to ELLs who experience academic difficulty (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008), (b) effectively distinguish difference from disability (Hoover, 2012), and (c) ensure that students who need special education services are appropriately served (Orosco & O'Connor, 2014). While this work is challenging and current research does not always provide sufficient guidance to direct intervention efforts, it is nonetheless imperative that communities of committed educators utilize what is known to most effectively address the cultural, linguistic, and disability-related needs of the students they serve.

Note

Also referred to as *English learners*, *emergent bilinguals*, and *limited English proficient*, although the latter is not a preferred term.

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CLD Committees 101: Understanding Service Opportunities

Welcome to CLD Committees 101! This column’s purpose is to give CLD members more information about the work of each CLD committee, including objectives and plans for the future. Each issue will offer an interview with a committee chair to provide information on more opportunities for you, our members, to engage with the organization. This first column features the **CLD Research Committee** and an interview with the committee chair, **Dr. Deborah Reed**.

LDF: What is the goal or objective of your committee?

Reed: The Research Committee is committed to developing guidelines and criteria for conducting and evaluating research in learning disabilities. We want to promote high quality research that supports the mission of CLD and advances knowledge in the field.

LDF: How does your committee connect with the mission and vision of CLD?

Reed: Through the Outstanding Researcher Award (ORA) and Must Reads Award, the Research Committee promotes and disseminates evidence-based research and practices related to the education of individuals with learning disabilities. Our annual project for 2015 seeks to help develop new leaders in the field and to foster collaboration among professionals.

LDF: What types of work or activities does your committee do?

Reed: Our major activities involve soliciting and evaluating (a) submissions to the ORA to recognize a noteworthy dissertation study and (b) “must read” LDQ and ISC articles published in print between July and June of the last year. Members of the committee form teams, so that each ORA,

LDQ, and ISC submission is rated by at least three people with relevant content and methodological expertise. In addition, we assist with reviewing proposals to the annual conference and conduct an annual research project for the organization. Past projects have included InfoSheets written in coordination with the Communications Committee and position statements written on behalf of the organization. We are now considering a project that will provide young scholars with facilitated learning experiences during the annual CLD conference.

LDF: Do you have any news or updates on the work of your committee that you would like to share with members of CLD?

Reed: We are actively seeking ORA submissions, which are due May 1st. We would also like to invite graduate students or newly minted assistant professors to contact us about participating in a guided “gallery walk” of the poster session or a lunch conversation about research methods at the CLD conference in Las Vegas this October 2015.

LDF: What drew you, personally, to serving as a committee chair with CLD?

Reed: I might not have considered serving on a committee, let alone being the chair, if others had not personally encouraged me in leadership positions within the organization. I therefore try to make that connection with others and draw them into CLD. I was particularly attracted to the Research Committee because of my own interest in and passion for conducting research to benefit the education of individuals with LD. It seemed the perfect way to integrate my scholarship and service.

CLD Election Update

CLD members recently voted for two important positions on the CLD Executive Committee: Vice President and Secretary. Please join us in congratulating **Dr. Deborah Reed** from the Florida Center for Reading Research, Florida State University, for being elected Vice President and **Dr. Brit-tany Hott** from Texas A&M University-Commerce for being elected Secretary. They will begin their terms on July 1, 2015. Thank you both for your service and commitment to CLD and thank you to CLD members for your participation in this democratic process!

Outstanding Researcher Award

To promote and recognize research, CLD annually presents an award for an outstanding manuscript-length paper on learning disabilities based on a doctoral dissertation completed within the last 5 years. The award recipient will receive a plaque and a \$500 honorarium to be presented at the 2015 International Conference on Learning Disabilities.

A submitted paper must not be under consideration for, or the recipient of, another award. Because the paper will be considered for publication in *Learning Disability Quarterly*, it cannot be simultaneously submitted to or already published in another journal. The submitted paper must follow the style of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA) and should be no more than 35 pages in length, including title page, abstract, main document, and references. (Tables and figures do not have to be counted in the page limit.) Submissions that exceed the page limit will not be reviewed.

Authors should submit papers electronically to:

Dr. Deborah K. Reed, CLD Research Committee Chair, via email (dkreed@fcrr.org). Submissions cannot be made by a second party on behalf of an author. Each submission should include a cover letter with the following information:

- Degree-granting university
- Major advisor
- Year doctoral degree conferred
- Confirmation that the manuscript has not been submitted to or published in another journal

The deadline for submission of papers is May 1, 2015. Submissions time stamped after 5:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time on May 1 will not be reviewed. The winner will be notified by August 15, 2015.

Committee & Chapter News

Liaison Committee Update

ESEA reauthorization as HR-5, *The Student Success Act*, was moving along quickly, with amendments being discussed, but has come to a stop for now in the House. We must remain diligent in urging our representatives to vote **no** on this bill. We need to communicate our desire to maintain accountability for students with disabilities and make certain that taking alternate assessments does not preclude a student from pursuing the general education curriculum or a general education diploma.

ESEA reauthorization as the draft *Every Child Ready for College and Career Act* (ECRCCA) put forth by Senate HELP Committee Chair Alexander is expected to come up for a vote on April 13 or after. Please let your senators know that we need accountability for students with disabilities and that the 1% cap for alternate assessments should be kept. We also need transparency and access to more data showing how students with disabilities are performing on the assessments. The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) has data that show annual assessments have been helpful for students with disabilities, but there is a need for more transparency.

Debi Gartland & Roberta Strosnider, co-chairs

Professional Development Committee Update

The CLD Professional Development Committee, in conjunction with the Diversity Committee, is excited to be offering TWO excellent webinars this spring! Each webinar is 1 hour and is designed to be informative and engaging, and to bring the most current research to students, educators, and university faculty. Plus, with a webinar you have the ability to stream it with your students or colleagues without the pressure of travel. The webinars are:

- **Intersectionality of Race, Poverty, and Learning Disabilities: Strategies for Reading and Mathematics, April 28, 4:00 CST;** presenters: **Endia Lindo**, *University of North Texas*, and **Jugnu Agrawal**, *George Mason University*
- **Teacher Preparation and Technology: Cultural Responsiveness and Awareness, May 28, 4:00 CST;** presenters: **Monica Brown & Lidia Sedano**, *University of Las Vegas, Nevada*

Mark your calendar now and watch your email for registration updates!

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California Chapter News

California State University at Fullerton is hosting its **9th annual conference on autism spectrum disorder** April 24 and 25 at the Embassy Suites in Brea, and the California CLD is sponsoring it. Our Friday night and Saturday morning keynote speaker, **Stephen Hinkle**, will discuss his life experiences as a person with ASD who was included in the public school system. He will focus on insights regarding schools' hidden curricula and offer advice for teachers, administrators, and parents. Breakout sessions on Saturday afternoon will equip participants in managing paraprofessional relationships, structuring successful inclusive opportunities for students, and building community support for schools that support students with ASD. Conference registration for both days is \$75, including lunch. *For more information on conference details and how to register*, please go to the webpage (<http://ed.fullerton.edu/autism/community>) or follow CSUF's Center for Autism, Education Core on Facebook to receive updates.

Colorado Chapter News

It has been a busy year for the Colorado Council for Learning Disabilities (CCLD). In November, we held an evening workshop on processing disorders for professionals and parents. A spring workshop on executive functioning is also planned in April.

In January the 26th annual **Courage to Risk Conference** occurred at the Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado Springs. The conference is sponsored by CCLD and eight other professional organizations that support persons with disabilities.

In February we hosted the 15th annual **Math on the "Planes"** Conference. Attendance was good in spite of a snowstorm that hit the mountains and the Front Range. Day 1

focused on **Numeracy and Proportional Reasoning: Assessment and Instruction**; Days 2 and 3 covered **Understanding Structure to Aid in Mathematical Problem Solving**.

Also in February, the CCLD Scholarship Program recognized two outstanding teacher candidates: **Megan Weaver** and **Cassandra Al-Mouradi** each received a \$1,500 scholarship and a 1-year CLD membership. An article about these two exceptional educators is on the CCLD website (www.cocld.org). We hope you will take a moment to view the website to see how CCLD continues to support teachers and families in Colorado.

Kyle Hughes, CCLD president

Texas Student Chapter News

The Texas A&M University–San Antonio Student CLD chapter welcomes back **President Kristen Dorwald-Gill** and **Vice-President Patricia Hernandez** for the 2015 year. The chapter also welcomes as new board members **Treasurer Elizabeth Tambunga** and **Secretary Tonya Bartlett**.

In conjunction with the student CEC chapter, A&M Student CLD co-hosted the Fiesta Especial Royal Court Coronation at the university on February 11th. Fiesta Especial is a commissioned Fiesta event that encourages leadership and self-determination for individuals with a variety of disabilities. More than 300 family members, students, and community leaders were in attendance.

The chapter is busy establishing a Researcher of the Year and a Teacher of the Year application process so we can honor these individuals in the spring. In addition, both undergraduate and graduate student chapter members are working together on a major research project they plan on submitting for presentation at the 2016 national conference.



Fiesta Especial Royal Court Coronation at Texas A&M–San Antonio University.

SAVE THE DATE

for the

37th Annual Conference on Learning Disabilities

October 1 & 2, 2015
Tropicana Hotel
Las Vegas, Nevada



Join CLD in Las Vegas!
Attend the
conference!

- Concurrent skill-building sessions on research, interventions, teacher preparation, and policies for students with LD
- President's Awards reception and interactive poster sessions on evidence-based practices
- Networking opportunities with local, state, and national educators in LD



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Sponsor the 2015 CLD Conference

The CLD Conference Committee is now accepting sponsorships for the 2015 CLD International Conference on Learning Disabilities in fabulous Las Vegas, Nevada!

Would your company or institution be interested in sponsoring an **awards ceremony, coffee break, Leadership Academy training, or other specially tailored event or product offering?** We have many great options available that will increase visibility and showcase your organization!

For more information and a copy of the sponsorship packet: Please visit the conference webpage (<http://www.council-for-learning-disabilities.org/professional-development/2015-annual-conference>) or contact **Maria Peterson** (mbpeters@tamusa.tamus.edu).