

Disability Awareness

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Special points of interest:

- Learning Disabilities in School Aged Children
- Signs of a Learning Disability in children
- Strategies
- The Role of ADHD



Learning Disabilities in School Aged Children

According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), learning disabilities affect at least 1 in 10 children. Learning disabilities are neurobiological in nature and impede a student's ability to store, process and/or produce information (LDA NYS, 2003).

Children with emotional and behavioral disturbances may exhibit some of the same symptoms as children with learning disabilities. An assessment could help identify the problem and determine what would best help the students who are struggling in your classes.

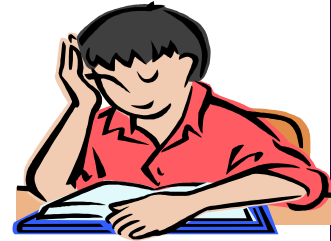
Retrieved on January 18th 2007 from:

http://www.ldanys.org/index.php?page_id=114

Some factors that may help you deal with difficult students in your class are:

- * Build an **alliance** with the students and focus on their strengths while turning to trusted colleagues and helpful individuals.
- * Define **boundaries** and talk directly with the students about expected behaviors. Mutually agree on these boundaries and write them down.
- * Take time to take care of yourself and model the importance of **self-care** to your students.

Think about the bigger picture, don't just assume the student is being difficult for the fun of it. Often, there are underlying issues that are



affecting this student's behavior. Don't use this as an excuse to allow disruptive behaviors in your class. Work with other trusted educators and staff to help get to the root of the problem.

To retrieve more information on this topic, useful websites are:

www.nclld.org

www.aacap.org

www.nasponline.org

Most Frequent Signs of a Learning Disability

- Has difficulty understanding and following directions
- Has trouble remembering what someone just told them
- Fails to master reading, spelling, writing, and/or math skills, and thus fails
- Has difficulty distinguishing right from left; difficulty identifying words or a tendency to reverse words, letters, or numbers (for example, confusing 25 with 52, "b" with "d", or "on" with "no").
- Lacks coordination in walking, sports or small activities such as holding a pencil or tying a shoelace
- Easily loses or misplaces homework, schoolbooks, or other items
- Cannot understand the concept of time; is confused by "yesterday, today or tomorrow."

Retrieved on January 4th, 2007 from: www.aacap.org under the heading of "Facts for Families" and subject "Children with Learning Disabilities"

Areas of Change:

Presentation

- Provide an audio tape
- Provide material in large print
- Present instructions orally

Response

- Allow for verbal response
- Allow for response via computer
- Allow response to be put directly into test booklet

Timing

- Allow frequent breaks
- Extend testing time

Setting

- Provide a space with minimal distractions
- Provide special lighting or acoustics

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Teaching and Relational Strategies for Educators

When teaching students with learning disabilities, it often is necessary to provide accommodations for these students. As educators, you have a difficult task of helping diverse students to reach a common goal. According to the National Center on Learning Disabilities (2005), sometimes it is not necessary to alter the material you are teaching. Changes in areas such as presentation of material, time limitations, timing and setting can easily assist a student achieve academically. It is important that the accommodations provided address the student's learning disability.

Retrieved on January 16th 2007 from: <http://www.nclld.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=306>

Strategies for Helping Improve Self-Esteem of Children with Learning Disorders

- * Be empathetic. See the world through your student's eyes.
- * Communicate with respect. Don't interrupt or put them down; answer their questions.
- * Give undivided attention.
- * Accept children for who they are.
- * Give those students a chance to contribute. Shows your faith in their abilities and gives them a sense of responsibility.
- * Treat mistakes as learning experiences.
- * Emphasize their strengths. A sense of accomplishment and pride give children the confidence to persevere when they face challenges.
- * Let them solve problems and make decisions. Avoid telling children what to do; encourage them to come up with solutions to problems.

Retrieved on January 16th 2007 from:
<http://www.nclld.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=318>

The Role of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

While ADHD is not classified as a learning disability, 20-30% of children with diagnosed ADHD also have a learning disability (LDA, 2006). Under the IDEA Act, students with ADHD are entitled to special education services with their impairment (LDA, 2006).

Signs and Symptoms of ADHD (LDA, 2006):

- Loses things necessary for tasks or activities (pencils, assignments, tools)
- Shows difficulty engaging in leisure activities quietly
- Acts as if "driven by a motor" and cannot remain still
- Blurts out answers to questions before the questions have been completed, often interrupts others
- Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes

Strategies for Teachers:

- Allow a child to change work sites frequently
- Vary tone of voice; loud, soft, whisper
- Assign tasks involving movement such as passing out papers, watering plants, running errands
- Permit a student to do something with their hands while listening: a stress ball, paper folding, clay

Retrieved on January 4th, 2007 from:
<http://www.lidaamerica.org/aboutld/teachers/understanding/adhd.asp>

