

Greetings - colleagues, and friends from the Council for Learning Disabilities,

Happy summer. I hope that this note finds you all well, having a strong end to the 2021-2022 academic year and preparing for some rest, relaxation, adventure, and rejuvenation during the coming months. It has continued to be a complex year on all fronts, and I commend you for your fortitude and perseverance in continuously finding ways to create more equitable environments for the diverse students with learning disabilities you serve.

I wanted to take a moment, in my final welcome letter to you as the President of the Council for Learning Disabilities, to reflect on our work together during the past year and continue thinking forward on how we can continue to use opportunities provided to us through our organization to innovate on behalf of the students and families we serve. First and foremost, I want to thank the Executive Committee and Board of Trustees for their dedication and commitment to CLD and its members. It has been inspiring to lead this group throughout the last year and I have been honored to continuously learn from them. To highlight some of their accomplishments:

- The Conference Planning Committee (Drs. Maria Peterson-Ahmad and Vicki Luther) worked to execute our annual conference held in fabulous Las Vegas, Nevada, returning to our first in-person gathering following the coronavirus pandemic. They are now working to ensure a successful 2022 conference in Richmond, Virginia, to be held on October 20 and 21, 2022. Registration is now available, and you can view the draft conference schedule on our website. We hope to see you there to continue our learning and collaboration.
- The Leadership Development Committee (Dr. Donna Sacco) welcomed Leadership Academy 10 and a new cohort of the Leadership Institute and continued ongoing mentorship to Leadership Academy 9. Thank you to Dr. Benikia Kressler from California State University, Fullerton, for her support of the continued mentorship of Leadership Academy 9.
 - Leadership Academy 9 has taken the lead in analyzing trends related to equity, antiracist orientations at our national conference and within our governance documents. I look forward to their findings and feedback to integrate into our work and ensure that we are creating welcome spaces for all individuals working in the field of learning disabilities.
- We have welcomed the most recent Affiliated Chapter of the Council for Learning Disabilities. The BOT approved the governance documents of the Georgia Council for Learning Disabilities, who have already begun their work in Georgia. Thank you to Dr. Cynthia Massey (Georgia Southern University) and her colleagues for their work in getting this chapter off the ground. We are excited to collaborate with you and hear of all the great things you do in your state.
- The Technology Committee (Drs. Sarah Vach and Kathy Ewoldt) have been working with our Executive Director (Linda Nease) to develop a new look and feel to the CLD website. Watch our page to see these impressive updates that will, hopefully, make for a better navigating experience as you find and download critical resources to support our work.

- An ad hoc committee established during the BOT meeting at the annual conference met to make recommendations for revisions to the Bylaws focused on creating a more efficient and effective governance structure while also ensuring clear planning for vacancies in the Presidential line. This committee recommended some structural changes to our committee structure; specifically, they have recommended:
 - Activities related to the Communications Committee be absorbed by the Technology Committee as we have moved to a digitally focused organization. This will result in the creation of a new committee, the Information and Technology Committee.
 - The Leadership Development Committee be split into two committees: LDC and a new Affiliated Partnerships Committee, which will focus on providing support to state chapters as well as liaising with our external partners (e.g., journal editors, other organizations with a similar focus).
- The Liaison Committee (Drs. Roberta Strosnider and Debi Gartland) continue to represent the Council for Learning Disabilities on national advocacy groups focused on policy and practice to support diverse individuals with learning disabilities. Additionally, they have spearheaded CLD's role on a joint celebration of the 60th anniversary of Kirk's operational definition of learning disabilities with LDA. Look for more information on this important event in the coming year.

This is just a sampling of the amazing work that has been accomplished by the servant leaders of your organization; their tireless and continued efforts to ensure that CLD remains a space for committed professionals to connect and develop new ideas and methods for supporting the outcomes of diverse students with disabilities are unparalleled. I count myself lucky to have been able to share space with them and look forward to all they will accomplish in the coming year. I hope that you will find ways to become actively involved with our committees and find a way to support and enhance programming focused on the outcomes of the students and families they serve. Feel free to get in contact with any of our chairs to find new ways to get involved.

I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to thank Linda Nease, our Executive Director, for her constant support of the work of our organization. Linda has been a sounding board, a confidante, a mentor, and a friend during my 10 years as a member of the CLD Board of Trustees and has been an immeasurable support to me during the Presidency. Sadly, for us and luckily for her, Linda has notified the BOT of her retirement effective June 30, 2022; she will continue to provide support to the organization as we navigate the identification of a new ED. Linda – thank you for your years of service to our organization and your support of me and the Presidents before me. We would not be where we are without you, and I am so grateful I was able to serve in this role with you. We wish you the best and hope to see you at many of our gatherings in the future – you are still on the invite list!

As I conclude my Presidency, I think back with bittersweet reflections; these include pride regarding the things we have been able to accomplish and disappointment in myself for not getting more accomplished to create more equitable and innovative systems to support our

members, students, and families. I know that change takes time and that it is an ongoing, iterative process; I take comfort in knowing that the line-up of leaders to take the helm of the organization in the coming years will continue the good work, deftly led by Dr. Brenda Barrio (University of North Texas) in the 2022-2023 academic year.

I would like to leave you with some final thoughts that have struck me throughout this past year and that, I hope, will speak to you and your continued commitment to our work:

1. **Equity matters.** Creating more just and antiracist systems for our members, our field, our teachers, our students and families, and our society are critical as we consider ways to imagine the true potential of public education. We, as a group, must continue to find ways to create an open and welcoming community to all members – and that sometimes means challenging things that are to imagine things that could be.
2. **Research matters.** I know I am preaching to the choir here, but in a world where disinformation is prevalent, we must ground ourselves in evidence-based practices to support our teachers and students. Keep doing the amazing scholarship you are doing and I hope that you will find ways to disseminate your findings through CLD and our affiliated journals (i.e., *Learning Disability Quarterly*, *Intervention in School and Clinic*).
3. **Translation of research matters.** As we find new and innovative ways to support teachers and students with learning disabilities, we also must find ways to get that research into the hands of practitioners. That could be through a practitioner article, a resource shared on our website, through policy and advocacy, or through professional development. I hope that we continue to lead the way in disseminating the results of our work to the people who have the power to implement it – our teachers and school leaders.
4. **Members matter.** We could not do any of our work without you – our members. And to maintain the health and vitality of our organization, I hope that we continue to find new ways to bring new folx into our organization. Whether those are your students, your colleagues, or leaders in your community, I challenge us all to find five new people to talk about CLD with. I know that Dr. Kyle Higgins's (University of Nevada, Las Vegas) encouragement of me to attend CLD has changed both my personal and professional career, and I know that many of you have had similar experiences.

It has been a whirlwind, CLD, but I have been honored and humbled to serve you. Thank you for your support, your engagement, and your work on behalf of the students and families we serve. I am a better professional and a better person because of you. Go out, do good in the world, and stay involved with CLD!

Onward,

Joseph John Morgan
President