



Idao • Learning Disabilities
Association of Ontario

The right to learn, the power to achieve

communiqué

THE PUBLICATION OF THE LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

FALL/WINTER 2014



Don't DIS my ABILITY

Imagine the difference it could make if we focused on the strengths of people with **learning disabilities** instead of their weaknesses?

OCTOBER

is Learning Disabilities Awareness Month.
Help stop the stigma and realize the **ABILITIES!**

Conference Impacts
SOLD OUT
Teaching in Ontario

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We are delighted to have several speakers contribute articles and insights to this issue, which celebrates the success of our conference! *Hilary Scruton* adds depth and dimension to the runaway success that is Reading Rocks!

Dr. Marjory Phillips sheds critical light on interpreting psychoeducational assessments and the meaning that this can have for people diagnosed with LDs.

Melissa Rowbotham offers practical tips on helping learners navigate through Executive Function challenges in the classroom.

Our English keynote Dr. Nancy Mather shares her views with *Carter Hammett* on the current state of LDs and summons experience from the past to provide commentary on future implications and directions.

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by Carter Hammett, Editor

Editor's Notebook

"ESCHEW OBFUSCATION"



Maybe it was the less-than-quiet four-hour bus ride or the furry eyeballs at the end of a long work week or maybe even the brain adjusting to a breath of fresh country air, but there it was in black-and-white posted on my friend's refrigerator:

"Eschew Obfuscation."

The phrase sounded familiar; ringing vaguely somewhere in the back of my less-than-reliable memory but I just couldn't accurately process it. Shortly after the wine kicked in, I stopped thinking about it, but then, lying in bed those words came back into my mind as I drifted off to sleep.

It wasn't until the following morning when I finally realized the irony of the statement, which basically was saying "avoid ambiguity and adopt clarity." It's actually quite funny in its hypocrisy.

Unfortunately, people with learning disabilities deal with this cruel irony every day. We live in a world that demands our democracy be transparent but covers that up with so many rules, policies, procedures, bylaws, small print and accommodations that everything gets lost

in translation. It's no wonder people with LD/ADHD struggle with comprehending the world around them sometimes...it can be a pretty mad place!

Fortunately, there is the rare gift of respite that is offered to us on occasion, and one of those took the form of The Educators' Institute on August 27, when several hundred people from across the province gathered in Toronto to attend a magical day full of insight and connection.

As part of LDAO's LD@school project, the conference brought together LD stakeholders for a fully-bilingual event that offered networking opportunities, information on the latest evidence-based research and a peek at some of the exciting projects going on around the province.

One of these is Reading Rocks, an evidence-based reading program that actually motivates kids to read. This is an exciting program offered by our very own LD Niagara and one of the program's creators shares some of her insights here. Another highlight was the not-so-simple dissection of those pesky psycho-diagnostic reports and what they actually

mean. How many clients have I spoken who had received feedback years before but were too embarrassed to ask for clarification? Integra's Dr. Marjory Phillips was another fine speaker that day and we are pleased to share her insights with you in this issue.

Filmmaker Karen O'Donnell knows what it's like to manage the frustrations and successes of dealing with ADHD both in the school and in her personal life. It was while filming her thoughtful documentary, *A Mind Like Mine*, that she learned she herself was also living with ADHD. As with many late-diagnosed individuals, she has gained many insights about herself. A measure of the person is how readily she shares those insights now with others.

And that's what it's really all about. One of the most powerful and transformative experiences we can possibly undertake is the ability to allow ourselves to be vulnerable and share our stories. We are taken out of isolation and become witness to empowering transformation and the magic of growth. It doesn't get any better than that.



This Issue We Were...

Mark Kawate is a self-proclaimed pirate strategist, as founder of Akasha Inspired, and has been in the technology industry since the age of 12. He started the non-profit brand ADHDapps and Apps for ADHD as a way to help his brothers and sisters with ADHD/LD/ASD succeed by effectively using the technology in their lives. You can find him on twitter.com/ADHDapps. • **Melissa Rowbotham**, B.Ed., M.Ed., works at Integra, a children's mental health centre specializing in treating

youth with Learning Disabilities (LDs) and co-occurring mental health disorders located in Toronto, Ontario. • **Dr. Marjory Phillips** obtained her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at the University of Waterloo. She has a passion for working with children with disabilities and their families and is now Director of Integra. • **Hilary Scruton** is a Graduate Researcher in Child and Youth Studies at Brock University and is now Director of Integra. Her research centers on supporting young vulnerable readers.

Hilary facilitates a number of programs offered by the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara, and also publishes in peer-reviewed journals and presents at local and international conferences on LD. • **Kenneth E. Seaton** is a Toronto-based freelance writer and small business consultant. View his website at www.wordable.ca • **Taru Virkamaki** is manager of disability services at JVS Toronto.

Next Issue You Could...



Message FROM THE CEO



Lawrence Barns, CEO

"Don't Dis My Ability"

LD Awareness Month October 2014 kicks off Campaign Emphasizing The Power of One's Own Strength

When people think of "disabilities" they often think in terms of what the person *can't* do: A person in a wheelchair can't walk; a person with a white cane can't see. A person with hearing aids can't hear. The theme for LD awareness month in Ontario aims to change this thinking.

WHY A PERSON'S ABILITIES MATTER

People too often define the life of someone living with learning disabilities (LDs) by the areas where their LDs impact directly, such as math, reading, writing or organizational skills. The goal of this campaign is for people to see beyond to their multiple areas of strength. LDs didn't stop entrepreneur Richard Branson, chef Jamie Oliver or musician John Lennon. A person with LDs just needs the right supports to achieve success.

- By definition, someone with LDs has average-to-above average intelligence
- LDs impact certain skills, most of which can be improved with the right supports
- Because LDs usually exhibit in the school system, those with LDs can be identified early in life, and early intervention improves confidence
- When they don't receive appropriate support, individuals with LDs have higher-than-average rates of school dropout, unemployment and poverty.

- LDs can be inherited and many parents are now finding they have been impacted in their lives as their children are diagnosed.

All of the above statistics can be radically altered if we as a society help them to succeed. Lives and communities can improve for the better. In fact, people with LDs can become among the most creative, and productive members of our communities.

People living with learning disabilities have the extra burden of LDs being invisible. This means that often they and their families have to make those around them aware in order to get the supports they need to succeed. Too often this in turn leads to them being labelled as an underachiever or worse. Yet learning disabilities are *not* a barrier to success, just a different path to the same outcome. Our goal is to see every person living with learning disabilities given the support, opportunity and understanding they need to succeed, by seeing their true ability!

Can I ask YOU a favour...? I know that I'm preaching to the choir here, so I want to challenge you to personally speak to five people during the month and change their perception of LDs. Will you join me in making this truly a month where we create awareness?

LDAO and LD News

Families Needed for Sick Kids Research study on the Genetics of Reading Disabilities

Families are needed for a research study at SickKids (the Hospital for Sick Children), which is investigating the genetic basis of reading disabilities. We require the participation of families and their child(ren), age 6 to 16 years, who struggle with reading. Parents will receive a report describing their child's test results, which may be helpful in educational planning. All testing will take place at SickKids in downtown Toronto.

Abundant evidence suggests that reading disabilities run in families and that both genetic and environmental factors influence the predisposition to struggle with reading. The aim of this study is to identify genes that may contribute to reading disabilities by examining genes that are thought to be involved in the biological basis of reading. We will also investigate the genetics of associated skills including language, spelling, math, attention, and working memory.

Study participation involves: One full day of psycho-educational testing for the child and a half-day of interviews and testing with parents, all of which takes place on the same day, at SickKids. We also require a small blood sample from parents and child, taken during the visit by trained experts in our Phlebotomy Department. Following participation, parents will receive a detailed report describing their child's test results, which may be helpful in the educational planning for the child.

Results from the study may improve the understanding of which genes and underlying mechanisms are involved in reading disabilities. The research is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

For more information, contact the study manager, Kirsten Blokland: 416-813-8207, or kirsten.blokland@sickkids.ca



Public Policy Roundup



New Ministry of Education Policy on Learning Disabilities

LDAO enthusiastically welcomes the announcement by the Special Education Policy & Programs Branch of the revised Policy/Program Memorandum 8: Identification of and Program Planning for Students with Learning Disabilities. The previous PPM 8 on Learning Disabilities was published in 1982 and the field of learning disabilities has seen major advancements since that time. In 2011 the ministry convened a Learning Disabilities Working Group comprised of educators, internationally recognized researchers, psychologists and key stakeholders, including LDAO, to inform the development of the revised PPM and a resource document for educators.

The Definition of the term Learning Disability in the revised PPM is consistent with key concepts of the LDAO Definition

of Learning Disabilities, developed through an extensive consultation process in 2001. While many school boards, in addition to Ontario postsecondary institutions, have been informally using the LDAO definition, the key concepts are now part of the ministry definition to be used for identification of students with learning disabilities through the IPRC process.

In addition to updating the definition, the revised PPM provides direction on Recognition and identification of Learning Disabilities (including Early and ongoing screening, and Assessments) and on Program Planning for students with learning disabilities. As stated in the memo to Directors of Education, the revised PPM “reflects the advancement in research and developments in special education policies and school board practices in supporting

students with learning disabilities”.

The ministry is organizing information sessions for Superintendents of Special Education and intends to release Guidelines for the Delivery of Special Education Programs and Services for Students with Learning Disabilities in the 2015-16 school year. In addition, the ministry is funding LDAO to develop online research-based resources, webinars, and podcasts (LD@school/TA@l'école) and funded the very successful Educator's Institute, Demystifying Learning Disabilities in the Classroom, on August 27, 2014.

The requirements of the revised PPM 8 will take effect January 2, 2015.



Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz



Elsewhere

Bits and Pieces of LD/ADHD News Collected From Around the World...



UNITED KINGDOM



Trade Union Congress launches new guide to dyslexia in the workplace

The TUC has published the third edition of its guide to dealing with dyslexia in the workplace.

Several million working age adults have dyslexia – which can cause problems with performance, organization of work and time management – with around four per cent of the population seriously affected by the condition.

Workers can face real difficulties at work if their dyslexia is not diagnosed or if appropriate adjustments to their working conditions and environment are not made. Union reps can play a vital part in supporting work colleagues with dyslexia and negotiating solutions with employers,

says the guide.

The new edition of *Dyslexia in the Workplace* is a major rewrite of the original handbook, taking account of changes in the law and in good practice.

The guide includes an outline of the main issues around dyslexia, how to identify whether an employee is dyslexic, how to undertake proper workplace assessments and how companies can do more to support staff with the condition.

TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady said: "All too often, workers with dyslexia can find themselves facing disciplinary action over perceived failures, when early awareness of the condition could have led

to sensible solutions being identified.

"Our new workplace guidance gives union reps and employees the information they need to support dyslexic work colleagues and sort out any workplace problems."

View a copy of the handbook here:
www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Dyslexia_In_The_Workplace_2013_LR.pdf

Issued: 21 March, 2014

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/disability-issues/tuc-launches-new-guide-dyslexia-workplace>



SOUTH AFRICA



Red Apple Dyslexia Association Launches in South Africa

On 12 March 2014 the first and only association dedicated to dyslexia in South Africa was launched in Sandton, Johannesburg.

Guests from all over the country attended this prestigious and historical evening. For the first time in history RADA is taking on the challenge to educate the public about dyslexia and the effects thereof on the individual presenting with this condition and their families.

Dyslexia is a neurologically based, often familial, disorder that interferes with the acquisition and processing of language. Varying in degrees of severity, it is manifested by difficulties in receptive and expressive language including reading, writing, spelling, handwriting and sometimes arithmetic which is known as dyscalculia.

Misconceptions about dyslexia being associated with inferior intelligence need

to be eliminated. Dyslexic people suffer from a disorder that is very real, and it is cruel to think of them as being 'stupid', 'lazy' or 'thick'.

Dyslexia affects at least 15% of the entire population worldwide, regardless of your culture, race, language, gender or age. The more reason to diagnose and treat dyslexics in our country.

http://dyslexiasa.org/press-releases/March_12,_2014



NEW ZEALAND



Specialised help for children with dyslexia pays dividends

Compelling research shows learning outcomes for children with dyslexia can be vastly improved.

Specialised, early intervention can significantly boost success at school for a child with dyslexia, a pilot study shows.

One-on-one, personalised tuition resulted in vast and surprising improvements in achievement skills, Karen Waldie, Associate Professor of the School of Psychology at Auckland University, says.

SPELD NZ, in collaboration with school RTLBs (Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour), carried out the study involving 42 seven-year-old students struggling in the classroom as a result of dyslexia.

Ms Waldie says she was taken by surprise and "truly impressed" by the resulting data.

"The children increased their predicted reading success by 20-44 percent in areas of sound blending, phonemic awareness, verbal comprehension and reading fluency.

"We saw vast improvements in thinking ability, cognitive fluency and processing speed."

The New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies has published the research findings, noting the improvement of cognitive efficiency and processing speed was "testament to the ability of the brain to be modified, presumably via strengthened neural connectivity, following even a relatively brief (60 session) exposure to an enriched environment in the form of SPELD intervention."

The students in the study came from a variety of schools, ranging from decile 1 to decile 10. They received 60 45-minute

sessions of one-on-one tuition, twice weekly, from SPELD NZ teachers. Each child had assessments of their academic and cognitive abilities before and after the 60 lessons.

SPELD NZ's chairperson, Marion Fairbrass, says although the sample size was small, it was a first step and the findings were very encouraging.

"They indicate that specialised teaching, built on solid foundations, can make a strong contribution to those with dyslexia and to the wider education sector."

<http://tvnz.co.nz/national-news/specialised-help-children-dyslexia-pays-dividends-6058429>

August 14, 2014



UNITED STATES



Lower verbal test score for toddlers who play non-educational games on touch screens

A recent study by pediatricians from the Cohen Children's Medical Center of New York examined infants 0-3 years old that used touch-screen devices to determine if their use was of any educational benefit to infants and toddlers. The study showed that children who played non-educational games using touch-screen devices had lower verbal scores upon testing.

The results also showed that although the majority of parents cited in the study believed their children received educational benefits by using smart phones, readers and tablets, there was no statistical difference in developmental scores in children who played educational games versus non-educational games.

"We have observed in our neonatal clinic that the number one "toy" parents are giving their toddlers are smart phones," said Ruth Milanaik, DO, chief investigator of the study and an attending developmental and behavioral physician at the Cohen Children's

Medical Center of New York in New Hyde Park. "It was striking to see that parents were substituting books and general baby toys for smart phones. Many parents did not seem to bring any other distraction for their children except the touch screen devices."

Dr. Milanaik noted that the 2011 American Academy of Pediatrics' (AAP) policy predated recent technological advances such as smart phones and tablets and discouraged the use of electronic media in children younger than age 2, citing potential adverse development risks and lack of evidence supporting educational benefits. The new 2013 AAP guideline cites positive and prosocial effects of media use but does not address children 0-3. The relationship between using touch-screen devices and cognitive development of this population had yet to be studied, according to Dr. Milanaik.

Of the 65 families surveyed, 63 (97 percent) owned a touch screen device. The average age of the child when starting to use a touch-screen device was about 11 months

and average use was about 36 minutes daily. The most common forms of touch screen device usage was watching children's "educational shows" (30 percent), using educational applications (26 percent), pressing buttons on the screen aimlessly (28 percent), and playing non-educational games (14 percent). Sixty percent of parents reported "educational benefits" of their child using a touch screen device. The study showed there was no significant difference in testing scores between children who used touch-screen devices and children without the same exposure to touch-screen devices. However, results indicated that children who play non-educational games (ie. Angry Birds, Fruit Ninja, etc.) have a lower verbal score on developmental tests.

"Technology can never replace a parent's interaction with his or her child. Just talking to your child is the best way to encourage learning" Dr. Milanaik said.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/05/140503082728.htm>



ADHD-Friendly Apps

ADHD Made Me A Stronger Person

By Mark Kawate

I believe it is imperative that we must take advantage of the chemical strengths that we all have due to whatever diagnosis we have to live with, to quality of our lives, happiness, and success.

There are many ways we can utilize our strengths sometimes they seem like odd tweaks or weird things about us but often they can be applied in a manner that directly utilizes a much more efficient way of connecting our actions to our thoughts and motivations .

I personally strive to take advantage of the positive aspects of my ADHD(especially within my circle of support); an example being using my hyper-focus to blitz a ton of work.

Now that we're talking about technology and apps I want to introduce three ways and three tech resources to utilize strengths you have while using modern technology!



1. SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY / ANALYZE AND TRACK

Recently, a reader of mine sent me a really interesting community-based accountability app that wasn't the distracted, ridiculousness that FaceBook can be. This minimalistic and very effective app is designed for the sole purpose of helping you reach your goals using a multitpronged approach. Lift employs coaching, community-based accountability, and data to help you reach your goal.

This app is for iPhone, android, and can be accessed online.

One of the main things that caught my eye was the ability to track and analyze progress, as well as, that and I am a little obsessed with community-based accountability. I'm also quite a fan of the inspirational quotes they stick in unexpected places. www.Lift.do

2. POSITIVE PROGRESS

Home Routines has a few major features or sections that make it ideal for ADHD or LD

success. Routines, daily messages, built in timer, focus zones, visual to-do lists, are some of the most important features and an accomplishment section that allows you to see how much you have gotten done make this a simple but very effective app. It is an emotional boost every time I use it.

HomeRoutines also has free syncing with the Cloud and online editing. It is for iPhone and is also web-based. www.homeroutines.com

3. UNDERSTAND

Take time to look at the apps that are already on or existing and ready for you to use on your smart phone.

Learn how to use everything that comes with the phone before you decide to go crazy with purchasing other apps.

Use the calendar to your advantage, whether that be time/blocking if you're more visual, or just to keep everything consolidated that you need to accomplish.

I also want to make sure to mention KahnAcademy.org again, as it is a free online directed study whose gamification

style method has been very recently expanded to all subjects beyond math.

In closing, we are coming into a new age that will directly affect people with mental health and learning disabilities along with their communities. Now that the brain has been mapped on a cellular level, we have, for the first time, a high resolution map with a field of answers staring us in the face.

"Technology should never be overwhelming. If you do feel overwhelmed, take a step back and gather your bearings. We want to continue to work together as a community. Furthermore, if anyone has any questions about technologies, apps or ADHD/LD/ASD, please don't hesitate to contact me directly at mark@appsforadhd.com. We must stick together and learn about ourselves individually!"

Neuroscientists will be asking questions all over the world, and I can't wait to see what we learn.



SOLD OUT

Conference Impacts Teaching in Ontario



 **LD**
@school

 **TA**
@l'école

Demystifying Learning Disabilities in the Classroom

Conference Impacts Teaching in Ontario

It was an inspiring day to come out and learn about all things LD.

That's because the 400 Ontario educators and LD professionals attending LD@school's first Educators' Institute, were offered a wealth of new knowledge, practical tips and deep perspectives on current research in the field.

The conference was a result of the hard work of both the LDAO team and the LD@school/TA@l'école team. LD@school/TA@l'école is a bilingual web resource produced by LDAO with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Education. The two web sites (www.LDatSchool.ca and www.TAaLecole.ca) were launched in 2013 as a resource for Ontario educators who work with students with LDs and the Educators' Institute was their culminating project from the past year.

Whether it was pragmatic information on assistive technology, interpreting psychoeducational reports or insightful strategies for enhancing executive functioning in the classroom, delegates were treated to a dazzling array of information, networking opportunities and the chance to meet some true legends in the field.

Especially notable was the fact that this was a fully bilingual event, which included French keynote speaker Dr. Nadia Rousseau, who shared inspiring student testimonies from a diverse range of learners. By sharing stories, the students were given a voice, and delegates in turn were able to appreciate and reflect on the struggles and strategies these learners endured.

A great deal of planning went in to the execution of the Educators' Institute, and to making sure that it was valuable to Ontario educators. Holding simultaneous English and French sessions allowed delegates to attend sessions in both languages, based on their individual interests and needs. Hosting a bilingual conference comes with its own challenges, including finding sufficient bilingual volunteers, however, the event was such a success partly due to the decision to make it bilingual, and is a decision that the team is proud of and will continue with moving forward. Part of the draw for French delegates (including French Immersion teachers) was that there are no other similar events hosted in Ontario in French with so many learning opportunities in one place.

Planning for next year's event has begun, and the team is looking to include more advanced content next year and to broaden

the pool of speakers, as well as add in even more topics. As the event will be extended to two days and the maximum registration numbers will be increased to 600, the team also hopes to include more opportunities for educators to network and more valuable learning experiences based on the feedback that was received this year.

This issue of *Communique* draws on some of the multitude of amazing speakers who contributed their energy to the success of the day. Key among content this time out is a profile of English keynote Dr. Nancy Mather, who delivered a touching, funny and insightful session that drew on current issues in the field as well as focusing on student strengths.

This issue also looks at current issues involving interpretation of psychoeducational reports and enhancing executive functions in the classroom from two exceptionally talented individuals from Integra.

If you are an educator who was unable to attend this truly special event—next year's two-day LD@school/TA@l'école Educators' Institute is one that you don't want to miss—then, we hope you draw some insights and inspiration from the content presented here.



Getting to the Bottom of Reading Disabilities

A Chat With Dr. Nancy Mather

“Every child would read if it were in his power to do so.”

– E.A. Betts (1936)

By Carter Hammett



While listening to Nancy Mather speak you begin to remember what a young field of study learning disabilities really is.

It was barely 100 years ago when the term “word blindness” floated around Europe and provoked much debate around the capacity of children unable to read, yet, who, perhaps touched by the hand of a higher power, were able to successfully perform in other areas.

“The children of superior mental capacity who fail to learn to read are, of course, spectacular examples of specific reading difficulty since they have such obvious abilities in other fields,” wrote Marion Monroe in her classic 1932 book, *Children Who Cannot Read*.

Flash forward nearly a century and you realize some things haven’t changed all that much.

However, it is precisely to history that Dr. Nancy Mather turns to extract lessons learned over the course of a long and substantial career as a passionate and vocal spokesperson for children with LD. Dr. Mather is a professor of special education at the University of Arizona in the department of disability and psychoeducational studies. She’s been a learning disabilities teacher, a diagnostician, a university professor and an educational consultant. She’s also published numerous articles and books and is perhaps best known as co-author of *The Woodcock-Johnson III* and the two books on

interpretation and application of the testing instrument.

She views one of the biggest issues facing the LD field today is the absence of a standardized national strategy for the accurate identification of students with LD and providing appropriate programming for them.

“Every state is different and some favour some models over others,” she says. “It’s confusing for who and how LD is identified and the validity gets challenged because you get different models.”

The models she refers to include three procedures that contribute information for identification of a specific LD. These include: Ability-Achievement Discrepancy, Response to Intervention (RTI) and Alternative research-based methods, including a pattern of strengths and weakness (PSW).

Each model has its own strengths and weaknesses. RTI, for example, is good at monitoring progress of students in school and reducing the number of referrals to special education and providing timely interventions. It does not, however, tell us why a student does not respond to intervention; nor does it diagnose or classify a particular disability.

Mather tends to favour the PSW approach because children tend to receive effective intervention.

The system gets further complicated

because of a lack of awareness among teachers.

“Lots of times teachers haven’t received appropriate training in terms of recognition of LD,” she says. “They might feel the child is lazy or not motivated when that’s not the issue at all.”

When this occurs it’s unfortunate that an emphasis on weaknesses becomes the central issue, which can result in neglect of the student’s strengths.

“You take a student who can assemble a car engine without looking at a drawing, but he just happens to be a bad speller... The emphasis will be on the negative,” says Mather.

A strength-based approach however, involves the student assembling the car engine and explaining it to people – he’s able to demonstrate his areas of expertise. You build on that by doing something and people acknowledge that you’re good at it.

Unfortunately with the current climate, “nobody tells them they’re good at it.”

And one of the unfortunate consequences this results in is poor self-esteem.

“It’s frustrating for the person because they feel inferior and ask, ‘why don’t I get it?’” says Mather. “I’ve seen surveys conducted with adults with learning disabilities and poor self-esteem is the number one problem that perpetuates into adulthood. It’s hard to get back on the horse after falling off 10 times.”

Continued on next page. ➤

A STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH

Still, it's always possible to change the approach. Mather is encouraged by the activities of some of the smaller, private LD-based schools and the positive results generated by teachers who understand LDs. Indeed, one of the more positive approaches she's seen has been observed in schools like the Indianapolis-based Fortune Academy, where she says kids are valued and operate on a 4-1 ratio with their teachers, thereby ensuring significant attention is paid to each learner.

Instructors at the school tie-in aspects of learning, placing it in a meaningful context and make it interesting.

"They'll teach you about 2/3...do they measure it out or show you a cup of rice?"

"Everything's meaning-based and integrated. It's exciting because teachers understand," she enthuses.

Unfortunately these schools tend to be prohibitively expensive and exclusive as well. "It makes you sad because you realize it's only available to a smaller group and they are so lucky."

Still, private instruction is just one response. A more recent, accessible and exciting development resides in computer-based instruction and this holds bright possibilities for the future.

One of these programs is the MindPlay Virtual Reading Coach (VRC). The VRC is an Internet-based tool that provides differentiated targeted instruction to learners coping with reading issues. The program includes applications that respond to areas like phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, grammar and meaning.

"It builds the program just for you by figuring out your reading rate and vocabulary."

Instruction provided by the program includes multisensory learning experiences, timely and targeted feedback and explicit, systematic instruction.

So successful is the program that Mather says significant gains begin to occur after 25-30 hours with most students reaching grade level reading after only 50 hours.

"There's no way teachers can provide differentiated instruction to a room full of 30 kids, but this way each kid is working on his own individualized programming and the teacher can provide 1-1 assistance to the kids that'll need more support."

And at an affordable rate that allows unlimited access for about \$300 annually, it's an accessible alternative to pricey schools.

"Think about having a reading tutor and how much that would cost over time. VRC becomes a good investment."

.....

"At one magical instant in your early childhood, the page of a book that string of confused alien ciphers-shivered into meaning. Words spoke to you, gave up their secrets; at that moment, whole universes opened. You became, irrevocably, a reader."

- Alberto Manguel,
A History of Reading, (1996)

Computer-based programs, such as the Virtual Reading Coach, among others, offer a bright light in a sea of challenges in a system fraught with change and turbulence and politics. Furthermore, says Mather, teachers are starting to get better training and increased awareness when it comes to early identification of learning disabilities and how to address them. No matter how slow it occurs, Mather remains optimistic about the future and the reach that technology offers children with LD.

"Different methods are needed for different children, depending on instructional needs and helping them is about being sensitive to their learning trajectory. Technology offers differentiated targeted instructions and that can now be provided to all."



BOOKS BY NANCY MATHER INCLUDE:

WJ III: Woodcock-Johnson III: Reports, Recommendations, and Strategies

(Mather & Jaffe, 2002)

Essentials of WJ III Tests of Achievement Assessment

(Mather, Wendling, & Woodcock, 2001).

Learning Disabilities and Challenging Behaviors: A Guide to Intervention and Classroom Management (2nd ed.)

(Mather & Goldstein, 2008),

Evidence-based Interventions for Students with Learning and Behavioral Challenges

(Morris & Mather, 2008),

Essentials of Assessment Report Writing

(Lichtenberger, Mather, Kaufman, & Kaufman, 2004),

Essentials of Evidence-Based Academic Interventions (2009)

Writing Assessment Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities (2009)

Comprehensive Evaluations: Case Reports for Psychologists, Diagnosticians and Special Educators (editor, 2010)

Dyslexia: Assessment and Intervention (2012)



Helping Students Manage Their World:

Executive Functioning in the Classroom

By Melissa Rowbotham, B.Ed., M.Ed.

Melissa Rowbotham, B.Ed., M.Ed., works at Toronto-based Integra, a children's mental health centre specializing in treating youth with learning disabilities (LDs) and co-occurring mental health disorders. She has worked as both a regular classroom teacher and special education teacher for children with behavioural difficulties, learning disabilities, social and emotional issues in Alberta and Ontario. Melissa also a Master's Degree in Psychology from OISE/University of Toronto and has worked as a mental health therapist with children and their families using individual, group, family and play therapy in both hospital and community settings.



"Kids will do well if they can. If not, something's going on and it means the needs of the environment are exceeding the child's ability to cope well."

Ross Greene's words resonate especially clear when considering a child with executive function challenges.

While commonly associated with ADHD and learning disabilities, executive functions are treated as a discreet entity in Rowbotham's workshop, because "teachers may not be privy to this and feel that they are being held hostage by a lack of knowledge."

This workshop takes a magnifying glass and applies it to an umbrella term that includes various skills and functions of the prefrontal cortex, and is largely responsible for self-regulation. Whether a child has to develop skills to contain outbursts at important social gatherings, or whether that same child is asked to undertake the challenges of a multi-step math problem, he is subjected to increased "cognitive load" which can slow things down.

"Students need us to help them develop these skills," says Rowbotham.

It's important to understand that executive functions are also

implicated in people with mental health and 100% implicated in all kids at Integra."

"Your understanding of the problems determine your solution."

One of the reasons I'm so excited about the recent explosion of research, books and discussions about executive functioning is that it gives educators and parents (and kids themselves) a different way of thinking about their daily functioning.

Often when students are struggling at school we are tempted to think about these challenges as problems that the student could control if only they were more motivated to do so (sustained attention), or if they just made better decisions (planning and problem-solving) or used their time more wisely (self-monitoring), or listened better (inhibited impulses), or were better prepared (organization) or would just focus (concentration)! The irony is that these may be the very executive skills that they are lacking.

Ross Greene's approach, Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS), believes that "kids do well if they can" and if they are not doing well then there is a reason. This opens up the possibilities for success as we rethink why kids are struggling, what deficits they may have, what strengths they may have and how we can use this information to help them at school and at home.

The term Executive Functioning (EF) skills (or higher order thinking) is being used a lot these days but needs to be understood in terms of the classroom context as well as the individual student's learning profile. Basically, this term refers to our

Continued on page 16. ►

Don't DIS my ABILITY

Imagine the difference it could make if we focused on the strengths of people with learning disabilities instead of their weaknesses?



OCTOBER is Learning Disabilities Awareness Week

Help stop the stigma and realize the ABILITY of everyone



awareness Month.

ILITIES!

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Association of Ontario

The right to learn, the power to achieve

ability to self-regulate and make our way through our daily lives effectively. For example, things like controlling our emotions (not snapping at someone when they bug us), the ability to shift from one activity or state to another (like getting out of the door in the morning or shifting from recess to reading), curb our impulses (to blurt out our thoughts or leap up and move around instead of sitting), to listen to instructions (and then actually follow them to complete work) are just a few examples of real life situations, which require the use of executive functioning skills.

Students who have identified deficits in these areas are often diagnosed with learning disabilities, and ADHD, which are neurobiological (or brain-based) conditions. These children can be behind other kids their age in regards to their EF skills – they most likely will need help to move forward in terms of EF skill development. As an educator, give yourself permission to adjust

expectations to a child's "stage" versus their age in terms of the strategies chosen for support. If a middle school student acts more like an elementary student in terms of daily functioning behaviourally, socially and/or emotionally then adjust accordingly. Sometimes we worry that by lowering expectations we will create dependence but we need to teach skills and offer supports close to their current level to see growth (scaffolding).

What we know about EF is that it doesn't necessarily impact a student's intelligence although it may affect their academic functioning and grades. I've worked with kids with EF deficits whose grades have gone up significantly with the use of well-chosen accommodations. At the heart of these accommodations are people, educators who strive to develop relationships with struggling students and understand their profiles in order to best support them.

If we, as educators, believe that we should help and we can help then the question becomes how can we help? Here are a few tips to get started:

1. Understand the student's learning profile including both strengths and weaknesses both formally (psychoeducational reports and testing) and informally (observations of daily routines, trouble spots and areas they do well). There is great variability within each profile and understanding an individual student is key to choosing effecting strategies.
2. Use a team approach – it is not one person's job to "fix or solve the problem" – everyone has a role and all viewpoints can be helpful in different ways (classroom teacher, psychologist, special ed. teachers, parents, and the student) – a shared load is a lighter load.
3. Help students be organized – students may need direct instruction in HOW to keep track of things, extra supervision and on-going practice may be needed to work towards independence.
4. Help students be masterful – self-esteem and confidence are directly related to accomplishment. Repeated failure can lead to learned helplessness and chronic emotional issues. Anything an educator can do to create opportunities for small, daily success will contribute to overall well-being.
5. Prioritize Relationships – This kind of support is like a "living IEP" where we as educators make daily adjustments as we interact with our students. We will make mistakes, push too hard, or not enough – it is inevitable as we try to meet multiple needs in a classroom. But if we prioritize the relationship with the student, we create trust and a space for conversation.

Specific EF skills development may take longer with neurological conditions like LDs and ADHD so support may need to be kept in place until a student can do things independently with continued success. The use of training wheels can be used as a metaphor – just because a child can ride with training wheels doesn't mean their balance, confidence and motor development are at a level where they are ready for them to come off. However, they can be adjusted to be further off the ground until the child is ready to tackle the next step of riding without them, at which point a whole other level of accommodations may be necessary (riding on grass, adult running beside, etc.). This will be a team process involving ongoing communication and informal evaluation to know when it is time to alter expectations. Often the student is a great resource at

knowing when to lessen supports. "Let go!"

At that point, it is a lovely moment for both the student and the teacher – as they ride off with the joy of accomplishment, and we watch with our own sense of satisfaction.

Student success is inexorably linked to our own and when students chronically struggle at school, we, as educators, struggle too. Rethinking a student's daily challenges in terms of EF can open eyes to new possibilities for intervention and provide opportunities to celebrate daily successes together thus strengthening one of the most important relationships in a child's life - that between a student and their teacher.



What Does This Mean For Everyday Life?

Practical Tips for Interpreting Psychoeducational Assessment Reports

By Dr. Marjory Phillips, Ph.D., C.Psych.

Dr. Marjory Phillips obtained her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at the University of Waterloo. She has a passion for working with children with disabilities and their families. Before joining Integra in October 2007, Marjory started a community-based children's Psychology Clinic at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. Prior to that, she worked for 12 years as a clinician and manager in a multidisciplinary children's treatment centre, providing assessment and treatment to children with disabilities. At the treatment centre, Marjory's work also included community consultation and the development of educational programming regarding pediatric acquired brain injuries.



Psychological or psychoeducational assessment reports provide a wealth of knowledge about how a person learns and processes information. However, the professional jargon and practical applications of the assessment measures and test findings can be difficult to interpret.

The tests can present a gap in translation says Phillips. "The tests are technical. We need to work in partnership— with families, educators, kids to make sense of it."

While testing is standardized, she says the College of Psychologists only requires that test results be captured and presented in writing. The way the information is presented, writing style, testing instruments and feedback can vary widely and wildly.

Teachers forget that it's a report. It's about the child, but often a parent is reluctant to share. We need people to understand that the process needs to be treated respectfully.

It's a great resource but it's not magical. People need to know how to make use of it. Once you get past the jargon, everyone should be able to read it for practical purposes. They can be very useful for helping the student make sense of his world."

Psychological or psychoeducational assessment reports contain a wealth of useful information about how a person learns and makes sense of the world. However, reports are written in a variety of styles and structures which can make it challenging to navigate and to distill practical information for application to everyday life. It is important for educators, particularly those writing a student's individual education plan (IEP), to consult and work collaboratively with school psychologists to understand the findings in a student's psychology assessment report. The report is a useful resource and it is my hope that the more comfortable everyone is in reading and understanding the information, the more

the knowledge can be applied and used in a practical way to help the student at school.

The following frequently asked questions and tips are intended to help educators navigate a psychological assessment report with ease.

1. How are reports organized?

Psychologists or Psychological Associates follow guidelines established by the College of Psychologists of Ontario which require some basic elements in all reports. These include demographic information about the student, dates of testing, a list of tests given, and assessment findings. It is up to the individual assessor to decide how the information is organized in a report. Most reports contain the following sections: Reason for referral; background information; procedures or tests administered; behavioral observations; test results; diagnosis or formulation; recommendations.

Continued on next page. ►

2. What is standardized testing and what do the numbers mean?

Standardized testing means that we give exactly the same instructions, prompts and materials to every student, trying to keep what we do the same as possible so that we can better identify differences among the students. Using published tables of scores, we compare the student's individual performance to hundreds (and thousands) of other students the same age ("normative sample").

Raw scores are the actual scores a student earned on a particular test. Since tests can differ in their units of measurement, we need to **transform** raw scores into scores that we can compare across all tests. Most often, we use **percentiles**, or the percentage of individuals whose score lies below the score of the test-taker. It is similar to rank ordering: If a student scores at the 10th percentile on working memory, that means that 90% of people scored higher than that student, or that the student scored in the bottom 10% of the sample.

Using percentiles, we can compare a student to others her age, and we can compare a student's score on particular tests to scores on other tests (looking at her profile).

Sometimes, psychology reports will avoid numbers (including percentiles) and will instead report results with descriptive terms. These terms are associated with particular tests, such as the WISC. Of key note, we expect 50% of the population to have scores within the "Average" range (percentiles between 25 and 75). Low Average (9th-to- 24th percentile) is actually below average, and High Average (75th- to- 90th percentile) is much higher than most.

Most importantly, the numbers don't tell the whole story about how the student approached the tasks or what strategies he used. Look for the interpretation beyond the numbers.

3. The report is really long. What should I look for?

Date of Testing: it can be handy to know how long ago the assessment took place. Learning patterns are generally fairly stable after the age of eight, so the test results may still apply even if the report was written years before. However, the older the report, the more caution is needed in considering whether the results still fit the student you see now.

Reason for Referral: look for who had concerns about the student and who requested the assessment. Look for whether this is a 'reassessment' and whether the learning concerns started at an early age, or whether the concerns are relatively recent.

Background Information: look for information about the student that might be relevant to his learning and behavior. For example, a student who has moved frequently has likely changed schools often and may have missed sections of curriculum. Or there may have significant family stress or loss at one time that may have interfered with the student's mastery of something.

Behavioral Observations: does the student described in the report sound like the student you know? If not, is it the environment that differs? Or has the child changed?

List of Tests: look to see whether this particular assessment is comprehensive with a relatively lengthy list of tests that assess different things, or was it intended

for a specific purpose, such as 'gifted' designation evaluation. A comprehensive assessment usually includes tests of thinking and reasoning (e.g. WISC or WJ), academic achievement (e.g., WIAT, WJ), and processing (e.g., memory – WRAML or CMS, processing speed – WISC, executive functioning – BRIEF, NEPSY, D-KEFS, etc.).

Test Results: Consider the student's profile as a pattern. What are the areas of significant strength? (percentiles higher in those areas for that student) and areas of need? (percentiles relatively low).

Diagnostic Impressions or Summary & Conclusions: Diagnosis is a controlled act and is restricted to members of particular self-regulating professional colleges. Diagnosis is not the same thing as identification. The revised Policy and Program Memorandum 8 for Learning Disabilities has just been released by the Ontario Ministry of Education. It contains policy directions about the criteria for identification of LDs, and will be used by school psychologists to determine whether a student's profile meets criteria for an exceptionality.

Recommendations: Assessors try to make recommendations that follow logically from the test findings. However, this is an area for ongoing collaboration. Applying the test findings to the student's current situation is a process and often requires discussion with the student, parent, educators, and professional staff. Recommendations in a report are just suggestions to get the process started.

With improved understanding and common language, we can collaborate to optimize the learning environment for all of our students.



Reading Rocks:

Using Motivational Tactics to Support Children with Reading Disabilities

By Hilary Scruton

An exciting new reading program that not only teaches, but also motivates children to read is making waves in southwestern Ontario.

Reading Rocks is a literacy intervention approach that is aimed at supporting children with reading disabilities. Reading Rocks was developed by Dr. John McNamara, Ashley Short, and Hilary Scruton. Currently, through a partnership between Brock University and the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region, Reading Rocks is offered widely throughout the Niagara Region each year supporting over 400 children and youth with reading difficulties. Hilary Scruton and John McNamara recently presented Reading Rocks at the Educators' Institute conference on August 27, 2014.



Reading Rocks has been developed based on the latest research around the reading process and supporting vulnerable readers. For the past several decades, researchers, practitioners, and concerned stakeholders have worked to establish effective interventions for vulnerable readers. This work has culminated in firm understandings about the skill component areas where vulnerable readers struggle most significantly. Reading Rocks is designed to focus on three foundational literacy skills: sight word vocabulary, phonics, and fluency – all skills recommended by the National Reading Panel. In addition to foundational literacy skills, Reading Rocks is an intervention approach that uses motivational tactics to engage children in the reading process. Specifically, Reading Rocks has children use tactics such as task understanding, goal setting, graphing, and monitoring. These tactics are designed to actively engage children in their own learning. This active engagement will allow children to recognize their own progress and achievement. By combining traditional literacy with motivational tactics, Reading Rocks aims to bolster children's motivation and increase their reading achievement to support long-term reading success. Reading Rocks recognizes that within the spectrum of motivation there are

several tactics that can be used to bolster children's motivation and increase their reading achievement. Specifically, within each instructional block (i.e. phonics, sight word instruction, etc.) Reading Rocks engages a number of motivational tactics that promote self-regulated learning skills. The motivation tactics are engaged through the use of instructional workstations that tutors design and tailor to each child's needs.

The Reading Rocks approach is designed to be delivered in a series of one-hour instructional sessions. Each session should be broken down into four 15-minute instructional blocks each corresponding with one literacy-based instructional component. For example, a one-hour session could include a 15-minute block of phonics, followed by a 15-minute block of sight word vocabulary, a 15-minute block of reading fluency, and conclude with a 15-minute block of reading appreciation.

The purpose of the 15-minute block structure is twofold. First, research has demonstrated that short, intensive instructional sessions (10-15 minutes) are more effective than longer sessions. Second, the 15-minute block structure in Reading Rocks is

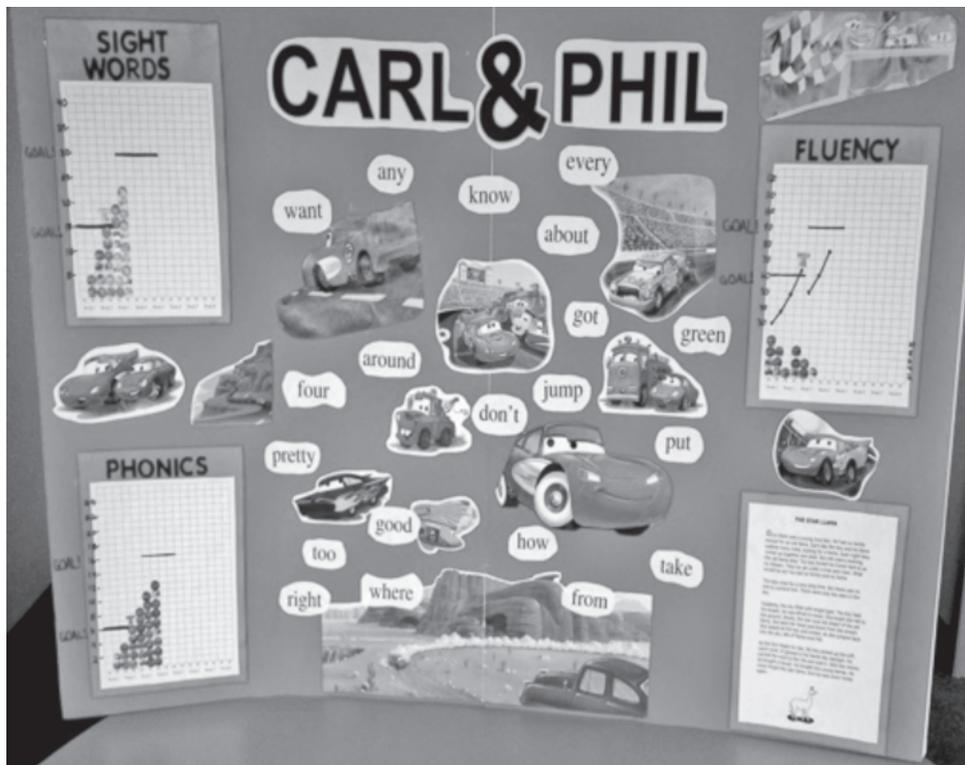
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designed to be motivational. Within the program, children set out to meet instructional goals within set time periods. This process encourages children to engage with the task vigorously in order to meet their defined goal. Goal setting is utilized as an important tactic for motivating children to engage within their own learning in order to meet their goals. An important aspect of the goal setting process in Reading Rocks is that goals are collectively developed and set by both instructors and children. Goals are deliberately set to be challenging yet attainable allowing children to feel a sense of accomplishment when goals are met.

The process of bridging a model of reading remediation and self-regulated learning holds important implications. First, research suggests that struggling readers often lack the self-efficacy to engage in the reading process. Following this, it is reasonable to expect that struggling readers are generally less motivated to engage in reading tasks. This is problematic in that vulnerable

readers are learning alongside strong readers who are engaging with reading tasks. The differences in "willingness to engage" can create long-term gaps in achievement that are difficult to overcome. However, by improving struggling readers' self-efficacy and engaging their motivation through tactics such as those utilized in Reading Rocks, children may be more likely to engage in reading, and thus, progress through the reading process.

Reading Rocks has been met with great success across the Niagara region. The developers of the approach have collected achievement data from participating children for several years and children have consistently demonstrated significant gains in their reading levels after an eight-week session of Reading Rocks. Reading Rocks is now in the process of being disseminated widely in schools and learning disabilities association networks throughout the province. For more information on the program please contact Ashley Short at ldaniagara@cogeco.net



Shelf Life

Books to enlighten and inspire and help you learn a little bit more about and embrace your LD/ADHD!

STUPID

by Kim Firmston

James Lorimer & Company Ltd., Publishers 2014

He sees the world in clear, sharp focus through his camera lens. A maze of shadows and objects turn black, then ominous. Other shapes loom large as he moves the lens into focus, or disappear from view as he shifts the angle of his camera.

Martin lives and excels in the creative vision of his mind's eye and through his camera lens. Brought together, he creates a world of moving stills, cut away shots and angles to tell the story of energy and movement.

Diagnosed with ADHD in grade eight, Martin refuses to accept it. It doesn't make sense to him. But he struggles at school where he can't read and he's failing every course. Everyone calls Martin stupid. His father calls him lazy and stupid, a real slacker wasting his life taking pictures and shooting videos instead of studying.

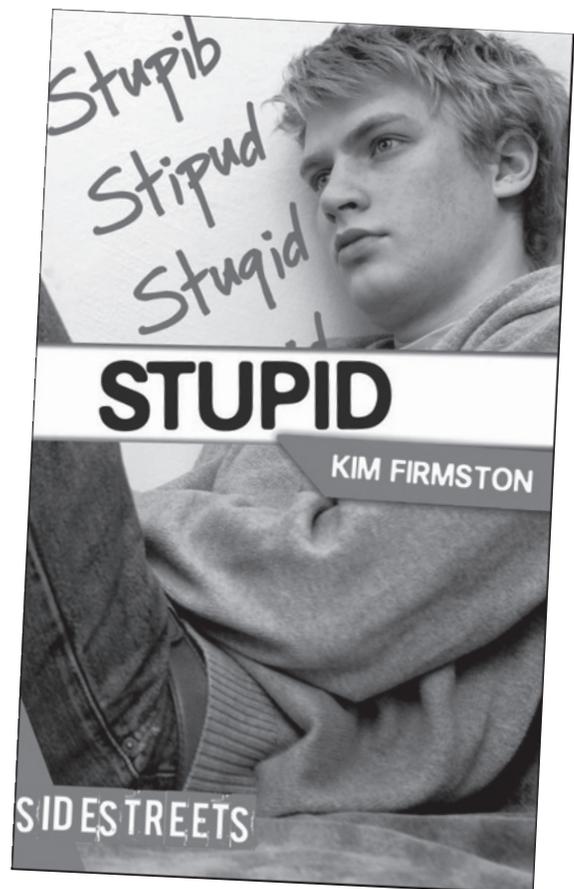
A chance meeting with Stick among the ruins of an old brewery changes the course of Martin's life. Martin is there filming a crumbling building surrounded with scraps of life's broken bits--wooden barrels, bottles, old tires. Stick uses the roof, walls, pipes and alleys as his obstacle course for parkour to move swiftly from one place to another.

Martin offers to film Stick and his group of friends doing their jumps and twists, mid-air somersaults to enter a video contest. He's sure he'll win and be able to show his father that he is very good at something--movie-making.

The ending of the novel moves too quickly through Martin's discovery that he has dyslexia. However, the parallel between dyslexia and parkour described through the discipline and training required to work with 'dyslexia-controlling techniques' to achieve good grades, and the physical training and discipline necessary to excel in parkour is compelling. That Martin is able to achieve 80% grades in the space of three weeks is incredible.

The happy ending is a bit too treacly. Still, the story flows at an energetic pace with enough tension through plot turns and twists to keep readers engaged.

-Taru Virkamaki



Continued on next page. ➤

FAST MINDS: HOW TO THRIVE IF YOU HAVE ADHD (OR THINK YOU MIGHT)

By Craig Surman, Tim Bilkey, and Karen Weintraub
Berkley, \$25.95, 352 pages

The title itself is an acronym that includes the terms Forgetful, Achieving below potential, Stuck in a rut, Motivationally-challenged, Impulsive, Novelty-seeking, Distractible, Scattered.

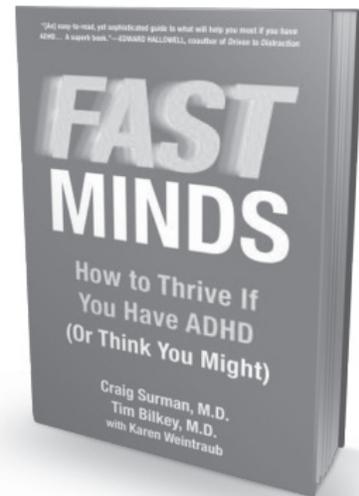
Many of us living in the fog of ADHD will be able to relate to one or more of these symptoms and the authors do a commendable job of breaking down and addressing each of these in pragmatic, easy-to-follow, user-friendly terms.

Divided into three parts: "Understanding FAST MINDS," "A FAST MINDS Operating Manual" and "Building the Life You Want." The authors choose to acknowledge ADHD—they point out you don't need a diagnosis to experience these traits—as a "problem maintaining consistent engagement."

This is especially helpful as the authors emphasize the particular uniqueness that the label has for everyone, and therefore a personalized program of attack is necessary when it comes to achieving mastering over one's management of the condition.

Enhanced with case studies, check lists and tools like "trait trackers" and "thought records" to monitor progress, the book takes a distinctly practical position in self-management.

I also liked the tone of the book, which is conversational in nature and never patronizing or highbrow. Chapter 8, for example, describes how the brain's prefrontal cortex is "for consciously controlling behavior and the basal ganglia helps manage behavior that involves goals and rewards." These two regions communicate via different pathways when animals are learning a new behavior, vs. when the behavior has become a reflexive, natural action. This means that when an animal is learning to press a lever for a reward the first time, it uses different brain circuits than when it presses it



already having learned that the action produces a reward."

The book offers new information that is easy to digest and understand and evidence-based resources and suggestions that can be tailored to your unique need. This is complemented by real-life stories—including the book's forward by Howie Mandel--sprinkled throughout the book that will strongly resonate with many readers, particularly the parts about underachievement.

In short, this is an empowering book that will shed light on the neurology of the condition and corrects the perception of ADHD as a personal failure. That sense of failure often becomes internalized and can have a profound effect on self-esteem. And that is the area where ADHD makes us feel most vulnerable. The book does a good job of reframing ADHD into something that can be managed and inverted into an optimistic potential that offers hope for those victimized by it.

-Rick Antosik

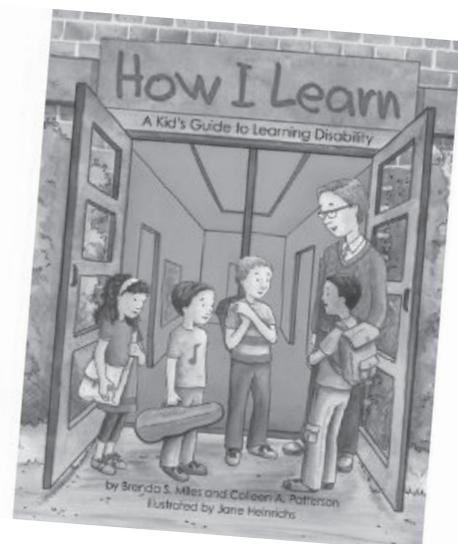


HOW I LEARN: A KID'S GUIDE TO LEARNING DISABILITY

by Brenda Miles and Colleen Patterson
Magination Press

Brenda Miles, neuropsychologist, and Colleen Patterson, psychologist, have written a simple-to-understand book for younger children, called How I Learn: A Kid's Guide to Learning Disability, using colourful illustrations by Jane Heinrichs. A young boy with reading difficulties talks about learning "in a different way" but also about all the things that he is good at. He tells about a couple of his friends who have other difficulties, one in math and one in writing, and explains that there are different kinds of LDs. His main positive message, repeated many times, is one of acceptance: "and that's OK". He gives examples of "smart things to help us learn" and ends with "When we do smart things to help us learn, we feel like we can do ANYTHING! And that's better than OK. That's GREAT!"

The authors include a Note to Parents, Caregivers and Professionals, with guidelines for using the book, and 'Smart Strategies' to try.



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Chapter News & Views

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM AROUND THE PROVINCE!

DURHAM

Learning Disabilities Awareness Day is Back!

Our latest Learning Disabilities Awareness Day/Fundraiser takes place Saturday October 25, 2014 9:30am - 1:30pm. It'll provide parents, students, educators and other professionals an opportunity to:

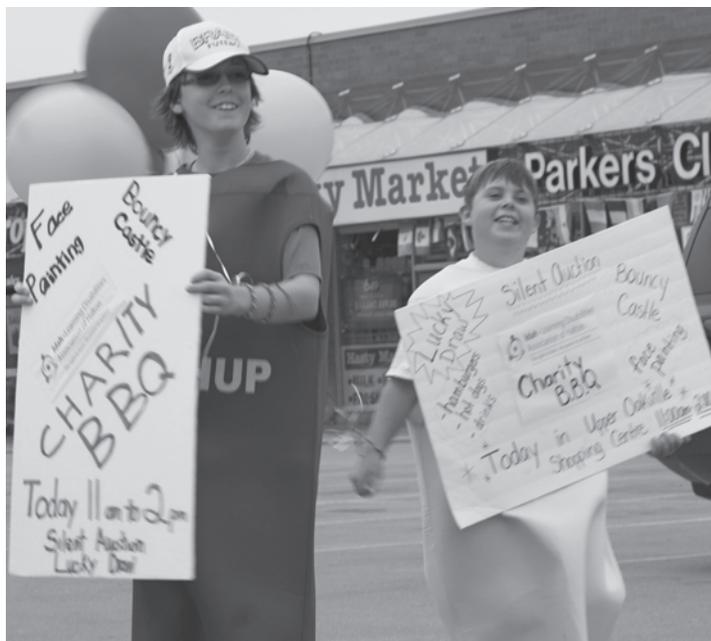
- Learn more about Learning Disabilities
- Hear engaging presentations on differentiated instruction, supporting students with LD and ADHD and anxiety disorders pertaining to students with LD and ADHD, and
- Become informed about some of the services and products available in and around Durham Region.

\$10.00 for LDA-DR Members/\$15.00 for Non-members

Pickering Christian School
162 Rossland Road East, Ajax L1T 4V2

Learning Disabilities - Become aware. Be there!

For information, call 905-426-1442
info@ldadr.on.ca



Thanks to our summer student Aatayna Hussain for her work in organizing our 2014-2015 lecture series. We have some informative lectures coming from September-to-May. We start with IEP Development, September 27th, transition to Planning for People with Disabilities and then Meeting the Needs of All Students, scheduled for October in recognition of LD Awareness Month. Additional lectures scheduled for November and January onward. Information and registration is available on our website www.ldahalton.ca

We continue with our Instructional Remediation program this Fall with students working 1:1 with one of our teachers twice per week on core skills for reading and writing. Our beginner keyboarding classes are scheduled to start September 27th and we have launched a new program this Fall in partnership with Indigo Tree Coaching – Organizing 101 for Students with ADHD. For more information or to register for programs & services, please contact: 905-333-1977 or info@ldahalton.ca

Final plans are being completed for our March 2015 conference to be held on Thursday March 26th at the Burlington Holiday Inn Hotel & Conference centre. This year's theme: Minds That Matter. If you would like to lend a hand in the organization of this event please drop us a line to conference@ldahalton.ca.

HALTON

Lecture Series Promises to Enlighten and Inform

The Learning Disabilities Association of Halton has had a busy summer. In August we held a charity BBQ with members of our Board pitching in to grill the burgers & dogs, centre family kids broadcasting the event throughout the parking lot and a good work out for the bouncy castle by the neighborhood children. The Learning Disabilities Association of Halton thanks all their community partners, sponsors and local vendors for their support of this fundraising event for our centre.



NIAGARA REGION

Summer Programs a Hit Across Niagara

The LDANR had another successful, full-day, summer program (Sunshine Learning Achievement & More) with over 70 participants at three locations across the region. The goal of this program is to address the summer learning gap children with learning disabilities face during the school break. Between working on their fluency and sight words, children went swimming, read to therapy dogs and played a variety of recreational activities with facilitators and volunteers. Thank you to the Branscombe Family Foundation for making the offering of SLAM possible!

This fall, LDANR is continuing to offer Reading Rocks, Reading Rocks Junior, Better Emotional & Social Times and Let's Read across the region. LDANR will continue to be the contact agency for HOPE (Helping Others Parent Effectively), an ADHD family support group for parents in Niagara. Meetings with presentations will be offered throughout the Fall and Winter.

In other news, LDANR has been rewarded an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant once again, to support programming. The agency will continue to seek grant opportunities and fundraise throughout the school year with Boston Pizza dinners and LDANR's annual trivia night!

Finally, LDANR welcomes back Ashley Short from her maternity leave and says a huge thank you to Charlotte Vergara for being such a valuable team member this past year. You will be missed!

Keep in tune with LDANR by following on Facebook and twitter! www.Ldaniagara.org

OTTAWA

Rick Lavoie to Discuss Behaviour Management Strategies for Kids with LD



The Learning Disabilities Association of Ottawa-Carleton is honoured to present Richard Lavoie who will be speaking on Behaviour Management Strategies for the Child with Learning Disabilities and ADHD.

Parents, teachers, and support professionals are invited to join us for this session which will explore: how current trends, issues and legislation in the field of special education have a direct impact upon students and their families; the importance of attempting to view situations and problems from the perspective of the children they serve; the functional differences among "mainstreaming", "inclusion" and "total inclusion." Also addressed will be the concept of "fairness" and its application to home and school situations; how learning/attentional disorders require complex and thoughtful treatments and solutions. "Simple

solutions" are generally ineffective and can be counter-productive.

LDAOC Member: \$75.00

Non-Member: \$125.00 (Early Bird Price)

Non-Member: \$175.00 (After Sept. 21)

Student Price: \$75.00

Tickets and registration information available online at www.ldaoclaivoie.eventbrite.ca or by calling 613-567-5864. The event will take place at Longfields-Davidson Heights Secondary School, 149 Berrigan Dr, Ottawa, ON K2J 5C6 October 25, 2014, 9am - 12pm

WELLINGTON

Anxiety Workshop Announced

Learning Disabilities Association of Wellington County Learning Disabilities and Anxiety

This session will be presented by Dr. Patricia Peters. Dr. Patricia Peters is a community based Clinical Psychologist with extensive experience working with children, youth and their families. Having worked in children's mental health, in the educational system, and at the University of Guelph, Dr. Peters brings her wealth of experience to the topic of Learning Disabilities and Anxiety. Dr. Peters presented for the LDAWC in April 2014 on Learning Disabilities and Depression which was a fantastic session. Please join us for an informative evening on another important topic.

The event takes place October 20, 2014, 7-9pm Community Living Boardroom, 8 Royal Road, Guelph

Preregister by calling 519-837-2050 or email info@ldawc.ca



In Person

KAREN O'DONNELL

by Kenneth E. Seaton

Leading By Example

She is a woman of many hats: writer, storyteller, producer, director, teacher and certainly last but not least a mother. Toronto-based Karen O'Donnell has been described as a passionate, knowledgeable and a driven person whose emotionally charged documentaries never fail to inspire and move viewers.



Karen has a degree in Fine Arts from York University in Toronto and has consulted for the Ontario Media Development Corporation. She was on the Board of Directors for Women in Film and Television and the Documentary Organization of Toronto. To add further oomph to her bio she has adjudicated for the Gemini awards, The New York Film Festival, and the International Emmys.

In the fall of 2012 her short film *No Place Like Home* was selected to be one of the Ontario filmmaker's contributions to the International *Why Poverty* project. "Oh very, very well!" Karen responded when asked how it was received. "It was another film that was very near and dear to my heart, I wanted to be able to do a full-length version of that topic and I accepted with great pride the invitation to do a five minute piece on the topic." She's very proud of the fact that the film is still being shown by a non-profit agency to help explain a little bit about what they do.

O'Donnell has also written, directed and produced a series of short documentaries including; *If I Were An Artist*, *The Don Lisk Story* – about an amazing self-taught egg shell sculptor – and *Working Without A Net*, – introducing several entrepreneurial filmmakers as they launched their own production companies.

Her ADHD-related documentaries include *My Different Life*, *Odd Kid Out* – her son Kail and others are showcased in this film about what life is like for adults with ADHD – and *A Mind Like Mine*. All these films should be

included in everyone's must-see list.

It was during the process of filming *A Mind Like Mine* that she first discovered that she herself had ADHD. She asked her doctor if he knew a mature, late-diagnosed ADHD woman who might be interested in being in her film and he turned to her and said, "I really hope that you're going to take this the right way, but why isn't it you?" Once she realized that he wasn't joking, she decided that she'd "Better start looking into it." It totally changed the trajectory of the film.

"Once you realise that you have it and once you realise that it's not all that bad, there are actual positives that go along with it. You have to be able to build your own self-esteem," she once stated following a screening of *A Mind Like Mine*.

"A lot of what I believe in regarding finding your way with ADD is that you really have to be aware of what your strengths are, what you're good at and what you are passionate about. I'm very fortunate that I have directed myself into a field that fits all of those things. I can be pulled in many many different directions at the same time and they are very high priority and things have to get done; deadlines have to be met. Somehow I just keep going and it helps that I'm a workaholic"

In partnership with Centennial College's Centre of Entrepreneurship, she created and teaches the only Canadian business training program for aspiring independent television producers. Her Independent Television Producers' Program runs for nine weeks and has been successfully

operating for 15 years. It focuses on the business of being an independent producer and covers such topics as financing projects, budgeting, proposal writing and pitching.

She brings expert advisors to work with the students and for Karen it has proven to be a wonderful and rewarding experience. They have had "many, many, many successes" and if it weren't for privacy issues regarding naming names she would do some name dropping. "But let's just say that you would recognize some of those people and their projects for sure in the Canadian domain".

She has produced several educational videos including *The Real Deal: An Insider's Guide to Purchasing a Used Vehicle*; *The Self Employment Process*—currently being used by the federal government as a training video – and the hour-long *Entrepreneurial Success Stories*, detailing the road to success for four new business owners and was shown on Rogers Cable.

She is currently developing a television series entitled *Line of Fire*, about firefighters and their world.

Karen is also the founder of the production company called Wordshop Productions Inc. and its mission statement reads, "By igniting the flames of thought, and illuminating the recesses of reflection, Wordshop Productions plants the seeds of inspiration, through empowering programming, daring the soul to dream."

The statement couldn't be more reflective of the woman herself.



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LDAO's new bilingual web resource for Ontario educators!

Practical and evidence-based strategies to help educators work with students with LDs.

What you will find on the LD@school website:

- General articles about LDs;
- Research-based and practice-informed strategies that can be used in the classroom;
- Videos;
- Webinars;
- Success stories;
- New resources being added all the time!



For information about TA@l'école resources available in French, please visit www.TAaLecole.ca.



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Association of Ontario

The right to learn, the power to achieve

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