



A Publication of the Council for Learning Disabilities December 2025

## President's Message



Dear CLD Colleagues,

It was great seeing so many of you at our 47th Annual International Conference on Learning Disabilities in October! I hope you were able to build new connections and take away new learnings that support your work. So many reached

out during the conference sharing positive comments about the sessions, location, meals, and camaraderie experienced. Here's hoping you too found a sense of "home" at CLD!

Thursday morning opened with a keynote lecture by Dr. Monica Brown and concluded with the President's Reception which allowed for great conversation. Friday opened with an amazing set of poster presentations and ended with a new closing session on why CLD matters. I would encourage you to think about why CLD matters to you and reflect on how you can become more involved. Did you learn more about a committee's work during lunch that resonates with your talents and interests? Could you share your work with the larger community by contributing to *LD Forum*, the Research to Practice Corner, or our journals, *Intervention in School and Clinic* and *Learning Disability Quarterly*? We each play a part in co-creating the knowledge and resources needed to support individuals with learning disabilities and their families, and it is these contributions that allow our organization to grow and thrive.

I wish to extend my thanks again to everybody who helped make this year's conference a success, especially conference co-chairs Drs. Randa Keeley and Cynthia Massey, President-Elect Dr. Alyson Collins, and our Local Arrangements Committee. Moreover, congratulations to our many award recipients who continue to make positive changes in the field of learning disabilities! Additional information about these recipients is available in the Conference Highlights.

Within the next month, you will receive communications about our upcoming election for our next vice president. You

will find information about each candidate in this issue of *LD Forum*.

In closing, please save the date for next year's conference in Fort Worth, Texas, October 22–23, 2026, at the Sheraton Fort Worth Downtown. The call for proposals will be forthcoming. Many thanks to current Vice President Dr. Nate Stevenson for preparing the call. Hope to see you in Fort Worth!

Wishing you and your family a joyous holiday season,

**Apryl L. Poch**  
2025–2026 CLD President

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## Candidates for the Position of Vice President on the Executive Committee of the Council for Learning Disabilities

*The Nominations and Elections Committee of the Council for Learning Disabilities is pleased to announce two highly qualified candidates for the position of vice president of the Council for Learning Disabilities, to be elected in the spring of 2026. Below please find brief biographies for each of the two candidates (presented alphabetically by last name) as well as a statement of their goals for the Council for Learning Disabilities if elected.*



**Nancy J. Nelson, PhD, NCSP**

*Boston University*

I am an assistant professor of special education at Boston University, associate director of translational research for the Wheelock Institute for the Science of Education (WISE), and the deputy director of the National Center on Improving Literacy (NCIL). I began my career as a special education math teacher in Oakland and Berkeley, California, teaching students with learning disabilities. I hold a master's degree in special education from San Francisco State University and was awarded my PhD in school psychology from the University of Oregon (UO) in 2011. From 2011–2021, I was research faculty at the Center on Teaching and Learning (CTL) at UO, where I also served as CTL's director of Clinic and Outreach, leading implementation of an academic intervention clinic. I have been a principal or co-principal investigator on more than 20 federally funded projects to develop or test the efficacy of reading and math interventions for students with or at risk for learning disabilities. My expertise lies at the center of school psychology and special education with a particular focus on supporting effective implementation of instruction, intervention, and

assessment for data-based decision making in multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS).

I first became a CLD member and began attending the annual conference in 2012. A paper I lead-authored (Nelson-Walker et al., 2013) was the inaugural “Must Reads” paper in LDQ. In the mid-2010s I served on CLD's Research and Conference Committees and as the Conference Committee co-chair. From 2017–2018, I was the Local Arrangements Committee co-chair for the 40th anniversary conference in Portland, Oregon. I was also a Leadership Academy mentor from 2018–2020, during which time I also served as president of the Oregon School Psychologists' Association. I took some time away from professional organization leadership in the early 2020s, when I had my youngest child and accepted my current position at Boston University. I'm eager to return to CLD leadership, as it remains my primary professional home. Based on my experience with CLD and its evolution over the last 15 years, my goals for CLD are to enhance its visibility and standing as a leading professional organization for supporting individuals with learning disabilities and increase membership and participation for enhanced sustainability of the organization. I would be honored to serve as your VP to further the mission and goals of CLD!



**Alex Smith, PhD**

*University of Nevada-Las Vegas*

I am an associate professor of special education at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas. I joined the Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD) in 2017 as a student member and I have considered CLD my professional home ever since. I completed the Leadership Institute and was a member of Leadership Academy Cohort 7. I am beginning my third year as editor for LD Forum and member of the Affiliated Partners Committee. I have been a regular conference proposal reviewer for CLD and am on the Editorial Board for Learning Disabilities Quarterly. I have worked with individuals with disabilities in a variety of roles in the states of Mississippi, Georgia, Missouri, Oregon, and Nevada as well as in South Korea and Abu Dhabi.

My research focuses upon students with learning disabilities primarily across the domains of data-based decision making, literacy, and intersectionality.

I want to serve as vice president for CLD because of all that CLD has done to support me as a doctoral student and early career researcher. Unfortunately, many professional organizations advocating for individuals with disabilities are facing difficult times, including CLD. With that in mind, I would like to advocate for leaning into our strength, the knowledge and skills of our CLD members, to generate actionable ideas to promote the sustainability and ongoing effectiveness of CLD. Further, I will also advocate for continuing to build partnerships with other organizations both to support CLD moving forward and to better enact CLD's mission of enhancing the education and quality of life for individuals with learning disabilities.

## 2026–2027 Election Information for the Vice President of the Council for Learning Disabilities

This spring, the Nominations and Elections committee will oversee elections for the position of Vice President of the Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD). The Vice President is elected into the presidential line of CLD, serving for one year in each of the following positions: (a) Vice President, (b) President-Elect, (c) President, and (d) Immediate Past President. In the role of Vice President, the elected candidate shall:

- 1) *Serve in the President's place and with the President's authority in case of absence or disability of the President and President-Elect,*
- 2) *Assist the President and President-Elect in the planning and preparing of the plan of operation, charges to committees, and annual budget,*
- 3) *Assist the President and perform such other duties as may be assigned to the office,*

- 4) *Serve as member of the Bylaws and Policies Committee, and*
- 5) *Serve as the program chair for the following year's conference.*

Ballots for the election of the Vice President will be disseminated electronically to all active members of CLD. Ballots will be disseminated by **mid-January**, and voting will close in **early February**. Election results will be verified by the immediate past president and two other members of the council prior to notification of candidates. Results of the election will be published in the April issue of *LD Forum*. If you have any questions about the election process, please contact Dr. Sara Flannigan, Immediate Past President, at [sara.flanagan@maine.edu](mailto:sara.flanagan@maine.edu).

## Conference Highlights

This year, CLD's 47th International Conference on Learning Disabilities was held in Salt Lake City, Utah, on October 16–17, 2025. More than 100 professional educators, researchers, and graduate students from across the United States registered for this year's conference. The sessions featured innovative research and practice in the field of learning disabilities.

CLD President Apryl Poch opened the conference on Thursday, October 16, 2025, introducing this year's J. Lee Wiederholt-Donald D. Hammill Distinguished Lecturer, Dr.



Dr. Monica Brown

Monica Brown (University of Nevada, Las Vegas). Dr. Brown's keynote address, "This is my home...but, my research has evolved," challenged attendees to reimagine inclusion, equity, and teacher collaboration for today's classrooms. Her dedication to advancing equitable educational opportunities for students with disabilities and those from diverse back-

grounds has established her as an inspiring voice in special education.

Research and practice were presented during the conference through content-specific panels, thematic roundtable sessions, interactive papers, and structured poster sessions. Conference topics included evidence-based practices in literacy and mathematics, AI policies in education, teacher prep-

aration, culturally responsive instruction, special education law, data-based decision making, and inclusive practices. Returning this year, researchers presented in-progress roundtables, organized by the CLD Research Committee. These roundtables provided a supportive, collaborative setting for researchers at any level to present ongoing work and receive peer feedback to enhance the quality of their research.

Notably, the conference offered the popular Judy Voress Networking Luncheon on Thursday, where attendees enjoyed opportunities to connect with colleagues. During the lunch, CLD committee meetings were held to allow attendees to learn about opportunities for committee work and explore ways to become more involved in CLD.

Our annual conference awards recognized outstanding contributions to the field. Dr. Erica Lembke (University of Missouri) received the Floyd G. Hudson Service Award for her leadership and research in data-based decision-making. Dr. Jechun An (University of Minnesota) was honored with the Early Career Researcher Award for his study, "Evaluating Alternative Item Response Theory Approaches to Account for Not-Reached Items in Children's Word Dictation Responses." Must Read Awards were presented to Dr. Sarah Krowka (Instructional Research Group) for her *Learning Disability Quarterly* article, "Key Instructional

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# SAVE THE DATE!

## 2026 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LEARNING DISABILITIES

October 22 – 23, 2026  
Sheraton Fort Worth Downtown  
Hotel, Fort Worth, TX

COME JOIN US FOR:

- Informative panel presentations
- Meaningful roundtable discussions
- Enlightening keynote address
- Engagement with colleagues from the field
- Insightful research projects
- Exploration of a vibrant city



**CALL FOR PROPOSALS COMING SOON!**

**(Conference Highlights, continued from page 3)**

Practices for Teaching Rational Number Concepts to Students with Mathematics Difficulties,” and Ms. Chloe Melton (University of Connecticut) for her *Intervention in School and Clinic* article “Success for All: Integrating Evidence-based Academic and Behavior Instruction in Tier 1.” Mr. David “Chad” Farrell (Statesboro High School, Georgia) was recognized as CLD’s Teacher of the Year for his dedication to ensuring every student feels valued and supported.



Dr. Erica Lembke, University of Missouri  
**Floyd G. Hudson Service Award**



Dr. Jechun An, University of Minnesota  
**Early Career Research Award**



Dr. Sarah Krowka  
**Learning Disabilities Quarterly Must Read Award**, “Key Instructional Practices for Teaching Rational Number Concepts to Students with Mathematics Difficulties”



Ms. Chloe Melton, University of Connecticut  
**Intervention in School and Clinic Must Read Award**, “Success for All: Integrating Evidence-based Academic and Behavior Instruction in Tier 1”



Mr. David “Chad” Farrell, Statesboro High School, Georgia  
**CLD’s Teacher of the Year**

The conference also celebrated the accomplishments of Leadership Academy Cohorts 13 and 14 and welcomed participants who attended the pre-conference 2025 Leadership Institute.

We extend our appreciation to all who volunteered their time to ensure the success of the 47th conference. We are par-

ticularly grateful for the time and dedication of the Conference Planning Committee Co-Chairs Dr. Randa Keeley (Texas Woman’s University) and Dr. Cynthia Massey (Georgia Southern University) who made the conference possible. Thank you also to Julie Cordell (CLD Executive Director) and the Local Arrangements Committee Co-Chairs Dr. Willa van Dijk and Dr. Kaitlin Bundock (Utah State University) for ensuring all conference operations were seamless and creating a welcoming atmosphere. In addition, special thanks to Dr. Lara-Jeane Costa (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) and Dr. Katie Miller (Florida Atlantic University) for their countless hours preparing a well-organized conference program, as well as to the Registration Subcommittee (Dr. Andria Disney and Dr. Megyn Martin) and Sponsorship Subcommittee (Dr. Schuyler Beecher) for their dedicated efforts. Much appreciation is also extended to CLD members who completed blind peer reviews of conference proposals.

Finally, we are especially grateful to our generous sponsors: PRO-ED; Hammill Institute on Disabilities; University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Texas State University’s Department of Curriculum & Instruction; Hill for Literacy; and Beverly Weiser. Your support was instrumental in making this conference a success.



**Thank You to Our Sponsors!**

Thank you to our sponsors for the 47th International Conference on Learning Disabilities, held in Salt Lake City, Utah, on October 16-17, 2025. We sincerely appreciate the generous support of the following sponsors. Your contributions were instrumental in making the conference a success.

**Bronze Level**



**Beverly Weiser**

**Silver Level**



★ TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Department of Curriculum  
& Instruction

**Diamond Level**



Thank you for your commitment to advancing research and practice in the field of learning disabilities!

Thank you to everyone who attended the conference. We look forward to seeing you at next year’s conference in Fort Worth, Texas!

**Alyson A. Collins, PhD, CALT**  
**Conference Program Chair**  
**CLD President-Elect**

## Membership Committee Update

The CLD Membership Committee develops strategies for the recruitment and retention of CLD members. Currently, CLD has a membership of 192 individuals. At the 2025 CLD conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, the Membership Committee co-chairs met with other members of the Board of Trustees to discuss ideas for increasing the value of CLD for student members and expanding student membership. Currently, the Membership Committee has obtained approval to design two student awards and aims to invite applications in the spring of 2026.

The Membership Committee is proud to continue their work as a team, and consists of the following individuals: Ayodele Aborishade, Catharine Lory (co-chair), David Ray Miranda, Kate Connor, Kimberly McFadden (co-chair), Joo Young Lee, Qingli Lei, and Travis Hammond. In this *LD Forum* issue, we are delighted to spotlight the student members in our committee, Ayodele and Travis. We would also like to congratulate Dr. David Ray Miranda for transitioning into his new role as an assistant professor at University of West Georgia and Dr. Kimberly MacFadden for becoming a postdoctoral researcher at the Iowa Reading Research Center!

**Ayodele Aborishade** is a doctoral student at University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Ayo has been an active member of CLD for four years. She was selected to be a member of the Leadership Academy this year. CLD was her first conference she attended in her graduate program. At the conference she had the opportunity to learn from an array of scholars and practitioners in the field of learning disabilities. It provided her with valuable insights and networking opportunities

that have greatly influenced her academic and professional growth. CLD has also given her a platform to develop leadership skills and connect with like-minded individuals who share her passion for advancing research in the field of learning disability. Last year, Ayo was part of the Leadership Institute in which she committed to being a part of the membership committee. Ayo values being a CLD member because CLD has helped her grow her network and leadership as well as increase her research experience.

**Travis Hammond** is a doctoral candidate at University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and active member of the Membership Committee within the CLD. He has been a dedicated CLD member for four years and has served on the Membership Committee for the past year. Travis's favorite aspect of CLD is its strong and consistent focus on learning disabilities. He values how the annual conferences provide informative, relevant, and practical sessions that directly apply to his work and the populations he serves. Through these conferences, he has expanded his professional network across states and universities, connecting with fellow doctoral students and supportive faculty who have encouraged his academic and professional growth. His participation in the Leadership Institute was another highlight of his CLD involvement, offering him a deeper understanding of the organization and the opportunity to build meaningful connections within its leadership. Travis values his membership in CLD because it continues to shape his professional development and connects him to a community dedicated to improving outcomes for individuals with learning disabilities.

## Diversity Statement

The Council for Learning Disabilities is committed to celebrating and enriching the field of special education through its diversity. As a group, we pursue the best practices, research, and policies that exemplify enhancing the lives of individuals with learning disabilities, including those from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. As a diverse group of professionals in the field of special education, we believe that this work cannot be completed in a silo, but rather, it must be embedded within every part of what we do. As an organization, we are committed to welcoming, understanding, learning about, and honoring individual diversity.

## Leadership Development Committee Updates

### Leadership Institute 2025

The Leadership Development Committee conducted the Leadership Institute the day before the 47th Council for Learning Disabilities conference in Salt Lake City, Utah. Nine doctoral scholars and early career faculty spent the day networking and receiving guidance on developing research lines, publishing, and entering the job market well prepared. These nine individuals will now be eligible for Leadership Academy 15 in the spring of 2026.

**L. Maurice Gibbs**, *University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

**Tony Jackson**, *University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

**Jacqueline W. Little**, *University of North Carolina, Charlotte*

**Stephanie Meza**, *University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

**Mahnaz Pater-Rov**, *Texas Woman's University*

**Marissa Rakos**, *University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

**Destiny Robinson**, *University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

**Haley Sanders**, *Auburn University*

**Charles Toussaint**, *Texas Woman's University*

### Leadership Academies

The **Brian R. Bryant Leadership Academy 14** was announced at the 47th International Council for Learning Disabilities conference in Salt Lake City, Utah. The Leadership Academy is now named for Brian R. Bryant, who was CLD president from 1995–1996. He served as co-editor-in-chief with his wife Diane P. Bryant for our CLD journal, *Learning Disability Quarterly*, for nine years. He was a research professor at The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk and taught special education courses in the department of special education at The University of Texas. His many contributions to the disability field have been well recognized, yet it is his dedication to developing new leaders in the field for which we are honoring him. He was there when the Council for Learning Disabilities began and felt that the association stood apart from others for our journals, fiscal responsibility in always having a prudent reserve, and the conference that is small enough to build lasting relationships and develop new leaders in the field.

This newest academy of future leaders in the field of learning disabilities and within the Council for Learning Disabilities have each been assigned a mentor to work with them throughout the year. In their second year of the Leadership Academy, they will work together on a project. The following are the members of the Brian Bryant Leadership Academy 14:



**Ayo Aborishade** is a doctoral student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Her research explores assessment and how it impacts placement and support provided to students with learning disabilities who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. By taking a closer look at assessment practices and their impact on placement and support, Ayo hopes to improve educational equity and ensure that students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have access to resources they need to succeed academically. She received her bachelor's degree in special education from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, and her master's degree in special education from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.



**Jechun An, PhD**, is a postdoctoral associate at the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Minnesota. His role is managing the data for two federally funded projects (Number-shire and Early Language Comprehension Individualized Instruction; ELCII) that entail large-scale efficacy trials of educational technology focusing on literacy and mathematics. He started his education career as a tenured elementary teacher in a rural area of Korea. After that, he worked as a secondary school principal qualification program coordinator at the National Academy for Educational Administrators at Seoul National University in Korea. Until 2024, he was a lab manager of a federally funded project (The Early Writing Project) to provide professional development for elementary teachers who have students with difficulties in writing.



**Kate Connor, PhD**, is an assistant professor of special education at Western Michigan University. Her research interests include improving the literacy outcomes of individuals with disabilities and sustained professional learning opportunities in literacy for special and general education teachers.

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**April Hill, PhD**, earned her PhD at Texas Woman's University and is a special education instructor at Northern Michigan University. She holds a BA in History from Texas A&M University College Station and an MEd in Special Education from Midwestern State University. She

has 19 years of experience in public education special education, including 14 years as an Educational Diagnostician. As a district administrator she was responsible for overseeing the special education evaluation policies, procedures, and practices, as well as ensuring the federal and state compliance of IEP and FIE timelines. Her research focuses on the use of equity-focused practices to address special education disproportionality and the use of special education processes to develop meaningful family-school partnerships.



**Shannon D. Pardue** is a doctoral candidate in special education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where she also serves as a graduate assistant at the Mebane Early Literacy Center. A Board Certified Behavior Analyst and former high school special education teacher,

her professional background spans over 15 years in clinical, vocational, residential, and K–12 educational settings. Her research focuses on leveraging structured cognitive strategy instruction and AI-generated materials aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to enhance reading comprehension and engagement for high school students with learning disabilities, with the goal of increasing equitable access to the general education curriculum. Shannon's current dissertation examines the effectiveness of *CUT to the Message*, a standards-aligned intervention grounded in the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) framework, using a single-case experimental design that compares AI-generated passages with textbook materials to investigate their impact on reading comprehension and student engage-

ment. Her long-term goal is to expand this work through randomized controlled trials as a tenure-track faculty member at a research-intensive institution.



**Latesha Watson** is a PhD student at Temple University's College of Education and Human Development, specializing in special education. She brings 15 years of experience as an educational administrator and special education teacher.

Her research focuses on culturally and linguistically equitable literacy, technology, and learning outcomes for youth with disabilities.



**Heba Abdelnaby, PhD**, is a Palestinian educator and scholar specializing in special education, academic support, and reading interventions. She has worked with UNRWA supporting Palestinian refugee students, developing educational content, and training teachers in Gaza

City and across the Middle East. She obtained a master's and PhD in special education from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Her research focuses on supporting academic performance and literacy skills for all learners, including multilingual learners and students with disabilities. Outside academia, she enjoys family time with her husband and three children, walking, reading, and volunteering.

The Brian R. Bryant Leadership Academy 13 completed their group project and presentation at the CLD conference in Salt Lake City, Utah. The team developed three podcasts with accompanying infographics that help close the research to practice gap in a creative manner. Please find their work on their [team project webpage](#).

The Brian R. Bryant Leadership Academy 13 includes Lola Aneke, Roba Hrisseh, PhD, Joo Young Lee, PhD, Catharine Lory, PhD, Kimberly McFadden, PhD, Reagen L. Mergen, PhD, and Marilyn Roberts.

## Intervention in School and Clinic Update

*Intervention in School and Clinic* (ISC) has added a new column, **Intersectionality and Accessibility**. ISC is excited about expanding the types of manuscripts reviewed. Fatmana Deniz will be the associate editor for the new column described below:

Intersectionality and Accessibility manuscripts address topics related to intersecting identities and how these shape the experiences of students from historically underserved or

underrepresented backgrounds. These manuscripts may also expand into the intersection of these issues in conjunction with low- or high-incidence disabilities, including ways of promoting access in inclusive educational settings.

As a reminder, CLD members get access to ISC as part of their membership, and submissions are encouraged, especially for this new column.

## Call for Research to Practice Corner Briefs!

*One goal of the Research Committee is to increase the number of publications in the Research to Practice Corner column. We are interested in new submissions as well as updating briefs that we have published in the past.*



Link to published Research to Practice Briefs



Link to the Research to Practice Submission Guidelines



Email your submissions to the Research Committee Co-Chairs: Dr. Anna Gibbs (agibbs14@utk.edu) & Dr. Soyoung Park (soyoung.park@ucf.edu).



Would you like to serve as a peer reviewer for the Research to Practice briefs? Contact Dr. Anna Gibbs and Dr. Soyoung Park for more information!

## Have a Question About Research?

Do you have a question about research that you would like to have answered by an experienced CLD researcher? Drop us an email at [AskACLDResearcher@cldinternational.org](mailto:AskACLDResearcher@cldinternational.org), and we'll do our best to find answers for you. We welcome questions related to theory, methodology, and logistics, including the challenges of conducting research in schools. Your questions can be specific and technical, related to your

own project, or more generally seeking advice as you begin your career as a researcher. Once we receive your question, we will provide a response or connect you with someone who has expertise in that area. Additionally, we will prepare a quarterly summary of common questions and answers that will be published on our website and here in *LD Forum*.

## CLD Mission & Vision

**Mission Statement:** The Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD), an international organization composed of professionals who represent diverse disciplines, is committed to enhancing the education and quality of life for individuals with learning disabilities across the life span. CLD accomplishes this by promoting and disseminating evidence-based research and practices related to the education of individuals with learn-

ing disabilities. In addition, CLD fosters (a) collaboration among professionals; (b) development of leaders in the field; and (c) advocacy for policies that support individuals with learning disabilities at local, state, and national levels.

**Vision Statement:** All individuals with learning disabilities are empowered to achieve their potential.

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