

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

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Abstract

"Learning Disabilities is a generic term that refers to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect individual's average abilities essential for thinking, reasoning, perceiving and learning. For success, individuals with learning disabilities require early identification and timely specialized assessments and interventions involving home, school, community and workplace settings. The accommodations need to be appropriate for each individual's learning disability. This includes the provision of: Assessment and Identification • Collaboration • Meaningful Parent Involvement • Ongoing Assessment • Assistive Technology as an Accommodation • Self-Advocacy. Education stands out as an essential key to any serious of action of the disabled. It helps in preventing disabilities, and in caring for those suffering from disabilities. Through appropriate accommodations and **apt** intervention strategies we can help children with disabilities "to learn how to learn". We can of course bring them into the main stream along with other students. To ensure success of students with disabilities teachers must plan collaborately, create structured classrooms, use appropriate intervention strategies so that we can bring the life of disabled ones independent and active. Thus, education act as a ray of hope for every disabled individual to raise and refine the capacity and shape the abilities of disabled children.

Introduction

The term "Learning Disabilities" was first used in 1962 by Dr. Samuel Kirk. "Learning Disabilities refer to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect individuals' average abilities essential for thinking, reasoning, perceiving and learning. Learning disabilities are due to genetic or neurobiological factors or injury that alters brain functioning in a manner which affects one or more processes related to learning. These disorders are not due primarily to hearing and/or vision problems, socio-economic factors, cultural or linguistic differences, lack of motivation or ineffective teaching, although these factors may further complicate the challenges faced by individuals with learning disabilities. Learning disabilities may co-exist with various conditions including attentional, behavioural and emotional disorders, sensory impairments or other medical conditions. For success, individuals with learning disabilities require early identification and timely specialized assessments and interventions involving home, school, community and workplace settings.

Accommodations

Typically, a higher education institution requires that a student with a disability register with the office that provides support services for students with disabilities, in order to receive accommodations. It is the student's responsibility to request services in a timely manner. These offices confirm the student's disability and eligibility for services and accommodations. A course instructor typically receives a letter from this office detailing recommended accommodations for a student. The student with a disability is responsible for meeting all course requirements using only approved accommodations.

A specific learning disability is unique to the individual and can be manifested in a variety of ways. Therefore, accommodations for a specific student must be tailored to the individual. The following are examples of classroom, assignment, and examination accommodations that may be recommended for a student with a learning disability. When in doubt about how to assist a student, work with the student privately or contact the campus office that provides support services for students with disabilities.

Classroom and Assignment Accommodations

- Assist the student in finding effective peer note-takers from the class. Alternatively, you could provide the student with a copy of your lecture notes or outline.
- Allow the student to tape record lectures.
- Allow the student additional time to complete in-class assignments, particularly writing assignments.
- Provide feedback and assist the student in planning the workflow of assignments. This is especially important with large writing assignments. It may be helpful to break the larger assignment into smaller components with opportunities for draft feedback.
- Provide assistance with proofreading written work.

Examination Accommodations

- Extended exam time, typically time and one half to double time.
- To take exams in a room with reduced distractions.
- The assistance of a reader, scribe, or word processor for exams.
- The option of an oral exam.
- To use spelling and grammar assistive devices for essay exams.
- To use a calculator for exams.
- To use scratch paper during exams.

The interventions need to be appropriate for each individual's learning disability. This include the provision of:

- Assessment and Identification
 - Collaboration
 - Meaningful Parent Involvement
 - Ongoing Assessment
- Assistive Technology as an Accommodation
- Self-Advocacy

1. Assessment and identification, recommended practices include:

- Early identification - the earlier, the better eliminating the “wait to fail” philosophy
- A comprehensive problem-solving and collaborative team planning approach that includes looking at a student’s response to instruction/intervention
- Use of standardized tests to assess basic psychological processes with careful consideration of the appropriateness of the measures for students from different cultures and language groups
- Consideration of environmental influences: social, cultural, familial and contextual.

2. Collaboration

No one person or one profession has all of the knowledge and skills to meet the complex needs of students with LD. The “learning team” of the student, parents, teacher, support personnel and specialists is most effective in dealing with LD. Classroom teachers need the support of personnel with knowledge about LD. Through team teaching, coaching, planning and discussion, all personnel can gain skills to be more effective in teaching students with LD. Collaboration beyond the school level is also recognized as important.

3. Meaningful Parent Involvement

There is an important connection between constructive and meaningful parent involvement and student achievement. Studies from the 1980s to the 1990s highlight the ongoing and reoccurring theme of “higher academic achievement, improved school attendance, increased cooperative behaviour, and lower dropout rates” with increased parental involvement. Parent roles in education are moving from passive recipient to knowledgeable consumer.

The following strategies are recommended to increase meaningful parent involvement:

- Supporting parents to increase their knowledge about LD
- Empowering parents by recognizing their point-of-view and sociocultural situation, including stress factors and cultural differences in how they regard learning, education and disabilities
- Communicating with parents and seeking frequent input from parents to ensure their productive involvement through the use of an agenda, meetings, and inclusion.
- Employing verbal communication techniques, such as balancing positive and constructive feedback regarding the student’s challenges and the use of “I” statements to avoid blaming

4. Ongoing Assessment

Ongoing monitoring of student progress has many benefits for students with LD. Ongoing assessment within specific areas is necessary to ensure:

- Timely and appropriate adjustments
- Appropriate accommodations can be chosen
- The learning strengths as well as the needs of the student can be understood
- A baseline of personal strengths and needs is established as early as possible in the student's school career so that repeated evaluation can occur to monitor progress
- A plan for transition can be created
- Immediate and corrective feedback can occur
- pacing of instruction is appropriate.

5. Assistive Technology

As an Accommodation "For people without disabilities, technology makes things easier. For people with disabilities, technology makes things possible (Cardinali and Gordon, 2002). Assistive technology (AT) enhances learning for students with LD, and can range from simple "low-tech" tools such as raised or highlighted lines on paper, to "mid-tech" tools such as a talking calculator, to more complex "high-tech" tools such as screen reading software.

6. Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy involves taking action on one's own behalf and is related to success in school and in the workplace for persons with LD. Strong self advocacy skills have been shown to facilitate smoother transitions for the learner from year-to-year. A student's ability to effectively and constructively advocate on their own behalf requires a clear understanding of their abilities and challenges, knowledge of effective interventions necessary for learning and skills to communicate this knowledge to others.

Conclusion

Education stands out as an essential key to any serious of action of the disabled. It helps in preventing disabilities, and in caring for those suffering from disabilities. Through apt intervention strategies and accommodations we can help children with disabilities "to learn how to learn". We can of course bring them into the main stream along with other students. To ensure success of students with disabilities teachers must plan collaborately, create structured classrooms, use appropriate intervention strategies so that we can bring the life of disabled ones independent and active. Thus, education act as a ray of hope for every disabled individual to raise and refine the capacity and shape the abilities of disabled children.

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