

Resource for the Identification and Teaching of Students with Specific Learning Disability:

High School Program



New  Nouveau
Brunswick

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The **Department of Education** supports the inclusion of students with exceptional needs into the regular classroom setting. The identification of specific learning patterns, as well as specific strengths and needs, is needed in order to plan for the variety of learners in our classrooms.

Since students with a Specific Learning Disability make up approximately five to fifteen percent of any population, the **Department of Education** recognizes the need to provide practical information for teachers with regard to the characteristics associated with Specific Learning Disability. Information regarding practical teaching methods and strategies for addressing the needs of these students is needed if teachers are to foster success within this group.

This document has been developed in response to this need. It provides teachers with background information about the characteristics of Specific Learning Disabilities. It suggests methods for informal and formal assessment. It presents guidelines for the development of Special Education Plans, and suggests various resources appropriate to address specific needs. The document suggests ways of incorporating parental involvement in the planning process. It also provides information regarding transition planning for school to work, and school to post-secondary education.

This document enhances the availability of tools that a school-based student services team, which usually includes a school administrator, a guidance counselor, a resource teacher, a classroom teacher and/or others, has to enable the team to work collaboratively with a variety of teachers to address the needs of students with Specific Learning Disability. The choice of suggested strategies and evaluation methods will assist the students to demonstrate knowledge of the curriculum and its inherent concepts. Although these students have difficulty in specific areas, many can be successful

when accommodations are made; however, they cannot always be expected to express their knowledge and understanding in the same manner as others. Methods of evaluation based on appropriate expectations and accommodations are key to addressing the needs of students with Specific Learning Disability. It's important to remember for these students that *fairness* means that everyone receives what he or she needs. It does not mean that everyone receives the same. (Richard Lavoie, "How Difficult Can This Be?")

This document will provide information that will assist teachers to vary presentation methods, activities and evaluations to suit the learning needs of these students in the classroom. In addition these students with learning disabilities often need explicit intervention, depending on the nature of their processing difficulty.

Definition

Learning disabilities refer to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual deficiency.

Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning. These include, but are not limited to: language processing; phonological processing; visual spatial processing; processing speed; memory and attention; and executive functions (e.g. planning and decision-making).



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

- oral language (e.g. listening, speaking, understanding);
- reading (e.g. decoding, phonetic knowledge, word recognition, comprehension);
- written language (e.g. spelling and written expression); and
- mathematics (e.g. computation, problem solving).

Learning disabilities may also involve difficulties with organizational skills, social perception, social interaction and perspective taking.

Learning disabilities are lifelong. The way in which they are expressed may vary over an individual's lifetime, depending on the interaction between the demands of the environment and the individual's strengths and needs. Learning disabilities are suggested by unexpected academic underachievement or achievement which is maintained only by unusually high levels of effort and support.

Learning disabilities are due to genetic and/or neurobiological factors or injury that alters functioning in a manner which affects one or more processes related to learning.

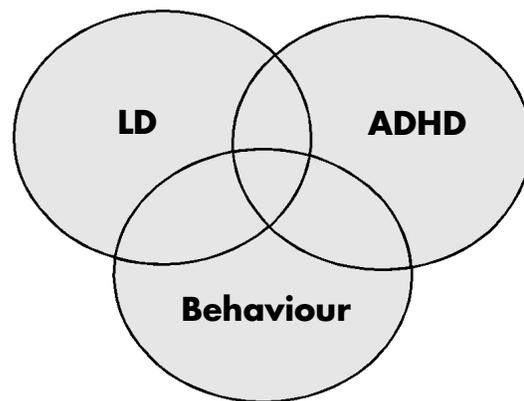
These disorders are not due primarily to hearing or vision problems, socio-economic factors, cultural or linguistic differences, lack of motivation or ineffective teaching. Although these factors may further complicate the challenges faced by individuals with learning disabilities, learning disabilities may co-exist with various conditions including attentional, behavioral and emotional disorders, sensory impairments or other medical conditions.

For success, individuals with learning disabilities require early identification and timely specialized assessments and interventions involving home, school, community and work place settings. The interventions need to be appropriate for each individual's learning disability and, at a minimum, include the provision of:

- specific skill instruction
- accommodations
- compensatory strategies
- self-advocacy skills

(Learning Disabilities Association of Canada: January 2002).

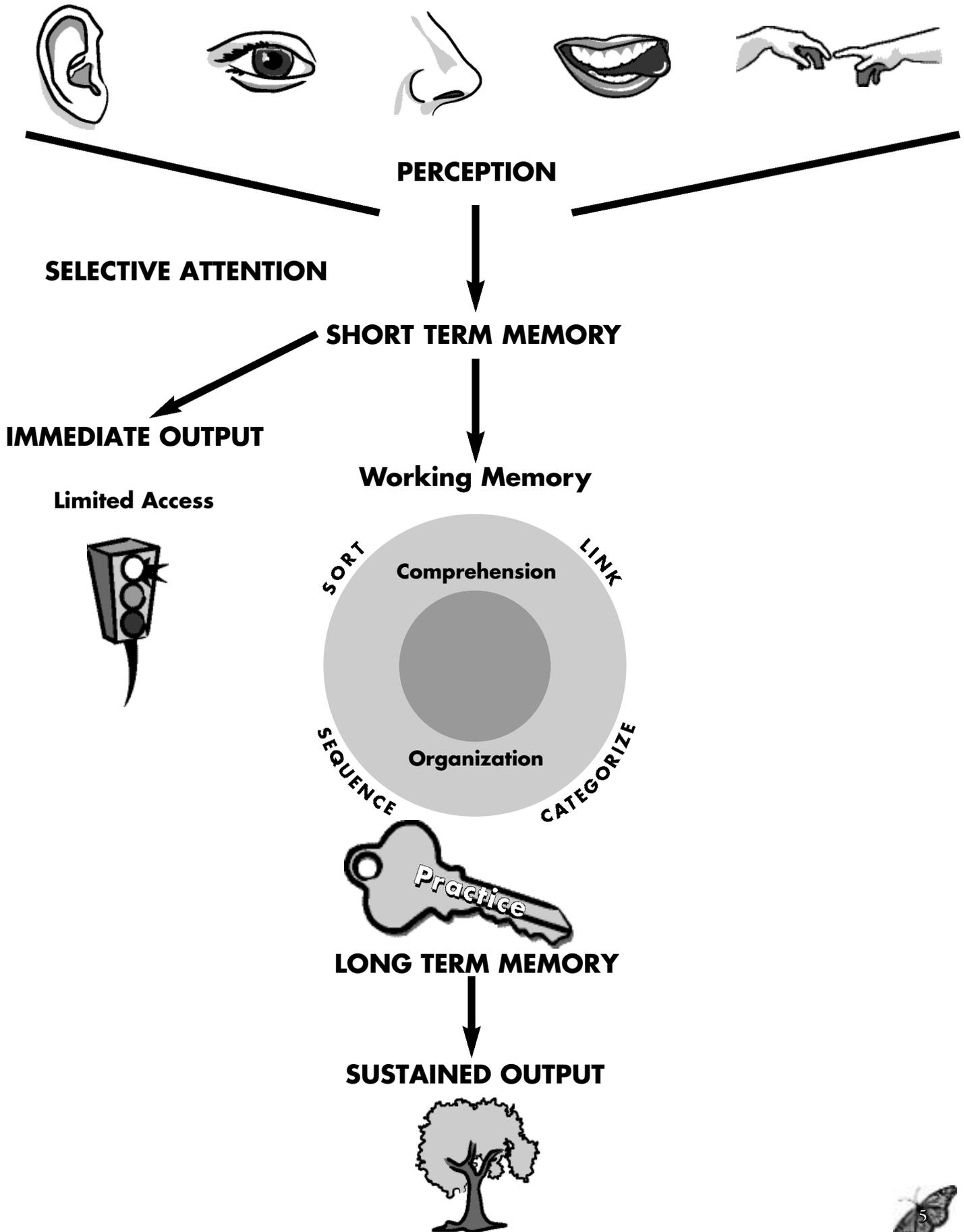
Behavioural disorders can develop as secondary characteristics of a number of other conditions including learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder and mental health disorders. As such it is essential to recognize that the presenting behaviour may be the result of one or more of these conditions.



Recognition of a Specific Learning Disability involves the use of a number of assessment tools. It is essential to have a broad range of knowledge regarding how the student processes information. Overall classroom behaviour and achievement will often appear similar to that of others with significant learning and behavioural difficulties. This resource will assist teachers in recognizing the uniqueness of each learner. This resource may be used by school-based student services teams to initiate the informal assessment process that may lead to a formal assessment, if required.



Semantic Memory Information Processing



Imagine you walk into a meeting room. You are confronted with the appearance of the room, the people in it, the sounds of their conversation, and the smell of the coffee in the corner, which likely awakens your taste buds! Your **five senses** are all active and taking in the information the environment is providing them.

Your **selective attention** filter begins to work on locating what you need to know to establish yourself at the meeting. You look for a vacant seat, a place to hang your coat, and you look to see if there are people you know in the room. You do all this, get your cup of coffee, and now you settle into your seat, acclimatized to your surroundings (**habituated**), and the meeting begins.

People now begin to introduce themselves. You don't know most of these people, so you are going to have to take some steps to remember their names in case you need to follow up with them later. The relationships you make with the names you hear will determine your ability to recall those names later. Let's consider how that works.

As people are introducing themselves, you need to focus your attention on that information in order to have it register in your **short-term memory (STM)**. If you hear the name but immediately move on to the next person or are distracted by someone next to you talking, the name will pass through your STM quickly and you likely won't be able to remember the person's name if asked again in 5 minutes. You didn't take any active steps to hold the name in your memory.

If it was a name that was very familiar to you, however, (e.g., your name, a family member's name, a well-known person's name), it would quickly be associated with the person's face and remembered more easily. In other words, there were associations existing in your memory already that you were able to connect to this new information and therefore retain it.

If you wrote down the name (**cueing**) so that each time that person spoke, you could go back to your notes and refresh the name (**rehearsal and**

matching), you would certainly be able to recall it throughout the meeting. If you were particularly attracted to what they were wearing, the colour of their hair, or to a particular accent they had, you would be adding more dimensions (**associations**) to the name. And if, later, someone asked you if you had met this person, you might be able to associate them (**recognition**) with the meeting. You might even be able to "see" them sitting in a certain place in the meeting or "hear" their conversation, because you had taken some extra steps (**focusing, rehearsal, and associating**) to embellish the memory of the name.

The extra steps you took to add distinguishing features to the person's name were the steps of **working memory**. The more times an item is processed through working memory, and the more steps taken to build in associations (**sorting, linking, sequencing, and categorizing**), the better our **comprehension** of the item is, and hence, the better **organization** we are able to put to it.

Good comprehension and organization of information improves our ability to **recall** it later, because through the activities of working memory, the information has been filed in our **long-term memory (LTM)**. Now you have an excellent chance of not only recognizing the person by name when next you see them, but also you can **retrieve** their name and features from memory when you want to speak about them. Long-term memory is like a tree; it has a core of information and many branches of details. The better connected and stronger the branches, the better retrieval capabilities we have.

There are two main functions of memory: recognition and recall. Recognition is the easier of the two, because the information to be remembered is provided to us. Recall is harder because it requires that we be able to access the information we've stored. The number and strength of the connections we've made as well as the quality of our organization and understanding of the material will determine what we can recall, i.e., our **fluent access to information** and **sustained output**.



How Difficult Can This Be?

Learning disabilities are referred to as the “invisible handicap” because it is often difficult for people to understand exactly what a student with a learning disability sees, hears, or feels that is different. Although physical disabilities are often easy to recognize, students with Specific Learning Disability are often misunderstood as being “lazy” or “unmotivated.” The video ***“How Difficult Can This Be?”***, helps viewers experience what it is like to have a learning disability and therefore understand the concept at a far deeper level.

(This video “How Difficult Can This Be?” is available through each district Supervisor of Student Services).





II. ASSESSMENT

Assessment is an on-going process involving the collection of data for the purpose of evaluating the performance of a student. An informal assessment is generally the first step in this process. At the high school level valuable information regarding the student's academic history may already exist within the student's records. The referring teacher is in the best position to provide current informal observational information. A resource teacher may assist by providing further informal and formal assessment information. If a formal assessment has not been completed in the past, it may be necessary to refer the student if the informal measures have not been conclusive.

A. Informal Assessment

Informal assessment may include the following:

- i. Cumulative record review
- ii. Work samples
- iii. Observations
- iv. Non-standardized tests
- v. Informal reading inventories
- vi. Informal tests of information processing

i. Cumulative Record Review

The cumulative record of a high school student provides a factual framework of patterns of behavior and trends in academic performance. Teacher comments on previous report cards offer insight into student progress during various stages of skill development. Essential personal information involving attendance, health, family situation, history and extent of support services are contributing factors, which should be considered. A checklist has been included to assist in summarizing pertinent information.



CUMULATIVE RECORD REVIEW

Name: _____ D.O.B. _____ Grade: _____

Grades Repeated: _____

of Schools attended: _____

Indication of Attendance problem: Yes No

Health Concerns: _____

Previous Referrals: Yes No

Date: _____

Reason for Referral: _____

Assessment Reports Yes No

Date: _____

Source(s): _____

Identified Learning Difficulties _____

Special Education Plan: Yes No Date: _____

Subject Area(s) of Difficulty: _____

Speech/Language Reports Yes No Grade(s): _____

Hearing Difficulties Yes No

Vision Difficulties Yes No

Resource Support Yes No Grade(s): _____

French Exemption Yes No

Behavioral/Discipline Letters Yes No

Successful Middle Level English Language Proficiency: Yes No

Recurring Comments on Report Cards: _____



ii. Work Samples

Samples of student work can be an indication of the level of success the student has achieved in a variety of written areas. It can be useful looking at class notes, written assignments, and unit tests in several subject areas. Difficulties can be noted in how the student copies, interprets, processes and retains information.

iii. Observations

An observation checklist has been included to help the teacher analyze a student's strengths and weaknesses in six skill areas. This is intended to be used as a general indicator of patterns of differences in learning behaviour.

- **Receptive language** includes vocabulary, reading decoding, and comprehension. Teachers can examine the student's listening skills, such as the ability to understand directions and explanations presented in the classroom.
- **Expressive language** includes both oral and written expression. Frequently the student's oral expressive language will be stronger than their written expressive language. Some students may have difficulty with the expression and sequencing of thoughts, the structure of sentences and paragraphs, the mechanics of writing, and also with word order and verb agreement. Written responses may often be brief in comparison to oral responses.
- **Note-taking skills** may indicate weaknesses in visual-motor integration. Some students will demonstrate difficulty with writing, copying from near or far point, and with organizing visual-spatial information on the page. Problems may surface with accuracy and fluency in writing. Taking notes by dictation can be more difficult for those who are less able to listen and write at the same time.
- In **math**, students may have difficulty with computation and/or math concepts. Computation skills may be affected by weaknesses in long-term memory, sequencing, organizing or lining up numbers, and in estimating. Math concepts may be weak because of difficulties with math terminology and related language. Applying previously learned skills to a new concept might be difficult and need to be explicitly reinforced and practiced. Multi-step problems may cause confusion with steps being out of sequence or omitted. Using a calculator effectively may be affected by difficulties with motor skills, visual-spatial abilities and sequencing.
- In the area of **social skills and peer relationships**, teachers can observe the level of social awareness of the students in their classroom. If students have difficulty interpreting their external environment, they may miss or misperceive the social cues around them. Students with Specific Learning Disability may show dominant/aggressive characteristics with their peers or may appear passive/submissive in the school environment. A lack of social skills should not be confused with immaturity. In the area of **general classroom skills**, specific school skills can be observed and areas of difficulty identified. Students having difficulty with organization of work, time management, homework completion, focus of attention and test taking, may require instruction and structure.



OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Student: _____

Grade: _____

Teacher: _____

Date: _____

Weak Average Strong

RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE

Reading Decoding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading Comprehension	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Listening Comprehension	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

Oral:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Written:			
Sentence Structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organization of Ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spelling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grammar and Mechanics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

NOTETAKING SKILLS

Handwriting or Printing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copying Ability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keyboarding Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dictation Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

MATH

Computational Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Math Concepts and Applications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SOCIAL SKILLS & PEER RELATIONSHIPS

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

GENERAL CLASSROOM SKILLS

Organization of Work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Time Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Homework Completion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Focus of Attention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Test Taking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Checklist of Areas of Difficulty

Use the following checklist to help you to identify areas of weakness regarding the student. Check each of the areas of concern that apply to the student being considered. Each of these statements is followed by a set of capital letters that will help you to further identify specific areas of processing weakness. The capital letters represent the following:

A: Auditory



V: Visual



S: Spatial



W: Written



L: Language



Ma: Math

$$4+3=7$$

O: Organization



M: Memory



At: Attention



R: Reading



Areas of Difficulty	A	V	S	W	L	Ma	O	M	At	R
Taking detailed notes from a lecture (A, W, At)										
Organizing thoughts for an oral response to a lengthy oral question (A, L, O)										
Making reversals, inversions, substitutions, omissions, additions, or transpositions in writing (V, S, W)										
Making reversals, inversions, substitutions, omissions, additions, or transpositions in reading (V, S, R)										
Is confused, slow, lacking cohesion when completing written work (W, L, O)										
Does not often complete written work in time limit (W, O, At)										
Rambles or uses disjointed oral language (L, O, At)										
Rambles or has disjointed written work (W, O)										
Has difficulty remembering what was just said (A, M, At)										
Has difficulty remembering stored facts or retrieving an appropriate word (M)										
Has difficulty tracking when reading, (loses places, omits words or word parts (V, S, R)										
Uses inappropriate spacing and mixes printing and cursive writing (S, W)										
Tunes out gradually during lengthy listening tasks (A, L)										
Is a daydreamer (A, At)										
Misinterprets what has been said (A, L)										
Can't screen out background noise to focus on target sound (A, At)										
Spells with correct phonetics but incorrect letter symbols, (<i>Repli</i> for <i>reply</i>) (V, M)										
Misinterprets written directions (L, R)										
Acts impulsively (At)										
Misperceives social cues and situations. (L, At)										
Has a poor sense of time (S, O)										
Shows poor eye-hand (visual-motor) coordination (V)										

Areas of Difficulty	A	V	S	W	L	Ma	O	M	At	R
Forgets assignments and assignment deadlines (O, M)										
Has difficulty copying notes from far point (V, S, W, M, R)										
Omits capitals and/or punctuation consistently (V, W, At)										
Has difficulty understanding abstract ideas presented in language (A, L, R)										
Has difficulty understanding concepts of time, money, measurement, directionality, and/or sequencing in math (S, O, Ma)										
Has difficulty choosing the correct operation in math (L, M, Ma)										
Has difficulty scanning for information on a page (V, S, R)										
Has difficulty with basic calculations (M, Ma)										
Has difficulty with abstract patterns and relationships between numbers (Ma)										
Has difficulty with understanding numerical order or place value (Ma)										
Has difficulty with written expression in comparison to oral skills (W)										
Remembers information for a day or two but forgets over the long term (M)										
Has difficulty remembering sequences in directions, events, procedures, & processes (A, O, M)										
Has difficulty carrying symbols or numbers in proper position (V, S, Ma)										
Has difficulty segmenting and sequencing number tasks (formulas) (Ma)										
Has difficulty with math word problems (Ma, R)										
Has difficulty with interpreting specific math terms (Ma)										
Lacks expression and appropriate pausing during oral reading (R)										
Slows down when performing oral reading tasks (R)										

___ A/ ___ V/ ___ S/ ___ W/ ___ L/ ___ Ma/ ___ O/ ___ M/ ___ At/ ___ R



iv. Non-standardized Tests

Classroom teachers may be able to provide more specific academic information. The teacher can examine the accuracy of the student's notes in relation to what was actually provided in class as well as note the level of success in the learning tasks in their course.

An initial meeting between the resource teacher and the student may provide an opportunity to assess their oral communication skills and to develop an understanding of their perception of their school situation. It is important to distinguish between a Specific Learning Disability and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder as a primary concern. The resource teacher would also note any concerns in the areas of attendance, nutritional and sleep patterns, hearing and vision, health, emotional well-being, personal/family situation, and substance abuse. Based on the results of this meeting and other background information, the resource teacher may decide to follow-up with non-standardized tests as appropriate.

Assessment may include, but are not limited to:

Informal Reading Inventory e.g.

- *Silvaroli*
- *Burns/Roe Informal Reading Inventory*

Miscue Analysis/ Running Record/Story Retelling

Screening Tool e.g.

- *Specific Language Disability Test* by Neva Malcomesius

Academic e.g

- *Brigance Series*
- *Academy of Reading* – Software program includes pretesting

v. Informal Reading Inventories

An inventory is administered by having the student complete a reading decoding and comprehension exercise. A listening comprehension passage may be used depending on the reading limitations of the student. An inventory can give an approximate grade level for reading. These levels are referred to as the *Independent Level*, the *Instructional Level*, and the *Frustration Level*. These levels can be determined for both isolated decoding skills and for reading in context. Informal reading inventories are available in published materials, but classroom materials may provide information more specific to the reading demands of the course.



Miscue Analysis

Miscue analysis is a means by which an examiner, usually a resource teacher, marks and then diagnostically analyzes the oral reading of a student on the basis of the pattern of errors. Miscue analysis allows the resource teacher to recognize the strategies that a student uses when he or she is reading words in context. A word-accuracy score can also be obtained in this manner. The following is a suggested marking system:

Marking System:

mispronunciation	firend friend	The student attempts to pronounce a word but produces a nonsensical word that has no meaning.
substitution	brain Brian	A real word is substituted incorrectly.
insertion	on walked / \ to	The student inserts a word or a series of words that do not appear in the text.
omission	takes ○ cake	A word or words are omitted from the text.
repetition	to <u>the</u> beach	A word or words are repeated.
reversal	that he / said	The word order is reversed or transposed.
lengthy pause	//	The student stops for a second or more.
successful correction	C in the room in the roof	The student successfully corrects a miscue.
unsuccessful correction	U in the forest in the roof	The student attempts a correction but is unsuccessful in producing the word.



meaningful substitution	T	The miscue makes sense within the context of the sentence or story.
prediction	P	The miscue indicates that the child is predicting as he or she is reading.
nonsense word	N	The miscue does not make sense whether as a prediction or as a meaningful miscue. Usually these are nonsense words.

vi. Informal Tests of Information Processing

One of the key factors in identifying the needs of a student with Specific Learning Disability is the identification of areas of weakness and strength, which relate to the ways in which the student processes visual, auditory or kinesthetic information. Informal tests such as the *Specific Language Disability Test* can provide essential information for understanding the learning needs of the student with Specific Learning Disability. Tests such as this provide information on visual perception, visual memory, visual motor processing, auditory memory, and auditory perception. Such tests, since they are informal, can be developed at a district or school level, although various published materials are available.

When processing weaknesses are evident strategies to assist students in using their strengths and coping with their weaknesses can be developed. Although these tests are informal and therefore not standardized using a normative process, there are general guidelines that have been established for their administration and use.

For those students whose information processing appears to be hindered by difficulties with attention, further investigation may be required with the assistance of a school psychologist and the family physician. These professionals may require the teacher to complete behavioural rating scales, and may use classroom observation and parent/teacher interviews among other things.

B. FORMAL ASSESSMENT

Formal assessment may include the following:

- i. Standardized Tests of Educational Achievement
- ii. Standardized Tests of Information Processing
- iii. Standardized Tests of Intellectual Functioning

i. Standardized Tests of Educational Achievement

Another form of assessment that may be helpful in identifying and planning for the needs of students with Specific Learning Disability is a standardized test of academic achievement. This type of test has been taken through a normative process and shows evidence of validity and reliability. Formal assessment procedures use organized test materials, structured test situations, and group-based comparisons. These tests often have a highly prescribed test format and are designed to reveal data that can be compared to that obtained on students who were tested during the instrument's construction (Guerin and Maier 1983).

Standardized tests of educational achievement provide further information related to the student's level of skill development in certain academic areas as compared to a normative group of students, whether in the same grade or age group. Students with Specific Learning Disability generally show significant lags in one or more academic areas.

The tests that give the most information relative to students with Specific Learning Disability are those that assess oral language skills, reading decoding, reading comprehension, written language, math computation, and math reasoning. Some examples of this type of test include:

Expressive Vocabulary Test
Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement
KeyMath – R
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test - III
Wechsler Individual Achievement Test – II
Woodcock Johnson Achievement Test
Woodcock Reading Mastery Test – Revised

The test manual will indicate examiner qualifications. In most cases, those qualified to administer this type of test include, but are not limited to, school psychologists, learning disabilities specialists, educational diagnosticians, reading specialists, clinical psychologists, remedial reading teachers, resource and methods teachers, counselors, social workers, and others within the

general fields of psychology, education, and social service who have background training in assessment. (KTEA Manual 2000).

Tests, such as the *Wechsler Individual Achievement Test – II* (WIAT-II), are slightly more restrictive in the qualifications of the examiner. Usually individuals who are involved in assessment have *graduate level training*, which qualifies them to administer these tests (WIAT-II Manual 2000). Many resource teachers would fall into this category.

ii. Standardized Tests of Information Processing

Similar to informal tests of information processing, standardized tests of information processing, such as the *Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude: 4*, also provide information related to visual memory, visual perception, visual-motor processing, auditory memory, auditory perception and kinesthetic processing. The *Wide Range Assessment of Memory and Learning* also provides information related to memory skills. Again the examiner qualifications are restricted.

iii. Standardized Tests of Intellectual Functioning

In order to corroborate other informal and/or formal assessment results, a standardized measure to determine intellectual potential, such as the *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-III* (WISC III) or the *Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale – Revised* (WAIS/R), *Stanford-Binet - IV* or similar tests may need to be completed. Furthermore, analysis of the various subtests can help to clarify strengths and weaknesses in information processing. Examiner qualifications for this type of test are the most restricted, and the school psychologist would usually be the examiner.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SPECIFIC AREAS OF DIFFICULTY WITH TEACHING METHODS AND EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

The next section of the resource book is divided into specific areas of difficulty. Each area contains a more specific checklist and a section on teaching strategies and methods of evaluation. The checklists will help to further determine whether or not the student is displaying weaknesses related to a specific processing area.

Consider the characteristics listed in the area that has been identified from the General Checklist as a potential area of weakness, and place a check mark beside the ones that apply to the student. If a majority of the characteristics listed for a specific deficit area are evident in the student, then go to the section(s) related to the teaching strategies and evaluation methods included in that section.



AUDITORY

Auditory-processing difficulties are seen as the inability to interpret, organize, analyze, or synthesize an auditory message in the absence of a hearing impairment.



The following is a list of characteristics that may be evident in students with this deficit. Use this as a checklist with regard to students who you think may fit this category

- Tunes out in a noisy environment (may be viewed as a daydreamer)
- Listens but processes the information heard inaccurately and often out of proper sequence
- Is unable to follow oral directions, especially those given quickly
- Asks frequently for information to be repeated (often uses question words such as *huh?* *what?*)
- Has difficulty retaining material presented orally
- Has difficulty learning sounds and sound patterns (phonemic awareness, phonics, linguistic method)
- Is unable to retain sounds or words long enough in order to make meaning from them
- Has a delay in language development, vocabulary, or articulation
- Is unable to discriminate between similar sounding words (e.g. *shut* and *shot*)
- Looks often to see what everyone else is doing before carrying out directions
- Prefers visual or experiential activities to those involving listening or speaking
- Doesn't respond as rapidly as others to sounds
- Is unable to explain in verbal or written fashion what he or she can achieve by doing
- Produces simplified written or oral responses that will not be an accurate indication of his or her knowledge
- Produces responses and comments that may often appear to be dissociated from the topic
- Experiences difficulty with dictated notes
- Experiences difficulty with short oral quizzes
- Experiences difficulty making notes from what the teacher has said
- Has difficulty sorting out background noises
- Has difficulty focusing on one sound amongst many
- Has difficulty answering oral questions and repeating sentences

Methods/Strategies:

- Place the student near the front of the room or near the teacher, away from the door or a window that may provide a source of auditory distraction
- Offer the student a study carrel to work in if one is available
- Place the student in a structured rather than an open classroom if possible
- Have most oral lessons in written form or in outline form for this student
- Place less emphasis on decoding words. Encourage the use of context cues
- Use taped books, as this will assist the student to associate the auditory with a visual message
- Intervene with phonemic awareness activities or programs if possible
- Ensure the student has eye contact with the teacher when instructions are given, and that the student is attending to what is being said
- Speak in a normal (not fast paced) and distinct manner, using simple vocabulary
- Use gesture to reinforce what is being said
- Emphasize key words and word endings when speaking or writing, especially when presenting new information
- Paraphrase instructions and information in simpler language rather than only repeating
- Encourage the student to ask questions when confused
- Clarify the instructions when changing activities
- Avoid asking the student to listen and write notes at the same time
- Provide copied notes when necessary
- Show patience with these students as they tire easily



- Monitor the student's understanding of directions by asking the student to repeat the direction given
- Pair the student with a peer helper who can assist the student when he or she has not grasped the auditory message
- Discount spelling in daily work or test situations

Evaluation Strategies:

- Break the test into smaller portions
- Provide a scribe for testing
- Discount spelling on a test
- Ensure that the student has understood the directions for a test
- Give the student short directions, explanations, and instructions to follow
- Provide written directions and instructions to supplement verbal directions and instructions.
- Identify a list of word endings, key words, etc. that the student will practice listening for when someone is speaking
- Have the student silently repeat or sub-vocalize information just heard
- Deliver directions to the student individually
- Interact frequently with the student during testing
- Give the student one task to perform at one time
- Provide visual aids whenever possible
- Provide a quiet place to write a test
- Provide extra time when necessary (usually time and a half or double time)
- Allow point-form answers to essay questions

VISUAL

Visual-processing difficulties are seen as the inability to interpret, organize, analyze or synthesize a visual message in the absence of a visual impairment.

The following is a list of characteristics that may be evident in students with this deficit. Use this as a checklist with regard to students who you think may fit this category.



- Is inattentive to visual tasks and can be easily distracted by too much visual stimuli (e.g. brightly coloured posters, or too much clutter in the classroom)
- Is restless during videos or visual presentations
- Has difficulty copying from the board, test paper, calculator or textbook to the student's own paper
- Shows missing figures or words, reversals, inversions, additions, deletions, or transpositions in letters or numbers in the written copy
- Does not remember what he or she has read silently
- Rubs his or her eyes or complains that his or her eyes are bothersome. The eyes may be bothered because of the intensity needed to decipher the visual material
- Has below average reading level
- Comprehends orally read material better than silently read material
- Is inattentive to function signs, omits steps in a formula, or confuses visually similar formulas in math
- Is a poor written speller, but is an adequate oral speller
- Does not observe visual changes or stimuli that other students notice (e.g. bulletin board displays, posted notices in obvious places)
- Has weak directionality. Gets lost in unknown places and often copies numbers reversed, inverted or transposed from the original
- Shows persistent spelling errors

Methods/Strategies:

- Reduce the amount of visual information on a page
- Have the student use graph paper to assist him or her in lining up the numbers properly
- Highlight or underline important phrases in the student's assigned reading
- Assign fewer questions, but retain the level of difficulty given to an assignment
- Have the student consistently use a word processor for written work
- Reduce distracting visual stimuli in the classroom
- Allow for extra time for written tasks.
- Provide copied notes
- Allow the use of a calculator for math-related activities
- Have the student use a sliding mask, finger, or ruler when reading if he or she chooses
- Use a scribe when necessary to record answers
- Be aware of the difficulty associated with visual tasks such as matching and adjust the task as necessary

Evaluation Strategies:

- Provide oral testing
- Provide a scribe for testing
- Give extra time (usually time and a half or double time)
- Be aware of the visual difficulty of particular test questions
- Provide a model or example if possible



SPATIAL

Spatial difficulties are seen as the inability to interpret, organize, analyze or synthesize the spatial components of a visual message in the absence of a visual impairment.



The following is a list of characteristics that may be evident in students with this deficit. Use this as a checklist with regard to students who you think may fit this category.

- Produces poor handwriting or artwork
- Loses his or her place when reading and skips important details or figures on a page
- Has below average reading level
- Is weak in mapping or graphing abilities
- Uses a finger consistently to keep his or her place when reading or finding a word in a composition (poor tracking)
- Has poor skills when attempting to accurately match letters and figures in correct spaces (e.g. letter and number matching activities in columns)
- Has difficulty locating specific words in dictionaries or texts
- Organizes papers poorly and scatters information
- Has difficulty with depth perception and measurement
- Is clumsy
- Produces sloppy written work
- Has difficulty perceiving spaces between words and recognizing punctuation in written language
- Pushes the wrong numbers on a calculator or phone often
- Has difficulty with time concepts or with the passage of time

Methods/Strategies:

- Have the student use outline format or visual organizers
- Encourage the use of a word processor

- Have the student use coloured overlays when reading to reduce visual stress
- Encourage cursive writing rather than manuscript to reduce reversals, inversions, etc.
- Provide strategies for organization
- Have the student consistently use an agenda or calendar to assist in preplanning. A peer helper, volunteer or parent may assist with this task
- Have the student use graph paper to assist in lining up numbers on a page
- Reduce the amount of visual information the student has to absorb at one time
- Reduce the number of assigned questions, but retain the level of difficulty
- Incorporate kinesthetic means whenever possible when introducing new concepts

Evaluation Strategies:

- Provide oral testing or a scribe
- Allow blank visual organizers to be brought to a testing situation, and evaluate these organizers if not enough time is available to the student to translate the organizer to written form
- Accept point-form answers
- Allow calculator for math activities
- Limit the amount of visual information presented on a test page
- Consider alternative methods, other than a written test, of checking for understanding of a concept
- Allow extra time (usually time and a half or double time)

WRITTEN

Written-expression difficulties are seen as the inability to effectively communicate thoughts and ideas in a structured, sequential, and organized form.



The following is a list of characteristics that may be evident in students with this deficit. Use this as a checklist with regard to students who you think may fit this category.

- Has poor or dysfunctional handwriting, otherwise known as *dysgraphia*
- Has total dysfluency on paper, known as *agraphia*
- Has poor spelling
- Has difficulty copying from the board or from dictation
- Has poor visual-spatial perception (may start in odd places on the page, use erratic spacing, use different sizes for letters)
- Prefers to print while others are writing, or the student uses both printing and cursive writing in the same assignment
- Is much slower than others to complete written work
- Loses the gist or thought easily when writing
- Omits capitalization and/or punctuation consistently
- Can express himself or herself much better orally

Methods/Strategies:

- Consider alternative forms, other than written tasks, for practicing and demonstrating knowledge in a concept area
- Encourage the use of a word processor
- Pair the student with a classmate who can do the writing for the student
- Utilize co-operative learning groups
- Model written work for the student to allow him or her to imitate your sentence structures

- Allow the student to read his or her written work aloud to help identify errors in organization
- Help the student “brainstorm” ideas about a topic and then show him or her how to put these ideas into an outline form, combining some ideas and discarding others
- Reduce distracting stimuli by placing the student in a study carrel or “office” when engaged in writing activities
- Have a peer act as a model for spelling words phonetically. Have the student read the material that the peers write phonetically
- Allow the student to keep a dictionary of “most often misspelled words”
- Provide practice in spelling by using a computer software program that gives the student immediate feedback
- Try various activities to help strengthen and reinforce the visual memory of spelling words (i.e. flashcards, word lists on the chalkboard, a list on the student’s desk, etc.)
- Have the student maintain a folder of all spelling words
- Allow the student to demonstrate knowledge in non-written form (i.e. oral report, art project, drama, etc.)
- Have the student practice typing (of critical importance for dyslexic and dysgraphic students). This connects kinesthetic with visual mode
- Provide specific organizational strategies for writing, e.g. story maps/webs, visual organizers, flow charts, outlines
- Allow the student extra time for copying or for producing written assignments
- Have copied notes available for the student
- Encourage the student to use a tape recorder to record draft copies of written work

Evaluation Strategies:

- Permit the use of point form or visual organizers for answers to essay questions or questions of a similar type
- Provide oral testing or a scribe when possible.
- Follow up a written test with oral questioning on missing parts
- Provide a word processor for tests
- Consider a take-home test
- Use fill-in-the-blank, true-or-false or matching questions to reduce writing requirements
- Allow the student to answer questions, using a tape recorder

LANGUAGE

Language-processing difficulties are seen as the inability to receive, comprehend, organize, and express language in its appropriate forms in the absence of sensory impairments.



The following is a list of characteristics that may be identified in students with this deficit. Use this as a checklist to refer to students who you think may fit into this category.

- Shows limited vocabulary, incomplete sentences, improper grammar, and confused or poorly sequenced thoughts in spoken language
- Has word retrieval difficulties
- Has difficulty understanding the meaning of some phrases
- Does not express feelings or thoughts logically
- Says one thing, but writes something else
- Substitutes words of similar meaning
- Is often misunderstood by peers and others
- Has difficulty determining the main idea or theme
- Has difficulty identifying a sequence in a story
- Has difficulty generating or identifying supporting details when given a general theme
- Has difficulty linking and categorizing verbal concepts
- Has poor spelling
- Has disorganized and messy written work
- Needs to read a passage or story several times before understanding its meaning
- Has difficulty following directions
- Shows poor coherence in the structure of sentences, paragraphs and longer passages

Methods/Strategies:

Note: The strategies listed for auditory-processing difficulties are appropriate here as well.

- Allow the student ample time to read silently for practice before asking him or her to read orally
- Model slow, easy speech for the student and do not interrupt or finish his or her sentence
- Slow down rate of speaking to allow the student to process the information
- Assign the student to work with a peer who is a good language model
- Establish a signal to remind the student to slow down and speak in complete sentences
- Have the student record his or her speech to teach monitoring strategies
- Emphasize the use of context cues
- Provide a language-rich environment
- Encourage the student to read a text more than once
- Monitor reading material to ensure that the level is appropriate
- Use high-interest books with accompanying taped version for rereading
- Teach reading strategies that will help locate information in a text
- Help the student use associate cues when sequencing events
- Practice sequential activities
- Have the student retell passages he or she has read
- Introduce and explain key vocabulary in context
- Use a multi-sensory approach

Evaluation Strategies:

- Provide oral testing or a scribe
- Adjust vocabulary usage in testing to suit the language needs of the child
- Allow extra time for testing (usually time and a half or double time)
- Provide a quiet space for testing

MATHEMATICS

Mathematics difficulties are seen as the inability to deal with number and mathematical concepts.

4+3=7 The following is a list of characteristics that may be evident in students with this deficit. Use this as a checklist with regard to students who you think may fit into this category.

- Has difficulty distinguishing the important from the insignificant details in word problems
- Has difficulty recognizing patterns or relationships among numbers
- Has difficulty putting facts in a logical sequence in order to find a solution
- Has difficulty remembering math facts, formulas or a sequence of formulas
- Perseveres with an improper procedure
- Does not understand numerical order or place value
- Has difficulty with such spatial math concepts as time, money, measurement, directionality and sequencing
- Is consistently reluctant to begin any math task
- Has difficulty with abstract or symbolic math concepts
- Has difficulty copying or reading numbers
- Has difficulty choosing the correct process to use
- Has difficulty visualizing or verbalizing numeric information
- Has difficulty generalizing math information to new situations
- Has difficulty with math vocabulary
- Responds often with an answer that bears no relationship to the math question asked
- Has difficulty with basic calculation/application

Methods/Strategies:

- Use word problems that relate to the student's experiences
- Use concrete manipulatives to demonstrate and

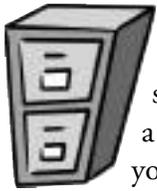
- practice problems before moving to symbolic
- Encourage the use of a calculator ensuring that the process is demonstrated in the student's work
- Have the student highlight key words for steps, directions or operations in questions given to him or her
- Provide practice in math by using a computer software program that gives the student immediate feedback
- Reduce the number of questions given to the student, but not the level of difficulty
- Have a math reference sheet or cue cards that demonstrate the steps to solving a particular type of question
- Ensure that the student has a clear understanding of the math vocabulary being used
- Use modeling frequently
- Have the student work with a classroom peer
- Teach strategies for checking math work

Evaluation Strategies:

- Evaluate on daily or weekly basis rather than on lengthy tests or exams
- Do not mix concepts at one time if lengthy tests are required
- Allow the use of a calculator or charts
- Provide a visual model with test questions to demonstrate what is being asked
- Provide graph paper for lining up numbers when working math problems
- Use personal experiences when designing math problems
- Have oral testing for word problems
- Provide the student with a quiet place to work
- Allow extra time to complete tests (usually time and a half or double time)
- Highlight operational signs so that the student is sure to notice the signs before beginning an operation
- Highlight key words on a test so that the student is sure to notice the words before answering the question

ORGANIZATION

Organizational difficulties are seen as the inability to internally structure for the purposes of planning, monitoring, and evaluating information.



The following is a list of characteristics that may be evident in students with this deficit. Use this as a checklist with regard to students who you feel will fit into this category.

- Is disorganized in personal appearance, as are books, locker, desk, assignments and thoughts
- Speaks in a rambling, disorganized manner
- Is forgetful (e.g. forgets to take assignments home, write out lessons, and/or bring back completed work)
- Is often late or absent
- Is immature or impulsive
- Has difficulty making choices or decisions
- Shows inconsistent behaviours
- Strays from the topic quickly
- Procrastinates when faced with a highly structured task

Methods/Strategies:

- Provide structure and routine
- State directions clearly and directly. Try not to wander off topic
- Clearly state the purpose or points to be covered in a lesson prior to beginning. A course or project outline is helpful
- Print key words on the board prior to each lesson
- Ensure that students write homework in an agenda or lesson book
- Send a talk mail daily, stating homework requirements using a talk mail set up for at-risk students
- Use a binder to help keep materials together
- Use a colour coding system for subjects
- Have two sets of books, one for school and one for home
- Model and teach strategies for approaching a project. Try not to assume that the student knows how to organize this task. Have the

student transfer the steps of these strategies onto a recipe card or index card, and tape to the inside of a binder or scribbler

- Post class rules or learning strategies in a visible location in the classroom
- Have the student summarize notes or text reading, using visual organizers
- Provide easy to follow mnemonic devices when available, for remembering or organizing concepts; e.g. COPS....Capitalization, Organization, Punctuation, Spelling... as a mnemonic for proofreading and editing
- Post or provide mark for course components at the beginning of each unit
- Involve parents in monitoring the student's homework and projects
- Avoid giving homework verbally without written backup
- Use co-operative learning techniques when possible to utilize the organizational skills of others
- Keep an extra folder of handout sheets to replace those "lost" by the student
- Take a new student on a tour of the school and explicitly point out specific locations such as the gym and art room, as well as taking the student through a day's schedule prior to starting school
- Allow the student to experience the consequences of disorganization when appropriate
- Intervene when the student is disorganized
- Praise and reward the student for good organization

Evaluation Strategies:

- Provide a scribe to ensure that the student has understood what is being asked of him or her
- Encourage the use of outlines, maps or visual organizers for tests
- Make use of question types that do not require as much organization; e.g. fill in the blank, true or false, multiple choice, when designing tests
- Give extra time for testing (usually time and a half or double time)
- Provide a model or example in test items



MEMORY

Memory difficulties are seen as the inability to retain and recall information.



The following is a list of characteristics that may be evident in students with this deficit. Use this as a checklist with regard to students who you feel may fit into this category.

- Does not remember often what was done yesterday or the day previous to that
- Remembers information for a day or two, but cannot recall over long periods of time
- Asks the same question a second and third time
- Can't remember a sequence of events
- Can remember that a topic was covered, but cannot recall the details
- Forgets homework
- Forgets sequence, words, or details from orally presented materials (short-term auditory memory)
- Has difficulty copying from the board. He or she is slow to complete these tasks and looks up constantly. The copied work may have omissions, additions or substitutions (visual short-term memory)
- Takes longer to remember information on tests
- Answers a previous question when the teacher has asked a new one
- Has difficulty with timed oral or written tests
- Has difficulty with fill-in-the-blank questions

Methods/Strategies:

- Use repetitive practice (drill) with these students
- Use a multi-sensory approach that considers multiple intelligences when presenting information. This enhances memory
- Present new material in short easy steps
- Use index cards to keep vocabulary words, spelling words, or number facts at hand

- Teach the student memory-enhancing strategies such as mnemonics
- Have the student repeat directions you have given to ensure understanding and retention
- Write directions on the board
- Ensure proper and consistent use of an agenda or calendar

Evaluation Strategies:

- Consider methods other than a written test for evaluation
- Use multiple choice questioning. Provide a word list when using fill-in-the-blank questioning
- Use cloze exercises with word choices
- Encourage the use of visual organizers, webs, or outlines
- Permit the use of a calculator
- Provide examples on the test to demonstrate what is being asked

ATTENTION

Difficulties with attention arise from the inability to filter out extraneous auditory, visual or kinesthetic information in order to focus and maintain attention to the task at hand.

The following is a list of characteristics that may be evident in students with this difficulty. Use this as a checklist with regard to students who you think may fit this category.

- Is fidgety and restless
- Is slow to respond when asked to give a direction, when asked for an oral response, or when asked to complete written work
- Misperceives social situations often
- Leaves his or her seat at inappropriate times
- Is overactive in inappropriate situations
- Talks excessively, interrupts often, and blurts out answers
- Has difficulty working quietly
- Has trouble waiting for his or her turn
- Has difficulty following through on instructions
- Has difficulty maintaining attention to the task at hand
- Loses things necessary for tasks and activities at school or at home
- Has difficulty listening
- Fails to give close attention to detail
- Seems disorganized
- Has trouble with tasks that require sustained focus
- Is forgetful and needs reminding even on a short term basis
- Is easily distracted
- Has difficulty getting started and will often procrastinate on assignments
- Has trouble with follow through and completion of tasks
- Has difficulty managing time, appointments, and deadlines
- Has difficulty with the social use of language. Can be seen as impolite and tactless

- Has tendency toward highly stimulating or risk-taking activities
- Has difficulty making transition to new tasks
- Can hyperfocus on one task
- Exhibits emotional traits such as worry, insecurity, moodiness, low self esteem and anxiety
- Has tendency to addictive behaviour
- Has tendency to give up easily because of misperception of situation
- Exhibits unusual study habits such as blocking out visual and auditory distractions

Methods/Strategies:

- Consider preferential seating – may vary with individual student or activity
- Consider the need for unusual study situations
- Encourage the student to make lists
- Inform the student when possible, prior to all scheduled changes in routine
- Give only one direction at a time or number for multiple directions. Write instructions on board
- Check with the student to see if directions have been understood
- Use activity-based lessons for this type of student. Try to vary the routine within the class period. Asking these students to sit still for long periods of time is an unreasonable request and most likely not possible for them
- Use a calm, positive manner with this type of student as it is much more productive
- Plan organization strategies into this student's lesson (see section on organization)
- Reduce the amount of homework given, but not the level of difficulty of the task
- Encourage the homework to be done in a number of short chunks of time rather than one lengthy session
- Send home an extra set of textbooks to circumvent memory lapses with regard to bringing books home or to school
- Be patient, as these students become more frustrated and tire more easily than others



- Make eye contact or use visual cues with the student when giving instructions or redirecting attention
- Establish use of an agenda book
- Attempt to acknowledge appropriate behaviour and positive growth
- Give a reprimand immediately if one is necessary, but also try to overlook some less obtrusive behaviours
- Use time out when necessary
- Provide a quiet space to work without distraction when appropriate and if possible
- Help to build self-esteem by displaying work or projects that emphasize the student's strengths
- Redirect physical energy, or ignore it
- Assign a classroom or study "buddy"
- Provide visual examples and steps for completing assignments
- Provide an outline and ensure that the student understands the exact requirements for his or her assignment
- Provide the student with a copy of the reading material with the main ideas highlighted
- Allow the student to have practice tests prior to testing so he or she comprehends the structure of testing
- Play calming music if possible when working on a task, testing, or during transition times
- Provide an outline for lengthy reading assignments
- Provide earphones and tapes of a text, book, or passage
- Base evaluations on a demonstration of knowledge of curriculum concepts and content, not simply on completion of all grade assignments. This student may not be able to complete the same number of assignments, but may display adequate knowledge
- Allow for creativity in approach e.g. use mind maps or concept webs to convey knowledge in lieu of an essay on tests
- Consider open-book tests
- Give oral tests or make a scribe available when necessary
- Consider providing the test on tape, to which the student responds on an answer sheet
- Assign oral reports or hands-on projects
- Give more weight for assignments or projects that allow the student to show his or her understanding, using his or her strength area(s).
- Balance their course load and daily load. e.g. math earlier in day and phys. ed later
- Reduce course load

Evaluation Strategies:

- Adjust the length of tests, not the level of difficulty. Measure knowledge, not endurance
- Allow extra time for completion of tests
- Avoid visually crowded sheets or confusing configurations on tests
- Arrange for a quiet area for the student to work during testing
- Allow for scheduled breaks during testing



READING

Difficulties with reading are evident for many reasons usually related to weaknesses in the processing areas previously stated.

The following is a list of characteristics that may be evident in students with this



deficit. Use this as a checklist with regard to students who you think may fit this category.

- Demonstrates word-by-word reading, chunking the words with no flow or fluency
- Does not attend to the pauses for the punctuation in the language
- Guesses words by their appearance/visual similarity
- Loses place –poor tracking
- Omits words
- Does not remember the ideas or the details of what was just read
- Does not blend word sounds well
- Tires easily when reading
- Avoids reading
- Has to re-read often
- Repeats words or phrases
- Improves comprehension when he or she reads aloud
- Needs a quiet place to read
- Needs a finger or ruler to read
- Reads larger text more fluently
- Relies on pictures, charts, etc.
- Is physically uncomfortable and anxious with reading tasks
- Is slower with reading tasks than peers

Methods/Strategies:

- Provide backup reading material on tape or computer
- Provide multi-modal forms of reading assistance-couple oral and visual support by allowing the student to see the words on a screen or book while listening
- Provide a computer text reader, i.e. scan

material and have computer read it

- Provide students with the option of reading orally in class
- Use peer buddies for reading assignments in class
- Provide the option of larger font
- Provide text on coloured paper if beneficial
- Provide the option of coloured overlays
- Provide information in typed notes or tests rather than in hand written form
- Red tag and define new vocabulary words prior to reading
- Engage in pre-reading discussions
- Highlight important words
- Engage in post reading discussions to solidify what has been read
- Ask students to underline difficult words
- Encourage the student to use technology to decipher unknown words, e.g. type the word on the computer and use read back, or use a Franklin Dictionary or reading pen
- Encourage students to stop and summarize and makes notes as they are reading using visual organizers
- Provide extra time for reading

Evaluation Strategies

- Ensure that even small or short passages on tests (especially directions) are clarified
- Reflect knowledge of content rather than reading ability on assessments. Focus on the outcomes of the subject area not on the student's ability to decode
- Provide support during tests or exams, e.g. reader or taped material, scribe or access to computer
- Provide extended time for those who take more time to read or write (usually time and a half or double time)
- Prompt students with difficult vocabulary on a test, especially similar words
- Provide an alternate location for testing (more comfortable, quiet atmosphere)



IV. DEVELOPMENT OF A SPECIAL EDUCATION PLAN

A **Special Education Plan** according to the *New Brunswick Education Act* is defined as the following:

... an education program for an exceptional pupil is based on the results of continuous assessment and evaluation and which includes a plan containing specific objectives and recommendations for education services that meet the needs of the pupil [12(1)]

An **exceptional student** in accordance with the *New Brunswick Education Act* is defined as the following:

.....is one who has shown, over an *extended* period of time, behavioural, communicational, intellectual, sensory/perceptual, or physical conditions that have contributed to delayed educational functioning. [*Standards and Guidelines: Educational Planning for Students with Exceptionalities, p. 9*]

A Special Education Plan should be considered when a student is experiencing difficulties over an extended period of time and is not making progress even with the additional support that a teacher would typically employ in the classroom. Many students with Specific Learning Disability will require planning to address their educational needs. Teachers can refer to the recent provincial publication, *Guidelines and Standards: Educational Planning for Students with Exceptionalities* for more information.

Collaborative planning is an integral part of the development of a Special Education Plan. Students, parents, classroom teachers, resource teachers, administrators, and others that may include guidance counsellors, district personnel, school psychologists, or speech/language pathologists share information related to the student, share their goals for the student's academic development in accordance with his or her strengths and needs. The written plan produced from this collaborative effort usually includes a current level of performance, and depending on the

type of planning, may have specific outcomes based on the collectively developed goals, as well as methods, strategies, materials and/or equipment needed to support these outcomes. The written plan indicates the review periods, the reporting of progress, and responsibility.

For students with Specific Learning Disability, the Special Education Plan will reflect planning to promote the development of academic skills and learning strategies; will indicate classroom accommodation, modification, and/or individualization of methods of presentation, support, and evaluation that recognize the unique processing needs of these students; and may reflect planning to help the students develop methods of understanding the uniqueness of their learning needs and talents.

V. PARENTS' ROLE

Parents, as their child's first educator, have an important role to play in the development and implementation of an educational plan for students with Specific Learning Disability. They also are an integral part of the support mechanism for both the student and the teacher.

Parents are often the first persons to recognize when their child is struggling with schoolwork, and therefore may be key persons to initiate a request for a referral to the school-based team. If the student has not been identified prior to high school, the parents may notice that their child is taking extra time on homework, is unhappy when dealing with certain subjects or is avoiding certain school-related tasks. They may be concerned about the excessive amount of time spent on homework compared to the time others spend. Parents often notice behavioural patterns such as a reluctance to go to school, anger, crying spells, physical symptoms, or extended periods of sadness or depression.

Parents are a critical component in the referral and assessment process and in the planning, implementation, and monitoring that follow. The parents can help to provide information that augments the teachers' observations of the student in the school setting.

Parents can also provide a background history of their child. A student's past experiences – for example, premature birth, ear infections, tubes in ears, visual difficulties, delay in acquisition of speech/language – often provide information that may be relevant in determining the presence of a learning disability.

As a Specific Learning Disability often is genetically inherited, parents can provide key information as to the presence of learning disabilities in other family members. If other members of a family have struggled with learning disabilities, then the likelihood of a learning disability being present in the child is much stronger. In presenting information to parents, the teacher should also

recognize that the parent(s) may have a learning disability and adjust his or her presentation accordingly.

Parents are essential participants in the development and implementation of a Special Education Plan for their child. Parents who establish good communication with the school can help to develop goals for their child that can be further developed by them at home. Goals and outcomes (depending on the type of planning), and accommodations and/or modifications will be agreed upon and monitored by both home and school. This way parents can know that they have a legitimate stake in the implementation of the Special Education Plan. They can also agree to undertake activities and responsibilities that can be carried out with specific goals in mind. In the development of a plan for the student, the parents may be assigned primary responsibility for certain parts of the plan - for example, researching their child's disability and seeking medical advice, obtaining a tutor, enrolling the child in outside social activities, or joining a support group.

Once a collaborative vision for the student has been established, and all persons involved clearly know that they understand and have a part in the planning process, then the welfare of the child is enhanced. The student's school success is enhanced by parental support and involvement. Parents and student should also be a part of continuous planning meetings for the student. Goals and outcomes, accommodations and/or modifications may change from year to year, but the parents and student should always have a part in discussing the learning outcomes and goals.

Parents often will need support during the difficult period of identification, evaluation and implementation of programming. Teachers should be sensitive to the turmoil that the parent(s) may be feeling. Providing information on such groups, as the Learning Disabilities Association of New Brunswick can be beneficial to parents at this time should they be interested in pursuing this avenue.





VI. SELF-HELP STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS

Students with Specific Learning Disability often feel frustration in their day-to-day school experiences. Feelings of being overwhelmed or feelings of depression often accompany the anxiety and tension associated with their struggle to deal with their difficulties.

There are various strategies that can be introduced into the lives of students with Specific Learning Disability that will help them adjust to the challenges that they face. These self-help strategies are often initiated by parents and teachers in the hope that the student will begin to use these skills independently.

Teachers and parents should be aware of the need to build a circle of friends for the student at school and in the community. Socializing may need the direct intervention of parents and teachers if it does not occur on its own. Students with Specific Learning Disability need a peer support group to help them through frustrating days. As well, students with Specific Learning Disability will need to develop skills for self-advocacy so that in the future they will be able to indicate to people the adjustments and accommodations necessary for their success in post-secondary institutions and/or the workplace.

Parents and teachers will need to assist the students in the development of positive thinking by fostering their self-esteem. It is often helpful for these students to find an adult mentor who can assist them with their advocacy skills, and who, by modeling, can show them ways of dealing with frustration. Self-esteem can also be developed through the identification and fostering of a talent.

More specific self-help strategies can be developed through social skills or stress-management groups, through club activities, extra curricular and co-curricular activities, peer helpers or tutors, or through group or personal counselling. Parents and teachers should look at areas that will assist the adolescent to develop skills for independence in adult life. Most adolescents develop these skills

without assistance. Often students with learning disabilities will need explicit teaching in this area.

Parents and teachers will need to identify and develop strategies related to assisting the student with academic areas. These strategies, such as study skills, organizational skills, memory strategies, etc., should be considered a toolbox from which the student can choose the appropriate technique or tool.

Anxiety and its associated tension and stress frequently plague adolescents with Specific Learning Disability. Therefore, they need to develop strategies to manage their reaction to stress, to help them relax, calm down and focus their energy on the task at hand.

Many breathing and stretching techniques will relax the muscles and counteract the negative effects of the anxiety built up as the child attempts a difficult task. Exercises involving slow deliberate movement are also helpful. Further, visualization techniques and relaxation through the use of soothing music are all stress relievers that can be introduced into the life of the student with learning disabilities to help them reduce their tension. (Adapted from "*How to Reach and Teach ADD/ADHD Children*" by Sandra Rief 1993)



VII. ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND SOFTWARE

Assistive technology can often help to create a learning environment, which enables students to produce their best work. It allows them to use their areas of strength and to circumvent the processing difficulties, which have traditionally held them back. Through assistive devices, assignments and curriculum can be presented so that students can demonstrate their true abilities.

Software and resource material (e.g. *Making Sense of Graphic Organizers* – Dr. Edwin Ellis, www.graphicorganizers.com), which enables the student to visually organize concepts learned in the classroom are very helpful. Examples include sequencing charts, cause/effect and problem/solution charts, time-ordered charts as well as story maps, concept webs and unit summary forms. Students may be taught organizational skills for writing with such programs as *Inspiration* by Inspiration Software Inc., and enhance their finished materials by using the spell check. For example, the *Franklin Talking Spell Checker* assists in clarifying the correct spelling of words by reading the list of words presented on the screen. (www.franklin.com)

Word Smith provides word retrieval assistance to developing writers. It offers such options as colour highlights and reads words, sentences and paragraphs, providing audio-visual reinforcement and helping to develop recognition of news and vocabulary. Word Prediction aids in sentence construction by suggesting words, which the student can use. Pronunciation options break words down into syllables for easy recognition and pronunciation, including a moving mouth to aid the development of more accurate speech. Browse Aloud reads Internet Explorer web pages. The program also has a Homonym Support option and scanning capabilities. (www.texthelp.com)

Often these students can be taught keyboarding skills. Laptop computers or desktop keyboards allow students to easily transfer work from home to school. Although still in the stages of being refined, voice activation software allows the students with

oral abilities to express their thoughts on paper. Current literature indicates that programs such as *ViaVoice/Advanced* have proven a great benefit to students with written communication difficulties. As well the *Readplease 2002* program will allow students to cut and paste text (web, e-mail, word documents, etc.) and read it as it highlights the individual words. The student can change the font, speed and voice. Free versions are available. (www.readplease.com)

Bibliomania offers free online literature and study guides from a large collection of classic texts and study resources ranging from poetry to non-fiction. (www.bibliomania.com)

For students with memory difficulties, calculators may be necessary for math-related activities. Calculators with larger keys that give tactile feedback may be of assistance to students who are kinesthetic learners.

As well, computer-assisted instruction is often helpful for students with Specific Learning Disability. A number of programs on the market such as *Academy of Reading*TM and *Plato*TM, all have features, which can accommodate individual needs, particularly in basic skill development.

Academy of Reading

This program is a comprehensive, interactive, multimedia reading program designed to enhance literacy skills in students, adolescents and adults. The program contains a wide variety of assessment tools and several training programs that help develop the skills necessary for successful reading.

The program contains the following reading measures:

- Phonemic Awareness Test Battery
- Reading Subskills Test Battery
- Word Recognition
- Oral Reading Comprehension
- Silent Reading Comprehension
- Cloze Paragraph Comprehension

On the basis of the assessment, each student is assigned lessons according to his or her needs. The management component of the program tracks the student's progress and provides immediate feedback to both the student and the teacher. The **Academy of Reading** is an intervention program for struggling readers. It is not a comprehensive language arts program. (www.autoskill.com)

Plato

This program is curriculum based and is criterion referenced. It is a sequential skills based program. It covers many curriculum and life-skill areas. It is available from Plato Learning, Inc. (www.plato.com)



VIII. TRANSITION PLANNING

Because services for students with learning disabilities are very different at elementary, middle and high school levels, appropriate transition planning is of paramount importance. Ideally, in the planning for transition from the middle school to the high school, the resource teacher for the middle school student will meet with school personnel from the receiving school including the resource teacher. The meeting is generally held prior to the end of the school year, to familiarize the receiving school with the details of the student's previous planning and to outline the needed support for the coming year. Transition beginning in the spring of grade eight should follow the guidelines as described in the document **"Resource for the Transition of Students with Exceptionalities From School to Work or Post Secondary Education and Adult Life"** produced by the Department of Education in May 2001.

Planning for High School

Transition meetings normally occur in the spring of grade eight to ensure that the move to high school is as smooth as possible. A current achievement test is beneficial to the high school in planning courses and accommodations. The student should have the opportunity to develop a relationship with a mentor/resource teacher within the school who will monitor their academic progress and provide advocacy and academic support.

Developing Self-Awareness and Goals

If the student does not have full understanding of their Specific Learning Disability, the resource teacher should help him or her to fully understand his or her strengths and weaknesses. The resource teacher may provide a preliminary outline of possible program accommodations and discuss how the student can better adapt learning strategies for his or her learning needs. The resource teacher may provide on-going monitoring to discuss changing needs related to

course choices. The students begin to explore their personal goals for high school and the post-secondary years. The guidance counselor, in conjunction with the resource teacher, can assist the student with academic programming and course selection that will best suit the student's learning strengths and interests.

Developing Self-Advocacy Skills

The skills for self-advocacy need to be introduced throughout the high school years so that students will begin to gradually develop responsibility for their educational needs. The student needs assistance to develop the skills to ask for the necessary help or accommodations. This could involve family members, teachers and/or peers and friends regarding their learning situation. The student must first develop his or her own comfort zone in the area of explaining the nature of his or her Specific Learning Disability. A useful strategy may involve having the student outline and rehearse their discussion regarding their learning needs. Self-confidence will develop with the successful use of the following personal and practical skills: managing time, establishing priorities, using learning strengths, organizing information, accessing tutoring and extra help, developing test-taking strategies, and developing effective communication skills.

Planning for Post Secondary Education

Some post secondary institutions require an up-to-date (usually within two years) psycho-educational assessment to support a diagnosis of a Specific Learning Disability and/or another learning difficulty. If this is the case for an institution being considered, documentation that outlines level of cognitive functioning, achievement, and information processing will need to be available. The level of support that was required and provided at the high school level should also be outlined. Information

documented in a Special Education Plan will be important to submit to the post-secondary institutions. Some institutions only require detailed information documented in a Special Education Plan.

The student's research into universities should include the services available for students with disabilities. They should make themselves known to the coordinator of student services and arrange for a campus visit where they review their learning needs and the availability of services at the institution. (See below for a list of possible accommodations.)

The student may wish to discuss the viability of a reduced course load especially in the first year. A student may still receive a full student loan even with a reduced course load with documentation of the student's Specific Learning Disability.

Accommodation at the Post Secondary Level

Many Canadian universities offer support services to students with Specific Learning Disabilities. Services may vary from one school to another therefore it is important for a student to research what accommodations are provided as part of their initial screening of universities of interest. A list has been comprised of information acquired from various Canadian universities including Mount Allison University, University of New Brunswick, St. Mary's University, Dalhousie University, University of Ottawa, and University of Waterloo. This is not an exhaustive list but it does include some regional universities and some from further afield with good outline of services:

- Extra time for tests and examinations
- Testing in a separate, quieter location
- Reader and scribe for tests and examinations
- Variation in exam and test format to accommodate student's individual learning style
- Taped material for tests and

- reading assignments
- Allowance of adaptive equipment such as tape recorders, word processors, computers, calculators, speech to print technology and print readers
- Technical equipment loans
- Notetakers or use of copy paper.
- Library services may include the extension of loan services and assistance in research
- Permission to give an oral report in place of a written paper
- Providing instructions both orally and in written form
- Writing and math centres for students.
- Facilitating the organization of study groups
- Counseling services – academic and personal

Planning for Employment

Students need to define their interests and strengths and begin to prepare themselves for employment that will support those areas. Preparation should be done in terms of job exploration, resume and cover letter writing, interview skills, and job search techniques.

Be aware of accommodations that may be needed at work. For assistance see the checklists in the **“Resource for the Transition of Exceptional Students From School to Work or Post Secondary Education and Adult Life.”**

Accommodations may include:

- restructuring a job by reallocating or redistributing marginal job functions
- altering when or how an essential job function is performed
- part-time or modified work schedules
- obtaining or modifying equipment or devices
- modifying examinations, training materials or policies
- providing qualified readers and interpreters



- reassignment to a vacant position
- allowing an employee to provide equipment or devices that an employer is not required to provide

The website from Job Accommodation Network in Canada may provide further suggestions for accommodations and case studies.
(see Resource section)

SCHOOL/CLASS TRANSITION FORM

Student: _____ Feeder School: _____
Age: _____ Program: Core EFI IFI
Grades Repeated: _____

Justification for SEP (if applicable): _____

Academic Functioning: English (mark) _____ modified regular
Math (mark) _____ modified regular
Reading (level) _____
Math (level) _____
Written Expression (level) _____
Other _____

Resource Support: Direct Indirect Monitor

Special Education Plan ACC. MOD. (slight moderate high) IND.
No SEP Plan Needed

Teacher Assistants: No Yes (Full-time Part-time Shared)

Tutoring: No Yes (EIE:LD EIE: Tutor Support Other Funding)
*EIE: Excellence in Education

Other Support: APSEA (Hearing Vision)
Guidance/Counselling
Speech Language Pathology Services
Occupational/Physiotherapy Services
Psychology Services
Support Services to Education
Other _____

Recent Assessment: No Yes (Date: _____)

Middle Level Eng. Assessment: Successful Unsuccessful

Middle Level Math Assessment: Successful Unsuccessful

French Exemption: No Yes

Areas of Concern: Academic
Behaviour
Attendance
Other _____

Notes: _____



IX. RESOURCES

Websites:

- JANCANA** This source provides information on accommodations in the workplace in Canada.
www.ccrw.org/en/jancana.htm
- LD Online:** This is an excellent source of information on the topic of learning disabilities. Each week it provides articles on a particular theme related to learning disabilities on its web page. You also have the opportunity to link with a FAQ page, in-depth articles, first-person stories, or a bulletin board.
www.ldonline.com
- Schwab Learning** This source provides helpful information for parents and teachers on learning disabilities.
www.schwablearning.org
- CEC: LD** This is the website for the Learning Disabilities division of the Council for Exceptional Children. Some articles are available from this source. It gives links to related sites.
www.dldcec.org
- LDAC** This is the main page for the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada.
www.ldac-taac.ca
- LDANB** This is the home page for the Learning Disabilities Association of New Brunswick
www.nald.ca/ldanb.htm
- CHADD** This is the main webpage for the *Association for Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder*.
www.chadd.org
- ERIC** ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education.
www.ericcec.org
- NVLD** **Nonverbal Learning Disabilities**
www.nldline.com
- CCLD** Coordinated Campaign For Learning Disabilities
www.aboutld.org
- NALD** National Adult Literacy Database
www.nald.ca
- NIC** National Information Centre for Children & Youth with Disabilities
www.nichcy.org/index.html
- NCLD** National Center for Learning Disabilities
www.nclld.org



TESTING	Testing Accommodations: Research and Practices www.ctb.com
FRANKLIN	www.franklin.com
WORDSMITH	www.texthelp.com
READPLEASE	www.readplease.com
BIBLIOMANIA	www.bibliomania.com
GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS	www.graphicorganizers.com

University Websites

Saint Mary's University – Atlantic Centre of Research, Access & Support for Students with Disabilities

Go to the main page then search under “Prospective Students” and then “Atlantic Centre of Research, Access & Support for Students with Disabilities”
www.stmarysu.ca

Dalhousie University
www.dal.ca/~etc/admin/ssd.html

University of New Brunswick
Fredericton Campus
www.unb.ca/current/special/index.html
Saint John Campus
www.unbsj.ca/stu_serv/ssn.html

St. Thomas University
www.stthom.edu/counseling/services.html

Mount Allison University - Meighen Centre
www.mta.ca/research/meighen

Carleton University - Paul Menton Centre
www.carleton.ca/pmc



Videos

The following videos are available from **WETA Videos**, 22-D Hollywood Ave., Ho-Ho-Kus, NJ 07423

“How Difficult Can This Be?” with Richard Lavoie

“Last One Picked..First One Picked On” with Richard Lavoie

“When the Chips Are Down” with Richard Lavoie

For further information on Attention Deficit Disorder, the following videos, available from **Child Management, Inc**, Carol Stream, IL, are suggested:

“All About Attention Deficit Disorder Part I: Symptoms, Development, Prognosis and Causes”
with Thomas Phelan

“All About Attention Deficit Disorder Part II: Diagnosis and Treatment”
with Thomas Phelan

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APPENDIX

X. APPENDIX A

Provincial Assessment Guidelines for Accommodations and Exemptions

Students with Specific Learning Disability may require some level of accommodations, modifications or exemptions for provincial assessments or examinations. The Province of New Brunswick has put forth a provincial document, *New Brunswick Provincial Examination Program: Guidelines for Exemptions and Accommodations*, which should be used as a reference when making decisions regarding the suitability of exemptions or accommodations.

Exemptions would be granted for those students whose exceptionality, including Specific Learning Disability, makes the particular assessment, even with available accommodations, inappropriate. If an exemption is granted, *as justified and documented in a Special Education Plan*, the literacy requirement for graduation is waived.

Definition

Accommodations are the types of strategies, technology or adjustments that enable the student to demonstrate their true knowledge.

Accommodations are a change in the way that a test is administered or responded to by the person tested and are intended to offset or 'correct' for distortions in scores caused by a disability (McDonnell *et al* 1997). This will apply to the students in the regular classroom who are expected to achieve within the limits of the regular curriculum. Accommodations may be necessary because of processing weaknesses, physical and/or emotional issues that have been observed and documented over an extended period of time.

Accommodation Categories for Provincial Assessment

Additional time (usually time and a half or double time) and/or reduction of test length
Alternate setting
Change in format (large print version, audiotape readings)
Extended use of technology (computer use)
Verbatim scribing of responses

See the *New Brunswick Provincial Examination Program: Guidelines for Exemptions and Accommodations, April 2002*

Eligibility

Students with Specific Learning Disability are eligible to receive accommodations based on appropriate documentation included in their Special Education Plan. The accommodations that each student will receive must be pertinent to his/her individual needs. The accommodations must be consistent with what is provided within their academic program. In some cases, reading/scribing accommodations not usually provided for the student can be deemed necessary because of the atypical length of the provincial assessment.

XI. APPENDIX B

SEP Accommodations

Learning Tools and Technology Devices

- Manipulatives
- Raised line paper
- Braille written materials
- Spell checker
- Computer assisted technology
- Dark line paper
- Large print materials
- Calculator
- Personal FM system
- Classroom FM system

Learning Environment

- Alternative program site
- Seating arrangement
- Special lighting
- Special study area/individual work area (e.g., resource room, study carrel)
- Short-term Intervention
- _____

Note Taking

- Near rather than far point copying
- Photocopied notes
- Key words and phrases only
- Word processor for notes
- Mind Map
- Verbal notes on tape
- Student note taker
- Point form notes
- Teacher's copy of notes provided
- _____

Organization

- Monitoring of student agenda/teacher initials homework
- Colour coding of notebooks
- Organizational mentor
- Outline provided for all special projects
- Put homework in separate special organizational binder
- Clean desk on regular schedule
- Individual/personal schedule
- Extra set of texts at home



Special homework assignment sheet/contract

Regular home contact
(e.g., home/school journal; voice mail)

Human Resource Assistance

Peer tutor

Noon hour or after school tutor

Sign or oral interpreter

Reader

Peer helper

Mentor

Scribe

Teaching and Learning Strategies

Mnemonics (memory prompts)

Strategy card (step-by-step direction)

Emphasize visual presentations

Monitor attention (signal systems)

Frequent activity breaks

Taped texts

Division of long assignments into parts

Reduced reading level materials

Simplified directions

Provide tactile/kinesthetic activities

Adjusted expectations for length
of assignments

Written directions read to student

Homework/Study Strategies

Test outline and preview provided

In-school study program

Extra time for project completion

Reader or tutor to review notes

Prioritize homework assignments

Mentor

Reduced number of assigned questions

Alternate format to written assignment

Study broken into several short slots



Testing/Evaluation

- Scribe for designated tests
- Adjusted test format (multiple choice, true/false, etc.) in lieu of essay
- Oral testing
- Provincial assessment accommodations (see provincial guidelines)
- Frequent short quizzes in lieu of exam
- Evaluation of daily work only
- Open book
- Evaluation of special projects only
- Written directions read to student
- Quiet, individual or small group setting
- Access to computer
- Practice test provided or example given on tests
- Blank visual organizer provided with test
- Extra time (usually time and a half/double time)
- Word choices provided for fill-in-the-blank questions
- Teacher selects key questions
- Spelling not counted in daily work or test situations
- Portfolio

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