

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

<b>UNDERSTANDING THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>THE EDUCATION ACT, R.S.O. 1990</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>REGULATIONS UNDER THE EDUCATION ACT</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>NUMBERED POLICY/PROGRAM MEMORANDA (PPMS)</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>BACKGROUND ON THE LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>DEFINITIONS OF LEARNING DISABILITIES</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>MINISTRY OF EDUCATION CATEGORIES AND DEFINITIONS OF EXCEPTIONALITIES</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>LEARNING DISABILITIES GROUPINGS -- 1</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>LEARNING DISABILITIES GROUPINGS -- 2</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>LEARNING DISABILITIES GROUPINGS -- 3</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>DIAGNOSTIC TERMS</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>LEARNING DISABILITIES AND ATTENTION DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>COMMONLY USED ACRONYMS</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>PARENT/SPECIAL NEEDS ASSOCIATIONS</b>	<b>35</b>



## PROVINCIAL & FEDERAL LEGISLATION

### Provincial Legislation

Education Act  
Child & Family Services Act  
Ontario Works Act  
Ontario Human Rights Code  
Accessibility for Ontarians  
with Disabilities Act

### Federal Legislation

Charter of Rights & Freedoms  
Youth Criminal Justice Act  
Access to Information Act  
Personal Information Protection and  
Electronic Documents Act

### Provincial Legislation can be obtained from:

[www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca)

Publications Ontario  
50 Grosvenor St.  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1N8  
Tel: (416) 326-5300 or 1-800-668-9938

For personal visits:

- in Toronto go to Publications Ontario Bookstore, 880 Bay Street
- in Ottawa go to Access Ontario, 171 Elgin St., Level 2

### Federal Legislation can be obtained from:

<http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/index.html>

Federal Government Publications [info@fedpubs.com](mailto:info@fedpubs.com)  
165 University Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario M5H 3B8  
Tel: (416) 860-1611 or 1-888-433-3782

## Some Relevant Legislation

**The Education Act** and the significant Regulations relating to special education i.e. 118, 298 and 306, govern the provision of educational programmes and services to all students including those who have learning disabilities. The Education Act provides the mandates of school boards.

**The Child and Family Services Act** is legislation geared to covering the protection and well being of children and their families. This Act is administered by the Ministry of Children and

Youth Services. Services covered by this Act include children's development, treatment, welfare, community support and young offenders' services, as well as Children's Aid Societies.

**Ontario Disability Support Program Act** is 1997 legislation that governs both the income support and the employment supports programs of ODSP. It replaces the Vocational Rehabilitation Act.

**Ontario Works Act** is legislation governing what income support through municipal Social Services, as well as the programs required of persons receiving income support, sometimes called workfare.

**The Ontario Human Rights Code** is the premier piece of legislation in Ontario, prohibiting discrimination on a number of grounds, including disability. Learning disabilities are mentioned as one of the categories of disability in the Act. The 1989 amendment, although not an actual regulation, delineates the types of accommodation that persons with disabilities may expect.

**The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act** was introduced to strengthen the ODA, enacted to remove barriers in society for persons with disabilities. The definitions of disability in the Ontario Human Rights Code are used. Ontario government ministries, municipalities, school boards, colleges and universities, hospitals and public transportation organizations are required to develop annual accessibility plans.

**The Safe Schools Act** amended the Education Act, setting out a Code of Conduct for schools and mandating reasons for suspensions and expulsions. The Safe Schools Act was amended in 2007, to put more emphasis on progressive discipline and bullying prevention, and the amendments came into effect February 1, 2008.

**The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms** and the **Canadian Human Rights Code** establish a framework for all Canadian legislation. In Section 15, there is a prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of disability. Unfortunately, in this piece of legislation learning disabilities are included under the mental disability category, instead of appearing separately. For some people this is a very negative concept.

**The Youth Criminal Justice Act** is the follow up legislation to the Young Offenders Act. It covers young offenders from 12 to 17, with the 12 to 15 year olds served by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and 16 and 17 year olds by the Ministry of Correctional Services. The Act allows for psychological assessment at any stage of the proceedings against a young person if "the court has reasonable grounds to believe the young person may be suffering from ... a learning disability or mental disability."

## UNDERSTANDING THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

When a piece of legislation is introduced, it is called a Bill and is given a number indicating its position on the order paper (laying out the business of the legislature). After it is passed, the Bill either becomes an Act with a name of its own, or it is integrated into the older Act which the Bill changes

**A provincial law - or Act - or Statute** such as *The Education Act, Revised Statutes of Ontario, 1990, Chapter E.2.* is passed by the Provincial Legislature after a lengthy process of examination, debate and revision. It can be changed only by another Act of the Legislature.

Statutes all have a date attached to them when they were proclaimed by the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, and became part of Ontario law. Statutes are amended from time to time by other Acts of the Legislature. For example, the *Education Quality Improvement Act, 1997*, often talked about as Bill 160, has substantially changed certain sections of the *Education Act*. Statutes are legally binding upon the people named in it. However, the consequences of non-compliance with the statute are frequently not spelled out.

**A regulation** is issued by the provincial cabinet under the authority of a statute. It does not have to be approved by the whole legislature, and can be changed without consulting the legislature. Regulations spell out the specific rules for implementing the statute and are to be obeyed along with the statutes under whose authority they are issued. Examples of special education specific regulations include the IPRC regulation, **Regulation 181/98**. It is important to note that the regulation may not restate all expectations set out in the statute. However, a regulation cannot contravene or over-ride the statute. Therefore, it is important to consider the regulation in light of the Act, under which it has been enacted.

**Guidelines, Policies and Policy and Program Memoranda** are issued by the Ministry concerned. They are policy statements prepared in conformity with the Act and Regulations, explaining the ways the Ministry prefers things to be done, when obeying the Act and Regulations.

Regulations have numbers as well as names. They are numbered in the order they are issued, and carry the year as an additional designation. For example, the regulation governing IPRCs and special education appeals is now called *Identification and Placement of Exceptional Pupils* and is numbered **Regulation 181/98**.

Both statutes and regulations are set up in numbered sections, subsections and clauses. For example, the part of *The Education Act* that defines "exceptional pupil" is clause 21, subsection (1) of section 1. This numbering system makes it easier to find the part of the Act or regulation you want to look up.

## THE EDUCATION ACT, R.S.O. 1990

[www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_90e02\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90e02_e.htm)

- Sect. 1 defines exceptional pupil, special education program, special education services
- 8 (3) outlines the duties of the Minister  
makes the provision of special education programs and services mandatory  
provides for the ability to appeal identification of exceptionality and/or proposed special education placement  
requires school boards to implement procedures for early and ongoing identification of learning strengths and needs  
provides for the establishment of categories and definitions of exceptionality;  
requires school boards to employ such definitions
- 11 gives authority for the enactment of Regulations governing special education programs and services and Identification, Placement and Review Committees (IPRCs)
- 13 provides for the establishment and/or continuation of the Provincial Schools for students who are deaf, blind, deaf-blind and for Provincial Demonstration Schools for students who have severe learning disabilities
- 49.2 provides for services to adults who are identified as exceptional by an IPRC
- 57 provides for the establishment of special education tribunals  
provides for the right to appeal identification and/or placement from an appeal board to a special education tribunal
- 57.1 mandates the establishment of Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs)  
gives authority for the enactment of regulations relating to the establishment, duties and mandates of SEACs
- 170 defines the duties of school boards to, among other things:  
provide instruction and accommodation for all resident pupils  
provide or purchase special education programs and services for all identified exceptional students
- 190 sets out school board responsibilities with regard to transportation, including transportation to the Provincial residential programs for students who are blind, deaf, deaf-blind or have severe learning disabilities
- 266 provides for the rights of parents and pupils to access pupil records
- 266.1 makes provision for the assignment of Ontario Education Numbers to all students
- 300-315 covers behaviour, discipline and safety issues, including suspension and expulsion

## **REGULATIONS UNDER THE EDUCATION ACT**

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/regs.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/regs.html)

### **Regulation 181/98, Identification and Placement of Exceptional Pupils**

[http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_980181\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_980181_e.htm)

This regulation governs the identification and placement of exceptional pupils, through the Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC), the IPRC review procedure, and the process for Appeal of IPRC decisions. The role of parent(s)/guardian(s) in all these processes is outlined.

The regulation requires school boards to create and maintain an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for each exceptional pupil and to create and maintain, as part of the IEP, a transition plan for each exceptional pupil (except for those identified solely as gifted) who are 14 years of age or older.

Regulation 181/98 also requires school boards to publish a parent guide to special education.

### **Regulation 306, Special Education Programs and Services**

[http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_900306\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_900306_e.htm)

Regulation 306 is concerned with special education programs and services. It requires that each school board and school authority:

- develop and maintain a plan for the provision of special education programs and services for exceptional pupils and to submit annually to the ministry any amendments that have been made to its plan;
- submit to the ministry, every second year, a report on special education programs and services in a form to be specified by the ministry.

The regulation also gives the Minister authority to direct a school board to amend its special education plan.

### **Regulation 464/97, Special Education Advisory Committees**

[http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_970464\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_970464_e.htm)

Regulation 464/97 sets out requirements for school boards with respect to SEACs and outlines their role, membership, and scope of activities. The regulation requires a school board to:

- include on its SEAC up to 12 representatives of local parent associations which “further the interests and well-being of one or more groups of exceptional children or adults”;
- consult with the SEAC concerning the board's annual review of its special education plan (under Regulation 306) and its annual budget process;
- provide the SEAC with the opportunity to review the board's annual financial statements;

- provide an opportunity for the committee to be heard before making a decision on any recommendation from the SEAC.

The regulation also requires SEACs to meet at least ten times in each school year.

The regulation also applies, with some differences, to school authorities.

### **Regulation 298, Operation of Schools – General**

[http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws\\_regs\\_900298\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_900298_e.htm)

With regard to special education, Regulation 298 contains sections pertaining to the following:

- the authority of a school board to reduce the length of the school day for exceptional pupils (subsection 3(3));
- the qualifications for special education teachers (section 19) ;
- the provision of special education programs for pre-school children who are deaf or hard of hearing (section 30);
- the maximum class sizes for various kinds of special education classes (section 31).

### **Legislative Grant Regulations**

These regulations, revised and re-issued annually, set out the conditions and procedures for the allocation of funds by the ministry to school boards.

The grant regulations provide for:

- special education funding to school boards and school authorities in accordance with objectively established levels of need of the exceptional pupils served by the board;
- special equipment to support access to instruction by exceptional pupils;
- special purpose grants for, among others, learning opportunities, transportation, pupil accommodation, and early learning;
- the provision of educational services by school boards in care, treatment, and correctional facilities.



## **NUMBERED POLICY/PROGRAM MEMORANDA (PPMS)**

Numbered policy/program memoranda are developed to assist school boards in the delivery of ministry policies and procedures. [www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/ppm.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/ppm.html)

With specific reference to the delivery of special education programs and services, PPMs have been issued on the following subjects:

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/ppms.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/ppms.html) )

### **Policy/Program Memorandum No. 1, [Ontario Schools for the Blind and Deaf as Resource Centres](#) (PPM 1)**

This memorandum advises that the Provincial Schools for the blind and deaf are mandated to provide resource services to school boards. It also identifies what services are available to school boards without charge. These services include audiological services, psychological services, educational consultation, professional development, learning materials, and media. A list of Provincial Schools is also provided.

### **Policy/Program Memorandum No. 8, [Learning Disabilities](#) (PPM 8)**

This memorandum gives definitions of learning disabilities, and provides information on identification processes, programming, and resources available to school boards.

### **Policy/Program Memorandum No. 11, [Early Identification of Children's Learning Needs](#) (PPM 11)**

This memorandum sets out the requirements for procedures for early identification of children's learning needs. It lists some of the principles of early identification and gives information about resources to assist in the early identification process.

### **Policy/Program Memorandum No. 59, [Psychological Testing and Assessment of Pupils](#) (PPM 59)**

This memorandum, which focuses on psychological testing and assessment of students, provides the principles on which school boards should base decisions regarding the use of such services.

### **Policy/Program Memorandum No. 76C, [Alternative Educational Programs and Services for Deaf, Blind and Deaf-Blind Exceptional Pupils](#) (PPM 76C)**

This memorandum outlines the educational programs and services offered by school boards that are an alternative to the Provincial Schools for blind, deaf, and deaf-blind students. It also articulates the philosophies underlying these services.

### **Policy/Program Memorandum No. 81, [Provision of Health Support in School Settings](#) (PPM 81)**

This memorandum focuses on the provision of health support services in school settings and the roles of the individual personnel and organizations involved. This memorandum is supplemented by Interministerial Guidelines for the Provision of Speech and Language Services and A Model for the Provision of Speech and Language Services.

**Policy/Program Memorandum No. 85, [Educational Programs for Pupils in Government-Approved Care and/or Treatment Facilities](#) (PPM 85)**

This memorandum is concerned with education programs for pupils in government-approved care and/or treatment facilities.

**Policy/Program Memorandum No. 89, [The Residential Demonstration Schools for Students with Learning Disabilities: General Information and Details of the Referral Process](#) (PPM 89)**

This memorandum provides the definition of a learning disability, outlines the goals and objectives of the Demonstration Schools, and provides the procedures for admission to these schools, including details on the referral process.

**Policy/Program Memorandum No. 127, [Provincial Secondary School Literacy Test in English-Language Secondary Schools – Accommodations, Deferrals and Exemptions](#) (PPM 127)**

This memorandum concerns the provision of accommodations, deferrals, and exemptions for students taking the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT).

**Policy/Program Memorandum No. 140: [Incorporating methods of Applied Behaviour Analysis \(ABA\) into programs for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders \(ASD\)](#) (PPM 140)**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide direction to school boards 1 to support their use of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) as an effective instructional approach in the education of many students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

**Policy/Program Memorandum No. 141: [School Board Programs For Students On Long-Term Suspension](#) (PPM 141)**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide direction to school boards regarding the development of board programs for students on long-term suspension. Research has demonstrated that positive outcomes for students are related to specific program elements that are tailored to meet the needs of each student. In the case of students with special education needs, boards are required to provide appropriate support consistent with the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

**Policy/Program Memorandum No. 142: [School Board Programs For Expelled Students](#) (PPM 142)**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide direction to school boards regarding the development of board programs for expelled students. In accordance with this memorandum, boards must establish programs that include the following elements:

- a planning meeting to determine the specific academic and non-academic program requirements
- a Student Action Plan (SAP) that outlines goals, objectives, and learning expectations, including provision for a review of the student's progress with regard to his or her SAP
- a re-entry plan to assist with the student's transition back to school and integration in the school

In the case of students with special education needs, boards are required to provide appropriate support consistent with the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

**Policy/Program Memorandum 144: [Bullying Prevention and Intervention](#) (PPM 144)**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide direction to boards on the development and implementation of their policies on bullying prevention and intervention. In developing policies, boards are directed to consult with various groups, including school councils and SEACs. Boards are required to “ *take into account the needs of individual students by showing sensitivity to diversity, to cultural needs, and to special education needs in their policies* ”.

**Policy/Program Memorandum 145: [Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour](#) ( PPM 145)**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide direction to boards on the development and implementation of their policies on progressive discipline. “ *For students with special education needs, interventions, supports, and consequences must be consistent with the student's strengths, needs, goals, and expectations contained in his or her Individual Education Plan (IEP).*”

## HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION

(Ontario Human Rights Code of Ontario, 1981, Amended 1989, 2001)

[www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_90h19\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90h19_e.htm)

Discrimination "because of disability" is prohibited in all areas protected by the Human Rights Code.

**"Because of Disability"** means for the reason that the person has or has had, or is believed to have or have had:

- (i) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness. (Some examples of physical handicap are diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, and physical reliance on a guide dog, a wheelchair or other devices);
- (ii) a condition of mental retardation or impairment;
- (iii) a **learning disability**, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- (iv) a mental disorder (section 9(b)); or
- (v) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the Workers' Compensation Act (section 9(b)).

### Lack of Access or Amenities

Lack of an appropriate means of access to premises, goods, services, facilities or accommodation amounts to discrimination contrary to the Code. The lack of appropriate amenities in premises, goods, services, facilities or accommodation is also discriminatory. This means that access and amenities must be provided unless to do so would cause undue hardship, considering the cost, any outside funding and any health and safety requirements.

### Ability to Perform Essential Duties and Requirements

A right of a person with a disability to non-discrimination is not infringed if the right is denied because he or she is incapable of fulfilling the essential duties or requirements attending the exercise of the right because of disability (section 16(1)). This means, for example, that it is not a contravention of the Code to deny a person a job if his or her disability makes him or her incapable of performing the essential duties of the job.

"Essential" duties and requirements refer to those duties and responsibilities which are necessary for the use of services or accommodation, or the performance of the job. For example, if a person applies for a job as a lawyer, it may not be "essential" that he or she be able to operate a photocopier. However, if that person is applying for a job in a copy shop, the ability to use a photocopier may be "essential".

If the person cannot perform the essential duties, the employer, landlord or service provider must make reasonable efforts to accommodate the needs of that person, short of undue hardship, considering the cost, any outside sources of funding and any health and safety requirements.

## **Exceptions**

### **Services and Facilities**

Religious, philanthropic, educational, fraternal or social institutions or organizations that serve the special interests of persons with disabilities may restrict membership or participation on this basis. (section 17)

### **Accommodation**

Residential accommodation may be denied persons with disabilities where the accommodation requires the occupants to share kitchen or bathroom facilities with the owner or his or her family. (section 20(1))

### **Employment**

Religious, philanthropic, educational, fraternal or social organizations or institutions which serve the special interests of persons with disabilities may restrict employment or give preference in employment to persons with disabilities provided that this is done on genuine and reasonable grounds because of the nature of the employment. (section 23(1)(a))

An individual may discriminate on the ground of disability when employing someone to attend to his or her medical needs or those of an ill, aged or infirmed relative. (section 23(1)(c))



## **BACKGROUND ON THE LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION**

### **Who Are We?**

- registered charitable organization on three levels: - national, provincial and local
- there are 8 provincial and 2 territorial LDA's. In Ontario, there are 20 chapters working in their communities
- volunteer parents, professionals and interested individuals
- dedicated to meeting the educational, social, emotional, recreational, and employment needs of children, adolescents and adults with learning disabilities.

### **How and Why Did The Association Start?**

- In 1963, four Toronto residents - Doreen Kronick, Harry Wineberg, Robert Shannon and Alan Howarth - decided to form the Ontario Association for Children with Learning Disabilities. Articles of Incorporation were issued in 1964. This was the beginning of ACLD in Canada, which paralleled in time the formation of the ACLD in the United States.
- Initially, publicity brought in calls and letters from around the world.
- Until 1971, when the CACLD was formed, this Toronto-based group provided leadership in the formation of local chapters and provincial branches, as well as dissemination of information for the whole country.
- In 1985, the words "and Adults" were added to the name, making it the Ontario Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities.
- In 1988, in order to bring the Association in line with the Canadian and other provincial/territorial Associations, Ontario ACLD changed its name to the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO).
- There are approximately 2,000 members in Ontario.
- Organizations at each level are affiliated with those of the other two, i.e. local chapters with Ontario and Canadian.

### **Who Are Our Members?**

- the majority are parents of children with learning disabilities
- some are adults with learning disabilities
- some are interested professionals or educators

### **What Does Each Level Do?**

#### **LDA of Canada**

- relates to the federal government
- puts on a bi-annual national conference
- national clearinghouse for information
- sets national policy
- publicity on national level to generate awareness of national issues
- raises own funds

- publishes newsletter, the National

### **LDA of Ontario**

- relates to provincial government and provincial agencies
- operates a resource library
- provides literature, information services
- does training workshops for chapters at annual general meeting
- sets policy for chapter formation and retention of Charters (chapter charters devolve from provincial Letters Patent)
- sets provincial policy
- publishes newsletter, Communique
- sends Chapter Newsletter and SEAC Circular to all chapters
- undertakes special projects of provincial scope
- publicity on provincial level
- must raise own funds
- elects two directors to LDA of Canada Board of Directors

### **LDA Chapters**

- grassroots strength
- relate to local government, agencies, school boards
- "local association" as defined by Regulation 464/97 of the Education Act, therefore eligible for membership on Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC)
- provide direct service to individuals with learning disabilities and their families
- provide speakers for other groups in the community
- undertake special local projects
- many operate resource rooms
- must hold a minimum of two free, open public meetings per year
- publicity at the local level
- parent/adult support and resourcing
- set chapter policy, elects LDAO Board and subject to LDAO By-Laws, helps set policy for the province
- raise own funds



# LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

## Mission Statement

LDAO's mission is to provide leadership in learning disabilities advocacy, research, education and services and to advance the full participation of children, youth and adults with learning disabilities in today's society.

We value promoting positive change through:

- Innovation
- Strategic partnerships
- Credible advocacy
- Informed public policy and
- Quality products and services

## What does LDAO do?

- Assists people with learning disabilities and their families in meeting their expressed needs by:
  - providing support, guidance and up-to-date resource information
  - providing the opportunity for the sharing of information and common concerns
  - encouraging research in the field of learning disabilities
  - [supporting and generating legislative initiatives](#).
- Furthers the educational, social, recreational, legal, medical, vocational and employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities in Ontario.
- Acquaints professionals working in the above listed fields -- education, recreation, legislation and justice, health, vocational training and employment - with the current literature and research in the field of learning disabilities.

Creates public awareness of learning disabilities by informing the public of the issues and challenges faced by people with learning disabilities.

## DEFINITIONS OF LEARNING DISABILITIES

### LDAO definition (2001)

“Learning Disabilities” refers to a variety of disorders that affect the acquisition, retention, understanding, organization or use of verbal and/or non-verbal information. These disorders result from impairments in one or more psychological processes related to learning<sup>a</sup>, in combination with otherwise average abilities essential for thinking and reasoning. Learning disabilities are specific not global impairments and as such are distinct from intellectual disabilities.

Learning disabilities range in severity and invariably interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following important skills:

- oral language (e.g., listening, speaking, understanding)
- reading (e.g., decoding, comprehension)
- written language (e.g., spelling, written expression)
- mathematics (e.g., computation, problem solving)

Learning disabilities may also cause difficulties with organizational skills, social perception and social interaction.

The impairments are generally life-long. However, their effects may be expressed differently over time, depending on the match between the demands of the environment and the individual’s characteristics. Some impairments may be noted during the pre-school years, while others may not become evident until much later. During the school years, learning disabilities are suggested by unexpectedly low academic achievement or achievement that is sustainable only by extremely high levels of effort and support.

Learning disabilities are due to genetic, other congenital and/or acquired neuro-biological factors. They are not caused by factors such as cultural or language differences, inadequate or inappropriate instruction, socio-economic status or lack of motivation, although any one of these and other factors may compound the impact of learning disabilities. Frequently learning disabilities co-exist with other conditions, including attentional, behavioural and emotional disorders, sensory impairments or other medical conditions.

For success, persons with learning disabilities require specialized interventions in home, school, community and workplace settings, appropriate to their individual strengths and needs, including:

- specific skill instruction;
- the development of compensatory strategies;
- the development of self-advocacy skills;
- appropriate accommodations.

<sup>a</sup> The term “**psychological processes**” describes an evolving list of cognitive functions. To date, research has focused on functions such as:

- phonological processing;
- memory and attention;
- processing speed;

- language processing;
- perceptual-motor processing;
- visual-spatial processing;
- executive functions; (e.g., planning, monitoring and metacognitive abilities).

### **LDAO working description of learning disabilities (1995)**

- Learning disabilities can affect the way in which a person takes in, remembers, understands and expresses information.
- People with learning disabilities are intelligent and have abilities to learn despite their difficulties in processing information
- Living with a learning disability can have an ongoing impact on friendships, school, work, self-esteem and daily life.
- People with learning disabilities can succeed when solid coping skills and strategies are developed.

# MINISTRY OF EDUCATION CATEGORIES AND DEFINITIONS OF EXCEPTIONALITIES

(as listed in *Special Education: A Guide for Educators*, 2001)

## 1. Category: Behaviour

A learning disorder characterized by specific behaviour problems over such period of time, and to such a marked degree, and of such a nature, as to adversely affect educational performance; and that may be accompanied by one or more of the following:

an inability to build or to maintain interpersonal relationships;

excessive fears or anxieties;

a tendency to compulsive reaction;

an inability to learn which cannot be traced to intellectual, sensory, or other health factors, or any combination thereof

## 2. Category: Communication

### A. Autism

A severe learning disorder that is characterized by:

a) disturbances in

(i) rate of educational development;

(ii) ability to relate to the environment;

(iii) motility;

(iv) perception, speech, and language; and

b) lack of the representational-symbolic behaviour that precedes language

### B. Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (formerly hearing impairment)

An impairment characterized by deficits in language and speech development because of diminished or non-existent auditory response to sound.

### C. Language impairment

A learning disorder characterized by an impairment in comprehension and/or use of verbal communication or the written or other symbol system of communications, which may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors, and which may:

(a) involve one or more of the form, content and function of language in communication; and

(b) include one or more of:

I. language delay;

II. dysfluency; and

III. voice and articulation development, which may or may not be organically or functionally based.

#### D. Learning disability

A learning disorder evident in both academic and social situations that involves one or more of the processes necessary for the proper use of spoken language or the symbols of communication, and that is characterized by a condition that:

is not primarily the result of

- (i) impairment of vision;
  - (ii) impairment of hearing;
  - (iii) physical disability;
  - (iv) developmental disability;
  - (v) primary emotional disturbance; or
  - (vi) cultural difference; and
- (b) results in a significant discrepancy between academic achievement and assessed intellectual ability, with defects in one or more of:
  - (i) receptive language (i.e., listening, reading)
  - (ii) language processing (i.e., thinking, conceptualizing, integrating);
  - (iii) expressive language (i.e., talking, spelling, writing);
  - (iv) mathematical computations; and
- (c) may be associated with one or more conditions diagnosed as:
  - (i) a perceptual handicap;
  - (ii) a brain injury;
  - (iii) minimal brain dysfunction;
  - (iv) dyslexia; or
  - (v) developmental aphasia.

#### E. Speech impairment

A disorder in language formulation that may be associated with neurological, psychological, physical, or sensory factors, that involves perceptual motor aspects of transmitting oral messages; and that may be characterized by impairment in articulation, rhythm, and stress.

### 3. **Category: Intellectual**

#### A. Giftedness

An unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated.

#### B. Mild Intellectual Disability

A learning disorder characterized by:

- (a) an ability to profit educationally within a regular class with the aid of considerable curriculum modification and supportive services;
- (b) an inability to profit educationally within a regular class because of slow intellectual development; and
- (c) a potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.

### C. Developmental Disability

A severe learning disorder characterized by:

(a) an inability to profit from a special education program for students with mild intellectual disabilities because of slow intellectual development;

(b) an ability to profit from a special education program that is designed to accommodate slow intellectual development;

(c) a limited potential for academic learning, independent social adjustment, and economic self-support.

## 4. **Category: Physical**

### A. Physical Disability

A condition of such severe physical limitation or deficiency as to require special assistance in learning situations to provide the opportunity for educational achievement equivalent to that of pupils without exceptionalities who are of the same age or developmental level.

### B. Blind and Low Vision (formerly visual impairment)

A condition of partial or total impairment of sight or vision that even with correction affects educational performance adversely.

## 5. **Category: Multiple**

### Multiple Exceptionalities

A combination of learning or other disorders, impairments, or physical disabilities, that is of such nature as to require, for educational achievement, the services of one or more teachers holding qualifications in special education and the provision of support services appropriate for such disorders, impairments, or disabilities.

## LEARNING DISABILITIES GROUPINGS -- 1

Learning disabilities can be grouped or subdivided in different ways. The following is one way of grouping types of LDs:

### A) Visual problems:

Relate to information received through the eyes. However they are not the usual problems of the eyes, such as shortsightedness, which are correctible with glasses:

- **Impaired visual perception** leads to difficulties in seeing the difference between similar things, such as similarly shaped objects, including letters, such as b and d.
- **Poor visual memory** results in people not remembering things that they have seen often before. This can include things such as people's faces, words, their own name in written form, and the street corner at which they need to turn to get home.
- **Figure-ground discrimination** problems are a particularly complex form of a visual perception problem. A person who has this kind of learning disability is unable to identify a specific thing when it is surrounded by similar things. For example, the person does not see the traffic light or the stop sign on a busy street. It can also include many things related to reading or writing. For example, not being able to find the place to write one's name on an application form can be extremely aggravating for someone trying to apply for a job.
- **Reversal** of letters, words and numbers is the most commonly recognized sign of a learning disability. People who experience reversals tell us that it is extremely frustrating, because it doesn't happen always. Sometimes 41 will appear as 14 and sometimes not. They have no consistent way of knowing which is correct. As a result they can only deal with written material, and especially numbers extremely slowly and carefully, constantly checking themselves for accuracy.
- **Visual tracking problems** affect a person's ability to follow the lines on a page. People who have this disability explain that the words move around or slip off the edge of the page.

### B) Auditory problems

Relate to information received through the ears. While the person who has auditory learning disabilities may appear hearing impaired, the difficulties do not relate to the volume of the sounds which the individual is attempting to hear. In other words, shouting at the person with auditory learning disabilities will not help. If anything, it may make the problems worse, due to the distortion of shouting.

- **Impaired auditory perception** means that the person will not hear everything said or hears it incorrectly. For example, they may have difficulty with syllables that are not accented - seven and seventy may sound the same. Similarly, they cannot distinguish between words that sound somewhat alike - for example, how and who.
- **Poor auditory memory** results in a person having difficulty remembering what has been said. Short term and/or long term memory may be affected. They may remember things said in the past, but not recall their own words from just a moment ago. Or they may have no long term memory for things they have heard.
- **Poor auditory sequencing** skills interfere with a person's ability to follow instructions. This is an extreme form of poor auditory memory. It can cause significant difficulties on the job or in social situations.
- **Poor listening skills** mean that the person has difficulty selecting the sounds to listen to. He may hear a confusing jumble of unsorted sounds, rather like having the television, radio and vacuum cleaner all running at the same time.

Children acquire listening skills at a very early age, and the skills of selective listening, (knowing what to focus on and what to tune out) are reinforced as they mature. A person with poor listening skills may appear uncaring or uninterested, rather than just confused.

### **C) Speech problems**

Are considered a learning disability, when the difficulty lies with the words used, the sentence structure, the style. Difficulties with pronouncing specific words are not usually included. Yet, people who have this kind of learning disability may consistently mispronounce common words, saying "bisghetti" for spaghetti or "hopsital" for hospital.

They may also mix up their sentences, such as saying "start and restop" instead of "stop and restart". Many will consciously choose simple words when they are speaking although they understand and can write correctly more suitable and complex words. The reasons for these difficulties may relate to any of the auditory difficulties described above.

### **D) Motor problems**

relate to the body's neuro-muscular or sensorimotor or sensory integrative functioning. The individual who has these difficulties is not in any way physically impaired, but may appear clumsy and uncoordinated.

- **Eye-hand coordination** difficulties will show up in difficulties with handwriting and activities, such as using certain tools. It is interesting to note that 11% of the general population is left-handed and therefore may have difficulties with using the tools of an essentially right handed world. On the other hand, left-handedness occurs twice as often (approximately 25%) among those who have learning disabilities.
- **Small muscle control** difficulties may result in awkwardness such as misjudging where to place things.
- **Large muscle control** difficulties will show up in clumsiness, awkwardness, difficulties with certain physical activities such as dancing and sports.

### **E) Organizational problems**

Relate to an individual's ability to manage time, space, certain functions and generally ordering the necessary tasks of daily living.

- Difficulties with managing **time** results in not meeting deadlines and having a poor or virtually no sense of elapsed time. Such people may be late or very early for appointments. This may be because they do not know how much time to allocate for tasks.
- Difficulties with organizing **tasks** results in not understanding the logical sequence of steps required to carry out a specific task. These may be simple things such as getting dressed, or cooking a meal such that the meat, vegetable and potatoes are all cooked at the same time. Or they may be complex tasks such as planning a party or a move or dealing with the demands of the workplace.
- Difficulties with organizing **space** such as a closet, desk or the kitchen cabinets results in the individual living and functioning in a state of disorder and never being able to find things quickly and efficiently.
- The skills of what are called **executive functions** are often impaired in people who have organizational learning disabilities. These skills are needed to plan, manage and evaluate things in everyday life.

### **F) Conceptual problems**

Relate to people's ability to understand abstract ideas, consequences and many other important functions in their daily lives which are not usually taught directly but are acquired incidentally. Common signs include:



- Difficulty in judging **nonverbal language** such as facial expressions or body language.
- Difficulty in understanding **figures of speech** such as idioms, metaphors or similes. For example, a person with this difficulty might take an expression like, "It's raining cats and dogs" absolutely literally, and expect to see animals falling from the sky.
- Difficulty in **anticipating** the future or **predicting** consequences. The individual may do something without considering its consequences for others. This kind of difficulty leads some people with learning disabilities into trouble with the law.
- Predisposition to **rigid thinking** or functioning, where a person may be unable to see that flexibility is required to deal with a situation. Or even if recognizing the need, is unable to practice flexibility.
- **Poor social skills** and social relationships may result from conceptual learning disabilities. Some examples are: lacking the "social graces", not maintaining eye contact during a conversation, standing too close to another person, using an inappropriate tone of voice or language.

## LEARNING DISABILITIES GROUPINGS -- 2

An article from the LDA of America outlines another way of grouping LDs:

Learning Disabilities (LDs) are neurologically-based processing problems. These processing problems can interfere with learning basic skills such as reading, writing, or math. They can also interfere with higher level skills such as organization, time planning, and abstract reasoning.

The types of LDs are identified by the specific processing problem. They might relate to getting information into the brain (**Input**), making sense of this information (**Organization**), storing and later retrieving this information (**Memory**), or getting this information back out (**Output**). Thus, the specific types of processing problems that result in LDs might be in one or more of these four areas.

### INPUT

Information is primarily brought into the brain through the eyes (visual perception) and ears (auditory perception). An individual might have difficulty in one or both areas.

**Auditory Perception.** (Also called Receptive Language) The individual might have difficulty distinguishing subtle differences in sound (called phonemes) or might have difficulty distinguishing individual phonemes as quickly as normal. Either problem can result in difficulty processing and understanding what is said. Individuals might have difficulty with what is called auditory figure-ground. They have difficulty identifying what sound(s) to listen to when there is more than one sound.

**Visual Perception.** One might have difficulty distinguishing subtle differences in shapes (called graphemes). They might rotate or reverse letters or numbers (d, b, p, q, 6, 9); thus misreading the symbol. Some might have a figure-ground problem, confusing what figure(s) to focus on from the page covered with many words and lines. They might skip words, skip lines, or read the same line twice. Others might have difficulty blending information from both eyes to have depth perception. They might misjudge depth or distance, bumping into things or having difficulty with tasks where this information is needed to tell the hands or body what to do. If there is difficulty with visual perception, there could be problems with tasks that require eye-hand coordination (visual motor skills) such as catching a ball, doing a puzzle, or picking up a glass.

### INTEGRATION

Once information is recorded in the brain (input), three tasks must be carried out in order to make sense or integrate this information. First, the information must be placed in the right order or sequenced. Then, the information must be understood beyond the literal meaning, abstraction. Finally, each unit of information must be integrated into complete thoughts or concepts, organization.

**Sequencing.** The individual might have difficulty learning information in the proper sequence. Thus, he might get math sequences wrong, have difficulty remembering sequences such as the months of the

year, the alphabet, or the times table. Or, she might write a report with all of the important facts but not in the proper order.

**Abstraction.** A person might have difficulty inferring the meaning of individual words or concepts. Jokes, idioms, or puns are often not understood. He might have problems with words that might have different meanings depending on how they are used. For example, “the dog” refers to a pet. “You dog” is an insult.

**Organization.** An individual might have difficulty organizing materials, losing, forgetting, or misplacing papers, notebooks, or homework assignments. She might have difficulty organizing her environment, such as her bedroom. Some might have problems organizing time. They have difficulty with projects due at a certain time or with being on time. (Organization over time is referred to as Executive Function.)

## MEMORY

Three types of memory are important to learning. “Working memory” refers to the ability to hold on to pieces of information until the pieces blend into a full thought or concept. For example, reading each word until the end of a sentence or paragraph and then understanding the full content. “Short-term memory” is the active process of storing and retaining information for a limited period of time. The information is temporarily available but not yet stored for long-term retention. “Long-term memory” refers to information that has been stored and that is available over a long period of time. Individuals might have difficulty with auditory memory or visual memory.

One reads a sentence and hold on to it. Then the next and the next. By the end of the paragraph, he pulls together the meaning of the full paragraph. This is working memory. He continues to read the full chapter and study it. Information is retained long enough to take a test and do well. This is short-term memory. But, unless the information is reviewed and studied over a longer period of time, it is not retained. With more effort over time, the information might become part of a general body of knowledge. It is long-term memory.

## OUTPUT

Information is communicated by means of words (language output) or through muscle activity such as writing, drawing, gesturing (motor output). An individual might have a language disability (also called expressive language disability) or a motor disability.

**Language Disability.** It is possible to think of language output as being spontaneous or on demand. Spontaneous means that the person initiates the conversation. Thoughts have been organized and words found before speaking. Demand language means that one is asked a question or asked to explain something. Now, she must organize his thoughts, find the right words, and speak at the same time. Most people with a language disability have little difficulty with spontaneous language. However, in a demand situation, the same person might struggle to organize her thoughts or to find the right words.

**Motor Disability.** One might have difficulty coordinating teams of small muscles, called a fine motor disability. He might have problems with coloring, cutting, writing, buttoning, or tying shoes. Others might have difficulty coordinating teams of large muscles, called a gross motor disability. She is awkward when running or jumping.

Each individual will have his or her unique pattern of LDs. This pattern might cluster around specific common difficulties. For example, the pattern might primarily reflect a problem with language processing: auditory perception, auditory sequencing/abstraction/organization, auditory memory, and a language disability. Or the problem might be more in the visual input to motor output areas. Some people with LDs will have a mixture of both.

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## LEARNING DISABILITIES GROUPINGS -- 3

An article from LDA of Canada by Elizabeth Gayda, Ph.D outlines yet another way of describing LDs:

Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning.

The following table provides some examples of how these cognitive impairments are manifested.

Table 1: Examples of some cognitive manifestations of learning disabilities

<b>Impairments in processes related to:</b>	<b>Perceiving</b>	<b>Thinking</b>	<b>Remembering</b>	<b>Learning</b>
<b>Language Processing</b>	Difficulties in processing sarcasm or understanding when someone is joking Difficulty taking another's perspective	Difficulties in understanding: long or complex sentence structure; and with figures of speech	Difficulties with: retrieving vocabulary words; orally presented task demands	Difficulties with new vocabulary and responses to teacher-directed questions
<b>Phonological processing</b>	Sounds in words (e.g. bat/bag) are confused; poor sound sequencing in words; limited automaticity in decoding	Difficulty with comprehension of content caused by lack of fluency in decoding	Difficulty retaining sound/symbol correspondence	Difficulty extracting essential concepts due to focus on decoding
<b>Visual spatial processing</b>	Difficulty with oral or written directions for an activity; perceiving organization of ideas in a text	Difficulty identifying main ideas in a text	Difficulty with left/right; north south, hierarchical structures	Poor integration of sequential information (days of the week, recipe)
<b>Processing speed</b>	Poor social interactions; does not keep up with fast-paced lessons	Few connections between isolated bits of information in texts	Slow linking of new with previously learned information	Less material covered or takes extra time and much effort to cover material
<b>Memory</b>	Few strategies when trying to remember content or concepts	Difficulty writing since spelling may not be automatic	Difficulty retrieving previously learned information	Forgets spelling words after test; difficulty recalling significant events in history; any new learning is difficult
<b>Attention</b>	Difficulty knowing when to pay attention Poor reading of social situations; impulsive	Poor concentration when putting ideas together	Little effort expended for remembering	Work may be disorganized; goes off on tangents,
<b>Executive functions (planning or decision making)</b>	Poor recognition of value of planning; impulsive	Difficulty problem solving and understanding consequences of decisions	Difficulty in linking new with previously integrated knowledge; Few strategies	Difficulties in higher levels of learning, but has isolated pieces of knowledge

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

### **EXCEPTIONAL PUPIL:**

"Means a pupil whose behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical, or multi-exceptionalities are such that he is considered to need placement in a special education programme by..." an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC). Education Act, subsection 1 (1) 21.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM:**

In respect of an exceptional pupil is "an educational program that is based and modified by the results of continuous assessment and evaluation and that includes a plan containing specific objectives and an outline of educational services that meet the needs of the exceptional pupil." Education Act, subsection 1 (1) 63.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES:**

"Means facilities and resources, including support personnel and equipment, necessary for developing and implementing a special education program." Education Act, subsection 1 (1) 64.

### **LOCAL ASSOCIATION:**

"Means an association or organization of parents that operates locally within the area of jurisdiction of a board and that is affiliated with an association or organization that is not an association or organization of professional educators but that is incorporated and operates throughout Ontario to further the interests and well-being of one or more groups of exceptional children or adults." O. Reg. 464/97, s. 1.

### **OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST:**

An individual who has a degree in occupational therapy. Many OT's can do assessment of motor and sensori-motor skills, including handwriting, and can offer remediation for these areas. Some have expertise in sensory integration therapy.

### **RESOURCE TEACHER:**

Is a teacher with special education qualifications who works with children with learning disabilities and may assist the classroom teacher with materials or program modifications.

### **PARENT GUIDE:**

A document developed by each school board which describes the process for accessing special education services in their board, and the services available. The guide should include a description of the IPRC process and the parent's rights to appeal, and usually lists the local association members of the board's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC).

### **PSYCHOMETRIST:**

An individual who has studied psychology and is qualified to carry out assessments, but can only interpret psychological test results under the supervision of a registered psychologist or psychological associate. Psychometrists usually have an M.A.

### **EDUCATIONAL CONSULTANT:**

Usually someone with a masters level in special education, e.g. an M.Ed., who can make recommendations for educational programming.

**PSYCHOLOGIST:**

An individual who has a Ph.D. in psychology and is registered under the College of Psychologists. Some psychologists have extensive training and/or experience in assessment and counselling of children and/or adults. Psychologists who specialize in these areas are authorized to diagnose learning disabilities.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATE:**

An individual who is registered under the College of Psychologists and performs many of the same functions as a psychologist. Many psychological associates have an M.A. or an Ed.D.

**PSYCHIATRIST:**

A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who has continued his/ her education in the specialty of Psychiatry. They are governed by a "college" or board and are subject to the same rules and regulations of conduct as any other medical doctor.

**SPEECH TEACHER:**

A qualified teacher who has been trained by a speech and language pathologist to provide articulation remediation in the schools. Remedial programs provided by the speech teachers are monitored by qualified speech and language pathologists.

**SPEECH/LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST:**

An individual who has graduated from a university program in speech and language pathology and specializes in the field of communication disorders...articulation, language, voice and fluency. Speech/language pathologists can provide consultation and assessment services to school age students, for both speech problems and language processing difficulties.

## **DIAGNOSTIC TERMS**

### **ADHD**

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a neuro-developmental disorder characterized by severe inattention and/or impulsivity, with or without hyperactivity, which is inappropriate for the age and sex of the student. It can only be diagnosed by a medical practitioner or a psychologist. Its formal description is in DSM (iv). A large percentage of students with ADHD also have specific learning disabilities or other coexisting conditions.

### **Acquired Brain Injury/Head Injury**

Acquired brain injury is, as the term implies, damage to the brain, resulting from external or internal injury. External causes may be such things as an accident or other trauma. Internal causes may relate to illnesses such as meningitis or encephalitis, convulsions, bleeding, stroke or some other condition that reduces the available oxygen to the brain (asphyxia). Many of the educational or cognitive symptoms of acquired brain injury are similar to or even the same as those for specific learning disabilities. However, the educational intervention may need to be different from the intervention provided to students with congenital (i.e. present from birth) specific learning disabilities, due to the fact that the level and intensity of brain damage may alter for those who have acquired brain injury, as a result of certain treatments.

### **Aspergers Syndrome**

Aspergers syndrome is a neurological condition that comes under the general heading of pervasive developmental disorders and was first described by Hans Asperger in 1944. It is characterized by poor social use of language and extreme difficulties in group function and peer relationships, highly developed interests in idiosyncratic topics, clumsiness and abnormalities of facial expression. Many of its symptoms are similar to those of non-verbal learning disabilities, in that the student who has this condition has reasonably good verbal skills, but has problems with social skills and visual and spatial skills. It differs from non-verbal learning disabilities in the level of severity of the symptoms, as well as the presence of certain behavioural manifestations of autism.

### **Asthma, allergies, anaphylaxis and other related chronic medical conditions**

These are allergic conditions caused by an overactive immune system that responds in an exaggerated way to otherwise non-harmful materials, such as pollen, certain foods, house dust or animals. The symptoms and severity of the condition varies significantly from student to student and even with the student, depending on the time of year or recent exposure to something. Anaphylaxis is by definition a potentially life threatening condition, which can arise in a very short period of time in a student who is exposed to a particular allergen, e.g., peanuts, insect bites, etc. These conditions are generally controlled with medication and through avoiding exposure to the allergens.

### **Down Syndrome**

Down Syndrome is a genetic disorder, arising from the presence of an extra chromosome in the cells of the individual who has it. Students with Down Syndrome usually have developmental disabilities, ranging in severity from mild to severe. The condition usually results in some readily recognizable facial and other physical characteristics.

### **Dyslexia**

Dyslexia refers to a difficulty with processing written language, which includes reading, writing and spelling. It is usually defines as a “disorder manifested by difficulty in learning to read despite conventional instruction, adequate intelligence and socio-cultural opportunity”. In some countries the



term dyslexia is used to describe all learning disabilities. In other cases the term is used instead of learning disabilities, because it is considered a less pejorative term. Although approximately 50% of those who have learning disabilities have dyslexia, which makes it the single most common learning disability, the term is not traditionally used in Ontario's schools for educational purposes. .

### **Environmental Hypersensitivity**

Environmental hypersensitivity is a condition in which a person experiences a cluster of adverse reactions to a whole series of environmental factors, not just those described under allergies, etc. (see above), but also more general ones, such as the contents of tap water or the presence of electro-magnetic fields. The reactions experienced by the person vary from physical ones, (such as headaches, hives or dizziness) and/or emotional/mental ones (such as poor concentration, depression or hyperactivity). Many of the students with environmental hypersensitivity experience difficulties in learning, behaviour, attention, concentration as well as the physical symptoms described above.

### **Fetal Alcohol Syndrome**

A specific pattern of altered growth, structure and function in which there is a history of significant maternal alcohol ingestion during pregnancy, leading to intrauterine and subsequent growth restriction. The condition is often characterized by the child having a very small head (microcephaly), certain unusual facial features and a significantly impaired level of neuro-development. The facial features become more apparent with age. The degree of cognitive impairment is variable and may be influenced by early intervention and a stable home environment.

### **Head Injury or Traumatic Head Injury**

Head injury is the condition that arises from serious external damage to the brain, resulting in significant brain injury. In many cases the condition is accompanied by other major physical disabilities, which may be temporary or permanent. (See also Acquired brain injury)

### **Nonverbal learning disabilities**

Whereas 80% of the population with learning disabilities have language processing as their most significant problem area, students with nonverbal learning disabilities have good verbal skills and often good language processing skills as well. Their difficulties tend to be in the areas of visual-spatial and social skills. Their most significant academic problems tend to be in the area of math and organizational skills.

### **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder**

Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) is due to a biochemical imbalance in the brain. It affects about 3% of the general population, but occurs in over 30% of those who have Tourette Syndrome. OCD involves recurrent, unwanted thoughts (obsession) and accompanying behaviours (compulsion). Although those who have the condition usually know that their obsessions and compulsions are irrational and excessive, they have little or no control over them. OCD can have significant negative impacts on a child's behaviour in school.

### **Oppositional Defiant Disorder**

This is one of the more common disruptive behavioural disorders of childhood, characterized by long-standing and repeated incidents of loss of temper, arguments with adults, deliberate provocation, irritability, anger and resentment, spite and swearing. Students with this condition usually function in a manner which differs significantly from expected age appropriate behavioural levels and which break social and/or cultural norms that would normally be expected from the student. The manifested behaviour cannot usually be ascribed to another more obvious physical or medical cause, but may be the precursor of conduct disorder. It may occur in conjunction with learning disabilities and/or ADHD.

### **Pervasive Developmental Disorder**

This is an umbrella term used to describe a series of conditions, formerly all called autism. These conditions include autism, general pervasive developmental disorder, atypical autism, Asperger's syndrome, Rett's syndrome and childhood disintegrative disorder. These disorders generally result in difficulties with verbal and non-verbal communication, and developing age-appropriate social relationships. They are often characterized by deviant rather than delayed development of social and communication skills. These conditions may co-exist with global developmental disabilities, but many students who have these conditions have normal intelligence, although they usually have significant cognitive or academic difficulties in school.

### **Prader-Willi Syndrome**

This rather rare syndrome is a metabolic genetic neurological disorder. It results in a number of symptoms, including having an insatiable appetite, leading to overeating and obesity. Other common features include speech and language problems, learning difficulties, similar in some ways to severe learning disabilities, extreme behaviours, such as tantrums and stubbornness.

### **Rett's syndrome**

This is a rare developmental condition, usually classified under the pervasive developmental disorder umbrella. To date it has only been identified in girls. The child who has this starts out with normal development up to about age 3-5 years. Then, the condition manifests itself in the child losing her general physical abilities starting from her hand skills to other age appropriate physical skills over the next few years. This loss is also accompanied by reduced and progressive loss in cognitive functioning.

### **Tourette's Syndrome**

Tourette's syndrome is a neurological condition that is characterized by a variety of symptoms the most common of which are physical and vocal tics. Many students with this condition have significant learning disabilities and may also exhibit the signs and symptoms of ADHD and/or obsessive-compulsive behaviour.

## **LEARNING DISABILITIES AND ATTENTION DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER**

The most common disorder that co-exists with learning disabilities is attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Many studies over the years have indicated a very strong co-morbidity of the two conditions but the exact percentage of overlap varies widely in these studies because of methodological inconsistencies. Studies of the families of children with either learning disabilities or ADHD indicate strong patterns of inheritance for both conditions, but also show that they are independent disorders.

At present ADHD and learning disabilities are considered by most professionals to be two discrete disorders with distinct symptom clusters. However, some symptoms may be common to both disorders, including: disorganization, weak executive functioning, and inefficient use of strategies.

Without careful assessment, distinguishing between ADHD and learning disabilities can be difficult because of overlapping symptoms and because some behaviours that may result from learning disabilities can look like ADHD symptoms. For example, individuals with central auditory processing deficits can appear inattentive, and students who have become discouraged due to learning problems may not stay on task or may appear distractible.

Assessments for ADHD and learning disabilities follow a different process, although both can be addressed in a multidisciplinary assessment. Psychoeducational testing by a registered psychologist or designated psychological associate is required to diagnose learning disabilities. Assessment for ADHD is usually through a clinical interview and review of developmental history, with the use of standard checklists and some cognitive tests being common. Diagnosis of ADHD is done by a pediatrician, psychiatrist or psychologist.

Intervention for learning disabilities may involve academic skills instruction, the development of compensatory strategies and self-advocacy skills, and appropriate accommodations. Treatment for ADHD may also include behavioural strategies, modifications to the learning environment, family counselling, and the use of specific stimulant and non-stimulant medications.

## COMMONLY USED ACRONYMS

ADFO	Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes
ADP	Assistive Devices Program (MOHLTC)
AEFO	Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens
AODA	Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
ARCH	Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped (Disability Law Centre)
BSWD	Bursary for Students with Disabilities (MTCU)
CCED	Comité consultatif pour l'enfance en difficulté (SEAC)
CIPR	Comité d'identification, de placement et de révision (IPRC)
CODE	Council for Directors of Education
CODELF	Conseil ontarien des directrices et des directeurs de l'éducation de langue française
CPCO	Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario
EDU	Ministry of Education
ETFO	Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
HRSD	Human Resources & Social Development
IEP	Individual Educational Plan
IPRC	Identification, Placement and Review Committee
LDAO/LDAC	Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario/Canada
MACSE	Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education
MCYS	Ministry of Children & Youth Services
MCSS	Ministry of Community and Social Services
MOHLTC	Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care
MTCU	Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities
NEEDS	National Education Association of Disabled Students
OAPSW	Ontario Association of Professional Social Workers
OCSOA	Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association
ODA	Ontarians with Disabilities Act
ODSP	Ontario Disability Support Program
OECTA	Ont. English Speaking Catholic Teachers' Association
OFIFC	Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres
OMA	Ontario Medical Association
OPA	Ontario Psychological Association
OPC	Ontario Principals' Council
OPSOA	Ontario Public Supervisory Officials' Association
OPSTF	Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation
OSAP	Ontario Student Assistance Plan
OSCA	Ontario School Counsellors' Association
OSLA	Ont. Assn of Speech-language Pathologists and Audiologists

OSR	Ontario School Record
OSS	Ontario Secondary Schools Grades 9 to 12 Program and Diploma Requirements
OSSTF	Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
OTF	Ontario Teachers' Federation
PAAC	Provincial Parent Associations' Advisory Committee
PEI	Plan d'enseignement individualisé (IEP)
PPE	Parents partenaires en éducation
SEAC	Special Education Advisory Committee
WBTT	Web Based Teaching Tool
YCJA	Youth Criminal Justice Act

## PARENT/SPECIAL NEEDS ASSOCIATIONS

ABC	Association for Bright Children
ADRN	Attention Deficit Resource Network
AO	Autism Ontario
CADDAC	Centre for ADHD/ADD Advocacy, Canada
CEC	Council for Exceptional Children
CHS	Canadian Hearing Society
CNIB	Canadian National Institute for the Blind
CPF	Canadian Parents for French
IAG	Integration Action Group
LDAO	Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario
NEADS	National Education Association of Disabled Students
OAAIS	Ont. Assoc. of Alternative and Independent Schools
OACL	Ont. Assoc. for Community Living
OACMHC	Ontario Association of Children's Mental Health Centres
OACRS	Ont. Assoc. of Children's Rehabilitation Centres
OAFCCD	Ont. Assoc. for Families of Children with Communication Disorders
OASAR	Ont. Assoc. for Students at Risk
OBIA	Ontario Brain Injury Association
OFCP	Ontario Federation for Cerebral Palsy
OSAC	Ontario Society for Autistic Citizens
PAAC on SEAC	Parent Association Advisory Committee on Special Education Advisory Committee
SBHAO	Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Society
TESS	The Easter Seal Society
TSF	Tourette Syndrome Foundation
VEWS	VEWS for the Visually Impaired
VOICE	VOICE for the Hearing Impaired

