Teachers' Corner

Special Education Teachers Do a Lot. Like, a Lot, a Lot.

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Martin Odima Jr.
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Special education teachers do a lot. Like, a lot, a lot.

8:31 AM · Feb 11, 2021 · Twitter Web App

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760 Retweets   **138** Quote Tweets   **6,309** Likes

The workload for all educators is intense. For special educators, it may be even greater due to the range of students' instructional needs, the nuances of multiple classroom instructional formats, and the quantity of due process requirements (Stempien & Loeb, 2002). During the pandemic, educators have also dealt with both their own—and their students'—mental health and fatigue. Educators are told to engage in self-care; however, workloads leave little time to manage stress. On a particularly stressful day, Martin turned to Twitter to express his feelings about these responsibilities. His tweet, "Special education teachers do a lot. Like, a lot, a lot," was viewed hundreds of thousands of times. This attention led the authors to dive into the "Like, a lot, a lot" for educators who encounter biases based on social identity and engage in roles to change current social justice structures in the educational system for students from their communities.

"Like, a Lot": Social Identity

Due to a lack of diversity in the teacher workforce, not all students accrue the academic benefits of being taught by an ed-

ucator from the same background (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Martin, an African and Asian American male educator with a commitment to educational equity, inclusive practices, and social justice, wasn't exposed to a Black educator until college. When Martin entered the field, he anticipated the typical challenges new educators experience, but he didn't anticipate the amount of effort he would invest in navigation of racial structures. It is a lot! Martin works harder than others to prove his competence. Colleagues, consciously and unconsciously, treat teachers of color poorly and question their competency more often than their White counterparts (Bristol & Mentor, 2018). Black male teachers report that they are rarely recognized for their content knowledge, pedagogical abilities, and teaching skills (Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2019).

Conversations about race and its impact can be uncomfortable, but not having this dialogue because of "the discomfort of authentic racial engagement in a culture infused with racial disparity limits the ability to form authentic connections across racial lines, and results in a perpetual cycle that works to hold racism in place" (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 66). Martin has witnessed staff of color marginalized, disrespected, and dismissed while White teachers resist difficult conversations about how privilege manifests in educational settings. People of color who speak up and name bias in schools face hostility and are accused of being "too emotional," "troublemakers," or too "political" for pointing out conditions that harm individuals of color (Kohli, 2018). When there are racial incidents in schools or communities, these same teachers are often expected to take the lead in educating others while dealing with their own responses (Cornier et al., 2021).

"Like, a Lot, a Lot": Social Justice Advocacy

Educators like Martin, who engage in social justice, invest a lot of time advocating for equity for students in special education programs who experience the intersectionality of having a disability and another social identity. Martin entered special education to be an agent of change, driven by an awareness of the needs of Black males in special education (Cornier, 2020). Students who disproportionately receive special education, physical segregation, and harsh applications of discipline policy need justice (Gorski, 2019). Martin has observed students in special education denied access to services because of this physical segregation. Martin invests time in justice work to provide

President's Message

Rob Pennington

DADD community,

Spring is just behind us and I am sure that many of you faced difficult transitions as the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on our communities continued to evolve. It is my hope that you remained safe and that this summer brings each of you warmth, rejuvenation, and reflection. DADD will continue to support your efforts through social media, accessible publications, and our many online trainings and forums.

We hope that you enjoyed CEC 2021 and the rich schedule of DADD sessions. This year's presenters were outstanding and tackled a range of essential issues related to instruction, behavior supports, and advocacy. Further, we saw excellent presentations from students, practitioners, and university faculty reflecting a swath of DADD membership. I encourage you to continue sharing your hard work with our community by submitting a proposal to next year's DADD international and CEC annual conferences. If presenting at a professional conference is new to you and seems daunting, let me embolden you to share your relevant and evidence-based content. Our membership is eager to hear from new and diverse voices, especially those working directly in the field.

Finally, I would like to reach out to our members that provide direct service and supports to individuals with autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, and/or other developmental disabilities (e.g., teachers, behavior analysts, speech pathologists). Your voices are important to the organization and I invite you to participate in committee membership (e.g., diversity, membership, communications) and to apply for positions on the executive board. We need strong representation of our membership within these leadership positions to ensure we can most effectively make progress towards our mission.

Have a wonderful couple of months and keep your eyes open for more DADD resources and opportunities to connect during those dog days of summer. ∎

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Executive Director's Corner

Emily Bouck

I am writing this on March 1, 2021, and I cannot help but think, what a year. It has been almost a year since my family—and probably a lot of us—started quarantining with the COVID-19 pandemic. On the one hand, I cannot help but feel time has both gone quickly and slowly. As I think about what transpired, I toggle between a year lost and a year gained. Lost, as I reflect on work that was unfinished or not started, as well as my kids isolated from friends and school for the most part. Gained, as I think about how we slowed our lives and spent more time together—not moving quickly from one thing to the next. I also realize how much time I have spent talking about the pandemic and worrying about the pandemic, so I am going to go in a different direction for this article, although I also know I would be remiss if I did not at least address the milestone before us.

[Segway, for there is not a good transition]. As I think about being halfway through spring semester, I look toward the upcoming graduation and convocations for many of our teacher candidates. Soon, we as a field will have more eager and excited new educators ready to embrace teaching and working to make a difference in the lives of students. Whenever I speak at our intern (student teacher) convocation, I always tell them of the awesome responsibility that is before them. I tell them that they have great power—the power to change a life—and that with power comes responsibility: the responsibility to educate, to advocate, to find the strengths of each student. Being a special education teacher is rewarding but challenging. We know special education teachers leave the field at much higher rates than K–12 administrators, special education teacher preparation faculty, and, often, families are comfortable with. Indeed, some reports have indicated that up to 50% leave within their first few years of teaching (The IRIS Center, 2021). While individuals leave for different reasons, commonalities do exist, including non-teaching job responsibilities (think paperwork), lack of support, and large caseloads. The loss of special educators also comes at a time when we are preparing fewer people to assume those positions. We in the field are facing declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs in higher education, including special education (Camera, 2019; Gonzalez, 2020).

The problem of special education teacher shortages can feel overwhelming, and I wonder what we can do as a division, and what I can do as an individual. One thing I try to do is to speak up for teachers and the profession of teaching. I try to call

Evidence-based Practices for Individuals with Autism, Intellectual Disability, and Related Disabilities

Using Upside-Down Task Analysis to Monitor Student Progress

Taryn Wade

Addie McConomy

Jenny Root

Florida State University

Using Task Analysis

Supporting student learning and independence is one of the primary goals of special education. Task analysis is one versatile tool that can help students work towards this goal. A *task analysis* is an ordered list that includes all of the discrete skills that, when completed sequentially, make up a specific task (Moyer & Dardig, 1978). Task analysis has been extensively used in special education. Research completed by Gold (1976) laid the foundation for teaching chained tasks using task analysis to students with extensive support needs (e.g., autism, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities). Task analyses are meaningful tools for special education teachers because they can be easily differentiated, can be applied to many settings and tasks, and allow for frequent data collection. Task analytic instruction is an evidence-based practice for teaching students with developmental disabilities to complete chained tasks (Spooner et al., 2017). Task analysis can use words or visual supports to convey the steps (Cohen & Demchak, 2018) and can be developed for any skill that requires a series of steps to be carried out in a specific order, including daily living skills (e.g., brushing teeth, preparing a snack), community living skills (e.g., using a vending machine, using a debit card to pay for a purchase), and academic skills (e.g., engaging in story-based lessons, solving a math problem).

In addition to academic assistance, task analysis supports related skills that allow students more independence, such as participation in routines within general education settings (Cohen & Demchak, 2018) and social activities with peers (Parker & Kamps, 2011). Teachers can also use task analysis to support self-monitoring, which can lead to greater independence (Gilley et al., 2020; Miller & Taber-Doughty, 2014; Root et al., 2020).

Connection to Writing IEP Goals

The data collected via task analysis can inform decision making in long-term goals, including IEP development and assessment of progress. Special educators are required to report student progress toward IEP goals on a frequent basis. Further, data-based decision making is a core tenant of special education (CEC, 2015). Using task analysis can reduce the amount of time teachers take to assess progress by integrating instruction

and assessment. The result is authentic and valuable data that have been collected throughout an instructional unit. These data can be used to establish present levels of performance, plan long-term goals and short term objectives, and tailor instruction to student needs as they demonstrate they need more challenge or increased support.

Monitoring Student Progress with Task Analysis

The upside-down task analysis is conducive to data collection, and teachers can use its embedded graphing format to analyze data directly on the task analysis form (Test & Spooner, 1996). The steps are listed in reverse chronological order (see Figure 1), so the first step is listed at the bottom of the task analysis. In addition to the written steps, columns with the step numbers can be placed on the form so that teachers are able to graph multiple sessions (for example, 5 columns to monitor one week of progress). The teacher can mark the steps the student completes correctly using an annotation key. This annotation system may be simpler (e.g., correct steps) or more complex and include prompt

Upside down task analysis: Steps to decompose a 3-digit number into place value														
10. Say number using numerals	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
9. Say number using blocks	NR	SV	SV	/		9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
8. Count and move units to place value mat	GP	SV	SV	SC		8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
7. Say last digit	/		/			7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
6. Count and move rods to place value mat	GP	GP	SC	SC	SC	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
5. Say second digit	/			SC	/	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
4. Count and move flats to place value mat	GP	SV	SC	/		4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3. Say first digit	SV	/	/	SV			3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
2. Confirm that number is in the hundreds	NR	NR	SV	/	SC	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
1. State how many digits are in the number	SV	/	/	/	/	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Session number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14

Annotation key:	Student mastery goal: Maxwell will complete 8 steps independently correct for three sequential sessions.
/ - Independent correct SV – Specific verbal SC – Self correct GP – Gestural prompt NR – No response/teacher completed	Notes:

Figure 1. Example of Upside-Down Task Analysis

Note: items completed independently correct are marked with a slash. The total number of steps completed independently correct in a session are circled.

levels (e.g., steps completed independently, with a specific verbal prompt, with a gestural prompt, no response).

The number of steps the student completes correctly is circled for each session for immediate and frequent progress monitoring (Test & Spooner, 1996). The circled numbers can be connected with lines for visual analysis of student performance. Collecting and analyzing data at the step level provides specific information on student support needs (Kellems et al., 2020). For example, steps that consistently require prompting may need to be pulled out and practiced in a massed-trial format for repeated opportunities to respond with feedback (Test & Spooner, 1996). For in-depth resources on data-based decision making, see Jimenez et al. (2012) and Cox et al. (2020).

The data from the task analysis can be reported in several ways. For example, the teacher can report that the student completed 45% of task analysis steps independently and 55% of the steps required teacher verbal prompts. This information can be used to modify the task analysis, which scaffolds support for classroom learning.

Conclusion

Task analysis is a versatile tool that includes benefits to student learning, supports inclusive practices, and streamlines the data collection process for special educators. Developing the steps in the process is individualized based on student need, and using a permanent product, data can easily be graphed and data-based decisions can be made to scaffold the task analysis steps up or down. Task analysis is an EBP for students with extensive support needs and should be incorporated into both academic and daily living instruction to support learning and independence. ■

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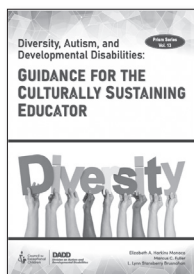
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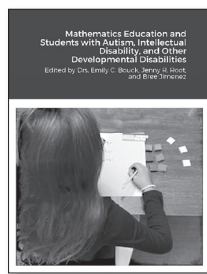
Mathematics Education and Students with Autism, Intellectual Disability, and Other Developmental Disabilities available now at http://www.daddcec.com/dadd-marketplace.html.

Students' Corner

Student Life, A Year Into COVID-19

Megan Carpenter

Melissa Tapp

Andy Masud Werner

University of North Carolina at Charlotte

We are a year into COVID-19. The world has changed for everyone, including students. We have faced and conquered many challenges, while many still remain. As students, we are in the unique position of having to carry on with multiple tasks (e.g., coursework, research, writing) as if nothing has changed, because academic expectations have not, while also navigating the COVID-19 life. This has placed a burden on our research agendas. We are missing the connection of having our advisors, faculty, and other students in one place. We are juggling the responsibilities of caring for children and loved ones without the pre-COVID support. It also is a struggle to disengage from work and spend time focused on family and friends when your work is at home.

While we all have been impacted by the changes brought about by COVID-19, we are at different points in our academic careers and are impacted differently. Andy Masud Werner, a first year doctoral student, shared how her experience has been shaped by COVID-19:

As a student in the first year of my doctoral program, the biggest challenge for me has been the lack of a sense of community due to the completely virtual delivery of the program. It is well known within our program that the faculty, students, and other staff members highly value creating meaningful relationships with one another. This has been evident in the various virtual social gatherings I have attended. The effort made to keep this sense of community has been outstanding! However, as I am sure many of us feel, talking into a computer is just not the same as being face to face with someone. I have formed friendships and partnerships with many members of my cohort, but I cannot help but imagine how much stronger these might be if we were together in person. I feel that I am missing out on the lively discussions within a seminar class, the incidental meetings in the hallways, the hug of emotional support from a friend, the legendary pep talks from our department head when we are feeling defeated, attending conferences in person, and of course, the notorious in-person social events. While starting out my doctoral

program with these very unique challenges has been disheartening, frustrating, and downright ugly at times, when I pause to take a step back and put things into perspective, I find myself overwhelmed with gratitude at being part of this amazing family.

Melissa Tapp, a doctoral student in the middle of her program, shared how her experience changed with COVID-19:

As a student in the middle of my doctoral program, the changes brought on by COVID-19 have definitely had an impact on my overall experience in the program. During my first year, I developed close relationships with other students in the program during informal gatherings in the office and social events. These relationships were essential to many areas of growth (e.g., coursework, collaboration, networking). With the shift to virtual everything (e.g., classes, meetings, social gatherings), there has been an impact on the peer support and guidance that is passed between scholars in different years of study. While the opportunities to "meet" are still available, the virtual format creates less personal experiences. In addition, the challenges I've encountered bring on an overall concept of "less." For example, within doctoral seminars, the level of engagement is less. During co-teaching experiences, there are less opportunities for relationship building with students. Also, by participating in limited direct research with students and teachers, I feel less prepared than I should be for embarking on the next phase of dissertation research. In contrast, this environment has also provided more. Overall, I have worked on more research projects using more methodologies. There is actually more time (even though sometimes it doesn't feel like it) for working on tasks. In addition, at this point I am also more motivated for the next phase due to the deprivation of social interactions and limited interactions with teachers and students.

access to the general education setting and interrupt systems that isolate students from curriculum, instruction, and peers without disabilities.

Martin's recognition of the inequities in students in special education not receiving access to all the general education curriculum led him to target science for instruction. He reached out to teachers and volunteers to brainstorm, collaborate, create, and implement a science program to engage students, regardless of their ability. The outcome was students in special education participated in the science fair for the first time. To support inclusion and ensure access, Martin has invested time co-teaching with a general education teacher to provide instruction to students with and without disabilities. Co-teaching requires extensive differentiation, innovation, and extra planning time. Additional responsibilities for teachers from underserved communities include being asked to be the disciplinarian for students experiencing behavioral challenges outside of their caseloads (Cornier et al., 2021).

Strategies

As a starting point, educators can participate in facilitated conversations and engage in critical introspection and reflective listening to understand bias, become aware of themselves and their personal bias, question understandings and beliefs, understand other perspectives, examine school contexts, and identify strategies (Safir, 2016; Staats, 2016). Conversations could include:

- What is bias (personal, institutional, and systemic)?
- Who am I (race, culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic group, language, sexual orientation, and gender)?
- How is my identity similar to and different from the identities of my students and other school personnel?
- What are my internal thoughts or beliefs about individuals based on identified differences?
- Where do I see biases playing out in schools? How does my school reproduce disparities in student outcomes or in the workload of colleagues?
- After listening to other perspectives, how are my thoughts or beliefs different?
- How can I disrupt my "autopilot" biased judgments about others based on my identity and understanding of the world?
- What fear or apprehension do I have about addressing these issues?
- How can I be an ally to individuals who experience racism in schools and adopt strategies that disrupt current inequities?

To advocate for social justice changes and gain access to curriculum for students with disabilities, educators can engage general education colleagues in conversations such as:

- What general education curriculum is not being provided to all students in special education?
- How can general and special education staff collaborate, share responsibility, and participate in different models of instruction to provide equitable access to the general education curriculum for students in special education?

Conclusion

Martin's tweet received 14,903 engagements and 98 comments. The tweet resonated with educators and others around the country and ignited a banner for support, empathy, and compassion for special education teachers who do a lot. The national momentum focused on racial injustice makes this a prime time to call all educators to action to disrupt the disparity and acknowledge the "Like, a lot, a lot." Educators can start by identifying bias and sharing in social justice work so as to not put this responsibility primarily on the shoulders of teachers who mirror students' social identities. ∎

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out the attacks on public education and the deprofessionalization of teaching. I often think my college of education and its leadership can and should do more to counter the attacks on public education. But perhaps we, as a division, and the larger organization of CEC, can and should do more as well. Perhaps we should rededicate ourselves to advocating for teachers and public education. We have a platform and a voice, and we should use these more to challenge those who belittle or demean educators and what they seek to do. As a professional organization, we have the power. And of course, with great power comes great responsibility. ∎

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Megan Carpenter, a doctoral candidate completing her dissertation, shared her experience:

As a doctoral student finishing my program, every aspect of my educational experience has changed. My first years in the doctoral program were filled with impromptu meetings with faculty, in-person support from colleagues, social gatherings, and time in schools working directly with teachers. Now, I cannot see other students in my cohort daily. I no longer go into schools to coach teachers and work with students. Due to hybrid learning environments, my dissertation data collection is taking much longer than I anticipated. Additionally, the academic job search process is completely different than I expected. However, I have been afforded opportunities I otherwise would not have been due to COVID-19. COVID-19 forced me to look at how I can continue to contribute to the field with very limited access to schools. I have new opportunities to expand my knowledge of research methodologies and work with diverse teams. I had the opportunity to help translate my research to practice by focusing on writing practitioner-friendly articles. Additionally, I have been able to work closely with other DADD board members for the DADD Community Chats.

Over the course of the year, we have learned ways to mitigate some of these challenges to survive and thrive in our academic programs, regardless of how far we are in the program. For many students, the lack of connection to colleagues has been a challenge. Virtual writing groups and book clubs are a great way to feel connected. I recently joined a book club through my university, and it has been a great way to spend time focused on improving our practice with colleagues. Additionally, DADD has a virtual writing group. You can continue to work on your individual writing goals with the support of colleagues.

Although virtual conferences felt strange a year ago, the enhancements to recent conferences have made networking and building connections possible. One way students can continue virtual networking is to reach out to researchers after their presentations. Researchers love to talk about their work, and many of them, like many students, are missing the connection with people. After you attend a conference session of interest, reach out to the presenters. They are often happy to correspond via email and often will meet with you to discuss their work. In addition to attending conference sessions, virtual conferences offer the opportunity for virtual student socials. At the DADD Virtual Student Social, students were able to connect, share successes, and build their networks.

In addition to virtual conferences, students can look for other opportunities for networking and collaboration through membership in organizations like DADD. In March, students had the opportunity to be paired with scholars with similar research interests. This allowed students to have a conversation with experts in the field of intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities, and autism.

Finally, COVID-19 has allowed many students and researchers the opportunity to build expertise in other research areas. While this was frustrating at first, it has allowed students the opportunity to expand their research expertise and work with different research teams on qualitative research, literature reviews, and surveys. Furthermore, it has allowed additional opportunities for cross-institutional collaboration. Due to the accessibility of virtual meetings, it is easier to invite colleagues from across the country to join projects.

In conclusion, COVID-19 has changed many of the experiences we expected to have in our programs. However, we are finding new and creative ways to connect with others and move the field of intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities, and autism forward. In many cases, we are afforded new opportunities we would not have been without COVID-19. ∎

2021 DADD Hybrid Conference Highlights

This past January, 360 attendees, presenters, and exhibitors participated both in-person and virtually in DADD's 22nd International Conference on Autism, Intellectual Disability, & Developmental Disabilities in Clearwater Beach, Florida! Highlights from the 3-day hybrid conference include the following:

Focused Training: Pre-conference training institutes included one with a practitioner/educator focus, and the other with a BCBA focus.

Opening General Session: Dr. Sue Ball opened the 2021 Conference with her virtual keynote address, *At the Heart of the Matter: Supporting Educators' Well-being and Resiliency During the Pandemic*.

Multiple Presentation Formats: Formats included in-person lecture presentations (live-streamed and recorded), collaborative Zoom presentations, pre-recorded, on-demand lecture and poster presentations, and in-person poster presentations.

Virtual Attendee Hub: All conference participants were able to view pre-recorded, on-demand presentations as well as the live collaborative Zoom presentations (which were recorded and posted in the Hub) for 3 months after the conference concluded!

Conference Sponsor: Thank you to Ann Meyer, vice president of Attainment Company Inc., for sponsoring our first ever hybrid conference!

Diversity Focus: Kudos to DADD's Diversity chair, Dr. Liz Harkins, and Dr. Jamie Pearson, a member of the Diversity Committee, for their various presentations on diversity and, most notably, *Empowering Families: Using Culturally Responsive Strategies to Teach Students with Multi-layered Identities*, a featured presentation on Wednesday. This presentation has the highest number of views, among all the presentations posted on the Hub!

Continuing Education: DADD provides Professional Development Hours (PDHs) and BACB-approved continuing education sessions; BCBA conference participants received BACB CEUs at no additional cost.

DADD Membership Outreach: Division members participated virtually in the Annual General Business Meeting and DADD committee meetings. Additionally, Megan Carpenter, DADD's student representative, hosted a virtual social for DADD student members!

Student Poster Presentation Award Recipient: Congratulations to Alison Wilhelm from the University of Washington for her poster presentation, *Access and Independence: A Systematic Review of Literacy Instruction for Elementary-aged Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*.

Award Winners:

Dr. Michael Wehmeyer, a long-time DADD member, board member, and past president, was the **2021 Burton Blatt Humanitarian Award** winner. Dr. Wehmeyer is the Ross and Marianna Beach Distinguished Professor in Special Education and director and senior scientist at the Beach Center on Disability at the University of Kansas.

Scott Fisher is the **2021 Shriver-Kennedy Student Achievement Award** winner. Scott is a young man in the 11th grade with autism who excels in academics, specifically math. His nominators spoke about his thirst for knowledge and willingness to work hard and overcome challenges.

Dr. Matthew Brock is an associate professor of special education at the Ohio State University and the **2021 Research Award** winner. His research is focused on inclusion and peer-mediated intervention for students with autism and developmental disabilities.

This year's **Teacher of the Year** is **Mr. Srinivas Pannela**, a high school teacher for students with autism at North West Halifax High School in Littleton, North Carolina. His nominators spoke about his passion for his work and finding strategies that work for his students.

The **2021 Tom E. C. Smith Early Career Award** winner is **Dr. Suzanne Kucharczyk**, an assistant professor at the University of Arkansas. Her key area of work is in transition for students with developmental disabilities.

Save the Date! Please plan to join us back in beautiful Clearwater Beach, Florida for DADD's 23rd Annual Conference, January 26–28, 2022. Call for proposals opens on April 1 and closes on June 1.

For additional information on DADD's conferences, please contact **Cindy Perras**, DADD conference coordinator, at **cindy.perras@gmail.com**. ∎

Editor's Note

Chris Denning

I hope you enjoyed this issue of *DADD Express*. We had an exciting first ever hybrid DADD annual conference, and I hope you enjoyed our summary of the event. Let me know if you'd like copies of recent Teacher's Corner, Legal Brief, and EBP articles or look for them on the new DADD website at **http://www.daddcec.com/**.

Interested in writing for *DADD Express*? We are always soliciting articles for Teachers' Corner and for our EBP and Legal Briefs sections. If you would like to contribute, please contact me with ideas or questions (**christopher.denning@umb.edu**). ∎

DADD Website:
http://www.daddcec.com/