CLD
Council for Learning Disabilities

LD Forum

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President's Message

Dear CLD Members,

We made it! This year has certainly presented many challenges that greatly impacted individuals with learning disabilities and our organization. Despite the challenges presented, CLD continued to advocate and work to enhance the education and quality of life of individuals with learning disabilities. Please join me in celebrating a few of our accomplishments and thanking members who spearheaded efforts.

1. We held our first virtual conference in October 2020. Our conference would not have been possible without the entire Board of Trustees (BoT) and many volunteers. HUGE thank yous to Conference Chair and President-Elect Joseph Morgan; Conference Planning Committee Co-Chairs Anne Brawand and Maria Peterson-Ahmad; and Technology Committee Co-Chairs Sarah McCarthy and Kathy Ewoldt.
2. The Finance Committee completed a comprehensive internal audit of CLD's finances with no areas identified in need of improvement. Thank you to Beverly Weiser, Finance Committee Chair and Treasurer, for leading the audit.
3. We enhanced our website to include banners and increased communication through social media. Enormous thank yous to the Technology Committee for all of their support this year and to Sara Flanagan for managing social media accounts.
4. The Research Committee hosted LD Methods Exchange presentations in which study designs and analyses published in *Learning Disability Quarterly* were shared. Thank you to Jessica Toste and Margaret Flores, Research Committee co-chairs, for hosting.
5. The Diversity Committee, chaired by Yun-Ju Hsiao, shared resources, provided guidance, and disseminated findings from projects to support faculty and individuals with learning disabilities in navigating the civil unrest and racism that continues to impact our country.
6. We partnered with the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities' Education Task Force, and national SLD workgroups to advocate for individuals with learning disabilities. Debi Gartland and Roberta Strosnider organized these efforts.

Without the collective service of our BoT, parliamentarian Judy Voress, and past president Sheri Berkeley, these successes would not have been possible. Thank you for your continued membership and service to CLD. Thank you for the opportunity to serve as CLD president and to share CLD happenings over the last year through *LD Forum*. It has been a pleasure.

If you are interested in becoming more involved with CLD, please consider joining a committee. Additional information is available on our website, **https://council-for-learning-disabilities.org/**. As past president, I will be chairing the Nominations and Election Committee. If you are interested in running for an Executive Committee office, please contact me. Here's to an amazing 2021–2022 academic year! Onward!

Sincerely
Brittany L. Hott, PhD, BCBA-D
2020–2021 CLD President

In This Issue . . .

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.*

5 Ways To . . .

5 Ways to Design Accessible and Supportive Online Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities

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Evidence regarding the effectiveness of online learning for students with disabilities is still in the development stage (Smith, Basham, et al., 2016). The Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities (COLSD) has noted a lack of precedent and limited research regarding evidence-based online instructional practices for students with disabilities (Franklin et al., 2015). Although the online learning environment provides customized instruction with high flexibility and accessibility for students with disabilities, these same students can have difficulty with a new learning format (Basham et al., 2016). However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure of schools across the United States, many school-age children with disabilities currently receive online instruction. Professionals are concerned about limited teacher preparation time for online learning and unequal access to online instruction for students with disabilities (Petretto et al., 2020). Academic regression and learning loss are of particular concern for both educators and parents of children with disabilities (Jones et al., 2020; Petretto et al., 2020). The online learning situation caused by COVID-19 may exacerbate existing learning gaps between students with and without disabilities (Kuhfeld et al., 2020).

As the largest group of students receiving special education services, students with learning disabilities (LD) often exhibit passive learning attitudes (Fletcher et al., 2018). However, online learning requires students to monitor their own learning to a greater extent compared to traditional in-person instruction; students' engagement and motivation are particularly important as they need to direct much of their own learning (Martin & Bolliger, 2018). Online learning environments also require educators to adapt to an educational environment very different from traditional classrooms, even those that incorporate technology. Tailoring the instructional design for students with LD in online learning has become salient (Greer et al., 2013). Thus, the purpose of this article is to suggest five specific strategies for educators to support students with LD when adapting instruction from traditional classrooms to online learning environments: (1) secure technology resources, (2) use assistive technology, (3) incorporate behavioral and self-regulation strategies, (4) increase interactive practice opportunities, and (5) collaborate with parents. Importantly, although this article was developed to help educators think about how to support virtual learning due to the immediate shift brought about by COVID-19, the strategies below are applicable whether instruction is provided in a blended in-person setting or virtually. Table 1 provides an overview of each strategy with implementation tips.

1 Secure Technology Resources

In online learning environments, the right technology resource is critical for successful online learning and teaching. Despite their importance, technology-based learning resources vary across school districts. In comparison to low-poverty districts, high-poverty districts are less likely to distribute digital materials, and teachers in high-poverty districts provide less live virtual instructional support (Garet et al., 2020). Given the wide range of learning resources, the first step in preparation for online learning should be cooperation with technology experts to secure technology resources. Expertise may vary among school districts, but many types of school staff are knowledgeable about technology and can support special educators (e.g., media specialists, technicians, administrative staff, librarians, and assistive technology specialists). Special education teachers may request professional development or regular meetings for technological resources. During this process, teachers need to determine the possible resources that school districts can provide. For example, teachers may learn what devices, internet access, and security policies are available to both teachers and students. Teachers may check available resources provided by school districts and/or budget for purchasing resources for online learning. It is also important to set a main site for communication with students and parents.

In addition to devices and internet connections, teachers need to facilitate educational apps and programs in order for learning to progress smoothly. This may require educa-

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tors to gain new technological knowledge related to a variety of devices and online platforms and resources. Teachers may become overwhelmed by recent technological developments (Williams et al., 2004) and thus may face difficulties when delivering online instruction. To address this concern, special education teachers may collaborate with other professionals for technical support. Online professional learning communities can be a resource for teachers. For example, practitioners can benefit from online teacher resources such as Apple Teacher (**https://www.apple.com/education/apple-teacher/**), Open Educational Resources (**https://www.oercommons.org/**), Google for Education (**https://appliedigitalskills.withgoogle.com/**), and Ed Tech Teacher (**http://edtechteacher.org**).

2 Use Assistive Technology

Assistive technology (AT) enhances learning opportunities for students with LD, supporting educational activities in the areas of writing, math, and reading by increasing access to the general education curriculum. When teachers implement AT devices in inclusive classrooms, students with disabilities experience greater educational and developmental growth (Tamakloe & Agbenyega, 2017). Klemes et al. (2006) asserted that AT is also highly beneficial for students with disabilities in online learning environments. Despite the importance of AT, students with LD often feel that their instructors lack understanding of and support for accommodations such as AT in online learning (Murders, 2017).

One way to incorporate AT is to utilize the built-in features of the various devices students might already be using (e.g., switch controls, voice activation, assistive touch, predictive text, keyboard shortcuts). The websites of several manufacturers (e.g., Apple, Samsung, Microsoft) offer descriptions of their products' built-in accessibility features. With assistance from technicians and/or parents, special education teachers may support students in customizing their individual devices. For example, *Safari Reader*, a built-in feature that deletes advertisements and extra images, can reduce students' distractions. In addition to the built-in features of AT devices, special education teachers may seek other forms of AT that are available in online environments. For instance, in mathematics interventions, students with LD can benefit from (a) virtual manipulatives (i.e., dynamic and interactive objects that can be manipulated on a screen); (b) web-based calculators; (c) math notation tools that allow users to write mathematical symbols (e.g., EquatIO); (d) graphing tools that help users draw graphs based on given equations (e.g., Desmos, and Geogebra); (e) drawing tools that enable users to draw geometric features; (f) graphic organizers that support word problem-solving, and (g) text-to-speech/speech-to-text tools (e.g., Read&Write for Google Chrome).

3 Incorporate Behavioral and Self-Regulation Strategies

Technology devices can stimulate the learning activities of students with disabilities, but these same devices can also distract students (Wehmeyer et al., 2004). During online learning, students may easily access non-academic activities (e.g., social networking apps or games) through their devices. Even in traditional classroom settings, a substantial number of teachers express concern that devices may increase student distraction and off-task behaviors (Ferguson & Oigara, 2017). Students who take online classes are exposed to different kinds of distractions from those that may be present in traditional classroom settings (Blasiman et al., 2018). Effective classroom management supports learning in in-person environments, and it is equally essential to online learning. Accordingly, educators need to address specific behavioral expectations tailored to online learning environments.

Teachers may wish to clearly state their behavior expectations (e.g., turning the video on and keeping faces clearly visible, logging in on time, unmuting for group work), create a list of online behavior norms with students in class, and post written directions to the online board. The behavior list may also be shared via classroom management programs and/or apps (e.g., ClassDojo) and/or shared with parents via email or a main communication site (e.g., Google Classroom). If any students have behavior intervention plans, teachers need to consider these behavior plans and provide additional technological support. For instance, *Guided Access*, a built-in feature in iOS devices (e.g., iPad), allows students to access only predetermined apps; thus, it can help students focus on their work while they use the devices. Android devices have a similar feature, *Parental Controls*, which sets a restriction on content types (e.g., apps, games, movies, TV, books, music). For transition support, teachers may post schedules and daily routines in online classrooms or add a time schedule as a background image on individual devices.

Beyond setting classroom norms and monitoring online behavior, developing students' capacities for self-regulation allows student ownership of learning and can increase student motivation. Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) is a framework that works across content areas by incorporating explicit instruction and cognitive strategies (e.g., concept maps, mnemonics, checklists) in combination with self-regulation strategies such as goal setting, self-monitoring, self-reinforcement, and self-instruction (Reid et al., 2013). Implementing SRSD requires six stages: (1) determining whether students have the skills and background knowledge to incorporate an academic strategy as well as developing and activating background knowledge; (2) discussing the importance of the strategy, gaining student buy-in, and student goal setting; (3) explicitly modeling the strategy through

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think-alouds and guided practice; (4) ensuring students have memorized the strategy; (5) gradually fading support, and (6) encouraging students to use the strategy independently while providing opportunities for the student to generalize using the strategy across different skills (Reid et al., 2013). Self-regulation requires ongoing monitoring, and in classrooms a teacher is readily available to provide support when necessary; in remote learning environments that is not always the case. When teaching remote learners, teachers must still work through the six stages of strategy development; however, both iTunes and GooglePlay list a multitude of apps that help support self-regulation such as goal-setting apps, timers, visual schedules, and graphic organizers. In both settings, strategies such as SRSD will require time and practice before a student can use them independently.

4 Increase Interactive Practice Opportunities

For academic improvement, it is important to provide opportunities for practice during the learning process. One evidence-based practice for students with LD, *explicit instruction*, includes prompted practice (i.e., guided practice), unprompted practice (i.e., independent practice), and ongoing feedback for the learners (Archer & Hughes, 2010). Although many websites and apps provide practice opportunities, they often involve one-way activities (e.g., online worksheets) and/or limited programmed interaction. This may cause students with LD to perceive a lack of interaction when they participate in online learning (Murders, 2017). It thus may be critical to design online instruction that is interactive in order to ensure student engagement.

One strategy to increase interactive practice is to use real-time programs; for example, students may practice new skills through real-time quizzes (e.g., Kahoot, Acadly, Socrative, Seesaw, Gimkit) in both synchronous and asynchronous classes. For delivery of synchronous classes, online video-conferencing programs (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet) provide interactive built-in features such as annotation and/or whiteboard sharing. Teachers may have students share their screens during practice or assessment activities and may provide feedback by making comments on student screens (i.e., the "annotate" feature). In addition to annotation, teachers can use the whiteboard, an on-screen shared notebook that enables writing or drawing on a screen similar to a physical whiteboard that would be used in a traditional classroom.

The Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities has indicated that online instructional design should be aligned to the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL; Basham et al., 2016). To do this, educators may plan to provide practice opportunities in multiple ways, including individual, paired, and group work. Students can also participate in game-based practice (e.g., Prodigy); synchronous group activities using Breakout Room, Chatting, and/or Google Docs; asynchronous activities using blog posting and/or social media such as Goodreads; online presentation using screen sharing and/or Google Slides; and uploading material in various formats (e.g., images, video, text, pictures). In addition to online assignments, educators may consider practices connected to real-world contexts.

5 Collaborate with Parents

Parents of online learners have reported taking on new responsibilities related to teaching and facilitating learning experiences for their children (Currie-Rubin & Smith, 2014; Smith, Burdette, et al., 2016). This can be especially true for parents of students with disabilities who may require additional support in order to access online learning. Some parents have reported ensuring their children understand assignments, supporting content acquisition, providing reminders to begin and complete work, assisting with time management, and implementing behavioral supports (Burdette & Greer, 2014).

One goal of effective collaboration should be to relieve parents of teaching responsibilities wherever possible. By maintaining consistent communication between school and home, teachers may inquire about the extent to which parents are assuming teaching roles and may determine steps the school can take to alleviate the need for such supports from parents. For example, if parents state that they are spending time ensuring their child has the necessary materials ready for class, the teacher can respond by providing the student with instruction and coaching on how to utilize a materials checklist to prepare for class without parental support. In this way, teachers may take ownership of the teaching role and free parents to attend to other responsibilities.

Two factors that contribute to effective collaboration for positive student outcomes are co-equal relationships and two-way communication between home and school (Cox, 2005). In co-equal parent–teacher relationships, the teacher is not positioned as the expert. Instead, all adults supporting a student are empowered to participate as equals in the educational process. Two-way communication flows freely to and from home and school and can be initiated by either as needed or on a regularly scheduled basis. Currie-Rubin and Smith (2014) recommended building and maintaining school-to-parent connections by utilizing frequent, brief e-mail messages and phone calls in combination with more in-depth monthly video conferences. These strategies may help combat parental feelings of isolation and remind parents that their contributions are recognized and valued.

A further benefit to strong home–school collaboration is the opportunity to engage in culturally responsive teach-

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Table 1. Five strategies for online intervention.

Strategy	Implementation Tips
Secure technology resources	• Cooperate with district staff, including administrative, technology, media, and/or library professionals. • Request professional development and/or regular meetings for technological support. • Set a main site for communication (e.g., Google Classroom). • Participate in virtual training for online resources. - Apple Teacher (https://www.apple.com/education/apple-teacher/) - Open Educational Resources (https://www.oercommons.org/) - Google for Education (https://applieddigitalskills.withgoogle.com/) - Ed Tech Teacher (http://edtechteacher.org)
Use assistive technology	• Support students in customizing their devices. • Explore assistive technology available online. - Google (https://www.google.com/accessibility/) - UDL Tech Toolkit (https://sites.google.com/view/freeudltechtoolkit/) • Explore the built-in accessibility features of devices. - Apple (https://www.apple.com/accessibility/) - Microsoft (https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/accessibility/)
Incorporate behavioral and self-regulation strategies	• Clearly state behavior expectations for students. • Post these expectations, review them regularly, and share them with parents. • Post schedules and daily routines in your online classroom. • Incorporate self-regulation strategies through the use of SRSD. - IRIS (https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/srs/cresource/q2/p03/)
Increase interactive practice opportunities	• Use real-time programs (e.g., Kahoot, Acadly, Socrative, Seesaw, Gimkit). • Utilize interactive features (e.g., Annotations, whiteboard/screen sharing). • Provide multiple and varied practice opportunities, including individual, paired, and group work.
Collaborate with parents	• Make daily/weekly contact via phone or email. • Schedule monthly video conferences. • Express gratitude. • Offer parent training.

Note. UDL = Universal Design for Learning, SRSD = Self-Regulated Strategy Development.

ing. *Culturally responsive* practices are rooted in the understanding that disability, race, culture, and language intersect in ways that uniquely shape students' educational experiences (Shealey et al., 2011). Culturally responsive educators understand how their own identities impact their teaching and their interactions with students. They seek to understand and affirm students' identities and their families' identities (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008). In the context of collaborating with parents to support online learning, this practice may include flexible scheduling, providing an interpreter and/or web-based translation, listening without judgment, and remaining open to new approaches while maintaining high expectations for student learning. Because students are working from their homes, teachers are afforded a rare glimpse into students' lives and a rich opportunity for connection and cultural responsiveness.

Conclusion

This article suggested five guiding strategies to design accessible and supportive online instruction for students with LD. With these strategies, educators can maximize the potential of online learning opportunities to meet the needs of individual learners. The strategies described in this article are applicable across instructional settings (e.g., synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid); however, they may be particularly relevant in this current period as the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated an unexpected shift from in-person to online instruction for many students. This shift presents challenges, but it also creates opportunities to use new tools and approaches to promote the growth and development of all

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learners. The strategies cannot alleviate academic gaps due to unequal access, but incorporating these strategies can help ensure that students are provided with intentionally designed instruction and support now and in the future.

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BIG Thank You to Our Reviewers

A big thank you to all the conference proposal reviewers. We had an overwhelming number of proposals submitted this year, and our reviewers helped us meet our timeline. As always, we could not do it without you!

CLD Conference: Save the Date

We are excited to see everyone in person at the Bally's Las Vegas on October 14th and 15th. We have fantastic topics and presentations, networking opportunities, and new innovative spaces called joint opportunities for discussion and action.

Also, our **2021 J. Lee Wiederholt Distinguished Lecturer** is the one and only **Dr. Diane Pedrotty Bryant**! **Registration is now open**. Don't forget to secure your hotel rooms as well. See you in Las Vegas!

Sponsorship Committee Announcements

Believe it or not, it is time to start preparing for the fall conference season. As co-chairs of the Council for Learning Disabilities Sponsorship Committee, we are reaching out to invite you to be a sponsor for our 2021 Annual Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada, in October.

There are various levels of sponsorship involvement, ranging from $50.00–$3,000.00. Your organization's donation will be recognized during the conference as well as on the Council for Learning Disabilities website and various social media platforms. A sponsorship form can be downloaded via **https://tinyurl.com/czsdjfmd**. We appreciate your consideration. Any questions related to sponsorship assistance can be directed to Randa Keeley at **rkeeley@twu.edu**.

Randa Keeley, PhD, & Patricia Flint, PhD
Co-Chairs, Sponsorship Committee

Chapter News

MNCLD Announcements

The Minnesota Council for Learning Disabilities (MNCLD) is pleased to report that our board is working to renew our meetings after a long absence during the COVID crisis.

What is the purpose of MNCLD? As the Minnesota chapter of the Council for Learning Disabilities, we would like MNCLD to be a local resource for teachers as well as provide a format for reciprocal learning from our members. A primary goal would be to build out professional development opportunities for individuals who teach students with learning disabilities in a convenient and accessible way. We feel revitalizing our Minnesota chapter will permit that goal to be accomplished. At present, the members of the board are meeting monthly through Zoom to discuss several topics: (a) the mechanics of promoting our program, (b) how to let interested parties know MNCLD is inclusive of all Minnesota, and (c) how to encourage new members to join the board. We hope to have representation from every area of Minnesota. Additionally, we are excited to be reconnecting with our parent council, the Minnesota Council for Exceptional Children (MNCEC), and we look forward to deepening that connection.

We also look forward to the day when we can once again meet face to face.

Dr. Miriam White
MNCLD President

VCLD Announcements

Virginia CLD board members presented a webinar for educators in February. Dr. Judith Fontana presented *TTAC: A Treasury of Free Resources*. Dr. Clara Hauth presented *Co-Teaching: From Me to We*. Dr. Mindy Gumpert presented *How to Differentiate Any Lesson*, and classroom teacher Allie Ojjeh presented *Tips from the Field for Virtual Learning*. This was the fifth webinar in the First Friday series, which has now offered professional development to over 750 educators across the state since its inception in August 2020.

VCLD co-founded a new organization, the Joint Coalition of Learning Disabilities and Literacy (JCLDL) with several Virginia state organizations. Dr. Michael Kennedy presented an overview of high-leverage practices at the inaugural JCLDL webinar in April. Over 70 attendees participated in this informative webinar. Tentative future JCLDL webinars include *Dyslexia and Reading* presented by Tiffany Hogan, a panel presentation on equity in reading by members of Virginia NAACP organizations, a webinar on writing presented by Dr. Linda Mason, and a presentation on the Structured Word Inquiry method by Dr. Gina Cook.

We are in the process of selecting a venue for the annual VCLD symposium next spring. We plan to have an in-person event that promises to be just as amazing as the 2019 Spring Symposium was! More details to come…

Mindy Gumpert
VCLD President