



Council for Exceptional Children

MINNESOTA

The voice and vision of special education

Minnesota Council for Exceptional Children

Newsletter

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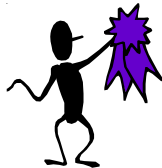
Call for Nominations

- ◆ Yes, I Can! Special Student Award
- ◆ Special Teacher Award
- ◆ Special Person Award

Awards will be presented at the 2006 Special Education Conference in Rochester on February 15-17.

See Nomination Form on Page 15

Deadline is December 20



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SLD, IDEA 2004 and Response to Intervention (RTI)

By: Gary Lewis, Ed.D.,
MNCEC Board Member and
Director of Student Services,
Northfield Public Schools



Editor's Note: This extensive article gives the most up-to-date information on Response to Intervention, a crucial topic in learning disabilities. The editor wishes to thank to Gary Lewis for submitting this timely, thorough, and important information. Gary's article can be downloaded from the MNCEC website at www.mncec.org.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) was signed into law by President Bush on December 3, 2004. While the new law contains several significant changes from IDEA '97, the new language surrounding the identification of a **specific learning disability (SLD)** has seemingly generated more discussion, concern and confusion than all the other changes combined. The purpose of this article is to briefly explore that change and speculate how it might impact the identification of SLD in Minnesota.



Historical Context:

The use of an IQ-achievement discrepancy to identify SLD has existed since the first regulations implementing the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL 94-142) were enacted in 1977. In a survey conducted by the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities in 2003, 48 of 50 states, including Minnesota, required a severe discrepancy as part of their SLD eligibility criteria (Reschley, Hosp & Schmeid, 2003). However, a growing body of research challenges the efficacy of the continued use of the IQ-achievement discrepancy model.

The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, in its report entitled *A New Era: Revitalizing Special Education for Children and*



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Letter from the President

by Larry Iwen



Change is Good!

Autumn and the beginning of a new school year bring about many change for all of us. Summer comes to an end, the weather becomes cool and crisp, we welcome new students to our classrooms and programs, and for some, it is the beginning of an exciting new position in the field of special education. Every year I look forward to fall and the changes it brings.

A big change for me this fall will be the start of my term as the MNCEC President. I am honored to be the president of the Minnesota Council for Exceptional Children and I look forward to the opportunity to serve the membership. The administrative term is also starting with a new treasurer, a new secretary, and three new members to the Board of Directors - Nancy Dumke, Lin Funk, and David Nelson. These changes on the board will no doubt bring fresh outlooks, opinions and ideas and I welcome the new members' input.

As president, it is my hope to also make some changes for the good of MNCEC by providing additional support, more opportunities for involvement, and additional staff development opportunities for the membership. It is important to remember that the individual members are the most important component to our organization. I know that there is a wealth of untapped knowledge, skills, and talent out there that can help make positive changes for the good of MNCEC.

The catalyst for another source of change has much to do with the decisions made in Washington with the reauthorization of IDEA. The recent reauthorization of IDEA will greatly impact how we do our jobs and how we work with the

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Minnesota Council for Exceptional Children Mission

To improve practices and resources for persons working on behalf of individuals with exceptionality in the state of Minnesota.

Minnesota Council for Exceptional Children Goals

- To promote and utilize systems for timely communication with our membership.
- To promote quality professional development opportunities including a quality conference.
- To support the professional development of pre-service teachers.
- To increase our involvement in political issues impacting our membership and the individuals they serve.

2005 – 06 MNCEC Board of Directors

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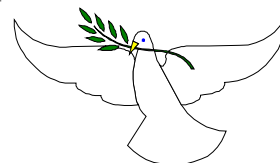
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Website: www.mncec.org



Mark Your Calendars Now for the 2006 Special Education Conference!



By **Jeanne Danneker**, MNCEC President Elect
and 2006 Conference Chair

“A Better IDEA”

The planning committee for the MNCEC/CCBD 2006 Special Education Conference has been busy putting together a great conference for special educators in Minnesota. The location has been selected, the dates set, the theme identified, and our keynote speakers are being confirmed. The Mayo Civic Center in Rochester will be the site for *A Better IDEA: Putting New and Improved Regulations into Practice* on February 15, 16 and 17, 2006.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act was signed in December 2004. The legal guidelines for implementing the law should be finalized by late January 2006. We are excited to have Deborah Ziegler, Associate Executive Director from the **Policy and Communication Services division of CEC in Washington D.C.**, as one of our keynote speakers. Deb will share the latest information regarding the new IDEA regulations. We are in the process of inviting other keynote speakers and presenters to bring you accurate, practical information regarding accountability for student achievement, improvement of discipline policies, Response to Intervention, Highly Qualified Teachers and much more of what you need to know.

There is still a lot of work for the planning committee to do. **The call for presentations will be mailed in late September** and will also be available on our website (www.mncec.org). If you or someone you know would like to submit a proposal to present at the conference, go to our website, fill out the proposal and mail it to the address on the form. We will begin reviewing and selecting presentations in November. The planning committee is also seeking exhibits from many of your favorite companies to show you the latest resources to enhance your teaching. Our primary goal is to bring you the most accurate, up-to-date and practical information available. Another goal for this conference is to celebrate some of the people who put the special in education in Minnesota.

To that end, we are seeking nominations for the **special student, special teacher and special person awards** to be presented during the luncheon on Thursday. If you know an outstanding student with special needs and talents, a remarkable special educator, or a person who provides extraordinary support to special education in your district, please fill out the nomination form included in this newsletter or on our website and send it to us along with a short narrative explaining why you are nominating that person. Nominations will be accepted through December 20th. Help us celebrate someone special, and remember...



When the excitement of the new school year has faded with the autumn colors, when your winter break is a fond memory and cabin fever begins to take hold, don't despair. The MNCEC/CCBD special education conference will come to your rescue with the information and inspiration you need to see this school year through to a fantastic finish. So, mark your calendar now and watch for conference registration materials coming soon to a mailbox (and website) near you.

News from MNCCBD

by **Lonna Moline**, President

MNCCBD kept very busy last year recruiting new members and sponsoring networking events around the state. The networking events have been very successful and we are hoping to continue them this coming year, provided we get some funds.

We are excited to announce that we will be partnering with the Behavior Institute for Children and Adolescence to bring a Minnesota EBD conference, *Celebrating the Past, Preparing for the Future: Closing the Achievement Gap for Students with Challenging Behaviors*, to the Twin Cities in October.

So **SAVE THE DATES**, October 6-7, for this outstanding professional development opportunity. To learn more

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SLD, IDEA & RTI

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their Families, criticized the use of IQ-achievement discrepancy model to identify SLD as being “fraught with statistical and other interpretative problems,” and as being a “wait to fail model.” (p. 25) The Commission went on to recommend that “appropriate steps be taken to amend current federal regulations to indicate that IQ achievement discrepancies (and therefore IQ tests) are not necessary for the identification of children as having a learning disability,” (p. 25) and that “To prevent the wrong children from being served, the Commission recommends that current regulations be modified so that the student’s response to scientifically based instruction is part of the criteria for diagnosing the existence of SLD.” (p. 26)



IDEA 2004

The statutory definition of SLD has not changed – both

IDEA ’97 and 2004 define SLD as: “a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.” Both definitions contain the same inclusions: “Such term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia;” and the same exclusions: “Such term does

not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental,

cultural, or economic disadvantage. (see PL 105-17 Part A §602 (26) and PL 108-446 Part A §602 (30))

What IDEA 2004 changes is the process by which a specific learning disability is identified.

Following the

recommendations of the President’s Commission, IDEA 2004 states that “when determining whether a child has a specific learning disability . . . the local education agency shall not be required to take into consideration whether the child has a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability.” (§614 (b)(6)(A)). This effectively prohibits states from requiring that local school districts use an IQ-achievement discrepancy formula as of July 1, 2005, the effective date for that section of the law.

The law goes on to state: “In determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, the local education agency may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures . . .” (PL 108-446 §614 (b)(6)(B)). This

concept has become known as **response to intervention, or RTI**. However, it is important to note that IDEA 2004 does not mandate that

“The use of an IQ-achievement discrepancy to identify SLD has existed since the first regulations implementing the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 . . . were enacted in 1977.”

RTI be part of a state’s SLD criteria – rather it simply permits districts to include RTI “as part of the evaluation procedures.”



The Proposed Regulations

The Office of Special Education and

Rehabilitative Services of the US Dept. of Education published draft regulations implementing IDEA 2004 in the Federal Register (Vol. 70 No. 118) in late June. Within the proposed regulations lies a grouping of sections entitled “Additional Procedures for Evaluating Children With Specific Learning Disabilities.” While much of the proposed language within this grouping is similar to the IDEA ’97 Regulations (i.e., composition of the evaluation team, requirement for an observation, etc.), two sections contain new language regarding SLD criteria.

§300.307 requires that each state develop criteria for identifying an SLD that is consistent with the federal law. In so doing, the proposed regulations further require that:

- 1) States cannot require that districts use an IQ-achievement discrepancy formula to determine the presence of SLD. However, state criteria may be written to either allow or prohibit individual districts the option to utilize a discrepancy model as part of the evaluation process;
- 2) State criteria may require, but minimally must allow districts the option to utilize RTI as part of the evaluation process; and

“What IDEA 2004 changes is the process by which a specific learning disability is identified.”

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Transition Wellness – Exercise and Eat your Way to Good Mental Health

by Nancy Dumke
Winona State University

Editor's Note, This is the first in a series of articles on wellness and disabilities. Nancy Dumke is a MNCEC Board Member and Coordinator for the Disability Resource Center at Winona State University.

Did you know that the average age of onset for mental health issues is between ages 18 and 25? Are you aware that 37 percent of young college students have “diagnosable” mental illnesses? As educators, how do we help students transition well in terms of mental health?

Awareness certainly plays a large factor in recognition of mental health needs. For example, student athletes who are used to working out regularly may become depressed if they suddenly discontinue exercising when they reach

post-secondary life. Mental health issues cross gender, geographic, social, economic, and cultural lines.



What kind of mental health disorders are prevalent in post-secondary settings? The most common are mood disorders such as depression (major, bipolar, and dysthy-

mic), anxiety disorders (panic attacks, social phobia, obsessive-compulsive, post-traumatic stress, and generalized anxiety), adjustment disorder and eating disorders. Many students with mental health conditions deal with more than one disorder at a time.

What resources are available for students in post-secondary settings? New student orientation programs emphasize campus resources which often include counseling centers, health services, and wellness programs. Parents can serve as referral



agents for students. Educators can encourage transitioning students to seek out their new local resources both as prevention and as treatment possibilities. Many communities have off-campus resources, too.

Exercise can make a difference in treating depression. A study at Utah Southwestern Medical Center found that adults aged 20 – 45 with mild to moderate depression showed a reduction in depressive symptoms by almost 50 percent when they exercised aerobically for 30 minutes three to five times a week. “The effect you find using aerobic exercise alone in treating clinical depression is similar to what you find with antidepressant medications,” said Dr. Madhukar Trivedi, professor of psychiatry and study author. He is also the holder of the Lydia Bryant Test Professorship in Psychiatric Research.

Nutrition, also, plays a role in wellness. In her WebMD article, “Eating for the Mind”, Dr. Brunhilda Nazario identified that “the brain is a hungry tissue”, demanding its energy come from high – quality carbohydrates. Eating breakfast can improve energy and mental power, especially if it includes a protein-rich source, a whole grain, and at least one fruit.

Other brain-boosting strategies include: taking it easy on the caffeine and including numerous “smart foods” such as dark-colored fresh fruits and vegetables, cantaloupe, spinach, carrots, orange juice, strawberries, whole grains and green peas, seafood, bananas, wheat germ, nonfat yogurt, nonfat milk, dried apricots, dark green leafy vegetables, cooked dried beans and peas, and extra-lean red meat in one’s diet.

MNCCBD News

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details of the conference, check out the website www.behavioralinstitute.org.

Other exciting news is we had an opportunity to share information about CCBD with classes during the Minne-

sota Institute for Emotional Behavior Disorders (MIEBD) Summer Institute. We presented benefits of CCBD membership, shared our vision and mission, handed out magnets with our website, and sold t-shirts. We had a wonderful response! We recruited many new members, as well as requests to become more actively involved. We just keep growing!

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SLD, IDEA & RTI

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- 3) State criteria may permit the use of “alternate research-based procedures” to determine the existence of a SLD.

§300.309 requires that when determining that a child has SLD, the evaluation team must document that:

- 1) The child, having received “learning experiences appropriate to the child’s age,” does not achieve commensurate with their age in one or more of the basic qualifying areas (i.e., oral expression, listening comprehension, basic reading skills, etc.);
- 2) The student is failing to meet the state-approved standards “when assessed with a response to scientific, research-based intervention process;” or that they display a pattern of intellectual strengths and weakness relative to IQ that is “relevant to the identification” of SLD;
- 3) The achievement deficits noted in #1 and #2 are not the result of one of the exclusionary factors (i.e, sensory deficits, mental retardation, etc.); and
- 4) The evaluation report must include documentation that the child “was provided appropriate, high-quality, research based instruction in regular education . . . delivered by qualified personnel,” and that the parents have been provided documentation of ‘repeated

assessments of achievement at reasonable intervals, reflecting formal assessment of student progress during instruction.” (§300.309(b)(3))

Sections 300.307 and 300.309 appear somewhat contradictory.

While §300.307 states that the use of RTI to identify SLD is permissive, §300.309 requires that evaluation teams document that the child was provided “appropriate, high-quality, research-based” instruction, and that student progress be monitored through the use of frequent, repeated measures of achievement – which are both key components of RTI.



What is RTI?

RTI is *not* a new form of eligibility criteria.

Rather, it is a process that provides high quality interventions to at-risk students so that potential academic and behavioral problems are resolved before they become severe – as such, it is the exact opposite of a “wait to fail” model. At its core, RTI is a problem-solving process. As the goal of the RTI process is early identification and intervention, questions about special education eligibility don’t arise until the RTI process has proven unsuccessful in resolving the child’s learning or behavioral problems.*

RTI can be broken into four basic components:

- 1) Early screening of all students to identify those who are at-risk for academic failure;
- 2) Providing well-implemented, high-quality, research-proven instruction and other interventions to at-risk students;

“RTI is *not* a new form of eligibility criteria . . . At its core, RTI is a problem-solving process.”

- 3) Conducting frequent and repeated measures of student progress to assess the effectiveness of interventions; and
- 4) Special education is provided to those students who:
 - a. are achieving below age/grade expectations,
 - b. fail to make adequate progress having been provided well-implemented, high-quality, research-proven interventions, and
 - c. their inability to make adequate progress is not the result of one or more of the exclusionary factors.

Perhaps the most persuasive rationale for moving toward a RTI approach is contained within the President’s Commission Report, which states:

Witnesses provided the Commission with compelling evidence indicating how early intervention can prevent disabilities in many children and ameliorate their impact in those who develop them. Although the focus of early intervention has largely been on reading, this is understandable given that up to 90 percent of children identified as SLD have reading as their primary area of difficulty. The Commission found compelling research sponsored by OSEP on emotional and behavioral difficulties indicating that children at risk for these difficulties could also be identified through universal screening and more significant disabilities prevented through classroom-based approaches involving positive discipline and classroom management. The

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Membership Benefits of CEC

An Interview with Lonna Moline – President, MNCCBD

By Mary Z. McGrath, Membership Chair



What is your current role with CEC?

This is my first year on the board of CEC. My main role with CEC is to represent MNCCBD. I am currently the President of MNCCBD. Previously I served, for MNCCBD, as both membership chair and Vice President. My longest position was as membership chair. I enjoyed that position and did it for many years. I loved the personal contact with members, the opportunity to be creative in ways to serve our members, and socializing at the MNCCBD table at conferences! I am hoping to continue to be part of all those activities as President.

How long have you been a member?

I have been a member since I received my degree in Special Education in 1994.

How has this been a benefit to you as a special education professional?

Being part of a professional organization has many benefits. I value keeping current with issues and CEC does a wonderful job of helping me with that. I also think it is important to be going to conferences and workshops to keep abreast of the trends and issues in Special Education. Being a member, I receive information regarding many conferences and workshops. CEC has a wide range of professional development opportunities which are always relevant and cutting edge. The benefit I value most is the friendships and support I have gained from being directly involved with MNCCBD. They are a group of passionate leaders in the field. We stay closely connected and support each other. The connections also provide other opportunities to advocate for the field of Special Education. As I become more involved with CEC, I see another group of dedicated leaders.

What has CCBD been doing to enhance membership benefits?

When I started as membership chair, I began personally talking to members to see what they valued about their membership. Members mentioned valuing the professional journals and the notice of conferences. Many shared they wanted opportunities to network with others in the field. I also called people who let their membership lapse to ask them why. Members were voicing that they wanted more direct support from MNCCBD. This information was used to brainstorm ideas for meeting our members' needs.

For the last two years we have been organizing networking events. These include a presenter on a current topic in the field and time to talk with other professionals. Some of the events included Dr. John Hoover, presenting on the topic of bullies; Dr. Kris Melloy sharing how to take care of ourselves so we can take care of others; Martha Simpson presenting positive behavior strategies; Deb Saxhaug providing information on mental health; and other valuable topics. They have been very successful! Members are very appreciative of the opportunity to come to the events. We always do a survey of the event at the conclusion. The results have all

been positive and people encourage us to provide more opportunities. We offer these events free of charge and extend the offer to all interested people in hopes of recruiting new members. It has worked. We have made many new contacts, as well as promoted members to become more active.

What do you recommend to a new member in order to enhance benefits of their membership?

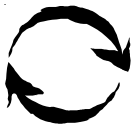
I always encourage members, old and new, to become more directly involved. Limited time is an issue for all of us. There are many levels of involvement, from helping with a one time event, being part of a committee, to becoming a board member. I guarantee that any involvement will be time well spent. Being part of a professional organization is more than journals and conferences. It is an opportunity to build new connections, receive support, and make a difference.

The benefit I value most is the friendships and support I have gained from being directly involved with MNCCBD. They are a group of passionate leaders in the field. We stay closely connected and support each other. The connections also provide other opportunities to advocate for the field of Special Education.

SLD, IDEA & RTI

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Commission also found that these approaches are widely used in some states and that they are at a stage where increased implementation is feasible. The Commission's findings parallel the work of the National Research Council report on minority students in special education, which found that early screening followed by effective interventions in the classroom prevented many disabilities. Most impressive were the results of large-scale clinical trials indicating that early intervention of reading skills in conjunction with positive behavior programs resulted in improved academic achievement and reduction in behavioral difficulties in high-risk, predominantly minority children. (p. 22)



So What's the Problem?

Given that there is ample proof the IQ-achievement model for identifying SLD does not work and that RTI is little more than good common sense, why then is there so much wide-spread confusion and concern? Perhaps it all comes down to one simple concept: fear of change! Abandoning the IQ-achievement discrepancy model in favor of a system that includes RTI does require that we change both our thinking and our behavior.

First, it changes the whole emphasis from remediating learning and behavior problems once they have developed, to preventing them from occurring in the first place.

Secondly, it shifts the primary responsibility for identifying SLD

away from special educators and places it squarely upon the shoulders of regular education. Instead of special educators administering norm-referenced tests to determine the existence of SLD, regular educators will be required to implement frequent and repeated curriculum-based measures to determine the effectiveness of their instruction – and only after implementing high-

“Abandoning the IQ-achievement discrepancy model in favor of a system that includes RTI does require that we change both our thinking and our behavior . . . The focus shifts from a problem within the child to a problem within the system.”

quality, research-proven instruction and other interventions over an extended period of time can an assertion be made that a child may have SLD.

Thirdly, it fundamentally changes our conceptualization of SLD. Although at its core SLD remains a neurologically-based learning problem, we must accept that the majority of students currently identified as SLD are a result of our failure as a society to provide the resources necessary to prevent learning and behavior problems from occurring. The focus shifts from a problem within the child to a problem within the system. The good news is that instead of feeling helpless to cure SLD within the child, there is hope in knowing that we can prevent the vast majority of learning and behavior problems.

Finally, it necessitates a reprioritization of resources by our

political leaders. Systems must be created that facilitate universal early screening for all children. Once those children who are at-risk for academic failure are identified, intensive early-interventions must occur. Such an effort will require personnel who are trained in early identification techniques; training teachers to implement high-quality, research-proven instructional strategies; training staff to conduct frequent, repeated measures of academic progress to track the effectiveness of interventions; and the funding of high-quality, research-proven, early interventions programs.



SLD and RTI in Minnesota

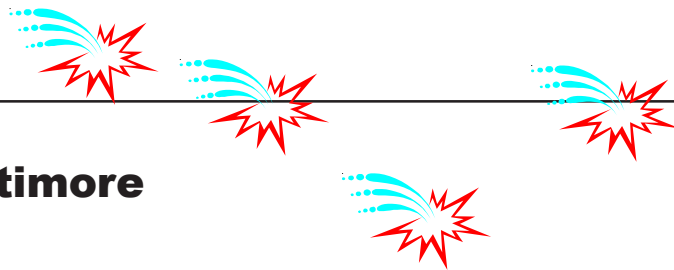
Once the Federal Regulations are finalized and adopted (currently scheduled for late Dec., 2005), Minnesota will undoubtedly draft new criteria for the identification of SLD. Until new criteria is adopted in the form of Rule, the existing criteria (M.R. 3500.1341) remains in effect. However, as Federal law trumps state law and rule, and as IDEA 2004 states that districts cannot be required to use an IQ-achievement discrepancy for determining whether a student has SLD, the severe discrepancy component of the MN criteria is now moot. That is, while M.R. 3500.1341 Subp. 2 B can no longer be enforced by MDE, the remaining portions of the SLD criteria remain in effect.

Until new criteria are adopted, Minnesota school districts have several potential options regarding the identification of students with SLD:

1. Districts could choose to continue utilizing the existing criteria in MN Rule, including the IQ-achievement discrepancy

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Student CEC Report



Moving the Classroom to Baltimore

By St. Cloud State University
Student Council for Exceptional Children

Ashley David, Juliane Chapman, Kelly Heather, Barb Ludwig, Kelly Weber, Amy Beckstrand, Carmen Mead, Mary Massmann, Sara Undesser, Katy Reger, and Stacy Seidl

This April eleven students from St. Cloud State University's chapter of the Student Council for Exceptional Children had the opportunity to move their classrooms from St. Cloud, MN to Baltimore, MD. The National CEC Convention in Baltimore was an excellent experience for all who attended as they were able to learn new information, network with schools and support services around the country, and bring the SCEC members closer.

Attending workshops and information sessions throughout the four day conference provided the students with new information about topics in special education in which they are interested. It also offered them a chance to expand their knowledge by attending sessions with information not covered or only briefly reviewed in their university classes. One of the members, Barb Ludwig, had the following to say about the sessions: "Seeing curriculum that had been recommended in my coursework displayed so vividly and being able to converse with various company representatives was so helpful." Mary Massmann has already been able to use some of the ideas she got at the conference in her student teaching.

Many of the SCEC members also enjoyed browsing through the extensive expo at the convention center. Not only were they able to pick up free materials and information from exhibitors, some were also able to network with schools around the country. They were able to see what various schools and states had to offer special education teachers and some were even able to get employment applications and interviews.

While the conference provided a lot of useful information to the participants, the SCEC members still found time to see the sights. In their time away from the convention

center, the SCEC members were able to tour Washington D.C., attend an Orioles game at Camden Park, take a ghost tour of Fells' Point, and see the shops on the waterfront. In addition, SCEC chapters from around Minnesota were able to meet and share ideas and have fun, providing a firm base for an active Minnesota SCEC.

The National CEC Convention is an opportunity of a lifetime. Sara Undesser said "It was an awesome experience and I recommend it to anyone." The information available through the sessions and at the expo is useful to students, student teachers, and those already teaching in special education. Kelly Weber said "This conference would be a great experience for any person involved in special education." The SCEC from St. Cloud State University would also like to thank the Minnesota CEC for helping to fund their trip to this very informative event.



MNCCBD News

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I want to take this opportunity to thank all the dedicated board members, committee members, and volunteer speakers for our networking events. Everyone's hard work has helped bring our mission alive and kept us focused on our vision.

Anyone interested in joining our group of dedicated professionals, embarking on an adventure, having fun, or reaping the benefits of membership, visit our website www.mnccbd.org for more information. If you wish to contact me directly, you can email me at molinel@earthlink.net. I would love to hear from you! Best wishes on the start of a new school year. Let us know if there is anything we can do for you.

SLD, IDEA & RTI

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requirement, when determining whether a student has SLD.

2. Districts may elect to continue to use an IQ-achievement discrepancy model to identify SLD, but choose to define a “severe discrepancy” as something other than 1.75 Std. Deviation as specified in the existing criteria.
3. Districts could choose not to utilize any form of IQ-achievement discrepancy when determining whether a student has SLD, while simply following the remaining components of the MN criteria.
4. Districts may choose to incorporate RTI as part of their SLD identification process, while following those parts of the MN criteria that remain in effect.
5. Districts could conceivably elect to incorporate RTI as part of the SLD identification process and also continue utilizing the IQ-achievement discrepancy formula as outlined in options #1 or #2 above.

Until such time as MN adopts new criteria, districts may end up applying differing standards to the identification of SLD. This creates the potential that a student could be identified as SLD in one district, while being ineligible in a neighboring district. The potential problems that could result from the application of differing SLD criteria across Minnesota are indeed legitimate reasons for discussion, concern and confusion.



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(Footnote)

* For additional information on RTI, see the MASE position paper “Response to Intervention and IDEA” available at: <http://mnase.org/Calendar/archive.htm>

“Until new criteria is adopted, Minnesota school districts have several potential options regarding the identification of students with SLD. Until such time as MN adopts new criteria, districts may end up applying differing standards to the identification of SLD. This creates the potential that a student could be identified as SLD in one district, while being ineligible in a neighboring district.”

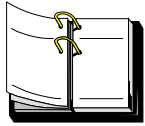
Letter to the Editor

continued from back page

As we approached the World War II Memorial, the pace of my uncle, who walks with a cane, quickened. My cousin and I exchanged glances as we caught his contagious excitement. My dad couldn’t get over how terrific it was. He and I walked around the perimeter while Uncle Fred and my cousins sat and soaked it all in. The two of

them seemed sad, yet satisfied, content, and pleased at the appreciation so long in coming.

And so I come back to my “don’t wait’ philosophy. Scheduling this trip was not easy. Fitting five different schedules was a minor miracle. Perhaps it would have been better at a different time of year. But I don’t believe in waiting until everything is perfect. It probably will never be perfect. However, to thank someone for their sacrifice, their service, their contribution, it is always the right time.



Calendar of Events

Annual ECSE Leadership Conference

October 5-7

Jane.roundtree@anoka.k12.mn.us

Celebrating the Past, Preparing for the Future: Closing the Achievement Gap for Students with Challenging Behaviors

October 6 & 7, Twin Cities

MNCCBD & Behavior Institute for Children and Adolescence

www.behavioralinstitute.org.

MASE 2005 Fall Leadership Conference

October 12-14

Cragun's Resort, Brainerd, MN

www.mnase.org

Minnesota CEC Board Meeting (Open to Public)

November 12 9:00 am to 12:00 noon

New Brighton Family Service Center

2006 MNCEC/CCBD Special Education Conference

February 15-17

Mayo Civic Center, Rochester, MN

www.mncec.org

Letter from the President

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special education populations we serve. Some of the wording is confusing at best and will no doubt cause some anxiety for many professionals that work in the field of special education. As the president of MNCEC, it is my intention to help all our members understand the changes made within the law. Learning about and understanding the changes will hopefully reduce some of the stress that has already started to develop within our profession.

To further support all staff working in the field of education, our annual conference this year will directly address the current and latest information in relation to No Child Left Behind and the reauthorization of IDEA. The conference itself will have an exciting change of location and will be held in Rochester for the first time. I encourage you to attend this year's conference, which will cover these important changes and new practices that affect special education teachers, general education staff, administrators, support staff, and parents.

Yes, change is good. It can also be scary, intense, confusing, and stressful. I look forward to the changes that this fall will bring. I extend to you an invitation to share your thoughts, ideas, concerns, and solutions with me, the MNCEC Board of Directors, and with each other. With all of us working together, change can indeed be good.

Announcement from MNCEC President, Larry Iwen

National CEC to Provide Web-Based Seminars in Fall 2005

The Council for Exceptional Children will be offering several web-based seminars during the months of October, November, and December of 2005. The seven seminar series will address the complex challenges of providing special education services in today's schools.

The seminars are ninety minutes long and continuing education units (CEUs) are available for each seminar that is taken. Registration is open to everyone but CEC members will be offered a discounted price. To save even more, you can have other staff and administrators join you for just one low price!

Be sure to check the "Web Seminar" link on the MNCEC website (www.mncec.org) to learn more about the seminars and how to register. We encourage you to print the .PDF announcement and share it with your colleagues and staff.

When registering for the seminars and asked to provide a promotional code, Minnesota CEC members should use MN0501.

Don't miss out on these terrific, practical strategies from experts in the field of special education!



Book Review

Writing Better: Effective Strategies for Teaching Students with Learning Difficulties

By: Steve Graham & Karen R. Harris
Paul H. Brooks Publishing Co.
Baltimore, MD, 2005



*Book Review submitted by Roberta Brack Kaufman
MNCEC Board Member,
St. Paul Public Schools Teacher on Special Assignment*

Writing Better: Effective Strategies for Teaching Students with Learning Difficulties by the husband-wife team of Graham and Harris is loaded with practical ideas for classroom teachers. The authors identify this warehouse of strategies as scientifically validated methods that are appropriate for elementary-age students. Many of the strategies fit just as nicely for use as methods in middle, junior and high school settings. Section 1 of the book contains a table listing the 17 strategies; a brief description including how it helps the writer and genre where the strategy can effectively be used. This table alone makes the book a valuable addition to the special educator's resource library.

Graham and Harris begin with a brief picture of the student who is a poor writer. This is a student who typically invests six minutes or less in writing an essay. While good writers generate and organize ideas, struggling writers focus attention on the physical act of producing text including, 1) writing BIG to fill space such as page requirements; 2) making it neat; and 3) correcting spelling. Additionally, students identified as poor writers spend less time planning (often less than one minute); make fewer revisions; are less knowledgeable about writing

strategies, have difficulty accessing what they know and over-estimate their writing skills.

Specific teaching of writing strategies provides a conscious set of actions where purposeful behavior and procedural knowledge come together. As with any strategy, the student must recognize change is needed and have the will to maintain effort. The authors have employed the Self-Regulated Strategy Development Model (SRSD). SRSD instructional model uses six stages in each of the strategies. They are:

1. Discuss it (the strategy).
2. Model it.
3. Memorize it.
4. Support it.
5. Perform it independently.
6. Establish procedures for maintaining and generalizing it.

Graham and Harris also stress four other critical classroom components that enhance strategy success. First, teachers must be enthusiastic and positive about students' capabilities. Second, students must be active collaborators. Third, individualize the instruction. Fourth, base the instruction on criteria rather than on time. As a guide, the authors point out that students with learning disabilities at the 4th and 5th grade level may require 9 -11 hours of instruction to master the strategy.

Throughout Writing Better: Effective Strategies for Teaching Students with Learning Difficulties, there are valuable reminders to reinforce teaching behaviors known to be effective. For example, Graham and Harris note that goal setting is a powerful tool for increasing performance and setting product goals has been found to dramatically improve writing of students. Just as importantly, self-monitoring and recording provide evidence of progress.

By way of contrast, Graham and Harris briefly address the use of Writer's Workshop. They note the lack of explicit teaching processes and reliance on informal learning procedures where "teachers typically provide some direct assistance in learning writing strategies through mini-lessons, writing conferences, or teachable moments, this assistance often consists of hints, questions, or tactful responding aimed at promoting discovery of useful strategies." (p. 8). Writer's Workshop, according to the authors is not explicit or strong enough for struggling writers.

Each of the described strategies is portable and can be modified according to age or genre. Writing Better is a quick read with a lot of good ideas that can be easily implemented.



CAN Report

by Bryce Fornes-Bates
Co-Chair

First, I would like to welcome a new member to our committee. This past spring, Roberta Kaufman agreed to co-chair the CAN committee. She was elected to the board in 2004 and is serving as secretary for MNCEC. Currently, she is an employee of Saint Paul Public Schools where she is involved in curriculum and academic coaching projects to assist new special education teachers. We both attended the CAN conference in Washington D. C. this past June, along with other statewide CAN coordinators.

We are taking what we learned there and we are planning to implement some new strategies and improve communication with you, our members. One of the new communication tools that we plan to implement in the next few months is e-mail. Our CAN committee email address is mncec_can@earthlink.net.

Please use this e-mail address if you would like to contact us, and we will use this e-mail address to contact our members and we will strive to keep you informed of current events and issues on a regular basis.

In the last newsletter, I wrote a short article about “highly qualified” special education teachers and the No Child Left Behind legislation. Minnesota had created a plan in 2004 (the plan now has several revisions) to deal with the subject and it was available on the department of education website. For my newsletter article, I used the September 2004 version of this document as the main source of information on

the subject. At that time, the message was clear- in Minnesota; licensed teachers are “highly qualified”.

Within a month of my “highly qualified” article in the last MNCEC newsletter, the federal law concerning special education, IDEA, was reauthorized by Congress. The reauthorized federal law now known as IDEA 2004, contained specific language about “highly qualified” special education teachers and it is contradictory to our current state laws and statutes. This is the reason why you received a letter from the

“The reauthorized federal law, IDEA 2004, contained specific language about “highly qualified” special education teachers and it is contradictory to our current state laws and statutes. This is the reason why you received a letter from the commissioner of education this past June.”

commissioner of education, Alice Seagren, this past June concerning the “Highly Qualified” Teacher issue.

To gain a better understanding of how this affects you as a teacher, I would recommend that you visit the document titled “REVISED Minnesota Plan for “Highly Qualified” Teacher Requirements” on the Minnesota Department of Education Website. It explains in detail, the impact of IDEA 2004 and the actual requirements for educators to become “highly qualified”, as well as the

forms and procedures for completing the HOUSSE process in Minnesota. You can locate this document, its executive summary, the letter to special education teachers from the commissioner, praxis testing information, and the MN HOUSSE application at the following web address:

www.education.state.mn.us/mde/Teacher_Support/Teacher_Quality/Highly_Qualified_Teacher_Require_MN_State_Plan/index.html.

I urge you, as the education commissioner does in her letter to Minnesota Special Educators dated June 28, 2005, to review the “highly qualified” document. All special education teachers now must participate in the HOUSSE process in Minnesota and, for the majority of teachers in our state, the mandated federal deadline for completing this process is June 30, 2006.

In her letter, Ms. Seagren also advises educators to contact the department of education staff listed on the executive summary page of the revised Minnesota state plan if you have further questions regarding this issue. You may also wish to consult your local school district special education director and human resources staff for local procedures and training concerning the updated “highly qualified” requirements.

Developing a Transitional Portfolio for Secondary Students

By Krista L. Fisher, MNCEC Board Member

Learning Disabilities Specialist, Mound Westonka High School



Developing a professional portfolio can give students a feeling of accomplishment as they transition from high school to post-secondary educational opportunities or as they transition into their community and full time employment. It gives them visual evidence of their time spent preparing for graduation. I teach a small group English course at the high school level and my students begin to develop their portfolios in their junior year. Although, the portfolio can be adapted for any grade level or course, such as work experience or a study skills class.

Though the bulk of the information is gathered the second semester, I begin with explaining the purpose of the portfolio the first week of school. Each of the students receives a three-ringed, one-inch binder with the plastic cover on the front. I also hand out plastic cover sheets to use to protect finished work. During the initial presentation I also hand out five tab dividers. The students label these as follows: Education/ Employment, Written Expression, Mathematical Computation, Reading Comprehension, and Personal Information. Each student receives a grading rubric. We use Six Traits for Writing in our district, so I modify this slightly to include a checklist of requirements. This also answers the questions “How much is this worth?” and “How is this going to be graded?” The students use the checklist to develop a table of contents for their portfolio. Our checklist includes but is not limited to the following:

Educational/Employment section:

- Cover sheet stating Professional Portfolio of John Doe (slid inside front plastic cover)
- The student’s resume
- Copy of the student’s Individualized Education Program
- Copy of the student’s reevaluation
- Copy of the student’s transcript (The student must ask the Guidance Counselor personally)
- Completed application for a post-secondary program (We use a local technical school application)
- Completed employment application (Do not have students include their social security number on any of the paperwork)
- Completed rental application
- Completed income tax form

Written Expression section:

- A cover letter for a job from an employment ad. (The ad should accompany the letter)
- A research paper written in your class or one produced for another class
- An editorial written in response to a local news article

Reading Comprehension section:

- The student’s word per minute and comprehension scores for each week tracked
- Reading strategy handouts
- A news article the student found interesting

Mathematic Computation section:

- Multiplication tables
- Formula sheet
- An assignment or test the student is proud of

In the Personal section, I let the students decide what they would like to include. Some ideas have been a list of their favorite sports teams with phone numbers and web addresses to purchase tickets, poetry they have written and important community numbers such as the city offices, post office and their county courthouse. Students enjoyed giving a copy of their ideas to classmates. As they develop different assignments and modify their table of contents, I have them save all of their written work on a disc along with printing a hard copy so that they can also take the disc with them upon graduation.

Again, this portfolio and checklist can be modified in any way to suit student needs and teacher expectations. The possibilities are endless! I also saw improvement in organizational skills during this process. I keep the portfolios in our classroom until graduation. I have my seniors present them to another small group as part of their final. Several of them displayed their portfolios at graduation parties.



Call for Nominations

Special Student, Special Teacher, Special Person Awards Due December 20, 2005

The Minnesota Council for Exceptional Children (MNCEC) is seeking award nominations for outstanding individuals in the field of special education. *(The nominee does not need to be a CEC member)* Send this nomination form and a short narrative describing why you are nominating this person to:

Jeanne Danneker, MNCEC Conference Chair
825 52nd Avenue
Winona, MN 55033

email: danneker.jean@uwlax.edu
phone: 507-452-7928
fax: 608-785-8128

★ Yes, I can! Special Student Award

The nominee must:

- be a student age 21 or under and currently receiving special education services in Minnesota
- demonstrate any or all of the following:
 - academic excellence
 - community involvement
 - and/or participation in special activities

Special Student's Name _____ Phone _____
 Address _____ School _____
 Your Name _____ Phone _____
 Address _____ CEC Member: Yes ___ No ___

★ Special Teacher Award

The nominee must:

- hold a current teacher's license in Minnesota
- be currently active in serving children with special education needs in Minnesota
- exhibit outstanding teaching skills

Special Teacher's Name _____ Phone _____
 Address _____ School _____
 Your Name _____ Phone _____
 Address _____ CEC Member: Yes ___ No ___

★ Special Person Award

The nominee must:

- be a resident or work in Minnesota
- have contributed in some way to persons who are disabled or gifted and/or to CEC

Special Person's Name _____ Phone _____
 Address _____ School _____
 Your Name _____ Phone _____
 Address _____ CEC Member: Yes ___ No ___



Letter from the Editor

by Carol Long



A commercial on a local television station advertising a ‘trip of a lifetime’ espouses a “don’t wait” philosophy. I am beginning to subscribe to that philosophy myself.

Two of my cousins and I are just back from taking our fathers to the World War II Memorial in Washington, DC. My father and my uncle are WWII veterans. Brothers and Missouri farm boys, they left in 1943 to fight for their country. My father was 19, my uncle 21. Dad was sent for training on the East coast and the next day my uncle left for the West coast. Dad was trained in aircraft artillery and Uncle Fred was a computer. He jokes about being the earliest computer. Dad served on a team firing a gun that plucked enemy airplanes out of the sky and Uncle Fred did the calculations for where to send fire on the enemy. Dad served in the European Theater and Uncle Fred in the Pacific. Dad lived in pup tents and foxholes for a year and a half and Uncle Fred contracted yellow fever in the jungles of the Pacific.

Our trip was more a pilgrimage than a sightseeing excursion. When we got off the plane at Reagan National Airport, we had our first indication that this was trip was going to be special. One of the passengers seated behind my cousin over heard that Dad was a WWII vet. As we de-planed she asked, “Did you really

“I don’t believe in waiting until everything is perfect. It probably will never be perfect. However, to thank someone for their sacrifice, their service, their contribution, it is always the right time.”

serve in World War II?” He responded that yes he had. Then she asked another question that was to set the tone for the rest of our stay in D.C., “Did anyone ever thank you?” From then on, Dad, who wore his WWII Veteran baseball cap, and Uncle Fred were constantly recognized for their service. The tour guide at Arlington National Cemetery had the entire bus applaud “these World War II heroes.” Dad and Uncle Fred beamed. We were encouraged to bump the line at the

National American Indian Museum. Extra pretzels on the plane were given to the vets and people volunteered to shake their hands. Everywhere people were gracious and patient as we sometimes moved a bit slower than the rest of the crowd.