

LD Connections

December 2014

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.ldawc.ca

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.

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learning disabilities
different paths....same destination

Welcome

As I navigate the education system for my eight year old daughter I have become aware of the need to be a strong advocate to ensure she receives the supports she needs. My current struggles created the theme for this edition of the LDAO newsletter. We have provided a number of courses LDAO offers on the topic of advocacy. Advocacy changes at different stages of life for the individual with LD – parents are advocates for their children, teenagers should start to advocate for themselves with guidance from their parents and then as adults there is a need for self advocacy – we have included articles for each of these stages so there is something for everyone.

A new twist - LD and Pinterest unite – check out the article on thinking outside the box on page 13.

There is a summary from LDAO of the new Ministry of Education policy on Learning Disabilities guidelines on page 15.

Our board of directors is made up of an amazing group of volunteers. We are always looking for interested people to join our board and help contribute to making a difference. If you are interested please contact us at info@ldawc.ca or 519-837-2050.

Hope everyone has a joyful holiday season with their families.



Guelph Storm Tickets!

LDAO is selling Guelph Storm tickets! The sale of the tickets allowed the Association to be able to earn the proceeds from the 50/50 draw at the November 9th game against London. LDAO raised \$1,134 after expenses and the Guelph Storm fan won \$1,446. Given the loss of our United Way funding these funds are critical to our future operations. To have the opportunity to earn this funding we are required to still sell 107 tickets. We are currently selling for the following games:

- Friday Dec 12/14 7:30 pm vs Owen Sound Attack
- Sun Dec 14/14 6:30 pm vs Oshawa Generals
- Sun Dec 28/14 2:00 pm vs Barrie Colts
- Sun Jan 25/14 2:00 pm vs SSM Greyhounds



Tickets are \$17 each – box office price is \$24.

Place your order now! We thank you for your support!

Call (519)837-2050 or email info@ldawc.ca to order.

IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY: The Provincial Advocate wants to hear from children and youth with special needs, and their caregivers

<http://www.ldao.ca/the-provincial-advocate-wants-to-hear-from-children-and-youth-with-special-needs-and-their-caregivers/>

LDAO has set the deadline for submissions for December 3rd, 2014 – ensure you take this opportunity to speak up!

Advocacy Courses

www.ldoa.ca

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO's) mission is to provide leadership in learning disabilities advocacy, research, education and services and to advance the full participation of children, youth and adults with learning disabilities in today's society. We value promoting positive change through:

- Innovation
- Strategic partnerships
- Credible advocacy
- Informed public policy and
- Quality products and services

One of the ways that LDAO is able to achieve their mission is to develop and host workshops. There are a number of online courses specific to the topic of advocacy that we have highlighted below. To register for any of these courses go



to www.ldao.ca and search under resources and online courses. All of the courses listed are \$25 each.

Self-Advocacy for Adults

This online workshop is self-paced and self-directed. The moderator is available through email or the bulletin boards to assist with any questions you may have.

Have you ever felt that someone didn't understand you or that you were treated unjustly because of your learning disability? Have you needed help and did not know how to ask for it? Or asked for help a little too late to benefit you? Did you ever try to explain what your learning disability is and the person didn't understand?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, this workshop can help you develop the skills and strategies you need to be successful. Becoming an effective self-advocate means that you know how to explain to others what your learning disability is and are good at asking for what you need. The first step in learning how to be an effective self-advocate is being able to talk about your learning disability.

Unit Breakdown

Unit 1: About Learning Disabilities

Unit 2: About Self-Advocacy

Unit 3: Disclosure in the Workplace

Unit 4: Strategies to help adults with Learning Disabilities

Unit 5: Your Legal Rights

Unit 6: Workshop Wrap-Up

Self-Advocacy for Youth

This online workshop is self-paced and self-directed. The moderator is available through email or the bulletin boards to assist with any questions you may have.

Have you ever felt that someone didn't understand you or that you were treated unjustly because of your learning disability (LD)? Have you needed help and did not know how to ask for it? Did you ever try to explain what your learning disability is and the person didn't understand? If you answered yes to any of these questions, this workshop is for you. Becoming an effective self-advocate is a key to success in all areas of life. An advocate is someone who sticks up for someone; lawyers in court advocate for the prosecution and defense. So when we talk here about being an effective self-advocate, we mean being a person who can explain to others how their LD affects them, and what they need in order to compensate for it.

This workshop is divided into four units, designed to be completed in order.

- Unit 1: You and Your LD
- Unit 2: How to Be an Effective Self-Advocate
- Unit 4: Your Legal Rights in School
- Unit 5: Summary

Parent Workshop Series – Part 2: Understanding the IPRC Process

Exceptional pupils are identified as such by an Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC). Upon receiving a written request from a student's parent(s)/guardian(s), the principal of the school must refer the student to an IPRC. The IPRC will decide whether the student is an exceptional pupil and, if so, what type of educational placement is appropriate.

This workshop will provide an overview of the IPRC process to assist parents in understanding what is involved, along with roles and responsibilities. This workshop has been adapted from "A Parent's Guide to Special Education in Ontario."

How can I get free money for my kids?	What do I need to do to get the Canada Learning Bond?	Canada Learning Bond Facts
<p>Get the Canada Learning Bond!</p> <p>This is a Government of Canada program that provides \$500 in education money to children born on or after January 1, 2004 whose families receive the National Child Benefit Supplement. And, the Government will add \$100 more every year your child is eligible, up to age 15. Your child could get up to \$2,000.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1 Visit a Service Canada Office to get your child a Social Insurance Number (SIN).2 Start a Registered Education Savings account (RESP) that is right for you. Make sure the provider you choose signs you up for the Canada Learning Bond. Visit SmartSAVER.org for our list of no-cost, no-risk plans.3 Grow your child's savings. Even if you can't contribute, the Government will deposit the Canada Learning Bond in your account.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All eligible children receive at least \$500• No family contribution is required to start an RESP or to receive the Bond• If you do make a contribution, the Government's Canada Education Savings Grant will add up to 40% more• Some RESP providers charge fees. Visit SmartSAVER.org for our list of no-cost, no-risk plans.• Act now and you can get your additional Learning Bond payments. When you apply you will receive \$500 plus \$100 for every year your child was eligible
		<p>What's the catch?</p> <p>The Canada Learning Bond can only be used for your child's education after high school or later on. Your child has up to 36 years to use it. The Canada Learning Bond can be used for part-time or full-time studies at college, university or other qualifying schools in Canada or outside the country.</p>

**Free money.
For your kids.
Yes, really.**


www.smartsaver.org

with help from 

Parents – Children’s Best Advocate

<http://www.ldaa.net/articles/509.php>

Adapted from Advocating For your Child with Learning Disabilities, LDAC, (1998). Ottawa, Ontario. Exceptional Children’s Assistance Center NewsLine)

Parents know their children in a more profound way than anybody else. They have had years living with, observing, reacting to, understanding, and responding to their children. They have learned under what conditions their children cooperate or resist, initiate or follow, interact or withdraw, and when they are most eager to communicate.

As a parent, you are the best person to advocate for your child in making these patterns of behaviour known to your child’s teacher. It is especially important so that the teacher can work with your child’s particular behaviour and learning pattern rather than against it.

An advocate is a person who effectively speaks up for, acts on behalf of, or supports someone else.

As a parent advocate, you will find others, such as teachers and physicians, who can support you in advocating for your child. Consider these professionals your allies. They can use their influence to assist you in receiving needed services and programs for your child. For example, a family doctor could write a letter to the school board describing the magnitude of your child’s anxiety concerning his language immersion program to speed up a placement in a program where he will be taught in his first language.

Despite the professional help you will seek along your advocacy journey, you are your child’s full-time advocate -- the one with the file, so to speak, on ways to help him succeed socially and at school.

Be aware that not all the professionals you consult will appreciate this closeness. Some professionals may take the view that parents are too emotionally involved to be objective. However, it may be your very connectedness that helps you understand that your child is different from his peers and that spurs you to take action to get him help.



As his trusted confidante, you know what really worries him and how complex his problems really are. Likely you are the person who knows how much school failure terrifies him. He has probably asked you, ‘What’s wrong with my brain?’

The classroom teacher is the single most important person affecting your child’s education. The teacher has tremendous influence on your child’s happiness at school and is the person that spends one-on-one time with your child on a daily basis. It is extremely important for parents and teachers to work together to provide a good school experience for each child.

Most teachers welcome the involvement of parents and want to hear your ideas. In fact, many teachers report that they are more motivated to teach a child whose parents are actively involved than one whose parents never seem to care. If the teacher resists involvement, you need to put into practice, constructive communication. Praise the teacher for the good things going on and keep the lines of communication open by writing notes, making classroom visits, attending conferences, etc. Remember, you have the right to be involved, but exercise that right in a constructive way.

Communication needs to be on a regular, on-going basis, not once or twice a year. Some of the following pointers may help:

1. Write out a list of what you want to discuss with the teacher.
2. When appropriate, praise the teacher for specific things you feel good about. For example, "Mrs. Brown, thank you for spending extra time with Johnny and working on behaviour. We really see results."
3. If you have a problem, discuss the specific things that bother you as they relate to your child. Do not generalize. Do not say to the teacher "You are not teaching my child. This is going to be a wasted year." Instead, you say, "The math program does not seem to be working for Johnny. Is there a way we can change it to better meet his needs?"
4. Approach the teacher to discuss these concerns in a positive, non-threatening way.
5. Keep the focus on your child, not the teacher's shortcomings. For example, relate specifically how and why a particular behaviour modification practice will not work with your child, instead of complaining about the teacher's poor application of a behaviour modification program.
6. Offer assistance in the classroom when possible. Decide with the teacher if this involvement is appropriate for your child.
7. Offer your time and talents. For example, when possible volunteer to be a grade mother/father, help with a field trip, tape a textbook chapter for a student with learning disabilities, etc.
8. When you make a request or suggestions, illustrate very specifically to the teacher how your suggestions can be implemented. Follow up your requests with a letter of thanks.
9. Attend all meetings and conferences.



Becoming an Effective Advocate

Parents need to know how and where to get appropriate information; then they need to communicate this information convincingly to the appropriate helping source. For example, a parent who is told that his child is behaving immaturely in his grade three class needs to visit the class on a couple of occasions for first-hand knowledge of the problem and its seriousness.

Maybe a trip to the family doctor is in order or a conversation with another adult who works with the child in the community (e.g., the cub leader). If the parent knows that the immature behaviour stems from the fact that a sibling has been in hospital for tests, it's best to let the teacher know so the child can get the support he needs during this stressful period. If a child is avoiding specific tasks at school (e.g., reading aloud in front of a group), the parent should understand that there must be a good reason.

A teacher lacking pertinent information about a child's behaviour patterns, has little choice but to assume the same expectations for all students. A predictable outcome: resistance, anger, resistance,

and more anger, soon add up to behaviour problems, lack of cooperation, decreased learning. Ongoing parent-teacher contact can help prevent this situation from occurring. As the child gains in academic and social competence and self-esteem, he will be more able to adjust to classroom demands, and even change his behaviour patterns in the process.

However, left unattended, even simple behavioural situations can grow out of control disproportionately, until specialists must be called in to try to peel away the layers of confusion. By this time, the child has lost precious learning time and has deepened his negative self image because of 'his failure.'

Once a teacher understands and can put to use the information provided by the parent, the teacher in turn, can begin to provide the needed support. A child who is receptive to learning, happily reveals to his teacher the most effective way of learning.



This valuable information, the child's learning style, can help the parent and teacher to understand and deal with a child who, for example, 'never remembers what the teacher tells him'. This child is a visual learner, and might need to have visual cues in order to remember. A note on the chalk board could be all that is needed for Johnny to remember to bring his money tomorrow for the play. Another child might rely heavily on his auditory sense and need to hear information to remember it. Still another child may need to hear and see the information simultaneously as well as repeat it aloud. These unique learning styles are academic behaviour patterns that teachers understand and can translate for parents into strategies that they can use with their children at home as well. This information exchange between parent and teacher builds trust that leads to even better communication.

To be an effective advocate, you should:

- learn what your rights are and what your child's rights are
- use effective communication in advocating for your rights, by engaging in active listening and being non-threatening
- find the information to make appropriate decisions
- develop problem solving techniques to overcome obstacles
- develop the confidence to do your own advocating
- take appropriate actions
- analyze problems and pinpoint areas of responsibility
- support your child's efforts towards independence
- learn about community resources and agencies
- network with other parents and groups for mutual support and
- connect with your provincial Learning Disability Association (LDA) or your local chapter.

Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy refers to an individual's ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs and rights. It involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions.

Children whose parents have been active advocates for them know that they have supportive cheerleaders at home. They experience advocacy as part of everyday life.

Children who hear their parents speaking positively about them feel valued (e.g., *John has a real bent for electrical engineering; not - John never reads a book, he just wastes his time repairing old radios*). Feeling valued gives the child the confidence to speak up for himself so that he can get the help he needs (e.g., *I'm finding it really hard to learn the order of the provinces*). Sometimes a child will come up with his own coping strategies because he's so aware of his own difficulties (e.g., *I made up a game to remember the names of the provinces by calling each one the name of a famous baseball player*).



Research has shown that as children enter high school they are often unprepared to communicate their learning needs to others. Teenagers want to fit in with their peers. However, the adolescent who has been involved in his parents' advocacy

efforts in elementary school or junior high will quite likely see it as normal behaviour to ask for help with a problem subject or express his fear of exams. A child who knows he has short-term auditory memory problems can explain to the soccer coach that it's best to write the plays down on paper so that he can see them more clearly.

Parents can enhance their own advocacy skills by working with the child on ways to communicate best with the teacher (e.g., *Do you feel comfortable telling Mrs. Smith the book report was too difficult or would she appreciate a note from me?*). It can be a relief to know that there are accommodations available at school, such as calculators, computers, spell checkers and extra time on tests. Parents may advocate for the use of these tools, but it is the child who will use them and determine what works best in a variety of situations. Teachers, students and parents must work together and agree on appropriate accommodations.

When effective parent-teacher communication takes place, the child benefits and learns, the teacher teaches more effectively and the parents can more appropriately parent.

Guidelines for Parent Advocates

- Understand the extraordinary time commitment involved in advocacy efforts.
- Recognize that if you don't advocate for your child, no one else will.
- Recognize your limits and capacity to advocate; seek out advocacy allies.
- Model advocacy skills for your child.
- Use information as a powerful tool for understanding the puzzle of your child's learning disability.

Are you parenting a child diagnosed with ADHD?

The Child Development Research Unit Needs Your Help!

We are starting a new project that examines the street crossing practices of children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) using a fun and innovative virtual reality simulator!

Is your child 7 to 10 years of age?



We need your help!

**UNIVERSITY
of GUELPH**

Call:
519-767-5033
or
Email:
cdru@uoguelph.ca



For more information about our research visit: <http://cdru.psychology.uoguelph.ca/>
OR contact Professor Barbara Morrungello at bmorrong@uoguelph.ca

Self-Advocacy: A Valuable Skill for Your Teenager with LD

<http://www.greatschools.org/special-education/health/797-self-advocacy-teenager-with-ld.gs?content=797>

If your teen has a learning disability, self-awareness and self-advocacy are keys to her future success.

By Jodie Dawson, Psy.D.

The ability to self-advocate is important for kids to learn in order to be successful at all stages of their lives. In the past, self-advocacy was a term applied mostly to adults with disabilities, but recently more focus has been placed on teaching this skill to preteens and teenagers.



Self-advocacy is understanding your strengths and needs, identifying your personal goals, knowing your legal rights and responsibilities, and communicating these to others. Because your child lives with his learning struggles on a daily basis, he must learn how to maneuver through life's challenges and obstacles to make sure his needs are met.

Until now, you've been your child's best advocate - protecting him from life's harsh realities. But the earlier you teach him to advocate for himself, the more prepared he'll be for life ahead - no matter what path he takes after high school. Whether in the workplace or on a college campus, your child must understand his strengths and limitations, know how they affect his performance, and be able to communicate this to other people.

Tips for Developing Self-Advocacy Skills

Understanding His Learning Problems

Young people say they need to understand how they learn and be able to express this information in "plain English." Your teenager must be aware of his strengths and needs in the learning process, strategies that help him succeed, accommodations that bypass limitations, and the type of environment that facilitates learning. To gather this information, he should review assessment results with the specialists who tested him; talk to his teachers and/or tutors; and reflect on his own learning challenges, successes, and preferences.

Practicing Communication

A key component of self-advocacy is knowing how to communicate this self-knowledge about the learning process to others. Your child must be clear in his requests and prepared with explanations. The manner in which he communicates can either get others on his side or push them away. To many, what he's asking for may be new. Your teenager may need your help preparing ahead of time, planning what he will say, and making notes to take with him. Role playing is a great way to practice communication skills. By helping him anticipate different situations, you can raise his level of confidence.

Identifying Supporters

It's important to help your child identify his support system early on. Whom does he trust and feel comfortable talking to - parent, relative, teacher, administrator, counselor, mentor, tutor? He needs to have people he can turn to for help, especially once he leaves home. This way he won't have to feel alone as he navigates through life.

Meeting with Teachers

High school is a great place to begin practicing communication with teachers and other school staff. Encourage your child to set up conferences with his teachers. This gives him an opportunity to discuss what's going well and what isn't, to get feedback, and to work out a plan to do better. After all, once he leaves high school and enters the workplace or college, he'll have to do this for himself. You won't be able to call his professor or boss; you have to pass on the advocacy baton.



Knowing His Rights

If your child has been formally identified with a learning disability (LD) or diagnosed with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD), he may be protected under federal law. Your teenager should learn whether he is covered under the Ontario Human Rights Commission laws. There are two documents available that help guide our responses to the education of persons with disabilities:

- The Opportunity To Succeed: Achieving Barrier-Free Education for Students with Disabilities
- Guidelines on accessible education
- Policy and Guidelines on Disability and the Duty to Accommodate

If he's eligible under any of these laws, your child has certain rights and responsibilities.

Participating Actively

A great way for a teenager to build self-advocacy skills is for him to attend and participate in meetings to develop his Individualized Education Plan (IEP). He'll learn how the school plans to help him succeed and hear the reasons behind their recommendations. These meetings give him an opportunity to share his own goals and have them included. With you present, these meetings can be a safe testing ground for discussing his strengths, interests, talents, and needs with school staff.

Preparing for the Future

By age 16 (if not before), a child who receives special education services will be invited to attend his IEP meeting to develop an Individual Transition Plan (ITP). He'll have an opportunity to express his future interests and goals. The transition plan is designed to help him move smoothly from high school to his next adventure - whether that's work, college, or another area of interest - and may include making connections with other community agencies and representatives or gathering tools to plan for college.

Educating Others

Throughout high school and beyond, your child will face many situations where he'll be required to educate others about his learning disability. Peers will ask questions about his "special attention" at school. Teachers unfamiliar with his needs must be taught more about how he learns. On the job, he may require a specific work-related accommodation. At times, these situations may feel uncomfortable for your child. But the more self-knowledge he has, the better he'll be at advocating for himself.

Ongoing Evaluation

By empowering your teenager to self-advocate, you'll help him develop skills necessary for success in learning and life. Encourage him to take time regularly to reflect on what's going well for him and what isn't. Making a list of "positives" on the left side of the paper and "improvables" on the right side can help him put things in perspective. If something isn't going right, he can decide what action to take next. After all, self-evaluation often is where the greatest learning takes place.



October was Learning Disabilities Awareness month. LDAO launched a fantastic campaign called "Don't Dis My Ability" which emphasized the power of one's own strength. The goal is to see beyond the LD to their multiple areas of strength. What a great message!



Families needed for SickKids research study on the genetics of reading disabilities

SUMMARY: Families are needed for a research study at SickKids (the Hospital for Sick Children), which is investigating the genetic basis of reading disabilities. We require the participation of families and their child(ren), age 6 to 16 years, who struggle with reading. Parents will receive a report describing their child's test results, which may be helpful in educational planning. All testing will take place at SickKids in downtown Toronto.

Abundant evidence suggests that reading disabilities run in families and that both genetic and environmental factors influence the predisposition to struggle with reading. The aim of this study is to identify genes that may contribute to reading disabilities by examining genes that are thought to be involved in the biological basis of reading. We will also investigate the genetics of associated skills including language, spelling, math, attention, and working memory.

Study participation involves:

- One full day of psycho-educational testing for the child and a half-day of interviews and testing with parents, all of which takes place on the same day, at SickKids.
- We also require a small blood sample from parents and child, taken during the visit by trained experts in our Phlebotomy Department.
- Following participation, parents will receive a detailed report describing their child's test results, which may be helpful in the educational planning for the child.

Results from the study may improve the understanding of which genes and underlying mechanisms are involved in reading disabilities. The research is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

For more information, contact the study manager, Kirsten Blokland:

416-813-8207, or kirsten.blokland@sickkids.ca

Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County Is In NEED of Your Help!

Recently our United Way application was rejected and we are in need of your help to ensure our organization continues to be available to provide these services. We are in the process of trying to secure other funding and would like to know if you have any information that could help! Please contact us if you are aware of any potential Grants that we could access or any Corporate Giving Programs that we might be able to apply to. Other options for helping could include renewing or signing up for a membership through LDAO, making donations to the Association in honour of someone and certainly by attending our events— we have some great ones planned for the Spring

Any ideas or suggestions are welcomed and appreciated – please email us at info@ldawc.ca

Out of the Box Advocacy: Talk LD on Pinterest

<http://www.nclد.org/ld-insights/blogs/out-of-the-box-advocacy-talk-ld-on-pinterest>

Article is written by blogger Lyn Pollard



Each time I put on my parent advocate hat I have two goals: to help my children get the help they need and to raise awareness about LD in the broader community. A great online advocacy tool I use is Pinterest, a newer social media platform where you can curate and share your favorite LD resources.

It's Pinteresting Pinterest is a fun way to not only find information about LD, but to organize and share your personal scrapbook of LD resources. If you haven't been on Pinterest yet, here's a bird's-eye

view. Pinterest is a virtual "pinboard." Think of it as a compilation of favorite magazine clippings, a photo album, and your kitchen bulletin board rolled into one digital space.

Ready, Set, Pin Many Pinterest parents combine their personal interests (décor, gardening) with interests related to their kids (school, crafts). Create boards about all the things you love — pretty soon you'll have a virtual collage of who you are and what's important to you. For parents of children with learning disabilities and difficulties, this will likely include information about how your kids learn and play differently. Pinterest is a great vehicle for raising awareness about LD and communicating with other parents.

Create a pinboard for "Learning Difficulties," "Parent Advocacy," or boards for specific topics like "Dyslexia Remediation," or "Handwriting Help." Pinterest offers tons of info for parents and educators, from helping you understand the IEP, to new ideas for your child's tutors. Pin these resources to create a collection for yourself, to share with others, or both.

Where can you find these resources? Here are three places to start:

1. Search and "Re-Pin" by Topic

Search for keywords on a topic — like IEP goals, dyslexia or special education — in the search box at the top left. Once you find a pin you like, click on it to access additional information, including who originally pinned it, the source of the content, and often a link taking you to the actual information, such as a blog post or a book listing on Amazon. If you like what you see, you can re-pin it directly onto your own board by clicking "re-pin" and choosing which of your boards you want to pin it to. And if you like what a particular person is pinning, follow that person or choose to follow just their specific LD-related boards.

2. Follow Organizations Pinning About LD

Many organizations that provide info and advocate for children and adults with LD have Pinterest pages. Or, if they don't have a page, there are likely lots of pins pointing directly back to these organizations' resources. Here are a few of my favs:

- **NCLD:** features videos, e-books, apps, and personal stories.
- **Child Mind Institute:** This excellent organization works to remove stigma from learning disabilities and children's mental health.
- **Imagination Soup:** This innovative resource on education and learning provides tips on their "Learning Differences" board include items like "worry cards" to reduce anxiety and info on how to talk to other parents about your child's learning difference.

3. Pass It On

Let folks know what you're discovering about LD on Pinterest. Invite your friends and family to view your boards and add a Pinterest icon to your email signature and/or personal blog. Share your pins on Facebook to point friends and family to LD resources they might find helpful, too.



**LDAO Position Paper on Interpretation
of the
LDAO Definition of Learning Disabilities, 2001
in Postsecondary Settings
September 2014**

<http://www.ldao.ca/about/public-policy-advocacy/responses-and-letters/>

Nancy Wise - French Immersion Educational Consulting Inc.

Nancy Wise provides consultation services to assist parents who are either considering a French immersion placement for their child or questioning whether or not to keep their child in a French immersion program. She can also serve as a dual-language education advocate for children with learning challenges who are enrolled in French immersion schools. Individual consultations can be arranged in person, by phone, or via Skype. Nancy is committed to working with families to get students with learning challenges equitable access to support services in French immersion schools. Canadian Parents for French Ontario has listed her services on their website under FSL Resources for Parents, French Tutors and FSL Education, Consultants

Email: nwise@frenchimmersionconsulting.com Tel: 416-566-4553.
Website: www.frenchimmersioneducationalconsulting.com



<http://www.ldao.ca/new-ministry-of-education-policy-on-learning-disabilities/>

LDAO enthusiastically welcomes the announcement by the Special Education Policy & Programs Branch of the revised [Policy/Program Memorandum 8: Identification of and Program Planning for Students with Learning Disabilities](#). The previous PPM 8 on Learning Disabilities was published in 1982 and the field of learning disabilities has seen major advancements since that time. In 2011 the ministry convened a Learning Disabilities Working Group comprised of educators, internationally recognized researchers, psychologists and key stakeholders, including LDAO, to inform the development of the revised PPM and a resource document for educators.

The Definition of the term Learning Disability in the revised PPM is consistent with key concepts of the LDAO Definition of Learning Disabilities, developed through an extensive consultation process in 2001. While many school boards, in addition to Ontario postsecondary institutions, have been informally using the LDAO definition, the key concepts are now part of the ministry definition to be used for identification of students with learning disabilities through the IPRC process.

In addition to updating the definition, the revised PPM provides direction on Recognition and identification of Learning Disabilities (including Early and ongoing screening, and Assessments) and on Program Planning for students with learning disabilities. As stated in the memo to Directors of Education, the revised PPM “reflects the advancement in research and developments in special education policies and school board practices in supporting students with learning disabilities”.

The ministry is organizing information sessions for Superintendents of Special Education and intends to release *Guidelines for the Delivery of Special Education Programs and Services for Students with Learning Disabilities* in the 2015-16 school year. In addition, the ministry is funding LDAO to develop online research-based resources, webinars, and podcasts (LD@school/TA@l'ecole) and funded the very successful Educator's Institute, *Demystifying Learning Disabilities in the Classroom*, on August 27, 2014.

The requirements of the revised PPM 8 will take effect January 2, 2015.

Self-Advocacy

http://canlearnsociety.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LC_Self-Advocacy_N2.pdf

Self-advocacy is learning to speak up on your behalf and ask for what you need. It is learning to take charge and be more independent. It builds self-confidence. Confident students feel better about themselves, take more risks, ask for the help and clarification they need and consequently do better in school and in life.

Studies of highly successful adults with learning difficulties have identified the ability to self-advocate as an important factor contributing to success both in post-secondary education and in the workplace.

As students enter the higher grades it becomes increasingly important that they are able to express their needs in a positive way as they are expected to be more independent as learners.

Barriers to Self-Advocacy

Students with learning disabilities and/or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) often lack the ability to articulate personal strengths and needs clearly and appropriately. This may be a result of expressive language difficulties, weak social skills or lack of practice in describing their needs. Students who are not skilled at self-advocacy often say things like:

“You talk too fast,” instead of, “I am finding it difficult to listen in class.”

“You make the tests too hard,” instead of, “I find it hard to show what I know on tests.”

“You say what’s for homework too fast and I can’t get it down,” instead of, “I have difficulty knowing what to do for homework.”

Since they often have limited confidence in their abilities and low self-esteem, they are reluctant to ask questions in class or to request extra assistance. They don’t want to be thought of as “stupid” or “disruptive”.

Programming for students with learning disabilities and/or AD/HD must support the development of self-advocacy skills.

Strategies

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Below are a number of helpful classroom strategies followed by tools to build awareness, understanding and self-advocacy skills for students with learning disabilities and/or AD/HD. While this understanding and skills are critical for students with special needs, all students benefit from an increased awareness of themselves as learners.

Three Steps to Self-Advocacy

1. Know yourself as a learner.
2. Know what supports you need to be successful.
3. Communicate your needs appropriately.

HELP STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THEIR LEARNING STRENGTHS AND NEEDS

- Talk with students about the concept of learning disabilities and/or AD/HD in general and their own strengths and needs in particular.
- Explain to students that everyone has differences in their abilities. Everyone has strengths and needs. Their particular learning disability and/or AD/HD does not define who they are as a person.
- Provide students with resources to view or read that broaden their understanding of learning disabilities and/or AD/HD. Perhaps a research assignment could focus on these topics.
- Empathize with their difficulties. Focus on finding solutions rather than criticizing them.
- Model the vocabulary needed to describe their strengths and needs (e.g. “You seem to remember better when you get a chance to ‘see’ the information”.)
- Provide students with terminology they can use to describe their disability to others.

Terminology	Older Student	Younger Student
Learning Disability	I take in, remember or express information differently than other people my age. This can affect my ability to learn.	I learn differently from other kids. I am really good at some ways to learn and other ways give me a lot of trouble.
Reading Disability	Some people refer to this as “dyslexia”. It is a processing difficulty that affects my reading, writing, etc.	I have trouble with reading (describe....).
Processing Difficulty	I have a difficulty in the way I take in and interpret information from my senses.	I am different from other kids in how I take in and use stuff I hear, see and touch.
AD/HD	I have difficulty with paying attention, focusing, controlling my impulses or staying still when I need to.	I have a problem with paying attention, sitting still when I need to or controlling myself.
Writing Disability	I have difficulty with written work.	I have a problem with writing.

- Give students a checklist to help them identify their strengths and challenges. They may need your assistance in accurately reflecting their profile.
 - Strengths
 - I am good at expressing myself verbally.
 - I am very artistic.
 - I have good computer skills.
 - Challenges
 - I have a hard time with organization and planning bigger assignments.
 - I cannot screen out sounds and movements around me, like someone moving or a clock ticking.
 - I sometimes have a short fuse, and I often react impulsively.
 - I have a difficult time taking notes.
 - I find it difficult to remember what I heard in class.

Have students prepare a presentation about themselves as learners. This could be particularly effective as they transition to a new school year or setting. It can provide a framework for communicating their strengths and needs (including appropriate supports) to new teachers.

HELP STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THE SUPPORTS THEY NEED

- Involve students in identifying their goals. Students' input and involvement should increase as they proceed through the grades.
- Involve students in selecting and evaluating assistive technology/strategies.
- Provide opportunities for making plans and choices.
 - What Helps Me Learn
 - Chunk long-term assignments. I need these “chunks” on a daily and weekly basis.
 - Illustrate information with: charts, timelines and other visuals.
 - Give me a reading guide before I start.
 - Let me demonstrate my knowledge in ways that work best for me.

HELP STUDENTS COMMUNICATE THEIR NEEDS APPROPRIATELY

- Model and teach appropriate self-advocacy skills. Self-advocacy skills need to be demonstrated, role-played, practiced and evaluated. Extensive guidance needs to be provided in the middle school/junior high years with greater expectations for independence in the high school years.
- Help students to prepare for meetings, conversations with instructors, or other situations in which they may be involved in planning their educational future. Model and role-play appropriate interactions.
- Start with small goals (e.g., asking a teacher for an accommodation) and gradually increase student responsibility as they gain experience (e.g., being involved in setting goals and identifying support).
- A very important part of educational decision making for students with learning disabilities and/or AD/HD is setting appropriate goals. Students themselves should be actively involved in this process and taught ways to make goals tangible and realistic.



Go to http://canlearnsociety.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/LC_Self-Advocacy_N2.pdf for the following templates that can be used by students to help them identify and communicate their needs:

- High School Student Checklist
- Elementary/Middle School Student Checklist
- Keys to My Success – Student Checklist
- Request for Help
- Action Plan

LDAWC EVENTS

We Have a Diagnosis of a Learning Disability – Now What??

On September 17, just around the start of school, the LDAWC hosted Deborah Szymanski-Potts for a session on what to do with a learning disability diagnosis. Deborah is an Educational Consultant with Norfolk Psychological Services and shared her experiences as a parent, grandparent and teacher and learning disabilities. Her presentation highlighted how to read a psych-educational assessment, how to talk to your child about the diagnosis and how to become an advocate for what your child needs. Deborah's experience was very useful to the attendees who had many questions about how to address specific questions/issues with their local schools. Her experience on both sides of the table as a teacher as well as a parent and grandparent provided a well balanced approach to addressing learning disabilities. She had many great points on how to be an effective advocate and when it was appropriate to start your child being involved in that process. As an Educational Consultant, Deborah's job is helping families navigate the education system and be in charge of their learning disability!



**Deborah
Szymanski-Potts**

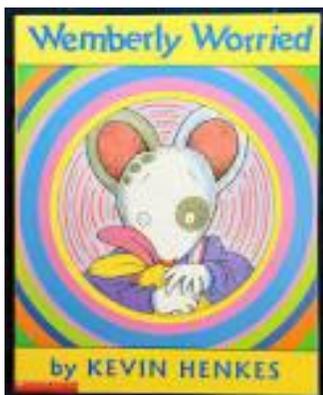
LDAWC EVENTS

Anxiety & Learning Disabilities

The LDAWC hosted an event on October 20, 2014 about Anxiety and Learning Disabilities. This topic was presented by Dr. Arlene Young from the Department of Psychology at University of Guelph. The presentation began with a brief overview of what anxiety is and why some level of anxiety is healthy and moderate amounts of anxiety is adaptive and helps us to cope with potentially dangerous situations. Anxiety disorders are diagnosed when the level of anxiety and the ability to cope with anxiety interferes with normal functioning in life; such as going to school or



Dr. Arlene Young



Wemberly Worried is a book that Dr. Young has used in therapy with younger children

playing with friends. Dr. Young outlined the different causes of anxiety disorders which include: genetic and family risk, temperament and stressful life events. On average, children with a learning disability have higher levels of anxiety compared to children without a learning disability. Some tips or techniques that Arlene outlined to help address anxiety included making things a routine to take away the uncertainty, teach calming strategies to help children address anxiety when it is present, breaking things into more manageable pieces and avoid avoidance. This last point relates to not letting children avoid the anxiety provoking situation as this really isn't helping the problem, but use other techniques, such as calm breathing or muscle relaxation, to help them manage during these situations. Treatment could include behavior therapy (exposure to stimuli while practicing ways to cope), cognitive behavior therapy (focuses on thinking and teaches coping skills) or medication. Dr. Young also stressed that family interventions may result in more dramatic and long lasting effects.

Have you ever thought of attending one of LDAWC's events? Here is what people are saying!

- The speaker was very informative and an excellent speaker. She presented the info in an easy to understand way
- Speaker was extremely knowledgeable and on topic
- Pace of presentation, examples of topic, interaction with audience

Make sure to watch your email for our Spring Events and come check us out!



LAZA CATERING

Great Taste of East Africa

Eritrean/Ethiopian Cuisine

Thanks to Laza Catering for helping raise awareness during the month of October.

For Learning Disability Awareness month Laza Catering had a donations jar in their store helping to bring awareness to our organization and cause!

TECH Talk: Livescribe News: Princeton Study Proves that the Pen is Mightier

<http://www.livescribe.com/blog/noteworthy2/2014/06/taking-better-notes-with-professor-andy-van-schaack/>

What's new in the Princeton/UCLA study that was recently released?



The researchers found that students in their experiment who wrote their notes by hand recorded fewer words than those who typed their notes—but on a subsequent test; they performed *better* in recalling the information and the meaning of the lecture. The researchers believe that this was because those who typed their notes had a tendency to simply transcribe what they heard while the students who wrote their notes summarized the ideas and captured more of the meaning, gaining a deeper understanding of the information.

How do these findings impact the learning process, both in school, and every day in the workplace?

Note taking serves two purposes: To help the note taker make sense of the information while it's being presented *and* to remind them in the future of what was said. The challenge for students and workers is to develop and use a note taking approach that provides the benefits of both processes. At Livescribe, we've created a process we call "pencasting" that links handwritten notes with synchronized audio recordings, so people can capture both their written notes, and a verbatim audio recording.

The benefit of ink and audio recording with the Livescribe smartpen is that anyone can jot down a few notes in order to capture the big ideas, while they know that *all* the information (that is said) is also recorded. In the future, they can use their handwritten notes as index points to help them jump to the part of the recording that has the detailed information they need. In this way, people process and 'integrate' the information by writing by hand, but then they can also go back and listen to their notes so they capture all the details.

What are the benefits of taking better notes?

Note taking is a common practice, but it's a skill that not everyone performs equally well due to differences in training and access to tools. Scientific research supports our intuition: *Taking good notes, and reviewing them in the future, produces better outcomes—in the classroom and in the workplace.*

Don't most classrooms allow laptops? What do you see in teaching your classes, and what are the challenges that students face when using a laptop in class?

There are as many policies about the use of laptop computers in the classroom as there are teachers. However, more and more teachers are restricting laptop use in the classroom—they create too many distractions. I belong to the group of teachers who believe that, for the most part, the disadvantages of

laptop use for note taking far outweigh the advantages. My personal policy is to restrict their use in my classes, with the exception of those who use a laptop as an accommodation for a disability.

The disadvantages of using a laptop are clear to anyone who has sat in the back of a classroom where they are allowed. Students “multitask,” which is a polite way of saying, “They do things other than engage in class activities.” Laptops, especially with those that have access to the internet, distract the laptop user as well as those who sit near them.

The study found that students who write with pen and paper do a better job understanding a lecture. Was there anything that students are missing out on if they write with a pen instead of a laptop?

No, but the opposite is certainly true. Students who take notes with a laptop find it very difficult to capture graphical information. In a class where all the information presented is verbal—such as in a law school course—note taking with a laptop can work. If the student is in a class where diagrams, maps, graphs, charts, and equations are part of the instructional content, then pen and paper is definitely the way to go.



How does the ability to quickly jump to a particular section of your notes help in recalling that information?

In the past, when individuals have found it critical to capture a complete and accurate record of a class or meeting, they would use an audio recorder. The problem with this technology is that it takes a long time to find the moment of interest in the recording. In a pencast, on the other hand, the individual simply taps on a word in their notes to jump to that spot in the recording.

I conducted an experiment to demonstrate the difference in access rates to audio information in conventional podcasts and in Livescribe pencasts. Despite the fact that none of the students had ever used a Livescribe smartpen before, and were only provided two minutes of training, they were able to access important moments in an audio recording of a previously viewed lecture 2.5 times more quickly than when they used an

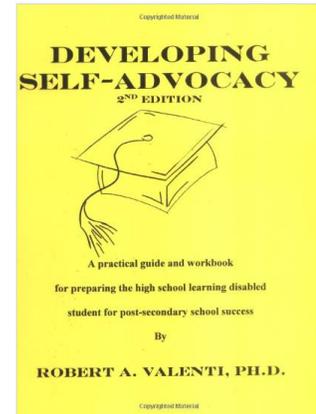
Apple iPod—a device that all of the subjects had extensive experience with. One student said, “The iPod is useful for listening to the whole lecture, but when searching for one particular moment, it is almost impossible unless you already have the lecture memorized. I was able to use the iPod to get a few answers by chance. The smartpen, though, made it incredibly easy to find whatever I wanted in a very short time.”

What aspects of the Livescribe smartpens make them even more useful when reviewing notes?

Using a Livescribe smartpen provides the solution to the challenge I mentioned earlier—how to take notes in a way that allows you to think about the meaning of what’s being said without missing the important details of a verbatim recording. The fact that it doesn’t take much training to use a smartpen or require the owner to change their approach to note taking makes it a practical and effective solution.

Developing Self-Advocacy: A practical guide and workbook for preparing the high school learning disabled student for post-secondary success

This guidebook is a practical, simply written workbook that addresses key issues for students with disabilities planning to attend a post secondary educational program. It provides students, counselors, and teachers with a wealth of practical strategies, skills and legal accommodations that they can use in assisting the special needs student succeed independently. It also provides parents with the information they need to know so their children's rights are not abused. It is written in a way that enhances the reader's comprehension, provides chapter end summaries, and paper and pencil quizzes." Dr. Valenti's guide aids the student in grasping their differentiation and helps them move on from a stance with auxiliary helpers to a stance of independence".



Events

Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County

Watch your email for details of our upcoming Spring events!



Kids Ability

Sleep Solutions for Tired Parents

December 10, 2014

Kids Ability, 340 Woodlawn Road, Guelph

This workshop is aimed at sharing information on common sleep challenges in Autism, and provides practical sleep strategies to help you and your child sleep better.

Free

<http://www.kidsability.ca/en/EventArchive>

Learning Disabilities Association of Halton Organizing the Disorganized Learner

January 17, 2015, 9 am -12 pm

Rotary Youth Building (top floor), 560 Guelph Line, Burlington

Everything they own is in their gym bag or at the bottom of their locker – including yesterday's geography note and last week's lunch. The book and/or assignment that they need is at school or is at home. They become overwhelmed when there are too many assignments in too many courses due within the present time frame. Sound like your child or student? Then this practical, strategies-based approach workshop presented by retired special educator and LDAH's Board President, Diane Vandenbossche, is for you!

Highlights

- Understand organizing time, material and thoughts
- Using suitable organizers
- Gain different strategies and techniques

Registration (REQUIRED), Member fee: \$25 / Non-Member fee: \$35 / Non-Registered Drop-in fee: \$40

Register online at: www.ldahalton.ca

Phone: (905) 333 -1977

E-mail: info@ldahalton.ca

Learning Disabilities Association of Toronto Understanding the IEP/IPRC Process

February 25, 2015

Learning Disabilities Association Toronto District, 121 Willowdale Avenue, Suite 100, Toronto

Mitchell Curci has worked in the area of special education for over 35 years. This workshop will discuss the IPRC process and parents' involvement in the IEP to ensure effective communication and the best care for the child or youth.

Fee: Members: \$10, Non Members: \$15, Registration at the Door: \$20

Contact programs@ldatd.on.ca to register

Learning Disabilities Association of Toronto Understanding the Impacts of Learning Disabilities

March 25, 2015, 7-8:30pm

Learning Disabilities Association Toronto District, 121 Willowdale Avenue, Suite 100, Toronto

This workshop will focus on understanding the impacts of LD on children and their families and will offer strategies for how to help children cope at home, school and play.

Fee: Members: \$10, Non Members: \$15, Registration at the Door: \$20

Contact programs@ldatd.on.ca to register

Learning Disabilities Association of Toronto Education Law for Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities

April 8, 2015, 7-8:30pm

Learning Disabilities Association Toronto District, 121 Willowdale Avenue, Suite 100, Toronto

Anne Irwin is a lawyer who focuses her practice on representing children in the area of education law. She is dedicated to informing parents about education law to enable them to better advocate on behalf of their children in the school system. In this workshop parents will learn about various aspects of education law, including the rights of "exceptional" children under the Education Act, and how the Human Rights Code protects students with disabilities.

Fee: Members: \$10, Non Members: \$15, Registration at the Door: \$20

Contact programs@ldatd.on.ca to register

Learning Disabilities Association of Toronto Bullying Prevention

April 22, 2015, 7-8:30pm

Learning Disabilities Association Toronto District, 121 Willowdale Avenue, Suite 100, Toronto

It is important for parents to recognize the signs of bullying and take action to ensure kids are protected. This workshop will help parents understand bullying from a child's perspective, present the warning signs to look out for, provide strategies to improve communication with their children and discuss proactive steps parents can take to keep kids safe.

Fee: Members: \$10, Non Members: \$15, Registration at the Door: \$20

Contact programs@ldatd.on.ca to register

Kids Ability Sleep Solutions for Tired Parents

May 20, 2015

Kids Ability, 500 Hallmark Drive, Waterloo

This workshop will focus on understanding anxiety and sharing strategies to support you and your child in managing circumstances that are challenging for your child

Free

<http://www.kidsability.ca/en/EventArchive>

Learning Disabilities Association of Toronto Successful Transitioning

May 22, 2015, 7-8:30pm

Learning Disabilities Association Toronto District, 121 Willowdale Avenue, Suite 100, Toronto

Mitchell Curci has worked in the area of special education for over 35 years. He currently supports LDATD as a Community Outreach & Education Advocacy specialist. This presentation is designed to help parents better understand the transition process of students with exceptionalities as they move from elementary to high school and then on to post-secondary.

Fee: Members: \$10, Non Members: \$15, Registration at the Door: \$20

Contact programs@ldatd.on.ca to register

The Simcoe County Chapter of the Learning Disabilities Association has created a group on Facebook called Learning Disabilities Support Group. This group was created so parents can ask questions to other members that may have had a similar experience of question. Check it out! <https://www.facebook.com/groups/268003810028819/>



Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

Membership Form

Name: _____ Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____

Postal Code: _____ Tel: (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 Evans Avenue, Suite 202, Toronto, ON M8Z 1K2
Tel: (416) 929-4311 Toll free in Ontario only: 1-877-238-5322
Fax: (416) 929-3905

Everybody is a genius. But, if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will spend its whole life believing that it is stupid. ~Albert Einstein.