

# Learning Disabilities Reference





# *Common Types of LD & AD/HD\**

## **Language-based LD**

### **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

## **Non-verbal LD**

### **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 & Impulsivity**

Trouble maintaining attention, focusing; impulsivity; occasional hyperactivity. Medication is common and can affect alertness, sleep, eating

### **Executive Function**

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

*\* common manifestations, not strict subtypes; categories can and do overlap*

# *Developmental Strategies for Students with LD & AD/HD*

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

**Homework:** Explain at beginning of class; written; posted on Blackboard

**Reading:** Every class & in 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 on Blackboard; 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

**Texts:** On reserve; with good advance organizers, and summaries

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

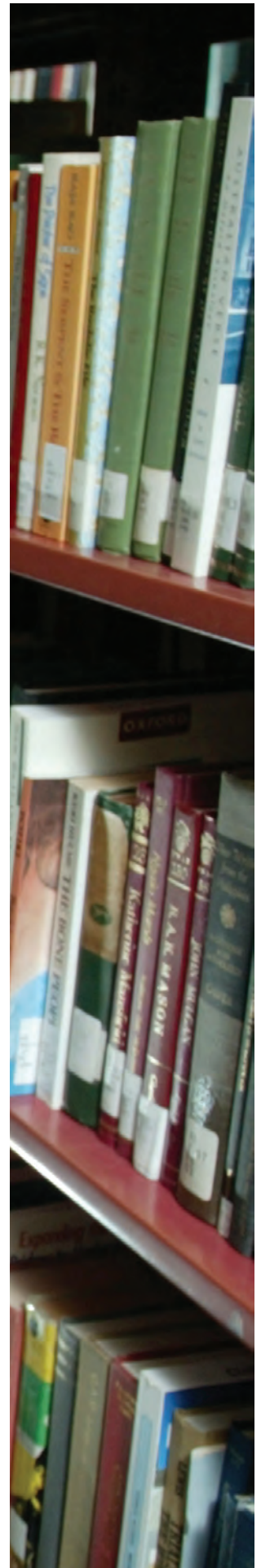
**Study Guides:** Helps students know what is important

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

**Class Lists:** (just names) Help students find study partners, etc.

**Assessment:** Frequent and varied; multiple modes (papers, tests, projects, presentations)

**Tests:** More rather than fewer; clear, concise; avoid double negatives and tricky wording; reduce recall burden if recognition is sufficient; possible formats: allow page of notes, mix m/c, short answer, and essay



# *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...*

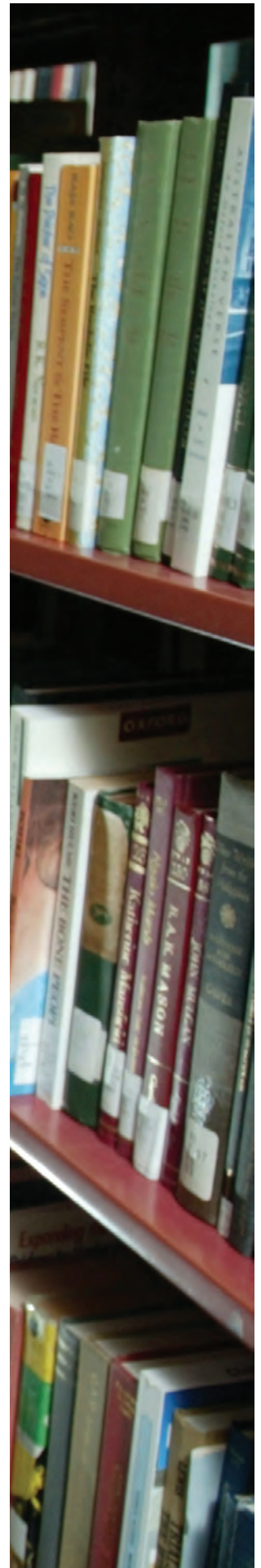
- not a kind of mental retardation/low intelligence
- not a psychiatric disorder
- not a physical disability
- not a lack of motivation

## *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
- voice to text (Naturally Speaking) and text to voice (Kurzweil) software
- seats in the front
- recorded texts
- spell-check on exams; correction but not penalty for in-class spelling
- note-taker or class notes from professor



# *What Learning Specialists Do*

## **Support:**

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](http://www.curry.edu/academics)

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

**Adult Center at PAL 617-333-2244**

**PAL for Multilingual Students 617-333-2296**

**Educational Diagnostic Center 617-333-2314**

**Summer Programs 617-333-2250**



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