

Guide to Understanding Learning Disabilities (LDs)

HWDSB Psychological Services



Unlocking Potential

Understanding how psychological processing difficulties can impact learning will help you choose appropriate tools and strategies to support your student.

Request a copy of the resource below from your Psychoeducational Consultant.

HWDSB Psychological SERVICES

Recommendations for
Supporting Students
based on Cognitive and
Learning Profiles



Get the Facts

- Learning disabilities are brain-based difficulties that affect how a person takes in, remembers, understands and expresses information.
- People with learning disabilities are intelligent and have abilities to learn despite difficulties in processing information.
- LDs can interfere with learning basic reading, writing, and math skills. They can also interfere with higher-level skills such as organization, time management and social communication.
- LDs do not always present the same way. Therefore, a person's pattern of learning abilities (strengths and difficulties) needs to be understood to find good, effective strategies for compensation.
- Between 5 and 10 percent of Canadians have LDs. LDs are a life-long condition – they do not go away. However, they can be successfully managed by using areas of strength to compensate and accommodations such as technology.

The Universal Design (UDL) Framework has helped to reduce accessibility barriers for students with an LD
Click below for more information

Provide multiple means of
Engagement ➔

Affective Networks
The "WHY" of learning



Provide multiple means of
Representation ➔

Recognition Networks
The "WHAT" of learning



Provide multiple means of
Action & Expression ➔

Strategic Networks
The "HOW" of learning



Types of Learning Disabilities

Dyslexia

Dyslexia affects word-level reading accuracy, reading fluency, and spelling. It is often described as an unexpected difficulty in learning to read.

“Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.”

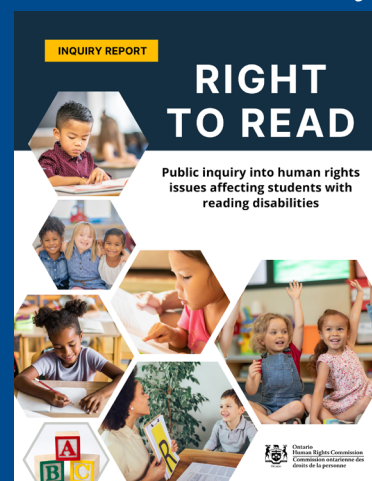


Adopted by the [International Dyslexia Association](#) Board of Directors, Nov. 12, 2002.

The Right to Read Inquiry Highlights

- Early Universal Screening
- Evidence based Reading Interventions
- Appropriate accommodations
- Timely access to psychoeducational assessments
- Systemic barriers

Click for Executive Summary



A Closer Look at LD & How Understanding What is Causing a Difficulty Can Help us Find Effective Tools to Help Students Reach their Full Potential

Meet Joe:

Joe is a grade 5 student who is an excellent oral communicator but sometimes has difficulty completing his assigned work on time. Despite participating in an intensive, evidence-based reading intervention, he still struggles to read words. Joe can recognize many more words than in the past. However, it takes him longer than his peers to read passages, and he still misreads some unfamiliar words. These difficulties often make it challenging for Joe to understand what he reads. However, when Joe uses assistive technology that allows the text to be read, he can comprehend reading materials at grade level.

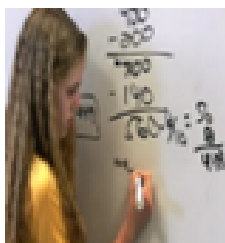
How Can We Help?

In this case, Joe has difficulty decoding words (phonological processing difficulties). However, he can reach his true potential when he uses assistive technology to work around this processing difficulty—specifically using text-speech technology or audiobooks.



Dysgraphia

Dysgraphia is a brain-based disorder of written expression that impairs writing ability and fine motor skills. It is a learning disability that interferes with practically all aspects of the writing process, including spelling, legibility, word spacing and sizing, and expression.



Dyscalculia

Dyscalculia is a learning disability that makes math challenging to process and understand. Symptoms range from difficulty with counting and basic mental math to trouble with telling time and direction.

Take Away Message:

- Individuals with learning disabilities are intelligent and have a strong learning potential
- They have underachievement in one or more academic areas (reading, writing or math)
- LDs may also impact an individual's organization, time management and social communication skills
- The reason for academic difficulties vary from student to student. Understanding what psychological process is impacting their ability to achieve in an academic area can help to determine appropriate and effective interventions, tools and accommodations

Information from LDAO, LD@school and Dyslexia Canada was used to inform this document. Please click on the links below for more information and resources about LDs



For more great information about how to use Assistive Technology to support your students, please visit [HWDSB's Centre for Success website](#)