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DCDT WEBSITE
www.dcdt.org

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



I write to all of you as we approach a spring full of hope and see a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. We have endured rapid and disruptive effects from the COVID-19 pandemic on our communities as well as on research and practice in transition. In response, we have seen transition professionals come together in new and innovative ways to deliver online instruction and create community in virtual spaces, including our own DCDT-sponsored **LiveBinder of Resources for COVID-19**, town hall discussions, and Twitter chats. We have concurrently seen the destructive, deadly, and ongoing impacts of racial inequity and injustice. In response, we have seen a push for action to actualize anti-racist policies and advocacy. We have begun to take steps within DCDT to create spaces for conversations to inform action and better understand how we can address structural racism in our organization and promote racial justice in our work. If you are interested in playing a role in advancing racial justice in DCDT, please reach out to **James Sinclair**, our chair of the Human Rights and Diversity Committee, at jamesin@uoregon.edu.

We always look forward to the fall and our annual DCDT conference where we can all come together, network, learn, and grow. In light of COVID-19, we cancelled the DCDT 2020 conference that had been planned for October in Little Rock, Arkansas. We thank our local planning committee and our conference planning committee for all their hard work, flexibility, and creativity in planning to bring the conference back to Little Rock in 2022. We are also busy planning for the **DCDT 2021 conference** in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

At this time, we plan to offer both an in-person and a hybrid option. We also look forward to continuing our online offerings to connect with members now and in the future.

Amidst all of this, we have been undergoing significant changes as an organization. A plan for a restructuring of the DCDT Board was developed over the past year, with feedback collected through multiple forums, and it was presented to the membership for a vote on April 27, 2020. We appreciate all of you that voted. The changes went into effect on January 1, 2021, and we are excited for our newly elected board members to join us.

You can review previous newsletters or communications for all the details, but I wanted to emphasize that while change is always hard, we were focused on creating a more nimble and flexible structure with elected positions for each of our major committees on the DCDT Board: Research; Publications; Human Rights and Diversity; and Policy and Advocacy. We established a Membership Committee led by the vice president for Membership that is composed of representatives of each of our DCDT regions. Further, to reflect our membership, we want to ensure we create spaces and supports for practitioners to be engaged in the leadership of our organization. Practitioners have always been—and still are—able to run for any Board position. However, due to lower representation on the Board over the past several years, we created an elected Board-level practitioner position in order to ensure practitioners are represented on the Board. We also want to recognize the critical importance of early career members in DCDT by creating an elected Board-level early career position to ensure

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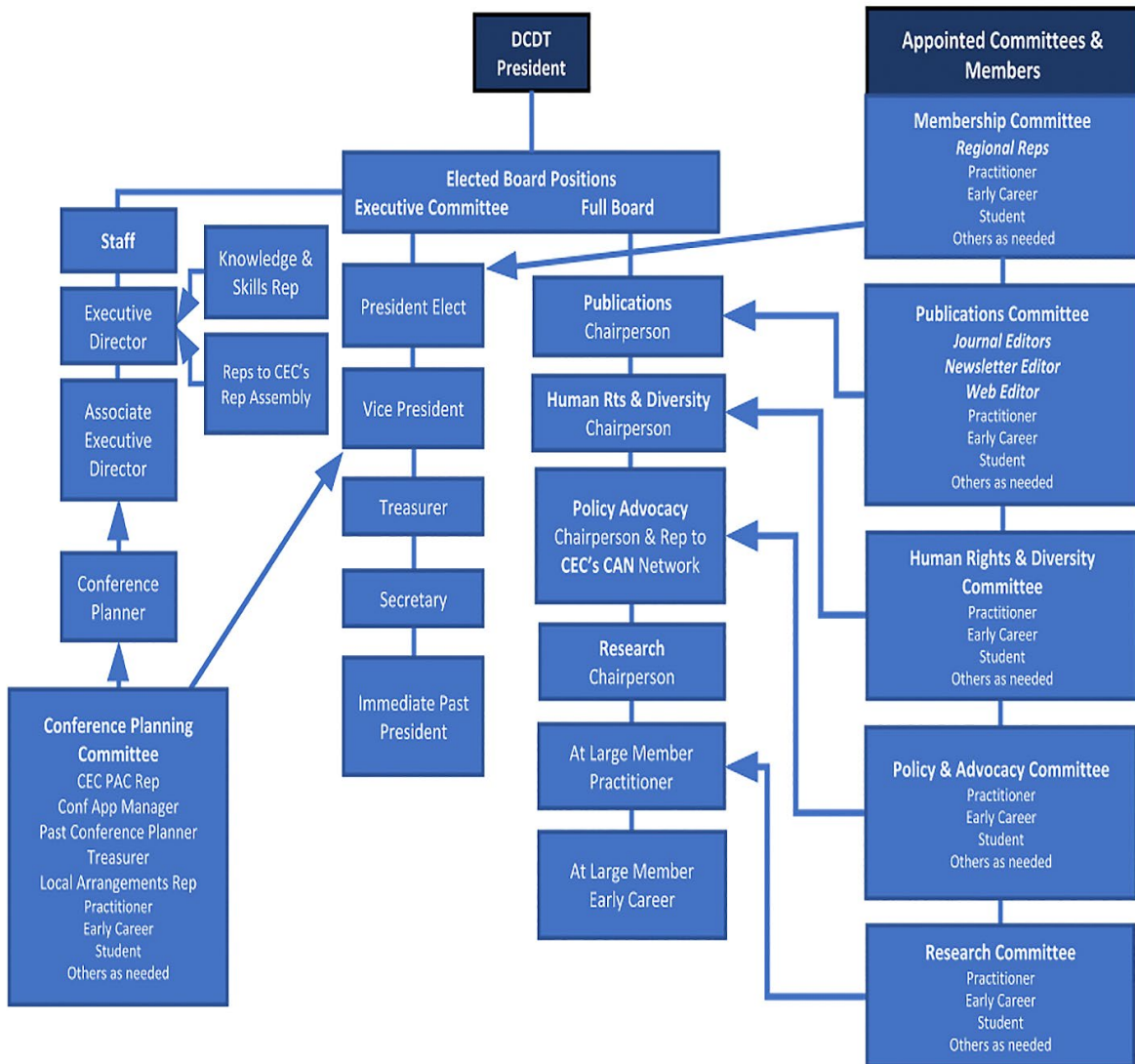
this voice is represented in the organization. The recently approved new Board structure is below.

We look forward to continuing to communicate with each of you as we implement the new by-laws, and I personally invite anyone who is interested in learning more about the elected positions or the newly restructured committees to reach out to me. Along with the entire Executive Committee of DCDT, I look forward to moving forward to engage DCDT members in our multiple committees and initiatives as we advance the mission of DCDT and address pressing needs in both our community and the world, including is-

sues of racial justice and reducing the inequities faced by students with disabilities, particularly as we continue remote and virtual learning.

You will find more information on the cutting-edge work being undertaken by committees and leaders in our organization throughout this newsletter, and I want to personally thank each of you for the work that you are doing to advance outcomes for students with disabilities through DCDT and in your own personal and professional work.

John McNaught
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HELLO FROM THE NEW DCDT PUBLICATIONS CO-CHAIRS!



Malarie Deardorff, PhD



Kendra Williams-Diehm, PhD

We are very excited to introduce the spring 2021 *DCDT NETWORK*. You may notice that this newsletter is much different from previous newsletters. In January 2021, Drs. Malarie Deardorff and Kendra Williams-Diehm were elected to co-chair the DCDT Publications committee. As chairs, one of our responsibilities is the publication of the bi-

annual newsletter. We really want this newsletter to become more practitioner friendly and to provide quick, easy to use, evidence-based strategies surrounding transition practices. Each newsletter going forward will include two short “Transition Quick Tips” in addition to the President’s Message.

So you may be wondering, *How do I submit an article for the DCDT Newsletter?*

In order for your article to be considered and published in *DCDT NETWORK*, please email submissions to zarrowcenter@ou.edu. Both Drs. Deardorff and Williams-Diehm check this email regularly. Submissions should be no more than 6 pages (total, double spaced) including cover sheet, references, and all tables/figures. Abstracts are not needed.

Thank you, and we look forward to serving DCDT through this role.



EXCITED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF ACHIEVING THE DCDT NATIONAL CERTIFICATION IN TRANSITION?



Jane A. Razeghi

Executive Director

jrazeghi@gmu.edu

Well, DCDT is excited and working toward helping you achieve that goal! As you may recall from the DCDT Spring 2020 newsletter, DCDT is working on two pathways you can take for certification. The first pathway is the university-based transition program approval (Level 1). University-based transition programs may apply for DCDT approval to be nationally recognized as an outstanding transition program by completing an application form and rubric for this pathway, and DCDT encourages universities with transition programs to apply. The second pathway currently being developed is for “experienced individuals” (Level 2) working in the field who are not graduates of a DCDT-approved university transition program. This pathway is intended for DCDT members who will apply directly to DCDT by documenting all transition education and actual transition experience. Both pathways are based firmly on the DCDT/CEC Transition Standards published on both DCDT’s and Council of Exceptional Children’s websites.

So, what does this mean to you? If you are a recent graduate or if you are graduating in the near future from a **DCDT-approved university transition program**, you have earned the ability to apply for the DCDT National Certification in Transition. This past year has heralded one of the most exciting events in developing the university-based approval process (Level 1) of the **DCDT National Certification in Transition!** Having completed the pilot testing, two different university transition programs volunteered to participate, completed their applications, and have received DCDT approval of their transition programs as excellent! DCDT is happy to announce and congratulate the first transition programs to have achieved DCDT’s national approval status. They are the **Master’s in Transition** program at the **University of Kansas** and the **Transition Leadership** program at **UMASS, Boston**. Their graduates now, and in the future, are eligible for the DCDT National Certification in Transition.

If you are faculty at a university that has a transition program or you are enrolled in one and you think your transition program could qualify for DCDT approval, please contact

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DCDT, and we will be happy to invite them to apply. We are ready to receive their application and promise to provide personal assistance in completing it.

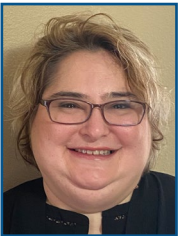
The second pathway, “**experienced individual**” (Level 2), to the DCDT National Certification in Transition is being developed. It is designed for individuals already working in transition: a transition teacher; transition specialist; professor; job coach; other agency and community rehabilitation provider; agency-related services staff focused on transition-age youth; or those in other transition educational service areas. As a professional with experience working in transition, these individuals may apply directly to DCDT and document their education and transition work experience, possibly through a portfolio, based on the DCDT/CEC Transition Standards. Additional details of this pathway to certification are currently being developed and will be based on the DCDT/CEC standards.

Like with any other national certification plan, DCDT members will need to update and renew their certification after five years for our DCDT nationally approved university-based transition programs and “experienced individuals” pathway. Those who achieve their certification, through either a DCDT university-based transition program or by applying as an “experienced individual,” will be able to document and update their knowledge and skills through ongoing professional development in transition in a number of ways, including attending sessions and special strands at DCDT conferences and other DCDT events. Another good reason to attend our DCDT events!

This continues to be a very exciting project, and I will continue to share our future progress through this newsletter. However, in the event you are interested in receiving more detailed monthly updates, please send me your email address, and let me know why you are interested. It is possible that some of you would like to have your university apply. In the meantime, I am open for questions and concerns and look forward to hearing from you at jrazeghi@gmu.edu.



DEVELOPING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES



Amillia K. Oswalt
University of Arkansas

Vignette: Mrs. Jones is working with her high school students in a small town in Arkansas. She has read the research that says students with disabilities have more significant and positive secondary outcomes when they participate in paid work experiences before high school graduation. She wants her students to participate in both paid and unpaid employment opportunities before they leave high school, but she is unsure how to develop partnerships within her local community businesses to achieve her goal.

Introduction

In 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) required that all students have a coordinated set of activities that are designed using an outcome-based process. Part of this transition process can, and should, include teaching students the skills that

they will need to be successful within their communities. Skills focused on preparing students for future work and education, independent living, and community engagement might include work readiness, communication, purchasing, ordering, shopping, banking, and participating in or attending local social and sporting events. Despite the addition of transition-focused skill attainment to IDEA and research identifying predictors for effective transition, students post-high school are still not meeting their and their IEP teams’ goals for them (Trainor et al., 2020). Young adults continue to not be employed to the extent they wish for themselves.

The National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD) identified the values gained by paid and unpaid work experiences for students with disabilities. The most considerable benefits to students include youth with disabilities receiving higher paying jobs after high school graduation and participating in competitive employment at a higher rate than their peers who have no work experience (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Teachers are aware of the benefits of providing work experiences to stu-

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dents while still in high school. Collet-Klingenberg and Kolb (2011) found teachers recognize that employment is an essential part of transition planning but struggle to implement employment-specific instruction. Building partnerships with businesses within their communities is one way that teachers can facilitate authentic work experiences for students with special needs.

Rural and small urban cluster areas face unique challenges and opportunities for building community partnerships. Markeve et al. (1992) identified several challenges faced by rural communities. Transportation is often the most significant obstacle rural school districts face when trying to build community partnerships, because the distance inherent in rural communities often requires traveling long distances. Another identified challenge is limited economic diversity. In many rural areas, agriculture is the central area of employment (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Heavy dependence on agriculture limits the number and variety of jobs available to students within the region. The third identified challenge faced by rural districts is that they are located in areas of low population density. Fewer people means a lower tax base to fund educational programs. For teachers wanting to create employment opportunities for students, a limited budget affects both the number of trips students are allowed to take off the school campus and the support teachers have to teach life skills and other vital transition-related skills.

Despite these identified challenges, rural communities have opportunities as well (Elrod et al., 1994). It may be easier to identify resources in a rural community. Unlike teachers in urban regions with multiple schools for children to attend, there is typically only one school district for students to attend in rural areas, thus making the school community and its resources clear. Rural areas also have less formal political structures. Elected officials are more easily accessible and often have more meetings available to the public than their urban counterparts. It is easier to get to know local business owners and managers in rural areas, and these businesses are more likely to be deeply invested in the community. Further, rural communities tend to value hands-on work. The plan for developing community partnerships notes these challenges and opportunities and provides teachers a step-by-step process to support their goals based on research (Alleman & Holly, 2018; Markeve et al., 1992; Elrod et al.; 1994; Harmon, 2018).

Steps for Developing Community Partnerships

1. **Identify your community's unique supports and challenges.** During your planning phase, it is

essential to identify the supports available within your community. It is also imperative to identify the challenges that will impact your ability to develop partnerships within the community. For example, identify leaders in your community, advocates for people with disabilities, transportation barriers and effective workarounds, and young adults with disabilities and their families who are successful.

2. **Meet with local school officials.** After identifying advantages and challenges, schedule a meeting with your local school officials. As a teacher, you need to meet with the superintendent, school principal, and special education director to outline your plans and get their approval. They can also assist you by providing business names with whom the school district has established partnerships. School leaders can also assist in providing funds or solutions for transportation issues to and from local community businesses.
3. **Collaborate with local business owners and managers along with your local chamber of commerce.** When looking to establish partnerships with local businesses within your community, it is critical to set up appointments to meet with business owners and managers to discuss your program and how it will benefit their business. Businesses can participate in collaborative partnerships with schools in many ways, and it is crucial to identify the best fit for each company. The chamber of commerce can provide information regarding your program to its members and facilitate the development of partnerships between local businesses and the high school.
4. **Promote your program.** For many, program promotion can be the most challenging part of this process. There are countless ways that you can promote your program. Contact your local media. Talk about your program wherever you go, especially in well-respected businesses. Create a brochure to distribute that explains your program's benefits and provides contact information. Most importantly, get the word out into your community and highlight the program's successes and advantages for both students and employers.

Conclusion

Rural areas offer unique challenges and opportunities for schools wanting to implement community partnerships. By identifying their particular community's opportunities and challenges and by designing programming that will fit their students' specific needs, schools can create meaningful

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and long-lasting partnerships with businesses within their communities. Partnership development will benefit students and the community.

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DCDT WEST COAST TRANSITION SYMPOSIUM

You're invited to our First DCDT West Coast Symposium. This monthly series is filled with evidence-based resources and strategies to inspire you to lead, learn, and motivate all students in 2021. If you have missed a session, PLEASE do not worry, the recording and handouts will be sent via email to you.

- Monthly, the third Tuesday of each month, 4:00–5:00 pm pacific standard time.
- Beginning Tuesday, February 16, 2021 at 4:00 pm PST
- Running through Tuesday, June 15, 2021 at 5:00 pm PDT

Participants will be provided with strategies to implement self-determination in the digital age, resources to build student portfolios, strategies to engage families, tips on collaborating with vocational rehabilitation, ways to address implicit bias in transition planning, and opportunities to connect with transition leaders from across the country.

Nevada DCDT has partnered to provide this symposium and will provide CEU credits to all Nevada educators. This series is presented at one low cost (\$55) for all of the sessions. Please [click here](#) to register as all registrants will receive recordings and transcripts of the sessions after the event.

PROMOTE MEMBERSHIP IN DCDT

One of the best ways to promote membership in DCDT is to encourage a friend or colleague to join. Try these strategies to build our membership:

- Share an issue of the journal and newsletter with a friend (enclose membership information from our website).
- Add DCDT membership information to your hand-out packets for workshops and conference presentations.
- In your presentations, add a slide promoting DCDT.
- Create DCDT stickers that include our website (<http://www.dcdt.org>).