

# LD *Connections*

*learning disabilities  
different paths.....same destination*

September 2009

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*An information newsletter from the Learning Disabilities  
Association of Wellington County*

## Welcome

As students return to school, our association is returning to our community information nights and workshops.

For any parent that has a child with an IEP, the workshop with Lindsay Moir is sure to be helpful. And back by popular demand is Barbara Post, speaking on non verbal learning disabilities. Along with the return to

school comes the participation in extra curricular activities for many students. Sometimes there is anxiety around starting something new, the questions of "Will I fit in?" "Will I understand what is going on?" and for parents "Will they understand my child's needs?" and "Will my child's needs be met?"

The Learning Disabilities Association has great resources to give parents, caregivers, and community members tools to find the results they are looking for. Contact us through our website at [www.ldawc.ca](http://www.ldawc.ca), or by calling 519-837-2050.

## Skateboard rodeo Fundraiser

Boston Pizza, Guelph hosted the event in support for the Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County in order to help raise awareness of the challenges affected individuals face.

Unfortunately the weather did not cooperate and we were forced to stop right when people were coming to check us out. Thanks to

Matt from The Ward and his employees for engaging the kids until the weather ended it!

Also at the event, for the interest of younger children, were the Guelph police and fire departments. There was also a skateboard demonstration.

Many thanks to Boston Pizza for organizing raffle prizes, inviting The Ward

Skate Park and Shop, Guelph Police Services, Guelph Fire Department, and thank Wyndham Art Supplies for their donation of spray paint used by the kids to decorate their skateboard grip tape, as well thank the businesses that donated the raffle prizes(including Boston Pizza). The volunteers were served pop and pizza afterwards by Boston Pizza. Additional thanks to 91.5 radio from Kitchener.



## Social Skills and Adults with Learning Disabilities

Have you ever encountered someone who didn't seem quite right? Was it the lack of a handshake when you extended your hand? Did he not make eye contact or maybe make too much? Or perhaps he hardly seemed to pay attention to what you were saying, abruptly changing the subject, focusing on irrelevant details, or not quite getting the overall gist of the conversation.

Although people who seemingly behave strangely may make us feel uneasy, confused, or even a little angry, their behavior is not necessarily indicative of psychological or emotional imbalances. Instead, they may have problems with social skills, those subtle, complex codes of conduct we apply, often subconsciously, in our interactions with others. We may be biologically social creatures, but our specific conventions of social behavior are learned.

Some adults with learning disabilities find the acquisition and use of social skills to be elusive. The term "learning disability" tends to conjure images of problems with language, particularly reading and writing although

it can also apply to specific difficulties in math, reasoning, attention, and organizational abilities. The unifying theme of learning disabilities centers around some sort of deficit in processing information, and herein lies a major link to problems with social skills. For some adults with learning disabilities, the same cognitive style that makes it difficult to process language, for instance, also makes it difficult to process social information effectively. Someone who does not process spoken language well, either receptively or expressively or both, may be at risk for not understanding everything that is said, or not being able to express what he or she really means.

We not only depend on language to relate to other people, but we learn to interpret nonverbal communication such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and gestures. We learn to make eye contact, to pay attention and express interest, to wait our turn, to respond appropriately. We learn how far or how close to stand to each other, and we learn how to gauge others' reactions to us. We also learn that these conventions of

social intercourse are fluid and malleable. What's appropriate in one situation, or with one person, may not be appropriate in another. Although we may bumble and stumble here and there, learning how to act appropriately with others comes naturally to most of us, more or less. We may not have had social skills taught as part of our formal education, but we become adept through incidental learning.

Adults with learning disabilities may not have difficulties with language *per se*, but instead may not effectively process the nonverbal elements of social interaction. Nonverbal social perception plays an essential role in our ability to relate to one another: without it, our interpersonal functioning can be clumsy if not treacherous. Worsening their difficulties, individuals with nonverbal social perception deficits are often oblivious to their social clumsiness. Thus it is not surprising that many adults with learning disabilities do not understand why their social lives are less than satisfying.

Other characteristics associated with learning disabilities may contribute to

social skills deficits. Problems with impulse control and distractibility (often associated with an attention deficit), reasoning (particularly in understanding cause and effect), defining problems, and evaluating consequences have a variety of implications in social situations. These individuals may be susceptible to engaging in socially maladaptive behavior, which, in extreme cases, may lead to criminal offences. A disproportionate number of juvenile offenders have learning disabilities; a number of researchers believe that many of them get into trouble because they do not fully understand the implications of their inappropriate actions.

Other adults with learning disabilities may not have an inherent weakness with social skills but instead have been deprived of the opportunities to learn appropriate social conduct. They may have attended school in largely segregated settings that minimized social contact with their non-disabled peers, or they may have been socially rejected to a point where they simply did not participate in many social activities.

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## Ask Lindsay Moir

We had several problems with unreasonable decisions by our principal, and finally met with the superintendent. She agreed with our concerns and said "I'll see what I can do for you..."

Her follow-up email clearly recognized our concerns and indicated that she would meet with the principal. After three weeks, we contacted her again — yes, she did speak to the principal and "suggested" that he should try to be more reasonable! Who is in charge here?

Our son is in Grade 10 and the high school has been surprisingly accommodating of his learning disability! One of the major accommodations is oral testing and this has been done routinely for three semesters. His Grade 10 science teacher sent home a note suggesting that our son "drop the course" before final exams, because he had "no chance of passing."

Upon checking with our son, we found out that the teacher refused to do any oral testing, saying it was unfair to the other students. A friend of ours teaches science and quizzed him on the content (orally) and told us J.

really knows his stuff.

We met with the science head and the principal who both said it was "unfortunate," but they could not require the teacher to follow the IEP. They suggested summer school....

We know that the teacher is required to follow the IEP — so do they.... why won't they LEAD?

Our local school has excellent teachers except for one. Everyone in town knows that this person can't teach (they have been here for 20 years). Our very academic daughter "survived" a year with him, but our special needs child simply can't afford to take a year off from learning. The principal says there is only one Grade 4 class.. so we have to "take our turn." Why won't the system get rid of "deadwood?"

**Answer:** In all of these cases, people who should be "education leaders" have chosen to "make nice," "keep the peace" or "circle the wagons." I can cite many cases where the LEADERS LEAD, but too often the leaders chose to take the easy road (easy for them).

Many educational administrators were outstanding teachers or principals before assuming their current roles. Principals' courses do not necessarily teach management skills, particularly the management of teachers. Ill-prepared for this role, they focus on community management, curriculum leadership and other aspects of management they are good at....and hope that the staff is as motivated as they were!

The Teachers' federations are extremely strong in Ontario, and they take very aggressive positions on grievances and teacher termination. It is almost impossible for administrators to terminate an experienced incompetent teacher — it can be done, but rarely is, because it is so onerous. In private conversation, many teachers will admit that some of their colleagues should not be teaching, but nothing is said publicly. Only a few brave administrators will put learning and students ahead of "professional solidarity."

School boards are "teacher-centric" — virtually all the decision-makers are former teachers, and there is a natural tendency to look after those "who are just like us"... there is no doubt that everything from budget to training passes through this filter.

Even though principals and superintendents are not members of the teachers' federations, they still greatly influenced by the union positions and practises.

I feel sad for the educator who knows what should be done but choses to act otherwise..... I feel that they are chosing "popularity" over "leadership"— not an unusual choice in any large bureacracy! This is a hard thing for them to live with. They KNOW it.

Leaders need to set the tone, point the direction and stand for excellence. They will earn the respect of parents, and more importantly, the majority of their staff — it is only a small VOCAL minority who impede good educators from leading.

"To thine own self be true" — Kipling

PS: Why not have the special needs student "skip" to the Grade 5 class and have one of the "excellent" teachers deliver his modified program?

This article is reprinted from the website [www.oacrs.com](http://www.oacrs.com) from the "Ask Lindsay Moir" column. It is intended for information only of parents and professionals involved with exceptional children.

## Social Skills and Adults with Learning Disabilities

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At this point you might think that all adults with learning disabilities suffer from social skills deficits. Beware of generalizations! Many adults with learning disabilities not only have more than adequate social skills: a good number of them consider their social skills to be a significant compensation and a key to success. Adults with learning disabilities are frequently charming, suave, gregarious, likable, astute, even charismatic people.

Persons with learning disabilities are a very diverse group, and it is not surprising that many of them exhibit strong social skills. But for many others, some social interactions may be uncomfortable, unsatisfactory, or incomprehensible. They are often isolated, and they do not understand why. Can this situation change? Adults with learning disabilities who have social skills deficits can take advantage of several support systems. National, regional, and local organizations for persons with learning disabilities offer a network of services and support that may help adults with learning disabilities understand and overcome many of their social skills deficits. Individual counselling may also be a good option: behaviorally-oriented therapy appears to be effective in helping people modify, change and improve their social skills.

Finally, trusted friends and loved ones might help. Sensitive yet objective feedback, when requested, has led some adults with learning disabilities to recognize and even change social behaviors. Taking the initiative to change is not always an easy step, but it is the best way to start dealing with social skills.

Source: National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center

## The Web Based Teaching Tool (WBTT) Program

The Web Based Teaching Tool is an online program which primary teachers use for early screening and intervention (JK – Grade 2). The WBTT program helps teachers determine:

1. which of their students are struggling
2. what areas they are struggling with
3. and how these areas of need can be addressed in the classroom

This online tool consists of several quick, predictive screening measures in the areas of school readiness, early literacy development (phonological awareness) and math. These screens help teachers ‘flag’ their struggling students so that these students can receive help early on in their school careers. The WBTT program also includes Observation Checklists for further determining ‘flagged’ students’ areas of need, and for tracking their progress. The WBTT’s searchable database of classroom-based interventions/teaching strategies helps teachers find ideas for supporting all of their students.

The project to develop and deliver the Web-based Teaching Tool was made possible by a grant from the Ministry of Education.

For more information go to <http://www.ldao.ca/WBTT/index.php>

## AGM

*The annual general meeting will be held on the evening of December 2, 2009 at Riverside Glen, Guelph followed by the Board Meeting*

*All are welcome.*

### *Reminder:*

*Ask about services available to students with LD at your college or university.*

## Resources

### Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario's (LDAO) publication Job-Fit.

Job-Fit is a workbook series developed to help people with learning disabilities (LDs) improve and enhance their employability and job-readiness.

More information on Job-Fit can be found on our website here:

<<http://www.ldao.ca/publications/publications.php>>

<http://www.ldao.ca/publications/publications.php>

## Ontario Disabilities Act

Every year, the Ontario Government spends billions of public dollars on capital projects, including new infrastructure, and on goods and services that it buys for use by the Ontario Public Service and by the public. Think how much it could help to making Ontario barrier-free for persons with disabilities if the Government made sure that that money was never used to create or perpetuate barriers against persons with disabilities!

The AODA Alliance has raised this with the Ontario Government as a priority issue in our campaign for a fully-accessible Ontario. Early in June 2009, an AODA

Alliance delegation met with a group of senior Ontario Government officials. The key points covered in this meeting are set out in a June 25, 2009 letter from AODA Alliance Chair David Lepofsky to that Ontario Government delegation, set out below. This meeting was very helpful and constructive.

In summary, the Government now has in place no comprehensive, monitored policy and process for ensuring that Ontario taxpayer dollars are not used to create or perpetuate barriers against persons with disabilities. We have offered a constructive proposal on how to address this.

The AODA Alliance is a disability consumer advocacy group that works to support the full and effective implementation of accessibility standards in Ontario.

[www.aodaalliance.org](http://www.aodaalliance.org)

## October is LD Awareness Month – Let's 'make it matter'

October is Learning Disabilities (LDs) Awareness Month across Canada! What does that mean? It means that during the month of October, the national network of learning disabilities services providers will draw attention to this widespread disability by generating grassroots activities that will raise Canadian awareness of learning disabilities and the challenges faced by these individuals and their families.

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada strategic plan mandated by its national board in 2006 is very clear: **Make LD Matter!** By increasing awareness and concern among the broader public – in other words, building a broader constituency of support, we've got to go beyond simple awareness of LD – to making people care.

Why? According to the 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS) from Statistics Canada, more children in this country have a learning disability than all other types of

disabilities combined.

Among Canadians aged 15 and over, learning disabilities increased considerably between 2001 and 2006 by almost 40 per cent to 631,000 people, making it one of the fastest growing types of disabilities in Canada that isn't related to aging. ([www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien))

October is LD Awareness Month is about encouraging our network to **'make LD matter'** and encouraging everyone in the learning disabilities community to make time during October to share with the public what it is they do and how it contributes to the overall well-being of the community. It's that simple.

Learning disabilities are a neurological condition that interferes with a person's ability to store, process, or produce information. It's a life long condition that affects one in ten Canadians with average or above average intelligence. LDs come in many forms and affect people with varying levels of severity. Regardless of

age, race, creed, social or economic status, you probably will be touched directly or indirectly by someone with LDs.

### How to Participate in LD Awareness Month

#### GET INVOLVED.

Throughout the month of October, all national and provincial/territorial Learning Disabilities Associations, and chapters and the thousands of professionals involved with learning disabilities will be hard at work organizing local events and participating in activities that will introduce Canadians to learning disabilities.

From researchers to teachers and practitioners everyone involved in the learning disabilities field is encouraged to organize local public education and outreach activities.

**GET INVOLVED.** As a family member, a parent, a neighbour or as a member of the general public, you are encouraged to attend local public education and outreach activities in your community to increase your knowledge about learning disabilities. Let's Make it Matter!!

The LD Association of Ontario Board passed a motion that LDAO and its chapters would use the new LDAC logo. More information in the next newsletter.



Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

[www.ldac-taac.ca](http://www.ldac-taac.ca)

### Cut-A-Thon Success

Thanks to Jay and Nitsa from EROS and their stylists, as well as Isaday from APPLE who all gave up their Sunday to cut hair!

Thanks to ELLIOTT Bus Lines for advertising - and to the customers who came - we thank you all. \$850 was raised. Truly a wonderful community effort! With the money raised we can continue to provide support to the Guelph Wellington Community.

The Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County is a non-profit charitable organization. We are a Chapter of The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario and affiliated with The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. Led by a volunteer Board of Directors who advise and guide the actions of the association, we also have two part-time staff members. Our local Chapter is supported by the United Way of Guelph-Wellington and our chapter fundraising activities.

## Right to Learn – Sign the Petition

**Education gives every student the tools they need to reach their dreams** - and achieve their full potential. But not every student gets that chance. **1 in 10 Canadians has a learning disability.** It doesn't mean they can't learn, it simply means they need access to the proven supports that are critical to their success.

Every Canadian with a learning disability has the Right To Learn. And with your support they will. **Please sign our petition today**, and help us tell the various levels of Canadian governments that you support every Canadian's Right to Learn.

RightToLearn.ca exists to break down the

barriers that prevent individuals with learning disabilities from achieving their potential in life. These barriers are:

- 1) Lack of standardized assessments for learning disabilities
- 2) Lack of teacher training about learning disabilities
- 3) Lack of family supports for children with learning disabilities
- 4) Lack of career planning for adults with learning disabilities

To learn more, please visit **The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada.**

### Sign The Petition

We call on the governments of Canada to support The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada's (LDAC) [Policy on Educational Accommodations for Individuals with Learning Disabilities](#) (pdf, 126 kb). The Policy states that all students who are diagnosed as having a learning disability, as defined by LDAC, be guaranteed full access to appropriate accommodations, which will enable them to optimize their potential, in accordance with the mandates of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Human Rights legislation of the Provinces and Territories.

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.ldawc.ca](http://www.ldawc.ca)

## Upcoming Events

**Tuesday, September 22, 2009**

**Barbara Post**

**7:00 pm to 9:00 pm**

**Location: Maranatha Christian School  
Wellington Rd 19/East Garafraxa St  
Fergus**

**Cost: No charge for this event.**

Topic: Nonverbal Learning Disabilities  
Barbara Post Itinerant NLD Resource Teacher  
Waterloo Region District School Board

**Saturday, October 24, 2009**

**Lindsay Moir**

**8:30 am— registration**

**9:00 am— Noon**

**Location: ARC Industries, 8 Royal Rd, Guelph**  
**Cost: \$20.00 for LDA Members**  
**\$25.00 for non-members**

**Topics:** A Guide to the IPRC Process, an overview of the legislation and process of Identification, Placement, and Review, as well as Appeals and Tribunals.

**The Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County is committed to ensuring equal opportunity to our workshops, so if you cannot afford our fee, please contact us at 519-837-2050 to discuss.**

**Donation/Membership Form**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Tell: (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Annual Dues:** Family/individual \$50; Student \$20; Professional \$75

I am interested in making a donation: \_\_\_\_\_ and/or volunteering: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Advantages:**

Awareness and advocacy efforts on behalf of those with learning disabilities or ADHD at the local, provincial and national level, subscription to local and provincial newsletters, information on learning disabilities and ADHD use of local resources and support services.

Please mail this form and cheque to: Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario  
365 Bloor Street East, Suite 1004, Toronto, ON M4W 3L4

The Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County does not endorse, recommend, or make representations with respect to the research, services, programs, medications, products, or treatments referenced in this newsletter. The material provided in this newsletter is designed for educational and informational purposes only.