



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR ADULTS WITH SPECIAL LEARNING NEEDS

NAASLN Membership News & Views Issue Eighteen – November 2007

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 that time of year already! Time to look back and look forward. This issue will reflect on the launching of our new Webinar Series and preview the quality you can expect from one of next year's presenters. And there is plenty of looking forward—from a reminder that it is time to renew your NAASLN Membership to an overview of some upcoming 2008 events.

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Reflections – Looking Back, Moving Ahead

Pat Walsh, Newsletter Co-Editor

As the holidays approach, we are asking our membership to think about the personal struggles that you may have overcome as an adult with a special learning need. Or perhaps you know a student, who overcame all odds; someone, who has made it all worth while. We want to feature such stories in the 2008 issues of **NAASLN News and Views**.

For me, that student is Demetrius. It took him seven years to pass the GED. He had almost passed all the sections back in 2001, and then had to start all over in 2002 when the latest version was released. Statistically, Demetrius should be in jail, on welfare, or dead. No father, distracted mother, poverty, special education certificate. When he

came to Project ACCESS in New Orleans right out of high school, he was devastated. He could barely read and couldn't get a job. Now he has a career with a top-tier hotel, a nice car, a nice girlfriend, a few vacations, and his second apartment – the first was destroyed in Katrina.

Whenever I'm tempted to give up or give in, I am inspired by my favorite student.

Who is your inspiration? Or have you overcome a special learning need to become an inspiration to others? **Send us your stories.** A look back in your life can be an inspiration for others to look ahead. (Contact us at info@naasln.org.)

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Webinars Deliver

Robyn Rennick, M.S., Program Director, Dyslexia Research Institute, Tallahassee, FL
NAASLN President

NAASLN has touched all four corners of the United States with sessions this fall and participants didn't even have to leave their offices!

Two webinars drew participants from Washington State to Florida. Feedback confirms what we set out to accomplish – that the information was conference quality. The added factors of time, cost, and convenience signal to us that the webinar is a great way to bring information to adult educators across the country.

The first, *GED Testing Accommodations and Adaptations*, offered specific suggestions to level the playing field for adults with special learning needs. The second, *Managing an Adult ESOL Class with Multiple Skill Levels*, covered curriculum, techniques, materials, and resources that work. According to our webinar surveys, most participants said they would register for another webinar. They reported that the presentations met their expectations, the A/V components were helpful, the schedules were convenient, and costs were reasonable. One respondent put it succinctly, "Thanks, I really needed this, and RIGHT NOW!"

We are responding to your suggestions for future topics. Our webinar series in the winter and spring will include: Emotions and Learning; Study Strategies for Tutors and their Students with Learning Disabilities; The Soft Skills that Create Barriers for Adults with Dyslexia, ADHD and related learning differences; and Working with Adults with Developmental Disabilities and more.

In addition to our live broadcasts, you will soon be able to purchase archived audio/visual presentations.

Visit the NAASLN web site (www.naasln.org) frequently for the latest information on upcoming webinar sessions and the archived presentations.

***You** can be part of the Webinar Planning Team by sending us topics of interest, potential speakers and recommendations for improving the presentations. Perhaps you would like to do a presentation yourself. Contact us at info@naasln.org.

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A Preview of a 2008 Webinar Series Presentation...

Metacognitive skill development—

Executive Functioning Provides Framework for Basic Skill and Literacy Learning

By Laura Weisel, Ph.D., Clinical Director, The TLP Group, Columbus, Ohio

Frontal lobe brain activity that controls executive functioning is also known as metacognitive skills.

The TLP Group began researching executive functions of literacy students (in both corrections and community-based programs) as part of studies funded through the Ohio Department of Education, ABLE, and the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (1995 - 1999). The studies looked at the impact of negative educational traumas on retention, reading, and self-esteem along with the impact of EMDR (a clinical therapeutic intervention for post-traumatic stress disorder) to address the educational traumas.

One of the key findings across the board was that literacy students that participated in the study consistently tested 'below average' in executive functioning using the Stroop Word/Color Naming Test.

Since our study, we have been researching the area of metacognitive skill development and perfecting an intervention template that could be used as the framework for all basic skill and literacy learning as part of the PowerPath learning system.

The metacognitive skill development intervention we have designed is simple and easy to use. The template and skills are reinforced daily as students are trained to plan and organize their own learning, select and integrate needed accommodations/learning strategies into each learning situation, set and manage learning tasks and time, evaluate personal learning gains, and reflect on their learning process for the purpose of transitioning knowledge of learning from one situation to another.

The intervention builds personal responsibility, personal empowerment, and self-advocacy skills while students learn to know, select, and use the accommodations and learning strategies they need to succeed and manage their learning challenges in any learning, employment, or other situation. The intervention appears to work remarkably well with both students and clients who are at risk of being diagnosed as LD as well as those who do not exhibit any LD characteristics.

We are training community-based and correction literacy tutors and learners, all levels of ABE instructors and learners, and workforce development staff and clients to use the intervention process with great success in increasing persistence and transition successes. We are beginning to collect both anecdotal and statistical evidence to support the impact of metacognitive training.

I am interested in hearing what other interventions are successfully being used that can demonstrate impact of executive function/metacognitive skill development.

(Dr. Weisel's research and techniques will be featured in a webinar on emotions and learning scheduled for January 2008. Don't miss this ground-breaking and exciting presentation. –Ed.)

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Website of the Month

These three sites keep you on top of what is really going on between our ears rather than the theories, models, and philosophies we have been train to use as educators. You can also sign up for free newsletters.

Daniel G. Amen, MD is a child and adult psychiatrist, brain imaging specialist, and a Distinguished Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association. Dr Amen's Brain Place offers research, pictures, and other resources related to brain SPECT imaging.
amenclinics.com/bp

BrainConnection, sponsored by Scientific Learning, offers opportunities to blog, view images and animations, play games, and generally learn a lot about the growing body of brain research.
www.brainconnection.com

All Kinds of Minds was founded in 1995 by renowned pediatrician Mel Levine and financier Charles R. Schwab to translate the latest research on how children learn into programs, products, and services that help students struggling in school become more successful learners.
www.allkindsofminds.org

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2008 Membership Renewals

Spending Wisely

Patricia M. Walsh, Membership Co-Chair

The last time I filled my gas tank, it cost me \$37.12. Granted, I didn't let the tank go empty and I do get good mileage. For the price of a tank of gas, I got to take a long weekend to visit some friends and relatives. It was worth every penny.

During my visit, I treated a friend to lunch. It cost \$38, plus tip. We laughed, caught up on old friends, and reminisced about dreams and shared experiences 40 years ago. It, too, was worth every penny.

I just came in from errands, which included a stop at a local farmers' market. I spent \$32 for enough apples to bake several holiday pies, some fresh squash, end-of-season tomatoes, lots of fresh basil, and freshly baked bread.

As you might gather, I like to spend my money wisely. I have an eye for quality, discriminating taste, and a nose for bargains. That's why I have just written my check to NAASLN for my 2008 dues. \$35.00. Less than half the price of my annual National Park Pass, but certainly in that category. It gives me unlimited access to the resources I need.

My NAASLN Membership, just like my recent purchases of gas, lunch, and groceries, is not just a simple commodity; like each of these expenses, it has lasting value.

As you know, NAASLN is the only national association for those who serve adults with special learning needs. Members are people like you — educators, trainers, employers,

human service providers, and adult learners — who are committed to ensuring and expanding opportunities for adults with special learning needs to become successful and productive lifelong learners.

For only \$35 per year, you can join an e-community that offers members a centralized hub of information NAASLN provides its services through the use of technology, collaborative partnerships, dissemination of relevant information and research, circulation of best practices, national and regional conferences, and creative networking with organizations and individuals.

So before the holiday season sets itself upon you, do as I just did. Give your self a gift that has longstanding benefits. When you get your dues notice, please remember lasting value and renew your membership. And pass along a membership form to a colleague. You can also easily renew through our web site, where you will find a downloadable form.

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Spotlight Topic of the month:

From High School to College— Transitional Challenges for Students with ADD

Melissa Arnott-Cox, PhD, Director, Academic Success Center, Rowan University,
NAASLN Board Member

Students with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) traditionally have a difficult time transitioning to college and with the college experience. While the reasons for the difficulties are numerous, many are unique to all freshman students and many are exclusive to those students with ADD.

The challenges that students with ADD contend with include those of academic, social, and emotional origins. This can lead to poor academic achievement, dropping out, and/or being dismissed from college. Other challenges include lack of self-esteem, increased anxiety, lack of understanding of a specific disability and learning style, and lack of motivation.

The most significant challenge that these students must confront is that of the transition from the dependent, structured environment provided in high school to an independent, nebulous environment presented in college.

The college environment is more complex and requires more independence than most students have previously experienced or are prepared to handle. The structure of the day, the independence of living on campus, schedule variations, variations in professors and their teaching styles, rules and expectations, along with an increased academic workload are all challenges for a student with ADD transitioning to college. These students have a difficult time adjusting to class schedules that allow freer time for unstructured activities and study. It requires learning and implementing new skills such as time management, which is particularly difficult for the student with ADD.

Many high school students with ADD are on medication, such as stimulants, or a combination of medications to control their symptoms. Medications that are known to assist students in concentrating, focusing, sorting, and deciphering incoming stimuli are often discontinued with or without parental and medical approval when students enter college. The decision to terminate medication is usually out of a desire to feel “normal”

or the belief that the students have overcome or outgrown their disability. But students also report that difficulties adjusting to schedules (class, social, dining, sleep, etc) may result in forgetting to take or discontinuing prescribed medication. Without it, students have increased difficulty academically and socially. They encounter challenges such as concentration, taking notes in class, test taking, organization, time management skills, poor impulse control, poor decision-making and problem-solving skills, peer interactions, and inappropriate social behaviors.

These students may also turn to substance use and abuse as a way of self-medicating, connecting with peers, and fitting-in. The discontinuation of the much-needed medication along with the presenting issues of ADD further adds to the problem of adjustment and success for the college student with ADD.

For a student with ADD, the world can be a difficult place to navigate. Students have a difficult time focusing and controlling their impulses. Sensations are entering from everywhere while ideas and thoughts are racing. It can be a constant state of disorganization leading to frustration and overwhelming feelings. It is important, however, to understand that individuals with ADD can pay attention and may in fact hyperfocus when a task is of interest to them. The ability to hyperfocus is a strength that can be maximized to assist them in academic achievement.

The key to success for these students is to develop a program that will meet the individual needs and maximize their strengths. Colleges and universities can either add to the discord by only providing the necessary services required by the law, or they can provide a supportive system to assist students in the transition and adjustment to college life. Acquiring a comprehensive understanding and effectively addressing the ambiguous and explicit needs of students with ADD and other disabilities needs to be a priority. A proactive stance should be made in order to ensure student success and retention.

(Dr. Arnott-Cox will be presenting *Assisting Students with Learning Disabilities & ADD in Achieving Academic Success—A Coaching Program* at The Word congress & Expo on Disabilities, November 15-17, in Washington, D.C. See the NAASLN calendar below. For more information about transition, visit the NAASLN Articles page on our website www.naasln.org/articles.htm, especially *Meeting the Needs of Students with LD in Higher Education,* *A Mentoring/Coaching Program, Parts I and II,* and *What is Self-Advocacy in Transition Planning?* –Ed.)

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Get on the Road with NAASLN

Bevan Gibson, M.S. Sp.Ed.

Director, Southern Illinois Professional Development Center, Edwardsville, IL

For the past year we have been promoting NAASLN on the Road. And we've been asked, "What exactly does that mean?"

IACEA, the Voice of Adult Education in Illinois, had its first Special Learning Needs track provided by NAASLN at our 2007 spring conference. NAASLN provided three presenters who conducted a total of seven sessions at the three-day statewide conference. Reaction from those attending was very positive. We heard from several people that it was wonderful to have a national organization bring its wealth of knowledge to Illinois adult education programs.

IACEA has since become an organizational member of NAASLN and will once again work with NAASLN for the 2008 conference in the same way. IACEA provides a \$1000 honorarium to NAASLN, as well as transportation, lodging, and meals for the presenters. The organization also provided handouts for each of the presenters for each of the sessions. IACEA hopes to continue this professional development relationship with NAASLN in the future.

In addition to the working relationship NAASLN has formed with IACEA, NAASLN also worked in coordination with TALAE, the Texas Association for Literacy and Adult Education to provide a special learning needs strand for their annual statewide conference in 2007. In May, NAASLN will be hosting a Special Learning Needs track at COABE.

If your state organization wants to feature a NAASLN on the Road track, please contact me, Bevan Gibson at bgibson@siue.edu or Laura P. Weisel at powerpath@aol.com. It's a great way to add a national angle to your local professional development conferences.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NAASLN Road Trip Tracks

NAASLN conferences often are described as national in scope, but local in intimacy. Until our next national conference, check out the following events, which will be featuring NAASLN tracks. And watch the **NAASLN web site Calendar** for more information on these and other upcoming events.

November 15-17

WCD Expo

World Congress and Expo on Disabilities
Washington Convention Center, Washington, DC
www.wcdexpo.com/conference.cfm

3 Days - 5 Tracks - A Comprehensive Learning Experience

This year's program will feature over 70 multi-disciplinary sessions sponsored by the WCD Foundation for Education, Inc, with the support of leading professional societies and organizations. During this intensive three-day educational experience, information and ideas on today's most important issues will be exchanged between people with disabilities, their families and caregivers, physicians, direct support professionals, allied healthcare professionals, educators and adapted physical education specialists. Be sure to catch a special session on adult students with learning disabilities and ADD, *Assisting Students with Learning Disabilities & ADD in Achieving Academic Success-A Coaching Program*, presented by Melissa Arnott-Cox, NAASLN Board Member, Director, Academic Success Center, Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ. For additional information visit www.wcdexpo.com/index.cfm

2008

March 5-7

ICEA Springfield, IL

The Voice of Adult Education in Illinois
29th Annual Statewide Conference
Hilton Springfield
www.iacea.net

NAASLN will be hosting a Special Learning Needs Track. Details will be posted at www.naasln.org when finalized

April 28 – May 1

COABE National Conference

Adam’s Mark Hotel, St. Louis, MO
www.coabe.org

NAASLN will be conducting a full day Pre-conference Session and hosting a Special Learning Needs track. Details will be posted at www.naasln.org when finalized.

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Giveline.com is an online store created for the community-minded shopper. Every transaction generates a financial contribution to your favorite charity, which we hope will be **NAASLN**. Giveline.com contributes between 7 and 33 percent of product sales, with a store-wide average of nearly 16 percent per transaction. The amount to be donated to **NAASLN** varies by product. Their “open book” policy includes displaying the exact amount on every product page, as well as throughout the checkout process.

So click on www.giveline.org and go directly the NAASLN page and for every item you order NAASLN receives a financial contribution.

This is the first time our association has worked with Giveline.org and so we would appreciate your feedback on your experience using this site, the quality of their products and service. Let us know at info@naasln.org. Thanks you!

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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,

Future Newsletter Submissions

Help us meet your needs. Recommend or submit an article, event announcements, book reviews, and web sites links. Either E-mail newsletter@naasln.org or send 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 888-5NAASLN (888-562-2756).

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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 info@naasln.org for membership information or visit our web site: www.naasln.org/membership.

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Send comments or questions about this newsletter by email to newsletter@naasln.org.

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