



A Publication of the Council for Learning Disabilities

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President's Message

Greetings!

As spring draws near, we often reflect back on our past accomplishments and goals and look forward to a new season of growth. This spring CLD will have an opportunity to do this as we continue to meet members' needs and strengthen our services and advocacy during our Spring Board of Trustees (BOT) meeting on March 5, 2010. Board members will continue to address CLD's current priorities, including fiscal responsibility, conferences, and professional development, as well as ongoing committee goals. Please do not hesitate to contact any BOT member with ideas, comments, or concerns that you may have for the organization. The May issue of *LD Forum* will include relevant updates on these initiatives from the BOT meeting.

On CLD's website, you'll find greater availability to CLD's Info Sheets via open access provided on a link from the CLD Home Page (<http://www.cldinternational.org/Infosheets/Infosheets.asp>). These resources have been widely used and are great to share with colleagues. They continue to be updated under the guidance of our Communications Committee. Our appreciation is extended to CLD's Web Editor (Dave Majsterek) and Communications Committee (chair, Judy Voress).

Do you know of a tireless advocate or an outstanding teacher who has an impact on the lives of individuals and children with learning disabilities? It's not too early to consider nominations for the annual CLD Floyd G. Hudson Service Award and

Outstanding Teacher Awards. Information on these awards can be found in this issue of *LD Forum*.



Under the guidance of President-Elect Cari Dunn and CLD's Conference Director, Mary Provost, the 2010 conference in Myrtle Beach promises to continue CLD's tradition of excellence in professional development and conferences. As you make plans for professional development within your school districts and regions, institutes of higher education, and other professional groups, don't miss this opportunity for collegiality, resources, research dissemination, and networking. You'll find more information in *LD Forum* and on CLD's website.

I look forward to a spring filled with activity to support CLD's resources and members.

With regards,

Christina Curran, CLD President 2009-2010

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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 ...

Consider the Constructs of Resiliency When Planning for Students with Learning Disabilities

Vita L. Jones

California State University Fullerton

Kyle Higgins

University of Nevada Las Vegas

The concept of *resiliency* has been discussed in education for more than 30 years (Waxman, Gray, & Padron, 2003). Researchers have isolated the specific constructs of resiliency (individual, relationship, community, cultural, physical ecology; International Resiliency Project, 2007; V. L. Jones, 2009; Rutter, 1999; Ungar, 2005). These research-based constructs play a crucial role in the design of educational systems and instruction for students with learning disabilities (LD) to offset potential risks and vulnerabilities they may encounter in school. For students with LD, these constructs, when negative in nature, can increase the likelihood of poor academic and social outcomes (Spekman, Herman, & Vogel, 1993).

Spekman, Goldberg, and Herman (1993) defined *resiliency* as a dynamic process that varies between and within individuals, with and without LD, and as such allows the individual to maintain adaptive functioning in spite of identified risk factors (e.g., academic, social, behavioral). This definition encompasses the ability to deal with stress and pressure in everyday challenges within structural conditions (e.g., school, home), relationships, and cultural/political situations (Goldstein, 2006; Ungar, 2003). For students with LD, this involves their ability (e.g., resilience) to deal with the challenges they experience in academic situations, social interactions, and behavioral functioning (Smith & Nagle, 1995).

Educational researchers have defined *resiliency* in terms of the increased probability of academic and social accomplishments (J. H. Brown, 2001; Milstein & Henry, 2000). Specifically, for students with LD, resiliency is the ability to rise above membership in an ability-stigmatized group (Steele, 1995). Thus, the educational definition of resiliency is based on an individual's ability to be engaged in the academic setting in spite of complicated and adverse experiences (Martin & Marsh, 2006), and it involves the cultivation of school engagement, school satisfaction, and academic/social competence (Sagor, 1996). Wong (2003) emphasized the importance of school-based considerations of resiliency for the development of students with LD.

The following five resiliency constructs provide a framework through which educators can evaluate research-based interventions, strategies, and systems in terms of their ability to increase resiliency in students with LD. Educators will find these constructs to be beneficial in their work to support students in the development of their capacity, well being, and sense of value in home and school settings. The constructs may serve as a lens through which educators may evaluate interventions and strategies in terms of their ability to serve as protective factors that will enhance the chance of positive outcomes (e.g., academic, social) for students with LD (Keogh & Weisner, 1993).

1

Individual Constructs. The individual constructs of resiliency are the innate abilities that reside in the student and remain centered during difficult times (Condly, 2006). For students with LD, the most critical teaching areas deal with self-understanding, self-acceptance, and a feeling of control over one's life (Gerber, Ginsberg, & Reiff, 1992). Specific strategies for promoting individual resiliency in students with LD should focus on (a) assertiveness and self-determination, (b) problem solving, (c) the development of self-efficacy, (d) internal locus of control, (e) self-awareness, (f) awareness of social support/social skills, (g) goal setting, (h) self-esteem, and (i) balancing independence and dependence (Abernathy & Cheney, 2005; Bandura, 1997; Blocker & Copeland, 1994; W. K. Brown, 2004; Harvey, 2007; Hippe, 2004; Miller, 1995; Palombo, 2001; Wehmeyer, Hughes, Agran, Garner, & Yeager, 2003). Research has indicated that individual resiliency constructs (a) can be taught and developed over time and (b) result in positive in-school and postschool outcomes for students with LD (Brooks, 1994; Hall & Pearson, 2005; Shessel & Reiff, 1999).

2 Relationship Constructs. Relationships involve the ability to connect and form ties in a positive manner with peers, parents, and teachers (Brooks, 2001; Bryan, 2005; Seng, 1999). Relationship resiliency instruction should focus on the following areas: (a) expressing emotions appropriately, (b) exhibiting social competence, (c) forming meaningful relationships with others, including a significant mentor within the school setting, and (d) developing acceptance by peers (Bhandari & Barnett, 2007; Booker, 2006; Harvey, 2007; Nelson-LeGall & Glor-Scheib, 1986). For students with LD, teachers can play a significant role in the development of relationships across people (parents, peers, other adults). Brooks (1991) found that the educator–child relationship can provide positive experiences that enhance a student’s self-esteem and competence when interacting with others.

3 Community Constructs. The community is an important context in which resiliency can develop. In terms of resiliency, *community* involves the coming together of the school and the community in which it functions (Brandon & Brown, 2009). Educators work with community members to understand their values, beliefs, and interests and the impact on the children or youth who reside within the community (Wang & Gordon, 1994). Resiliency cannot be taught or developed without educators considering the impact of community factors such as violence, recreation, and culture on the child or youth (Brooks, 1994). When focusing on the community in which students with LD live, educators must consider the type, quality, depth, and breadth of services provided to that community (Spekman, Goldberg, & Herman, 1993).

4 Cultural Constructs. Cultural resiliency constructs reside within an individual and involve the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the child or youth. Because culture often serves as a protective factor for students with LD, these constructs may be important resources in the development of resiliency (Wang & Gordon, 1994). Cultural considerations that should be considered are (a) affiliations with various groups (e.g., churches, social organizations), (b) tolerance for difference, (c) cultural dislocation, (d) cultural philosophy, and (e) cultural investment (e.g., knowing one’s history and cultural tradi-

tions; T. M. Brown, 2007; Goldstein, 2006; J. M. Jones, 2007; Hewitt, 2005; Ogbu, 2004). To develop resiliency, educators must respect the cultural constructs of their students and incorporate them into instructional activities (V. L. Jones, 2009).

5 Physical Ecology Constructs. The constructs of physical ecology involve a student’s access to a healthy and safe environment (International Resiliency Project, 2007). While educators are not directly responsible for the physical environments in which their students live, they can advocate for physical environments that reduce risk and stress. Physical ecology constructs that contribute to resiliency are (a) access to a healthy environment at home and school (e.g., housing, food), (b) feeling secure in one’s community, (c) access to recreational spaces, and (d) sports involvement (Brooks, 1994; Duffy, 2007; Hawkins, 1992; Ungar, 2005). Because environmental factors can influence a person’s vulnerability in relation to stress, schools must work with the community to provide a healthy and safe environment around the school setting (Garmezy & Rutter, 1983).

Conclusion

Because resiliency is a multidimensional construct, educators must be vigilant as they develop curricula, select intervention strategies, and implement research-based instruction. Students with LD often are searching for their own resilience to survive within the educational environment (V. L. Jones, 2009). Resiliency will not develop in isolation; educators must have a vision and a plan that addresses its development. The five constructs discussed herein provide a framework that educators can use to evaluate educational materials, strategies, and interventions in terms of their ability to nurture resiliency in students with LD. The use of these constructs will allow educators to make informed decisions in educational matters—academic or social.

These five constructs ask educators to expand their focus from academics to consider the following aspects of their students: (a) individual development, (b) ability to develop and maintain relationships, (c) the community in which the majority of their time is spent, (d) the culture and its impact on academic or social functioning, and (e) the physical environment. By using these constructs as a guide, educators can facilitate the development of resiliency in students with LD as well as provide a roadmap

for students to use as they maneuver through their school years and beyond the boundaries of school.

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Awards Nominations

OUTSTANDING TEACHER AWARD

Purpose and Nature of Award

As part of an effort to encourage and recognize quality instruction, each year CLD recognizes outstanding teachers from local chapters. Winners receive a certificate presented at the annual International Conference on Learning Disabilities as well as a complimentary conference registration and a stipend.

Selection Criteria

Individual chapters develop criteria for selection of an outstanding teacher. Applicants should contact either the national CLD office or the president of their state/region CLD chapter for application materials and criteria.

Notification Process

Information on award winners must include a one-page summary of accomplishments and contributions of the award winner to the field of learning disabilities. As part of the annual CLD conference, award winners will be asked to participate in a Master Teacher Showcase poster session, which is an opportunity to highlight his or her expertise.

To obtain the name/address of your CLD Chapter President, contact the Conference Director:

Mary Provost
Conference Director
Council for Learning Disabilities
P.O. Box 2266
Mount Pleasant, SC 29465
843/971-2980

FLOYD G. HUDSON OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD

Purpose and Nature of Award

The Floyd G. Hudson Service Award is granted by CLD for outstanding performance and commitment to individuals with learning disabilities demonstrated by professionals who are not necessarily special education classroom teachers. One professional is selected from nominees submitted from local chapters. The winner will receive a complimentary one-year membership in the Council for Learning Disabilities.

Selection Criteria

Nominees are judged based on the following criteria:

1. Extent and quality of professional service to the field of learning disabilities, and
2. Exemplary service to the field of learning disabilities for a minimum of 5 years.

Review Process

Nominees are submitted to the Leadership Development Committee by local chapters. Final approval of nominations rests with the Leadership Development Committee, with assistance from the Executive Committee. The Leadership Development Committee selects the final award winner.

Application Procedure

All nominations must include:

1. A completed application form and related materials (forms may be obtained from the national office or your regional representative)
2. A letter of nomination outlining the extent and quality of the nominee's professional contributions to the field of learning disabilities as based on letters of support from colleagues, parents, students, and so forth (self-nominations are accepted)
3. A two-page vita

DEADLINES FOR BOTH AWARDS:

1. **Chapter deadline** to be determined by individual chapters.
2. **Send nomination materials by May 15 to:**
Mary Provost, Conference Director
Council for Learning Disabilities
P.O. Box 2266
Mount Pleasant, SC 29465
843/971-2980

2010 CLD OUTSTANDING RESEARCHER AWARD

Sponsored by



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 five years.

The winner will receive a plaque to be presented at the J. Lee Wiederholt Distinguished Lecture, during the 32nd International Conference on Learning Disabilities, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, October 8th and 9th, 2010.

In addition, the paper will be considered for publication in *Learning Disability Quarterly*.

Six copies of the APA-style paper (maximum 25 pages in length) should be submitted to: Council for Learning Disabilities, 11184 Antioch Road, Box #405, Overland Park, Kansas 66210 • 913.491.1011

Deadline for submission of papers: Received by May 1st

The winner will be notified by August 15th.

LDQ Available Online

CLD members now have free online access to *Learning Disability Quarterly* for issues starting with Winter 2007 (Vol. 30, No. 1) onward. **To activate your free access**, you must register with IngentaConnect (www.ingentaconnect.com). Once you have completed the initial registration, select Personal Subscriptions. Select Learning Disability Quarterly and enter your subscription number (this is your CLD membership number). You will be notified by e-mail once your online access has been activated. For more detailed instructions, visit the CLD website (www.cldinternational.org) and download step-by-step directions.

Keeping up with current research in the field will be even easier. 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. Go to IngentaConnect today and register for your free access.

Mark your calendars now for the 32nd International Conference on Learning Disabilities



Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
October 8–9, 2010

Sheraton Myrtle Beach Convention
Center Hotel

2010 Conference Strands:

- Effective Practices in Collaboration and Inclusion
- Evidence-Based Practices in Literacy
- Evidence-Based Practices in Mathematics
- Effective Content Area Instruction (Science and Social Studies)
- Evidence-Based Practices in Behavior Interventions and Positive Behavior Supports
- Responsive Practices in Cultural and Linguistic Diversity
- Evidence-Based Practices in Transition
- Nonverbal Learning Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Current Issues, Research, and Policy in Special Education
- Current Issues in School Administration

CLD is also encouraging nominations for
Outstanding Teachers of the Year and the Floyd G.
Hudson Outstanding Service Provider Award.

Further information is available from Mary Provost, CLD
Conference Director, at mcprovost@bellsouth.net or
Cari Dunn, CLD President-Elect, at dunnca1@auburn.edu.

Thank you.



www.cldinternational.org

Committee/Chapter Reports and News

Research Committee News

The Research Committee is soliciting manuscript-length papers on learning disabilities from a doctoral dissertation that was completed within the last 5 years. We are seeking IHE faculty assistance in encouraging recent doctoral graduates who have completed an outstanding research study to submit their work to CLD (see the 2010 CLD Outstanding Researcher Award announcement in this issue for details). The Research Committee will select the work that is rated as most meritorious for this prestigious research award.

Maryland Chapter News

On March 6th, the Maryland CLD Chapter will hold a joint conference with the **Maryland Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)** and the **Towson University CEC Student Chapter**. The topic for the conference will be "Improving Executive Function Skills for All Students."

California Chapter News

California CLD will be combining with other organizations in California to host the fifth annual "General Education/

Special Education Collaborative: Autism, Inclusion and Effective Practices," April 16 and 17, 2010, at the Embassy Suites in Brea, California. For more information, contact **Belinda Karge** (bkarge@fullerton.edu).

Colorado Chapter News

Theresa Haley is the recipient of the first CCLD Tuition Scholarship. Theresa will complete her degree in the spring of 2010. Her advisor, Dr. Cynthia Lindquist, chair of the Department of Special Education at Metropolitan State College, stated:

Theresa has maintained an A average in her classes and puts tremendous effort into her coursework. She has the desire to learn and grow. In addition to her achieving outstanding grades, she truly seeks to gain wisdom. She is a dedicated person and a woman of integrity. She is an outstanding student with a heart for students who need assistance to achieve their highest potential.

Theresa will receive a \$1,500 scholarship and a 1-year student membership to CLD.

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