



# Parent Training and Information (PTI) Program

"Parents Are Vital in Education"

## LEARNING DISABILITIES

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throughout the State.  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

The focus of this booklet is to provide basic information about learning disabilities (LD) and how they affect people—particularly children. Having a learning disability is a life-long condition. People do not outgrow LD. They learn to cope with it and accommodate for it. They learn what works and what does not work for them in order to perform a task. Each person who has LD is an individual. One person who has LD will not fit the same profile as the next person who has LD. Parents and educators who understand the various aspects of LD can be valuable resources to help a child learn the techniques and strategies s/he will need to be successful in school and in life.

### **WHAT IS A LEARNING DISABILITY?**

A learning disability (LD) is a condition that interferes with a person's ability to receive, store, process, retrieve and/or use information. People with learning disabilities usually have average or above-average intelligence. There is a severe discrepancy between the person's ability and performance level. That discrepancy or gap is evidence of the learning disability. Approximately 10% of the general population have learning disabilities. Some sources say the percentage is even higher.

LD is a widely misunderstood disability for several reasons:

- It is a hidden disability. Other people cannot tell someone has LD simply by looking at him or her.
- It manifests itself in many ways. A person may have a learning disability in one or two academic areas and excel in others, so it may appear the person is not trying to learn in the areas with which s/he is having difficulty.
- People sometimes think a learning disability means dyslexia. Dyslexia is just one of several forms of LD.
- People sometimes think LD is the same as mental retardation, which it is not.
- A person who has LD often performs inconsistently. One day s/he may be able to do something, and the next day not be able to perform the same task.
- LD affects a person's life in more areas than just learning.

### **WHAT AREAS DO LEARNING DISABILITIES AFFECT?**

Learning disabilities may affect one or more of the following areas:

- Basic reading skills
- Reading comprehension
- Math computation
- Math reasoning
- Written expression
- Listening comprehension
- Oral expression
- Problem solving

- Organizational skills
- Time management skills
- Attention span
- Ability to retrieve information
- Ability to retain information
- Social skills

Often parents, educators and others think of learning disabilities as only affecting academics. What they need to realize is problem solving, organization, sense of time, ability to remember and other aspects of LD permeate all areas of life. The same learning disabilities that affect reading, writing and math also affect sports, games, keeping a room neat, setting the table, and many other daily activities.

### **WHAT IS IT LIKE TO HAVE A LEARNING DISABILITY?**

The following is just one example of how some children with a reading learning disability would see a written paragraph. Realize that not all children with LD in reading would have the same experience.

One day Mother Pig said,  
 "Boys, it's time for you to go your own way  
 And to live in your own houses."  
 "Yes, it is fine," said the first little pig.  
 "To go our own way," said the second little  
 pig.  
 "And to live in our own houses," said the third little pig.  
 So the three little pigs packed their bags. They left the  
 houses at the bottom of the hill.  
 "Good-bye now," they all said.  
 "And don't forget to watch out for the big, bad wolf."  
 He eats little pigs."  
 "We won't forget," said the three little pigs.  
 "Beware of the big," said the first little pig.  
 "Beware of the bad," said the second little pig.  
 "Wolf is for wolf," said the third little pig.  
 They waved good-bye and went their merry way.

Think about how the child would feel when reading this way in front of the class. Words are jumbled, letters transposed, upside down or mirrored. Speaking and even hearing are affected. Imagine how frustrated the child would be trying to make sense of the passage. Trying to keep up with other students would be a huge challenge. Other children, and some adults, often ridicule the child and his/her differences. The child often feels humiliated by these experiences.

The child needs help rather than ridicule, understanding rather than badgering to try harder, and support to succeed rather than harsh words of failure. The techniques, methods, knowledge and tools are available. Parents, teachers and others in the child's

life can help the child toward success if they gain the knowledge and are willing to take the time and the steps to work with the child in the way s/he functions and learns.

### **WHAT ARE THE “RED FLAGS” THAT INDICATE A LEARNING DISABILITY?**

Having difficulty with any of the areas listed in the previous section could be an indicator of a learning disability. There are other indicators, as well. When one hears statements like the following about someone, especially a student, a learning disability should be suspected. “He has the ability. He just needs to try harder, and he could do it.” “He chooses not to do the work.” “If she would just pay attention, she would get it.” “I tell the whole class how to do it, and she still comes and asks again. She simply does not listen.” “He is not motivated. After I give the instructions, he sits there and does not work.”

These are common statements made about children with learning disabilities.

### **IS LD AN ISOLATED DISABILITY?**

It is not uncommon for other disabilities to be present with LD. For instance Attention Deficit Disorder (with or without hyperactivity) and learning disabilities often go together. Emotional or behavioral disabilities can also be present with LD. Learning disabilities can co-exist with any other disability.

Other disabilities may present themselves after the learning disability. As noted before, LD is a hidden disability that can often be overlooked, because people do not understand why the person is having difficulty learning and/or performing tasks. There can be a lot of frustration when the appropriate treatment and services are not being provided and when the child is being blamed for the inability to perform. Behaviors and/or emotional problems often begin to emerge. All aspects of the child’s disability must be considered in educational planning.

### **WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN I SUSPECT MY CHILD MAY HAVE A LEARNING DISABILITY?**

The first step would be to talk with the teacher about how the child is doing in class and what the teacher is observing. If the teacher has concerns, explore those and compare them to your view of the child’s performance and ability. Talk with the teacher about making a referral to have the child tested by the school. If the teacher has not noticed anything out of the ordinary about your child, do not assume there is no reason for concern. Remember, learning disabilities are hidden disabilities, and some teachers are not aware of the symptoms. Some children quietly fail in school and simply fall through the cracks in the system. That is not acceptable!

Parents may be unaware that they can start the evaluation process with the school. Anyone can bring the child to the attention of the school district and ask to have him/her evaluated to see if the child needs special education services. This is to be done in writing to the Special Education Director of the school district. In the letter state the educational concerns about the child and ask for a full evaluation.

## **WHAT PROTECTIONS ARE THERE FOR CHILDREN TO GET HELP IN SCHOOL?**

There are state and federal laws to insure the rights of children to an appropriate education. There are laws specific to special education:

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that insures a free, appropriate, public education (FAPE) for children with disabilities, ages 3-21.
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal anti-discrimination law that insures that children with disabilities have equal access to their education, services and programs as all other children do.
- Washington Administrative Code (WAC 392-172) is Washington State's special education law to insure FAPE.

IDEA and WAC govern the provision of special education (specialized instruction) to children who qualify for services under one of the disability categories in those laws. One of the categories is "specific learning disability". Section 504 has a broader definition of disability than the other two laws. Children who do not qualify for specialized instruction under IDEA and WAC can qualify for services under 504. Those services are usually in the form of accommodations in the regular education classroom.

School districts must comply with all state and federal laws governing education. Federal laws take precedence over state laws, unless the state law is more protective of the child.

## **IF I ASK THE SCHOOL TO EVALUATE MY CHILD, WHAT HAPPENS?**

First, it is important to know that parents are equal members of the special education team, so they are vital participants in the process.

As soon as the school district receives the letter requesting evaluation, a timeline is set in motion. During that window of time, the team decides whether there is reason to evaluate the child. If there is, parents are asked to sign informed consent for the evaluation. After the school district evaluates the child, the team decides whether or not the child qualifies for special education. If the child qualifies, the team writes an individualized education program (IEP) for the child, and services and supports are put in place.

***REMEMBER: THE CHILD'S PARENTS ARE EQUAL MEMBERS OF THE TEAM THAT MAKES THESE DECISIONS.***

## **HOW DOES A CHILD QUALIFY FOR SERVICES?**

To qualify for services according to the definition of learning disabilities, a child must have average or above average intellectual ability and have a severe discrepancy between intellectual level and achievement. Discrepancy tables are used to determine whether the gap between ability and performance is sufficient to need specialized instruction. Additionally, the discrepancy must not be explainable by any other factors, such as a vision, hearing or orthopedic impairment or emotional/behavioral disability.

In Washington State, educators look at 7 areas of learning disabilities:

- Oral expression
- Listening comprehension
- Written expression
- Basic reading skill
- Reading comprehension
- Mathematics calculation
- Mathematics reasoning

If a child shows a severe discrepancy in one or more of those areas, s/he qualifies for special education (specialized instruction) and will have an IEP. The IEP must be written to meet the child's specific educational needs.

Sometimes a child who has a learning disability does not qualify for special education services, because there is not a big enough discrepancy between his/her ability and performance according to the discrepancy tables. This often happens in the early grades when the child has not had enough academics to fall far enough behind in performance (according to the tables). When this happens, a child can receive help through a 504 plan. A 504 plan provides modifications and accommodations in the regular education classroom.

The WAC is more prescriptive about diagnosis and programming for learning disabilities than it is for other disability categories. Consult WAC 392-172-126 through 392-172-132 for full information.

## **HOW DOES AN IEP HELP?**

An IEP is an individualized education program that is written to meet the special education needs of a specific child. The IEP document is a contract between the parent(s) and the school district covering what the child needs, what will be provided to meet those needs, and how and when it will be provided. The IEP is based on the child's Present Levels of Performance. That is the area where the child's needs and strengths are listed and established. From there, Goals and Objectives/Benchmarks are written to show the levels of progress the team expects the child to attain within a calendar year. Services the school district will provide, as well as any accommodations, equipment, and modifications are also included in the document. Dates for initiation

and duration of services, transition services, assessment information, and consideration of any special factors, such as behavior concerns or communication needs are some of the other components of the IEP. In short, the IEP is a picture of where the child currently functions, where s/he should be functioning within the year, the services and supports to help him/her reach that level, and how progress will be reported to the parents.

It is extremely important to establish a program for all the child's current educational needs in the IEP. Sometimes, when a child has a high number of needs, priorities may have to be set for which ones to work on first. Realize that if the needs and the programming are not in the IEP, they may not be addressed in the child's school day. Sometimes staff will say about a particular skill, "We teach that to all the kids". That does not mean it will be individualized to your child's specific needs. If individualization (a different way for him/her to learn the task) must be provided in order for your child to master a skill, it has to be included in the IEP. Being written into the IEP is your assurance that a particular area of strength or need will be addressed in your child's program.

**AFTER** the IEP is written, the child's placement is determined. Students are supposed to be educated in the general education classroom and given the supports and services necessary for his/her success. When the child cannot be successful in the regular education classroom with supports and services, then the team can consider a more restrictive placement, such as pull-out services, like the resource room.

**REMEMBER! PARENTS ARE EQUAL MEMBERS OF THE IEP TEAM—ANY TEAM THAT MAKES DECISIONS ABOUT EVALUATION, PROGRAM, AND/OR PLACEMENT!**

### **WHAT IS A 504 PLAN?**

A 504 plan is written for a child with a disability who needs help but does not qualify for special education. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 defines a person with a disability as someone who has a disability, has a record of a disability, or is regarded as having a disability. This definition is far broader than the definition in IDEA or WAC. A 504 plan is usually written to provide accommodations in the general education classroom.

### **WHAT ARE ACCOMMODATIONS? WHEN AND HOW ARE THEY USED?**

As the name implies, they are ways of meeting the child's needs within the general education classroom. Accommodations can also be made in any other setting.

At times, a student does not need specialized instruction, because accommodations in the general education classroom provide enough support for him/her to be successful.

Examples of accommodations could include extra time to take tests, or taking the test in a separate, quiet setting, or taking the test orally instead of in written form. A more complete listing of accommodations can be found at the end of this booklet. These accommodations would need to be put into a 504 plan for the student and distributed to the student's teachers so they know what the student's needs are and what they must provide.

Accommodations are also included in an IEP when needed. If, for instance, a student is in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and reads at the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level, s/he would receive specialized instruction through the IEP for reading. Since the general education classroom's books and materials are written at the 6<sup>th</sup> grade level, the student will need accommodations in order to access the information. Books on tape or highlighted texts could be written into the IEP to meet this need. The accommodations must be individualized to the child and to what will help him/her achieve success.

### **WHAT IS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY?**

Assistive technology (AT) is equipment the student with disabilities needs in order to increase, maintain, or improve his/her functional capabilities. AT includes a variety of equipment, ranging from adaptive implements, such as specially designed scissors or pencils to specialized furniture. It also includes calculators, word processors, and computers. The equipment must be chosen or designed to meet the student's individual needs. For example, a child, who is unable to write well enough to do class work clearly or in a timely manner, might need a laptop computer with a spell-check to do his/her assignments. It would not be appropriate for the district to simply provide access to the one or two classroom computers and expect that student to take turns with all the other students in class. If it has been determined that s/he needs a laptop with a spell-check, that is what must be provided. The equipment must be allowed to be taken home, if the student needs it to do school work.

### **WHAT ABOUT LEARNING STYLE?**

A learning style is a preferred way of using one's abilities. Some people are more able to use visual information. Others prefer to listen, while others are more successful with a sensory approach to learning. Many people use a combination of styles. When a person's LD affects one of these modes of learning, it becomes important to find out which way(s) s/he learns best. For example, if a person is able to hear within normal limits but is not able to learn by listening s/he probably has auditory processing deficit(s). In this situation the person needs information presented visually and/or "hands-on" in addition to the verbal material. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for a student in this situation to be successful in a class where all the material is presented in lecture form, with no visuals or "hands-on" experiences.

The child's learning style should be determined during the evaluation that diagnoses the learning disability. You can ask for that specifically when you request the evaluation. Style of learning can and should be accommodated through the IEP or 504 plan.

Other aspects of learning style need to be identified and worked with. For instance, some students have a difficult time (or are unable to) reading information on a vertical surface (the chalkboard) and copying it to a horizontal surface (their paper). When homework assignments are presented in this way, it is difficult, if not impossible, for some students to correctly transcribe the information into their notebooks. Some teachers, not understanding the concept, will say, "But the students know the assignments are always written on that corner of the board. They have the whole period to write them down, so there is no reason for a student to not have the assignment." Some students cannot follow a series of directions and may need the instructions broken into smaller segments, or given orally or in writing. Some students have difficulty with navigating through and around a school building. They may become easily directionally confused and get lost going from class to class. **If something is part of the student's disability, the skill or compensatory skills must be taught and/or accommodations must be made.**

The question can be raised: "Is it Dyslexia or Dysteachia?" When a student has a different style of learning than most others, that style must be accommodated in order for that child to be successful. That is the job of the educational staff—to teach so the child can learn. It is also the job of the child's parents—to find out how the child learns and work with him/her in that style.

### **ARE THERE VARIOUS KINDS OF INTELLIGENCES?**

Standardized intelligence (IQ) testing often does not show an accurate picture of a child's knowledge and capabilities. Some of the reasons are that most IQ testing is language based and depends on the life experiences a child has had. If a child has a language disability, the testing may not show a true picture of what the child knows. S/he may not be able to process the information or may not be able to verbally express the answers appropriately, which would impact the scoring. When a child is from a different culture or different socio-economic group, the testing may involve concepts that the child has not been exposed to. That does not mean the child is less intelligent, but it may show up that way in the scoring, because the child simply lacks the life experiences. There are non-verbal intelligence tests. A child (or person of any age) who is being tested needs to have the evaluation done with instruments that are not biased against his/her culture, disability, and/or socio-economic group. The tests are supposed to measure the child's ability levels, rather than the disability levels. See examples of culturally specific tests in the back of this booklet.

In addition to the traditional view of what intelligence or IQ means, some relatively new evidence has been presented that shows how people can be very bright in a number of areas that are not necessarily measured by the standard IQ tests.

According to Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences\*, all people possess seven distinct sets of capabilities. Gardner emphasizes that these intelligences work together, not in isolation. The seven intelligences are:

- **Spatial:** The ability to perceive the visual-spatial world accurately and to perform transformations upon one's perceptions. This intelligence is highly developed in hunters, scouts, guides, interior designers, architects, artists, and inventors.
- **Bodily-Kinesthetic:** The expertise to use one's whole body to express ideas and feelings and facility in using one's hands to produce or transform things. Highly developed in actors, mimes, athletes, dancers, craftspersons, sculptors, mechanics, and surgeons.
- **Musical:** The capacity to perceive, discriminate, transform, and express musical forms. Highly developed in musical performers, aficionados, and critics.
- **Linguistic:** The capacity to use words effectively, orally or in writing. Highly developed in story-tellers, orators, politicians, poets, playwrights, editors, and journalists.
- **Logical-Mathematical:** The capacity to use numbers effectively and to reason well. Highly developed in mathematicians, accountants, statisticians, scientists, computer programmers, and logicians.
- **Interpersonal:** The ability to perceive and make distinctions in the moods, intentions, motivations, and feelings of other people. Can include sensitivity to facial expressions, voice and gestures, as well as the ability to respond effectively to such cues—to influence other people, for example.
- **Intrapersonal:** The ability to act adaptively on the basis on one's self-knowledge. Includes having an accurate picture of one's strengths and limitations, awareness of one's moods and motivations, and the capacity for self-discipline.

\*Adapted from an article about the ASCD book, *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*, by Thomas Armstrong.

Other authors have written about different kinds of intelligences, such as Daniel Goleman in his book, *Emotional Intelligence—Why it can matter more than IQ*. He discusses having an emotional mind as well as a rational mind. Each involves a different way of thinking or of perceiving a situation. People often talk about listening to and acting according to one's heart or one's head. The emotional mind often takes over a situation before the rational mind does, as in when one acts (or reacts) before thinking.

### WHAT IF BEHAVIOR BECOMES AN ISSUE?

As mentioned previously there can be other disabilities co-existing with LD. A child (or adult) might have, for instance, oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) in addition to the LD. This would cause behavioral concerns. In another child the behavior might develop as a result of the frustration over not being able to learn or perform at ability

level. The other component of the frustration is that children are often blamed for their inability to learn as well as adults expect them to.

Whenever behavior becomes an issue, the first step is to analyze why it is happening. Behavior is a form of communication. There is always a purpose or reason for behavior. The adults' job in this situation is to determine what the child is trying to communicate as well as the reason behind the behavior.

There is a specific method the schools must use to determine this. When IDEA was reauthorized in 1997, a process was developed that must be followed when behavior becomes an issue for a student who has an IEP. The 3 parts to the process include:

- Conduct a Manifestation Determination to decide whether or not the behavior is related to the disability, the program and/or the child's placement;
- Conduct a Functional Behavior Assessment to analyze the behavior and determine such components as causes, triggers or patterns to the behavior;
- Write (or revise) the positive behavior intervention plan, which is supposed to be a proactive, positive approach for working with behavior. The aim is to teach the child what is appropriate behavior and to intervene to keep the inappropriate behaviors from happening, rather than waiting until the child misbehaves then doling out consequences.

These steps are conducted by the IEP team, and remember: *PARENTS ARE EQUAL MEMBERS OF THEIR CHILD'S TEAM.*

It is far more effective to determine and work with the cause(s) of the behavior, rather than simply rewarding or punishing surface behaviors. When only surface behaviors are targeted and the causes are not, it is like treating a deep wound by trying to heal the surface only. The wound is still there, and the condition becomes worse. Treating the surface behaviors and not the cause may provide a temporary improvement at best, but not lasting skills for maintaining appropriate behaviors when the "going gets tough". When the above steps are followed appropriately, the behaviors—as well as the child's self-esteem—usually improve, and the child gains skills and techniques s/he can carry into adult life.

The percentage of people with LD in the justice system (both juvenile and adult) is high. The difficulty people with LD have with decision-making, impulsiveness, reasoning, problem-solving and other components of the disability puts them at higher risk for getting into trouble, and that includes trouble with the law. Helping them gain as many skills as possible at as early an age as possible, encouraging self-esteem and the ability to make appropriate decisions and say, "No", when needed are important proactive steps to aid them in staying out of the juvenile justice system. Communication skill is also highly important. For instance, a driver may be stopped by the police for a traffic infraction. If s/he knows how to courteously address the officer, answer the questions, find and show the requested documentation in an appropriate way, as well as self-advocate in a respectful manner, s/he will usually be in far less serious trouble than

someone who comes across as rude, smart-mouthed and challenging to the officer's authority. The same skills are needed if a person has to appear in court.

This kind of personal interaction is part of learning appropriate social skills, and those are needed in all facets of life. Many people without learning disabilities struggle with social skills, and it seems to be a common component of learning disabilities. The talents needed to make friends, interact with other people, understand verbal cues and innuendos, and read body language are often impacted by the same learning disabilities that affect math, reading, and other academics. When that is the case, the skills and techniques need to be consistently taught and practiced in the home as well as in the schools.

### **HOW IMPORTANT IS SELF-ADVOCACY?**

Self-advocacy is a vital skill for anyone to have. It involves knowing about oneself, one's strengths and weaknesses, making one's wants and needs known, and in general being able to "stand up for oneself".

This is especially true for a person with a disability. When a person self-advocates, he/she knows about the disability, the language of the disability and how the disability affects personal performance. S/he can tell someone (whether it is a teacher or employer) about his/her style of learning and ask for the assistance and/or accommodations needed. Part of knowing about one's disability is figuring out what works and what does not work for the individual. Parents and school staff can be valuable resources to help with this. They can make suggestions, but ultimately it is the person with LD who will decide what is effective and what is not, and some of it will be through trial and error experimentation. For example, one person might find having soft music in the background while studying can aid concentration, and for another person that same music will be very distracting.

When a person has learning disabilities, having knowledge about LD and what it means can be empowering. It helps the person know s/he can learn. It may be in a different way than most people do, but the ability is there. Remember, many people who have LD are told, "You have the ability, if you would just try harder". They know they have been trying, and it has not been working for them, so they start to feel "stupid" or become angry because of the frustration. It is often a relief for the person who has LD to find out there is a reason it has been difficult for him/her to learn. When a person is taught according to his/her style of learning and has accommodations made, that person can be successful!

Self-advocacy and independence should start at an early age. Beginning steps involve letting the child make choices and decisions and teaching that s/he can say, "No", in certain circumstances and situations. The child should always be treated as a person first. The child happens to have a disability. The child should not be identified as a "Disabled Child" as though the disability is part of his/her identity. As the child matures,

s/he should learn about the disability, that it is not his/her “fault”, that there is no shame in being disabled, and that s/he has many talents. The child’s talents and interests should be encouraged and developed. Helping the youngster build on his/her strengths is a good way to promote self-esteem in a child who may daily receive many negative messages about what s/he cannot do. The more self-confidence a child has, the more able s/he is to self-advocate.

## **WHAT ABOUT TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD?**

The parents, the child, and the educators need to work together to prepare a child for the adult world. This is true for all children. For children with disabilities, there is some more and different planning and preparation that needs to be done. Many of those things have already been discussed. In addition for a student who has an IEP, transition planning must begin by age 14. It involves looking at the student’s interests and abilities and what s/he wants to do in the adult world. The IEP team, now including the student, also looks at the current levels of ability and then plans a program to assist the student to make that transition into adult life. The areas of concern are vocation, living situation, and community access.

In looking at vocation it does not matter whether a student plans to go on to higher education, take a job right out of school, or whatever else. The program must be individualized to help him/her attain that goal. If the student plans to go to college, for instance, college preparatory classes need to be part of the schedule—along with the modifications and services the student needs. If the student plans to go to work right after leaving school, s/he may need some job skills training. Many students need social skills training to know the appropriate ways to interact with co-workers, with the supervisor, and with customers. When people with LD lose jobs, it is more often because of poor interaction with staff and customers than because of lack of job skills.

If the student needs help with learning to live independently or in accessing community activities, goals should be written into the IEP in those areas also.

Another part of transition planning on the IEP is making the connections with appropriate adult service providers, such as Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, so the person with an IEP can access those services as soon as possible. Adult services are not mandated and often have waiting lists, so it is important to make those necessary contacts early.

## **WHAT JOBS OR CAREERS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PEOPLE WITH LD?**

**ANY JOB OR CAREER THEY WANT!!!**

People who have learning disabilities have all types of jobs—just like everybody else. It depends on where their skills and interests take them. People with LD are engaged in a

full range of employment situations. Some become famous and others who may not be famous are also successful in whatever field they have chosen. Lists are sometimes published giving names of well-known people with LD who have become actors, scientists, athletes, politicians and business moguls. There are many, many people with LD who, although not famous, make huge contributions and differences at a more local level, such as doctors, landscape specialists, attorneys, heavy equipment operators, sales people, police and a myriad of others.

The federal law, the Americans with Disabilities Act, provides protections for people with disabilities in the job market. A person who is otherwise qualified for a job cannot be denied that job strictly because of disability. Prospective employers may not, as part of the interview process, ask whether or not a person has a disability. That information is only to be disclosed after the job offer has been made. When a person accepts the job, then s/he can tell the employer what accommodations s/he needs in order to do the work. Unless those accommodations are unreasonable (and most are not), they must be provided. The kinds of accommodations discussed earlier are easily made, such as breaking down instructions into smaller segments. Another accommodation might be to provide a list of the tasks to be done so the worker can do them as listed and check them off when complete. As the worker becomes comfortable with the job, the list making might be able to be phased out.

Do you remember the discussion about self-advocacy? The above scenario is a good example of the need for self-advocacy skills and putting them into action.

### **IS COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY AN OPTION?**

Many people who have LD go on to college or university—or other forms of education after high school. It is important to know that Section 504 applies to colleges and universities—any institution that receives federal funding. Each agency or institution that 504 covers must have a special services person on staff to aid people with disabilities. The person with a disability (consumer) must access that staff member, show documentation of the disability and work with that person on the accommodations needed. The special services person does not have the responsibility to locate all persons with disabilities at the college. It is the consumer's responsibility to access the help. Again, this is where self-advocacy comes into the picture.

### **FINAL COMMENTS**

This booklet has provided a brief overview of some of the aspects of learning disabilities. For more information consult the references listed on page 15. The spectrum of learning disabilities is wide, and much information is available. The more information a person gains about a child's LD or as an adult about his/her own LD, the better prepared s/he is to accommodate, cope, and find the methods that help him/her to learn and function best.

## BOOKS AND OTHER RESOURCES

Many books, videos and pamphlets about learning disabilities are available. Some are about learning disabilities in general, and some are more specific about a certain type or about particular aspects of LD. Here is a sampling from the PAVE library.

### BOOKS:

*Children Who Can Hear But Can't Listen* by Mark C. Gridley, Ph.D.  
Auditory processing deficit-achievement anxiety syndrome

*Classroom Success for the Learning Disabled* by Suzanne H. Stevens  
How to work with the child with learning disabilities in the classroom

*HAZY...? CRAZY...? AND/OR LAZY...?* by Joseph H. Rosenthal, MD, PhD  
The Maligning of Children with Learning Disabilities

*Learning Disabilities* by Cruickshank, Morse and Johns  
The Struggle from Adolescence Toward Adulthood

*THE LEARNING DISABLED ADOLESCENT* by Woodward and Peters  
Learning Success in Content Areas

*THE LEARNING-DISABLED CHILD: WAYS THAT PARENTS CAN HELP*  
By Suzanne H. Stevens

*MAINSTREAMING THE LEARNING DISABLED ADOLESCENT* by D. Woodward  
A Manual of Strategies and Materials

*THE MISUNDERSTOOD CHILD* by Larry B. Silver, M.D.  
A Guide for Parents of Learning Disabled Children

*SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH MY CHILD* by Brutten, Richardson, and Mangel  
A Parent's Book About Children with Learning Disabilities

### VIDEOS:

*Dyslexia—The Hidden Disability*  
*How Difficult Can This Be?*  
*I'm Not Stupid*  
*Last One Picked—First One Picked On*  
*Mind's Eye*  
*Secret Dyslexia*  
*Stephanie: A College Student with LD*

## WHAT IT IS LIKE TO TAKE A CULTURALLY SPECIFIC TEST

The cultural bias and discriminatory nature of many assessment instruments (especially intelligence tests) have often been questioned. These evaluation tools are used in making decisions about the placement and programs for students who come from and experience a variety of backgrounds and ability levels. The following sampling of assessments will help you realize what many students are subjected to in the evaluation process. Read the items and try to answer them anyway and do the best you can – just as you would expect your students to do.

Examples 1-4 are taken from the *Black Intelligence Test of Cultural Homogeneity-BITCH* (developed by Dr. Robert L. Williams, Washington University at St. Louis), based on the urban Black culture.

1. Deuce and a quarter
  - a. Money
  - b. A car
  - c. A house
  - d. Dice
2. T.C.B.
  - a. That's cool, baby.
  - b. Taking care of business.
  - c. They couldn't breathe.
  - d. Took careful behavior.
3. C.P.T.
  - a. Time
  - b. Tune
  - c. Tale
  - d. Twist
4. Mother's Day
  - a. Black Independence Day
  - b. A day when Mothers are honored
  - c. A day the welfare checks come
  - d. Every first Sunday in church

Examples 5-8 are taken from the "Chitling Test" (by Adrian Dove), based on the Southern rural Black culture.

5. A "handkerchief head" is:
  - a. A cool cat
  - b. A porter
  - c. An Uncle Tom
  - d. A hopi
  - e. A preacher
6. Cheap chitlings (not the kind you purchase at a frozen-food counter) will taste rubbery unless they are cooked long enough. How soon can you quit cooking them to eat and enjoy them?
  - a. 15 minutes
  - b. 2 hours
  - c. 24 hours
  - d. One week (on a low flame)
  - e. 1 hour
7. If you throw dice and seven is showing on the top, what is facing down?
  - a. Seven
  - b. Snake eyes
  - c. Boxcars
  - d. Little joes
  - e. 11
8. "Bo Didley" is a:
  - a. Game for children
  - b. Down-home cheap wine
  - c. Down-home singer
  - d. New dance
  - e. Moejoe call

Examples 9-12 are taken from the “People Ain’t Dumb – l’ts Them Tests!” (compiled by the editors of the Appalachian Review – West Virginia University), based on Appalachian culture.

9. Blue tick is
 

a. An insect	c. Hound dog
b. A food stamp	d. NRA sticker
  
10. Before it is fit to drink, moonshine must be
 

a. Aged three months	c. Aged three days
b. Aged three weeks	d. Cooled
  
11. The most successful method for catching catfish is
 

a. Gigging	d. Creating electric shock with two pokers and a car battery
b. Setting a trot line	
c. Dynamiting	
  
12. A gee-haw-whinny-diddle is a
 

a. Good time	c. Toy
b. Harness for a horse	d. Type of persimmon

Examples 13-16 are taken from “The Hana-Butta Test, “ based on Hawaiian culture.

13. If you were at home and someone told you to get “da kine,” they could probably mean:
 

a. A glass of water	c. Dried fish
b. A towel	e. Any of the above
c. An ash tray	
  
14. “Pakalolo” is:
 

a. Salted raw fish and seaweed	c. Marijuana
b. Whiskey made from ti-root	d. Liquor
	e. Acis
  
15. If someone wanted to say dinner was delicious, he would say it was:
 

a. Papa’s	d. Lola
b. Kukui	e. Ono
c. Ewa	
  
16. “Hanna-butta” is known statewide as:
 

a. High butter fat Hana butter	d. Mucus running from the nose of a person with a bad
b. Hana Dairy’s margarine	son with a bad
c. Toto’s Snack Bar’s famous peanut butter shake	e. A plain old peanut butter sandwich

**WHAT IT’S LIKE TO TAKE A CULTURALLY SPECIFIC TEST  
ANSWERS**

1. b, 2. b, 3. a, 4. c, 5. e, 6. c, 7. a, 8. c, 9. c, 10. d, 11. c, 12. c, 13. e, 14. c, 15. e, 16. d

## Modifications

The following is a copy of the form provided by the Alabama State Department of Education  
to the state's school system.

### Modifications for Regular Classes

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

School Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Check  each modification made

	Name of Course	Teacher
1	[ _____ ]	[ _____ ]
2	[ _____ ]	[ _____ ]
3	[ _____ ]	[ _____ ]

Courses

1	2	3	
			<b><u>A. Modifying the Presentation of the Material</u></b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Break assignment into segments of shorter tasks.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. When content mastery is questionable, investigate the use of concrete concepts BEFORE teaching abstract
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Relate information to student's experiential base.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Reduce the number of concepts introduced at any one time.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Provide student with an overview of the lesson BEFORE beginning the lesson. (Tell student what student should expect to learn and why).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. Monitor the level of language you use to communicate ideas (Are you using vocabulary and complex sentence structures that are too advances?)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Schedule frequent, short conferences with student to check for comprehension.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Provide consistent review of any lesson BEFORE introducing new information.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	9. Allow student to obtain and retain information utilizing: <input type="checkbox"/> Cassette/tape recorders <input type="checkbox"/> Projects <input type="checkbox"/> Dictation <input type="checkbox"/> Computers <input type="checkbox"/> Calculators <input type="checkbox"/> Typewriters <input type="checkbox"/> Interviews/Oral reports
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	10. Highlight important concepts to be learned in text or material (color code key points; outline; study guides).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	11. Space practice and drill sessions over time.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	12. Monitor the rate in which you present material (Do you talk too fast or give too much material at one time?)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	13. Give additional presentation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	a. Repeat original presentation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	b. Provide simpler more complete explanation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	c. Give additional examples.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	d. Model skills in several ways.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	14. Provide additional guided practice.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	a. Require more responses.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	b. Lengthen practice sessions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	c. Schedule extra practice sessions.

- | <b>1</b>                 | <b>2</b>                 | <b>3</b>                 | <b><u>Modifying the Presentation of the Material (Continued)</u></b>                         |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 15. Make consequences more attractive.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Increase feedback.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Provide knowledge of results.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | c. Chart performance.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | d. Reward approximations.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | e. Give incentives to begin and to complete.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 16. Recognize and give credit for student's oral participation in class.                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 17. Make arrangements for homework assignments to reach home with clear, concise directions. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 18. Assign tasks at the appropriate level (lower reading/difficulty level).                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 19. Give tests orally.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 20. Other: _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 21. Other: _____   |

- | <b>1</b>                 | <b>2</b>                 | <b>3</b>                 | <b><u>B. Modifying the Environment</u></b>                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Use study booths.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Use proximity seating.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Seat student in area free from distractions.                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Let student select the place which is best for student to study. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Help keep student's space free of unnecessary materials.         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Use checklists to help student get organized.                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Use notebook for organized assignments, materials, and homework. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. Provide opportunities for movement.                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Other: _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. Other: _____  |

- | <b>1</b>                 | <b>2</b>                 | <b>3</b>                 | <b><u>C. Modifying Time Demands</u></b>   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Increase amount of time allowed to complete assignments/test. (Contract with student concerning time allotment.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Reduce amount of work or length of tests (as opposed to allowing more time).                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Teach time management skills (use of checklists, prioritizing time, prioritizing assignments).                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Space short work periods with breaks or change of task.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Set up a specific routine and stick with it.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Alternate quiet and active time (short periods of each).   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Give student a specific task to perform within specific time limits.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. Other: _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Other: _____   |

- | <b>1</b>                 | <b>2</b>                 | <b>3</b>                 | <b><u>D. Modifying the Materials</u></b>  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Visual Motor Integration   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Avoid large amounts of written work (both in class and homework).                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Encourage student to select the method of writing which is most comfortable (cursive or manuscript). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | c. Set realistic and mutually agreed upon expectations for neatness.                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | d. Let student type, record or give answers orally instead of writing.                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | e. Avoid pressures of speed and accuracy.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | f. Provide student with carbon copy of lecture notes produced by teacher or peer.                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | g. Reduce amounts of board work copying and textbook copying; provide student with written information. |

1 2 3

**D. Modifying the Materials (Continued)**

h. Other \_\_\_\_\_  
i. Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. Visual Processing

- a. Highlight information to be learned (color coding, underling, etc.)
- b. Keep written assignments and work space free from extraneous/irrelevant distractors.
- c. Avoid purple dittos.
- d. Worksheets should be clear and well-defined.
- e. Go over visual task with student and make sure student has a clear understanding of all parts of the assignment BEFORE beginning.
- f. Avoid having student copy from the board. (Provide student with a written copy of the material. May copy teacher's manual or other lecture notes.)
- g. Other \_\_\_\_\_
- h. Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. Language Processing

- a. Give written directions to supplement verbal directions.
- b. Slow the rate or presentation.
- c. Paraphrase material using similar language.
- d. Keep statements short and to the point.
- e. Avoid use of abstract language (metaphors, idioms, puns, etc.)
- f. Keep sentence structures simple; gradually introduce more complex sentences as student masters the ability to comprehend them.
- g. Encourage feedback from student to check for understanding. (Have student restate what you have said in student's own words.)
- h. Familiarize student with any new vocabulary BEFORE the lesson. (Make sure student can use this vocabulary not just recognize it.)
- i. Reduce amount of extraneous noise such as conversations, TV, radio, noises from outside, etc.
- j. Alert student's attention to key points with such phrases as, "This is important. Listen carefully."
- k. Ensure the readability levels of the textbooks used in class are commensurate with student's language level.
- l. Utilize visual aids to supplement verbal information. (Charts, graphics, pictures, etc., can be used to illustrate written and spoken information).
- m. Utilize manipulative, hands-on activities whenever possible; establish the concrete experience base BEFORE teaching more abstract concepts.
- n. ALWAYS demonstrate to student how the new material relates to material student has previously learned.
- o. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- p. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Organizational

- a. Establish daily routine and attempt to maintain it.
- b. Make clear rules and be consistent enforcing them.
- c. Contract with student, using a reward for completion of the contract.
- d. Avoid cluttered, crowded worksheets by utilizing techniques such as:  
Blocking Block assignments into smaller groups.  
Cutting Cut worksheets into fourths, sixths, or eighths and place one problem in each square.  
Folding Fold worksheets into fourths, sixths, or eighths and place one problem in each square.  
Color Coding  
Highlighting  
Underlining Color code, highlight or underline important information on which the student needs to focus.

- |   |   |   |    |   |
|---|---|---|----|---|
| □ | □ | □ | e. | Hand out written assignments with expected dates of completion typed or written on one corner.                                      |
| □ | □ | □ | f. | To prevent misplaced assignments, provide student with file folders, notebooks or trays in which he can immediately place his work. |
| □ | □ | □ | g. | Set aside a specific time for cleaning desks, lockers, organizing notebooks, etc.   |
| □ | □ | □ | h. | Teach goal-setting skills   |
| □ | □ | □ | i. | Teach decision-making/prioritizing skills.  |
| □ | □ | □ | j. | Teach time management skills.   |