

## **NJCLD Hosts Symposium on Affirming the Validity of LD Construct**

The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) hosted a symposium on May 23, 2011 entitled, *Affirming the Validity of the LD Construct: Implications for Policy, Research and Practice* at the headquarters of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) in Rockville, MD. A mix of educational practitioners, policy makers, researchers, higher education representatives, postsecondary disability services specialists, parents, and representatives of the NJCLD member organizations attended the symposium. The purpose of the symposium was to provide an interdisciplinary forum to increase communication and understanding on issues related to the LD construct and to promote the dissemination of the NJCLD's newest report, *Learning Disabilities: Implications for Policy Regarding Research to Practice*.

The symposium consisted of an overview of the report, panel presentations, audience discussion, an exhibit table of resources, and social networking time with refreshments provided. Welcome remarks were given by Lemmietta McNeilly, ASHA Chief Staff Officer for Speech-Language Pathology, and Mary Beth Klotz, the Chair of the NJCLD, and Director of IDEA Projects and Technical Assistance for the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). The overview of the report was provided by Emerson Dickman, Esquire, and the NJCLD representative for the International Dyslexia Association. In his presentation, Mr. Dickman outlined the points of agreement regarding the LD construct, common misperceptions, unresolved issues, basic principles to guide policy, and recommendations. Key recommendations of the report are to maintain SLD as a distinct eligibility category under IDEA, to preserve accountability requirements for students with LD, increase coordination between IDEA and ESEA, expand preservice education and fund professional development in the use of evidence-based practices, and support the implementation of research-based practices that have demonstrated effectiveness.

In addition, a panel of experts gave brief presentations and responded to questions from the audience related to the LD construct. The panelists included Brett Miller, Director, Reading, Writing and Related Learning Disabilities, Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD); Rich Long, Director of Government Relations, International Reading Association; June Zillich, Bilingual School Psychologist, Montgomery County Public Schools, MD; and John W. Lloyd, Professor, University of Virginia.

The panelists shared their perspectives and information about research and initiatives related to the LD construct. Some of the issues discussed were:

- current and future research projects for the next 5-years from the NICHD,
- federal budget bills that address education funding cuts,
- the status of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA),
- implementation of the Common Core State Standards and the relation to ESEA reauthorization,

- Universal Design for Learning
- English Language Learners (ELLs) versus students with LD,
- RTI approach for ELLs,
- considerations for teacher preparation and credentialing, and
- curriculum tools and resources to help translate research to practice.

This symposium represents the commitment of the NJCLD to promote ongoing communication and collaboration on the topic of the validity of the LD construct. To download the report and read more about the symposium and the work of the 12 organizations that compose the NJCLD, please visit [www.ldonline.org/njclld](http://www.ldonline.org/njclld).

### **Related Resources**

Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), [www.nichd.nih.gov/](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/).

National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2011). *Learning Disabilities: Implications for Policy Regarding Research to Practice*. [www.ldonline.org/njclld](http://www.ldonline.org/njclld).

Additional symposium materials available at [www.ldonline.org/njclld](http://www.ldonline.org/njclld).

- Executive summary of the report
- Power Point presentations
- Speaker and panelist bios
- Symposium agenda

*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, [mbklotz@naspweb.org](mailto:mbklotz@naspweb.org).*