



WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

AccessAbility Services Learning Disability Fact Sheet

Learning Disability (LD) is a "generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span" (NJCLD, 1990).

An LD is not simply a difference in approach to learning, or lack of motivation to learn; but rather difficulty with basic psychological processes involved in understanding and processing information (i.e., received, manipulated, organized, categorized, synthesized and expressed) (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 1991).

Challenges Associated with Learning Disabilities:

- Generally academic performance does not reflect individuals true cognitive abilities
- Reading, writing, spelling, grammar difficulties
- Challenges with visual or auditory processing/comprehension speed
- Information processing speed can be slower
- Math skills (steps to follow, problem solving, reversal of numbers)
- Memory difficulty (long-term, short-term, visual, auditory)
- Executive functioning (organization, self-awareness, inhibition and initiation of actions and time management)
- Screening out environmental stimuli (lights, sounds, visuals)
- Sustaining concentration
- Generalizing concepts
- Oral presentations (organizing thoughts, processing information, managing questions)

Instructional Strategies:

- Clearly define course requirements, the dates of exams, and when assignments are due; provide advance notice of any changes
- Sharing lecture notes with a student in advance can be extremely helpful to support his or her visual and auditory preparation for each class
- In the classroom, avoid "rapid fire" questions
- Assist students in breaking down large projects into smaller parts with due dates
- Remind students of upcoming deadlines with a week's notice
- When presenting abstract concepts, support the concepts with concrete examples or visual materials such as charts and graphs
- Use of visual, aural and tactile instructional demonstrations
- Use diagrams, graphics and pictures to augment lecture material

- Use more than one way to demonstrate or explain information
- Allow time for clarification of directions and essential information
- Supply regular quality feedback
- Provide study guides, overviews, or review sheets for exams
- Provide alternative ways for the students to show mastery of course content by choice, such as, quizzes, exams, assignments, homework, presentations, projects or oral presentations
- When in doubt about how to assist the student, ask him or her
- Allow the student the same anonymity as other students (i.e., avoid pointing out the student or the alternative arrangements to the rest of the class)

Additional Resources:

- **Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD)**: <http://www.cldinternational.org/>
- **LD Online**: <http://www.ldonline.org>
- **National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD)**: <http://www.nclld.org>