

NAASLN Membership News & Views

Issue Twelve – August 2006

NAASLN Membership News & Views is an outgrowth of the **NAASLN Vision** to offer our members a centralized hub of information, professional development, technical assistance, communication on issues and trends, and advocacy initiatives on behalf of adults with special learning needs.

IT'S OFFICIAL! – the NAASLN membership has elected a great new 2006-2008 Board of Directors.

We proudly introduce the new and returning Board members below in the second article; but first in “A Presidential View” our new **President, Robyn Rennick** shares her thoughts at the beginning of her two-year term of office

In this issue, we begin a series on Mentoring/Coaching Programs with an article by Dr. Melissa Arnott, Director of the Academic Success Center at Rowan University and a new NAASLN Board Member. There is also a link to the program’s web site.

A revised, more informative and accessible *NAASLN.org* coming soon!

Keep watching **www.NAASLN.org** ! Any day now, we’ll have a whole new look, new features, extended links, and much more. The next issue of **NAASLN News and Views** will feature the work and the workers behind this new venture.

And don’t forget, many wonderful and informative tapes of the 2005 NAASLN conference presentations are still available. See ordering information below.

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In this issue

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- **Spotlight Topic**, “Meeting the Needs of Students with LD in Higher Education,” the first in a series of a Mentoring/Coaching Program
- **Web site of the month:** www.drarnott.com/Four-Stage%20Model.html
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***A New Vision from the Desk of the President –
Bringing NAASLN to Our Members***

By Robyn Rennick, NAASLN 2006-2008 President

I went to my first NAASLN meeting in 1991 in South Florida. I was a private school administrator working with dyslexic and ADD kids, K-12, but something pulled me towards this field of adult education. The air was full of energy and enthusiasm as adult educators and providers from Corrections, Adult and Community Ed, Community Colleges, English as Second Language, Adult Basic Education, etc. met and shared ideas and visions of how to assist their adult students with special learning needs to become more productive.

I had just started my Master’s degree program in Social Work but shifted it to

Adult Education. The ironic piece of this is that while Florida State University had an Adult Education master's program, I was the only graduate student in it that had an interest in reading and in working with adults with special learning needs. "Those people" were not on the radar screen of higher education. Sound familiar? Still I forged ahead, created my own program, and continued to develop ties with NAASLN because I found that one NAASLN conference benefited me educationally more than any three graduate courses I took!

NAASLN – What's unique about NAASLN? Not just the energy and enthusiasm of the members as they meet and share their ideas and programs, but the fact that NAASLN offers a level playing field for professionals to meet away from their own hierarchy to share ideas, frustrations, and triumphs. Classroom teachers, state directors, program coordinators, corrections educators, private providers, etc. all rub shoulders with little regard for hierarchy or political correctness. We've witnessed some real dialogues which have challenged preconceived or cherished notions, or reinforced philosophies, but in all ways allowed those with open minds to grow.

What vision do I have for NAASLN over the next two years? I want to continue this tradition of bringing the diverse backgrounds together to share ideas and keep the pot stirred. We will continue to have exciting regional and national conferences. However, in this world of budget cuts and limited travel, we know we need to bring NAASLN to our members as well as asking our members to come to us.

We will be developing Virtual Conferences and Workshops over the next two years which will be as close to you as your computer. Over the next several months, we will be exploring what topics NAASLN members want to hear and how we can bring those topics to you. However, don't sit back and wait. Let us know what topics you want to hear about and whether your program would help to sponsor a virtual workshop.

If you are not a current member, join us. If you are, join a committee or contact us with your ideas. In the meantime, let me introduce a truly spectacular Board of Directors.

Robyn Rennick
NAASLN President

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Election Results

Membership has its privileges, and we are privileged indeed to announce our new officers and 2006-2008 Board Members. Their expertise and commitment speak for themselves. Throughout the next year, we will bring you individual profiles of our board members. This month, we'd like to introduce our **Executive Committee** and share the backgrounds of our **New Members**.

Executive Committee

- **President** – Robyn Rennick - Program Director, Dyslexia Research Institute Tallahassee, FL, and teacher – trainer - consultant for Hardman & Associates. Robyn has worked in the field of dyslexia and attention deficit disorders since 1979 and has been a member of NAASLN since 1991. She served as Vice-President of NAASLN and Chair of the By-laws and Policies Committee. Robyn

has fought for expanding accommodations for adults with special learning needs and perceives NAASLN as an advocate for them. See her message above.

- **Vice-President** – Debra Watkins, M.S.Ed., Coordinator Academic Affairs, Adult Education, City Colleges of Chicago, Chicago, IL Debra has been a member of NAASLN for more than 10 years and sat on the board for the past 6 years. She has served as Secretary and Co-chair of the Membership Committee. Debra has been in the field of adult education since 1981 with experience in curriculum development and administration as well as teaching. She is a member of the Illinois Board of Higher Education Disability Advisory Committee and has been on the board of the Illinois Adult and Continuing Education Association.

- **Treasurer** – Richard Cooper, PhD, Director, Center of Alternative Learning Havertown, PA, continues as Treasurer; and as one of the earliest and longest members of NAASLN; he also served as President. Richard exemplifies the heart and soul of NAASLN. Through his Center for Alternative Learning , he has developed materials and programs that have assisted individuals with special learning needs, especially learning disabilities and attention deficit disorders, to break through their learning barriers and achieve their goals.

- **Secretary** – Anne Murr, ABE Director, Drake University Adult Literacy Center Des Moines, IA. Anne fully supports NAASLN’s Vision, Goals, and Guiding Principles, and chairs the Advocacy Committee. As an active adult literacy practitioner, she sees individuals and their needs close up. Her research has been in the causes of reading failure and in the intensive instruction necessary for adults so they learn to read. She works with adults to increase advocacy skills so that their voices will be heard and acknowledged, and that society’s awareness and commitment to resource allocation for their education and training will also increase.


New Board Members


- **Melissa Arnott-Cox**, Ed.D, LPC, CAC, has worked with individuals with special learning needs in postsecondary education, vocational rehabilitation and private practice. She is Director of the Academic Success Center at Rowan University and has a private practice in Glassboro, New Jersey. (See her article below, “Meeting the Needs of Students with LD in Higher Education”.)

- **Julie A. DeSiderio**, M.Ed., an adult teacher and advisor with the Los Angeles Unified School District, Division of Adult and Career Education. Her expertise is working with students who are deaf, hard of hearing, and have entered this country without language or communication skills. She is an accomplished Sign Language Interpreter and a contributing author to a Sign Language Dictionary. In addition to writing adult curriculum approved by the State of California, she has developed a Perkins Grant funded program: Vocational American Sign Language As A Second Language, and consults with teachers and other professionals who work with this population. Julie also manages a multi-district contract for the California State Department of Rehabilitation that provides job development and placement. She is director of the Direct Support

Professional Training Program, which prepares persons who serve adults with developmental disabilities to pass a State mandated evaluation.

• **Bevan Gibson**, M.S. Sp Ed., has been a GED instructor for 12, years and is the director of the Southern Illinois Adult Education Service Center. She specializes in both learning and behavior disabilities. Bevan is an Illinois trainer for the Institute to Credential Special Learning Needs Resource Specialists and has promoted success of students with special learning needs in adult education classrooms since 1998. She has worked with the Illinois Community College Board to revise the Learning Disabilities Guidelines for the Illinois Adult Education programs. Bevan recently joined the NAASLN Membership Committee.

 **Fran Holthaus** is the recipient of the 2005 NAASLN Distinguished Service Award, primarily because she is passionate about the belief that every person should be given the opportunity to become the best he or she can be, in spite of labels and life's circumstances. She believes that educational professionals must continually strive to become as knowledgeable as possible about those barriers which may hinder a client's success and help or guide him/her to overcome those barriers or to accommodate for them. Fran brings almost 35 years of experience as an educator, trainer and program director. She has been the director, coordinator, and instructions of programs including GED, pre-GED, Literacy, Family Literacy and ESOL/Civics and Ohio Reads Grant. Fran works for Adult Basic and Literacy/ESOL-Civics. She is based in Piqua, Ohio.

 **Peg Kennedy, M.S.** is a learning and disability specialist with the Illinois Eastern Community Colleges, where she assesses special learning needs and designs appropriate classroom strategies and accommodations. She also serves on several community committees, striving for the betterment in the lives of the disabled. Additionally, she teaches English Composition online classes for the IVY Tech Community Colleges in Indiana. Peg is an advocate for all persons with disabilities but has first-hand understanding of auditory issues such as processing, discrimination, perception, and deafness, having had her own struggles with a severe hearing loss. Peg will be serving on NAASLN's Communications and Membership Committees.

• **Sherry Nash**, PhD, Instructional Coordinator, Trinity Valley Community College, Athens, Texas, is first, and foremost, a teacher and a learner. With 35 years as an educator in both public schools and college, she loves the challenge and excitement of acquiring new skills and achieving new insights -- and actually enjoys change. She has a passion for helping other adults gain the resources and skills they need to become capable, accomplished and fulfilled individuals who are able to navigate life's ups and downs with confidence. Sherry also has organized large conferences, managed financial operations, developed policies and procedures, and created newsletters. Sherry is particularly interested in helping NAASLN to become an even stronger national voice of advocacy for governmental and institutional policies and structures to appropriately serve adults with special learning needs.

Other Returning Members

Joan Hudson-Miller, Robin Lovrien Schwarz, Ange Siemer, Patricia Walsh, Laura Weisel, and Terry Wetzel

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Spotlight Topic

“Meeting the Needs of Students with LD in Higher Education,” A

Mentoring/Coaching Program

(The first in a series of a Mentoring/Coaching Program)

By Dr. Melissa Arnott, LPC CAC, Director, Academic Success Center

Rowan University

The growing numbers of students with learning disabilities currently comprise approximately 3 to 9 % of the population in institutions of higher learning. The diagnosis of a learning disability is initially obtained and addressed by utilizing an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in the kindergarten through twelfth (K-12) grades. The process that provides support, monitoring, classroom, and testing adaptations, and modified academics is not mandated to continue in the same manner after graduation from high school. Regrettably, the learning disability persists and follows the student into post-secondary education and continues throughout their life span.

Therefore, the staggering numbers of students who are accepted into colleges and universities require a continuation of services in order to assist in the transition and to achieve academic success. Owing to the significant increase in students with learning disabilities and the multitude of issues that they present, responsive colleges and universities need to determine what interventions these students need and provide effective services to maximize the probability of academic success and retention of this at-risk population.

Students with disabilities traditionally have a difficult time transitioning to college and throughout the college experience. The reasons for the difficulties are numerous, many are unique to all freshman students, and many are exclusive to those students with disabilities. The challenges that they face include those of academic, social and emotional origin and may result in poor academic achievement. Other challenges include: lack of self-esteem, increased anxiety, lack of understanding of their disability, learning style, and lack of motivation. The most significant challenge that they must confront is that of the transition from a dependent structured environment provided in high school to an independent nebulous environment found in college.

Students with disabilities usually possess an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) while in high school, which provides programs and supports for academic achievement. In high school it is the school’s responsibility to guarantee that the student achieves success and passes each grade. In college, the student is responsible for his or her own educational success with very few programs and services in place. The student must independently seek out the limited services that are available in college.

In addition to the personal issues presented by students with disabilities, most colleges and universities add to the discord by providing only the necessary services mandated by the law. However, students with disabilities require a supportive system to assist them in the transition and adjustment to college life.

The decline in mandated services from high school to college presents the most significant issue, which is at the center of the experienced difficulties for students with disabilities.

Concerns facing higher education administrators and faculty regarding the transition for the increased number of students with disabilities include such issues as a 50% attrition rate, the extended time required to obtain a four-year degree, and the lack of preparation and skills held by the incoming freshman.

Acquiring a comprehensive understanding and effectively addressing the ambiguous and explicit needs of students with disabilities has become a concerted effort for institutions of higher learning.

To successfully address this issue, a mentoring/coaching program was developed utilizing the Four-Stage Model for College Success. The intent of this program is to increase self-esteem, reduce anxiety, assist students in adjusting to the demands of university life, obtain higher GPA's and retention of students.

Next Issue: Part 2 of "Meeting the Needs of Students with LD in Higher Education"

(See below for information on ordering an audio recordings From Dr. Arnott's NAASLN Conference presentation.)

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Web Site of the Month

To learn more about the Four -Stage Model for College Success, visit www.drarnott.com/Four-Stage%20Model.html

Dr. Arnott details the process by which students become acclimated to campus life and learn the importance of advocating for themselves through a structured mentoring program and implementation of a College Management Plan (CMP). The ultimate goal is to empower the student to become independent and benefit from an improved style of life and academic success.

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Ordering Conference Session Audio Tapes and CDs: For sale on the NAASLN website.

Maybe you attended NAASLN 2005, but couldn't make it to every session. Or maybe you couldn't join us at all. Here's your chance to experience what you missed. Go to the NAASLN web site for the full list of over 60 sessions available on audio tape and CD. A downloadable order form is also available.

Tapes related to this issue's focus topic include:

- **Utilizing a Mentoring/Coaching program to Work Effectively with Students with Learning Disabilities in College with Melissa Arnott-Cox (1 tape/1 CD)**
- **Using Technology with LD Adults: A Practical Guide with Mary Kelly & Jaman Welch (2 tapes/2 CDs)**

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Membership

Welcome to the ONLY national association exclusively dedicated to improving the educational experience for Adults with Special Learning Needs. Whether you are a renewing member, a new member, or an introductory member, a teacher, learner, or policymaker, you have joined a like-minded group of professionally

and personally committed individuals whose camaraderie is based on lifelong learning for diverse populations with specific needs – the disabled, working poor, ESOL learners, high school dropouts, postsecondary students, incarcerated youth, etc.

As a NAASLN member, you have full access to this unique arena, including resources (people and products), our newsletter, membership roster, international networking, advance notice of professional development programs, FYI bulletins on national issues and trends in adult education, discounted rates to our conferences, and opportunities for leadership.

For membership forms go to NAASLN's web site .

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

NAASLN is devoted to enhancing the opportunities for life-long learning for adults with special learning needs by improving the efforts of adult educators working with these individuals in the full range of life-long learning programs, i.e., ABE, ESL, GED, volunteer-based and community-based literacy programs.

Future Newsletter Submissions

Help us meet your needs. Recommend or submit an article, event announcements, book reviews, and web sites links.

E-mail newsletter@naasln.org

Mail to:

Joan Hudson-Miller, 14214 S. Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA 90066 or
Fax to 310-354-2601.

All submissions will be reviewed for appropriateness for our readership and will be selected at the discretion of the newsletter editors.

Sharing information

Do you have ideas on how you would like to better network with other members? Are there other features you would like to see in this Newsletter and on our website?

E-mail newsletter@naasln.org or leave a message on at 800-496-9222

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Help Spread the Word

Please forward this newsletter to other educators and interested parties. If this newsletter was forwarded to you and you would like to become a member of NAASLN and a regular subscriber, send an email to naasln@aol.com for membership information or visit our web site: www.naasln.org .

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