

## **NJCLD Hosts Symposium on Comprehensive Assessment and Evaluation of Students with Learning Disabilities**

The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) hosted a symposium on June 4, 2010 entitled, *Comprehensive Assessment and Evaluation of Students with Learning Disabilities*. 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 share timely information on assessment and evaluation issues, provide opportunities for cross-stakeholder collaboration, and to promote the dissemination of the NJCLD's most recent report, *Comprehensive Assessment and Evaluation of Students with Learning Disabilities*.

The symposium consisted of an overview of the report, a panel discussion, an exhibit table of resources, and a reception celebrating the 35<sup>th</sup> year of the NJCLD. Mary Beth Klotz, the chair of the NJCLD, and Director of IDEA Projects and Technical Assistance for the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), gave the audience an historical overview and reflections on the accomplishments of the NJCLD in policy and practice arenas. Following the overview, Diane Paul discussed the report.

Diane Paul is the Director of Clinical Issues in Speech-Language Pathology for the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and is the NJCLD representative for the Division for Communicative Disabilities and Deafness (DCDD) of the Council for Exceptional Children. Paul noted that the NJCLD strongly supports comprehensive assessment and evaluation of students with learning disabilities by a multidisciplinary team for the identification and diagnosis of learning disabilities. She stated that comprehensive assessment requires the use of multiple data sources to identify a student's pattern of strengths and needs and to inform identification, eligibility, services and instruction. Paul discussed changes in legislation, research and education as they related to comprehensive assessment of students with learning disabilities. Recommendations were made concerning further research, professional development, families and advocates and administration/leadership.

In addition, a panel of experts responded to questions related to comprehensive assessment and evaluation of students with learning disabilities. The panel was moderated by Nancy Hennessy, an NJCLD representative of the International Dyslexia Association. The panelists included Brian Bartels, Director of Psychological Services, Montgomery County Public Schools, MD.; Brett Miller, Director, Reading, Writing and Related Learning Disabilities, Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD); and, Karen Rooney, Past-President, Division of Learning Disabilities of the Council for Exceptional Children and founder of Educational Enterprises, Inc.

The panelists shared their perspectives, experiences, challenges, emerging issues and current initiatives related to comprehensive assessment and evaluation of students with learning disabilities. Some of the issues discussed were current research funded by NICHD, English Language Learners, Response to Intervention, challenges of implementation, and practitioner and parent involvement as they relate to comprehensive assessment.

A number of important points were made.

- There is a need for reliable and credible criteria.
- Assessment must include multiple forms of data.
- Technological advancements will inform future assessment practices.
- Interpretation and professional judgment are critical.
- There is a need for evidence-based interventions.
- Within an RTI process, there is a need to investigate what constitutes a response and how it is measured.
- Patterns of strengths and weaknesses must be identified.
- Assessment and evaluation differ for postsecondary disability services.
- Professional development is vital.

This symposium represents the commitment of the NJCLD to promote ongoing communication and collaboration on the topic of comprehensive assessment and evaluation of students with learning disabilities. To download the report and read more about 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 (2010). *Comprehensive Assessment and Evaluation of Students with Learning Disabilities*. [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, at [mbklotz@naspweb.org](mailto:mbklotz@naspweb.org).*