Learning Disabilities Reference

LDR

Developmental Strategies for Students with LD & AD/HD

Syllabus: Explicit and detailed; calendar with dates and assignments; checkpoints for long-term projects; posted online

Homework: Explain at beginning of class; written; posted online

Reading: Manageable doses; questions to prompt active reading

Class Presentation: Varied; not just lecture: small group, demo, concrete examples from student experience, visual supports – keywords, diagrams

Activity: Stand up and move time; change activities

Lecture Notes: Handouts or slides; outline online; concept diagrams

Discussion/Student Participation: Prompts prior to class; partner share to start; small group with reporter; time to think; jot down questions and thoughts; wait longer for more hands; leave option open to pass

Readings: On reserve or online; with good advance organizers, and summaries

**Mnemonics:** Model how to remember concepts and terms

Study Guides: Helps students know what is important

Videos: With guided questioning; structured prompts; what to watch for

Class Lists: (just names) Helps students find study partners

Assessment: Frequent and varied; multiple modes (papers, tests, projects, presentations); some low stakes

Tests: More rather than fewer; clear, concise; avoid double negatives and complex wording; reduce recall burden if recognition is sufficient; possible formats: allow page of notes, mix m/c, short answer, and essay
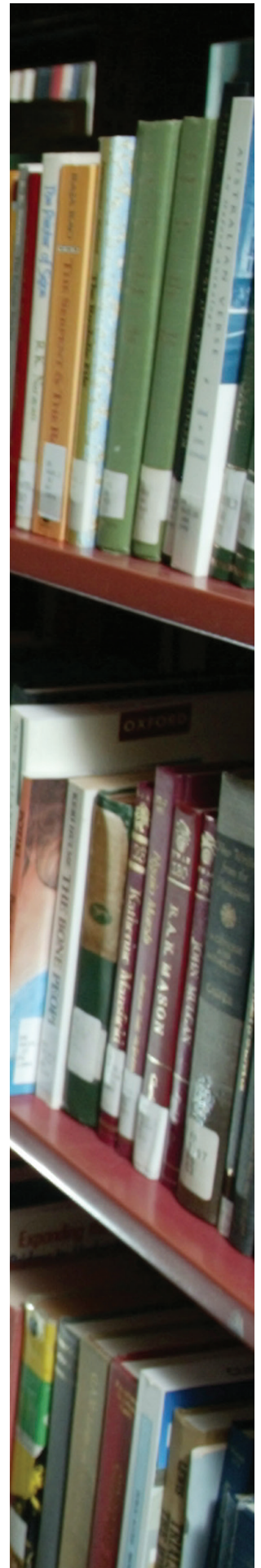
Common Types of LD & AD/HD

Listening (Receptive Language)
Easily overloaded by auditory input, especially directions or detail-filled talk. Visual or kinesthetic (hands-on) channels are often stronger

Reading (Receptive Language)*
Speed, accuracy, vocabulary, comprehension, main concept vs. detail

Oral Expression (Expressive Language)
Thinking of what to say; finding words; conceptualizing parts and whole; elaboration

Written Expression (Expressive Language)*
Ideation, organization, sentence structure, grammar, spelling

Social skills
Can miss social cues; misinterpret non-verbal communication

Part-whole understanding; weak generalization
Miss the forest for the trees; focus on detail at expense of big picture in writing or reading comprehension; poor at inferences and synthesis

Visual/spatial organization (and math)*
Difficulty with visual spatial understanding; abstract concepts

AD/HD

Attention &/or Impulsivity
Trouble maintaining attention, focusing; impulsivity; occasional hyperactivity. Medication is common and can affect alertness, sleep, eating

Executive Function Challenges

Difficulty with organizing, planning, starting, monitoring, remembering to do, completing, sense of time, studying effectively, keeping track of belongings and due dates

* Specific Learning Disorder (SLD)
   More information: DSM-5, American Psychiatric Association

Sources of Processing Difficulty

Memory: Storage and Retrieval
Input/output channel: visual, auditory, kinesthetic; verbal or non-verbal can be weak

Working Memory
Trouble multi-tasking, such as listening and copying from the board simultaneously

Processing Speed
Slow compared to other abilities; extended time critical

Visual-Motor Skills
Trouble copying/writing quickly, tracking from question to answer sheet (scantron); poor handwriting

Visual Detail
Difficulty with charts, graphs, numbers, mathematical signs

Sequencing
Confusion with following directions, steps, or logic in order

Auditory
Faulty sound awareness and/or analysis

Developmental Education Concepts

Scaffolding: Teach and assess in incremental steps within a larger context

Universal Design: Inclusive classroom instruction taking all kinds of learners into account

Feedback: Concrete, specific, frequent and balanced

Models: Positive examples and/or rubrics of how to meet expectations

Explicit (vs. implicit): Detailed and clear; written and oral

Corrective (vs. punitive): Multiple chances vs. high stakes; strength-based

A Learning Disability …

- often exists in the presence of notable strengths
- is lifelong, but manifests differently over time
- is a neurologically-based disorder of processing information
- impacts listening, thinking, speaking, reading, written language, spelling and/or math

and is...

- not low intelligence
- not a psychiatric disorder
- not a physical disability
- not a lack of motivation

Guiding Law

- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities

Common Accommodations

- extended time
- audio version of exams
- computer to type exams
- speech to text and text to speech software
- seats in the front
- recorded reading
- spell-check on exams; correction but not penalty for in-class spelling
- other assistive technology
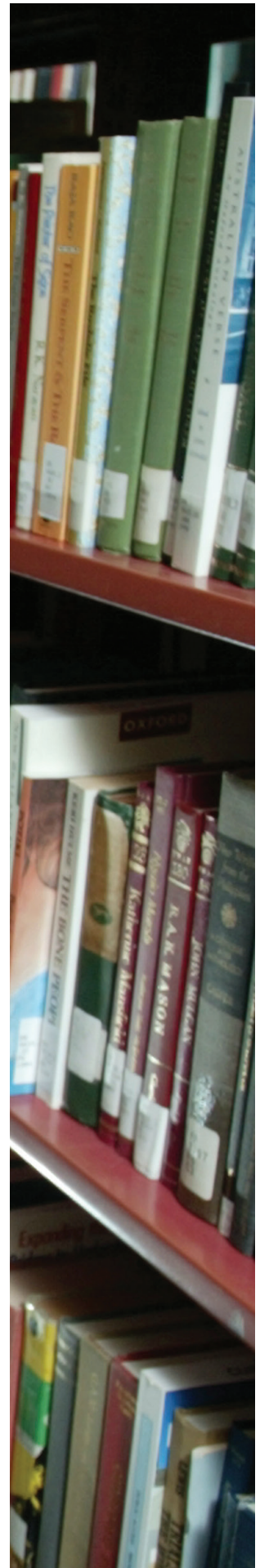
What Learning Specialists Do

Metacognitive awareness of students' strengths and weaknesses
Academic strategies (study skills, reading, organization, etc.)
Development of writing/editing process
Students' understanding of learning disabilities and ADHD
Self-advocacy skills
Effective problem-solving in daily academic life
Gradual independence along a developmental continuum unique to each student

as well as:

Evaluate diagnostic information
Develop individualized educational plans
Write progress reports for each student
Serve as liaison with other professionals and family

... and don't

Write or rewrite student papers
Do research for students
Provide answers to take-home exams
Give extensive content tutoring
Make wake-up calls or act in loco parentis

Resources

www.curry.edu/academics

Program for Advancement of Learning (PAL) 617-333-2250