SREE Symposium Abstract

6C. Invited Symposium: Transdisciplinary Approaches to Understudied Populations with Learning Disabilities

Although reading disability (RD) is the most common form of learning disability (LD; Lyon, Shaywitz, & Shaywitz, 2003), multiple other variants of LD have been described, for example, mathematics disability (MD, dyscalculia), and writing disability (WD, including dysgraphia and disorders of written expression). For historical reasons, RD has dominated the research in LD (Hallahan, Pullen, & Ward, 2013). As a result, topics remain under-researched relating to MDs, WDs, co-occurring LDs, and RD in difficult to recruit and/or to specify populations. Ongoing difficulties in identification, recruitment, classification and retention of particular LD populations of interest, as well as methodological challenges inherent in investigating the most challenging and historically recalcitrant learners have resulted in understudied LDs and underserved learners affected by these conditions.

In an effort to address these under-researched topics and populations, as well as topics that have been some of the most challenging in the area of learning disabilities (LDs) impacting reading, writing, and mathematics, the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD/NIH) funded four LD Innovation Hubs. These four research projects are designed to bring to bear diverse and unique methods and perspectives to help move LD research forward and set the stage for improved interventions for these most challenging populations.

The four LD Innovation Hub grants (aka “Hubs”) each represent distinct scientific and methodological domains studying distinct LD populations: cognitive & intervention science to study co-occurring MD+RD (Vanderbilt University); cognitive neurobiology to study MD (University of California, San Diego); neuro-genetics to study MD and RD (Ohio State University); and psycholinguistics to study RD in an
American English cultural dialect-speaking population (Georgia State University). Each will shed light on the theoretical underpinnings of an understudied LD, and likely LDs in general, and potentially lead us closer to more efficacious interventions.

References