



ResearchILD's 34th Annual Learning Differences Conference: Highlights



Learning Differences Conference Teacher Panel 2019: Embedding executive function strategies into the classroom using the SMARTS curriculum

The annual teacher panel included, from left Dr. Jane Gertler, Director of the Office of Teaching and Learning at the Churchill School and Center in New York City; Karen Grabowski, M.S., CCC-SLP, M.Ed., a Speech-Language Pathologist with Lexington Public Schools in Lexington, MA; Kristine Wiltz, M.S. Ed., BCBA, Special Education Liaison, Lexington Public School in Lexington, MA; Ruth Schaller, M.A., Founder and CEO, Schaller Education Solutions, L.L.C., IN VA and Cherelle Webster-Payne, MSW, LCSW, Social Worker, Boston Public Schools. Panel members discussed their experience in implementing executive function strategies in their schools and reflected on their success and challenges in supporting learning outcomes for a broad range of students with diverse learning profiles.

"I was fortunate enough to attend the Learning Differences conference this weekend. I am exhilarated to bring the important information I learned back to my district."

"My biggest conference takeaway- - I can teach Executive Function strategies and change every one of my student's lifelong outcomes! I will definitely be back next year."

"I was so appreciative of how all the speakers provided such detailed and rich information about the topics they presented. I cannot wait to implement new strategies into my teaching."

"There were so many excellent concurrent sessions that we wanted to attend them all: it was too hard to choose. Also, the binder is my new favorite teaching tool!"

With close to 250 educators in attendance, representing 22 states and 5 countries, ResearchILD's 34th annual Learning Differences Conference, chaired by Dr. Lynn Meltzer, and held at Harvard Graduate School of Education was a highlight of the academic year for many teachers, administrators, therapists and other practitioners in the field of neurodiversity, social emotional learning and executive function.



Dr. Lynn Meltzer, Conference Founder and Chair, "Stretching and Flexing the Mind: Executive Function Strategies that Promote Resilience and Success"

During the opening plenary session, Dr. Meltzer, the Conference chair, emphasized practical approaches for promoting metacognitive awareness, flexible thinking, and executive function strategies across the grade levels. She stressed the importance of teaching students to understand how they think and how they learn so that they can compete in 21st century schools and in the workforce.



Sasha Forbath, B.A., "Learning and attention differences: The building blocks of creative thinking and leadership"

Sasha Forbath was among three panelists who shared their personal stories about overcoming the impact of a learning difference diagnosis and how they developed resilient mindsets to assume leadership roles in schools, work settings, and communities. Also on the panel were Dan Koh, Partner in HqO and the former Chief of Staff of the Mayor of Boston, Marty Walsh, and Billy Warren, a Senior Associate Scientist with Life Biosciences of Cambridge, MA.



Michelle Garcia Winner, SLP, MA-CCC, "Social thinking and social competencies: Teaching more than social skills"



Thomas Brown, Ph.D., "Executive Function, motivation, and stress in students with ADHD"



Over fifty elementary-level educators and administrators were introduced to SMARTS Elementary, ResearchILD's new Executive Function program for elementary school use. Michael Greschler, M.Ed., ResearchILD's Director of SMARTS Programs, Wendy Stacey, M.A., Senior SMARTS Teacher Trainer, and Shelly Levy, M.Ed., ResearchILD Associate presented a lunch-time session highlighting some of the new program's features. SMARTS Elementary will be available online in summer, 2019.



Members of the SMARTS educator community gathered in Elliot Lyman for a special luncheon to discuss their strategies for using the SMARTS Executive Function program in diverse school settings throughout the U.S. and internationally. Dr. Lynn Meltzer facilitated the 30+ member forum that included an idea exchange on lesson plan implementation and recommended best practices for maximizing the effectiveness of SMARTS for middle and high school students.



ResearchILD & ILD Conference Staff

From left: Nancy Trautman, Reading Specialist, ILD; Cheryl Barresi, school psychologist, ILD; Wendy Stacey, Director of Reading and Language, ILD and Senior Teacher Trainer ResearchILD; Hannah Turner, Speech, Language, and Reading Specialist, ILD; Lynn Meltzer, President and Director of ResearchILD and ILD and Conference Chair; Jamie Cutler, Director of Marketing and Communications, ResearchILD and ILD; Joan Steinberg, Director of Educational Therapy, ILD; Shelly Levy, Educational Specialist and SMARTS Associate, Kathy Button, Educational Specialist, ILD; From left (front row): Bee Keswa, Learning Differences Conference Coordinator; Michael Greschler, Director of SMARTS Programs. Missing from photo: Donna Kincaid, Assistant Director, ILD and Director of Outreach and Training ResearchILD and ILD; Kim Davis, ResearchILD Senior Teacher Trainer and Research Associate; Joelle Chang, ResearchILD Intern and Harvard Graduate School of Education student.