



Communiqué

Council for Educational Diagnostic Services

A Division of the Council for Exceptional Children

Volume 34, Issue 2, Winter 2006

President's Message

Carol A. Layton

The fall remains my most favorite time of the year. A fresh school year, new students, and the innovative opportunities I experience grow richer as I grow older. Those of us involved in evaluation for students with special needs anxiously await the changes brought forth in IDEIA. Although we know that some revisions of the law were disappointing, we expectantly continue to advocate and persist in facilitating good progress and outcomes for students receiving special education services. Hopefully, the fall's beautiful turning leaves and the crisp air mirror some good alternatives that will aid us in serving students. During this fall, the following events will help us improve our diagnostic expertise and our ability to support students and families with special needs.

- Our annual conference occurs in early November. It promises to be a wonderful opportunity to learn new skills and network among

other diagnostic professionals. News of the conference will appear in the next newsletter. If you miss this conference, please plan to join us at the 2007 Annual Conference in New Orleans.

- As a separate entity, The National Board for Certification of Educational Diagnosticians works each month putting critical pieces together that will help shape our future role as educational diagnosticians in special education. This board currently plans on meeting at the annual conference in Kansas City for a face-to-face planning session. This committee is progressing to put forth a great credential that will enhance the status of educational diagnosticians.
- CEDS Professional Standards Committee chair, Pat Frawley, heads an active group charged with further developing and reviewing the advanced standards for educational diagnosticians. All CEC divisions are participating in this review and rewrite of standards. Since these standards govern accreditation, this committee strives to create excellent standards that will embrace the future content and skills of educational diagnostician programs.
- David Walker, vice president, organized the selection of the CEDS program for next spring's Annual CEC Conference in Louisville. From early reports, the schedule of presentations appears loaded

with research-based strategies and evidence-based practices in the assessment field of which we are required to stay informed.

As evidenced above, CEDS keeps your interest in our professional endeavors at the top of our agenda. We invite you to assume a more active role in our organization. The stronger our membership, the greater the impact our organization makes, nationally and throughout each state. Help us embrace the fall's new changes and work toward the richness of doing our best for students with special needs.

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CAN Report: Make a Difference – Get Involved!

Stephen Walker, Chair of CEDS Governmental Relations Committee/CAN Coordinator

The Legislative Action Center is one way that CEC helps to keep members informed and involved on issues and legislation before the Congress. If you have never visited the online Legislative Action Center, it is a great place to get a quick update on the burning issues and let your congressional representatives know how you feel about legislation that affects children with exceptional learning needs.

If this will be your first visit to the Legislative Action Center, please put this newsletter next to your computer and, when you have an extra 20 minutes, follow the steps below to take advantage of the extraordinary work that CEC has done to track legislation related to special education. You will be amazed at what you can learn and the difference your involvement will make.

- First, go to the CEC Web site at <http://www.cec.sped.org>
- Click on the dark red button (fifth from the left near the top of the page) marked **Policy and Advocacy**.
- Select the link for the **Legislative Action Center** (it is in the blue field on the left side just under the Policy and Advocacy Center banner). This would be a good time to bookmark this webpage because once you see how much you can do on this page you will want to return frequently.
- Just for fun, put in your home zip code and click **“GO”** on the **Congress and President** link. The top of this page will contain a summary of the major educational issues before Congress. Lower on the page you will find pictures of the President, your Senators, and your House Representative. If you click on the **“info”** link under their pictures you can learn more about them including their educational background, religious affiliation, and previous occupation. Under the PAC

link you can even find out who and which organizations have contributed to their election campaigns.

- To learn about the issues and to send an e-mail to your Congressional Representatives, go back to the **Legislative Action Center** and click on the **Issues and Legislation** link (use the blue **“click here”** button).
- Click on the **Legislative Alerts and Updates** and then click on one about which you are interested in learning more. If this is the first time that you have visited the Legislative Action Center, you may wish to try one of the **Smart Alerts** (second set of options on that page).
- Select a Smart Alert, click on it, and you will be linked to a brief description of the issue or the pending legislation. If you are using the Smart Alert, you can then enter your zip code and click **“GO.”**
- You will be linked to a sample letter written by CEC that you can edit or send as is. I frequently edit the last line of the letter by making a specific reference to the children in my area of the state.
- Complete the sender information at the bottom of the page so that you will receive a copy of the e-mail and your Congressional Representatives can contact you either via e-mail or through a letter from their office. You can anticipate a response to your e-mail within a couple of weeks. Representatives will often let you know their position on the issue about which you wrote.
- Be sure to click the **“Send Message”** button at the bottom of that page.

Congratulations, you have participated in the democratic process! Your Congressional Representative keeps count of how constituents feel about issues before the House and Senate. Please, make a difference – get involved!

Member Profile: Shirley Steffens

Connie Nielson, CEDS Membership Chair

Shirley Steffens, Associate Professor at Northwest Missouri State University, received her B.S. from Dana College, Blair, NE, her M.A. from University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and her Ph.D. from University of Wisconsin-Madison. After teaching for eight years as an elementary resource teacher in Nebraska City, NE, she moved to higher education at Luther College, Decorah, IA, and taught for eight years before coming to Northwest Missouri State University, where she is beginning her 12th year. Dr. Steffens

teaches classes in assessment and collaboration and serves as the Graduate Special Education Coordinator. She is the faculty co-advisor for SCEC (Student Council for Exceptional Children) and has served as president and secretary for the Small Special Education Program Caucus (of the Teacher Education Division of CEC). Active in the MO-CEDS chapter, she is currently serving as president and board representative to the Missouri Federation. Dr. Steffens is a member of the local arrangement committee for the 2006 Annual CEDS conference in Kansas City.

National Certification of Educational Diagnosticians (NCED)

The National Board for the Certification of Educational Diagnosticians has been hard at work establishing the constitution and by-laws and the standards for national certification. Under the guidance of David Walker (Mississippi) and NCED Board Chairman Ellen Frye (Texas), the board has developed both the Professional Standards Committee, chaired by Patricia McElroy (Louisiana), and the Professional Growth Committee, chaired by Eric Lopez (New Mexico). Additionally, an ad-hoc committee, chaired by Linda Hall (Texas), has been established to develop the

constitution and by-laws for NCED. The National Board of Directors consists of Norman Geller (Virginia), Carol Layton (Texas, ex-officio as President of CEDS), Patricia Frawley (New Jersey), Cathleen Spinelli (Pennsylvania), and Lisa Turner (Pennsylvania). Currently, the committee is in the process of developing outsourcing agencies, guidelines for a national test for accreditation, and outreach. As the committee progresses, CEDS members will be notified.

National Board for Certified Educational Diagnosticians (NBCED)

The Council for Educational Diagnostic Services (CEDS) invites applications for appointment to the National Board for Certified Educational Diagnosticians (NBCED). Three directors will be selected. Applicants must (a) be a CEDS member in good standing; (b) be a practicing diagnostician, a supervisor of diagnosticians, and/or a higher educator with documented expertise in educational assessment; and (c) hold a current, valid regular license/certificate in a non-psychology field issued by the applicant's residence state and/or other state that qualifies the applicant to practice special education assessment. Applicants must submit the following materials: (a) a letter indicating interest; (b) copy of current vita that documents qualifications and credentials; and (c) copy of license/certificate. Nomina-

tions are particularly encouraged from individuals who conduct assessments in applied settings and who are from the following states so that the NBCED will have national representation: AK, AZ, CA, CO, IA, ID, KS, MN, MT, NE, ND, NV, OR, SD, UT, WA, WI, WY.

Submit materials to: Ellen M. Frye, Ed.D.
3004 79th Street
Lubbock, TX 79423

Applications must be postmarked by May 1, 2007.

Look for additional information on the CEDS website <http://www.unr.edu/educ/ceds/>

Explaining Evaluation Results to Parents

Rosalind W. Rothman, Ed.D.
Claire Lavin, Ph.D.

Almost all children today take some form of standardized test within the second or third year of their school careers. While most will take group tests, some will be referred to an educational diagnostician or a psychologist for individual testing. Testing is anxiety provoking for both parents and children but is particularly stressful when the child has been referred for an individual evaluation because of a suspected problem. Children sense that they have failed to meet spoken or unspoken expectations of key figures in their lives (parents and/or teachers). Parents may feel apprehensive about test findings and fearful of the impact the test results may have on their hopes and dreams for their child's future. Parents may also feel anger at the school as the perceived cause of the child's difficulties or may feel guilt if they perceive themselves as causing the problem or failing to notice signs of trouble earlier. The emotional state of the parents is a key factor in guiding the approach the diagnostician takes in explaining test findings.

The purpose of the assessment is to gather information and communicate findings regarding the referral question. The actual testing is relatively straightforward. Interpreting the results is more difficult. Clearly communicating the results both orally and in writing is the most challenging task the diagnostician faces (Sattler, 2004). Professional diagnosticians are steeped in testing materials as well as statistical data. Information regarding stanines, percentiles, "T" scores, and standard deviations is part of their everyday jargon. Most parents, however, do not share their expertise in this area, but they love and are concerned about the success of their children. To ensure that parents understand the evaluation results, explanations must be clear and in terminology they can best comprehend (Bergman, 2004). Communication must be culturally appropriate and incorporate examples that the parents can understand. The dialogue must be reciprocal, with parents afforded ample opportunity to voice questions and clarify what they have heard. Each set of parents brings different strengths and needs to the process, and the approach must be tailored specifically for them.

Parents have a right to know the purpose of the test; exactly what the test requires the student to do; how the child is expected to respond; what the scores mean; how the scores and tests relate to classroom curriculum; and

CEDS *Communiqué*

Volume 34, Issue 2, Winter 2006

Leann DiAndreth-Elkins, Editor

Communiqué is the official quarterly newsletter of the Council for Educational Diagnostic Services (CEDS), a division of the Council for Exceptional Children. Subscriptions are by membership to CEDS. Web postings are made thirty days after the newsletter is sent to members. The editor encourages responses, ideas, and inquires. Submissions of previously unpublished material are welcome for consideration.

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Assessment for Effective Intervention:

The official quarterly research journal of CEDS is *Assessment for Effective Intervention*, provided through CEDS membership. The primary purpose of the journal is to publish empirically sound manuscripts that have implications for practitioners. Submittals are encouraged; guidelines are available on the CEDS Website.

CEDS Website:

www.unr.edu/educ/ceds/

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most importantly, what can be provided to help the child perform better (Roeber, 2003). The ultimate purpose of the evaluation is to help the child. Parents need specific information about the concrete next steps they can take. Services available in the school should be detailed, as well as the means of accessing them. Samples of homework organizers, computer software suggestions, or educational games they can use will set them on the right path and give them a positive orientation about dealing with the problem. Parents also need information about community agencies that provide supplementary services. When appropriate, parents should be given information about support groups to connect them with others who have dealt with similar issues. Finally, parents need advice about ways of communicating with their children regarding the findings. In some cases, joint meetings can be held to explain the findings simultaneously to parents and child. However, even in these cases parents will explain the findings and their impact numerous times as the family and school work on the issues.

In explaining evaluation results to parents, the following guidelines may be helpful:

1. Provide the information orally and refer to your report, but do not give it to the parent to read at the feedback session. He/she can read it later and call for clarifications.
2. Tailor your language so that the parent can easily follow what you are saying. Be succinct, talk slowly, and pause frequently so that the parent can digest the information.
3. Use visual aids, charts, and sample activities to reinforce important points.
4. Organize the presentation into logical portions, i.e. academic, social, emotional, etc.
5. Explain the ways the child's test performance is related to classroom performance, both positively and negatively.
6. Explain results in percentiles, which can more easily be understood by parents. Additionally, explain the implications of high and low scores that may result in an overall average score that does not accurately represent the child's abilities.
7. Finally, emphasize the positive, the strengths the child exhibits, and the steps the school and home

(continued next page)

("Explaining Evaluation Results to Parents" continued from p. 5)

can take to improve future performance and ultimately success in life.

Although communicating effectively requires time and effort, it yields great rewards for the child and family.

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- Bergman, L. (2004). *Making sense of test scores: Assessment Brief, Number 10*. Oakland, CA: Center for Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning.
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Author Notes

Dr. Rosalind Rothman is an Educational Diagnostician, author, and Professor Emeritus at Southern Connecticut State College with a private practice in Harrison NY.

Dr. Claire Lavin is a Psychologist, and Professor at the College of New Rochelle in the School Psychology Program.

Council for Exceptional Children 2007 Annual Convention & Expo

April 18–21, 2007
Kentucky International Convention Center
Louisville, Kentucky

CEDS Program at the CEC Convention:
Thursday, April 19 at the Convention Center
❖ **5:00 pm CEDS Annual Business Meeting**
❖ **6:00 pm CEDS Reception hosted by Pearson**

For more information about the convention,
visit the CEC Web site <http://www.cec.sped.org>

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CEDS ELECTIONS 2007 – OFFICIAL BALLOT

Candidates for Secretary – Select One X

STEFANIE BOLLES

Biographical Statement

My education includes a MEd in Special Education from Utah State University in 1988 and a BS in Special & Elementary Education from the University of Nevada, Reno in 1975. I have taught both third grade and in resource rooms at both the elementary and secondary levels for 15 years. I have been an educational diagnostician at both the elementary and secondary levels for 18 years. The extra committees I have at school most frequently deal with students with behavioral or emotional problems.

Vision for CEDS

CEDS has been very instrumental to me in both their publications on topics that affect the role of educational diagnosticians, providing information on new assessments on the market and keeping information updated as rules and regulations change and evolve. The Topical Conferences are relevant in content and offer a chance to network with others with a common job description. I would like to see CEDS continue working to update the skills of those in the field and continue to strive to reach even more practitioners in the public schools.

ELLEN RATCLIFF

Biographical statement

Dr. Ratcliff received a Bachelor of Science degree in Learning Disabilities and Mental Retardation from Mississippi State University. She served as a special education classroom resource and self-contained teacher for 15 years teaching students with high and low incidence disabilities, ages 6 to 17. Subsequently, she earned a Master of Education from Southeastern Louisiana University (SLU) in Special Education with a concentration in Education Diagnosis. After her Master's Degree, she taught undergraduate assessment courses and supervised student teachers at SLU. Ten years later, she received her PhD in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Special Education and a minor in Educational Leadership from Louisiana State University. Dr. Ratcliff continues to teach assessment courses at the graduate level, and focuses her time on training educational diagnosticians and undergraduate teacher candidates in the area of assessment. Currently, Dr. Ratcliff is working with assessment personnel in a local school district about the effectiveness of RTI.

Vision for CEDS

Dr. Ratcliff envisions three goals for CEDS. The first goal is to increase awareness about the importance of correctly identifying students with disabilities through best assessment practices. Promoting the benefits of belonging to CEDS to other divisions of CEC and even school districts across the country is a second goal. Finally, she believes that it is important for CEDS to continue to identify best assessment practices and offer professional development to educational diagnosticians online or through regional conferences.

Candidate for Treasurer – Select One X

BRENDA GILLIAM

Biographical statement

Dr. Gilliam currently serves as the chair of the Department of Early Childhood, Reading and Special Education and head of the Educational Diagnostician program at The University of Texas at Tyler. She received her BS and MEd degrees at Texas A&M Commerce and her PhD from the University of North Texas. She served six years as a special education teacher and ten years as an educational diagnostician prior to her university appointment. While maintaining her university responsibilities, she continues to do educational evaluations for several school districts. Dr. Gilliam has a long history of service to CEC. She served her state in many leadership positions, including Texas CEC President in 1991–92 and TCEC Governor on the CEC Board of Governors from 1997–2000. In addition, she served as Chair of the Small Special Education Program Caucus of TED from 1993–94. She has been an active member of CEDS for many years, and a frequent presenter at the national conferences. Her research interests have focused on appropriate assessment of second-language learners. Dr. Gilliam was appointed to fill a vacancy in the treasurer position and is nominated for a complete term.

*****Ballots must be returned postmarked by February 15, 2007*****

Please vote, detach at perforation, fold, stamp and mail

Please vote, detach at perforation, fold, stamp and mail

Anna Henderson
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