

# Bulletin



**In the spotlight:  
Oral Language and Developmental  
Language Disorder**

## LDA Council 2022-2023

(As at March 2023)

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## LDA Publications

#### AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Editor: Dr Alison Madelaine

Assistant Editor: Kim Knight

#### LDA BULLETIN

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## LDA MISSION

Learning Difficulties Australia is an association of teachers and other professionals dedicated to assisting students with learning difficulties through effective teaching practices based on scientific research, both in the classroom and through individualised instruction.

#### THE BULLETIN

The Bulletin is published three times a year. For information about submitting articles, and for requests to reprint articles, please contact the Editor: [bulletin.editor@ldaustralia.org](mailto:bulletin.editor@ldaustralia.org)

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# From the President

## Elaine McLeish

**T**his Bulletin report will be my final as the LDA President for the 2022/23 Council term.

When I took on the role of President at the 2022 AGM in October, it was with a great deal of trepidation, feeling very underqualified for such a prestigious position and aware that LDA was at an important crossroads. However, I am grateful that my colleagues encouraged me to step up because I have learnt much from the experience and value the opportunity to work with such a fantastic team.

At times I felt overwhelmed by the responsibilities and the time commitment required, and I am in awe of my predecessors who often combined the Presidency with the demands of full-time employment and with minimal administrative support. Since our new General Manager, Dr Sherree Halliwell, commenced in May, we now have our entire staff complement, and Council administrative responsibilities have dropped enormously. As Sherree puts it, Council members no longer need to waste their time “stuck in the weeds” but can rely on our efficient staff to find the way through them.

We are fortunate to have three such dedicated staff in Sherree, Hema Desai (Education Manager) and Bec Rangas (Business Administrator), who all go above and beyond in their efforts for our organisation. Sherree and Hema have gone way above and beyond recently in providing cover for Bec during her seven weeks’ leave, and we greatly appreciate this.

You will undoubtedly have noticed the impressive amount of excellent professional development opportunities we now have on our calendar, thanks to the tireless efforts of Hema in

collaboration with the PD Committee. Hema has been preparing monthly eNews and generating regular social media posts to promote our events. These sessions to date have received tremendous support from members and non-members and much positive feedback. They have also generated a gratifying increase in membership. We are confident of your ongoing support as we further expand our offerings to meet your PD requirements, including a new On Demand Platform currently in the pipeline, which will significantly increase our reach. Hema is currently planning two Conferences in October and November, exploring potential sponsors for events, and thinking ahead about plans for next year. She is also working closely with our Bulletin editor, Julie Scali, on potential links between Bulletin articles and PD events.

## Other news from Council

The Awards Committee is busy judging the 2023 Mona Tobias, Bruce Wicking, and Tertiary Student Awards nominations; the Consultants panel have decided on the Rosemary Carter Award recipient, our AJLD editor has decided on the Eminent Researcher Award recipient and is assessing Early Career Researcher nominations. These awards give important recognition to individuals whose achievements have made a difference to the whole education community. Stay tuned for announcements about all of this year’s recipients.

To support the work of our Bulletin Editor, Sherree has recruited a copyeditor who will join LDA as a contractor on a fixed fee-for-service basis.

Representatives from LDA Council and Consultants recently met with an Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) project team on Engaged Classrooms to discuss classroom challenges when engaging students with Learning Difficulties. This meeting was an opportunity to share perspectives and inform the work.

Our Vice President, Dr Robyn Wheldall and Secretary, Steph Murphy, have prepared a submission from LDA to the National Schools Reform Agreement (NSRA) in

Our other Vice President and Convenor of our IT Committee, Geoff Ongley, continues to work indefatigably on improvements to our website and also



contributes an enormous amount of time and expertise to IT support for our online Professional Development and across other areas of the organisation. I can’t imagine what we’d do without him.

Sherree is preparing a draft of a Strategic Plan for the Council to review, with strategic priorities for sustainability and growth and operational recommendations.

We are again planning for another hybrid AGM, which will be at our traditional venue, the Treacy Centre in Melbourne, on Saturday, October 14th. It is an excellent opportunity to catch up with people and make new connections. As is customary, there will be a presentation by the Eminent Researcher and other award recipients.

Information about nominating for the 2023/24 Council will be circulated to all voting members in mid-August, allowing sufficient time for an election in mid-September if required.

I look forward to seeing many of you in person at the AGM.

## Best wishes

*Elaine*

*Elaine McLeish is enjoying retirement from a long teaching career in primary and special education and as an LDA Consultant. She has a strong history of active contributions to LDA, serving as the LDA Referral Officer and Administration Officer for the Consultants Committee for many years. She has recently contributed as Convenor of the Consultants Committee, Vice-President, and Acting Treasurer. She is a Life Member of LDA*

*Elaine is also actively involved with her six grandchildren and divides her time between suburban Northcote and the wild coast of Cape Paterson in Victoria.*

# In this issue of the Bulletin...

## Julie Scali, Editor, LDA Bulletin

I am pleased to share with you our *Oral Language and Developmental Language Disorder* edition of the Bulletin. Oral language is the foundation of all literacy success and a predictor of later social skills. This edition focuses specifically on the why and what of best practice in oral storytelling instruction, language difficulties students experience, as well as considerations and recommendations for small group intervention.

Students come to school with a wide range of oral language experiences. Despite this, even children who experience the most language-rich early childhood backgrounds have a vast gap between their spoken vocabulary and the complexity of vocabulary required in understanding written texts, in even the simplest picture books. In this edition, Trina D. Spencer and Chelsea Pierce provide a practical approach in bridging this divide through oral storytelling as a best practice approach for classroom instruction. They explain the positive impact upon not only reading and writing, but also as a protective behaviour for students. It is an excellent read and I am delighted to be republishing this piece.

Our feature piece of this edition is 'Identifying and Supporting the 1 in 14 Students with Developmental Language Disorder' by Shaun Ziegenfusz. This article outlines the large number of students in our classrooms with a widely unknown disorder- Developmental Language Disorder (DLD). Shaun outlines indicators for identifying students with DLD, how to support students in the classroom, as well as suggestions for raising awareness and recommended resource links.

The second piece is entitled, "The Oral Narrative Intervention Programme – A Tier 2 small group intervention for 5–6-year-olds with storytelling difficulties".

It is written by Laura Glisson and outlines the impact of implementing oral narrative interventions in mainstream classrooms and contexts. She outlines that the explicit teaching of narrative macrostructure can have a significant impact on the development of other literacy areas

Following on from this article, Kathryn Thorburn outlines 'Oral Language and Communication in the K-2 classroom' that suggests recommendations for early assessment screening in schools, positive oral language additions to the latest NSW English curriculum, as well as promising research based on the Nuffield Early Language Intervention in a Newcastle school.

Of equal interest in a broader sense and not specifically oral language focused is a piece on an 'Introduction to multi-tiered system of supports'. This guide for school teachers and leaders, highlights how schools can provide evidence-based literacy and numeracy support in secondary schools. It is the work of Adam Inder, Tess Marslen and Dan Carr from AERO.

To wrap-up, this edition also includes a book review entitled 'Effective Instruction in Reading and Spelling. Edited by Kevin Wheldall, Robyn Wheldall, Jennifer Buckingham, this text combines decades of scientific research about how children learn to read with teaching methods that have the strongest evidence of effectiveness, into a practical guide on how to plan and implement high quality literacy lessons. It is an excellent read for teachers and learning support specialists alike, and is in my opinion an essential inclusion in every early childhood and primary teaching preservice university degree.

I would also like to thank the wonderful staff and students of St Luke's in Woodvale, Perth; for allowing us to go into a classroom to take

photographs of an oral storytelling session in action, for this Bulletin edition. You are superstars!

I hope you enjoy the wonderful contributions of this Bulletin. Happy reading!



**Julie Scali**  
Editor, LDA Bulletin

*Julie Scali is the Director of Literacy Impact, specialising in structured literacy and Response to Intervention. A former deputy principal in Australia, she now works with principals, school leaders and teachers with consultancy, professional learning and online modules to embed schoolwide evidence-based literacy approaches.*