

Tools for Caregivers of Children with Learning Disabilities

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Learning Disabilities:

What are they, and what can we do for children who have them?

What is a Learning Disability?

- **“Learning disability”**: deficits in an individual's ability to process information which significantly interfere with learning and academics
- Disorder affects;
 - Acquisition
 - Retention
 - Understanding
 - Organization
 - Use of verbal or non/verbal information

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- Result from impairments in one or more psychological processes
 - Phonological processing
 - Memory and attention
 - Processing speed
 - Language processing
 - Perceptual-motor processing
 - Visual-spatial processing
 - Executive functions

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- People with learning disabilities have average intelligence, but their brain processes information in different ways
 - This interferes with academics in various ways



Learning Disabilities

- Interfere with the acquisition and use of;
 - Oral language
 - Reading
 - Written language
 - Mathematics



More on LDs

- Distinct from more global impairments
- Impairments are lifelong
- Range from mild to severe
- People with LDs can learn



What Causes LDs?

- Genes
- Complications during pregnancy
- Traumatic brain injury
- Environmental conditions



Tips and Strategies

General Strategies



Parents

- Recognize your child's strengths and weaknesses
- Familiarize yourself with LDs and resources in your community
- Keep communication with school open – communication binder may be helpful
- Advocate for your child
- Work with your child daily
- If possible/needed, get your child a tutor

Teachers

- Work with child's strengths
- Review the IEP, psychology reports, OT reports, etc.
- Sit child near a buddy who is not having difficulties
- Preferential seating as needed
- Check in with the student, or have check in with you after completing X number of questions
- After assigning seat work, have the student tell you what they are supposed to do in their own words
- Depending on the child's abilities, provide notes ahead of time
- You will often need to reduce demands, provide more time, have child write tests in resource room
- Pre-teaching



Students

- Learn about your own strengths and weaknesses
- Having a LD doesn't mean that you are *stupid*
- Access the resources available to you
- Become your own advocate



Tips and Strategies

Specific Strategies



Reading: Fluency

- Select books for the child to read that are at his/her level
- Practice reading with the child everyday
- Start with guided reading – you read to the child, then have them read it to you
- Repeated reading
- Reading buddy
- Technology – Kursweil

Reading: Comprehension

- Ask the student to describe what they have read to you in their own words
- Retell the important part of the story
- RAP method
 - **R**ead the paragraph
 - **A**sk yourself “What were the main ideas and details”
 - **P**ut the main idea into your own words
- Questioning strategies
 - Who, what, where, when, why
- Detective games
 - What will happen next, prediction, etc

Note Taking from Text Books: SQRW Method

○ Survey

- **Title**(Abnormal Psychology)
- **Introduction** (will learn about the development of abnormal psychology, and disorders)
- **Headings** (History, Mood disorders, etc)
- **Summary/Conclusion** (summarizes the history and what each disorder is)

Note Taking

- Question

- *Form questions that help you understand what to look for as you read*
 - Who pioneered the field of clinical psychology?
- *Who, what, where, when, why, or how*
 - Who first coined the term mania?
 - What are the symptoms of mania?



Note Taking

- Read
 - Read the passage
- Write
 - Write questions on the Q-A Note-taking form

Written Work

- OT referral may be warranted
- Graph paper
- Provide notes to student ahead of time
- Have a student scribe for him/her
- Keyboarding
- Reduce amount of written work required
- Give more time for written work
- Test orally
- Have the student proof read their work, with a checklist each time (Punctuation, grammar, look up words they don't know how to spell)
- Revise the work with the student present
- Software programs like Inspiration and Draftbuilder



Mathematics

- Make use of graph paper to organize numbers
- Number line, counting on fingers
- Calculator
- Review homework daily
- Work with the child to see where they are making mistakes
- Make use of cue cards
- Break question into steps




Phonological Processing

- Teach/practice letter-sound patterns
- Practice rhyming, identifying, blending and segmenting words
- When practicing with a passage, color code the different sounds
- Flash cards to help with sight vocabulary
- Programs like Keys to Literacy



Phonological Skills and Example Activities

- Discrimination
- Counting
- Rhyming
- Alliteration
- Blending
- Segmenting
- Manipulation



Memory Repetition

- 1. Read the facts
- 2. Write the facts
- 3. Say the facts
- 4. Repeat the steps 3 or more times



Memory

Mind Picture

- 1. Say the facts
- 2. Create one or more pictures in your mind to show all the facts
- 3. Focus on the pictures and say the facts
- 4. Recall the pictures when you need to remember the facts



Memory Grouping

- 1. Look for ways that facts can be grouped together
- 2. Write a name for each group
- 3. Write the facts that go with each group

Memory Rhyme

- 1. Write a line that ends with a word to be remembered
- 2. Write a second line that ends with a word that rhymes with the word to be remembered
- 3. Repeat the steps

Christopher Columbus was not a tailor.

He was a good old _____

He sailed across the ocean blue

And discovered America in the year ____

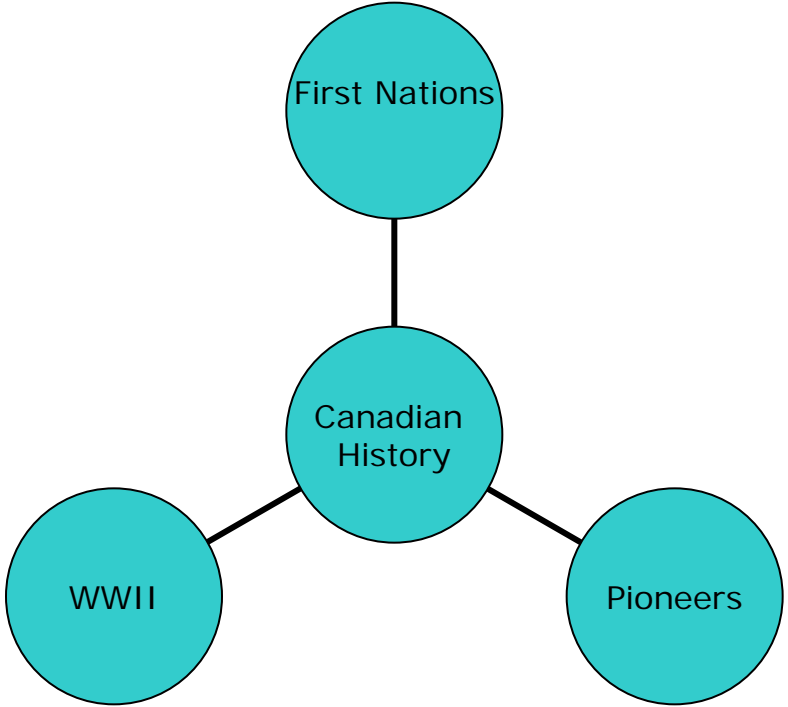
Memory Acronym

- 1. Write the facts
- 2. Underline the first letter of each fact
- 3. Arrange the underlined letters to form a real word or a nonsense word



Memory Graphic Organizer

- 1. Write the topic for the information you need to remember
- 2. Write the subtopics for the topic
- 3. Write the details for each subtopic
- 4. Draw a graphic organizer that shows how the topic, subtopics, and details are related





Organization

- Color coded duo tangs
- Labels for binders
- Have child clean out desk on regular basis (before recess)
- Have child clean out book bag every night when they get home
- Make use of checklists (Do I have my communication book, lunch, forms for home, etc)
- Teach self-monitoring



Homework Strategies

○ Daily Planner

- Create a term calendar with due dates of assignments, tests, school activities and extracurricular activities
- Create a weekly planner with time slots
- Schedule in time for reading, studying, assignments
- Prioritize



Homework Strategies

- Study environment
 - Quiet
 - Good light
 - Distraction free
 - Comfortable chair
 - All work materials needed



Homework Strategies

○ Study Habits

- Break work into manageable chunks
- Planned study time
- Review notes
- Take short breaks
- Have a study buddy if I get stuck
- Write down questions to ask teacher
- Finish one assignment before moving on to the next



Resources for Parents

- Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario
 - <http://ldao.ca/>
- Learning Disabilities Association of Canada
 - <http://www.ldac-taac.ca/>
- Learning Disabilities A to Z: A parent's complete guide to learning disabilities from preschool to adulthood (1997).
Smith & Strick



Resources for Teachers

- Strategies for Teaching Students with Learning and Behavioral Problems. Vaughn & Boz (2009)
- Teaching Learning Strategies and Study Skills to Students with Learning Disabilities, Attention Deficit, or Special Needs. Strichart & Mangrum (2002)
- *Teaching Math to students with learning disabilities: Implications and solutions (2008). Rowman & Littlefield
- The complete learning disabilities handbook: ready-to-use strategies & activities for teaching students with learning disabilities. (2008). Harwell & Jackson

What's Available in Our Community

- Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario: London, Region
 - ***Winter/Spring Program for Children/Youth:***
 - *Guidance Tutoring for Youth*
 - *One to One Tutoring*
 - *One to One Tutoring - February Session*
 - *Social Skills*
 - *Fun Fridays PA Day Camp*
 - Program Coordinator (519) 438-6213 Ext. 24 or ldaprograms@ldalondon.ca

Thank-You!



- The London Public Library
- London Regional Psychological Association
- The University of Western Ontario