

NJCLD Hosts Symposium: Helping Students with Learning Disabilities in an Era of the Common Core State Standards

The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) hosted a symposium on June 3, 2013 entitled, *Helping K-12 and Postsecondary Students with Learning Disabilities in an Era of the Common Core State Standards*. Numerous educational practitioners, policy makers, researchers, higher education representatives, parents, and representatives and leaders of the NJCLD member organizations attended the symposium. The purpose of the symposium was to: provide a context for the implementation of the Common Core State Standards for students with LD, explore the interconnections with Response to Intervention (RTI) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and consider practical examples of interventions, strategies, and curriculum tied to the CCSS.

The symposium included three presentations by experts in this area:

- Mark Griffin, National Center for Learning Disabilities
- Beth Poss, Montgomery County Public Schools
- Barbara Marinak, International Reading Association

Mark Griffin, presented “CCSS in Context: Can it Work for Children with Learning Disabilities.” Dr. Griffin reviewed opportunities created by the CCSS for students with learning disabilities. More than ever before there is a collective belief that students with learning disabilities can achieve high standards and should be included in general education courses. There is also more research to guide educators in how to help students with LD achieve. Now is the time to build better collaboration among educational teams and to deepen professional knowledge of the research-validated methods to facilitate achievement for all learners. It is time to promote the implementation of UDL principles so that every learner has access to the increasingly complex course content. He noted that we must not only prepare the learner but also address the learning situation. He referred to resources such as McLaughlin’s six principles for helping students with disabilities to access the CCSS. Griffin challenges education to become better at implementing what is known about supporting learners with LD so that students have a chance to achieve these high standards.

Beth Poss presented, “The Common Core State Standards and Learning Disabilities: Supporting Students through a Universally Designed for Learning Curriculum.” Ms. Poss explained that UDL is promoted in the CCSS documents “Applications to Students with Disabilities” and “Application for Standards for English Language Learners” as a means to help all students achieve the CCSS. She reported that UDL is a framework for removing barriers by anticipating the needs of all students and is the practice of embedding flexible strategies into the curriculum during the planning process so that ALL students can access a variety of learning solutions. By using multiple means of representing content, providing multiple means for the student to carry-out the tasks and express their knowledge, and employing multiple means of engaging students,

teachers can make the curriculum accessible to students with learning disabilities. Poss presented examples of using the UDL framework to support English Language Arts instruction for close reading of complex text as is emphasized in the CCSS. She discussed the power in providing student choice and using flexible technologies. Poss gave examples of supporting the changes in mathematics instruction required by the CCSS, such as using technologies to help represent the continuum of concrete to abstract representation.

Barbara Marinak presented, Humanizing RTI: Nurturing Expertise and Collaboration at the Table. Dr. Marinak discussed the implications of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for students with specific learning disabilities as well as ways to humanize RTI. She described how the CCSS are radically redefining what it means to be a proficient reader and writer so that special educators must be trained in CCSS core expectations. Marinak explained that students with specific learning disabilities must be included in effectively differentiated core reading instruction and daily interventions aligned to the CCSS. She emphasized the need to provide more explicit instruction with challenging texts and rigorous responding opportunities. Marinak used the outline from *Made to Stick (Heaths)* to make suggestions to improve RTI. She reviewed the following characteristics that lead to success making ideas 'stick' in the context of RTI implementation: Be simple, concrete, unexpected, credible, encourage emotions, and share stories.

This symposium represents the commitment of the NJCLD to promote ongoing communication and collaboration issues related to implementation of the Common Core Standards for students with learning disabilities. For more information about the NJCLD, please visit www.ldonline.org/njclld.

Additional symposium materials available at www.ldonline.org/njclld.

- Power Point presentations
- Speaker bios
- Symposium agenda
- CCSS Resources List

The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities is dedicated to promoting the education and welfare of individuals with learning disabilities. For additional information on the work of the NJCLD, contact Dr. Mary Beth Klotz, NJCLD Chair, at mbklotz@naspweb.org.