



Division on
Autism and
Developmental
Disabilities

Press Release: Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities Announces 2026 Burton Blatt Humanitarian Award Recipient

(For Immediate Release)

January 5, 2026

The Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities (DADD) is pleased to announce Dr. Melinda Ault, Faculty Emeritus at the University of Kentucky, whose distinguished career has shaped generations of educators and scholars, as the 2026 Burton Blatt Humanitarian Award recipient. This award honors exceptional individuals who have made a significant contribution to the field of education for students who have autism, intellectual disability, or other developmental disabilities.

Dr. Melinda Ault is a nationally recognized scholar, educator, and advocate whose career spans more than four decades of service to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Her work has had a lasting impact on the field through foundational contributions to systematic instruction, assistive and instructional technology, inclusive education, and access to meaningful school, community, and adult outcomes for individuals with moderate to severe disabilities.

Dr. Ault has published extensively in high-impact journals and contributed to seminal texts, including *Teaching Students with Moderate to Severe Disabilities*, which continue to shape research and practice. Her scholarship is known for its rigor, translational focus, and real-world applicability, addressing critical instructional challenges.

In addition to her scholarly contributions, Dr. Ault is widely respected for her humanitarian leadership, mentorship, and service. She has served on editorial boards of leading journals, mentored generations of teachers and scholars, and consistently advocated for equity, access, and inclusion. Colleagues describe her as a scholar of integrity and humility whose influence extends well beyond publications, reflected in the many educators and leaders she has prepared and inspired.

This distinguished award is presented by DADD, a special interest association within the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), the largest international professional organization dedicated to supporting students with disabilities. Since 1963, DADD has been a leading voice in educating students with autism, intellectual disability, and other developmental disabilities, contributing to research dissemination, developing professional practice standards, and fostering robust professional networking.

The award ceremony is scheduled for January 16, 2026, at DADD's annual conference in Long Beach, CA. For further information, please contact DeVoshia Mason Martin, DADD Awards Chair, at awardschair@daddcec.com. Additional details about the Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities can be found at <http://www.daddcec.com/>.