



Idawc • Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County

The right to learn, the power to achieve

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LDawc News

May was another busy and productive month at LDawc; planning continues for our 5th Annual Family Conference, this year on Saturday, October 19. Save-the-Date Now! We're excited to have booked an engaging keynote speaker with a fresh perspective. The day will also include a choice of inspiring field professionals delivering on several topics such as parent/caregiver self-care, talking to your child/teen about their LD/ADHD, and ADHD and Mental Health. More details will come shortly, and registration will open over the summer!

Our May 15 workshop, UnderstandABILITY – Demystifying Psycho-Educational Assessments, had 13 people in attendance, and was an engaging evening for all. Speaker Susan Slack Miller did a great job illustrating what different elements of the psychoeducational assessment look like, and what types of questions children and teens are asked during their assessment. Everyone walked away with a clearer picture of psycho-educational assessments, and how to help their child at home – based on their children's index scores (indexes include verbal comprehension, visual spatial, fluid reasoning, processing speed and working memory).

We held our final Peer Support Network meeting of this school year on Thursday, May 30. Although it was a small group of parents, conversation was meaningful and demonstrated the real value for parents to share experiences and learn from each other. Our next Peer Support Network meeting will likely be in late September.

Coordinating logistics for our Fall Reading Rocks program has begun, and our Reading Rocks Coordinator Erika Longman has made a bunch of sight word games to make learning even more fun! Watch for more information over the summer through our e-blasts for when registration will open.



Note: We're still looking for the 50/50 draw winner at the March 1/19 Guelph Storm game: ticket #U-342901.

Articles – LDs and ADHD

What Does a Student Need to Know about Learning Disabilities in Order to be a Self-Advocate?

Answered by Mike Di Donato, OCT and Brian Hayes, OCT

In order to be a self-advocate, students who have learning disabilities (LDs) need to first **understand how their LDs affect their learning**. When students are diagnosed with LDs, parents, teachers, special education teachers and child psychologists may not always explain to the student how their LDs affect their learning and students are left in the dark.

Students with LDs have the cognitive ability to learn and understand, which is why it is so important for a student's support group to **take the time to deeply explain** LDs using "kid friendly" language, free of educational jargon. For any student to understand how they learn is key to success and for students with LDs, it is imperative that they can understand and eventually **communicate the way they learn**.

We liken the self-advocacy process to building a house, where students' understanding of their LDs is the foundation. Once the student understands their LDs, they can then move on to build the frame of their house, consisting of student knowledge of their own strengths and needs. Once the frame of the house is up, students can begin to put the roof on. The roof of the house represents the student becoming mindful of the variety of tools and strategies to assist them on their learning journey. The finishing touches are put on the house when the student is ready to put all their learning about themselves into action to **become successful self-advocates** and take the control of their own learning. Our students explain this as "owning [their] LDs".

The process of self-advocacy is best achieved in a thought-out manner in order for students to be able to digest the information in small chunks. The following is the process that we have successfully followed with our students.

Step 1: Building the Foundation – Helping Students Understand their LDs

During this step, the teacher takes time to **sit with the students** and read through *Helping Students Understand their Learning Disability: A checklist designed to help students become better self-advocates*. We keep an electronic copy of this checklist and share it with students via Google Drive so that they can return to the information if needed.

[Click here to access the Helping Students Understand their Learning Disability checklist.](#)

We also use the York Region's *Understanding Learning Disabilities - How Processing Affects Learning* waterfall chart in order to consolidate **our own professional learning** about LDs. This helps by giving us the background knowledge we need when students have questions about certain sections of the checklist. This step is the most crucial as you are establishing a **learning partnership with each student**.

[Click here to access York Region's *Understanding Learning Disabilities - How Processing Affects Learning Waterfall Chart.*](#)



Step 2: Building the Frame – Student Strengths and Needs

After the time spent one-on-one with each student to help them better understand their LDs, we use a **whole group** approach to understanding strengths and needs. Some strengths and needs may come to light during the one-on-one student conferences; however, by using a collaborative approach, students will often see that they share **similar strengths and needs with their peers**.

In order for the students to think about their strengths, needs, and learning, we often ask: **How does this impact your learning?**

Step 3: Putting on the Roof – Finding Effective Tools and Strategies

Finding **effective tools and strategies** is an ongoing process in the classroom, as the learning environment should always be tailored to the learner. Ideally, we would all have the luxury of small

class sizes which would allow us to create learning partnerships and learning environments that are driven by student need. Whether or not this is the case at your school, **candid discussions** can and should be taking place in every classroom. Providing a range of diverse learning tools and strategies is essential for some students, but **good for all**.

Some of the tools and strategies we use include, but are not limited to:

- Providing access to a variety of **apps** and programs that can support learning (students can choose the app/program that best fits their learning style);
- Structure and organization of **routines**;
- GAFE: Google Apps For Education (Leveraging Digital);
- Developing **learning partnerships** (student/parent/teacher/special education resource teacher/educational assistant);
- Goal setting and constant **self-reflection**;
- Use of **success criteria** and frameworks to focus learning, and
- Always understanding the **WHAT**, the **WHY** and the **HOW** of learning.

Step 4: The Finishing Touches – Putting Everything into Action

Each year, about two weeks after winter break, we notice our students are **suddenly vastly more independent**. Students begin self-advocating and applying multiple problem-solving strategies to support their learning, without guidance from an educator. What may seem on the surface like an overnight change represents a **5-month process of guided self-examination**. At this point students have developed enough understanding to work around their LDs and communicate their needs, but the process is far from over. Students will need to grow and adapt continually as they move through their education and the world outside of school. Though challenges remain, students have **laid the groundwork** to be strong self-advocates for life and now have the confidence to adapt their tools and strategies to their needs throughout their learning journey.

Students with learning disabilities may develop a negative self-image in relation to their abilities and their potential for school success. By equipping these students with the skills necessary to self-advocate and not rely entirely on their parents and educators, students can build **confidence and feelings of self-efficacy**. In order to become successful self-advocates, students with LDs must first fully understand how their LDs affect their learning, have a firm grasp of their strengths, and be given the tools and strategies to accommodate for their areas of need. By taking the time to build a strong partnership with students, educators can help students with LDs to take their learning into their own hands and “**own their LDs**”.

Source: <https://www.ldatschool.ca/a-t-e-self-advocate/>

9 Empowering Books for Parents

By the Understood Team

When you have a child with learning and attention issues, books can be a huge help. Check out these resources on building your child's self-esteem, helping him learn, getting the services he needs and more.

1 - "The Misunderstood Child" by Larry B. Silver, M.D.

The Misunderstood Child is a classic guide that has been in print for 20 years. The fourth edition contains the latest research on topics like genetics, plus an expanded section on ADHD. It also looks at problems that sometimes accompany learning and attention issues. These include depression, anxiety and anger. And it lists resources, websites and groups that can provide treatment and support for you and your child.

2 - "Raising Resilient Children" by Robert Brooks, Ph.D., and Sam Goldstein, Ph.D.

Kids with learning and attention issues may struggle with self-esteem. Raising Resilient Children can help you learn to focus on your child's strengths in order to boost his sense of self-worth. It describes 10 essential parenting behaviours that can help build resilience. And it offers insight into the minds of kids and teens with learning and attention issues.

3 - "It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend: Helping the Child with Learning Disabilities Find Social Success," by Richard Lavoie

If your child has trouble making friends or dealing with social situations, It's So Much Work to Be Your Friend may shed light on the problem. It explains how learning and attention issues can impact kids' social skills. It's organized by different sets of skills and where they're used: at home, at school and in the community. The book doesn't just offer explanations, however. It gives practical advice on things like how to spot learning and attention issues and how to change kids' behaviour.

4 - "The Dyslexic Advantage," by Brock L. Eide, M.D., and Fernette F. Eide, M.D.

Despite the challenges it creates, having dyslexia isn't all negative. At least that's what the authors contend. The Dyslexic Advantage focuses on the areas in which people with dyslexia often excel. These include things like creativity and spatial relations. It points to careers that people with dyslexia often do well at, such as law and engineering. The book also offers advice on how you can help your child use his learning strengths to his advantage.

5 - "From Emotions to Advocacy: The Special Education Survival Guide," by Peter W.D. Wright and Pamela Wright

Finding your way around the world of special education can be challenging. From Emotions to Advocacy, a practical guide now in its second edition, gives advice on everything from how to prepare your child for special education to how to get the best services. It also provides tips on dealing with

parent-school conflicts. That includes how to write effective letters and how to create the paper trails you need. It's a great resource to help you be an effective advocate for your child.

6 - "Making the System Work for Your Child with ADHD," by Peter S. Jensen, M.D.

Having trouble navigating the complex system of help for ADHD? Making the System Work for Your Child with ADHD can help you understand the role of teachers, doctors, schools and health-care plans. It can also help you troubleshoot problems that come up. The author writes from his experiences as a physician and researcher, but also as a parent advocate and the father of a son with ADHD.

7 - "Ready for Take-Off: Preparing Your Teen with ADHD or LD for College," by Theresa E. Laurie Maitland, Ph.D., and Patricia O. Quinn, M.D.

Ready for Take-Off is a hands-on book that offers ideas for getting kids up to speed on the life and learning skills they'll need in college. It provides surveys and worksheets for parents to gauge how ready their child is. The book also helps parents identify their "coaching style" when working with their teen. And it explains how to create a readiness plan to get kids prepared for college in a gradual and organized way.

8 - "Thinking Differently: An Inspiring Guide for Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities," by David Flink

Thinking Differently is a comprehensive guide for parents of children with learning issues. It offers actionable advice for how to move past the myth that kids just "need to try harder." Flink gives practical advice for handling common problems and includes a "Step-by-Step Launchpad to Empowerment." Along the way, he also shares stories and strategies to inspire parents to assist children in discovering their inner gifts, build self-esteem and gain self-advocacy skills.

9 - "The Dyslexia Empowerment Plan: A Blueprint for Renewing Your Child's Confidence and Love of Learning," by Ben Foss

The Dyslexia Empowerment Plan doesn't just explain what dyslexia is—it explains what it's like to have dyslexia and how you can help your child with dyslexia thrive. Foss, who has dyslexia, says that having trouble reading isn't the same as having trouble learning. He offers tools to map your child's strengths and weaknesses, which can help you help your child build self-confidence and create a learning plan. The book also provides concrete ways to help your child find the resources he needs to feel supported.

Source: <https://www.understood.org/en/family/taking-care-of-yourself/dealing-with-emotions/9-empowering-books-for-parents?view=slideview>

About Trillium Demonstration School

The Provincial Demonstration Schools provide educational programs for approximately 120 students. Students come to the programs significantly underachieving in some or all of the academic areas. Poor reading, writing, spelling and mathematics skills are common; many students also have immature social skills. Nevertheless, all students have average to above average potential. In addition, they display some, or all, of the following characteristics:

- Difficulty with receptive and expressive language
- Poor sequencing, discrimination, coordination, organizational and spatial skills
- Auditory and/or visual memory problems
- Focusing difficulties

Specialized programming is provided for students with severe language learning disabilities and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

The length of stay at a Provincial Demonstration School is up to one year in highly specialized programs. School hours are consistent with the regulations for school boards. However, adjustments are made to ensure that students are able to return home on Friday and remain at home as long as possible on the weekend (in many cases until Monday morning). Provincial Demonstration Schools are designed to serve as a resource to school boards, rather than to function as a separate education system. As soon as possible, every effort is made to facilitate the student's return to an appropriate program in his/her local community. Transition plans are prepared and follow-up is provided for students when they return to their home schools.

*Note from LDAWC – there are four Provincial Demonstration Schools in the province: Trillium in Milton, Amethyst in London, Sagonaska in Belleville, and Centre Jules-Léger in Ottawa. Referrals to these schools are through your school/school board.

Source: <https://pdsbnet.ca/en/schools/trillium/about-us/>

Resources

Math Resource – *Math Before Bed*

Does your child or student struggle with math? Perhaps if math was more interesting or engaging, it might help! You might want to check out this resource, Math Before Bed, at their website here: <https://mathbeforebed.com/>. Help “Transform and enhance numeracy discussions in your classrooms or at home”.

You can also follow Math Before Bed on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for updates.

Upcoming LDAWC Events

5th Annual LDAWC Family Conference

SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, October 19, 2019

**St. James Catholic High School,
Guelph**



Our family conference is intended for parents and caregivers of children with learning disabilities and/or ADHD. The focus of the day will be on providing parents with tools and strategies to help them to support their children, as well as important networking opportunities.

The day will include engaging keynote speaker Dean Huyck. Dean has worked in a variety of educational settings, including psychiatric day treatment and learning disabilities, where he has collected a wealth of experience to compliment his ability to empathize and strategize with people of all backgrounds. A choice of afternoon breakout sessions will be led by inspiring professional speakers as well.

Registration is FREE and will open soon.

Watch your email or get updates on our website at www.ldawc.ca



Idao • Learning Disabilities
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Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario Membership Application

Membership:

- Member fee rates to LDAO programs and services, including some online workshops/courses
- Member fee rates to all chapter programs and services, where available
- Two issues of the LDAO digital magazine LD@Ontario, sent biannually through email
- Chapter newsletters (frequency varies from chapter to chapter)

We're going **paperless!** Please provide us with your email address to receive your copy of LD@Ontario!

Required Information:

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

Postal Code: _____ Chapter Affiliation: _____

Membership Type:

Family/Individual \$50.00 Professional \$75.00

Institutional \$125.00 Student \$20.00

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