LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

communique

A different way of learning can lead to success.

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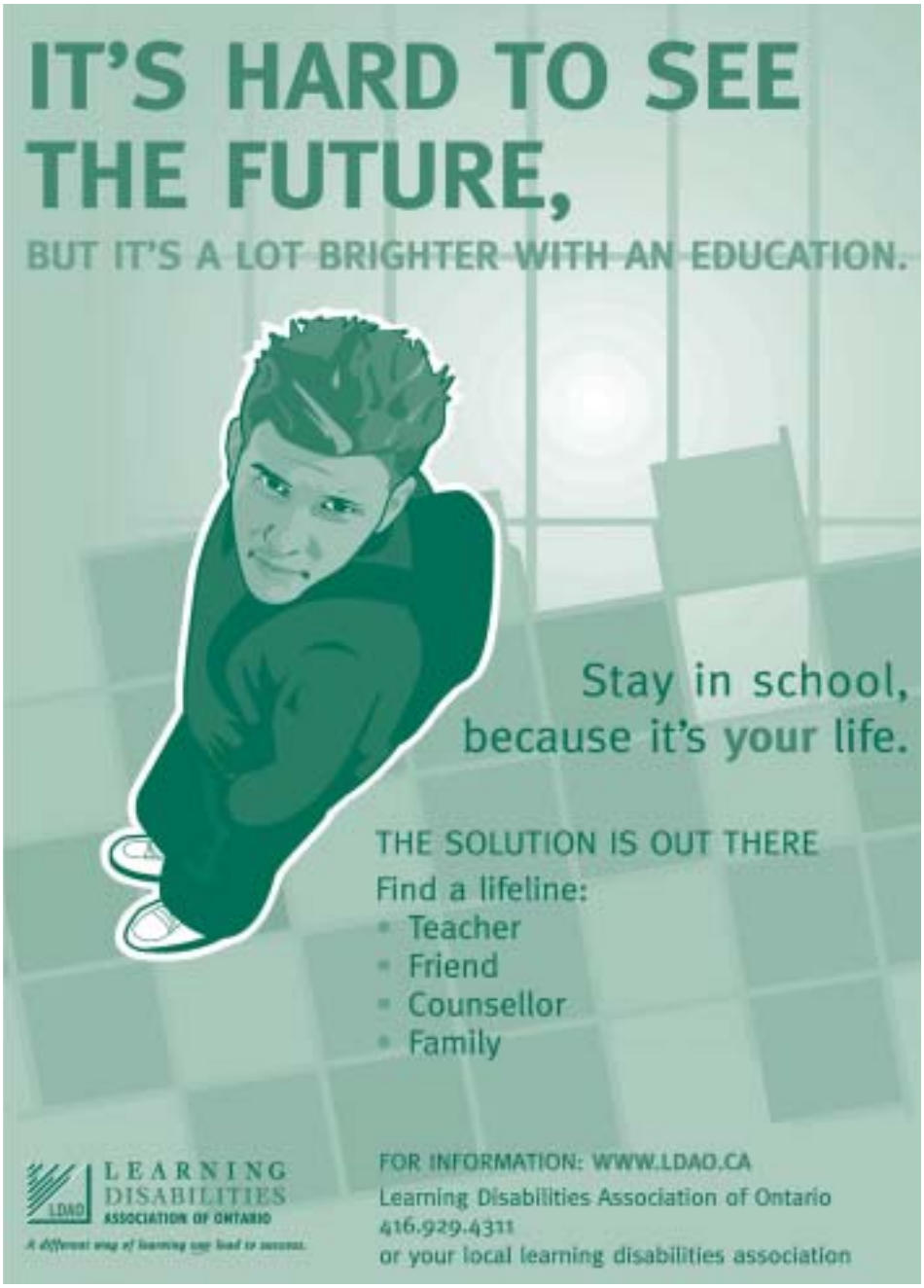

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

In late April our Web address will change to: www.ldao.ca

Message From The Chairperson

As many of you are aware March is Public Awareness Month for the Learning Disabilities Association. We are very pleased this year to have Toronto Police Chief Julian Fantino as the Honorary Chair of this campaign. Our Working Chair is Jay Mandarino, a successful business entrepreneur who happens to have a learning disability.

Our campaign this year is directed towards youth and the importance of staying in school, particularly for those with learning disabilities. I would like to share with you some of my thoughts and experiences working with young adults with learning disabilities at the community college level. For the past fifteen years we have seen a steady increase in the number of students with LD who enter college. This certainly speaks well for those young adults who have taken yet another risk in continuing their education.

Traditionally students entering post-secondary education have been provided with guidance in planning their academic future. Unfortunately in the last few years there has been a decrease in the amount of guidance counselling available at the secondary level. In addition the number of changes and course offerings at the post-secondary level has increased considerably. Adjusting to new learning environments, new teachers, and new and more complex learning materials requires considerable patience, energy, motivation and emotional resilience on the part of any student. This is particularly true for students with learning disabilities who have already had numerous academic setbacks. One of the key factors in succeeding in the postsecondary environment involves the recognition on the part of students with LD that they need outside assistance and, then, to take the initiative to obtain the help.

For many, the postsecondary educational environment is very different from anything students have previously experienced. The coursework often requires independent study and multi-tasking (e.g., reading, organizing and understanding assignments and

Isabel Shessel, Chairperson

producing written and oral reports, exams, and papers).

The community colleges of Ontario have made considerable strides in helping students with LD to make a successful transition to the postsecondary environment and be successful in their academic studies. Today community colleges have many different professionals available to assist students with LD. There are disability counsellors, learning strategists, assistive technologists, and learning disability specialists. There are also peer tutors, scribes, and note takers available to assist students with LD in the classroom and in the testing centre. Many colleges also have a learning centre where students can go for special tutoring in English and mathematics.

The point of this long explanation of postsecondary education and services is to say that there is light at the end of the tunnel for people with LD. People with LD do succeed in school and find satisfying employment. The keys to success include a good understanding of one's own learning disability, strengths and weaknesses, strong internal resources, the capacity for sustained effort and motivation and an optimistic attitude. People who are optimistic about their abilities tend to be goal directed and think in terms of eventual success rather than becoming overwhelmed by temporary setbacks.

Staying in school means learning the right skills to be successful in the highly competitive world of work. Having a good education can also lead to higher wages and job security.

communique

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Message from the Executive Director

In this issue of *Communique* we highlight the launch of a two-year campaign titled, Stay in School, Succeed in Life. As you will learn from the following pages, leaving school prior to obtaining a diploma is the fate of far too many youth with learning disabilities. Without the necessary support, the school work is too hard and the repeated failure is too painful. Seeing hope for the future is almost impossible and giving up is too tempting.

We know what a life without a high school diploma can mean. It most often means being consigned to limited opportunities, under-employment or more likely, unemployment and of course a greatly restricted income and quality of life. For a population with average or above potential

Exective Director, Carol Yaworski

this is an unacceptable fate and LDAO will work with our partners to reverse this trend over the next several years.

Joining us in this campaign is the Honourary Chair, Chief Julian Fantino of the Toronto Police Service, as well as the campaign's cornerstone sponsor, Shire BioChem. We are also very pleased about the participation of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation and the Ontario Catholic Teachers' Association who will assist us in engaging teachers as a lifeline to students considering dropping out of school.

Over the course of the next several years we will develop tools and resources to support students to stay in school and to assist teachers in recognizing who these students are and how they can help. Watch future issues of *Communique* for updates on Stay in School, Succeed in Life.

Transition from Secondary School to Post-Secondary Activities

Transition is usually described as a co-ordinated set of activities for a student, designed to promote successful progress to and from school and between the various educational levels. These include entry into and exit from each educational level, such as pre-school to elementary school, elementary school to secondary school as well as diverse post-school activities, including post-secondary education, both university and college, vocational training including apprenticeships, employment, adult education, independent living and community participation.

Successful transition planning for all students, including those who have learning disabilities, must be based on the student's:

- identified needs
- recognized strengths, skills and competencies
- interests and preferences
- short and long term goals
- past experiences, including academic achievements, co-curricular and volunteer involvements at school and in the community.

Transition planning is a mandated process for all exceptional students who are 14 years of age or older and whose primary exceptionality identification is any of the exceptionalities other than giftedness. This requirement is included in Regulation 181/98, the IPRC regulation as well as the Ministry of Education's standards for Individual Education Plans. This means that school boards should be fully accountable not only for complying with this requirement but also for ensuring that the transition plan meets all the necessary requirements, both in a generic and an exceptionality specific way. Students and their parents or guardians should be able to count on this commitment.

Unfortunately, the Ministry's recent IEP review at all 72 school boards and the experiences of many students and parents have indicated that in many cases students have a very brief transition plan in place, essentially simply stating their post-secondary destination or have no direct reference in their IEP to transition planning or programming.

This finding was also supported by the research work carried out by the Learning Opportunities Task Force between 1998 and 2002. This research identified that only just over 10% of the 1200+ students participating in the research had a written transition plan, in accordance with the legislation. At the same time, over 85% of the students required a diagnostic assessment or re-assessment on entry into post-secondary education, in order to ensure that they had access to the right accommodations to facilitate their educational success. While students with learning disabilities may select a variety of post-secondary destinations just like their non-LD peers, it is important to note that the LOTF's research also identified that, with the requisite help and support, students who have learning disabilities are just as able to succeed in college or university as their non-disabled peers. Therefore, for students who wish to proceed to college or university, having a learning disability should not become a barrier. For further information on this research, visit the LOTF website (www.lotf.on.ca).

In order to make a successful transition from secondary school to post-secondary life, students need to be enabled and supported to learn to do the following:

- understand their learning disabilities, their assessments and the potential and actual impact of having learning disabilities on learning and work;
- present a positive self-image by learning to focus on strengths and competencies;
- develop positive personal qualities, such as realistic self-assessment, willingness to take risks, becoming an independent learner and focusing on self-motivation;
- establish realistic and realizable goals;
- develop and practice positive social skills and pro-social behaviours;
- develop and practice effective studying, test preparation, test taking, time management and note taking strategies;
- identify any potential and actual difficulties with needed skill areas and any accommodations required;
- know their rights and responsibilities as students with disabilities, potential workers and contributing citizens;
- prepare for and practice disclosure;

(continued on page 5)

- prepare for and participate positively in selecting appropriate post-secondary destination options and choices;
- identify and know how to access resources that will assist in facilitating ongoing accommodations and future success, including disability related services, funding, etc.;
- seek out a learning and/or working environment which is supportive and in which they can demonstrate their competencies effectively;
- be willing to work hard to achieve their goals.

So, what does an effective transition plan look like and who is responsible for its development and implementation? Since the transition plan is supposed to be a part of the student's IEP, it is the school principal who is responsible for the development of the transition plan. However, there are important roles for others, including the student, the parents, teachers and maybe others from the community, depending on the future destination of the student.

Parents and students must learn to advocate for the development of a suitable transition plan and the implementation of the plan. An IEP, even if it is accompanied by an IPRC form, which lists an exceptionality identification, is generally not enough to ensure that the student will have access to all the supports and accommodations that they have a right to expect, especially if they are college or university-bound. A reasonably up to date psycho-educational assessment, containing a diagnostic statement, a listing of appropriate accommodations that the student has benefited from and the student's current educational functional levels are among the key requirements for supporting a comprehensive transition plan for the purposes of post-secondary education.

Every post-secondary educational institution in Ontario offers services, supports and accommodations to students with learning disabilities. They have in place learning strategists and assistive technologists who are knowledgeable about learning disabilities and who can facilitate success for and with the students. Many colleges and universities also offer transition and orientation programming to students with learning disabilities during the summer after the student graduates from secondary school and prior to entry into the institution or during the grade 12 year. Information about these services may be found on the institution's website or may be obtained from the Office for Students with Disabilities, prior to entry.

The Ministry of Education has issued a generic transition guide for school boards. Unfortunately, this has not resulted in the development of better transition plans. Parents will find an LD-specific transition guide on the LDAO website (www.ldao.ca) which will help them to figure out what should be in their son or daughter's transition plan. Help is also available from the LDA chapters and the Provincial Office of LDAO. It is worth persevering with this initiative, since an effective transition plan can provide a bridge for all students with learning disabilities as they move from secondary school to their post-secondary destination.

It was Alice (Lewis Carroll's heroine) who said that *"if you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there"*. Transition planning will not only help your sons or daughters identify where they want to go, but also what is going to be the right road for them to travel. We must all support them along the way.

Eva Nichols, Legislation and Educational Policy Consultant, LDAO

Our Readers Write:

Dear LDAO:

I am writing to let you know about a success story. One of my students, Phil B., was our star student last year in 2003. Phil, who has a learning disability, overcame many obstacles and reached phenomenal success. Phil was voted Valedictorian of his OAC class, and was an Ontario Scholar. He was patient and kind and very popular. He stated "I just always knew that things in school would just take me longer. With a learning disability you just have to have patience and get at it."

Phil is now working towards an Engineering Degree from The University of Ottawa.

Phil serves as an example to all students with learning disabilities. We are very proud of his accomplishments and wanted to share them with you.

Sincerely
Muriel Franklin
Special Education Teacher
Brockville, Ontario

Mentoring: The Art of Postive Role Modelling

About three or four years ago, I had the distinct pleasure of reconnecting with a young man who innocently wandered into our office en route to a meeting one day. A decade had passed since I 'd last seen John, whom I'd met in a pre-employment program for youth with disabilities where he was a participant, and I was employed as a Life Skills Coach. Amidst the animated chatter that occurs with pleasant connectedness, a co-worker became involved in our conversation, which inevitably led to the question, how did you two meet?

John pointed to me, and said, "He was my mentor."

I must admit to being a little surprised by this assertion, but on reflection, I realized that mentoring is often an act of "unconscious competence," one of those "not-knowing-that-you-know" events, that can have influence, positive or negative, for an observer. Ten years ago, I perceived myself as "just doing my job." John, however, was engaged in a learning process that he was integrating into a series of individualized behaviours and personal codes. Consciously or not, we have all been mentored by others, and as we in the helping professions touch another's life, we serve, however briefly, as mentors to someone ourselves.

"Mentoring" is not a new concept. In fact, the term dates all the way back to Homer and The Iliad, when Odysseus went off to war, leaving his son, Telemachus, in the care of Mentor, an older, wise man. Partnering younger men with older, experienced males was commonplace in ancient Greece. It was hoped the elder would act as teachers and personal friends, instructing the young person in the ways of the world and guiding them in developing values. The word 'mentoring' became synonymous with wisdom, guardianship, teaching and personal and social development.

Although there are many mentoring models, things really haven't changed all

that much. Mentoring is gaining prominence again in a big way, especially in corporate sectors, where it's proven itself to be a cost effective, capacity building tool. In the business world, it's too often used merely as a succession planning method, and, with some exceptions, notably, internationally-trained professionals, it's a woefully under-utilized concept in the non-profit sector. The benefits mentoring can have for a person with a learning disability are far reaching.

The basic premise—and thus, success—of mentoring is relatively straightforward and simple. Two individuals are partnered to accomplish agreed-upon tasks within a specific time frame. The tasks can range in scope from skill development, problem solving or job search, to task mastery and networking opportunities. In most formal mentoring programs the individuals are matched by a third party who provides the framework for the program, screens the participants and acts as a resource during the mentoring relationship. In many successful, well-matched partnerships, results are win-win-win for all involved. For mentors, benefits can include: enhancing one's understanding of learning disabilities and the manifesting societal barriers, while engaging in a developmental dialogue with another human being that can have life-altering impact. Mentees, have opportunities to emerge from social isolation, recover self esteem, develop accommodations, and receive non-judgmental support to accomplish goals. The host agency meanwhile, benefits from low-cost enhanced programming that utilizes existing skills and fosters community partnerships while addressing possible service gaps.

But filling in service gaps requires guidelines, and it's essential to realize what mentoring isn't, as much as what it is. It's important to realize mentoring does not involve: taking over an employer or counsellor's role, trying to make the mentee a clone of the mentor or playing the part of a "guru" who knows and sees all. The best mentors are always guides, who act as supervisors, gatekeepers and teachers who sometimes engage in persuasion and "protected practice". Good mentors, more than anything perhaps, are listeners and learners, who don't necessarily have all the answers, but who nonetheless honour the whole person and their challenges. Note the absence of the

(continued on page 7)

word, "friendship" here. Mentoring is often a task-oriented process, and while friendships do occur, this is not generally meant to be the foundation of the relationship.

"We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take us or spare us."
Marcel Proust

Successful mentoring programs operate within frameworks that follow clear boundaries and expectations. Both mentors and mentees should be subjected to a thorough intake process that includes police and reference checks as well as developing a plan of clear and concise goals and objectives of what the partnership is and isn't. A coordinator should be available to provide mediation, professional development and resources, if necessary. Essentially though, a good program with well-matched participants runs itself. Mentors should be trained and mentees oriented to the process and expectations of the agency. Ideally, a plain language, multi-sensory approach that utilizes the concept of universal design should be in place during the training process, during which the person with LD should be able to communicate their needs and disclose required accommodations.

The ALDERCentre is a Toronto-based, non-profit employment agency that links job seekers with learning disabilities and challenges to the labour force through assessment, counselling, coaching and job development. Last summer ALDERCentre launched a two-year, Trillium-funded project, "Helping Ontarians Learn Differently" (HOLD), that offers a province-wide education and mentoring program.

We hope to build this program in partnership with local agencies across Ontario to support the needs of youth and adults with LD who might otherwise be living in isolation, or in need of skill development and other support. It's an exciting opportunity to get involved, enhance capacity and potentially change lives.

Learning is a life-long expectation, but learning disabilities are a life-long condition! The benefits that mentoring, a "living process," can have for the LD community, are many and three dimensional. Perhaps more than anything, it can help the person with LD access the untapped community that lives within each and every one of us.

Carter Hammett is a Toronto writer and Workshop Coordinator with the ALDERCentre. You can learn more about mentoring and the HOLD Project by contacting him at: hammett@aldercentre.org or by calling (416) 693-2922 ext. 307

Mentoring Students with Learning Disabilities

The Toronto Training Board (TTB), sponsored by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and Human Resources Development Canada, has pulled together a team of community partners in order to develop a career/job mentoring program for high-school students with learning disabilities.

The community partners on the steering committee include: the Learning Disabilities Association of Toronto District, Integra Foundation, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Family Services Association, YMCA, and the Toronto District School Board. Other community organizations are kept informed and may join the committee at any time.

The project, (called a Partnership by the TTB), has two phases. In the current fiscal year, ending March 31, the three objectives are: to develop a manual for mentors, using York University's manual as a model; to identify 20 grade 10 students willing to participate in the upcoming pilot; and to identify funding sources for post-pilot program sustainability. The manual will be made available to the public on the TTB website (www.ttb.on.ca) in late March.

In the next fiscal year, starting April, the objectives include: developing and implementing a pilot program, e.g. hiring a part-time coordinator; identifying, screening and training mentors; matching mentors and students; finding a host organization for meetings and identifying a resource centre(s). At the same time the steering committee will be working to identify the organization or organizations that would most likely take over the permanent program once sustainable funding for the program was secured.

For more information call: Greg Yarrow, Executive Director, Toronto Training Board (416) 934-1652; or email yatrrow@ttb.on.ca.

Talking with your Teenager about Learning Difficulties

Adolescence can be a trying time for you and your teenager, especially if she has learning problems. At an age when kids are often least willing to talk with their parents, it's probably most important to keep the lines of communication open and operating. Conversing with your teenager about her learning difficulties can be particularly challenging — and valuable.

In her drive to forge a distinct identity, your teenager may spend a lot of time asserting her independence in the face of adult authority, staunchly defending her peer group, and challenging your opinions and values. Teens are also faced with greatly increased school demands. All of this can make it tricky to talk with her about her learning problems.

Open, straightforward, and persistent communication with your adolescent about her learning struggles helps her build skills of self-awareness and self-advocacy that will serve her through middle school and high school, and into adulthood. This article presents some practical approaches for keeping your child engaged in a conversation with you and other adults about her learning struggles, so that she can rise to the challenge of doing her best at school.

Gather Some Facts

Gather information about the nature of your child's learning struggles from as many sources as possible. These may include current books and articles, as well as detailed information on learning strengths and weaknesses from each of her teachers, across all subject areas. Press for details so that you understand very concretely how her problems are affecting academic performance, especially in reading, writing, speaking, and math. A few examples of weaknesses that a parent or teacher might easily overlook are:

- In the upper grades the organizational demands of keeping track of homework and class work across multiple subject areas is demanding for even the most capable student. Disorganization may be "invisible" until it causes serious problems with getting work completed and to the teacher on time;
- A student in middle school may be perceived as having adequate reading skills and good vocabulary, but actually possess poor comprehension and memory skills;
- A high school student may have strong oral language skills, but continued weaknesses in written language.

As you gather information about your child's learning problems, identify her areas of strength, too. These strengths will likely be the compensatory tools that help her overcome or bypass areas of weakness.

Sort Through Your Feelings

By middle school, if your child has experienced years of academic struggles, she may have become very discouraged about school and have low self-esteem. When these feelings result in her losing motivation, becoming depressed, or acting out, it can be a challenge for you to remain hopeful and optimistic about her achievement at school.

When you watch your child struggle in school, it can bring back painful memories of your own negative school experiences. Or, if you were a confident, successful student, it may be hard to empathize with your child's learning challenges. You may also feel angry toward the school or individual teachers. Whatever difficult feelings you may experience, it's a good idea to get some support from other sympathetic adults — friends and family, a support group of parents of kids with learning problems, or a counselor — so that you can bring a positive outlook to the task of supporting your child.

Choose Your Words

By middle school and high school, your child will have been exposed to a variety of terms for her learning struggles — some of which are very negative and disrespectful. Continue to talk openly and honestly with your adolescent about her learning difficulties to counter the myths and misinformation she may hear at school, in the media, or elsewhere. Use *facts about learning disabilities and the achievements of people with these disabilities*, as evidence to counter her negative and self-defeating beliefs about her intelligence or ability. Many teenagers express a sense of relief and can cope better when parents and teachers offer them accurate information about their learning problems and realistic, step-by-step strategies for addressing them.

(continued on page 9)

Use Correct Terms for Support Services

If your child receives special education assistance or has an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) or 504 plan, you and your teenager's teachers should use appropriate terms to describe the type of support she receives. In many schools, the special education classroom is routinely called a resource room, and the special education teacher is called a resource teacher. It may help break down the stigma of the "special education" label that some kids experience if you use the term interchangeably with "resource room" or "resource teacher." Likewise, a 504 plan may legitimately be called a "support plan." If you don't use the correct terms and your child hears them from other sources, you may unintentionally increase the stigma and shame she attaches to the labels.

Take Age and Maturity into Account

Middle School Students

Parents of sixth- through eighth-grade kids often feel the need for a well-stocked "bag of tricks" to overcome the sometimes defensive attitude of adolescents. By this age, **kids should be participating actively with their parents and teachers in personal goal-setting discussions**, such as thinking about things they excel in or careers they might enjoy. Students this age often participate in a portion of the parent-teacher conference. Provide your child honest feedback about her performance in school and together try to identify natural affinities that she could later cultivate into powerful assets.

By seventh or eighth grade, **kids should be introduced to the concept "self-advocate"** or the role of "manager" of their own educational needs. Teach your child to speak up for herself, as this practice will be essential as she gets older. Rehearse how to talk to teachers and others about her specific learning needs. She'll want to use this skill as she gets older and will need to use it in high school, post-secondary education or training, and employment.

Kids in middle school want desperately to conform in order to fit in with their peers. For this reason, your middle school-age child may strongly prefer to be enrolled exclusively in general education classes. Even though she's probably more similar to other kids than she is different from them, her learning struggles may cause her to feel not only different, but inferior. So, rather than emphasizing her problems and needs for special help, keep her focused on specific learning goals, the steps you've outlined to reach them, her progress to date, and the support you and her teachers can provide her.

Middle school kids want some degree of influence and control over many aspects of school. Your seventh grader may set a goal to participate in all general education classes by high school, that is, to discontinue special education classes or tutoring. You and her teachers should help her evaluate this proposal realistically. If you support the idea, let her know what the steps are and how you'll work with her to reach her goal. You may also need to model an adaptable and flexible outlook for your child, to think out loud with her about adjusting her goals to better suit her capabilities. In this and other ways, you continue to offer a "safety net" of support that she can rely on as necessary.

High School Students

High school-age kids often ignore or even deny the fact they have learning difficulties. This stage of rebelliousness can be the perfect opportunity for your child to build her self-advocacy skills and assert greater control over her life. **Possessing knowledge about oneself and the skills to express that knowledge to others is a real asset.** Help her understand that she can influence how others treat her when she presents her educational strengths and needs in a respectful and knowledgeable manner. She should also be aware that, if she has an IEP or specific accommodations for learning, federal disability law is also on her side—and will be throughout her life.

Most teachers are open to accommodating the various learning needs of their students if they only know what will help. For example, if her teacher assigns 40 pages of reading along with 20 comprehension questions to be turned in the next day, your teenager has a couple of choices. She can become overwhelmed or angry, or simply ignore the homework assignment and receive a failing grade. Or she can (take three deep breaths and) think of how best to explain her learning difficulty to her teacher, then ask for either a reduction in the amount of homework, or extended time to complete the assignment. She should talk with her teacher either before or after class so that the teacher can focus on what she's saying. With practice, such self-advocacy skills will become more routine. It may never be "easy" for some kids, but it's important to have a goal of becoming vocal and vigilant about their learning needs.

Keep up the Good Work

By her second or third year of high school, **your child should have some understanding of how her strengths, talents, and learning or attention problems may affect her education or career goals.** If you've been able to help her develop a realistic picture of her strengths and weaknesses; to use problem-solving approaches that make use of her strengths to overcome weaknesses; to identify and use resources and help; and to approach big goals as a series of small steps; she'll be able to help chart her course into young adulthood.

To a great extent, development of all of these skills relies on ongoing communication between your teenager and the various helpful adults in her life. It's a lot of work, and you may not get much thanks along the way. But, in the end, your child may show her gratitude when you least expect it. She may credit you as the reason for her graduation from high school or tell you what a great role model you were for raising her own kids. Accolades or not, you'll be helping her do her best.

LDAO Launches "Stay in School - Succeed in Life" Campaign

On March 8, 2004, the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario launched its Stay in School campaign, aimed at reducing the high drop out rate for students with learning disabilities, with a gala event hosted by Ernst and Young. In attendance were the Honorary Chair of the campaign, Chief Julian Fantino, Toronto Police Services, Hon. Dr. Marie Bountrogianni, Minister of Citizenship/Children Youth Services, Hon. Mary Anne Chambers, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Hon. Ernie Eves representing the Justin Eves Foundation, and representatives from a number of government ministries and teachers' federations and corporate supporters of the campaign.

Chief Fantino spoke of the need to focus on the positive, both in terms of youth and those who are making positive contributions to helping young people. Minister Bountrogianni spoke of her experiences as an immigrant child in being placed in a "special" class and of one teacher who recognized her intelligence and helped her get the help she needed. Mr. Eves spoke of the importance of supporting students with learning disabilities throughout their school careers. Pierre Garand of Shire BioChem, a major funder of this campaign and the project, expressed their satisfaction in being able to fund this initiative.

There are 2.2 million students in Ontario's schools, and some 95,000 of them have been identified as having learning disabilities. Many of these students are at risk for dropping out of school because of the frustrations they face in meeting curriculum demands. Despite having average or better intelligence, they must learn to be strong self advocates with an understanding of their academic strengths and needs, what works best for them and a willingness to ask for help.

This campaign is the first step of a two-year project that will develop a set of resource materials for educators and students with learning disabilities to foster and understanding of the learning needs of these students and the importance of providing them with adequate support to enable them to be successful in their secondary school careers.

L. to R. Barbara Glendinning, V.P. LDA York Region; Dr. Bruce Ferguson, Hospital for Sick Children; Hon. Dr. Marie Bountrogianni, Minister of Children's Services/Citizenship; Lynn Ziraldo, LDA York Region & Chair, MACSE.

L. to R. Chief Julian Fantino, Toronto Police Services; Jay Mandarino, Campaign Chair; Carol Yaworski, Executive Director, LDAO.

L. to R. Dr. Isabel Shessel, Chair, LDAO; Hon. Mary Anne Chambers, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities; Carol Yaworski, Executive Director, LDAO; Jay Mandarino, Campaign Chair.

L. to R. Jay Mandarino, Campaign Chair; Hon. Ernie Eves, Leader of the Opposition.

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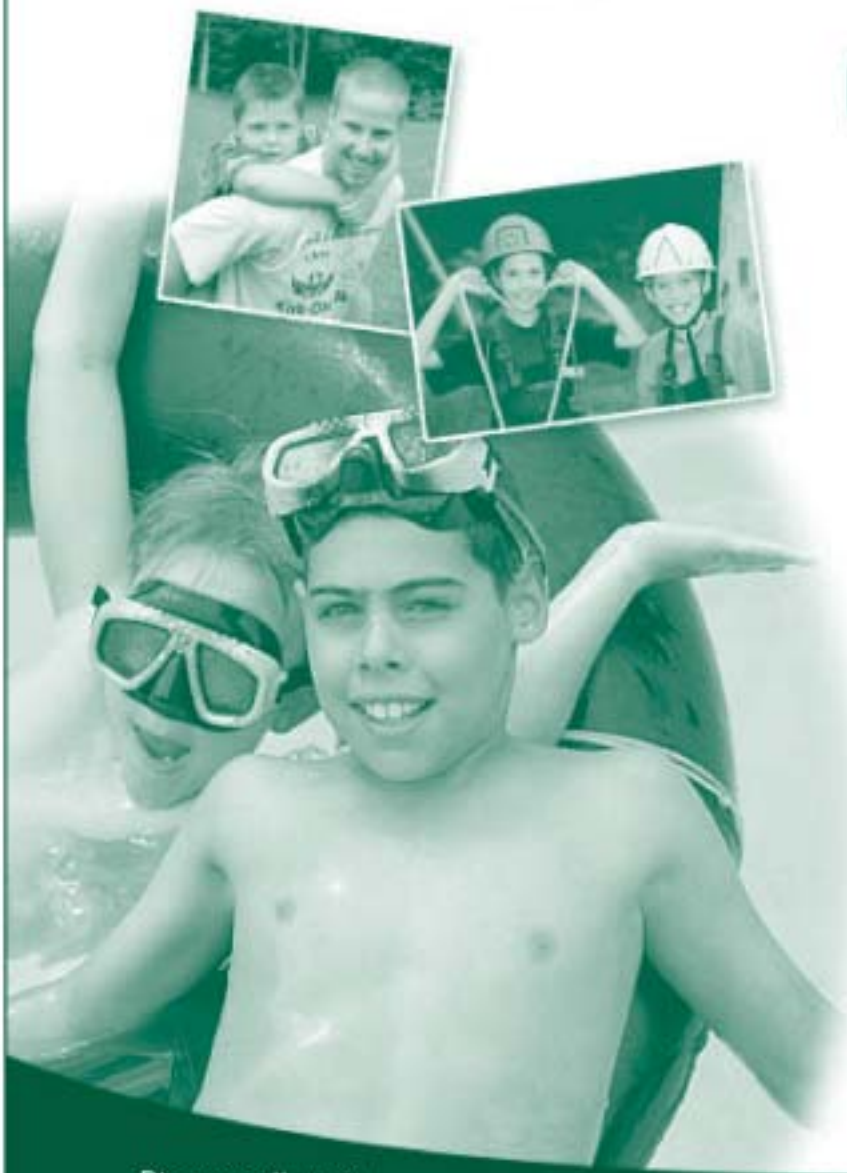

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Attributes to Success

Adults with learning disabilities (LD) face challenges in several areas of life, including education, employment, social interactions, daily routines and activities. However, many are able to lead successful lives while others are barely able to 'keep their heads above water' emotionally, socially or financially.

Why? Results from projects and research point to the importance of a set of personal characteristics, attitude, and behaviours that help lead persons with learning disabilities to successful life outcomes. Successful persons with learning disabilities are much more likely to have these characteristics than unsuccessful individuals.

What is success?

According to the Frostig Centre in California, the agency that conducted over 20 years of research in this area, success means different things to different people, at different times in a person's life. However, there seems to be a number of things that most people include when they think of success. These include good friends, positive family relations, being loved, self approval, job satisfaction, physical and mental health, financial comfort, spiritual contentment, and an overall sense of meaning in one's life.

Children with learning disabilities grow up to be adults with learning disabilities. Many of the difficulties experienced in childhood continue into and through adulthood. According to the Frostig Centre, these success attributes include: self-awareness, pro-activity, perseverance, goal-setting, the presence and use of effective support systems and emotional coping strategies.

Self Awareness

Successful people with learning disabilities are aware of the types of disabilities they have, including academic problems like reading and writing, academic-related problems such as attentional or organizational difficulties

and non-academic difficulties such as motor deficits, social skills, or emotional/behaviour problems. They are open and specific about their difficulties and understand how they affect their lives. They are able to see their LD as only one aspect of themselves. They recognize their talents along with accepting their limitations. In addition they are also able to find jobs that provide the best 'fit' or 'match' with their abilities.

Pro-Activity

Successful adults with learning disabilities are generally actively engaged in the world around them. They believe that they have the power to control their own destiny and affect the outcome of their lives. They often step into leadership roles at work, in the community, and in social and family settings. They demonstrate creative self advocacy and initiative and have a willingness to consult with others while making decisions. When acting upon these decisions they also assume responsibility for their actions and resulting outcomes. They generally take responsibility for the outcome and do not blame others when things don't work out.

Perseverance

Many persons with learning disabilities show great perseverance and keep pursuing their chosen path despite difficulties and may be heard saying 'I am not a quitter' or 'I never give up'. However, successful individuals demonstrate an additional important ability – knowing when to quit. They may change the way they go about achieving their goal, thereby improving their chances of success. Often they try several strategies until they find one that works. Successful persons with learning disabilities appear to learn from their hardships and mistakes that they found to be necessary for growth.

Goal Setting

Successful individuals set goals that are specific, realistic and attainable yet flexible so that they can be changed to adjust to specific circumstances and include a strategy to reach their goals. They have an understanding of the step by step process for obtaining their goals.

Presence and Use of Effective Support Systems

Guidance, support and encouragement come from family members, friends, mentors, teachers, therapists and co-workers. As successful individuals move into adulthood, they attempt to reduce their dependence on others. However, they take the initiative and seek the support of others rather then wait for someone to come to their aid. They are willing to accept help when it is offered. In many instances, they are able to switch roles with people who had provided them with support in the past, finding themselves assisting and encouraging those who once helped them.

Emotional Coping Strategies

The daily struggle of living with learning disabilities and coping with its symptoms often result in individuals experiencing stress in their lives. In some cases, the stress can be so significant that it leads to psychological difficulties such as anxiety

(continued on page 13)

and depression. However, successful individuals appear to have developed effective means of reducing and coping with stress, frustration, and the emotional aspects of their learning disabilities. Researchers have identified three components of successful emotional coping:

1. Awareness of the situations that trigger stress;
2. Recognition of developing stress;
3. Availability/access to and use of coping strategies.

These coping strategies can include:

- seeking counseling,
- asking others to do unmanageable tasks on the job,
- changing activities periodically so stress does not build up,
- expressing feelings,
- asserting oneself,
- utilizing peer support and encouragement,
- learning to ask for help,
- planning ahead for difficult transition,
- keeping away from negative or critical people,
- working out differences with friends, family and/or co-workers,
- using meditation/yoga,
- doing physical activities or exercises.

Conclusion

Research has shown that self-awareness, pro-activity, perseverance, goal-setting, the presence and use of effective support systems and emotional coping strategies help lead people with learning disabilities to success. To date no research tells us exactly how to teach these attributes depending upon the age, abilities, experience, interests and living environment of the individual with learning disabilities. However, research does suggest a number of key components and areas that need to be considered in fostering success attributes at a young age.

Unfortunately, we concentrate our efforts primarily on the academic/educational areas, paying little attention to the development of these attributes in promoting positive life outcomes in persons with learning disabilities. If we remind ourselves that research has shown that learning disabilities persist into adulthood, and that children with learning disabilities must function in settings beyond school, then it is reasonable to direct greater efforts toward fostering the development of these success attributes, at least to the same degree that we strive to improve academic skills. Although the extent to which these attributes can be taught to, or learned by students with learning disabilities, is not completely clear, we do know that they are critical to attaining life success.

To obtain a free copy of 'Life Success for Children with Learning Disabilities: A Parent Guide' please visit the Frostig Centre website at http://frostig.org/LDsuccess/ . Included in the guide are checklists and suggested activities to foster successful attributes in children with learning disabilities.

LDA of Canada, 2004.
Adapted with permission from the Frostig Centre in California, a non-profit organization that specializes in working with children who have learning disabilities in the area of research, teacher training, direct instructional services.

New In The LDAO Library

The Source for Learning & Memory Strategies, by Regina G. Richards, 2003, LinguiSystems, Inc., East Moline, IL ($65.95)
Regina Richards has distinguished herself with her previous books and articles on writing disabilities and dysgraphia. In this book, Richards has used her long experience as an educational therapist to write a virtual encyclopedia of strategies for word recognition, spelling, reading comprehension, math, and different kinds of memory tasks. In addition there is a good breakdown and description of the processes involved in memory. The book is both thorough and easy to follow.

The Source for Visual-Spatial Disorders, by Britt Neff, Julie Neff-Lippman & Carol Stockdale, 2002, LinguiSystems, Inc., East Moline, IL. ($65.95)
Using the format of an ongoing biographical story, a young woman, her mother and her educational therapist write about Britt's struggle with a severe visual-spatial learning disability. There are descriptions of her struggles with math, spelling and other areas affected by understanding of time and space. Her educational therapist developed a program to teach, in a very concrete way, the underlying concepts that Britt lacked. These techniques are described throughout the story and listed in a section at the end. While Britt's difficulties stemmed from a genetic disorder, Turner's Syndrome, the approaches outlined could be useful to many others with visual-spatial LD's.

The Source for Executive Function Disorders, by Suzanne Phillips Keeley, 2003, LinguiSystems, Inc., East Moline, IL. ($65.95)
This book is written from a medical perspective about adults who have acquired difficulties in executive function because of neurological injuries. However many adults with LD and/or ADHD have similar executive function difficulties in such areas as planning and organizing, determining the sequence of steps, initiating tasks, maintaining attention, self-evaluating and making use of feedback. This book gives exercises and strategies for organization, prioritizing and time management in day-to-day life. It could be useful in planning Life Skills programs.

What can teachers do to foster motivation, self-esteem, and resilience in students with learning problems?

The answer parallels many of the same strategies I described for parents to bolster a child's sense of self-esteem, optimism, and resilience. Research about resilience highlights the significant influence of even one adult to help children with learning and attention problems become increasingly hopeful and successful. The late Julius Segal called that one person a "charismatic adult," noting this was an adult with whom children "identify and from whom they gather strength." Segal observed, "And in a surprising number of cases that person turns out to be a teacher." Not surprisingly, teachers and schools play a major role in determining a child's sense of self-worth and dignity.

The Mindset of Teachers Who Are Charismatic Adults

How can teachers serve as charismatic adults? Certainly they must use particular interventions to bolster the self-esteem and resilience of students. However, if strategies are to be effective, the teachers using them must possess a positive mindset, or set of assumptions, about themselves and their students. Some of the main features of this mindset are:

1. Every student desires to learn and be successful in school. If they are not, we must strive to understand the nature of their learning problems.

2. If students are demonstrating self-defeating behaviours, such as quitting, or not trying, or acting like the class clown or class bully, we must recognize these are ineffective coping strategies that often mask feelings of vulnerability, low self-esteem, and hopelessness. Rather than impose punitive consequences, we must ask how to minimize the despair these youngsters experience each and every day.

3. If we are to lessen the use of these ineffective coping behaviours, we must teach these youngsters in ways they can learn best. This implies that as educators we must first change our approach and teaching style if students with learning problems are to adopt a more hopeful, positive approach. We must be comfortable in making accommodations when needed.

4. Each child or adolescent possesses "islands of competence," or areas of strength, that must be identified, reinforced, and displayed by educators. A strength-based model does not deny the child's problems but recognizes the importance of using the child's strengths as an important component of any intervention program.

5. We must actively invite and involve students in the process of their own education.

Interventions to Nurture Self-Esteem and Resilience in the School Environment

If one accepts the tenets of this mindset, then it is easier for educators to rely upon Attribution theory for offering guideposts for bolstering self-esteem and hope. This theory directs us to find ways for youngsters with learning problems to feel an increasing sense of ownership, control, and responsibility for their successes and to view mistakes as experiences from which to learn rather than feel defeated. What follows are several key strategies with examples of how teachers might accomplish this task. Each educator should use these strategies in a way that most successfully meets the particular needs of each student.

1. Understanding Our Students' Learning Problems and De-Mystifying These Problems for Them

A first step in helping children with learning difficulties is for teachers and parents to appreciate the nature of these problems, help children understand their unique learning strengths and weaknesses, and make appropriate accommodations in their school programs. When I conduct psychological/educational evaluations, I seek to enlist the children, as well as their parents and teachers, as active "partners" in the evaluation. I ask these youngsters what they see as their learning strengths and weaknesses. I am often very impressed with their ability to articulate their learning profile. I describe the evaluation as an attempt to understand more clearly their strengths and weaknesses so together we can figure out the best ways for them to learn.

When I complete an evaluation, I sit down with the youngster to review my

(continued on page 15)

findings, emphasizing both their islands of competence and their areas of difficulty and what we might do to strengthen the latter. Typically, I write a special report for each child, thanking them for working with me and detailing, in language they can understand, the main findings of the evaluation and the interventions I believe would help them. I should note that the interventions follow from the discussions I have with parents and teachers.

My close friend Dr. Mel Levine, through his writings and lectures, has skilfully demonstrated the importance of de-mystifying for children their learning strengths and problems. The more articulate students are about their learning style, the better equipped they will be to become self-advocates for what they need to succeed in the school environment.

2. Making Appropriate Accommodations to Maximize the Success of Children with Learning Problems in School

If all children learn differently, then it makes inherent sense that we teach them in ways they learn best. The kinds of accommodations I typically recommend do not require major modifications in a student's program, nor do they demand that a teacher have different educational plans for each student in the classroom. What is required is that all parties-students, teachers, parents-understand a child's strengths and weaknesses, arrive at common expectations and goals, and recognize what has to be done to reach these goals.

Some teachers have raised the question whether it is "fair" to make accommodations for one student, especially if other students feel offended. While I understand this concern, I believe that since all children are different and learn differently, the least fair thing is to treat all of them the same. However, the issue of fairness must be openly addressed lest other students begin to resent those students who are receiving accommodations. For this reason, I advocate that schools use the first couple of days of the new school year (although it is never too late) as an "orientation" period. During this period, teachers would not focus on academic content but instead would use the time to create a classroom climate in which all students would have the opportunity to thrive.

For example, to lessen the possibility of children feeling a teacher is unfair because some children might be doing more work than others, on the first day of school, the teacher can discuss with the class how each student is different, how some

students read more quickly than others, how some can solve math problems more proficiently, how some can run faster than others. The teacher can then say that given these differences, there will be different goals and expectations of the amount and kind of work done by each student. The teacher can add, "One of my concerns is that you may begin to feel I am not being fair, and if you do, those feelings may interfere with learning. Thus, if at any time you feel I am not being fair, please tell me so we can discuss it."

The feedback I have received indicates that when a teacher introduces the topic of "fairness" **before** it becomes an issue, it remains a non-issue and permits the teacher to accommodate to each student's needs without negative feelings emerging. Obviously, teachers should share this message of fairness with parents, perhaps through a short statement of class philosophy that is sent home.

As noted, the kinds of modifications I typically have recommended do not require major changes. A teacher reviewing several of these recommendations recently remarked, "These are all very reasonable." The following are a small selection of these accommodations:

- Untimed tests should be provided. I have known students with learning problems whose scores have gone up significantly by taking tests untimed, and yet they only required a few extra minutes. Removing the pressure of time lessened their anxiety.
- A maximum time for homework can be defined. I believe that if most members of a class can do six math problems in 15 minutes, then, if possible, teachers should set that as a maximum time. If some students can do only three problems in that time span, the three should be accepted. To ask students with learning and attention problems to put in an inordinate amount of time for homework not only is counterproductive in terms of learning, but also increases tension at home.
- We should ensure students know what the homework assignments are. Many students with learning problems have difficulty copying homework assignments from the blackboard. Providing the child with a monthly "syllabus" of assignments can be very helpful. Some teachers assign a "buddy" to ensure the child has an accurate picture of the homework required.
- Children should be permitted to use computers for their assignments. Many students who have difficulty transmitting their ideas on paper do much better with computers. Yet, I know of teachers who still feel "students have to learn to write." By this they mean, writing with a pen or pencil. My feeling is if students

(continued on page 16)

What can teachers do . . .
cont. from page 15

struggle to write with a pen or pencil but find it easier to express their thoughts using a computer, they should be allowed to do so.

3. Teaching Children How to Solve Problems and Make Decisions

I continually emphasize that a basic feature of high self-esteem and resilience is the belief one has control over many areas of one's life and can accurately define these areas. This belief is tied to a feeling of ownership, a vital foundation for motivation. If we wish our children to develop this sense of control, it is essential we provide them with opportunities from an early age to learn and apply problem-solving and decision-making skills.

When I consult with schools and have the opportunity to interview students, I often ask, "What choices or decisions have you made in the past month in school?" Choices and decisions must be present if we are to help students with learning problems gain a feeling of ownership and become self-advocates.

Teachers can provide choices in many ways. A couple examples include:

- Teachers in one school gave a certain number of problems for homework but said to the students, "It's your choice. Look at all six problems, and then do the four you think will help you learn best." By offering the students the choice to "do less," they actually received more homework than in the past, especially since the students felt a greater sense of ownership.
- When children are having difficulty learning, it is advantageous to discuss with them what they think might be most helpful and to attempt certain strategies. As Dr. Myrna Shure has found using her "I Can Problem-Solve" program, even young children are capable of coming up with different options to help them learn more effectively.

4. Reinforcing Responsibility by Having Children Contribute

Self-esteem and resilience are nurtured when children are provided opportunities to contribute to their world and to the well-being of others. In my research, I found that when adults are asked, "What is one of your most positive memories of school when you were a student, a memory involving something an adult said or did that boosted your self-esteem and motivation?" the most frequent answer centered around being asked to help.

For this reason when I consult with educators, I request they make a list of their students and what each contributes to the school environment. I have found that when students feel they are making a positive difference in school, they are more motivated to do well and

more willing to take appropriate risks in learning. These acts of caring can easily be linked with academic tasks. There should not be one student in a school who does not feel he or she is contributing to a better school environment. A few examples follow:

- Students with learning problems can be asked to read to younger children.
- An educator I knew enlisted adolescents with learning problems to sponsor a bake sale and raffle, with the proceeds going to a needy family in the community. This educator noted the students'self-esteem improved as they performed the many academic skills involved in the charitable project.
- Students can take care of plants in school, or paint murals on the wall, or hang up favourite drawings.
- Some schools use cooperative learning groups so students gain experience working together and helping each other. For some youngsters with learning problems, it is the first time they realize they have something to contribute to the school.

5. Learning from, Rather than Feeling Defeated by, Mistakes

All students are concerned about making mistakes and looking foolish. However, youngsters with learning problems typically experience more failure situations than peers who do not have these problems. Thus, they are even more vulnerable and fearful about failing. They feel especially "exposed" in school since it is an environment in which their learning problems are very evident. If we are to keep students from losing hope and quitting, we must help them develop a more positive attitude towards mistakes.

One of the most effective means of dealing with the fear of making mistakes and failing is to discuss this fear directly with students even before any mistakes are made. This is best done during the "orientation" period mentioned earlier. One of my favourite techniques for accomplishing this task is for teachers to ask at the beginning of the school year, "Who feels they are going to make a mistake and not understand something in class this year?" Before any of the students can respond, teachers can raise their own hands and discuss times when they were students and worried about making mistakes and how this interfered with their learning. They can then engage the class in a problem-solving discussion of what they can do as teachers and what the class can do to minimize the fear of

(continued on page 17)

failing and looking foolish. Rules can be established about how to call on students and how the teacher and other students should respond when a student does not know an answer.

Openly acknowledging the fear of failure renders it less potent and less destructive. Tying this to a discussion of how we all learn differently and have different strengths (islands of competence) and weaknesses sets the foundation for a class environment filled with respect and understanding. Such an environment is one in which students with learning problems will feel respected and their self-esteem, motivation, hope, and resilience will be nurtured.

Concluding Remarks

One of the most precious gifts we can provide children and adolescents with learning problems is to develop their self-dignity and resilience. I hope this series of articles has provided a helpful portrait of the world of these youngsters and what we can do to assist them to lead more satisfying, fulfilling, successful lives. A wonderful legacy we can leave these children and students is to be the charismatic adults in their lives, knowing they have truly "gathered strength" from us.

By Dr. Robert Brooks. Dr. Brooks is on the faculty of Harvard Medical School and has served as Director of the Department of Psychology at McLean Hospital. He has written many articles and book chapters, including the book, The Self-Esteem Teacher, and co-authored A Paediatric Approach to Learning Disorders and Raising Resilient Children. Dr. Brooks will be a co-presenter at LDAO's conference, June 3-4, 2004.

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This Mother's Day, Help Our Children Stay In School

Most people would agree that a high school diploma is an essential ingredient in the lives of successful youth. What is not as understood in our communities is the strong link between learning disabilities and high school dropout rates. Without the academic support they need to finish high school and begin productive lives, many young adults with learning disabilities begin the cycle of poverty and welfare dependence that robs them of their futures and strains our social services.

In response to this critical issue, LDAO is developing resource materials for a special program, *Stay in School, Succeed in Life,* aimed at convincing these students to seek help for their academic challenges and encouraging their teachers to learn more about how to support youth in their classrooms. *Stay in School, Succeed in Life* will empower, encourage, and accommodate youth with learning disabilities, helping to close an important gap in our education system, strengthening our families, and enhancing the future prosperity of young Canadians.

This Mother's Day, you can make a difference in a young person's life and honour the love and commitment of mothers everywhere by making a donation to the LDAO *Stay in School* campaign. Just complete the coupon on this page and return it with your gift to LDAO. For donations of $35 or more, we'd be pleased to forward a personalized acknowledgement letter to the person you wish to honour. You can also find additional information about the *Stay in School* campaign (and make an on-line campaign pledge in honor of someone special) at www.ldao.ca. Happy Mother's Day!

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Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario
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Adult Perspectives - by Martin Durkin

I'm a full time writer who has dyslexia. I think it's funny as hell; real irony in that. I've learned that without family and friends, perseverance has a hard time emerging from the heart. My ups and downs in school would probably match everyone else's but somehow, you have to reach inside yourself and prove to everyone, including yourself, that you can achieve your goals.

Looking back, I focused on the teachers who helped me, forgot about the ones who were less than understanding and realized, that although my parents seemed like a pain in the butt at the time, they too were working with a blindfold on, trying to help me.

In the end, I've made it. I write, I'm married, I have high school and college diplomas and I discovered the me that was almost buried due to the hard times I had with school, peers and the bookwork. Now when I do something and people recognize me for it, it's not the LD guy, it's Martin.

I found my niche by realizing my disability is just a shadow on the wall, part of who I am but not WHAT I am. In time, the education system will catch up, but like most things in life, what isn't understood is cast aside and scorned for being different. If you can get beyond that, the anger, frustration, humiliation, and hurt; if you can grab hold of your strengths, and the support of friends family and faith; if you have that determination to make it despite all the bullshit.....this point in your life is just a small section of the whole cycle. It's tough now and it seems like forever but, in time, you'll realize what full circle really means and that your school years, although so very important, are only a very brief moment in the rest of your life, and just a small part of your overall success.

Diplomas are necessary. Your sanity and belief in yourself are your staples. Your family/friends/time alone and perseverance are what will make the difference. Knowing your strengths and relishing them rather than focusing on the burdens, will make all the difference in the world. Standing up for yourself in a positive manner and helping others to understand all this will help to make this journey less of a hardship for the next person who follows down the same path.

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Finally, a learning disability is simply a unique way of seeing the world. So see it through your eyes and not how everyone else SAYS you see or should see it. Know that everything you want in life will happen if you're willing to work three times harder for it. In the end, in spite of all the support or lack of support you receive, the final result is up to you. If someone offers you a helping hand, take it as a positive gesture and not as a hand out.

Worrying about what others think will keep you down. If you're not receiving support of any kind from any one, look again; the person in the corner who seems the most quiet, may be the one who wants to help.

I look back on my own life. I'm 24 years old. I've gotten through high school, college, society, with this thing called dyslexia. I understand what it means and what it means to me, something so very important. And what does it mean? It means things can be tough but, it doesn't mean it runs my life. So in return, I'm a happy guy and that's all I've ever wanted to be.

LEAP Retires!…Welcome JOB-FIT

In 1996, LDAO hired Eva Nichols to write and compile a book called the Learning and Assessment Profile (LEAP). The premise behind LEAP was that if adults with learning disabilities were to be successful at obtaining and retaining employment, that a better process for matching strengths with employment was needed.

LEAP owed much to Gerber's work in emphasizing the importance of an individual with LD understanding their own strengths and weaknesses and then making educational and vocational choices that built on their strengths and minimize the impact of their weaker skills. Also imbedded in LEAP was the importance of developing self-awareness and self-advocacy skills to create a more self-sufficient and independent individual.

Over the past six years, LEAP has been used in LDAO chapters, colleges, universities and in employment programs in LDAs throughout Canada (funded by HRDC and administered by LDAC through a program called Destination Employment). For some time, however, LDAO has sought to update and revise the materials and as a result of a grant from Human Resources Development Canada we have begun that process.

In canvassing feedback from those using the materials, we determined that LEAP needed to become two products, one targeted at employment programs and the other focusing on students in post-secondary. From that decision, Job-Fit has evolved.

Focussing on individuals with learning disabilities or even learning difficulties, Job-Fit consists of two client books and a facilitator's guide. Book 1 leads the individual, with the support of a facilitator through the development of a clear understanding of their specific learning disability and its potential impact on their employment prospects. By coming to understand their strengths, they are assisted in developing the self-awareness to make good employment choices, understand their accommodation needs and develop the vocabulary to help others understand both what they need and what they have to offer.

In Book 2 the focus is on refining their understanding of their learning and working preferences and style. Clients are offered exhaustive information on the employment options, learn how to develop a resume and practice the skills necessary to market themselves to an employer. As well, Book 2 focuses on the organizational and interpersonal skills necessary to retain employment. Combined with the Facilitator's Guide, the package that is Job-Fit offers a comprehensive approach to assisting individuals with learning disabilities to obtain and keep suitable employment and thereby enjoy the self-sufficiency and success for which we all strive.

New Access LDAO Website

In addition to our regular website **www.ldao.on.ca** (www.ldao.ca after the end of April, 2004), LDAO will be launching the new **www.access.ldao.ca** in May, 2004. This new site will be a compilation site that serves as an internet portal to existing sites that are part of the LDAO website family and that are currently password protected. These sites are currently known as the Virtual Service (VS) and the Online Learning Forum.

The Virtual Service made resources and such services as an online bulletin board available to LDAO members only. There is a special section for our chapters that provides them with immediate access to the latest information, resources and directions from LDAO.

The Online Learning Forum allows LDAO to run structured courses and workshops online. Course participants enter the site via a unique user id and password to access course content and bulletin boards allowing contact with other participants and the course moderator.

The plan is to merge the Virtual Service website with the Online Learning Forum so that both sites function as one seamless program, making all resources, workshops and courses available to registered users. This means that the Virtual Service will become available, at no charge, to any member of the public who chooses to register for access to the site.The new URL will be **www.access.resources.ldao.ca.**

Plans for the future include a large addition to the ”Youth” section of the site . These will include areas for “blogging” (web journaling), “build your own site” and bulletin board and chat room capabilities. The goal is to provide a forum for youth that can be built upon by youth.

The Online Learning Forum, **www.access.learning.ldao.ca,** will continue to serve the same purpose as at present, but will become a counterpart to the new resources website and hosted alongside it on a server housed at OISE/UT.

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