

communique

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EARLY INTERVENTION

**WHAT IS IT?
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?
WHEN TO INTERVENE?**

Message from the Executive Director

Back to the Future

It's a fact of life that both good ideas (and bad ones) have a way of cycling through life. Ideas are in vogue, fall out of favour and return many years later, seemingly new and improved.

In the 1960's, the then US Department of Health, Education and Welfare adopted an innovative program called Head Start. Its premise was the view that children entered the school system at different levels of school readiness and that their life circumstances often placed them at an unfair advantage. Head Start proposed supporting these students before they entered the school system through programs that supported their physical, social, emotional and intellectual development.

Children arrive at school at many different levels of school readiness. Some have learning disadvantages that are entirely unrelated to disability but are the result of unstable home environments, language barriers or hearing or vision problems. With early identification and appropriate intervention many of these children can be prevented from experiencing academic problems and can quickly catch up with their peers. The key component for progress, however, is active intervention that is targeted and that does not rely on the child to catch up on their own.

The Dynamic Screening and Intervention Model of early screening and intervention



Executive Director, Carol Yaworski

with senior kindergarten to grade 3 students provides a systemic approach to such early intervention. Using the Web-based Teaching Tool (WBTT), we can equip all relevant classroom teachers to find the students that need extra support and teach them in the way they learn best. By screening all students, no one falls between the cracks and students with actual learning problems such as learning disabilities are found and assisted sooner.

We are very pleased that the Government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Education, is enabling us to make available the WBTT, beginning with the 2004-05 school year, to all publicly-funded schools in Ontario. As a companion to Best Start, an initiative that owes much to Head Start, the WBTT and other early numeracy and literacy initiatives are making Ontario a leader for early student achievement in North America. LDAO is proud to be the Ministry's partner in this important initiative. ☺

communiqué

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Has the IPRC process outlived its usefulness and has the IEP Standard usurped the IPRC's place in special education delivery?

Ontario's special education legislation is based on the principle that the school system has an obligation to identify and meet the special needs of all students who meet the definition of "exceptional student", as contained in the Education Act. An exceptional student is someone who requires placement in a special education program, due to his/her behavioural and/or communication and/or intellectual and/or physical needs. The definition of exceptional student in the Act also makes reference to the Identification Placement Review Committee (IPRC). This committee, established by every school board in Ontario in accordance with Section 11 of the Education Act, determines the student's identification, special education programming needs and the placement where the student will have access to the specified special education programs and services.

The IPRC process has been in existence for almost 24 years. Its benefits for students and parents have included:

- access to a known, structured process
- the ability to utilize "due process rights" in accordance with the Act
- the mandated annual review of placement and identification, if deemed necessary
- the mandated review of the student's Individual Education Plan and progress in the current special education placement
- the opportunity to discuss (though not decide) special education programming matters
- the right of appeal

There have been some down sides as well. Some parents do not like the "identification" process, since they view this as a form of mandated negative labelling. It is, however, quite rare that this becomes an issue for the parents of students with specific learning disabilities. The IPRC process may be very stressful for some parents. In some cases the

number of staff participating at the IPRC vastly outnumbers the parent(s), and the parent feels powerless and defensive. There continues to be a problem with the fact that the identification decided upon by an IPRC may not be based on a formal diagnosis of the exceptionality. This is a particular pitfall for parents of students with learning disabilities, where the LD designation may not be based on a formal and appropriate psycho-educational assessment. The appeal process may be adversarial, which can be very hard for parents, especially if they do not have access to good advocacy support, while the school board utilizes the services of a lawyer to present their case.

But, on balance, the IPRC process, especially if carried out in accordance with the Act and Regulation 181/98, is a useful approach for determining special education matters.

School boards typically do not like IPRCs or the potential for appeals and tribunals. They find the process cumbersome, time consuming and adversarial. They claim that it is expensive and that it questions their professional competence in determining and meeting student needs. They often urge parents to bypass the IPRC process, in favour of having an IEP.

Although the Ministry of Education has not amended the Education Act and the definitions in it related to special education, it responded to some of the concerns described above by expanding student access to special education programming. In 1998, as a component of the Individual Education Plan resource guide, it was stated that students may have access to special education programming and an IEP without having to participate in an IPRC. This approach was further reinforced by the amendments to the special education funding formula and the IEP Standards Document, released in 2000.

As a result of these changes, there has been a steady increase in the number of non-identified special needs students, who do not have an IPRC decision supporting their special education placement. Approximately 35% of the total number of special education students now fall into this category, with a corresponding decline in the numbers of identified students. The funding formula and the ISA process contribute further to the declining incidence rates of certain exceptionalities, in particular learning disabilities and giftedness.



Some parents do not like the "identification" process, since they view this as a form of mandated negative labelling.



Some families and many school boards like this approach. They feel that an IEP, without an IPRC backup, is quite adequate for appropriate service provision, especially when it relates to students who are deemed eligible for ISA funding support.

The IEP Standards Document mandates many of the same components that we, at LDAO, favour in the IPRC process, e.g., the determination of student needs and accommodation requirements, parental participation, an annual review, etc. But, since the document is a guide and not a regulation, i.e. has no legal status, parents have no due process or appeal rights related to the IEP and by extension to their children's special education programming.

This legislation report began with asking the question whether the IPRC has

(continued on page 4)

Has the IPRC ... cont. from page 3
 outlived its usefulness and whether the IEP Standard has usurped the place of the IPRC in special education programming. My answers to these two questions is no and yes, respectively.

I believe that we should not lightly give up the due process and right of appeal components of the IPRC process. These are the twin foundations of natural justice that we in Ontario rely on. At the same time, although superficially the IEP Standards offer many of the same approaches to parents and students, the experience of many families and their children with specific learning disabilities, especially under the current funding formula arrangement, indicate that the current process for IEPs without IPRCs is flawed.

So, what needs to be done to improve the situation?

We know and appreciate that the funding

formula is under review. We look forward to the resulting improvements for the purposes of special education programming.

We believe that the Ministry of Education should expect greater compliance from school boards regarding the IPRC and IEP processes, such that boards are held accountable for their mandated roles and that IPRCs are carried out in a consistent and student focussed manner throughout Ontario. Strengthening the parental right of appeal by introducing a regulation for tribunals has been recommended many times. At the same time, we believe that a more consistent approach to mediation would also be helpful. LDAO has recommended several times that the blurring between identification and diagnosis, at least for LD, should be eliminated and that all school boards should utilize the LDAO definition of

learning disabilities for IPRC and other programming purposes.

Ultimately, the student must be the focus. Exceptional students are entitled to have well-written and responsive IEPs, with their special education programming being based on that IEP. In other words, the Ministry's and school boards' IEP audit process should focus on development, delivery and full implementation. At the same time, we see no reason to eliminate or further water down the IPRC process, which continues to fulfill a very important role for parents and students in Ontario's special education system. Don't let us throw out the baby with the bathwater! ☺

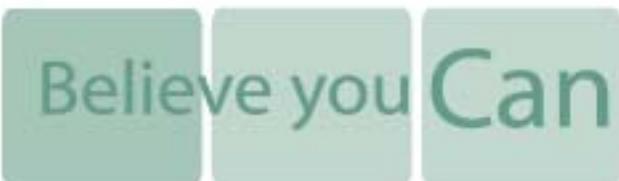
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Responsiveness-to-Intervention

The National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, in the United States, is currently carrying on research to find a better way of diagnosing students as having learning disabilities than the current method that looks at the discrepancy between ability and achievement. Most of the Center's work has focussed on the process called "responsiveness-to-intervention" or RTI. This model is based on research-based instruction and uses an individualized assessment and intervention process, within a problem-solving framework to identify and try to help students who are experiencing academic difficulties.

In the RTI process, as used in the US models, young students showing signs of difficulty in learning are provided with increasingly intensive and individualized interventions by teachers in collaboration with experts. Students who do not show progress are considered to have learning disabilities and in need of special education services. However, some RTI models also require these non-responding students to undergo an individual assessment to verify their eligibility for special education services.

Critics of RTI argue that lack of response to intervention is not adequate to identify a learning disability. It will, however, identify students at risk for academic failure for a variety of reasons including learning disabilities, mild intellectual disabilities, English-as-a-Second-Language, or language impairment due to low socioeconomic status. There are also concerns that well-trained staff, knowledgeable about research-based interventions, are not universally available and that strained school budgets could make the model an unrealistic goal.

LDAO, in its Promoting Early Intervention project, brought together a group of experts to look at ways to implement the RTI model in a realistic way in Ontario's schools. The results were the Dynamic



Screening and Intervention Model (DSIM), a new definition of learning disabilities, Diagnostic Protocols for identifying learning disabilities based on the new definition, and the Web-Based Teaching Tool (WBTT) for classroom teachers.

This past school year, a group of Ontario teachers of senior kindergarten and grade one classes received online and face-to-face training on how to implement DSIM and the WBTT for use in their classrooms. They were given information on how to set up their classrooms in September and October to aid all learners. By November, at the earliest, they were to begin screening each child in the class using the Teacher School Readiness Inventory (TSRI) to assess the readiness to learn of their students. The screen takes three to five minutes per child and tests five, highly predictable, indicators of readiness to learn. These are predictors of later school difficulties in learning if they are not addressed at an early stage.

Children are next screened using a phonological screen: the Rosner is used for senior kindergarten children and the Yapp-Singer for grade one. The screens flag

children at risk, and typically this will be about 26% of the class (4-5 children on average). Special consideration is given to English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) children.

Curriculum-based checklists have been developed that take key pieces of the curriculum and operationalize them so that they are measurable in terms of classroom activities. These are used only with flagged children so that, over the school year, the teacher can measure how well these students are responding to his/her teaching. For example, the numeracy indicator has five components that will assess where the child is performing on a scale of one to four. Three or better are the desired levels.

The Web-Based Teaching Tool (WBTT) contains a whole database of teaching strategies, lesson plans and materials that the teacher can use for ideas on how to target the problem areas for the flagged students. The end goal is that the flagged students will benefit from this extra support and no longer be at risk for academic failure. Students who don't make the necessary gains can then be assumed to

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Responsiveness-to-Intervention
cont. from page 5

have innate problems, and inappropriate instruction as the cause of their academic problems can be ruled out.

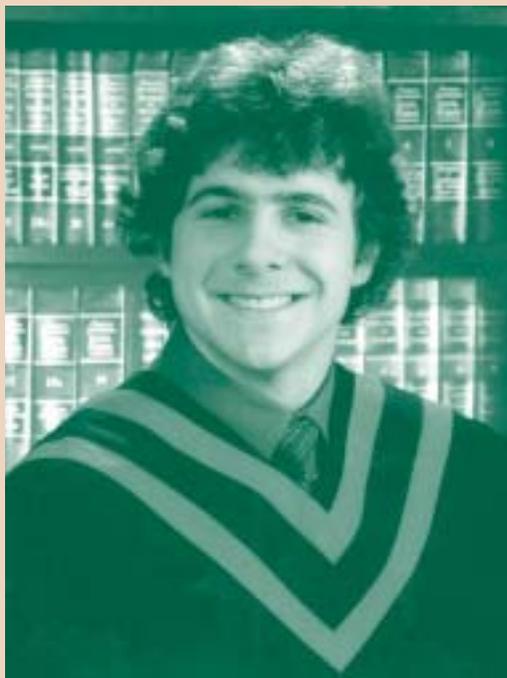
A growth plan is developed for each flagged student, with scores on screens, a summary of the checklists and a list of strategies and lesson plans tried. This plan can move with the student from year to year so that a pattern of his or her struggles emerges. By grade two the student is then age-appropriate for a formal assessment and the plan will be of value to the assessor.

The value of this method of early intervention for students at risk for academic failure are many:

- Students do not have to fail before support is offered.
- The students have been supported during the whole period and therefore are less likely to feel frustrated.
- The method provides accuracy and confidence that the problems being experienced are innate.
- Parents have been engaged in the process too: they are given strategies to use at home.
- Children who only need to catch up are helped and thus later kept out of special education.
- Instruction is appropriate to the student's needs.
- Identification of innate problems comes after the intervention process, at grade two, where the students are age-appropriate for the assessment process.
- The process is suitable for all children at risk for school failure, no matter what their exceptionality or reason for their difficulties.

By September 2004, with the financial support of the Ontario Ministry of Education, LDAO can now make the WBTT intervention process available at no cost to all publically funded elementary schools in Ontario. ☺

LDAC Beat the Odds Award 2004



Phillip Benson, recipient of LDAC's "Beat the Odds" youth award

We are proud to announce that this year's Ontario recipient of the Beat the Odds youth award, given annually by LDA of Canada, is Phillip Benson from Brockville, Ontario.

Phillip was the star student in his secondary school in 2003. Phillip, who has a learning disability, overcame many obstacles and achieved phenomenal success. He was voted valedictorian of his OAC class, and he was an Ontario Scholar. He stated: "I just always knew that things in school would take me longer. With a learning disability you just have to have patience and get at it."

Phillip is now enrolled in the Industrial Design program in the Faculty of Engineering at Carleton University. His mid-term marks were an average of A-. He also received the Male First Year Industrial Design Award. Phillip takes advantage of the special education resources at university as well. He is allowed to use a laptop for exams and has extra time and often a quiet place to write the exams.

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

Screening and Assessment of Young Children

Non-Categorical Screening for Early Intervention

Children entering Junior and Senior Kindergarten programs arrive with highly diverse environmental, social and linguistic experiences, with various degrees of enrichment or deprivation, with a history of individual learning opportunities, and with a significant range of developmental maturity. Physical health factors can affect energy and motivational levels, while personality, emotional and family issues also have an impact on an individual's attitude to and readiness for learning. While the majority of these children adapt to the level of programming offered during these early school years, a minority show evidence of learning difficulties that place them significantly behind their peers in key areas of readiness for the acquisition of appropriate literacy and numeracy skills.

These learning difficulties may result from many different factors, including developmental, physical, biological, psychological, environmental, emotional, social, cultural and behavioural, and may be manifested in academic, home, and/or social settings. The extent of such learning difficulties can be established within the classroom by comparing individuals to their age peers on various global and standardized measures of academic progress, or by determining whether they meet age-appropriate "benchmarks" or milestones. From the results of such comparisons, specific criteria may be applied in order to determine which children are at risk of failure, for whatever reason, and for whom additional support will be provided. Such a screening is non-categorical in nature; that is, children are determined simply to be "at risk" without specifying a particular diagnostic category or identification label. Specific

programming can then be implemented, either within the classroom in general, or to small groups of children with common learning needs, geared toward skill-building in preparation for entry to the Grade 1 program. The degree of success will usually depend to a great extent on the specific types of difficulty, the causes of the difficulties, the timeliness of the



intervention, and the appropriateness of fit of the remedial programs used.

While generic intervention programs may result in improvements in some individuals, there will be a subgroup of children who will require more in-depth assessment to pinpoint each child's specific areas of difficulty related to learning, and individualize intervention programs so that the probability of success is maximized.

Assessment of Young Children

Assessment of preschool children may well indicate a pattern of strengths and weaknesses that could indicate deficits in specific psychological processes logically related to learning difficulties. A small number of children have a clearly documented history of impairments that can impact early learning (e.g., speech and language disorders, Pervasive Developmental Disorder, Developmental Coordination Disorder, etc.) and that have important implications for placement and programming from the very beginning of formal schooling. In children younger than age seven, a clear diagnosis of a learning disability, in areas other than language processing, may be hampered by relatively weak reliability and/or predictive validity of current measures of thinking and learning, a relatively narrow range of measurable areas of academic achievement, and a broad band of normal developmental fluctuations. In cases where the existence of a learning disability cannot be established, younger children may be identified as "at risk" for later exhibiting a learning disability, *with appropriate interventions being initiated*. Further assessment at or after age seven will normally be required in order to confirm the differential diagnosis. ❁

*Excerpt from LDAO
Recommended Practices for
Assessment, Diagnosis and
Documentation of Learning
Disabilities, 2003*

Reading Disorders vs. Developmental Lag

How do parents know if their child's reading delay is a real problem or simply a "developmental lag?" How long should parents wait before seeking help if their child is struggling with reading?

Susan Hall Answers:

As I travel across the country speaking to groups of parents about reading difficulties, I often say "beware of the developmental lag excuse." I have several reasons for saying this. First, I have listened to parent after parent tell me about feeling there was a problem early on, yet being persuaded to discount their intuition and wait to seek help for their child. Later, when they learned time was of the essence in developing reading skills, the parents regretted the lost months or years. Second, research shows that the crucial window of opportunity to deliver help is during the first couple of years of school. So if your child is having trouble learning to read, the best approach is to take immediate action.

Knowing how soon to act can be easy if you are informed about important conclusions from recent research. Reading researchers tell us the ideal window of opportunity for addressing reading difficulties is during kindergarten and first grade. The National Institutes of Health state that 95 percent of poor readers can be brought up to grade level if they receive effective help early. While it is still possible to help an older child with reading, those beyond third grade require much more intensive help. The longer you wait to get help for a child with reading difficulties, the harder it will be for the child to catch up.

The three key research conclusions that support seeking help early are:

- 90 percent of children with reading difficulties will achieve grade level in reading if they receive help by the first grade.
- 75 percent of children whose help is delayed to age nine or later continue to struggle throughout their school careers.

- If help is given in fourth grade, rather than in late kindergarten, it takes four times as long to improve the same skills by the same amount.

Parents who understand these research conclusions realize they cannot afford to waste valuable time trying to figure out if there really is a problem or waiting for the problem to cure itself.

These research conclusions make it imperative for schools to implement screening tools that emphasize phonemic awareness skills. The best plan is to begin screening children in mid-kindergarten and continue screening at least three times a year until the end of second grade.

Reading researchers who designed these screening tools recommend identifying and providing additional assistance to the lowest 20 percent of children. The rationale is that it is better to slightly over-identify the number of children who may be "at risk" of reading difficulty than to miss some who may need help. The worst outcome of over-identification is that a child who would eventually have caught on receives some additional help. Parents should follow this strategy and act early because the worst that can happen is their child will get a little extra help she really didn't need.

Yet identification is only the beginning. Effective and intense intervention must be offered immediately. Students who lag behind their peers must be given extra help, preferably in groups of three or fewer students, by a well-trained educator who knows how to deliver effective instruction. Assignment to these groups can be fluid, with children joining whenever the teacher determines skills are lagging and others moving out as they master skills.

Early signs of difficulty should not be attributed to immaturity. When a kindergarten child confuses letters, associates the wrong sound with a letter, or cannot distinguish a rhyme, it usually has nothing to do with social maturity. These warning signs do not necessarily mean the

child has a reading disability; these signs may indicate the child had insufficient preschool preparation. If a child has not been exposed to letters and letter sounds, she usually catches on quickly once exposed. It is only after effective instruction has been provided and the child is still struggling that one can conclude there may be a more serious problem.

Why do parents wait to seek help? In a recent Roper Starch poll, parents' attitudes about their child's learning problems and the public's general awareness of learning disabilities were explored. The poll showed many parents waited far too long to seek help for their child because they worried their child might be stigmatized if found to have a learning problem. Nearly half (48 percent) of parents felt having their child labeled as "learning disabled" was more harmful than struggling privately with an unidentified problem. Of the parents who expressed some concerns their child may be having trouble, 44 percent said that they waited a year or more before seeking help.

Parents who understand the risks of delay in getting help for their child's reading problems are motivated not to wait. Children can be brought up to grade level much more successfully and with less effort if effective intervention is offered early on. Once parents understand the risks of waiting, hopefully it will be easier to overcome concerns and get help immediately. 🍌

*Susan Hall is co-author with Louisa C. Moats, Ed.D., of **Straight Talk about Reading and Parenting a Struggling Reader.** Copyright Schwab Learning 2001.*

Editor's Note: There is an excellent booklet containing a series of articles by Susan Hall and others that can be downloaded from the Schwab Learning website. It is called *A Parent's Guide to Reading Basics* and can be downloaded from: <http://www.schwablearning.org>.

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“Should My Child be Evaluated for Dyslexia?”

- An Excerpt from *Overcoming Dyslexia*

In the following excerpt from *Overcoming Dyslexia*, Dr. Sally Shaywitz discusses early diagnosis of dyslexia in young children as well as in older children and young adults.

Sally Shaywitz on Diagnosing Dyslexia

I now want to gather together all the clues that combined will serve as an early-warning system for recognizing dyslexia. The clues will help you answer the question: Should my son or daughter (or I) be evaluated for dyslexia?

No one wants to be an “alarmist” and put her child through an evaluation for trivial or transient bumps along the road to reading. Evaluations can take time, and those carried out privately can be expensive. But I think we have to remind ourselves that our children are precious, one-of-a-kind individuals and have only one life to live. If we elect not to evaluate a child and that child later proves to have dyslexia, we cannot give those lost years back to him. **The human brain is resilient, but there is no question that early intervention and treatment bring about more positive change at a faster pace than an intervention provided to an older child.** And then there is the erosion of self-esteem that accrues over the years as a child struggles to read.

Childhood is a time for learning. A child who delays breaking the phonetic code will miss much of the reading practice that is essential to building fluency and vocabulary; as a consequence, he will fall further and further behind in acquiring comprehension skills and knowledge of the world around him. To see this happen to a child is sad, all the more because it is preventable.

Joseph Torgesen, a reading researcher at Florida State University who has carried out many of the critical studies on intervention, has this to say about the need



to identify children early on and the cost of waiting: “To the extent that we allow children to fall seriously behind at any point during early elementary school, we are moving to a ‘remedial’ rather than a ‘preventive’ model of intervention. Once children fall behind in the growth of critical word reading skills, it may require very intensive interventions to bring them back up to adequate levels of reading accuracy, and reading fluency may be even more difficult to restore because of the large amount of reading practice that is lost by children each month and year that they remain poor readers.”

Most parents and teachers delay evaluating a child with reading difficulties because they believe the problems are just temporary, that they will be outgrown. This is simply not true. **Reading problems are not outgrown, they are persistent.** As the participants in the Connecticut Longitudinal Study have demonstrated, at least three out of four children who read poorly in third grade continue to have reading problems in high school and beyond. What may seem to be tolerable and overlooked in a third grader certainly won't be in a high schooler or young adult.

Without identification and proven interventions, virtually all children who have reading difficulties early on will still struggle with reading when they are adults.

Luckily, parents can play an active role in the early identification of a reading problem. All that is required is an observant parent who knows what she is looking for and who is willing to spend time with her child listening to him speak and read.

The specific signs of dyslexia, both weaknesses and strengths, in any one individual will vary according to the age and educational level of that person. The five-year-old who can't quite learn his letters becomes the six-year-old who can't match sounds to letters and the fourteen-year-old who dreads reading out loud and the twenty-four-year-old who reads excruciatingly slowly. The threads persist throughout a person's life. The key is knowing how to recognize them at different periods during development. Therefore, I have gathered the clues together to provide three distinct portraits of dyslexia: first, in early childhood from preschool through first grade; next, in

school-age children from second grade on; and, last, in young adults and adults.

Clues to Dyslexia in Early Childhood

The earliest clues involve mostly spoken language. The very first clue to a language (and reading) problem may be delayed language. Once the child begins to speak, look for the following problems:

The Preschool Years

- Trouble learning common nursery rhymes such as “Jack and Jill” and “Humpty Dumpty”
- A lack of appreciation of rhymes
- Mispronounced words; persistent baby talk
- Difficulty in learning (and remembering) names of letters
- Failure to know the letters in his own name

Kindergarten and First Grade

- Failure to understand that words come apart; for example, that batboy can be pulled apart into bat and boy, and, later on, that the word bat can be broken down still further and sounded out as: “b” “aaaa” “t”
- Inability to learn to associate letters with sounds, such as being unable to connect the letter *b* with the “b” sound
- Reading errors that show no connection to the sounds of the letters; for example, the word *big* is read as *goat*
- The inability to read common one-syllable words or to sound out even the simplest of words, such as *mat*, *cat*, *hop*, *nap*
- Complaints about how hard reading is, or running and hiding when it is time to read
- A history of reading problems in parents or siblings.

In addition to the problems of speaking and reading, you should be looking for these indications of strengths in higher-level thinking processes:

- Curiosity
- A great imagination
- The ability to figure things out
- Eager embrace of new ideas
- Getting the gist of things

- A good understanding of new concepts
- Surprising maturity
- A large vocabulary for the age group
- Enjoyment in solving puzzles
- Talent at building models
- Excellent comprehension of stories read or told to him

Clues to Dyslexia From Second Grade On

Problems in Speaking

- Mispronunciation of long, unfamiliar, or complicated words; the *fracturing* of words—leaving out parts of words or confusing the order of the parts of words; for example, *aluminum* becomes *amulium*
- Speech that is not fluent—pausing or hesitating often when speaking, lots of *um*’s during speech, no glibness
- The use of imprecise language, such as vague references to *stuff* or *things* instead of the proper name of an object
- Not being able to find the exact word, such as confusing words that sound alike: saying *tornado* instead of *volcano*, substituting *lotion* for *ocean*, or *humanity* for *humidity*
- The need for time to summon an oral response or the inability to come up with a verbal response quickly when questioned
- Difficulty in remembering isolated pieces of verbal information (rote memory) — trouble remembering dates, names, telephone numbers, random lists

Problems in Reading

- Very slow progress in acquiring reading skills
- The lack of a strategy to read new words
- Trouble reading *unknown* (new, unfamiliar) words that must be sounded out; making wild stabs or guesses at reading a word; failure to systematically sound out words
- The inability to read small “function” words such as *that*, *an*, *in*
- Stumbling on reading multisyllable words, or the failure to come close to sounding out the full word
- Omitting parts of words when reading; the failure to decode parts

within a word, as if someone had chewed a hole in the middle of the word, such as *conible* for *convertible*

- A terrific fear of reading out loud; the avoidance of oral reading
- Oral reading filled with substitutions, omissions, and mispronunciations
- Oral reading that is choppy and labored, not smooth or fluent
- Oral reading that lacks inflection and sounds like the reading of a foreign language
- A reliance on context to discern the meaning of what is read
- A better ability to understand words *in context* than to read *isolated* single words
- Disproportionately poor performance



There is the erosion of self-esteem
that accrues over the years
as a child struggles to read.



on multiple choice tests

- The inability to finish tests on time
- The substitution of words with the same meaning for words in the text he can’t pronounce, such as *car* for *automobile*
- Disastrous spelling, with words not resembling true spelling; some spellings may be missed by spell check
- Trouble reading mathematics word problems
- Reading that is very slow and tiring
- Homework that never seems to end, or with parents often recruited as readers
- Messy handwriting despite what may be an excellent facility at word processing—nimble fingers
- Extreme difficulty learning a foreign language
- A lack of enjoyment in reading, and the avoidance of reading books or even a sentence
- The avoidance of reading for pleasure, which seems too exhausting

(continued on page 12)

“Should My Child be Evaluated for Dyslexia” cont. from page 11

- Reading whose accuracy improves over time, though it continues to lack fluency and is laborious
- Lowered self-esteem, with pain that is not always visible to others
- A history of reading, spelling, and foreign language problems in family members

In addition to signs of a phonologic weakness, there are signs of strengths in higher-level thinking processes:

- Excellent thinking skills: conceptualization, reasoning, imagination, abstraction
- Learning that is accomplished best through meaning rather than rote memorization
- Ability to get the “big picture”
- A high level of understanding of what is read to him
- The ability to read and to understand at a high level overlearned (that is, highly practiced) words in a special area of interest; for example, if his hobby is restoring cars, he may be able to read auto mechanics magazines
- Improvement as an area of interest becomes more specialized and focused, when he develops a miniature vocabulary that he can read
- A surprisingly sophisticated listening vocabulary
- Excellence in areas not dependent on reading, such as math, computers, and visual arts, or excellence in more conceptual (versus factoid-driven) subjects such as philosophy, biology, social studies, neuroscience, and creative writing

Clues to Dyslexia in Young Adults and Adults

Problems in Speaking

- Persistence of earlier oral language difficulties

- The mispronunciation of the names of people and places, and tripping over parts of words
- Difficulty remembering names of people and places and the confusion of names that sound alike
- A struggle to retrieve words: “It was on the tip of my tongue”
- Lack of glibness, especially if put on the spot
- Spoken vocabulary that is smaller



than listening vocabulary, and hesitation to say aloud words that might be mispronounced

Problems in Reading

- A childhood history of reading and spelling difficulties
- Word reading becomes more accurate over time but continues to require great effort
- Lack of fluency
- Embarrassment caused by oral reading: the avoidance of Bible study groups, reading at Passover seders, or

delivering a written speech

- Trouble reading and pronouncing uncommon, strange, or unique words such as people’s names, street or location names, food dishes on a menu (often resorting to asking the waiter about the special of the day or resorting to saying, “I’ll have what he’s having,” to avoid the embarrassment of not being able to read the menu)
 - Persistent reading problems
 - The substitution of made-up words during reading for words that cannot be pronounced — for example, metropolitan becomes mitan — and a failure to recognize the word metropolitan when it is seen again or heard in a lecture the next day
 - Extreme fatigue from reading
 - Slow reading of most materials: books, manuals, subtitles in foreign films
 - Penalized by multiple-choice tests
 - Unusually long hours spent reading school or work-related materials
 - Frequent sacrifice of social life for studying
 - A preference for books with figures, charts, or graphics
 - A preference for books with fewer words per page or with lots of white showing on a page
 - Disinclination to read for pleasure
 - Spelling that remains disastrous and a preference for less complicated words in writing that are easier to spell
- Particularly poor performance on rote clerical tasks

Signs of Strengths in Higher-Level Thinking Processes

- The maintenance of strengths noted in the school-age period
- A high learning capability
- A noticeable improvement when given additional time on multiple-choice examinations
- Noticeable excellence when focused on a highly specialized area such as

medicine, law, public policy, finance, architecture, or basic science

- Excellence in writing if content and not spelling is important
- A noticeable articulateness in the expression of ideas and feelings
- Exceptional empathy and warmth, and feeling for others
- Success in areas not dependent on rote memory
- A talent for high-level conceptualization and the ability to come up with original insights
- Big-picture thinking
- Inclination to think out of the box
- A noticeable resilience and ability to adapt

These clues across the life span offer a portrait of dyslexia. Examine them carefully, think about them, and determine if any of these clues fit your child, you, or someone else you are close to. **Look for clues in the weaknesses and strengths.** Identifying the weaknesses makes it

possible to spot dyslexia in children before they are expected to read and in adults after they have developed some degree of reading accuracy but are continuing to show the remnants of earlier problems, reading slowly and with great effort.

If you think you or your child has some of these problems, it is important to note how frequent they are and how many there are. You don't need to worry about isolated clues or ones that appear very rarely. **For you to be concerned, the symptoms must be persistent; anyone can mispronounce a word now and then, or confuse similar-sounding words occasionally. What you are looking for is a persistent pattern — the occurrence of a number of these symptoms over a prolonged period of time.** That represents a likelihood of dyslexia.

Dr. Sally Shaywitz, is one of the world's leading experts on reading and dyslexia. *Overcoming Dyslexia* is a

comprehensive, up-to-date, and practical book to help parents and professionals understand, identify, and overcome reading problems that plague children today.

Drawing on recent scientific breakthroughs — many of them in her own laboratory — Dr. Shaywitz demystifies the subject of reading difficulties and explains how a child can be helped to become a good reader. 📖

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Harcourt Assessment Supports the Community

For almost 25 years, Harcourt Assessment has been serving the Ontarian and Canadian clinical professions. Our staff has many years of experience and understands the needs and challenges facing you. Every effort is made to ensure that we develop products that enable you to effectively and efficiently serve the growing population of children with learning disabilities.

Harcourt Assessment strongly supports the actions of clinical professional associations, especially the efforts of LDAO. We recognize the importance of supporting our local community, as it is through your dedication that our community strengthens.

As you build a stronger community, we are focused on being there with you step-by-step, improving lives by improving the practice of assessment. We strive to be your indispensable partner.

Thank you for your strength and dedication to your profession.



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Some Assembly Required: An Instruction Manual for Learners - An Overview

The Need for Some Assembly Required (SOAR):

There is currently an average of one guidance counsellor for every 9,726 elementary school students in Ontario, while 80% of all public school boards have no guidance counsellors. In Ontario secondary schools, the average is one guidance counsellor for every 500 students. One of the areas where this lack of staff most hurts students is in the transition from elementary to secondary school. Transitions are a critical time when students need help choosing courses, choosing programs and learning how to find information about careers.

In September 2000, the Ontario Ministry for Education identified “Transition Planning” as a critical curriculum component for secondary schools. Students are making decisions by Grade 7 and 8 about what path they will follow after secondary school, and they may or may not be making informed decisions. The current high school system requires students to complete their 30 credits in 4 years. Basic level courses have all but disappeared. In Grade 9, students either take applied courses, which generally lead to the workplace, or they take academic courses, which lead to college and/or university.

Staff shortages mean students are either receiving less in career development or less in personal support. This situation has led to a record number of students across the province – approximately 40,000 according to a recent provincial report—who will not graduate this year. Add the mandatory Grade 10 literacy test into the picture and the number could become higher. Half of all students who enter Grade 9 either don’t graduate or go directly to work from grade 12. A Grade 12 diploma is often the minimum for a majority of the trade apprenticeship programs in Ontario.



What is Some Assembly Required (SOAR)?

SOAR is transition curriculum for students in grades 6-9 with learning disabilities, designed to assist them in succeeding in school, in their transitions in school and beyond, and making healthy choices for their future. SOAR therefore fills an identified gap in curriculum for students with learning disabilities. SOAR is also not only Ontario specific, it can be modified for English and French secondary school use worldwide.

The Goal for Some Assembly Required:

SOAR aims to foster an understanding in students that there is more than one way to be successful. The program teaches options that are available, where to find information, and helps students to make sense of their choices.

SOAR fosters the development of skills and attitudes that help students cope better with their disabilities, while

acknowledging and building on strengths needed for future success. Our goal is to help students gain an understanding of their disability and how to use this information to enhance their own learning, school success and career planning.

What Some Assembly Required is all about:

The foundation for SOAR is built on the development of self-advocacy skills. SOAR’s emphasis on understanding and accepting strengths and limitations allows students to make career and vocational choices with a greater potential for success.

Settings for Some Assembly Required:

While Some Assembly Required has no direct correlation with curriculum, it supports the learner in accessing the curriculum in any discipline.

Components of Some Assembly Required:

SOAR consists of a Teacher's Guide and Student Books One, Two and Three, which focus on three related topics:

- Learning and learning disabilities
- Study skills and strategies for success
- Making choices and choosing paths

Book One: L's & D's

- An introduction to learning and LD
- The importance of learning
- Different aspects of learning
- Learning Disabilities
- Key self-advocacy skills
 - What can I do to help myself?
 - What can I do to help the people around me?
 - What can I ask my teachers to do?
 - What can I ask my parents to do?

Book Two: Skills for Success

- Why do we have to go to school?

- Offers students advice about managing their workload
- Focuses on developing good study habits and compensatory strategies
- Skills for studying and tests
- Skills for projects and assignments

Book Three: Making Choices for the Future

- Life in high school
- Managing a locker, class transition and getting to know the teachers
- Keys to high school success
- IEPs, accommodations and self advocacy
- Making choices for the future
- Job options, LD and job success
- Future Resources

Curriculum Services Canada, Seal of Recommendation:

SOAR has received Curriculum Services Canada's seal of recommendation.

Review Recommendation:

"Some Assembly Required: An Instruction Manual for Learners is recommended as a supplementary resource to support learners in understanding Learning Disabilities and how best to meet their individual needs."

How to obtain SOAR:

SOAR is available for purchase through Curriculum Services Canada. To order, go to www.pdstore.com and type "Some Assembly" into the Title Search. Select "go".

Alternatively, School Boards may contract directly with LDAO for a one-year renewable site licence. ☺

For more information contact Kate Lloyd, Project Manager, LDAO, katel@ldao.ca or go to: www.ldao.ca.

New In The LDAO Library

Learning Disabilities and Challenging Behaviors: A Guide to Intervention and Classroom Management, by Nancy Mather and Sam Goldstein, 2001, Paul Brookes Publishing Co., Baltimore, MD (\$66.95) www.parentbooks.ca.

From their wide experience in the field of special education and learning disabilities the authors have developed a unique framework for understanding classroom learning and behaviour, which they call the Building Blocks of Learning. The first layer, called the Foundational Blocks, includes Attention and Impulse Control, Emotions and Behaviour, Self-Esteem, and the Learning Environment. These four form the support systems for the higher levels, first of all the Symbolic Blocks: Visual, Auditory and Motor (processing). At the highest level are the Conceptual Blocks: thinking with Language, Images (visual patterns and designs) and Strategies (executive functions).

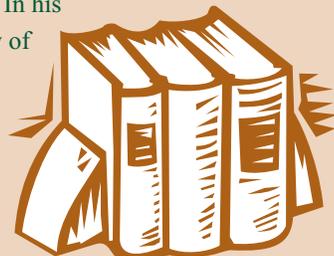
For each building block there is a chapter with descriptions and classroom interventions. This book contains a wealth of useful information for educators.

Educating our Children: The Guide to Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening Activities, by Pierre Gauvin, 2004, Structurum Publications, Timmins, ON (\$24.95) www.structurum.ca.

This Canadian educator has just published a book of over 200 game-like activities to help children practice language-related academic skills. These activities can be done in the classroom or on an individual basis, by teachers, parents or tutors, and can be adapted to different levels.

Universal Instructional Design in Postsecondary Settings: An Implementation Guide, by Jim Bryson, 2003. Learning Opportunities Task Force (LOTF), Richmond Hill, ON (The book can be downloaded from the LOTF website: www.lotf.ca, under *About LOTF*, then *Reports*).

Jim Bryson of Georgian College worked on a pilot project funded by LOTF that introduced the principles of Universal Instructional Design (UID) to postsecondary students and faculty. This approach is useful for teaching all students, whether or not they have disabilities, and to some extent reduces the need for individual accommodations. In his book Jim Bryson gives a history of UID, explains the rationale and principles, and guides instructors through the implementation process.



Getting a Good Start to the School Year

Most children view the end of summer with mixed feelings, but many are happy to be back in school. Many children with learning disabilities, however, face the opening of school with considerable trepidation. For them, the adjustments to new teachers, new levels of work, new expectations are not always tinged with the excitement of new adventures.

A number of youngsters with learning disabilities will have had a summer very little removed from school. Some will have attended summer courses, others will have been tutored regularly and yet others will have been to camps, but camps involving academic activity.

The following TIPS can be helpful to parents and teachers in charting the course of the school year for their children.

1. Provide teachers with helpful information

Teachers in regular education classes, provided with good information, can be particularly helpful to the child with learning disabilities during the first few weeks of school. For many children the first month of school dictates to a large degree their perceived possibility for success throughout the year. If their confidence level remains high after a successful summer, they are more likely to persevere and take risks when things become more difficult. If their teacher has convinced them they can succeed in the class they will continue to work diligently toward that goal.

2. Establish an atmosphere of parent-teacher collaboration

It is important to establish a collaborative effort for the child as soon as possible prior to the school year. The inclusion model in many school districts requires closer communication and cooperation of schools and parents to achieve excellent and appropriate programming for children.

Parents who are moving to a new school board should arrange to meet with school personnel during the late summer or early in the school year to discuss what special education programming is available for their child and initiate the special education referral process.

All relevant information concerning the child should be shared by both parents and school. A child's summer experiences may put him at a different level of expertise in a number of areas than he may have previously demonstrated.

3. Attend all meetings

Parents have excellent information to share. They are an integral part of the team that plans for the child's education and should attend all meetings held to determine the best program for the child.

4. Review textbooks ahead of time

Many youngsters with learning disabilities can be helped by an opportunity to look at textbooks prior to the opening of school, if at all possible. Tutors or parents can

sometimes pinpoint areas where the student is likely to encounter difficulty.

5. Begin studying early

The LD student can begin a routine involving some studying time prior to the start of school. This will help the child to make the adjustment to the regular school routine. Many children with learning disabilities find rapid adjustments difficult and it helps them to be able to ease into a new routine.

6. Parent(s) and child: Review your mutual expectations

Parents(s) and child can review the general level of expectations during the coming year on various issues like homework, communication amongst them when the going gets rough, tutoring, how much the parent is to help, and under what circumstances the parent will visit with the school and teachers. Prior agreements about these kinds of issues can save considerable grief later on.

Keeping these pointers in mind can make a real difference in the school year success of the child with learning disabilities. ☺

From The Phoenix, Fall 2000, the newsletter of LDA of South Vancouver Island. Originally reprinted with permission from the U.S. National Center for Learning Disabilities website: www.nclld.org.

Conference Calendar

October 15-16, 2004

Cracking the Code

Halifax, NS

LDA Nova Scotia Conference

Cost: \$275.00

Contact: Susan Clarke at:

sclarke.ldans@ns.sympatico.ca or

902-423-2850 or

<http://ldans.nset.org>

October 21-23, 2004

Closing the Gap

Computer Technology in Special Education

Minneapolis, Minnesota

Information:

www.closingthegap.com/conf

or 507-248-3294

October 24, 2004

The Explosive Child

Inn on the Park, Toronto

With Dr. Ross Greene of

Harvard Medical School

Cost: \$130.-\$150.00

Contact: info@seminars.org

Or 416-784-4221

Focus on Our Chapters

Learning Disabilities Association of Chatham-Kent

The Learning Disabilities Association of Chatham-Kent came into operation in 1976, under the direction of Rita Lloyd. It was formed by a group of parents in conjunction with Maurice A. Feldman, Ph. D. and Thomas G. Bowman, Ph. D. We have been a funded agency of the United Way of Chatham-Kent since 1978.

We provide structured programs, an excellent library, mentoring, advocacy and information and referral to individuals in Chatham-Kent (parents, families, professionals) with or involved with learning disabilities (LD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and related issues.

Our tutoring service was established in 1977 to meet the needs of members' children. Our programs continue to focus on the importance of early identification of children at risk and providing a learning environment that facilitates success for the child. We offer a one-to-one tutoring program three times a year for elementary-age children. Gradual progression through individually tailored programs builds academic skills, confidence and self-esteem. Programs are prepared according to the student's needs and updated daily to accommodate personal challenges and promote achievement. Thirty hours of one-to-one assistance is given using computer programs, manipulatives, worksheets and games to facilitate success. The emphasis of this program is to bolster the child's self-esteem by providing successful experiences.

In 1993, a social skills training program was developed for elementary students. Its aim is to help children to have successful social interactions and to circumvent future associated problems. Heather Simpson and Jane Bondy (now both teaching) were instrumental in developing and facilitating this program under the direction of Maxcine Throsel. Maxcine



who has now retired, directed the associations programs and services for more than 20 years.

Our social skills program is offered three times a year and is designed to walk children through social situations with step-by-step instruction on how to handle themselves, with reinforcement through modeling and role-playing. This twelve hour program is a small interactive group which meets one evening a week (or two weeks in the summer). It is important to facilitate and improve the way in which children interact with others and how they feel about themselves. Many individuals do not infer social rules on their own. Social skills are essential for everyday living. Role-playing, modeling and discussions are ways in which skills are reviewed and practiced.

In 2000-01 Homework Clubs were piloted in two rural communities as outreach to provide assistance to children having difficulty with school-based materials and organizational skills. With the assistance of Ontario Trillium Foundation, Homework Clubs will be implemented within five rural communities (Thamesville, Ridgetown, Wallaceburg, Blenheim and Tilbury), over the next two years. This program teaches personal coping strategies

important for reaching an individual's full potential.

Community, adult and family supports are provided via our website, newsletters, information meetings and resource library. We strive to increase awareness of our organization and characteristics of learning disabilities, inform individuals as to their legislative rights and responsibilities and to promote and facilitate empowerment, self-esteem, confidence and eventually self-advocacy.

Hundreds of volunteers are recruited, screened and trained annually donating thousands of hours as tutors, directors, executive committee members, Special Education Advisory Committee representatives and various skilled assistants. Year-round volunteers work in concert with a team of five regular staff and four to six seasonal staff. Without each volunteer, the contribution and commitment of each staff member and the financial contribution of donors, we would not be able to offer these invaluable services to our community.

Learning Disabilities Association of Durham Region

LDA Durham Region was founded in 1976 by Judy Crawford, a mother and teacher in

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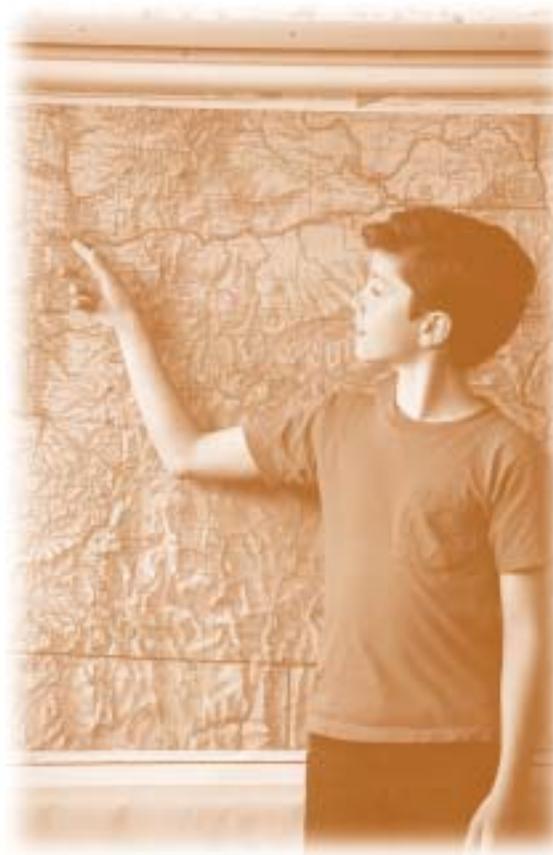
Focus On Our Chapters
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the Uxbridge area. The Chapter was a small group to support parents in the northern section of Durham. By 1994, the Chapter had grown and the boundaries included Whitby in the east, Pickering to the west and part of Uxbridge to the north. Today, we serve Oshawa in the east, the Town of Uxbridge and all of Brock Township in the north, as well as Pickering in the west. Most importantly, we continue to be completely volunteer based.

Our dedicated volunteers provide written and verbal information about learning disabilities and ADHD. There is a Resource Centre providing books, videos and access to government publications. Monthly meetings with keynote speakers are offered at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Ajax. Parents and guardians can contact our office and receive support and guidance relating to their child's rights in the school system. A member of our volunteer group will attend team meetings or IPRC meetings with the parents to offer support and guidance. We advocate for our students with learning disabilities through the Special Education Advisory Committees of Durham and Durham Catholic District School Boards. On a quarterly basis, a newsletter is produced presenting resources, information and support to parents. Qualified volunteers present seminars to teachers enrolled in the York University and Queens University Special Education Specialist training. As well, we conduct presentations at Durham College to the Adult Education Classes. We continue to partner with other special needs groups in the Durham Region by delivering presentations on advocacy to their parents.

We offer an annual Awareness Day to parents, professionals and teachers on the first Saturday in March. This is a unique

opportunity for vendors of Assistive or Adaptive Technology, Colleges/ Universities, Doctors, Learning Facilities, etc. to meet in one central location in Durham to promote technology and services available to assist our children in meeting their challenges. Awareness Day creates a sense of family within the community, support for everyone involved in advocating for exceptional children,



together with the fusion of parties towards the same end result- the emotional and academic success of our children.

Learning Disabilities Association of Kingston

LDA Kingston was founded in 1981 by a group of parents whose children had learning disabilities. We are currently funded by the United Way and employ two part time employees – a Resource Facilitator and Resource Coordinator. We also receive some private donations and some monies from Nevada, and are currently trying to partner with other agencies to do a fundraiser for our chapter.

We use volunteers from Community Living to help us with office tasks.

Our members consist largely of parents. But we are finding that more and more adults, who have not been diagnosed with a learning disability but have always struggled, are coming to us for help. We also see students, and occasionally children and professionals.

We provide resource facilitation for people with many different needs and provide referrals to many different sectors in the community. We operate a resource library where we try and keep up to date with the current literature, videos, software, games for parents, teachers, children, teenagers and adults with LD and/or AD/HD.

We run monthly information meetings, as well as an annual Strategies conference that is very successful with an attendance of around 120 people. We also run two other workshops during the year. We recently ran our first “Employing Adults with Learning Disabilities” workshop that was primarily geared to trainers who work with LD adults.

We provide advocacy for students in the school system to help them acquire services and programs in the public and separate school systems, advocacy for adults in the workforce and for

students attending colleges, universities and adult education centres.

We run a summer reading camp in partnership with Queens University for children between the ages of 6-12. These are for 2-week sessions and run throughout July and the first week of August.

We create public awareness, by delivering presentations in the community, and publish quarterly newsletters for distribution to our membership, clients and to the local school boards. We have representatives on the Special Education Advisory Committees of both school boards.

Learning Disabilities Association of Lambton County

The Learning Disabilities Association of Lambton County was started in 1988 by parents of children with learning disabilities. Our office has moved from a spare bedroom in member Norma Logan's home in Watford, to a store-front location in Petrolia in 1993, to our present home in Devine Street School in Sarnia in 2000.

Our membership has grown dramatically in the last year. The majority of our members are parents of children with learning disabilities. We have increased our Resource Library holdings in order to provide the information that our community is looking for. The original strength of our organization has always been our members, volunteers and parents who are committed to our goal to encourage the community at large to develop an awareness of, empathy for and an interest in the problems faced by persons with learning disabilities.

In 2003 we were doubly blessed and received a two-year Trillium grant and a three-year Ontario Early Years Challenge Fund grant. These funds have allowed us for the first time to hire three employees—an executive director, a program coordinator for the LLDP program and a program development coordinator. Our Board of Directors includes volunteers from a variety of backgrounds, educational and otherwise.

Carolyn Elzinga, a teacher with a degree in psychology, not only coordinates the Learning to Learn Differently Project (LLDP) and trains and oversees the 35 volunteer tutors, but runs our other programming as well. LLDP is a tutoring program that enlists volunteer tutors to work one-on-one with kindergarten and grade one students who have been identified by their teachers as struggling with the curriculum.

We have been able to offer three 10-week sessions of Kids Positive Social Skills program per year. We also tried, for the

first time this year, a March Break session and two weeks of summer programming – all based on the social skills program.

We developed a new program for older students this past April called Study Smart. This program is for students in Grades 6-12. Study Smart teaches organizational, time management and assignment management skills necessary in order to become a good student. The program was well received and we hope to make it a regular part of our programming.

We are introducing two new programs for fall 2004. One of them is the JUMP Math program (“Junior Undiscovered Math Prodigies”). The JUMP program uses a teaching method based on the simple but revolutionary contention that every child can master math. The reasoning behind the program is that so many children fail at math because somewhere in the chain of learning they haven't understood a step. The program will begin with teaching math operations such as adding and subtracting fractions and gradually introduce the concepts behind the operations, using word problems, games and puzzles. Children from Grades 3 up will be taught together with help from several volunteers.

The next new program we are working on is an in-school workshop called “Empathy for All”. The Empathy for All Program is designed to encourage acceptance of differences, enhance understanding, promote emotional literacy and foster empathy in young children. This program will benefit all children, including children with learning disabilities and other invisible disabilities. The one-hour workshops will begin with Grade 2 classes with other grades to be added in time. Since most children in this age group have little or no awareness regarding learning disabilities, they tend to view their learning disabled peers as “different” from themselves. By offering workshops to younger children, the Empathy for All Program will minimize hurtful behaviours such as exclusion, ridicule and bullying, in

addition to increasing public awareness about disabilities such as learning disabilities. A plethora of research has indicated that a proactive stance is critical at this developmental stage. The workshop is geared to meet the Ontario curriculum.

We hold a minimum of three educational events a year. Our Parenting Children with Learning Disabilities Program is extremely popular and always well attended.

Learning Disabilities Association of London Region

The London chapter was started almost 30 years ago by Joan Simons who worked out of her home as a volunteer parent. It has grown to become a strong organization which serves London and 7 surrounding counties. Funded by the United Way, the City of London, donations, and fund-raising activities, LDA-London Region's Board of Directors, staff of five dedicated individuals, and numerous volunteers work hard to help children, adolescents and adults who are affected by LD and ADHD to be more successful in their lives.

Our services are accessed by parents, adults, post-secondary students, teachers, professionals, literacy providers, and various agencies for employment, families, health care, and government support. Our Resource Consultant provides direct consultation sessions and advocacy for parents and adults. We are partners in Network To Learning which is a local project designed to help adults with LD who are unemployed, and we are partners with LDA-Canada in Destination Employment (DE) which also targets adults with LD who are unemployed. DE provides an assessment, a full training program and a work placement. This year we are launching a new concept in tutoring with our Student Coaching Program for children ages 8 to 16. Our new Program Coordinator has contributed significantly to the design of this program. We have a support group for AD/HD adults, and we are looking to increase our number of support groups this year.

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Focus On Our Chapters
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Presentations, workshops, and an 8-session series called Parenting the ADHD Child are a regular part of our services. This fall we will have a one-day conference. Our office is equipped with the latest assistive technology for teaching, demonstrations and learning. We have a website, an e-mail address, a centrally-located office, and a busy telephone line. What was once a very small operation has grown to become a valuable resource in our community.

Learning Disabilities Association of Sudbury

We are the newest chapter due to the hard work of a group of committed parents led by Carole Paquette and thanks to a recent Trillium Foundation grant.

We are active in the community, developing partnerships with which to support many of our programs and services. With the help of the Rainbow District School Board our community outreach office is located in Lockerby Composite School. Our resource library has been developed in partnership with the Greater Sudbury Library Service. The main branch houses a "learning disability section" and all resources are made available through the network of fourteen branch libraries. We also have partnerships with the Sudbury District Health Unit for workplace wellness and resources and the Children's Aid Society for foster parent workshops.

We currently provide resource facilitation support, SEAC representation on the Rainbow DSB, community outreach including a speaker series and workshops, advocacy and self-advocacy support, assistive technology support, a SOAR pilot program beginning in September, 2004 and a quarterly newsletter.

With a very strong representation on our Board of professionals associated with assistive technology we will be developing computer loan and training programs in the fall. Program and service development

over the next year will include tutoring programs, transition planning for elementary and secondary school students, a parents' support group and a "Success Stories" workshop. Our linkages to Laurentian University, Cambrian College and the Boards of Education will continue to open opportunities and build bridges within the community in the coming years.

We have a volunteer Executive Director, a part-time Chapter Development Coordinator and are advertising for a part-time Resource Facilitator to provide support to individuals with learning disabilities, parents and students. A volunteer program is being developed and will be launched in the fall, to provide the foundation for sustainable program delivery.

This is an exciting time in our chapter as we build new relationships and commence our outreach programs. Because we are a new chapter, we have tremendous opportunities to be creative and innovative in the way we establish ourselves and deliver programs and services. We look forward to building our chapter to meet the needs of our community.

LDA Thunder Bay

Originally named the Thunder Bay Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, the Thunder Bay Chapter of ACLD was founded in the early 1970's by a small Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors have developed, established and maintained the status of the Chapter. They have assisted many parents, teens and adults with LD.

Amanda Zaporzan served as President from 1997 to 2000. She started the Computers Skills program with the Developmental Services Worker students at Confederation College. She also continued with the Social Skills Program under the direction of Dr. Jane Taylor of the Kinesiology Department and her students at Lakehead University. In 1998, the Aqua Gym Program was established. This program previously had been successfully developed and implemented

in Vancouver with excellent results. Also, a skiing program was tried with some interest in January 1999.

In October 2000, new President, Linda VanEs, instituted support group meetings for persons with LD. She also planned and implemented a workshop with Dr. Maggie Mamen on Understanding and Managing Learning Disabled Children. The workshop was a great success.

Janis Thompson, took over as President in late 2001. She brought her experience in the human resources field to the Chapter. With the assistance of Lisa Coccimiglio, Secretary/Vice President, Janis worked on providing information and referral to persons with LD. They also recruited new members to the Chapter and continue to do so today.

Our newly elected President, Lisa Coccimiglio, has been an active member with the Thunder Bay Chapter for over 7 years. Recently, Lisa has been asked by Microcomputer Science Center Inc. to be a computer program trainer for Northern Ontario. In the Fall of 2004, Lisa will be trained in various types of programs, including Kurweizel 3000, and TextHelp and many more adaptive technologies. These programs/software are designed for people with learning disabilities. Lisa's training will enable her to teach these programs and offer assistance to users of all ages and abilities.

Today, the Thunder Bay Chapter's Board of Directors is made up of volunteers, parents, adults and teens, many of whom have learning disabilities. We have members sitting on the Special Education Advisory Committees for both school boards, and we are in the process of recruiting a member to sit on our SEAC for the French School Board.

The Chapter provides services and support to parents and persons of all ages with learning disabilities in Thunder Bay and in surrounding areas including Sioux Lookout, Dryden, Kenora and Fort Frances

Public awareness has always been a concern. The Chapter has participated in Inclusion Week, the Wellness Conference, mall displays and attended meetings with various other local committees, for example, the Ontario March of Dimes.

The Social Skills Program is one of the Chapter's longest running programs and has helped many children with LD. In conjunction with the Social Skills Program, the Chapter will be running a Parent Support Group for parents. This will allow parents of children with learning disabilities to talk about their issues, concerns and frustrations.

Upcoming programs include a Teen/Adult Support Group, fundraising events and Computer and Social Skills Programs.

Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County

The Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County was started by Nene Lott in 1973. Our service area encompasses all of the Upper Grand District School Board and Wellington Catholic District School Board

catchments. We provide services and supports to children, parents, teachers and adults in our areas. Our volunteer board of directors and dedicated community volunteers are involved in many facets of our programs. Two part-time staff work from September to June to provide resource and administrative support. We provide 6 public meetings annually on a variety of LD related topics. Support is provided to people with learning disabilities and their families through informative articles and resources which are distributed at our meetings and by request. Our quarterly newsletter is distributed to every school and the school board program staff in our service area, all 4 city and 13 county libraries as well as other community agencies and professionals. Through the support of the United Way we also provide books and video resources annually to the city and county libraries. Advocacy is provided for learning disabled students through representation on the Special Education Advisory Committees at the school board level. Individual advocacy and support is also provided for members as needed.

Learning Disabilities Association of York Region

The Learning Disabilities Association of York region began in 1976, servicing the nine municipalities of York Region from a church basement and with limited resources. Today, we are fortunate to have a centrally located office with a resource library open to members and the public. We serve all of York region, one of Canada's fastest growing regions.

In December, 2002 we marked our 25th anniversary, celebrating it with the theme *25 Years of Caring*. This was a testament to the hard work of the presidents, directors, volunteers, members and staff who have contributed so much to our association.

Lynn Ziraldo has been our Executive Director since 1985 and, with her involvement, we continue to develop many community partnerships and to serve individuals with learning disabilities and their families as well as community professionals and other service agencies.

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Focus On Our Chapters
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With the help of staff and accredited volunteers our chapter offers many programs and services to the community at large. Clients and members can meet individually with Resource Facilitators to receive information, guidance, and support. These programs and services are offered in the towns and cities throughout York Region when and where required. The Association also benefits from the involvement of volunteers and high school, college and university students in the areas of fundraising, administrative assistance, and program assistance.

Facilitated support groups are available for parents and adults with learning disabilities, allowing individuals to openly and comfortably express their feeling, ask questions, obtain information and receive support from people who share their concerns and challenges.

For our participants 5 to 16 years of age, we have Social Skills programs where children are able to develop social skills, problem-solving strategies and develop self-esteem and self-confidence. During the summer, a Social Skills summer camp provides the opportunity to continue the development in a camp atmosphere.

For students in Senior Kindergarten and

Grade 1, we provide trained tutors who work with the children and their families focusing on literacy and numeracy through ABCs and 123s (Learning to Learn Differently Project).

Parents can also register for the 10-week Parenting Course offered twice annually. Here participants are provided information and engage in various topics including problem solving, home activities, and recognizing feelings.

For individuals seeking job search assistance, we offer Adult Employment Preparation Program and Learning and Employment Assessment Profile (LEAP). With these programs, participants explore their strengths and weaknesses, areas of interests and develop the tools required to land the all important job interview.

The Association also offers seminars and workshops and provides training covering topics such as ADHD, IEPs, IPRCs and Advocacy and presentations by individuals with learning disabilities and their inspiring success stories. Individuals, young and older, with learning disabilities, their families as well as physicians, health care workers, social service agencies, professionals and educators, utilize these seminars, workshops and training sessions.

To be continued

Thank You to Our Donors & Funders

for gifts received from March, 2004 to July, 2004

Your support helps LDAO provide a level playing field of opportunities and services for children, youth and adults with learning disabilities!

Project Funders

Government Grants

Human Resources Development Canada
Ontario Ministry of Citizenship
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Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
The Ontario Trillium Foundation

The President's Council

The President's Council was initiated to recognize an outstanding level of commitment through annual contributions to LDAO and the learning disabilities network.

Carol & Randy Jones
Glenn Jones
Peter & Mary Elizabeth Kinch
Robert M. McDerment
Robert & Penny Richards
Isabel & Stephen Shessel
Carol Yaworski

The welcome and invitation is still open! You will help us and our chapters maintain our position as the only organization in Ontario providing services to the learning disabled population. Please contact Denise Harding, Fund Development Consultant @ (416) 929-4311 ext. 40 or e-mail deniseharding@rogers.com for further information.

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LDAO appreciates gifts made in honour of anyone of your choosing. Please consider a commemorative gift to support the work of LDAO and mark birthdays,

anniversaries, memorials, graduations or any other milestone. Please contact Denise Harding, Fund Development Consultant @ (416) 929-4311 ext. 40 or e-mail deniseharding@rogers.com for further information about **Commemorative Gifts** or the **Lifetime of Learning Monthly Donor Program**. Gifts of \$50+ will be listed in the subsequent newsletter. ☺



Information from Eli Lilly on ADHD Beyond the Classroom

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is thought by some to be an "academic" disability causing difficulties with attention and concentration in the classroom. However, ADHD is more than just an academic issue, it is a neurobiological disorder caused by chemical differences in the brain. Untreated, it may affect all aspects of the lives of those with ADHD, including his/her social interactions, extra-curricular activities and family relationships. ADHD requires continuous symptom relief to improve the overall functioning of a child.

Studies have shown that children with ADHD who do not receive treatment run the increased risk of accidental death, injury, sexually transmitted diseases, substance abuse and criminal activity, along with causing marital difficulties for their

parents. Social abilities and development of strong interpersonal skills are also at risk. Many children with ADHD have few friends and suffer from low self-esteem.

Proper diagnosis can help those with ADHD put their difficulties into perspective and provide a better understanding of many ADHD symptoms. Although more formal checklists are used in assessing ADHD, the support group CHADD lists the following core symptoms:

- Poor attention to detail
- Fidgeting
- Difficulty sustaining attention
- Poor listening skills
- Difficulty following instructions
- Difficulty engaging in leisure activities quietly
- Poor organization
- Always "on the go"
- Excessive talking

- Losing things
- Easily distracted
- Impatient
- Forgetful
- Interrupting others

Proper treatment of ADHD can manage symptoms and provide children with a chance to fulfill their potential. Research shows the greatest improvement in ADHD symptoms results from a combination of counselling and medical treatment.

All medications currently approved to treat ADHD belong to a class called stimulants. A number of new investigational ADHD treatments offer great promise and in the future Canadians will have more choice in ADHD treatment. For more information on ADHD, please visit your family doctor.

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A different way of learning can lead to success.

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