



A Publication of the Council for Learning Disabilities

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President's Message

Greetings,

I hope many of you were able to participate in the 32nd International Conference on Learning Disabilities in Myrtle Beach last October. I would like to thank the members of the Local Arrangements Committee, our conference director, the volunteers, and the presenters. A special thanks goes to Pat Galardi, chair of the Local Arrangements Committee, for her hard work and dedication. The combined efforts of these individuals resulted in an excellent conference for all!

Efforts are underway for the 2011 Conference, which will be held in Austin, Texas, in October. The Call for Proposals will soon be posted on our website (cldinternational.org). We'll keep you updated on the conference via the *Forum* and email blasts. As well, you can always check out our website for the latest information.

LD Forum continues to include articles that provide research-based strategies that teachers can easily incorporate into their teaching routines. One of the concerns I hear from many of the teacher candidates and teachers with whom I work is that students "just don't seem to be engaged in the learning process." In this issue, you will find some practical strategies for addressing this concern. Erika Blood's article, "5 Ways to . . . Get (and Keep) Students Engaged During a Lesson," offers some excellent suggestions for increasing student participation and engagement. I am adding this article to the required reading list for my undergraduate secondary curriculum class!

There are a lot of changes in the Board of Trustees this year. This past year saw the conclusion of the terms of four of our standing committee chairs (Leadership Development: Martha Larkin, Research: Diane Bryant and Brian Bryant, Membership: Jennifer Williams, and Technology and Website Editor: Dave Majsterek). Thank you Martha, Diane, Brian, Jennifer, and Dave for all of your efforts on CLD's behalf. Please welcome our newest members to the Board of Trustees: Brian Bryant: Conference Planning Committee (this committee was reactivated this year),

Kyle Hughes: Leadership Development Committee, Robin Lock: Membership Committee, Richard Evans: Technology Committee, and Patricia Mathes: Research Committee. These new members bring to our Board a lot of talent, experience, and commitment to the field of learning disabilities!



The Executive Committee has also had some changes. Dan Boudah leaves the committee after 4 years. Thanks, Dan, for your vision, patience, and guidance. Chris Curran, our Past President, is not leaving the Executive Committee just yet, but she certainly deserves a big thank you for her dedication, commitment, and perseverance on behalf of CLD. Her leadership and vision are inspiring. As well, our Secretary, Teresa Montani, was unable to complete her term due to a job promotion. We congratulate Teresa on her new job and thank her for all her contributions to CLD over the years. Sarah Semon will be completing Teresa's term. Welcome to Sarah!

Finally, I encourage you to become active members in CLD. We would like to invite you to become involved in your state or local chapter, or volunteer to serve on a committee. For more information, please feel free to contact me via email (dunnca1@auburn.edu).

Cari Dunn
2010–2011 CLD President

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Editor's Note: This column provides readers with immediate access to evidence-based strategies on current topics that can easily be transferred from the pages of *LD Forum* into effective teaching practice in CLD members' classrooms. Authors who would like to submit a column are encouraged to contact the editor in advance to discuss ideas. Author guidelines are available on CLD's website and from the editor, Cathy Newman Thomas (thomascat@missouri.edu).

5 Ways To ...

Get (and Keep) Students Engaged During a Lesson

Erika Blood

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The amount of time a student spends academically engaged in the classroom is a vital aspect of academic performance and achievement. The term *academic engagement* refers to a variety of classroom behaviors: writing, completing tasks, reading out loud or silently, and asking or answering questions, as well as any activity with an academic focus (Kern, Bambara, & Fogt, 2002; Sutherland, Wehby, & Copeland, 2000). Past research has shown a strong association between increases in academic engagement and increases in academic achievement (i.e., students who pay attention learn more; Borg, 1980; Greenwood, 1991, 1996; Greenwood, Delquadri, & Hall, 1989; Junod, DuPaul, Jitendra, Volpe, & Cleary, 2006). Increased levels of academic engagement are also associated with decreased levels of problem behavior (Kern et al., 2002). Thus, strategies that are successful in increasing student participation and engagement are likely to result in improved academic achievement and student behavior, as well as promote a more positive and effective classroom environment.

Students with learning disabilities (LD), however, often have trouble interpreting what is seen or heard, and they also have difficulty with study skills, self-management and monitoring, memory, and attention (Lerner, 2003; Mercer, 1997). Deficits in these areas can make it difficult for students to maintain their focus during class activities and to comprehend and identify key information presented in class. As a result, these students have extreme difficulty remaining engaged during academic instruction. This column provides teachers with five techniques and strategies that can be used to increase student participation and engagement during academic instruction. The following suggestions are research-proven practices applicable for students of all ages.

1 Greet Students at the Door with a Smile. Be at the door when students enter the classroom, giving each student a brief and personalized welcome. A friendly greeting, along with a positive statement (e.g., "It's nice to see you," "I like your new jacket"), has been shown to increase participation and on-task behavior for students within the first 10 minutes of a class session (Allday & Pakurar, 2007). While this quick, simple gesture may enhance positive teacher-student relationships and increase attention for all students, this strategy can be particularly helpful for students who are frequently off task and/or are easily distracted during class sessions (e.g., looking out window, not paying attention; Allday & Pakurar, 2007).

2 Keep Tasks Brief and Vary Difficulty Levels. Even the best lecture or perfectly planned activity will fall short if it runs too long and student attention begins to drift. To maximize student interest, keep in-class assignments short (Miller, Gunter, Venn, Hummel, & Wiley, 2003) by introducing multiple tasks rather than one long task. When presenting new material, provide practice problems and exercises that include both new concepts (i.e., difficult tasks) and concepts that students have previously mastered (i.e., easy tasks). Including a variety of easy and more challenging tasks will help keep students motivated and prevent

off-task behavior due to frustration over task demands (DePaepe, Shores, Jack, & Denny, 1996).

3 Provide Advance Organizers. Use of various types of graphic organizers—such as concept maps, Venn diagrams, KWL (what I *know*, *want* to know, and *learned*) charts (Hershberger, Zembal-Saul, & Starr, 2006), guided notes, and study guides (Conderman & Bresnahan, 2010)—can help students identify the important concepts being presented in a lesson and focus on the “big ideas.” Providing a tool to aid students in focusing their attention during the lesson can benefit all students, particularly students with diverse learning needs or those who have difficulty staying on task during teacher-directed instruction.

4 Increase Opportunities to Respond (OTR). Students who are asked questions are more likely to answer questions and participate in class sessions. Frequent opportunities for active responding during a lesson (e.g., asking/answering questions, writing), instead of passive responding (e.g., watching an overhead presentation, listening to the teacher lecture), are associated with increased class participation and task engagement (Sutherland & Wehby, 2001). To increase students’ OTR during teacher-directed instruction, teachers can use tools such as electronic student response systems (e.g., “clickers”; Blood, 2010) or response cards (Gardner, Heward, & Grossi, 1994; George, 2010; Marmolejo, Wilder, & Bradley, 2004) to provide each student with multiple chances to answer teacher questions during a class session. Incorporating components of Direct Instruction into lessons (Keel, Dangel, & Owens, 1999), particularly the use of choral responding, offers another way of increasing a student’s OTR. Each of these strategies encourages students to become more actively in-

involved in lessons, provides timely feedback regarding student learning to both student and teacher, and helps to prevent the all too common “raise your hand and wait to be called on” scenario, which frequently results in only a few students actively engaging during any given class session. To monitor the frequency of response opportunities provided, teachers can keep track of the number of questions asked per class session and set an “OTR number” goal each day.

In addition to the more teacher-directed strategies for increasing OTR just suggested, the addition of peer support within the classroom setting, in the form of Class-Wide Peer Tutoring (CWPT), provides another way to increase a student’s opportunity to participate. CWPT is a peer tutoring strategy in which a student is paired with a partner for one-to-one practice of basic skills (e.g., spelling words, math facts; Bowman-Perrott, Greenwood, & Tapia, 2007; Delquadri, Greenwood, Stretton, & Hall, 1983). Research has shown that peer tutoring is effective in increasing both academic achievement and engagement in a variety of student populations, including students with LD (Bowman-Perrott et al., 2007; Delquadri et al., 1983; Mortweet et al., 1999).

5 Utilize Collaborative Activities Regularly Throughout the Lesson. Add variety to teacher-directed sessions and keep students engaged in the topic by including several quick peer/partner exercises throughout the lesson. Using the Numbered Heads Together strategy, students form small groups and each student receives a number. The teacher poses a question and students “put their heads together” to generate an answer. The teacher calls a number, and the student with that number will act as the group spokesperson. Because no one knows which number will be called, every mem-

(continues on page 4)

(5 Ways to . . . , continued from page 3)

ber of the group must participate and be ready with the group answer (Maheady, Michielli-Pendl, Mallette, & Harper, 2002). Teachers can also use partner activities such as Think–Pair–Share in which students first *think* independently about a question or prompt posed by the teacher, then *pair* up with a peer and talk about the answer each came up with. Finally, after pairs have shared with each other, the teacher calls on pairs to *share* their thoughts with the whole class. For small-group projects or activities, consider the jigsaw strategy (Keel et al., 1999). In this strategy, each student is given a specific part of the lesson/project to research and share. In this way, every student is responsible for “a piece of the puzzle” while also working collaboratively with peers to divide tasks and present findings to the larger group.

Incorporating these brief collaborative activities into lessons will not only increase task engagement but can also encourage students to take an active role in their learning experience and teach students to work together cooperatively. Use of quick collaborative activities throughout a lesson may also break up a longer lesson and clarify the purpose of a lesson by focusing student attention on a few key concepts or big ideas, making it easier for some students to follow along and participate.

Conclusion

The strategies presented here can be used to gain, maintain, and enhance the attention and focus of all students during academic instruction. However, efforts by teachers to organize lessons in ways that clarify key content and highlight big ideas (e.g., advance organizers, collaborative activities) are often most likely to benefit students with LD, due to difficulties associated with memory, attention, and visual and auditory perception experienced by many of these students (Lerner, 2003; Mercer, 1997). Students with LD also benefit from teachers’ efforts to structure learning activities in ways

that get and keep their attention (e.g., use of greetings at door, brief tasks, varied tasks, OTR). Although this is far from an exhaustive list, these five research-based strategies can be helpful additions to the toolbox of both elementary and secondary level teachers.

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Committee/Chapter Reports and News

Colorado Chapter Summer Math Boot Camp a Success

The Colorado chapter held its annual Summer Math Boot Camp this past July. This year, the boot camp was designed to answer the following question:

When school starts this fall, how will our team provide comprehensive and effective math instruction for ALL students in our schools, including those with math disabilities and others who are not making adequate growth in mathematics?

Participants learned key milestones of mathematical learning progressions in whole numbers (for elementary) and rational numbers (for secondary). These teachers are now able to apply this learning to deepen



understanding of the RtI process in mathematics to benefit their students, including in particular students with learning disabilities.

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LD Forum Review Board

The following persons are the members of the *LD Forum* peer review board. We invite individuals who are interested in reviewing manuscripts for *LD Forum* to email the editor, **Cathy Newman Thomas** (thomascat@missouri.edu) with their name, affiliation, and topics of interest.

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Important Announcement: Intervention in School and Clinic

CLD members receive the journal *Intervention in School and Clinic* (ISC) as a valuable CLD membership benefit. Currently, members have free access to the electronic version through the Members Only section of the CLD website and also receive a print copy. CLD, the Hammill Institute on Disabilities, and Sage are working to decrease the environmental impact of association publishing while still ensuring that you have access to essential journal content. Thus, **effective with the January 2011 issue of ISC**, active members will continue to have free electronic access to current and past issues, but a print copy will no longer be mailed. You may wish to download articles of interest and create a storage system to archive specific content. Free access to the electronic files will not be available to persons whose membership has lapsed.

The process to access ISC online will not change. Go to the CLD website (<http://www.cldinternational.org>) and log in to the Members Only section. Select "Online Journals" in the left navigation bar. A link will

take you to current and past issues of ISC. You can sign up for email alerts to receive the table of contents for newly released issues, read articles published ahead of print (OnlineFirst), sign up for RSS feed, or search for articles in current and past issues. The online content is highly searchable to help you find just the article that you need.

LD Forum, your source of information for CLD activities and concise how-to articles, will continue to be available on the CLD website. On the home page, select "Publications" from the navigation bar on the left, then select "LD Forum" to download the current issue.

We are pleased that together we can help reduce our collective carbon footprint without sacrificing access to important content to aid us in our professional development.



Looking Ahead to the 2011 CLD Conference



AUSTIN, TEXAS
OCTOBER 2011

Check the CLD website and future issues of *LD Forum* for details.

Invitation to Review for *LD Forum*

LD Forum, the official newsletter of CLD, would like to invite new reviewers. CLD members with expertise in topics relevant to service providers and children with LD and their families are needed to peer review manuscripts for our Research to Practice and 5 Ways to ... columns. If you are interested, please contact the editor, **Cathy Newman Thomas** (thomascat@missouri.edu).



CLD Information Central

CLD Mission, Vision, & Goals

Mission Statement: The Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD) is an international organization that promotes evidence-based teaching, collaboration, research, leadership, and advocacy. CLD is composed of professionals who represent diverse disciplines and are committed to enhancing the education and quality of life for individuals with learning disabilities and others who experience challenges in learning.

Vision Statement: Our vision is to include all educators, researchers, administrators, and support personnel to improve the education and quality of life for individuals with learning disabilities and others who experience challenges in learning.

External Goals

1. Promote the use and monitoring of evidence-based interventions for individuals with learning disabilities (LD) and others who experience challenges in learning.
2. Foster collaborative networks with and among professionals who serve individuals with LD and others who experience challenges in learning.
3. Expand our audience to educators, researchers, administrators, and support personnel.
4. Promote high-quality research of importance to individuals with LD and persons who experience challenges in learning.
5. Support leadership development among professionals who serve individuals with LD and others who experience challenges in learning.
6. Advocate for an educational system that respects, supports, and values individual differences.

Internal Goals

1. Ensure efficient, accountable, responsive governance to achieve the CLD mission.
2. Mentor future CLD leaders.
3. Maintain sound fiscal planning and practice.
4. Recruit and retain CLD members.
5. Increase the diversity of our organization.

CLD on the Web

www.cldinternational.org

Visit the CLD website for all the latest updates! Read CLD's Annual Report, position papers, conference news, committee information, Infosheets, and much more.

Convenient E-Access to ISC and LDQ

- You can access your complimentary members-only subscription to *Intervention in School and Clinic* through the CLD website. Articles are searchable by keyword, author, or title and are indexed back to 1998. Simply log-in through our Members' Only portal (<https://www.cldinternational.org/Login/Login.asp>) and then click on the link provided.
- CLD members have free online access to *Learning Disability Quarterly* for issues starting with Winter 2007 (Vol. 30, No. 1). To activate your free access, register with IngentaConnect (<http://www.ingentaconnect.com>). Once initial registration is complete, select Personal Subscriptions. Select *Learning Disability Quar-*

terly and enter your subscription number (your CLD membership number). You will be notified by e-mail once your online access has been activated. For downloadable step-by-step instructions, visit the CLD website. With your free online access, you can receive e-mail alerts and RSS feeds for new issues, interlink between articles to track down other relevant articles, search for topics of interest, and more.

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Author Guidelines

The strategic goals of CLD include the dissemination of research that promotes effective practices for individuals with learning disabilities (LD) and supports the education of students from diverse backgrounds. In light of these goals, CLD's newsletter, *LD Forum*, includes a "Research to Practice" column and a "5 Ways to ..." column, the latter offering evidence-based tips for teachers.

LD Forum invites articles from the full range of professionals who serve individuals with LD, including classroom teachers, graduate students, researchers, teacher preparation faculty, consultants, and others. Manuscripts accepted on an ongoing basis.

Research to Practice Column

- *Purpose:* translate evidence-based research findings on effective interventions and practices in the field of learning disabilities to a practitioner-oriented format that offers educators the guidelines needed to integrate research findings into classroom instruction.
- *Article submission:* electronically to the *LD Forum* editor for peer review. Appropriate articles should offer a brief summary of supporting research, classroom guidelines, and implications that will enable educators to easily implement effective practices. Evidence-based lessons, scripts, and activities will be featured, with a focus on information that easily translates into classroom practice. *Length:* no more than 4–6 double-spaced pages, including a cover page, references, and tables/figures; formatted per APA guidelines

5 Ways to ... Column

- *Purpose:* provide educators with quick access to 5 high-quality, easy to implement, evidence-based tips for teaching organized around a specific theme, such as 5 ways to manage challenging behavior or 5 ways to build reading fluency.
- *Article submission:* electronically to the *LD Forum* editor for peer review. Appropriate articles should provide a single paragraph introduction/statement of the problem, followed by a brief listing of 5 research-supported techniques related to a specific theme. *Length:* No more than 2 double-spaced pages, including a cover page, references, and graphics.

Send manuscripts to: **Cathy Newman Thomas, PhD,**
LD Forum Editor (thomascat@missouri.edu)