



Council for  
Exceptional  
Children

A publication of the DIVISION ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, a unit of the Council for Exceptional Children  
*Focusing on individuals with cognitive disabilities/mental retardation, autism, and related disabilities*



## Viva Las Vegas!

**Best Practices for Practitioners**  
*The 9th International Conference on  
Developmental Disabilities*

Las Vegas, Nevada  
October 10–12, 2004

Conference highlights and  
registration on the

DDD website:

[www.dddcec.org](http://www.dddcec.org)

Nevada Staff Development credit for designated conference strands will be offered. If you are interested in receiving credit in Nevada or other states, please contact

Dagny Fidler

([dagny.fidler@dmtps.k12.nv.us](mailto:dagny.fidler@dmtps.k12.nv.us))

## Teachers' Corner

### Sexuality Education and Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Brief Overview

**Peter Gerhardt**

*Executive Director, Nassau Suffolk Services for Autism*



Open and frank discussions of sex and individual sexuality are often difficult for most of us and, as such, the topic is either ignored or, more likely, discussed in a glib, casual, or superficial manner. We are generally much more comfortable discussing who slept with whom on our favorite television program than entering into an honest discussion of societal norms and personal understanding of human sexuality. And if that discomfort was not enough, add to the discussion of sexuality and sexuality education that we are including learners with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) and related developmental disabilities (DD) and many of us, despite our training and best intentions, are quite willing to bow out of the discussion.

However, the simple fact remains that these learners are sexual beings, and each has a sexuality all their own. Furthermore, although not everyone may express an interest in sex or in sex with another person, to ignore the impact of sexuality as an individual characteristic with considerable curricular implications should be considered unacceptable.

#### Definition of Sexuality

The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined sexuality as “a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy, and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles, and relationships. Sexuality can include all of these dimensions, but not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical and religious and spiritual factors” (WHO, 2002). As such, the extent to which an individual may or may not have an active, physical sex life does not alter his or her status as a sexual being, the definition of which extends well beyond the choice of a sexual partner to include such issues as personal privacy and sexual safety to friendship development and individual values.

Despite the centrality of sexuality to human existence, and the subsequent potential importance of comprehensive sexuality education in promoting a positive quality of life for learners with ASDs, Griffiths (1999) has noted that most learners with a developmental disability receive sexuality education only after an episode of offensive, dangerous, or otherwise socially inappropriate sexual behavior.

(continues on p. 8)

## Inside this issue . . .

President's Message	2
Best Practices for Practitioners	2
“Best of ETMR/DD” News	
Completion	3
Join a DDD Committee	3
Showcase Session at New Orleans	
CEC Conference	3
DDD Call for Nominations	4
“Highly Qualified” Teachers in	
an Era of Increasing Alternative	
Routes to Certification	4
Students' Corner	4
Meet the Newly Elected DDD	
Board Members	5
Executive Director's Corner	5
DDD Research Award	6
Membership & Unit	
Development News	6
The Scoop on the DDD Awards	7
Editor's Note	7

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## President's Message

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Barbara Gartin

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It is now a new year for DDD. I am looking forward to serving the membership as president for the next year, which looks to be exciting. On October 10–12, we meet in Las Vegas for the 9th International Conference on Developmental Disabilities. In answer to requests from the membership, the program committee has developed a special autism strand that is outstanding. Check out the website ([www.dddcec.org/conferences.htm](http://www.dddcec.org/conferences.htm)) for more information. This program looks as if it will be the best ever. Work is also beginning on the CEC annual convention in Baltimore on April 6–9.

The Publications Committee is finalizing a new Prism book on postsecondary options and beginning work on two others, one in the area of autism and the second on differentiation of instruction at the secondary level. A subcommittee of the Publications Committee has completed the development of a search engine for articles published in ETMR/DD, now ETDD. Check it out on our website! In addition, the group is working on developing a series of monographs tied to

the new DDD Professional Standards featuring the “best of” the articles published in ETDD during its existence. Last year, the Critical Issues Committee developed two position papers, one on autism spectrum disorders and one on sexuality issues. A third paper on uses of medication with persons with developmental disabilities is being finalized, and a fourth on employment opportunities and issues is in process. The Legislative Committee is working with CEC in advocating for our members concerning proposed legislation. DDD has been asked to participate in responding to issues regarding AYP. DDD has added a link from our website to CEC Policy Updates so that all members can access legislative updates.

In addition to the committee work, the DDD board is also working on the more mundane governance tasks of updating the Division bylaws and its strategic plan. In all, it looks to be an excellent year, full of opportunities. The Board and I are looking forward to seeing you in Las Vegas! Come and join us—let’s work toward improving the future for all those with developmental disabilities, their friends, and their families. See you there!

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## Best Practices for Practitioners

The 9th International Conference on Developmental Disabilities will be in Las Vegas, Nevada, October 10–12, 2004, at the Alexis Park Resort Hotel, just a few blocks off the Las Vegas Strip. The conference will have a practitioners’ focus and will include strands on assistive technology, autism/autism spectrum disorders, cognitive disabilities, best practices, differentiated instruction, multiple disabilities, and wellness. “Make-and-take” sessions will be available for teachers wanting to get new ideas and develop new materials for their classes. Featured speakers include

- **Mr. Taylor Crowe**, self-advocate with autism, My Advice to Teachers
- **Dr. Amanda Boutot**, Social Skills Development in Early Childhood Autism
- **Dr. Jim Patton**, Mental Retardation and the Death Penalty
- **Dr. Brenda Smith Myles**, Adolescents with Autism
- **Dr. J. David Smith**, Developmental Disabilities in the 21st Century
- **Dr. Tom E. C. Smith**, Inclusion and Students with Mental Retardation and Autism

Staff development credit is available for the conference by contacting Dagny Fidler ([dagny.fidler@dmps.k12.ia.us](mailto:dagny.fidler@dmps.k12.ia.us)). Another anticipated event is the biennial announcement of the recipient of the Dolly Gray Award for Children’s Literature, which honors quality literature in which an individual with developmental disabilities is the central character.

Registration materials are available online ([www.dddcec.org/conferences.htm](http://www.dddcec.org/conferences.htm)). On-site registration begins on Sunday, October 10th, at 5:00 p.m. at the Alexis Park Resort. Information concerning hotel registration is also available online and at 800/582-2228 or 702/796-3322.

Search the entire archives of

*Education and Training in  
Mental Retardation/  
Developmental Disabilities*  
at

<http://www.dddcec.org/search.htm>

## "Best of ETMR/DD" Nears Completion Co-Editors Sandieson and Sharpe Recognized

DDD Publications is pleased to announce that the long-awaited monograph series, *The Best of Education and Training in Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities*, is scheduled for publication by the end of the year. This work involved reviewing approximately 1,500 articles that have appeared in the journal over its 40-year history and identifying those pieces that truly captured the best practices of the day.

Monograph co-editors **Bob Sandieson** and **Val Sharpe** agreed to take on this massive task. Over the past 2 years, Sandieson and Sharpe identified approximately 120 articles that truly represent "the best of" our journal. These articles, reviewed and approved by the DDD Publications/Communications Committee, will be published in a series of themed volumes. This work will provide a unique perspective of developmental disabilities as reflected in the division's journal: our accomplishments, our present status, and most important, our goals for the future.

Sandieson and Sharpe were presented with special plaques of recognition by CEC/DDD Publications Chair Jack Hourcade at the recent business meeting of the Division on Developmental Disabilities in New Orleans.

In beginning the article review process, Sandieson also saw the potential to develop sophisticated electronic access to the journal's growing corpus of knowledge. He began by keyword coding each of the 1,500 articles published in the journal over the past four decades, according to several fields: topic (e.g., instruction, communication, attitudes), support personnel (e.g., parents, peers, teachers), age of participants

(e.g., preschool, elementary, secondary, adult), and target disability (e.g., Down syndrome, autism). This work was significantly assisted by Sharpe's contributions.

Sandieson's university, the **University of Western Ontario**, generously supplied a team of technology support personnel to develop a search engine that could be accessed from any computer with Internet access to find any article ever published in the journal. Searches can be done by each of the four fields and can be narrowed by combining fields. Searches can also be done by article title, author(s), and/or date. That search engine is now featured on the home page of the DDD Web site, and it is proving to be invaluable for practitioners and researchers.

In recognition of that work, Hourcade also presented DDD Certificates of Appreciation to Bob Sandieson and the members of his technology team at the University of Western Ontario: **Jeff Cameron, Steve Czynowski, Kate Gies, and Rachel Sandieson**.

Many thanks to these wonderful people for the incredible work they've done!



**Val Sharpe & Bob Sandieson**

### JOIN A DDD Committee!

Committee	Chairperson(s)	Contact
<b>Awards</b>	Jennifer Miller	JRM5145@aol.com
<b>Conference</b>	Dagny Fidler	dagny.fidler@dmps.k12.ia.us
<b>Critical Issues &amp; Legislative</b>	Bob Stodden	stodden@hawaii.edu
<b>Diversity &amp; Prof. Standards</b>	Scott Sparks	sparks@ohio.edu
<b>Finance</b>	Dan Ezell	dezell@mail.ucf.edu
<b>Membership/ Unit Development</b>	Jim Forristal	jimfortpa@aol.com
<b>Special Recruitment Focus</b>	Joyce Agness	jagness@mail.howard.k12.md.us
<b>Nominations</b>	Andrea Babkie	ambbk@aol.com
<b>Publications</b>	Jack Hourcade	jhourca@boisestate.edu

### Showcase Session at New Orleans CEC Conference

Kicking off **Division Day** for DDD in New Orleans was the **Showcase Session**, with **Paul Wehman** presenting "What Are the Employment Models That Are Working for Young People With Developmental Disabilities?" Dr. Wehman has allowed us to post the PowerPoint presentation he used (go to [www.dddcec.org/conferences.htm](http://www.dddcec.org/conferences.htm)) for our membership's review. Check it out! Dr. Wehman will be chairing a DDD critical issues committee on transition issues and will be developing a DDD position paper for consideration at the Baltimore CEC conference.

## DDD Call for Nominations

### Andrea Babkie

*Nominations Committee Chairperson*

Want to become more involved in your professional organization? Be in a leadership position? Have the opportunity to directly affect policies? Now is your chance! DDD is accepting nominations for officers. These positions will begin

**July 1, 2005.** For further information, or to submit your name and a brief biography, please contact me ([ambbk@aol.com](mailto:ambbk@aol.com)) by **November 15, 2004.**

**Vice President:** Four-year term, first as vice president and then as president-elect, president, and past-president. The responsibilities of the vice president are to (a) act in the place of the president-elect with his or her authority in case of his or her absence or disability, and act in the place of the president with his or her authority in case of absence or disability of both the president and the president-elect; (b) serve as the Division's representative for advance program planning for the annual convention that will occur during his or her term as president-elect; and (c) act as co-chair with the president-elect for future special conferences sponsored by the Division.

**Treasurer:** Member of the DDD Executive Committee and serves a 3-year term. The treasurer may run for reelection one time. Duties include accounting for all funds in a manner prescribed by the Board of Directors, preparing an annual budget, and making midyear and annual reports to the Board of Directors and the business meeting at the annual convention.

**Canadian Member:** Member of the Board of Directors, may be from any Canadian province or territory. The Canadian Member serves on the Membership Committee and several other committees. The term of office is 3 years, and the member may run for reelection one time.

**Student Governor:** Term of office is 1 year or 2 years, contingent upon being a full-time student during that term of office; may run for reelection one time. In creating/subsidizing this position, the Board sought the presence of the student point of view in its deliberations and expected that the position would open and maintain communications between DDD and SCEC. SCEC subsequently stipulated the following expectations for this position: Expected to: (a) attend the meetings of the DDD Board of Directors, (b) encourage the Division to appoint students to committees, (c) maintain communication with the SCEC liaison at CEC, (d) submit information regarding students to the newsletter editor for publication in the DDD Express, (e) attend the SCEC Board meeting at the annual convention, and (f) maintain communications with student liaisons of other divisions.

**Nominees for office must be members of CEC-DDD.**



## "Highly Qualified" Teachers in an Era of Increasing Alternative Routes to Certification:

### A Position Paper of the Board of Directors of DDD

With mounting pressure under federal mandates for teachers to be what is termed "highly qualified" comes the need to set parameters as to what exactly is defined by those words, particularly with the growing number of different routes to certification in the field of special education. In this position paper, issues surrounding the special education teacher shortage are examined, as are potential concerns with alternate routes to licensure. Finally, DDD recommendations regarding what constitutes a teacher who can be deemed "highly qualified" to work with students with developmental disabilities are proposed. For the full text of this position paper, please go to the DDD website (<http://www.dddcec.org>) and click on the "Position Papers" button.

## Students' Corner

### Jennifer Miller

*Student Governor*

Welcome back! I hope everyone had a restful summer and the transition back to school was easy. I am thrilled to be representing you as the student governor for DDD. This summer I sent out an e-mail to the presidents and advisors of SCEC chapters. If your chapter did not receive an e-mail, please contact me ([JRM5145@aol.com](mailto:JRM5145@aol.com)) for the information.

I am looking forward to the DDD conference in Las Vegas, Nevada, on October 10-12. It promises to be a learning experience for all educators, and I hope you can make it for one or all of the days (reduced rates for students!). As your student governor, I represent you at the DDD board meetings. If you have any questions or are interested in becoming involved in DDD, please contact me.



Visit the official Website of the  
Division on Developmental Disabilities:

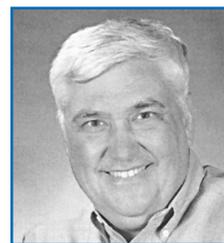
<http://www.dddcec.org>

## Meet the Newly Elected DDD Board Members

**Phil Parette, Vice President:** Phil is the Kara Peters Endowed Chair in Assistive Technology at Illinois State University and director of the Special Education Assistive Technology (SEAT) Center. He has published extensively regarding children with disabilities, with an emphasis on cross-cultural applications of AAC, and has developed an award-winning CD-ROM used in AAC decision-making. His current interests focus on assistive technology (AT) systems change and outcomes-focused AT service delivery. Phil is an active DDD member. He served as editor of *MRDD Express* for 6 years, editor for the third Prism book, and associate editor for the fourth Prism book. Phil has taught in general education, early intervention, and special education settings.



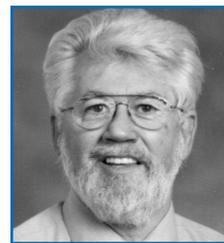
**Kent Gerlach, Farwest Member:** Kent is a professor in the School of Education at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington. He has produced several publications and has been recognized nationally for his research, writing, and other work on issues involving the employment, supervision, collaboration with, and training of, paraeducators. Kent's research interests include teaming, collaboration, paraprofessionals, inclusion, and child abuse. Kent has received several teaching awards, served as a consultant to several national organizations and local and state education agencies (most recently on NCLB Legislation), and conducted staff development workshops. He has been a CEC and DDD member for 25 years and has represented both on several taskforces and committees.



**Cindy Perras, Secretary:** Cindy is a consultant for students with developmental disabilities and/or autism in both contained and inclusive settings, and she is working on her doctorate in adaptive instruction. She is also the mother of a young adult with a cognitive disability and a seizure disorder, and Cindy is involved in the local association for individuals with developmental disabilities, encouraging self-advocacy and inclusion within the community. She is active in CEC at the local chapter level, served on the DDD Board of Directors as Canadian Member and as president, is a member of the DDD Conference Committee, and is the vice president of the Ontario Subdivision of DDD.



**Jim Forristal, Southeast Member:** Jim has been in the field of exceptional education for 30 years. He was a teacher of students with mental challenges and emotional disturbances (K-12). Jim was also supervisor of the Mentally Handicapped Programs for Hillsborough County Public Schools and currently is an exceptional education supervisor. Jim's involvement in CEC began when he was a student at the University of South Florida in 1975. He has been an active member of both Tampa Bay Chapter 194 and the Florida Federation, serving in various executive positions, including the presidency. As a DDD subdivision member in Florida, Jim is currently serving his third term as president.



## Executive Director's Corner

### Tom E. C. Smith

It's annual reporting time once again. Subdivisions need to complete their annual reports and submit them to me **no later than September 15** for full rebates. Rebates are currently \$2.00 per member (a strong incentive to submit your reports). Because CEC no longer requires subdivision reports, DDD will accept a much shorter version. I need a list of your new officers (2004-2005) and their contact information. Also, please provide a summary of your subdivision activities for



2003-2004 and any plans you have for 2004-2005. If you have any questions about your annual report, or anything else that I can help you with, please contact me ([tecsmith@uark.edu](mailto:tecsmith@uark.edu)).

Please make plans to attend our conference in Las Vegas in October. The program is excellent and will offer many different topics, from make-it-and-take-it sessions for practitioners to presentations that describe how research findings may be implemented in the classroom. Aside from an excellent program and an opportunity to interact with colleagues in the field of developmental disabilities, Las Vegas is a wonderful place to visit and have fun with friends. We hope to see you there in October.

## DDD Research Award

Next year there will be a new award category, **The Division on Developmental Disabilities Research Award**, which will be given annually to an individual or group of individuals in recognition of outstanding basic and/or applied research in developmental disabilities. Selection criteria are

- a. The research has been published within a peer-refereed journal during the 2 years prior to the year in which the award is being given. No "in press" articles will be considered.
- b. The article is a primary research report (reflecting any research methodology), a meta-analysis, or a research review. It may not be a theoretical paper, a position or issue statement, or a chapter.
- c. The article has broad implications for practice that are likely to affect the field of developmental disabilities.

To nominate an individual or self-nominate for this award, submit the following materials to the chair of the DDD Awards Committee by **January 15** of each year:

1. Three clear copies of the photocopied article from the journal in which it appeared.

2. Letter of nomination in which the nominator states how the study extends the knowledge base in the field of developmental disabilities, how the research can lead to research-based practices, and/or how the research supports evidenced-based practices in developmental disabilities. (Letter is not to exceed 3 pages.)
3. Complete name, title, address and e-mail address, and telephone information for nominee(s).
4. Complete name, title, address and e-mail address, and telephone information for the nominator.

A three-person subcommittee of the DDD Awards Committee will review all submitted articles to determine if the nomination is in accordance with award guidelines. The subcommittee then will screen the pool of articles and create a short list. Evaluations of the selected articles will be solicited from appropriate scholars in the field. A summary of findings and recommendations will be transmitted to the DDD Awards Committee, which will make the award decision.

Submit to: **Jennifer Miller** ([JRM5145@aol.com](mailto:JRM5145@aol.com))  
by **January 15, 2005**.

## Membership and Unit Development News



**Jim Forristal &  
Joyce Agness**  
*Membership/Unit  
Development  
Committee Co-Chairs*



As we begin another academic year, it is the time to remind ourselves what we are doing in

the field of education and, more important, what we are doing in our Division.

As a professional organization, we have an obligation to recruit new members or encourage lapsed members to renew their membership. To that end, CEC recently completed a "Membership Roundup Campaign" to encourage professional members who had lapsed over the last 3 years to reinstate their membership and renew/join divisions. DDD gained 51 members at a minimal cost. Roundups are a good way to build a stronger membership base. We suggest that the DDD subdivisions complete a similar activity by encouraging lapsed members to renew their memberships. Total Division membership is up just a little over the past year, with 4,263 mem-

bers. Our student numbers are increasing. As has been stated before, students are the future of this organization. DDD will again be offering the Student Recruitment Grant to student CEC chapters, which is an opportunity for those student chapters looking to build their membership base to do so with some financial assistance from the Division. See the DDD website ([www.dddcec.org](http://www.dddcec.org)) to obtain an application for the grant. Those professional members with ties to higher education might encourage student chapters at your colleges and universities to apply.

At the membership committee meeting in New Orleans in April, several issues were raised and are presently being addressed. Some actions to be taken by the membership committee are as follows:

1. Establish a membership contact list to communicate more readily and effectively with the membership.
2. Contact Student CEC Advisors to assist with the recruitment/retention of student DDD members.
3. Establish a procedure(s) to get subdivisions reactivated.
4. Survey members as to their needs.

If you have any ideas or suggestions or would like to assist the Membership Committee, please e-mail Jim Forristal ([jimfortpa@aol.com](mailto:jimfortpa@aol.com)) or Joyce Agness ([joyce\\_agness@hcpss.org](mailto:joyce_agness@hcpss.org)).

# The Scoop on the DDD Awards

## Nominating Is as Easy as 1–2–3!

*Is there someone whom you admire because of his or her service to children or adults with developmental disabilities? How would you like to make him or her feel great and completely valued? What if you could accomplish this in just three easy steps? Well, here is your chance! Nominate your colleague, mentor, legislator, or state/provincial subdivision for a DDD award. The three steps are described below.*

### Step 1: Read About the Awards and Identify a Deserving Nominee

The **Teacher of the Year** and **Paraeducator of the Year** awards are conferred upon a teacher/paraeducator from each state or provincial subdivision (e.g., one teacher of the year from Ohio, one teacher of the year from Quebec, one teacher of the year from Vermont, and so on). Nominees do not have to be CEC-DDD members; therefore, there can (and should) be multiple Teachers and Paraeducators of the year. Each nominee will receive a certificate at the annual DDD Board Meeting. Each state/provincial subdivision president should nominate a teacher and paraeducator from his or her state for this honor and send this to the Awards Committee chair.

In contrast, the **Legislative Award** and **Burton Blatt Humanitarian Award** are bestowed upon only one individual per year. The **Legislative Award** is given annually to an individual who has demonstrated leadership in the development or support of legislation designed to meet the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. The **Burton Blatt Humanitarian Award** is presented annually to an individual who has made significant contributions to the field of developmental disabilities, is a member of DDD, and reflects the ideals of the Division. In both cases, nominations are to be made to the Awards Committee chair.

The **John W. Kidd Subdivision Award** is given annually to the subdivision that has shown exceptional performance during the past year. Criteria used include increases in membership, innovative programming, and participation of members in related activities beyond the subdivision level. Nominations are to be made to the Awards Committee chair.

### Step 2: Contact Jennifer Miller

Actually, you can skip this step if you want. However, if you've never nominated anyone for a DDD award before, you may find it helpful to touch base with me on how to proceed (besides, if you get in touch with me, I'll talk you into doing it!). Contact me via e-mail ([JRM5145@aol.com](mailto:JRM5145@aol.com)), phone (301/299-5145), or mail (*Jennifer Miller, 11317 Rouen Dr., Potomac, MD 20854*) and simply state, "I'd like to consider

nominating [name] for such and such an award." I promise that I'll do whatever I can to make the nomination process as painless as possible. My goal is to help you through the nominating process, so please do not hesitate to contact me.

### Step 3: Take 30 Minutes to Prepare the Nomination Information

The common element in all nominations is a short (200–400 words) essay regarding why a certain individual (or subdivision) is deserving of the award. The other information that is required is very straightforward and very minimal. It is important to write a concise essay that builds a case as to why DDD should honor an individual or subdivision.

Although the awards will be presented at the CEC convention in Baltimore in April 2005, neither the nominators nor awardees are required to attend the convention. DDD will make sure that all of the awardees receive their plaques and are officially recognized.

**Nominations for all the DDD awards are due to Jennifer Miller, Awards Committee Chair, by January 15, 2005.** Don't wait! Do it now, when you have a break. Let this be the year that you nominate a deserving recipient. Your nominee will be thrilled.

## Editor's Note . . .

### Darlene Perner

On behalf of DDD, I would like to thank **Peter Gerhardt** for his contribution to our Teachers' Corner and for his invited **DDD Workshop** on Sexuality at the CEC convention in New Orleans. Also, our thanks to **Paul Wehman** for presenting at our DDD Showcase Session and for sharing his PowerPoint presentation, *Integrated Employment: Quality Indicators, Strategies for Success, and Models That Work*. His PowerPoint presentation may be viewed at the DDD website. Congratulations to **Bob Sandieson** and **Val Sharpe** for their special contributions to DDD. Plan now for our **DDD Best Practices for Practitioners** conference in October. Information and registration materials are available on the DDD website. Also, don't forget to **JOIN A DDD COMMITTEE!** and apply for the **Student Recruitment Grant**. Any questions? Please contact me ([dperner@bloomu.edu](mailto:dperner@bloomu.edu) or 570/389-4075 [days]).



(“Teachers’ Corner” continued from p. 1)

### Three Major Myths

Despite increased public awareness of the needs of learners with ASDs and related DD, there continues to be a number of myths associated with this group of individuals that remain popular today. With regards to the experience of individual sexuality and sexual expression, the most prominent among these are that learners with ASDs and related DD:

1. have little interest in sex or a sexual relationship,
2. are hypersexual and unable to control their sexual feelings and actions, and
3. are all heterosexual.

Although you and I may consider these to be ridiculous overgeneralizations or otherwise incorrect attributions (with the first two myths seemingly canceling each other out), a misinformed public often continues to hold these myths to be true.

The third myth, which asserts the universal heterosexuality of learners on the spectrum, is, perhaps in part, a holdover from earlier professional admonitions against homosexual behavior and a continued reluctance in some parts of society to acknowledge homosexuality as an innate and natural expression of one form of human sexuality. Although a somewhat new area of professional discourse (e.g., Thompson, Bryson, & de Castell, 2001), a safe assumption is that homosexuality is present in the population of learners with ASDs and related DD to the same extent as it is present in the neurotypical population. And it should be noted that when this is the case, teaching strategies that focus solely on developing heterosexual skills and behaviors should be considered both inappropriate and ineffective.

### Guidelines for Instruction

In general, there are three basic goals for sexuality instruction with learners with ASDs and related DD. These are to provide the learner with direct, accurate information; assist the learner in the development of a system of personal values regarding sexual expression; and develop the necessary social competence to engage in appropriate sexual behavior. Some basic guidelines for instruction (e.g., Mitchell, 2003) that may be revised relative to each individual learner’s ability level include the following:

- Be proactive. Waiting until a problem exists is not a good instructional strategy.
- Be factual. Many of the topics considered for instruction (e.g., human growth, puberty, pregnancy, childbirth, nocturnal emissions) are biological in nature and, if not simple, are quite factual.
- Present material in as concrete a manner as possible.
- Break down more complex subjects into more manageable segments of instruction.
- Teach steps in the correct sequence.
- Consider providing individual instruction in the beginning.
- Because sexuality generally involves a degree of social reciprocity, integrate social skills instruction into the sexuality curriculum.
- Target individual decision-making competencies for development.
- Consider using multiple instructional mediums.
- Be calm, consistent, and repetitive.

- Communicate with important others (e.g., family members, critical staff) regarding current topics of instruction and expected outcomes. Consider designating specific individuals with whom the learner can discuss sexuality issues.

As to central topic areas that may be revised as a function of learner interest and ability, the following should be considered:

- Personal privacy
- Sex differences between boys and girls
- Development and puberty
- Proper names of body parts (and, at times, improper names of body parts)
- Appropriate versus inappropriate touch
- Personal boundaries
- Masturbation as an appropriate, private form of sexual expression
- Social skills and relationship building
- Avoidance of danger/The reporting of sexual abuse: How to say “no”
- Attraction and sexual feelings
- Dating skills
- Personal responsibility
- Laws regarding sexual expression
- Consent
- Sexual orientation

### Discussion

Learners with ASDs and related DD are sexual beings and, as such, may require comprehensive sexuality instruction if they are to appropriately and safely participate in this generally positive aspect of their life. However, despite this need, there continues to be a “lack of evidence [supporting the] effectiveness of sex education and training for persons with developmental disabilities” (Duval, 2002, p. 453). The challenge before us thus is not simply to provide comprehensive sexuality instruction to learners with ASDs, or to better educate society at large about these issues, but also to promote research into which systems, curricula, methods, or strategies are most likely to result in outcomes that support a safe and positive quality of life.

**Note.** This article is from the DDD Invited Workshop session at the CEC Conference in April 2004.

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