



17th International Conference on Autism, Intellectual Disability, & Developmental Disabilities

Research-Informed Practice

*Council for Exceptional Children
Division on Autism & Developmental Disabilities*

On behalf of the Board of Directors for CEC's Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities (DADD), may I extend an invitation to join us in **Honolulu, Hawaii, January 20-22, 2016!**

DADD's 17th International Conference on Autism, Intellectual Disability, and Developmental Disabilities will integrate research and practice, reflecting the need for evidence-based and practice-informed strategies and interventions within this diverse field. Topical areas include:

- ◆ Autism Spectrum Disorder
- ◆ Assistive & Adaptive Technology
- ◆ Early Childhood
- ◆ Intellectual Disability
- ◆ Mental Health
- ◆ Multiple Disabilities
- ◆ Paraprofessionals
- ◆ Employment
- ◆ Post-Secondary Initiatives
- ◆ Transitions

The program features more than 150 lecture and poster presentations; conference delegates may also attend one of two in-depth pre-conference training institutes: ***Mental Health and Behavior Challenges in ASD*** or ***Fostering Professional Classroom and Clinics: Ethical Practice and Effective Staff Supervision***. CEUs through CEC, now known as Professional Development Hours (PDHs), will be available for all conference sessions and the pre-conference training institutes; BCBA CEUs will be available for designated sessions on the program and for the pre-conference training institute on ethical practice & staff supervision. *Note:* CEC PDHs count toward maintenance of the ASHA Certificate of Clinical Competence.

Our conference will be held at the beautiful **Waikiki Beach Marriott Resort & Spa** in Honolulu, Hawaii.

For further information, please contact:

Cindy Perras
Conference Co-ordinator
CEC-DADD
cindy.perras@cogeco.ca



The voice and vision of special education

Conference Overview

Wednesday, January 20, 2016

Pre-Conference Training Institutes

◆ Institute I – Mental Health and Behavior Challenges in ASD: Impact and Interventions

Brenda Smith Myles, PhD, Consultant, Ziggurat Group, Scientific Council Board Member, Organization for Autism Research, and **James Coplan**, MD, Neurodevelopmental Pediatrician, Clinical Associate Professor of Child Psychiatry, University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine

◆ Institute II – Fostering Professional Classrooms and Clinics: Ethical Practice and Effective Staff Supervision

Morning

Part I: Avoiding Pseudoscientific and Unproven Interventions to Ensure Ethical Treatment and Education of Learners with Autism and Developmental Disabilities

Jason Travers, PhD, BCBA-D, University of Kansas

Part II: Ethical Issues in Augmentative & Alternative Communication: Contrasting Authentic AAC with Rapid Prompting Method and Facilitated Communication

Jason Travers, PhD, BCBA-D, University of Kansas

Afternoon

How to Train and Supervise your Paraprofessionals and Therapists in Evidence-Based Practices

E. Amanda Boutot, PhD, BCBA-D, Texas State University, and **Samuel DiGangi**, PhD, BCBA-D, Arizona State University

Opening General Session at 5:00 p.m.

◆ Keynote Address, Dolly Gray Children's Literature Award

◆ Poster Presentations & Wine & Cheese Reception

Thursday, January 21, 2016

Conference Day 1

- ◆ Poster Presentations/Continental Breakfast
- ◆ Concurrent Breakout Sessions/Featured Speakers
- ◆ Publisher/Exhibitor Display

Friday, January 22, 2016

Conference Day 2

- ◆ Poster Presentations/Continental Breakfast
- ◆ Concurrent Breakout Sessions/Featured Speakers
- ◆ Publisher/Exhibitor Display
- ◆ Closing Session – Keynote Address & iPad draw

Featured Sessions

Ilene Schwartz, PhD, BCBA-D
Nancy Rosenberg, PhD, BCBA-D
University of Washington

“Ethics Goes to School:
Navigating Ethical and Professional Issues
When BCBA's Work or Consult in Schools”



Tina Taylor Dyches, EdD
Kimberly Tarnasky
Brigham Young University

“Disability Awareness Activities:
Using the Dolly Gray Children's Literature
Award Books”



Students in the VOICE II
Transition Program
Jamie Ellison & Kelly Choma
Transition Program Teachers
Blaine County School District, Hailey, Idaho

“My Voice, My Independence”

Zach Zaborny, BS
Self-Advocate with Autism
Kat McMahon, BA
Zach's Mother

“Mom and Me:
Life on the Autism Spectrum from
Two Sides”



Bree Jimenez, PhD
University of North Carolina, Greensboro
Carol Stanger, MS
Attainment Company, Inc.

“Virtual Manipulatives to Support Early
Numeracy for Students with
Developmental Disabilities and Autism”



Emily C. Bouck, PhD
Richard M. Gargiulo, PhD
Teresa Taber Doughty, PhD
Michael Wehmeyer, PhD
Members of the DADD Board of Directors

“Success at Writing a Textbook:
Strategies from Authors”

Conference Registration

Please note that conference registration may be accessed through the conference website (<http://www.cvent.com/d/mrqf57/4W>).

Registration Dates and Rates for Conference Delegates and Presenters:

Registration Rates	Special Rate (to December 15, 2015)	Regular Rate (after December 15, 2015)
Pre-Conference Training Institute January 20, 2016 Includes continental breakfast and lunch	\$125.00	\$150.00
Two-Day Conference January 21–22, 2016 Includes breakfast and lunch both days and wine & cheese reception	\$275.00	\$325.00
Combined Package Price for Two-Day Conference and Training Institute Includes breakfast and lunch each day and wine & cheese reception	\$350.00	\$425.00

Please contact **Cindy Perras** (cindy.perras@cogeco.ca) for information on student rates and exhibit/sponsorship opportunities.

Conference Hotel/Room Bookings

Waikiki Beach Marriott Resort & Spa

2552 Kalakaua Avenue, Honolulu, Hawaii

[http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/hnlmc-waikiki-beach-](http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/hnlmc-waikiki-beach-marriott-resort-and-spa)

[marriott-resort-and-spa](http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/hnlmc-waikiki-beach-marriott-resort-and-spa) ◆ 1.808.922.6611

Situated only steps from world-famous Waikiki Beach and the Pacific Ocean, the Waikiki Beach Marriott resort spans 5.2 acres of picturesque beauty and splendor. Located next to Diamond Head Crater and near a dazzling array of attractions, this luxurious hotel offers unrivaled service in a landmark setting.



Please make your reservations **by January 4, 2016**, to take advantage of the special daily conference rates (single & double occupancy) available at the Marriott: **City View** – \$219.00; **Partial Ocean View** – \$239.00; **Ocean View** – \$279.00; **Deluxe Ocean View** – \$329.00; room taxes are extra. Please note that these rates include the daily resort amenity fee; amenities include wireless Internet access, fitness center, daily fitness and cultural classes, daily newspaper, welcome Mai Thais, etc.

Reservations may be made through this link (<https://resweb.passkey.com/go/DADD>), or by calling the Waikiki Beach Marriott at 1.808.922.6611 (**CEC-DADD** is the group booking reference).



Teachers' Corner

Parents as Equal Partners: *Maximizing Diverse Family Involvement in Special Education*

**Juliet E. Hart Barnett &
Stanley H. Zucker**
Arizona State University



Creating a bridge between school professionals and families to maximize benefits to students has been a major goal of many education reform initiatives. As the U.S. population continues to diversify, teachers and other school staff need to develop the knowledge and skills to collaborate with families whose cultures and languages differ from their own. The National Center for Education Statistics (2011) has estimated that 11 million school-age children speak a primary language other than English. The percentage of English learners with disabilities is almost 8% of all public school students with disabilities (National Center on Educational Outcomes, 2011), ranging from close to 0% to over 28% of students receiving special education services in a particular state. This growing population of children in our schools means that teachers will have an increasingly important responsibility: not only to provide students with disabilities an appropriate, individualized education but also to partner with families in a way that is culturally and linguistically responsive and equitable (Hart, Cheatham, & Jimenez-Silva, 2012).

Parental participation is a core principle of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and suggests that families and professionals should become partners in decision-making regarding the student's education. When parents are actively involved in making decisions regarding special education services and placement, their children stand to benefit. Although enlisting parents as active partners in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process is emphasized in IDEA, the complicated IEP process is bewildering to many immigrant and diverse families (Lo, 2008). As a result, many families participate only passively in educational decision-making for their child. Typically, one parent attends the meeting, while four or more school professionals, who are experts in their field, participate. Parents often have not had the opportunity to access and understand their legal rights and responsibilities or to com-

prehend the specialized jargon and terms that educators and other professionals will use (Turnbull, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, & Shogren, 2013). Moreover, parents have reported such concerns as language differences, unprofessional behavior on the part of some school personnel (e.g., not attending meetings, arriving late and/or leaving early, and checking the clock repeatedly during meetings), and poor translation and interpretation services; thus, parents may feel confused and disrespected, as though their input is not actively sought or included by school professionals (Lo, 2008; More, Hart, & Cheatham, 2013).

These obstacles and related language challenges can hinder diverse families from fully accessing and exercising their expected roles in the IEP process. It is crucial for educators and service providers to recognize their important position in demystifying the special education process for diverse families (Lo, 2012). Strategic collaboration with language interpreters can offer school-based professionals specific ways to facilitate the meaningful participation of diverse parents in special education planning for their children.

Working Strategically with Language Interpreters

Interpretation services are considered an effective way to bridge the communication gap between professionals and parents who are limited- or non-English speakers (Lo, 2012). IDEA mandates that schools facilitate parent participation in part by ensuring that language interpreters are provided for parents who do not speak English. However, the special education field is challenged by a lack of attention to and recruitment of well-trained language interpreters in schools. Educators may enlist impromptu interpreters (e.g., bilingual teachers, secretaries, lunchroom personnel) with little or no training to serve as language interpreters (Mueller, Singer, & Grace, 2004). Moreover, some educators may ask children (e.g., siblings) to serve as interpreters during meetings despite professional caution against such an approach (e.g., American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2011).

Teachers empower family members by viewing them as partners and employing specific strategies to facilitate communication through targeted collaboration with interpreters. For example, meeting with the interpreter and family to discuss the families' preferences and priorities for their child prior to the meeting can be helpful. Doing so can also be an effective way

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President's Message

Dianne Zager



What has DADD done to help increase your effectiveness in your classroom, school, and professional lives? Even more important, what can DADD do now to support your educational efforts? What services can DADD provide and what types of materials would you like to have available to help inform your practice? These are critical questions for our members, with answers that are essential for evaluating our worth as an organization and for maintaining a viable membership base. As we consider these questions, it is instructive to reflect upon the mission and goals of our organization as they relate to the everyday practice of our members

The mission of the Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities is to serve professionals who are committed to enhancing the quality of life of individuals, especially children and youth with autism and intellectual disability, through increased knowledge, information dissemination, and advocacy. The division seeks to further the knowledge base of the field, thus ensuring continued advancement of positive educational and life outcomes for persons with autism and developmental disabilities. Our organizational goals focus on the following:

- enhancement of competence of persons who work with individuals with autism, intellectual disability, and other developmental disabilities;
- responsiveness to emergent and critical issues in the field; and
- advocacy on behalf of individuals with autism and developmental disabilities.

Enhancement of professional competence, DADD's first organizational goal, has been advanced by the division through a variety of means, including (a) publication of refereed journals and newsletters that cover topics pertinent to the education and treatment of children with autism and developmental disabilities, (b) professional conferences that offer presentations on evidence-based interventions, (c) webinars with wide access for audiences who may not be able to attend the annual conferences, (d) development of books and materials, such as the Prism Series, and videos, available for purchase at discounted cost, and (e) mentoring activities sponsored by the division.

In addition to activities directed toward enhancing professional competence, the DADD Board of Directors has taken an active role in responding to emergent and critical issues in the field. The Critical Issues and Publications committees have collaborated through a rigorous review process to produce po-

sition papers and statements on pressing issues. Recently, the board released a position statement supporting the American Academy of Pediatrics' Recommended Immunization Schedule for children through 18 years of age. Past position papers have focused on topics such as inclusion and transition to postsecondary education and employment.

With regard to advocacy, DADD members have had an active history of promoting and protecting the welfare of persons with autism and developmental disabilities in the educational, legislative, and human rights arenas. Many of our division members have attained national and international leadership roles in researching topics pertinent to quality of life for people with autism and intellectual disability. They have shared their expertise with the CEC membership and the field at large through presentations and publications about their cutting-edge work. This work has focused on a wide range of activities, including development of professional standards at the core and advanced levels; guidelines for evaluating the evidence base of current practices; promotion of positive behavior supports in schools and communities; research on self-determination; preparation of young adults for transition to adult living and employment; examination of racially disparate identification of individuals with autism; and promotion of a reasonable and fair judicial system for all individuals, including those with significant disabilities.

It is my firm belief that the path to building an even stronger membership base is paved by the provision of high quality services that are directly responsive to the needs of professionals in the field. Reflecting on the collective activities and accomplishments of DADD's membership and its Board of Directors makes it clear that our organization has contributed significantly to the advancement of knowledge on autism and intellectual disability. DADD has supported—and continues to work toward supporting—professionals in the field in meaningful and substantial ways. In sum, the advancement of knowledge, enhancement of professional standards and skills, and advocacy work accomplished by our board and members serve to demonstrate the division's commitment to the children and youth whom we serve.

I hope to see you at the upcoming DADD conference in Waikiki in January. With my best wishes for a productive and gratifying year ahead,

Executive Director's Corner

Teresa Taber Doughty



A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to observe my dean give her governance report on the state of our College of Education to our university's senior administration and trustees. It was an interesting experience. It just so happens that our current president is the former governor of our state, and our trustees are successful business people who are also alumni of the institution. As the dean delivered her report, supported by considerable data describing declining trends in undergraduate enrollment, she indicated that this trend was not unique to our state or university. She noted that what is happening in education, in legislative bodies, and in governmental offices, affects our enrollment. ... Our profession is at a critical juncture. The pervasive negativity about the teaching profession, and the misconception that education is broken, has resulted in increased pressures on practicing teachers. (see <http://www.jconline.com/story/opinion/columnists/dave-bangert/2015/05/27/bangert-awkward-ed-reform-called-purdue/28031101/>)

The university trustees seemed quite surprised by this information and had many questions. The ensuing exchange highlighted their lack of awareness about what is really happening across the education landscape.

As I considered the topic for this *DADD Express* issue, I thought about this presentation and why the trustees seemed unaware of the issues facing education. How is it that they were surprised by the severe decline in individuals entering the teaching profession? Why were they oblivious of the poor starting salaries for teachers and the fact that many also hold second jobs to make ends meet? What did they not understand about the increasing external demands for classroom teachers and students in teacher-training programs (e.g., high stakes standardized testing, Common Core State Standards, the diversion of public funds to charter and private schools, school and teacher ratings, increased licensure requirements)? Granted, as educators these issues are at our doorstep every morning. But, given the onslaught of education reform by legislators (e.g., more than 150 education bills were introduced in my state during the 2015 legislative session), I was truly ignorant regarding how little the general public really understood about the consequences of education reform efforts. What became clear was a need to better articulate to the public what is happening in education.

So what about special education? What are the critical issues for special educators and the students we serve as a result of constant education reform efforts? A report from *CEC's Policy Insider* ("CEC Members Raise Top Special Education Issues at White House Meeting," 02/22/2012) indicated five areas of

focus: alignment of early childhood delivery systems, teacher training, differentiation of instruction, accessible assessments, and transition services. Personally, I would add the following to this list: the impact of charter schools and school voucher programs on education services for students with a disability; federal and state discretionary spending for disability-related programs (e.g., IDEA early intervention, supported employment, protection and advocacy services); overrepresentation of diverse students in special education; and teacher retention efforts. These are only a few of the issues that require full implementation or a strong evidence base to support their continuation.

For those of us who care about individuals with autism, intellectual disability, and developmental disabilities the question becomes: What do we do now? How can we address the needs of our students and our profession in regards to the critical issues we face? Here are a few ideas.

First, **be an education advocate**. While the sheer number of challenges we face can seem overwhelming when considering them as a whole, we can be a part of change. Write your state legislators, work with CEC's policy and advocacy group, and join other teachers in your community to advocate for legislation that supports students in your local area. I was amazed that my legislative representatives responded to my emails when I expressed my concerns!

Second, **inform parents**. Collectively, parents can make a tremendous difference in policies and practices when they are knowledgeable about the issues that affect their children. Many have wonderful connections and can be very vocal!

Third, **participate in research and data collection** surrounding the effectiveness of mandated educational practices. Don't accept these changes without evidence to support their implementation. If no evidence exists, gather it yourself to demonstrate the validity or appropriateness of required practices.

And finally, **volunteer**. Serve on statewide validation panels that provide feedback to teacher certification offices about training and testing requirements for new teachers. Become a trained scorer for standardized assessments (e.g., edTPA) or national accreditation agencies for teacher education (e.g., CAEP, CEC-SPA). By being engaged and acting as a voice for our students and profession, it is my hope that we will increase the visibility of the challenges we face as educators. We need to reverse the current trends in education so that we can continue to improve our own practices as we serve our students. ■

DADD website:
<http://daddcec.org>

Research-based Practices for Individuals with Autism, Intellectual Disability, and Related Disabilities

Increasing Physical Activity for Young Children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder

Christopher B. Denning, PhD
University of Massachusetts–Boston



National guidelines on physical activity suggest that preschool-age children should engage in at least 120 minutes of accumulated physical activity each day, with 60 minutes each in structured and unstructured activities (National Association for Sport and Physical Education, 2009). Guidelines for children older than 6 years include at least 60 minutes of activity per day, of which the majority should be aerobic (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2008). Researchers have suggested that most preschool-age children engage in less than half the recommended amount of physical activity each day (e.g., Pate, Pfeiffer, Trost, Ziegler, & Dowda, 2004), while children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have been found to be even less physically active (e.g., Pan, 2011). For children with ASD this includes more time spent in sedentary activities and limited involvement in team or non-team sports (Srinivasan, Pescatello, & Bhat, 2014).

Physical Activity

Physical activity programming provides an opportunity for teachers to increase children's movement or exercise and focus upon development of specific motor skills. For most children, motor skills develop naturally during such activities as running, jumping, and throwing or catching a ball; however, some young children with ASD fail to develop proficient motor skills (Ming, Brimacombe, & Wagner, 2007). Although motor skill deficits are not listed as a specific characteristic of ASD (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), young children with ASD often experience significant delays in motor development (e.g., overall gross motor skills, manual dexterity, balance, gait, motor coordination, and ball-handling skills; Fournier, Hass, Naik, Lodha, & Cauraugh, 2010). Children ages 2 to 3 years with ASD may also experience regression in motor skills, possibly due to limited physical activity and practice (Lloyd, MacDonald, & Lord, 2013). Consequently, they are less likely to engage in physical activity throughout the day (Pan, 2011) and may even experience negative health outcomes across their lifespan, such as obesity (Srinivasan et al., 2014), cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, and poor self-concept (Sutherland, Couch, & Iacono, 2002). Implementing physical activity programs may provide specific benefits for children with ASD (e.g., Lang et al., 2010).

Research Base for Physical Activity

Researchers found positive effects from increasing physical activity for individuals with developmental disabilities and ASD. Johnson (2009) found strong evidence of the benefits of group exercise programs, treadmill training, and therapeutic riding, including increased aerobic capacity, improved gross motor function, and high levels of participant and parent satisfaction. Similarly, Lang et al. (2010) examined 18 studies that involved physical exercise programs for individuals with ASD. A total of 64 individuals ages 3 to 41 years participated. The majority of the exercise programs included activities such as running, jogging, or walking. The researchers found consistent benefits for the individuals with ASD, including improvements in behavior (e.g., reductions in classroom disruptions, self-stimulatory behavior, aggression, self-injury), academics (e.g., increases in time on task, accurate academic responding, and vocabulary), physical fitness (e.g., endurance or strength), and increased time engaged in exercise. Lang and colleagues (2010) also found that vigorous exercise appeared to be more beneficial than less intense activity. *Vigorous activity* was defined as jogging for 15 minutes and was compared to less strenuous activities, such as walking (Levinson & Reid, 1993) or playing catch (Kern, Koegele, & Dunlap, 1984). For young children, vigorous activities may include those that increase children's heart rate or breathing rate and last for 15 to 20 minutes (e.g., running, jogging, playing tag, completing an obstacle course). More recently, Sowa and Meulenbroek (2012) conducted a meta-analysis on physical exercise for individuals with ASD and found consistently positive changes in motor and social skills. Although additional research is needed to more fully understand the effects of physical activity, the present research appears to support its use in the classroom.

Physical Activity in Practice

Despite barriers to implementation (e.g., scheduling, time, resources, overstimulation; Lang et al., 2010), the current research base has indicated positive effects from physical activity. For increasing physical activity by children with ASD, teachers have many options that offer both exercise that raises the heart rate and practice of complex motor movements (e.g., balance beam, catching or throwing, crossing midline). This can be accomplished in one of two ways. First, a program could be implemented two to three times per week for approximately 30 minutes (e.g., Young Athletes; Favazza, Zeisel, Parker, & Leboeuf, 2011). The program could involve a routine that consists of a warm-up activity, two or three activities that focus on

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Diversity Committee News



Debra Cote
and
Elizabeth West
Co-Chairs



The DADD Diversity Committee demonstrates a commitment to ensure the division expands its work related to meeting the goals of the Strategic Plan. The committee identified several action items that included looking at how diversity is addressed in CEC-DADD publications and at conferences. The committee is dedicated to taking the lead to ensure the voice of diverse groups of learners with autism, intellectual disability, and developmental disabilities remains at the forefront. As result, **workgroups** were formed to meet the goals of the action items. We invite you to participate in one of the Diversity Committee workgroups. *If interested, contact us via email* (eawest@uw.edu or dcote@fullerton.edu). ■

Publications Committee Report

Michael Wehmeyer
Chair



Don't forget that Volume 8 in the **Prism** series is now available for purchase through the CEC bookstore (<https://www.cec.sped.org/Publications>). *Friendship 101: Helping Students Build Social Competence*, was co-edited by **Juliet E. Hart Barnett** and **Kelly J. Whalon**. It focuses on building social competence, friendship making, and recreation and leisure skills among students with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities. Chapters in this research-based, user-friendly guide address the needs of students in different developmental periods (from pre-K through young adulthood), providing teachers, parents, and teacher educators with tools and strategies for enhancing the social skills development of these children and youth. Presented through an ecological perspective, these chapters emphasize building social competence within and across school, home, and community contexts.

In addition, this fall, look for the **Volume 9** in the **Prism** series, *Footsteps Toward the Future: Implementing a Real-World Curriculum*, authored by **Emily Bouck**, **Teresa Taber-Doughty**, and **Melissa Savage**. *Footsteps Toward the Future* provides an overview of strategies when implementing a real-world curriculum for students with intellectual disability,

autism spectrum disorder, or other developmental disabilities. "Real-world" curricula incorporate instruction in skills that support students in living independently and functioning successfully in an inclusive society: living, working, and having fun. Chapters in the book delve into the components of such instruction, discuss how to incorporate real-world skills training within academic settings, and explore effective community-based instruction and collaboration. Full of strategies, tools, and advice, this book will be a valuable resource on real-world curricula and a "must-have" addition to every educator's instructional planning toolkit. ■

Communications Committee News

Emily Bouck
Chair



DADD members, please remember that our website (<http://daddcec.org>) allows members to log in to access members-only materials (e.g., the ETADD journal). Be sure to visit our website for important information about conferences and other division activities. We also encourage DADD members to find us on **Facebook** (search for *Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities*). DADD is on **Twitter** (follow [DADD_CEC](https://twitter.com/DADD_CEC)). If members have suggestions for other materials for the website or ways we can better communicate with you, please contact me (ecb@msu.edu). ■

Editor's Note

Ginevra Courtade



This issue contains a brochure with information for the **17th International Conference on Autism, Intellectual Disability, & Developmental Disabilities**. Please see the brochure for information about topical areas, pre-conference sessions, featured sessions, and registration information. Hope to see you in Waikiki!

Do you have information to share with our readers about legal issues? Every other issue of *DADD Express* includes a Law Brief. If you would like to contribute to that section, please contact me with ideas or questions (g.courtade@louisville.edu). We are also looking forward to more submissions for our Teachers' Corner section. Happy fall! ■

Students' Corner

How to Get the Most Out of Professional Conferences



Jenny Root
University of North
Carolina at Charlotte



Claire Donehower
University of Central
Florida

Make Connections

The advantage of conferences over webinars and other professional learning events is the opportunity to build and maintain professional relationships. One-on-one conversations can sometimes be more valuable than the sessions themselves. There are opportunities to engage in service to the division during both the CEC convention and DADD's annual international conference. Look at the program or e-mail a committee chair to find out when and where committee meetings are being held. The annual business meeting and President's Social at the CEC convention are also good places to get to know other division members. The DADD student luncheon at CEC and networking events at the DADD international conference are worth prioritizing—after all, these will be your colleagues in the field for years to come! Establishing connections outside of your current university is important, can be helpful in the job search process, and may result in future writing or research opportunities.

Explore the City

Every conference is an opportunity to get acquainted with a new city, state, or part of the country or world, so make the most of it! Visit local attractions in your free time and eat at restaurants that feature the local cuisine. Some conferences will even have planned tours or opportunities to explore the city in small groups. This is a great way to see the city while simultaneously networking with people in the field. As students, we will all be looking for a job at some point in the future. Is this somewhere that you could see yourself living and working when you are done with school?

After You Get Home

When you get home, there is still some very important work to be done. This is the time to follow up with any new connections that you made at the conference. Did you meet any speakers or faculty members from other universities who share your research interests? Which leaders from divisions or SIGs can you follow up with to get more involved and connected? Are there students from other universities whom you met and with whom you may be able to collaborate in the future? Keep in mind that the people you meet at conferences have the potential to be future colleagues, mentors, or writing partners, so do not let any opportunities pass you by! ■

Make a Plan

Planning is the key to making the most out of every professional conference. It is important to set goals for yourself and your conference experience well before you arrive. What do you want to learn? Make decisions about whether you are going to attend presentations on a wide variety of topics or if you prefer to use your time at the conference to focus more narrowly on a specific area of interest. Whom do you want to meet? Identify presenters ahead of time whose research interests align with yours or whose work you find yourself reading frequently. Designate a time to hear them speak or make a plan to introduce yourself. Poster sessions or roundtables can sometimes offer a better venue for conversations than traditional presentations, so consider this in your planning as well. What do you want to accomplish? Review the conference program and other materials before arriving at the conference site. This may help you to identify other goals for the conference, such as getting more involved in a division or SIG (special interest group), attending more social or networking events, or learning more about specific organizations or vendors at the expo.

Professional Learning

Planning ahead is also crucial to being able to focus on the conference. Careful planning in the weeks before a conference can help to ensure that you won't have to divert your attention to other things, such as grading or writing for a deadline. When it comes to attending sessions, consider branching out on your own. While it can be comfortable to attend sessions and division meetings with your colleagues, it is also beneficial to break off and see different presentations. This may encourage you to network with new people from other universities. Meet back up with your colleagues over break or dinner to discuss exciting ideas you heard about or possible ideas for future research and collaboration. You can use social media to your advantage pre-, during, and post-conference. One way to do this is to promote the conference, as well as connect with others who are attending.

(Teachers' Corner, continued from page 1)

to build rapport and provide parents with critical meeting information, including the purpose of the meeting, who will be in attendance, the time and location of the meeting, and the terminology that will be used (Lo, 2008). It also offers a good opportunity to ask parents about any concerns they have and would like discussed during the conference.

With the help of the interpreter, families can also be assisted in preparing for IEP meetings by linking them with state or local parent training and information centers (PTIs). PTIs are funded by the U.S. Department of Education and are available in each state. PTIs assist families in understanding disabilities, communicating with education personnel, asserting their rights and responsibilities, and linking to other community agencies. Moreover, community parent resource centers (CPRCs) provide support to culturally and linguistically diverse families and are funded at the local/community level. CPRCs provide in-depth support to families impacted by poverty, limited education, and language barriers. Because experienced parents staff them, these programs are especially helpful in helping families understand their rights and communicate adeptly, and at times they provide a staff member to attend meetings with families (Turnbull et al., 2013).

Teachers should determine the extent to which the interpreter has previously interpreted during special education meetings. Teachers can then assist interpreters as needed by explaining special education law and terminology, disability and medical terms, and other technical language. Terms such as *accommodations*, *least restrictive environment*, and *adaptive skills* carry unique meanings in special education and warrant explanation if interpreters are not conversant in such terminology. Likewise, teachers can ensure that interpreters have knowledge of special education processes, such as referral, assessment, and placement procedures.

Beyond accuracy of the actual words being interpreted, interpreters must understand the context of the meeting to accurately interpret speakers' meaning. Therefore, prior to meetings, teachers should acquaint interpreters with the purpose of the meeting and the topics to be examined. Likewise, after meetings, interpreters should spend time debriefing with the team—including parents—to determine if appropriate decisions were made and parental perspectives were sought, represented, and included appropriately.

Following the meeting, with assistance from the interpreter, teachers can provide a translated written summary of the IEP for parents, and encourage them to contact the school with any questions or concerns. Many parents who are limited- or non-English speakers rely on the information on the translated IEPs, so accuracy is important (Lo, 2012). With the assistance of the interpreter, teachers should also tell the parents when

they will receive their translated copy of the IEP and about the due process or mediation procedures should they disagree with its contents (More et al., 2013).

Conclusion

For many diverse families, a lack of empowerment restricts their role as active participants in decisions regarding the education of their children. School professionals must progress from merely providing suggestions and recommendations to families; rather, we must move towards working collaboratively with families, acting as coordinators and facilitators of service delivery (Gargiulo, 2015). High-quality language interpretation during IEP meetings is critical to facilitating parents' ability to have their voices heard, collaborate as full team members, and engage in decisions about their child's educational programming. Forging such supportive, mutually respectful relationships between diverse families and school professionals is an important step towards actualizing school success for their children.

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(Research-based Practices, continued from page 4)

increased movement or a specific complex motor skill (e.g., balance, catching, throwing), and a cool down activity. The cool down (or closing) activity can support calming students and transitioning to the next activity. Lang et al. (2010) also highlighted the benefits from practices such as whole class walks.

A second way to implement involves using 5- to 10-minute exercise or activity breaks throughout the day (e.g., Activity Cards; Pangrazi, Beighle, & Pangrazi, 2009). For example, one activity for early elementary school classrooms, called Teacher Leader, includes fitness and locomotor movement practice (Pangrazi et al., 2009). To start, teachers can play music and have the class walk around the room for 30 seconds. After 30 seconds, the music stops and children freeze. The teacher then leads the class in an exercise such as jumping jacks or stretches for 30 seconds. The music begins again and the class performs a locomotor movement, such as skipping or hopping for 30 seconds. The cycle is repeated for 5 to 8 minutes. Educators might also consider using the website Go Noodle (<https://www.gonoodle.com/>), which includes video models for short (e.g., 5-minute) activities, such as dancing or running. Teachers can create a log-in for individual students or for the class, allowing for the option of tracking progress for individuals or the entire class. Based on what the teacher selects, these activities could occur in the classroom or might need a different space, such as a hallway, cafeteria, gym, playground, or multipurpose room.

For successful implementation, teachers should stay consistent and have a set structure or routine for the program (Schultheis, Boswell, & Decker, 2000). Teachers can help students prepare by previewing expectations or activities and providing photographs or modeling of specific skills. Teachers can increase motivation by incorporating exercise into age-appropriate games or activities or embedding play-oriented activities within preferred activities. Repetition of lessons and activities also seems to help children get used to the routine and become more successful in performing the skills (Schultheis et al., 2000).

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Additional Resources

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