



**Press Release:** *Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities Announces 2024 Burton Blatt Humanitarian Award Recipient*

*(For Immediate Release)*

January 12, 2024

The Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities is pleased to announce Dr. Darlene Perner as the recipient of the 2024 Burton Blatt Humanitarian Award. This award recognizes individuals who, like its namesake Dr. Burton Blatt, have made a significant contribution to the fields of autism, intellectual disability, and other developmental disabilities.

Dr. Perner is a Professor in the Department of Exceptionality Programs at Bloomsburg Commonwealth University in Pennsylvania. In her over 50-year career in the field, she has held multiple positions, including dean, chairperson, and professor at Bloomsburg; research and policy analyst and inclusive education consultant for the province of New Brunswick, Canada; special education teacher; as well as president and communications chair for DADD. Dr. Perner's lifelong commitment to advocacy for best practices in providing instruction, support, and opportunities for students with autism and intellectual disability are evident through her inclusive education policy work in New Brunswick which still serves as a Canadian and an international model. Her multiple books, book chapters, and articles further underscore her dedication, as does her generous service to the field and mentorship to new and current teachers and higher education faculty members. Many view Dr. Perner's dedication to advocacy and collaborative spirit as a guiding model in the field.

One nominator, Dr. Robin Drogan, described the "strong ties" that Dr. Perner creates with her students to "lay a foundation for increased independence and self-determination". Dr. Gordon Porter emphasized her pivotal role in "reshaping attitudes in the education system and fostering support for the closing of special schools and special classes." Another nominator, Dr. Michael Giangreco said it this way, "It's easy to look at Dr. Perner's long list publications, presentations, consultancies, and alike to see that she has been consistently productive for decades. Yet, when I think about Darlene's many and varied contributions the terms that leap to mind are ones such as: (a) generosity, (b) collaboration, (c) service, and (d) mentorship".

This distinguished award is presented by The Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities (DADD), a special interest association within the Council for Exceptional Children—the largest international professional organization dedicated to supporting the needs of students with disabilities. Since its establishment in 1963, DADD has been a leading voice in the field of education for students with autism, intellectual disability, and other developmental disabilities,

actively contributing to research dissemination, the creation of nationally recognized professional practice standards, and fostering robust professional networking. The award ceremony is scheduled to take place at DADD's annual conference in Honolulu, Hawaii, on January 18, 2024.

For further information, please contact Dr. Jordan Shurr, DADD Awards Chair, at [j.shurr@queensu.ca](mailto:j.shurr@queensu.ca). Additional details about the Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities can be found at <http://www.daddcec.com/>.