

communique

A different way of learning can lead to success.

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THE PUBLICATION OF THE LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

LDAO's Annual Meeting- September 18, 2004



Clockwise From Top Left:

Ministry of Education panellists (L to R): Alex Bezzina, Special Education Branch, LDAO Chair Ruth Taber, Kit Rankin, Curriculum Branch, Grant Clarke, Secondary School Branch

Outgoing LDAO Chair Isabel Shessel presents the Chair's Award to Jean Carberry, retiring long-serving LDAO board member.

Annual Meeting delegates at the Novotel North York.

Minister of Education, the Hon. Gerard Kennedy addresses Annual Meeting delegates



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ADULT ISSUES: EMPLOYMENT / WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS, RELATIONSHIPS

Message from the Chair

Autumn is the time of year for transitions. For all of us it is a seasonal change marked by great beauty as well as a sense of loss. For LDAO staff and its Board, following the AGM in September, it is both a time for renewal and reflection. We have recently experienced the retirement of several key, longstanding members who have provided considerable leadership and expertise on the board and we thank them all for their contributions during their tenure. However, the enthusiasm generated by the addition of several new members who bring a valuable and varied set of skills to the board will help us provide the governance needed during a time of growth and innovation.

While we can look back with satisfaction at several accomplishments to develop strategies and tools to meet the needs of children, youth and adults with learning disabilities, our energies must be focussed on the priorities we have articulated, the commitments we have made through our strategic planning process, and the mission and values we espouse. Our challenge will be to sustain our level of enthusiasm over the next year as we undertake to create partnerships that will enable us to raise the necessary



LDAO Chair Ruth Taber

funds for the completion of the network of regional centres. Our priority to develop a province-wide capacity to meet the needs of a diverse adult community will require us to look at original ways to provide programs and services and to promote self-advocacy. We will need to work diligently to sustain the momentum for positive change that has been generated over the last few years and to nurture the partnerships that have evolved because of our initiatives.

As Chair of the Board of LDAO, I invite you to help us expand the community of volunteers, members and professionals whose contributions improve the lives of children, youth, and adults with learning disabilities. ☺

communiqué

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Message from the Executive Director

These are busy times at LDAO as we have a number of key initiatives underway that are contributing to our efforts to support children, youth and adults with learning disabilities throughout the various stages of their lives. As well, we are engaged in systemic change that will lead to fewer students developing “acquired” learning disabilities as a result of getting off to a weak educational start.

In the previous edition of *Communique*, you read about our partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Education, under which we are beginning the process of offering province-wide availability of the Web Based Teaching Tool (WBTT) to publicly funded schools across Ontario in both French and English. There is also growing interest in the WBTT in other parts of Canada.

SOAR is selling well through Curriculum Services Canada and we hope to have it incorporated soon into after-school programs in our chapter network. Job-Fit, the revised and redesigned son of LEAP is now available for sale and has been shipped to Destination Employment sites in LDAs across Canada.

Next month, we will be launching a new brochure titled *Learning Disabilities on the Job!* This brochure for employers will have wide distribution and is intended to help employers understand how they can support and invest in employees with learning disabilities by providing affordable accommodations.

While we have put much effort into the product and development side of our mandate, our commitment to systemic advocacy remains strong and we have recently experienced two significant breakthroughs. The first was an announcement in September 2004 by the Honourable Gerard Kennedy, Minister of Education, that the funding formula for special education would change and that the ISA model would be abandoned. The Minister, who spoke at our recent AGM, has noted that LDAO predicted four years ago that the ISA model was both financially unsustainable and that it would be detrimental to many students, including the majority of students with learning disabilities. While we took little pleasure in being right, we are very pleased at the McGuinty Government keeping their promise to move to a new model. We look forward to working with the Minister and his staff in finding an approach to funding that supports student achievement while ensuring accountability for finite public funds.

Our second occasion for celebration on the advocacy front was the introduction on October 12, 2004 by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Honourable Marie Bountrogianni, of legislation titled “An Act respecting the development, implementation and enforcement of standards relating to accessibility with respect to goods, services, facilities, employment, accommodation, buildings and all other things specified in the Act for persons



Executive Director, Carol Yaworski

with disabilities”. This very long title describes new legislation that will replace the existing *Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA)*.

LDAO was alone among disabilities groups in never supporting the ODA, as we believed it to be weak legislation that required accessibility planning while leaving accessibility implementation voluntary. The new legislation not only lays out clear expectations for planning and implementation but also introduces incentives for employers and institutions that are proactive and sanctions for those who resist. This new legislation is realistic while establishing a higher standard for supporting individuals with disabilities in achieving full citizenship. Most notably, it includes those with invisible disabilities such as LD to an unprecedented degree.

We have much to celebrate and much to do. Please read future issues of *Communique* or visit us at www.ldao.ca and stay informed. ☺



Best Wishes for
the Holiday Season
from LDAO Board,
Staff and Volunteers

New legislation for improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in Ontario

For over ten years, residents of Ontario who have disabilities, have been awaiting the introduction and enactment of legislation that would ensure that persons with disabilities are guaranteed access to services, supports, etc., that are already available to those who are not disabled. In a caring society such as ours, having a disability should not become an insurmountable barrier to participation in the various components of day to day living, i.e., education, employment, shopping, entertainment, participation in sports, etc., nor should having a disability lead to discrimination.

Although this is generally accepted by our population, it is also clear that unless accessibility and equity are legislated, they will not be available to those who deal with barriers and discrimination in their daily lives.

The legislation that was enacted in 2001, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, did not achieve these goals. We, at LDAO, did not endorse the ODA legislation because it did not adequately include persons with learning disabilities, it did not set measurable goals, it did not include the private sector and it contained no compliance and enforcement principles.

LDAO was pleased when on October 12, 2004, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Hon. Marie Bountrogianni, introduced for first reading, Bill 118, which will eventually replace the ODA. This Act, commonly referred to as Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2004, is expected to ensure the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards. These standards aim to achieve accessibility for all Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, occupancy of accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises.

The key components of the legislation include the following:

Mandatory standards for access

This legislation mandates the involvement of persons with disabilities, other stakeholders and the provincial government in developing accessibility standards for all aspects of day to day living. Although accessibility is not actually defined in the Act, it presumably means the elimination of all barriers or obstacles that prevent persons with disabilities from fully participating in all



If this Act is fully implemented, Ontario will be fully accessible for all persons with disabilities within twenty years.

aspects of society. These standards relate to the full range of disabilities and barriers including physical, mental, sensory, developmental and learning disabilities.

Enforcement of the legislation

The ODA Committee estimated that this legislation will affect 350,000 public and private organizations in Ontario. Efficient enforcement tools will ensure compliance among all the organizations and institutions affected by the proposed legislation. All organizations covered by the legislation will be required to file accessibility reports and make them public. Under the ODA, 2001, the institutional and organizational accessibility plans were not submitted to the government, nor were the groups required to implement them in a timely manner. It is now proposed that the government will review the accessibility reports, conduct inspections and spot audits. Non-compliance will lead to significant penalties.

Timelines

If this Act is fully implemented, Ontario will be fully accessible for all persons with disabilities within twenty years. However, it is anticipated that real measurable results would be achieved much earlier.

Content of the accessibility standards

Such standards will set out measures, policies, practices, etc. for the identification and elimination of barriers and require all persons and organizations named in the standard to implement the measures, etc., within the time period specified.

This Act is lengthy and has some complex components that will have to be discussed and spelled out in detail during the rest of the legislative process. For example, it is not specified how the proposed tribunals for dealing with non-compliance will function. Are these going to be similar to the special education tribunals or are they going to be more effective and efficient in helping people? It is also not entirely clear as yet what the role and mandate of the newly proposed Accessibility Standards Advisory Council will be and how this will differ from the Accessibility Directorate, which will continue to function.

LDAO looks forward to continuing to participate in the process of developing this legislation by attending public hearings and submitting comments to the Minister and her staff, prior to second and third reading and royal assent. In the meantime, we are optimistic that this legislation will improve access and equity for the people that we represent, Ontario's population of persons with learning disabilities. ❁

*Eva Nichols,
Legislation Consultant*

How to become a successful Adult with LD

What is Success?

Success is not easy to define. It means different things to different people. In addition, it may mean something different at different times in a person's life.

However, although views of success may differ, there appear 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. Of course, different individuals may place lesser or greater emphasis on these various components of success.

How Do Children With Learning Disabilities Become Successful Adults?

Children with learning disabilities grow up to be adults with learning disabilities. That is, many of the difficulties experienced in childhood continue into and through adulthood. Nevertheless, some individuals with learning disabilities follow a life path that leads them to success, becoming productive members of society and living satisfying and rewarding lives. Others find little more than continued "failure," and are barely able to "keep their heads above water" emotionally, socially, or financially. Why, despite similar backgrounds and learning problems, does one individual end up with a rewarding career, long-term friendships, and financial stability, yet another, a life of loneliness, isolation, and financial stress?

Learning disabilities research has provided some answers to this question.

Our research at the Frostig Center,² as well as several major studies by others,³ has focused on identifying which factors contribute to success for individuals with learning disabilities. Results from these projects point to the importance of a set of personal characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors that can help lead persons with learning disabilities to successful life outcomes. By tracing the lives of individuals with learning disabilities throughout the lifespan, these studies have revealed a number of "success attributes" that guide an individual to either positive or negative adult outcomes.

What Are The Success Attributes?

Our 20-year study, in particular, highlighted the importance of six success attributes for individuals with learning disabilities. These success attributes included: self-awareness, proactivity, perseverance, goal-setting, the presence and use of effective support systems, and emotional coping strategies. It is important to emphasize that not every successful individual possesses each of these attributes, and some attributes may be present to a greater or lesser degree. Similarly, persons who might be considered "unsuccessful" may nevertheless possess some of the success attributes, again, to a lesser or greater degree. What it does mean is that successful persons with learning disabilities are much more likely to have these characteristics than unsuccessful individuals. It is our hope that, by helping

parents understand these success attributes, they will be better prepared to work with and guide their children toward satisfying and rewarding lives. It is also important to keep in mind that having these attributes does not guarantee success. Rather, it increases the chances of achieving a fulfilling and successful life. It is interesting to note that our research indicates that these characteristics may have a greater influence on success than even such factors as academic achievement, gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and even intelligence quotient (IQ).⁴

Each of the success attributes is discussed in the following pages. Quotes from successful adults with learning disabilities are used to help explain each attribute from the viewpoint of individuals who live with learning disabilities.

Self-Awareness

"As I said, I have dyslexia. I have never not had dyslexia, so it always has, and always will, affect my life. I don't know what it's like not to have dyslexia. I don't know that I want to do life over again without it. It's part of me. It will hinder me, as it has, and it will push me into places where I never would have gone."

Thirty-three-year-old male

Successful people with learning disabilities are aware of the types of problems they have, including academic problems like reading and math,

(continued on page 6)

2 Marshall H. Raskind, Roberta J. Goldberg, Eleanor L. Higgins, and Kenneth L. Herman. Patterns of Change and Predictors of Success in Individuals with Learning Disabilities: Results from a Twenty-Year Longitudinal Study, *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 1999; Roberta J. Goldberg, Eleanor L. Higgins, Marshall H. Raskind, and Kenneth L. Herman. Predictors of Success in Individuals with Learning Disabilities: A Qualitative Analysis of a 20-Year Longitudinal Study, *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, in press.

3 Henry B. Reiff, Paul J. Gerber, Rick Ginsberg. *Exceeding Expectations: Successful Adults with Learning Disabilities*. Pro-ed, 1997.

Emmy E. Werner and Ruth S. Smith, *Overcoming the Odds: High Risk Children from Birth to Adulthood*. Cornell University Press, 1992.

4 This is not to say that these factors do not have a substantial impact on the life outcomes of persons with learning disabilities, but rather that research has shown that the success attributes may play an even greater role. Of course, such factors as extreme poverty or severe psychiatric problems can have a profound affect on someone's life and even negate the influence of the success attributes.

**How to become a successful adult with LD
cont. from page 5**

academic-related problems such as attentional or organizational difficulties, and non-academic difficulties such as motor deficits or emotional/ behavioral problems. They are open and specific about their difficulties and understand how they affect their lives. Most important, these individuals have the ability to compartmentalize their disability. That is, they are able to see their learning difficulties as only one aspect of themselves. Although they are well aware of their learning limitations, they are not overly defined by them. As one successful individual states:

“You know, everybody comes with a package. And yeah, there are things that I am good at and things that I am not so good at. Some of my limitations are reading and writing. But boy, when it comes to putting things together, reading plans, and chasing down problems, those are some talents, some skills that I was born with . . . I carved a different path and my whole life has been that way.”

Successful individuals with learning disabilities recognize their talents along with accepting their limitations. This idea is expressed particularly well by one adult who stresses, “We all learn differently; we all have strengths and weaknesses.”

Another adult with a learning disability shares, “It’s still there and I compensate . . . I think the problems that I had were no different than anybody else who is conscious of their weaknesses, and then some of their strengths. Some people are not conscious at all.”

In addition to recognizing their strengths, weaknesses, and special talents, successful adults with learning disabilities are also able to find jobs that provide the best fit or “match” with their abilities. For example, an individual with severe reading problems, but exceptional skills in woodworking might find a successful

career in cabinet making rather than as a copy editor. A person with math deficits, but excellent writing abilities might shy away from a career in accounting, yet find success in journalism. And, the individual with poor reading and writing, but strong oral language skills might pursue sales and avoid jobs requiring substantial written language abilities.



Unsuccessful people with learning disabilities, on the other hand, often fail to recognize both their strengths and limitations, accept their difficulties, compartmentalize their learning disability, and find employment that provides the best fit for their abilities.

Proactivity

Successful adults with learning disabilities are generally actively engaged in the world around them — politically, economically, and socially. They participate in community activities and take an active role in their families, neighbourhoods, and friendship groups. Additionally, they often step into leadership roles at work, in the

community, and in social and family settings.

Not surprisingly, therefore, successful persons with learning disabilities also believe that they have the power to control their own destiny and affect the outcome of their lives. In talking about how he took charge of his college experience, one successful adult remarks:

“I actually didn’t take classes as much as I took professors. The way I got through college was I looked at the classes I was interested in and I was over at the professors’ office times telling them I’m going to need extra time; give me the ability to take the written exam orally. There are a bunch of exceptions and I just listed them out for these people.”

This quote demonstrates the kind of creative self-advocacy and initiative we frequently observed in successful adults. In contrast, unsuccessful individuals tend merely to respond to events and are passive.

Successful persons with learning disabilities also show the ability to make decisions and act upon those decisions. Additionally, they assume responsibility for their actions and resulting outcomes. In talking about how his shyness interfered with trying to meet a girl, one successful adult shares:

“I looked at that lesson and said, ‘OK, you blew it that time. What are you going to do? How are you going to overcome that situation?’ So I systematically started working on getting over my shyness . . . And last spring . . . “

When things don’t work out, successful individuals generally take responsibility for the outcome and do not blame others. Commenting on his career, the same individual expresses commitment to action, “Anything I’m going to do, I’m going to give it my all. Otherwise I’m not going to touch it.”

A willingness to consult with others while making decisions is also characteristic of successful people with learning disabilities. In that connection, they also appear to be flexible in considering and weighing options. For instance, when faced with a career-ending knee surgery, one successful athlete was able to smoothly shift her career focus to a pottery business. Another individual whose learning disability prevented him from passing required college courses, researched and transferred to a university that did not require those courses for graduation.

In contrast, unsuccessful individuals often do not recognize that situations can be altered, or that multiple solutions may exist. Instead, they are either passive, making no decision, or conversely, stick rigidly to a simplistic, rule-based decision even if it ultimately fails. Successful individuals, on the other hand, take responsibility for both the positive and negative outcomes of their decisions and actions. For example, one former student commenting on his success stated:

“I think that I worked hard and I made choices instead of letting things happen. I mean stuff that I haven’t actively gone and taken care of are the only things that I’m not as satisfied with. The stuff that I’ve gone and taken care of, I’m very happy with.”

Perseverance

Many persons with learning disabilities show great perseverance and keep pursuing their chosen path despite difficulties. They often describe themselves in such terms as “I am not a quitter,” and “I never give up.” However, successful individuals demonstrate an additional important ability — knowing when to quit. Although they rarely give up on a general goal, depending on the situation, they may change the way they go about achieving it, thereby improving their chances for success. In other words, after repeated failure, these individuals are able to see and pursue alternative

strategies for reaching their goal, or know when the goal itself might have to be modified. Often they try several strategies until they find one that works. One successful adult states, “Once I have a failure, I can’t just dwell on that failure and restrict myself for the rest of my life. I’ll do something else.” In contrast, unsuccessful individuals are typically not flexible and often appear to “beat their heads against the wall,” failing to recognize when it is time to reevaluate their strategies, or the goal itself.

Successful persons with learning disabilities appear to learn from their hardships making statements such as “I have failed many times, but I am not a failure. I have learned to succeed from my failures.” In addition, successful people seem to agree that difficult situations are necessary for learning. In comparison, unsuccessful individuals with learning disabilities are often overwhelmed by adversity, back away from challenges, and give up much more easily and quickly than successful peers.

Goal-Setting

Successful individuals set goals that are specific, yet flexible so that they can be changed to adjust to specific circumstances and situations. These goals cover a number of areas including education, employment, family, spiritual and personal development. In addition, the goals of successful persons with learning disabilities include a strategy to reach their goals. That is, they have an understanding of the step-by-step process for obtaining goals. One successful adult pursuing a career in the entertainment field states:

“I always look at every move, like this particular move doing the video, as a stepping stone for the next project. That’s how I’m looking at it. As I said, the area I really want to move into is, I want to direct.”

Successful people also appear to have goals that are realistic and attainable.

“I’ll tell you something. I’m very realistic in terms of what I know I can do, what I possibly can do, and what I cannot do. That’s why I knew right off the bat that I was not going to be a doctor.”

— Thirty-one-year-old male

Many successful people with learning disabilities set at least tentative goals in adolescence, which provide direction and meaning to their lives. A successful adult trained as a social worker says:

“When I was in late high school, I knew what I wanted to do when I grew up. I was given the opportunity to babysit and in the twelfth grade I worked at a day camp. I just discovered that I was interested in children and that this may turn out to be a profession. So there was kind of a break and something to shoot for; some sort of self-direction.”

While successful individuals with learning disabilities have concrete, realistic, and attainable goals, unsuccessful individuals often have vague, unrealistic, or grandiose goals that are not in line with their strengths, weaknesses, or special abilities. For example, one individual having extreme problems with eye-hand coordination and spatial relations aspired to be an airline pilot, while another with severe reading, writing, and organization difficulties wanted to become an executive secretary. Not surprisingly, both were unsuccessful at their attempts to reach these goals and experienced frustration and stress as a result. ☹

Excerpted from Raskind, M.H., Goldberg, R.J., Higgins, E.L. & Herman, K.L.: *Life success for children with learning disabilities: A parent guide* (2003), pages 1-3. Reprinted with permission from the Frostig Center.

To view the whole document please visit www.frostig.org/LDsuccess.

ALDER-A Model for Adult Services

ALDER (formerly the AlderCentre) is a service agency in Toronto whose mandate is to provide employment support to youth and adults with learning disabilities, by helping them to understand the nature of their learning disability and by providing an employment program individualized to each client's needs.

Many clients enter the ALDER program through the ODSP Employment Supports program. Persons receiving disability or rehabilitation benefits from other sources such as Ontario Works may not qualify for ODSP. ALDER staff can assist potential clients with the ODSP application process.

The foundation of all services provided by ALDER is an assessment process to

determine the nature of a person's learning disability and to suggest appropriate accommodations. If deemed eligible for ALDER's services, clients are then provided with the following services:

- Pre-employment skills development training (individual, small group);
- Employment planning/creating an action plan;
- Job development;
- Unpaid work experience (for clients receiving ODSP Employment Supports);
- Job coaching;
- Job support and maintenance;
- Adaptive technology assessment and training;
- Networking and social events;

- "Helping Ontarians Learn Differently" (HOLD) Project;
- Mentoring.

A brief outline of each of the above components follows.

Pre-employment skills development:

This includes understanding your learning disabilities and their impact in the workplace; resume and cover letter writing (assistance is provided to individuals with difficulties in reading or writing); interpersonal skill development; time management; disclosure issues and requesting accommodations; organizational skill development; job search; life skills needs.

Employment planning: Includes one on one career exploration, identification of



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potential barriers, and ultimately, identification of a realistic employment goal.

Job development: Staff provide assistance in obtaining appropriate job opportunities/placements and accommodations in the work place as well as support to the client before and during job placements.

Unpaid work experience: This is used as a step to achieving paid employment in an occupation already determined and customized to client need up to a maximum of 12 weeks.

Job coaching: If required, a job coach can provide the individual with on-the-job assistance and this can lead to greater success in the workplace.

Job support and maintenance: Job support provides help in understanding workplace culture and meeting employer expectations.

Adaptive technology assessment and training: ALDER facilitates appropriate adaptive technology assessments that are customized to the individual's areas of strengths and weaknesses. For example, difficulties in written expression and handwriting may be overcome with specialized computer software.

Networking and social events: ALDER holds monthly networking and social events for all past and current clients. Goal of these events is to provide a safe and supportive environment and to have fun.

“Helping Ontarians Learn Differently” (HOLD) project: HOLD is a two-year provincial outreach initiative offering customized workshops on a diverse range of topics for employers, persons with learning disabilities and the general community. For more information call 416-693-2922.

Mentoring: Mentoring matches talented job seekers or employees with LD to volunteer skilled workers who act as guides and advisors and who offer assistance with support, goal setting and problem solving during an agreed-upon period of time. Mentoring has been found to bolster self-esteem and social skills, and to help in obtaining employment. ALDER offers mentoring and mentoring start-up services to support the complex needs of individuals with LD and their job search needs. GTA Agencies can call ALDER with a referral or the GTA client can self-refer by calling 416-693-2922.

ALDER offers its services to clients in the Greater Toronto Area only. For information on adult services in your community, please contact your local Learning Disability Association. ☎



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Working It Out: The Challenge of Relationships

Adults with learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorder and their spouses or partners often face unique problems. This article describes some real situations and suggests ways to deal with them. People reading this article may want to assess how their situations differ from those discussed and develop their own solutions.

What to change

First, each couple needs to identify their problems if they want to improve their relationship. Here are some examples:

The partner without learning disabilities may feel resentment at having to continually tend to the needs of the person with learning disabilities, while many of his or her needs seem to go unmet. Additionally, this partner may feel that, despite the effort, the assistance is not appreciated. Moreover, the person with learning disabilities may feel frustrated about the way the partner provides assistance.

Persons with learning disabilities may feel unfairly blamed for relationship problems. Persons with learning disabilities may be blamed for not listening or for being careless when, in actuality, the problems may be unintentional due to the learning disability.

How to Discuss the Changes

In talking about the way situations can be better handled, it may be helpful to broaden the discussion to include:

- The degree to which each person is able to meet his or her own needs and wants.
- Each person's ability to carry out particular responsibilities.
- How much, and what kind of help each person would like from the other.
- The extent to which each person is able and willing to do for the other.
- How well the needs and wants of both persons are being accommodated.

Helpful Tips

The person with learning disabilities should:

- Become aware of the specific ways in which the learning disabilities create difficulties in processing information, communicating, etc.
- Explain to his or her partner, in detail, how the condition may interfere with situations.
- Request accommodations in matter-of-fact terms, without excuses or elaborate justification.
- Avoid crying wolf, to maintain credibility with his or her partner.
- Be self-reliant, by finding alternatives to over-burdening his or her partner.

The person who does not have learning disabilities should:

- Try to recognize, specifically, how the condition affects the partner's ability to pay attention, comprehend, conceptualize, visualize,

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communicate, be organized, remember what was discussed, read instructions or a map, etc.

- Be aware that what seems like a simple, logical way to carry out a task may be difficult for a person with learning disabilities. Persuading the person with learning disabilities to just do it this way may not be helpful. The person who does not have learning disabilities must learn that what seems like a complicated method to do a simple task may be the easiest way for a person with learning disabilities.
- Be aware that symptoms of learning disabilities may be more apparent at the end of the day or when a person is fatigued.
- Refrain from demanding that the partner try harder. This would be similar to expecting a deaf person to hear by trying harder.
- Recognize that the partner may have difficulty with conventional thought processes. The partner should develop empathy by recognizing that he or she would have as much trouble thinking circuitously as a person with learning disabilities would have using conventional thought processes.

The couple should:

- Talk about positive things they would like to see in their relationship; cultivate a spirit of good will for working out troublesome areas.
- Give equal consideration to the feelings of the partner without learning disabilities, to reduce his or her resentment and to create balance.
- Prioritize requests, either as necessary or preferred.
- Accommodate each person to whatever extent is practical,

recognizing it may not be possible to meet both persons' requests all the time. Trade-offs may be necessary.

- View accommodations for the person with learning disabilities as a fact of life, rather than as favours.
- Distinguish between difficulties that can be overcome by using special strategies or accommodations, and those which are not likely to change.



much assistance is routinely provided by his or her partner. In this situation, the person may feel like he or she is being treated like a child or is stupid.

Additionally, the person who does not have learning disabilities may resent having to do everything. To avoid over-generalizing, the person who does not have learning disabilities should ask the partner if assistance is wanted, before giving it.

Furthermore, the person with learning disabilities should bear in mind that his or her partner's help is well intended, and it may truly be helpful at another time.

Sex roles may compound the effects of learning disabilities. For instance, men have traditionally been designated as breadwinners. This may not be realistic for some men with learning disabilities who have had

trouble with job stability and career advancement. A couple can reduce the stress by creating more realistic expectations and redefining their roles according to each person's abilities rather than by tradition.

Conclusion

This article suggests ways to resolve the relationship problems that learning disabilities can generate. If a couple's problems persist, they may find it useful to seek professional advice to help them resolve problems, especially those generated by the learning disabilities. Forming support groups to deal with learning disability issues, may help couples feel that they are not alone. 🍷

The Complexities

Once the adult who does not have learning disabilities begins to understand how to provide assistance that is indeed helpful, he or she may be surprised that the same assistance may be accepted one day with great appreciation and rejected, perhaps insensitively, the next day.

Assistance needed by an adult with learning disabilities on a bad day may not be needed on a good day. Capabilities of a person with learning disabilities can vary tremendously from day to day, without predictable patterns or identifiable causes. This may be easier to understand by realizing that everyone has good and bad days. Nonetheless, one must not lose sight of the fact that bad days for persons with learning disabilities may be much more pronounced and frequent.

Inflexible patterns may lead to problems. For example, an adult with learning disabilities may feel stifled when too

*By Britta Miller
and Stevie Marie Stephens.*

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LDAA Newsbriefs.*

Adults with Visual-Spatial Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities in visual-spatial areas are less well-known and less understood than language-based learning disabilities such as dyslexia. Because they affect “everyday life” as much as academic settings, visual-spatial difficulties continue to have a significant impact in adulthood.

Persons with a pattern of visual-spatial LD’s typically display:

- auditory memory (for things that are heard) better than visual memory.
- basic reading skills better than mathematics skills
- verbal expression and reasoning better than written expression
- difficulties with sense of direction, estimation of size, shape, distance, time
- difficulties with spatial orientation, e.g. knowing how things will look when they are rotated
- visual figure-ground weakness, e.g. problems finding things on a messy desk
- problems interpreting graphs, charts, maps
- may become easily lost in an unfamiliar environment
- may have problems in learning to drive
- may have trouble estimating how

long tasks take, managing time

- may have trouble seeing the “whole picture” or knowing what details are important
- may have trouble organizing, especially nonverbal information

Persons with this pattern of learning disabilities remember things best by using words. They prefer to learn and remember information by writing or

dictating and tend to solve problems by talking out loud and reasoning with words. They describe nonverbal types of tasks (e.g. assembling an object, reading graphs) using words, and they need a language-based system to sort out how to organize information. Many have very strong verbal skills and can use these to compensate well for their visual-spatial weaknesses.

Some (but not all) persons with visual-spatial learning disabilities also have problems with reading nonverbal cues such as body language and facial expressions. They may not pick up subtle social cues required to monitor their interactions in social settings. However these skills can be taught and rehearsal of verbal “social scripts” can be very useful.

With the appropriate skills instruction, development of compensatory strategies, and accommodations in educational or workplace settings, adults with visual-spatial learning disabilities can find their niche and lead successful lives.

References:

Job-Fit Facilitator’s Guide, 2004, Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

“What are Nonverbal Learning Disabilities?” 1998, Patti Brace, LDA Kingston Newsletter

“See and Learn Not Always True” 1998, Edwin Ortiz, LDAO *Communique* ☼

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Job-Fit

Learning disabilities affect the lives of up to 10 percent of the general population. This statistic cuts across national, ethnic, and racial boundaries as well as socio-economic conditions. In spite of the fact that learning disabilities have the highest recognized incidence of all disabilities, there is still limited understanding and acceptance of the condition as a real disability.

Job-Fit was developed to help people with learning disabilities improve and enhance their employability and job-readiness skills. There is no requirement for a formal diagnosis or assessment of learning disabilities for someone to use Job-Fit. The materials may be useful for some clients who have not been identified as having learning disabilities, but who are having difficulties similar to clients with learning disabilities.

There is greater acceptance now than there used to be of the idea that learning disabilities are an educational or school-based problem. However, for adults with learning disabilities, their difficulties are still frequently attributed to negative characteristics such as laziness, lack of intelligence, or poor attitude rather than to learning disabilities.

Why is this, when as a society we are so much more supportive and accommodating of disabilities than was the case in the past?

Some of the more obvious reasons include the following:

- Learning disabilities are invisible
- Some people do not understand or accept the fact that learning disabilities are a neurological condition, the result of differences in the functioning of the brain
- There is no single universally accepted definition of learning disabilities

- Learning disabilities are very diverse in their severity, complexity of symptoms, and impacts on day-to-day life, so they are hard to understand

Of course, many people with learning disabilities are quite successful and require little or no outside assistance. They have figured out for themselves how to utilize and build on their strengths and use coping strategies to compensate for their areas of weakness. Such people usually do well in school and go on to become productively employed. Frequently, they are the only ones aware that they have learning disabilities.

Despite having been identified as having learning disabilities, others struggle with schooling and go on to be disadvantaged in the world of work. They are sometimes



... many people with learning disabilities are quite successful and require little or no outside assistance.



unemployed and often underemployed. Even when employed, they frequently remain in entry-level positions and often feel victimized by society. Others who have not had their difficulties formally attributed to learning disabilities are likely to blame themselves for their difficulties.

Studies have shown that many people who are unemployed and/or are perpetually on social assistance have disabilities. Some of these studies have also shown that people with invisible and/or less well-understood disabilities are even more likely to face discrimination than those with the more readily visible and understood

disabilities. Even though many countries now have legislation barring discrimination and mandating the accommodation of persons with disabilities, such supports are frequently denied to those who have learning disabilities.

The experience of those who have learning disabilities and who are successful has shown that learning disabilities can be overcome. People with learning disabilities are usually employable. With the right training, support, self-awareness, and accommodation they can become self-supporting, productive workers.

Job-Fit is a facilitated program, developed to assist persons with learning disabilities to become more self-aware, to make any necessary changes for themselves, and to become productively employed. Consisting of a facilitator's guide and two client work books, Job-Fit addressed the following topics:

Module 1 – Introduction to Job-Fit

Module 2 – Understanding Your Assessments

Module 3 – Learning Styles and Strategies

Module 4 – Useful Information

Module 5 – Setting Employment Goals

Module 6 – Becoming Job Ready

Module 7 – Workplace Issues

Module 8 – Pulling It All Together ☺

For more information or to order Job-Fit materials, please contact Kate Lloyd at katel@ldao.ca or at 416.929.4311 x. 23.

New Government Initiatives

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities recently announced funding for some innovative projects to strengthen apprenticeship training for students. Under the Apprenticeship Innovation Fund, \$21 million is being provided to fund three programs in 2004-05. The government is calling for proposals that will:

- Expand access to apprenticeship by helping people develop their skills to the level required for training;
- Update and expand training facilities in the college system;
- Ensure that apprenticeship classroom training is flexible, relevant and meets industry's highest standards.

By 2007-08, it is expected that new participants in these programs will increase annually to 26,000.

The government has recently introduced legislation called the Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit that, if approved, will give an incentive to employers to expand their commitment to skills training. The refundable tax credit will equal 25 percent of salaries and wages for eligible apprentices. To support small businesses, the tax credit will increase to 30 percent for businesses with payrolls of \$400,000 or less.

Public Inquiries:
416-325-2929/800-387-5514

The Ministry of Education, in its Students at Risk/Student Success initiative, will fund school boards to develop school-work transition programs to prepare students for employment on leaving school. The Report of the Program Pathways Work Group can be

found at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/pathways.pdf>.

A Pathways pilot in the Waterloo Region District School Board has just started in three secondary schools. Called Fast Forward, it is geared to students who won't be attending college or university. More than 800 students have enrolled in the program which emphasizes essential-level courses and practical work experience. The program is a 4-5 year transition program designed and delivered in partnership with local industry. Further information can be found on the Board's website:

www.wrdsb.on.ca under Fast Forward. ☎

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Possibilities and Pitfalls: Employment and Learning Disabilities

First, the good news. Most people who have learning disabilities¹ have a sigh of relief when school days are finally behind them and get on with satisfying, successful lives. They find a niche where they can fit into the workforce, matching their skills and abilities to the right job. Many are college and university graduates, and take their places confidently and comfortably in their chosen fields.

Now, the less good news. Many people who have learning disabilities struggle to get appropriate training or education, struggle to find jobs, struggle to get accommodations in the workplace, or get jobs only to lose them within a short time. There are several possible reasons for this: lack of fit between skills and job requirements; social skills difficulties; systemic barriers resulting in lack of appropriate accommodations; and difficulty handling the learning experiences inherent in any job in today's world.

Fit, between skills and jobs is a primary ingredient for success. This is true for everyone. For individuals who have learning disabilities it means that they must have a clear understanding of their specific learning disabilities and understand when and how they are likely to manifest. Many individuals leave high school with only the vaguest general idea of what their deficit areas are, and little idea of how those will impact on various career possibilities. For example, I have worked with an individual who struggled mightily to get through law school. She finally succeeded. However, her main area of difficulty was auditory processing deficits. Her score on a standardized test placed her well below the 16th percentile. This is a major handicap for a lawyer whose job is to process accurately and remember large amounts of information. When I tried to reach her at her business

number a year or so after her graduation, it was out of service. I do not know that she was not able to make it as a lawyer, but it would surprise me greatly if she did. On the other hand, I worked with a young man at university who had great difficulties with writing. He was in an applied program of video production in which his strengths were utilized and the need for writing was minimal. This represents a good "fit" between strengths

and job requirements. He had all the part-time work he could handle in his field and would likely have no difficulty achieving success as a full-time worker.

Some individuals with learning disabilities have social skills deficits. They have difficulty reading social situations, understanding the non-verbal aspects of communication (tone of voice; pace of delivery; non-word vocalic such



1 – In this article, the term *learning disabilities* includes attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

as “um, ah, oh”; body position and gestures; facial expressions), using eye contact appropriately, listening, asking for help, explaining a problem, accepting ‘no’ for an answer, and turn-taking in conversations. The Conference Board of Canada has published a leaflet called **Employability Skills Profile**. It lists the general skills that all employers look for and value in all employees. A look at this list of *Critical Skills Required for the Workforce* makes it clear why individuals with social skills deficits have difficulty succeeding in the workplace even if they have the requisite hard job skills. The list of ‘critical skills’ includes the abilities to: listen to understand and learn; understand and contribute to the organization’s goals; understand and work with the culture of the group; plan and make decisions with others and support the outcome; respect the thoughts and opinions of others in the group; exercise “give and take” to achieve group results; seek a team approach as appropriate; and lead when appropriate, mobilizing the group for high performance. A survey of employers conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Labour revealed that they cite ‘lack of social skills’ as the main reason for termination of employment. This makes social skills deficits a serious issue for people with learning disabilities who have this particular deficit.

Individuals who have social skills deficits can learn to perform many of the skills mentioned as essential. They do not learn automatically, but they need to have each skill made explicit, have the skill demonstrated, and practice the skill in a supportive environment receiving corrective feedback. They often need ongoing ‘remediation’ to help them apply the skills they have learned when they are actually in the workplace. Social skills training is best done in small groups where students can help each other as they are learning under the guidance of a trained facilitator.

Even those who have good job skills and good social skills may run into systemic barriers. This refers to practices or attitudes within the workplace that work to prevent individuals from achieving success. Such practices or attitudes preclude implementation of accommodations that would enable people to do their work effectively. Our Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, and associated Human Rights Acts dictate that accommodations must be provided to individuals with disabilities. In order to refuse a job to, or let go, a person for lack of ability to do the job, the employer first must make sure the individual cannot do the job **even with appropriate accommodations**.

Accommodations include such things as assistive technology (voice interactive software), job restructuring (if there is one minor aspect of the job that cannot be performed even with accommodations, giving that part of the job to another individual in exchange for something the person can do), providing written instructions for workers with memory problems; and allowing extra time for new skills required for the job to be learned. A recent case that went to trial involved an individual who was denied a promotion because it took her longer to achieve a second-language proficiency requirement. After many years, the individual won her case. But how many people are there who do not have the time, motivation, or resources to fight such a battle, and therefore simply accept the discrimination?

Paul Gerber and his colleagues who have spent years researching adults with learning disabilities, have looked at the positive side of employment by interviewing many highly and moderately successful adults with learning

disabilities. They concluded that the overriding issue mitigating for success was the quest by individuals to gain control over their lives. Control was pursued through two sets of themes: internal decisions and external manifestations.

The internal decisions included having the desire to succeed, being goal-driven, and having reframed how learning disabilities was thought about. Having the desire to succeed is quite straight forward. Everyone I have ever met has that desire. It becomes trickier when self-efficacy enters the picture. Self-efficacy



refers to one’s belief that one’s own efforts have a direct impact on outcomes. Many people with learning disabilities do not believe that what they do makes any difference...they will either succeed or not, depending on luck, their teacher, their boss, or other factors apart from their own effort. Those who succeed want to succeed **and** believe that what they do makes the difference. Therefore they are more motivated to take action and persevere. At some point, adults with learning disabilities who achieve success decide to take control over their own lives and make things happen by taking direct action.

All of the successful adults interviewed by Gerber and his colleagues routinely set goals, both long-term and short-term. It is important that the goals be realistic, that is, achievable. Goals that are too easy are

(continued on page 18)

Employment and Learning Disabilities cont. from page 17

not meaningful as motivators. Goals that are unrealistic in light of the individual's strengths and weaknesses are not likely reachable and so serve to de-motivate rather than motivate. But clear, achievable goals, accompanied by a plan of action, serve to propel individuals toward success. Strategic thinking becomes important if goal-setting is to work. Success or failure to reach goals needs to be accompanied by reflection about why the individual succeeded or not, and if not, what other strategy could be tried. This type of strategic thinking does not come naturally to many individuals with learning disabilities. Deborah Butler has developed a method to help college students learn to think strategically by repeatedly leading them through the cycle of goal-setting, plan development, plan implementation, and reflection.

The third internal decision identified by Gerber was *reframing*. That is the process

of recognizing and accepting the impact of the learning disabilities and accepting and valuing oneself, including the learning disabilities. It means making friends with one's learning disabilities, and approaching life with a positive attitude. Such acceptance brings with it the ability and willingness to discuss one's learning disabilities with others when and as appropriate, without shame or guilt. In order to be able to do so, individuals need to truly understand their own strengths and weaknesses so they can be dealt with realistically when making career decisions or discussing the need for accommodations. The final stage in the reframing process is *action*: taking direct action toward goal achievement.

Having made these internal decisions, successful individuals then exhibit behaviours that are consistent with those decisions. They select jobs or careers which fit well with their abilities and disabilities, persist in their efforts to achieve success, and become creative in developing or learning new strategies to

help them get around their areas of difficulty. To do this, many develop a solid network of friends, supporters, mentors, and learning experiences/resources that may be called upon when required. Learning how to make effective use of technology would fall into this category. Developing the ability and willingness to seek out and accept support is key.

A very pragmatic question often arises for individuals with learning disabilities. "When should I disclose to an employer that I have learning disabilities?" There is no stock answer to this question. If the individual's learning disabilities are not expected to be an issue in the particular job, there is no need to disclose. For example, a person may have arthritis, diabetes, or depression. If the condition is under control and not likely to surface as a barrier to that individual's effective job performance, then it is a non-issue and does not need to be disclosed. If, however, the condition is not well controlled and is likely to interfere with

Useful Websites Related to Employment

Ministry of Education CAREER GATEWAY

www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/career/

Gateway to portals on career exploration, job search skills, training and jobs

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities SKILLS CONNECT

www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/apprenticeship/Skills/main.html

Information on apprenticeship opportunities and Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program

Human Resource Development Canada ESSENTIAL SKILLS

www15.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/english/general/es.asp

Essential skills for employment, and Occupational Profiles

WORKINK - Canada's Virtual Employment Resource Centre for Job Seekers with Disabilities

www.workink.com/display.asp?Page_ID=10813 , or go to

www.ccrw.org/en/programs/index.asp and click on WORKink

Articles and tips for jobseekers, and "Ask ECO (employment counsellor on-line)"

POSSIBILITIES - Toronto's Virtual Employment Resource Centre

www.possibilitiesproject.com/index.asp

Free registration for job opportunities, career fairs, event calendars, tips and tools

JAN - Job Accommodation Network - Portal for Individuals

www.jan.wvu.edu/portals/individuals.htm

American based, offers articles, individualized accommodation information and a Searchable Online Accommodation Resource

the individual's ability to carry out all aspects of the job effectively, then the condition needs to be disclosed and adaptations identified to deal with the issues. The same is true for learning disabilities. The more one has chosen work that provides a good fit with individual strengths and weaknesses, the less likely it is to be an issue. If it is an issue, it needs to be disclosed before work commences, but after the job offer has been made. This allows the individual to identify strategies and adaptations which will permit effective job completion, or allows the employee and employer to work together to find workable solutions. The bottom line always must be that the employee can perform the essential elements of the job **with adaptations**. If the essential elements of the job cannot be performed, even with adaptations, there is no 'fit', and the employer needs to find another person who can do the job. The potential employee needs to find work or a job where there is a fit. Happily, recent court

decisions have made it clear that the onus is on employers to prove that every avenue has been tried to make jobs work for individuals with learning disabilities before refusing to hire or promote, or terminating employment.

In school, students with learning disabilities vary greatly in their need for support. Some need a special school, some a special class, some resource support, and some cope nicely without any special supports. In the workplace, the same is true for adults. Some require significant rehabilitation programs to prepare them for success in the workplace. Such a program could include assessment, remediation, career assessment and counselling, skills training with proper adaptations, on-the-job training, unpaid work placement with monitoring, coaching, or counselling, and social skills training. Some require access to education and training with adaptations provided. Some only need employers willing to provide adaptations

in the workplace. And some perform with no special supports. Hopefully this article offers guidance to help you, or your loved one, make decisions about what, if anything, is needed.

A list of books and articles for further reading is available upon request to: joans@ldao.ca. ☎

Catherine M. (Cathy) Smith is a psychoeducational consultant in private practice in Oakville, Ontario. She has worked for over 35 years as a teacher, career counsellor, and college administrator, specializing in work with children and adults with learning disabilities. Reprinted with permission from LDAC's newsletter National.



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Chapter Profiles

Learning Disabilities Association of North Peel

We are a group of parents and professionals brought together by our concern for children and adults with learning disabilities. The Learning Disabilities Association of North Peel was formed by a parent of a learning disabled child in 1985. It originally operated from the basement of this parent's home.

We share staff with and run similar programs to the Learning Disabilities Association of Mississauga in an effort to provide the public with a variety of services throughout the Region of Peel, in a program effective, cost-efficient manner.

Our efforts are directed toward these basic goals:

- Assist people with learning disabilities and their families by providing support, guidance and resources information
- Provide an interactive environment, offering workshops, programs, courses and support groups
- Provide public awareness of learning disabilities
- Support LDA Ontario in pursuing legislative and government initiatives in special education funding and curriculum
- Support LDA Ontario in their work with the provincial and local governments to initiate new policies for those with learning disabilities

LDANP is led by a volunteer Board of Directors and has a small core staff, administrative and program support, to meet members' needs across the area.

GENERAL PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Newsletter: "Learning Connections" is a collection of up-to-date information and

resources on learning disabilities, attention disorders and issues related to disabilities. Published 4 times per year, our newsletter is a benefit of LDA Membership.

EZINE: Our E-zine (electronic newsletter) provides up-to-date information on programs, services and community events and is published on a periodic basis.

Resource Facilitation: Our resource facilitator provides support, guidance, information, referrals and connection with other agencies by an accredited intake worker. Assistance is provided via phone or in person (by appointment only).

Resource Library: On-site library provides information, support and education about LD and ADD through books, literature, videos and audiotapes.

Volunteer Program: Volunteering with LDA provides an opportunity to learn more about the challenges of living with a learning disability, to develop transferable workplace skills and opens

doors to new areas of personal development.

Workshops / Conferences: We offer up to date workshops and conferences on learning disabilities, ADHD and other related topics.

Focus Groups: Facilitated discussions on specific topics. Past topics include bullying, treatment options, juvenile delinquency & ADD.

CHILD & ADOLESCENT PROGRAMS

Academic Tutoring Program (ages 7-18): Academic tutoring on a one-on-one basis, with experienced tutors who are sensitive to the needs of students with learning disabilities, in the areas of math, organization, concentration skills and/or language and reading.

Social Skills Program (ages 7-16): A 10-week program offered three times per year that assists in the development and reinforcement of positive social skills and appropriate social behaviour.

Keyboarding (ages 7-16): A 12-week program offered three times per year that assists in the development of touch-



Congratulations to Patricia Morrissette, the 2004 recipient of the Gloria Landis Memorial Bursary. Patricia is a mature student at Sir Sandford Fleming College in the Career and Work Counsellor program. Shari Davis, Executive Director of LDA Peterborough (middle) and Cindy Foulon, Resource Facilitator (right), presented the cheque on behalf of LDAO.

typing skills for students who are experiencing written skill problems.

Summer Support Program (ages 6-12):

Our Summer Support Program combines the core components of our social skills, academic tutoring and keyboarding programs and recreationally based games and activities.

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Youth Support Group (ages 13-18):

It is designed to meet the social needs of youth by providing them with the opportunity to interact with their peers while participating in fun activities.

Youth Volunteer Program (ages 13-18):

We offer cooperative education placements, mentoring services, and opportunities for youth to fulfill their mandatory community service hours by providing skill-building opportunities.

ADULT PROGRAMS

Adult Support Group (ages 18+):

Our support group is held once a month and is facilitated by a professional. It encourages self-facilitation amongst participants

Destination Employment: Destination Employment is an employment-training program for adults with LD. The program ends with a 4-8 week work placement.

Adult Keyboarding: This program is designed to help adults with written skills problems, develop touch-typing skills.

PARENTING PROGRAMS

Parent Support Group: Our support group, held once a month, is facilitated by a professional who provides a forum for problem sharing and problem solving for parents of children with LD and AD(H)D.

Parent Education Training: Workshops are available for parents of LD/ADD children. Topics include Parenting your LD/ADD child and coping strategies for children with LD. ☺

Certificate Program for School Psychology

What is one way to support children with learning disabilities in Ontario? Adler School of Graduate Studies has discovered that there is a shortage of trained personnel who can take that first step of determining whether a child has learning disabilities. Several school boards have informed us that even when they have positions available, they have trouble finding people with significant graduate-level training in school-related assessments to fill those positions. Adler has responded by designing a Certificate in Psychological Assessment that fills this need.

This intensive training is designed to provide basic skills to individuals who plan to meet registration requirements of the College of Psychologists of Ontario.

Course work for the program will include:

- Psychological processes, such as memory, language, attention, and fine motor skills, and how they relate to learning.
- Assessment of cognitive functioning.
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- Assessment of Academic Achievement
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- Communications Skills
- Report Writing
- Disorders of Childhood
- A practicum experience

In order to qualify for the certificate program, potential candidates must hold an Honours B.A. in Psychology or the equivalent from an accredited university, and they must have completed or be in the process of completing a Masters degree in Psychology from an accredited graduate school or university.

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Request an information packet by contacting:

R. James Little, M.Ed., M.A., C. Psych. Assoc.
Adler School of Graduate Studies Inc.
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Toronto, ON M5S 2V6
Email: jlittle@adler.ca

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

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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.

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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. ☺



LDAO Does Lunch

Toronto Mayor David Miller welcomed more than 150 special guests, students, teachers, and dignitaries at *Reducing the Risk*, our special policy luncheon in support of youth with learning disabilities. The October event helped to generate important public awareness around the alarming dropout rate for high school students with learning disabilities and educated the audience about the need to pay special attention to youth with learning disabilities in our community. LDAO also launched the new ACCESS Web site, which offers tools and resources for youth with learning disabilities and their teachers, and officially introduced the SOAR program, which helps secondary students understand their learning styles and classroom needs.

Mayor Miller spoke about the responsibility of the community in helping young people achieve their potential and reach their goals. Mayor Miller emphasized that it is not just the responsibility of our schools and teachers, but our obligation as neighbours and citizens, parents and employers, and

mentors and friends to create opportunities and services to meet the needs of this important generation.

Learning strategists from several colleges and universities, as well as representatives from the Hospital for Sick Children and Toronto District School Board, joined us at the Sutton Place Hotel for the sold-out program. We were delighted that the headmaster and director of admissions from The Gow School, America's oldest boarding school for dyslexic boys in South Wales, New York, drove up to join us. Students from Pierre Elliot Trudeau High School, North Peel Secondary School, Willow Wood School, and Parkdale Collegiate Institute also attended, putting a special spotlight on the importance of helping at-risk youth remain in school.

Jay Mandarino, our youth campaign chair, spoke about his struggles as a young man coping with learning disabilities and the transformation he experienced while attending The Gow School. "People with LD aren't stupid," he said. "They don't deserve to be laughed at or singled out. They need to be taught differently, and they especially

need the support of our entire community so that they don't fall through the cracks in our educational system and enjoy the same opportunity as others."

We'd like to thank our main event sponsors Shire BioChem, Eli Lilly, and Janssen-Ortho for their leadership, and also our supporting sponsors Ernst & Young, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, and Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. Heathbridge Capital Management was the refreshment sponsor, and Peter Kinch, senior partner from Ernst & Young, kindly emceed. Information about our sponsors is available on the LDAO Web site at www.ldao.ca. We plan to make this successful event an annual initiative to help keep our community partners, educators, professionals, and students aware of the resources available to them through LDAO.

For more information about supporting the LDAO youth campaign, please contact Denise Harding at (905) 853-7283 or email deniseharding@rogers.com.

Building on the tremendous success of our first Conference in 2001, we are proud to offer

from **RESEARCH** NOVEMBER 3 & 4, 2005 - TORONTO
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A Conference on Learning Disabilities for
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Held at the Metro Convention Centre, the symposia, workshops and plenary sessions offer professionals from across Canada a unique opportunity to increase their knowledge of the latest research-based learning in LD and how to put the research into practice in the classroom, clinic or home.

Please mark your calendars now. For more information, please contact the Conference Manager, Mary-Gayle Goebel, at 416.226.9756 or by email at mgoebel@interlog.com.

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