

Atlantic Conference on Learning Disabilities

Summarized by: André Davey

Atlantic Conference on Learning ~~Disabilities~~

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Atlantic Conference on Learning Differences

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In the past...

- A teacher sent the following note home with a six year old boy: “He is too stupid too learn”.
- Teachers said that he was mentally slow, unsociable, and adrift in his foolish dreams.
- A learner was regularly punished in school for failure or lack of effort, sometimes failing the same class numerous times.

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That boy was Thomas Edison.

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The student was Albert Einstein.

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The learner was Winston Churchill.

Today...

It is our hope that a student labeled with a Learning Disability sees this as an affirmation that they are smart; they simply learn in a **different** way.

Each student, above all, wants to please their teacher.

“Our learners can never be who they ought to be, unless we are who we ought to be”

Felix Justice paraphrasing Martin Luther King Jr.

“Teachers’ actions have twice the impact on student achievement as do school policies”

Robert J. Marzano

Workshops attended

- Making Connections: Successful Transitions to Post-Secondary Education for Students with Disabilities
- Teaching Math to Students with Learning Differences
- Identifying Learning Differences in the Classroom – And What to Do About It
- Keeping Students Connected: How Teachers Can Help Students Feel Good About School... And Why it Matters

Making Connections: Successful Transitions to Post-Secondary Education for Students with Disabilities

Permanent Disability means a functional limitation caused by a physical or mental impairment that restricts the ability of a person to perform the daily activities necessary to participate in studies at a post-secondary school level or the labor force and is expected to remain with the person for the person's expected life.

» **Canada Student Financial Assistance Regulations (CSFAR)**

- In order to access most services and funding, a learner's disability must stay with them for life and must cause a barrier to completing post-secondary education.

Making Connections: Successful Transitions to Post-Secondary Education for Students with Disabilities

What is available?

- Financial grants to reduce debt load
- Interpreters and/or Support Staff
- Funding for goods
 - Computers, assistive technology, ergonomic equipment
- Funding for services
 - Tutors, note takers, accommodations for assessments, special transportation

Making Connections: Successful Transitions to Post-Secondary Education for Students with Disabilities

Where do learners access these services?

- Funding for direct service delivery will be through a **Disability Resource Facilitator (DRF)**
 - Available at N.S.C.C. www.disabilityservices.nsc.ca
 - Also available at N.S.C.A.D.
- Or contact the corresponding University
 - Dalhousie University's *Mark A. Hill Accessibility Centre*
 - Saint Mary's University's *Atlantic Centre of Research*
 - Mount Saint Vincent University's *Disability Services*
 - Mount Allison University's *Meighen Centre*

Making Connections: Successful Transitions to Post-Secondary Education for Students with Disabilities

What should we do as educators?

Initially

- Have any & all accommodations documented
- Obtain a PsychEd Assessment through the Association of Psychologists of NS (www.apns.ca)
- Spread awareness of www.LDANS.ca (Learning Disabilities Association of NS) & Post-Secondary Disability Services (<http://psds.ednet.ns.ca>)

Making Connections: Successful Transitions to Post-Secondary Education for Students with Disabilities

What are the proper steps to take?

The entry point is to apply for a student loan by completing the **Medical Assessment Form**

- Encourage learners to apply using this intake process as this may enable them to...
 - » access grants for tuition
 - » be eligible for goods and/or services
- Physical Disabilities need a statement from a physician
- Mental Disabilities need a PsychEd within the last 5yrs

Teaching Math to Students with LDs

Cognitive Areas of Impact (Math analysis of a PsychEd report)

- Verbal comprehension
 - » Ability to repeat what is said
- Perceptual Reasoning
 - » Ability to use learning manipulatives
- Working Memory
 - » Ability to plan & organize (go to p.357 & solve questions)
- Processing Speed
 - » Ability to perform mental math at appropriate pace

Teaching Math to Students with LDs

Cognitive Areas of Impact (Math analysis of a PsychEd report)

- Verbal Memory
 - » Ability to remember verbal information
- Visual Memory
 - » Ability to remember visual information
- Visual-motor integration
 - » Ability to form letters/numbers or complete a maze
- Executive functioning
 - » Ability to get through day to day activities, shift from one task to another, and initiate tasks

Teaching Math to Students with LDs

Using a Multi-Sensory Approach to...

- Operations
- Time
- Geometry
- Money
- Estimation
- Mental Math
- Problem Solving
- Numeration

Teaching Math to Students with LDs

- Operations

- Practice often but in small quantities
- Repetition is key
- Build upon math facts
- Relate to real life ($2 \times 2 = 4$ like wheels on a car)
- Use graph paper for alignment
- Use of skill folder to practice basic skills
- Organization station

Teaching Math to Students with LDs

- Time
 - Use different vocabulary (six thirty, half past six)
 - Identify a minute passing with eyes closed
 - Use large clocks or body clocks
 - Have a time watcher to see how hour feels
 - Have access to clock manipulatives

Teaching Math to Students with LDs

- Geometry
 - Reduce stress with spatial positions, patterns, likeness, and similarities
 - Use uncluttered geometry worksheets
 - Use multi-sensory manipulatives
 - Make 3D shapes and relate to real life objects

Teaching Math to Students with LDs

- Money
 - Pre-teach new vocabulary (monetary terms)
 - Suggested Activities
 - Match coin equivalencies
 - Have mock auctions (bid on: free time, positive feedback)
 - Provide a menu to buy from (pick items & total amounts)
 - Sequence pennies by date

Teaching Math to Students with LDs

- Estimation
 - Set up permanent estimation station
 - Guess contents of container
 - Use rocks, eraser, cherrios, pennies, marbles, marshmallows (with measuring cup nearby)
 - Use interactive & physical examples
 - Combined cost, days till vacation, distance
 - Provide in class examples
 - Estimate then use metre stick to measure

Teaching Math to Students with LDs

- Mental Math

- Start with basic skills and build from there
- Improve memory with use of flash cards
- Use word wall (with colour differences)
- Interact with fact family cards (learners hold individual cards like $10 + 2 = 12$ then switch places)
- Math Olympics to challenge their knowledge

Teaching Math to Students with LDs

- Problem Solving

- Review key math words (part of, times...)
- Explain harder terms (quotient, isosceles...)
- Use highlighter for key words
- Model problems using think-aloud technique
- Use checklists & how to organize information
- Keep it interesting (relate it to learners)
- Ask learners to create word problems
- Read the word problem out loud

Teaching Math to Students with LDs

- Numeration

- Emphasize placement in ordering numbers
- Use coins for counting by 5, 10, 25
- Match placement value with base ten blocks
- Highlight columns (ones, tens, hundreds...)
- Human number and shuffle
 - Give each learner a single digit then ask them to go to the correct placement for desired number

Identifying LDs in the Classroom and what to do about it

Defining LDs

- May effect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information.
- Affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. As such, they are distinct from global intellectual deficiency.
- 10% of the population has some type of LD

Identifying LDs in the Classroom and what to do about it

Different types

- Dyslexia (*most common form of LD*)
 - » Struggle understanding/processing of words
- Dyscalculia
 - » Difficulty manipulating numbers, retaining formulas
- Dysgraphia
 - » Cannot form a letter or write within a defined space
 - » Cursive writing may work better than printing
- Non-verbal (*70% of autistic tendency*)
 - » Lack of understanding of 'social norms'
 - » Difficulty understanding abstract ideals
 - » Remarkable memory

Identifying LDs in the Classroom and what to do about it

What to do...

- Assist learners to become aware of their Learning Difference; and that it is okay to learn differently
- Instruct learners how to ask for help specific to their LD
- Keep in mind that in order to summarize what is read, a learner must be able to:
 - Read
 - Understand the words
 - Remember
 - Comprehend what the words mean in context
 - Explain what was read

Identifying LDs in the Classroom and what to do about it

Possible Signs of LDs in Adults

- Mechanical aptitude but difficulty with reading, writing, and spelling
- Learn well when shown but cannot follow written instructions
- Have a very poor self concept, anxious, tense, and depressed
- Extreme difficulty organizing belongings, times, activities, or responsibilities

Please Note: No one will have all of these symptoms

Identifying LDs in the Classroom and what to do about it

After Suspicion and/or Diagnosis

- Organize assignments through manageable steps
- Encourage students to question for clarification
- Provide opportunities and extra time to hone skills
- Use manipulatives and multi-sensory techniques
- Reduce quantity of material (combine outcomes)
- Focus learner's attention with checklists
- Keep good models/samples for visible reference
- Reduce information on worksheets
- Prepare student by explaining test expectations
- Be open to different ways of assessing
- Check in, provide help before frustration begins

Keeping Students Connected: How Teachers Can Help Students Feel Good About School

- Create a positive environment for learning.
- Focus on positive school memories to avoid 'chronic success deprivation'.
- Inform learners about the programs & services that they have access to.
- Involve the learner and make the class instruction meaningful to them.
- Be engaged.
- Connect or reconnect with your learners.

Keeping Students Connected: How Teachers Can Help Students Feel Good About School

Form relationships

- Speak to students by name and get to know them
- Keep learners engaged through conversation
- Catch them doing something good & praise them
- Be consistent in interaction and availability

Use differentiation

- Assure them that success is achievable
- Give them the choice
- Adapt to their needs
- Provide relevant tasks

Keeping Students Connected: How Teachers Can Help Students Feel Good About School

With Reading...

Direct Vocabulary instruction is critical

- Learner shouldn't just learn new words but interact with them

Remember

- A learner that reads more, gets better
- A learner that doesn't read, gets weaker

Provide options other than traditional reading

- Graphic novels
- 'Read-along' books with taped texts available at Public Library

Orcha Publishing

- Books with a low reading level but do not appear elementary

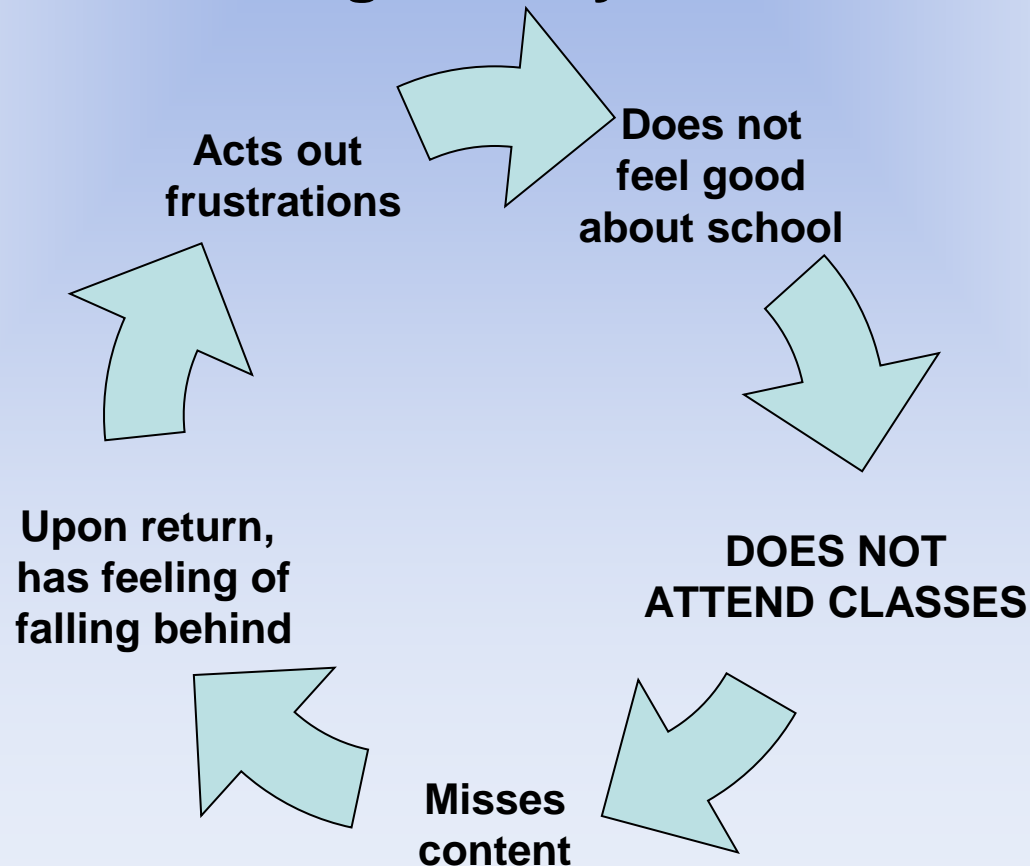
Keeping Students Connected: How Teachers Can Help Students Feel Good About School

CAUTION

- Adults can pass on their view or bad school experience to their children
- Learners may have a lot going on out of school
- Students fear being embarrassed and may:
 - Act out
 - Hide what they don't know

Keeping Students Connected: How Teachers Can Help Students Feel Good About School

Negative Cycle



Keeping Students Connected: How Teachers Can Help Students Feel Good About School

Positive Cycle

