

Thanks for the (Unusual) Memories

Over the course of the 40 years of the Midwest Symposium for Leadership in Behavior Disorders some unusual events have occurred that we just can't forget.

- The Gun.** In the late 1980s, one presenter, trying to make a point, drew a handgun out of a briefcase and waved it to the audience. The point may have been made at the time but was lost for the long run. Although this was before gun violence had become rampant in our society, attendees were frightened. This was not condoned by MSLBD and we hope this does not occur again!



- The Parachute.** As part of his presentation, one presenter fully opened a parachute in one of the ballrooms to demonstrate how to employ creativity in teaching and draw kids into activities which allow them to creatively cooperate for common goals. Another presenter brought and demonstrated a variety of inflatable manipulative objects including an inflatable "environment or classroom" for use as a location for teaching small groups of students.
- The Animals.** While there may have been a rare presentation which someone might have classified



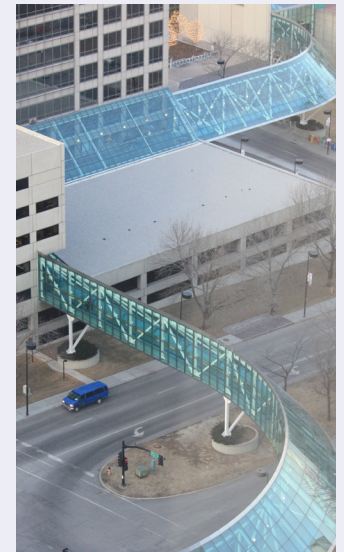
as "a dog", dogs actually have appeared in at least two presentations on the use of service or therapy animals.

- The Magic and The Theatrics.** There have been at least two sessions on how magic can be a tool to motivate and involve students, and another called "BD on Broadway"- which promoted using theater and theatrics in the classroom for emotional growth.
- The Blizzard.** Although several times the weather may have prevented some from attending and forced some to leave the conference early over the past 40 years, there has been only one major blizzard that disrupted the Symposium. In 2013 presenters and attendees couldn't arrive since the airport was closed and roads were either impassable or closed. All area schools were closed. In the Crown Center only one restaurant was open and most shops were closed. There was concern about not meeting the MSLBD contractual hotel room requirement. The good news was that the nearby



hospitals bought out every room left in the hotel for their staff, solving that problem. Unfortunately, by the time we left the Awards Ceremony and Dinner the bar was at capacity.

Overall, weather has been a relatively small factor for the conference. While Kansas City can become cold and snowy in February, the average high temperatures at the end of February are typically in the low 50s, and only rarely fall below freezing.



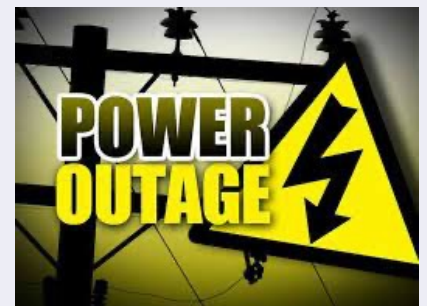
The Sheraton Crown Center (formerly the Hyatt) has the advantage of allowing access to restaurants and museums without going outside due to the skywalk system to Crown Center and the Union Station. It offers convenient shopping and food options as well as several museums which make it a destination location.

- **Why Kansas City in February?** The original decision to hold the annual Symposium in February was guided in part by the availability of less expensive meeting space, since that was an “off time” for hotels in Kansas City, allowing the Symposium to be one of the least expensive conferences available. Additionally, February did not conflict with other special education conferences which were typically held either in the spring or fall.



February has also proved to be a great time for educators to get away to attend a conference, as it is toward the end of the winter stretch, and between the holiday and spring breaks. About half-way through the school year, February is a time when many educators are wanting to sharpen their skills. Kansas City was centrally located to educators in the four states originally involved in the founding of MSLBD - Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Iowa. Driving time for most educators in these states is less than five hours. Kansas City also has excellent air service.

- **The Power Outage.** In 1995 or 1996, for a still unknown reason, the hotel’s electric power went out Thursday afternoon during the Symposium. This prevented presenters from showing slides and using microphones. Some rooms were very dark with only emergency lighting. Nevertheless, presenters carried on, and attendees didn’t leave the presentations. This was the quintessential EBD special education experience. No matter what happens, special educators weren’t rattled, kept going, and didn’t let it distract them from getting the job done. A minor crisis compared those often occurring in school. Fortunately, the outage lasted only a few hours.
- **The Heart Attack.** See the separate story “Eli Bower- Reflections after a Heart Attack.”
- **The Symposium Postponed.** Due to the Corona Virus, the 2020 Symposium was not postponed. However, in lieu of the Symposium, MLSBD held a free virtual event, attracting over 500 viewers,



conducted by
Valentina
Contesse,
University
of Florida
Doctoral
Candidate.



Similarly,
the 2020 and 2021 Richard L. Simpson Confer-
ences on Autism were held virtually.

- **The Memorable Presentation Titles.** In the MSLBD activities, a goal has always been to provide engaging and stimulating content. Separate stories have described some of the unique formats for MSLBD presentations such as the Debates, Meeting of Minds, and Courtroom Dramas. Beyond those, some of the most memorable presentations titles include:
 - Saving children in the age of big brother: Moral issues in the identification of deviance. James Kauffman, 1984.
 - Pill power vs. Teacher power...Or what every BD teacher should know about psychotropic medications. John Stanley, 1985
 - Theories and therapies: Evolving themes in thaumaturgy. Michael Pullis, 1989

- Shoulda', Woulda', Coulda'- Increasing resistance to burnout though devotion to priorities and realistic expectations. Jamie G. Wood, 1998.
- Remembering how to fly a kite: Reflections on managing resistance. John Maag, 1998.
- What makes social skills training work: Analyzing the function of behavior. Richard Neel, 1986
- Are all children educable? James Kauffman, 1986
- On standing in a pool of quicksand with alligators all around: The Ecology of Positive Classrooms. Jane Close Conoley, 1987
- On the separation of church and state in special education: How many angels can dance on the head of an interdisciplinary pin? Steve Forness, 1987.
- A Turpid Menagerie of Values Lonny Morrow, 1993

Hopefully many more memorable sessions will be presented going forward!