



Florida's Focus on Adults with Learning Disabilities

GLOSSARY OF LEARNING DISABILITY-RELATED TERMS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cover Page.....	i
Table of Contents	ii-iv
Glossary of Learning Disability-Related Terms	1-8
Accommodations	1
Adult Individualized Education Plan (AIEP)	1
Advance Organizer	1
Assistive Technology.....	1
Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).....	1
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	1
Auditory.....	1
Auditory Discrimination	1
Auditory Memory	1
Auditory Perception	1
Automaticity	1
Basic Skills.....	1
Best Practice.....	1
Brain Imaging Techniques.....	2
Brain Injury.....	2
Cognitive Skills	2
Collaboration	2
Connected Instruction.....	2
Content Mastery Approach.....	2
Coping Strategy.....	2
Critical Content	2
Critical Questions	2
Cue-Do-Review	2
Decoding.....	2
Developmental Aphasia	2
Diagnosis.....	2
Diagnostic Tests	3
Direct Instruction	3
Dyscalculia	3
Dysgraphia.....	3
Dyslexia	3
Dysnomia	3
Dyspraxia	3
Encoding	3
Enduring Instruction	3
Evaluated Instruction.....	3
Explicit Instruction.....	3

GED Tests.....	3
Generalizable Instruction.....	4
Graphic Organizer.....	4
Hyperactivity.....	4
Impulsivity.....	4
Incidence.....	4
Independent Practice.....	4
Individualized Education Plan (IEP).....	4
Informative Instruction.....	4
Instructional Adaptation.....	4
Integration.....	4
Intensive Instruction.....	4
Kinesthetic.....	4
Laterality.....	4
Learned Helplessness.....	4
Learning Disability.....	5
Learning Modalities.....	5
Learning Strategies.....	5
Learning Strategy Approaches.....	5
Learning Styles.....	5
Literacy.....	5
Locus of Control.....	5
Metacognition.....	5
Metacognitive Learning.....	5
Minimal Brain Dysfunction (MBD).....	5
Mnemonic.....	5
Mnemonic Device.....	6
Morpheme.....	6
Multisensory Learning.....	6
Neuropsychological Examination.....	6
Norms.....	6
Orthography.....	6
Perception.....	6
Perceptual Handicap.....	6
Phoneme.....	6
Phoneme Awareness.....	6
Phonemic Segmentation.....	6
Phonetics.....	6
Phonics.....	7
Phonological Awareness.....	7
Phonology.....	7
Process-Sensitive Instruction.....	7
Reliability (of tests).....	7
Remediation.....	7
Screening Instrument.....	7
Screening Process.....	7
Self-Advocacy.....	7
Specific Learning Disability (SLD).....	7

Structured Instruction	7
Subtype Research	7
Syllabication	7
Tactile	7
Think-Aloud	8
Transition.....	8
Validity (of tests).....	8
Visual.....	8
Visual Discrimination	8
Visual Perception.....	8
Word Attack Skills.....	8
Word Decoding.....	8
Definitions of the Term ‘Learning Disabilities’	9-15
A. A. Strauss and Lehtinen.....	9
Dr. Samuel A. Kirk	9
Barbara Bateman.....	10
National Institutes of Neurological Diseases and Blindness	10
National Advisory Committee of Handicapped Children	10
Education for All Handicapped Children Act: Public Law 94-142.....	10
U.S. Office of Education	10-11
National Joint Council on Learning Disabilities and LDA.....	11
Canadian Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities (CACLD)	11
Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).....	11
Learning Disabilities Association of America.....	12
U.S. Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities.....	12
National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD)	12
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	12
Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia	13
National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH)	13
National Joint Commission on Learning Disabilities	13
Bridges to Practice.....	13
Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC)	14
National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center (NALLD)	14
GED Testing Service.....	15
Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, Canada (LDAOC).....	15
State of Oregon Department of Education	15
Dr. Roy McConkey, University of Ulster	15

GLOSSARY OF LEARNING DISABILITY-RELATED TERMS

Adapted from material developed by the National Adult Literacy & Learning Disabilities Center, Bridges to Practice Guidebook 1: Preparing to Serve Adults with Learning Disabilities, pages 89-95.

Taken from: http://ldlink.coe.utk.edu/bridges_glossary.pdf

Accommodations - Techniques and/or materials which legally must be allowed or provided to individuals with disabilities to complete school or work assignments with greater ease and effectiveness. Examples include spell checkers, tape recorders, and extra time for completing assignments.

Adult individualized education plan (AIEP) - A specifically tailored program designed to meet the distinctive needs of adult students diagnosed with a disability.

Advance organizer - Concise overview or summary of a larger body of information that is used to gain prior knowledge before reading or listening to the larger body of information.

Assistive technology - Equipment that enhances the ability of individuals with learning disabilities to be more efficient and successful. Examples include use of an overhead projector by a teacher, use of computer grammar checkers, or the audio/visual information delivered through a CD-ROM.

Attention deficit disorder (ADD) - A disorder characterized by severe and persistent difficulties in one or more of the following areas: attention, impulsivity, and motor behaviors. These difficulties can lead to learning and behavior problems at home, school, or work.

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) - with hyperactivity, or excessive and exaggerated motor activity.

Auditory - Having to do with the sense of hearing.

Auditory discrimination - The ability to differentiate between speech sounds.

Auditory memory - The ability to remember information which has been presented orally.

Auditory perception - The ability to recognize sounds.

Automaticity - Automatic and correct responses to stimuli without conscious effort.

Basic skills - The fundamental academic skills related to reading, writing, listening, and mathematics that must be mastered for an individual to be successful in daily living tasks.

Best practice - Making good decisions about how best to help an individual learn.

Brain imaging techniques - Recently developed, noninvasive techniques for studying the activity of living brains. Techniques include brain electrical activity mapping (BEAM), computerized axial tomography (CAT), and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

Brain injury - The physical damage to brain tissue or structure that occurs before, during, or after birth that is verified by EEG, MRI, CAT, or a similar examination, rather than by observation of performance. When caused by an accident, the damage may be called Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

Cognitive skills - Skills that are used for thinking, comprehending, analyzing, or evaluating.

Collaboration - A program model in which the LD teacher demonstrates for or team teaches with the general classroom teacher to help a student with LD be successful in a regular classroom.

Connected instruction - A key principle of LD-appropriate instruction, involves showing the adult how information in and between units and lessons is linked to learning and to the adult's goals.

Content mastery approach - Teaching method wherein the learner receives intensive instruction in topics that are needed for daily living, such as obtaining insurance, getting a driver's license, doing taxes, and procuring health care services.

Coping strategy - A method or behavioral strategy that helps an individual succeed despite learning or other disabilities.

Critical content - Specific information that the learner needs to master for a given task, such as the skills needed to pass a driver's test.

Critical questions - Questions that the instructor should pose that will lead to discourse on learning and help the learner identify goals.

Cue-Do-Review - To help ensure learning, the teacher should CUE the learner, explaining the level of instruction, DO the activities in partnership with the learner, and REVIEW the learning at the end of each level.

Decoding - A process of recognizing unfamiliar written words by sequentially segmenting the sounds represented by the letters of the word and then by blending the sounds into a meaningful word or syllables which are then combined into words.

Developmental aphasia - A severe language disorder that is presumed to be due to brain injury rather than because of a developmental delay in the normal acquisition of language.

Díagnosis - Confirmation of the existence of a condition by someone qualified to reach such a conclusion. For example, a licensed psychologist can make a diagnosis of a learning disability.

Diagnostic tests - An aid to assessment that yields information concerning the learner's weaknesses in areas such as reading or math; composed of several parts, including personal history and psycho-educational tests.

Direct instruction - A key principle of LD-appropriate instruction, characterized by high rates of teacher control during initial stages of information acquisition followed by careful performance monitoring as the learner gradually assumes control over application. Instruction is structured, modular, and sequential (simple to complex and concrete to abstract). Direct instruction stresses practice and mastery, and provides a high level of success experiences and positive feedback to the student.

Dyscalculia - Difficulty in performing mathematical functions, reasoning, word problems, or in aligning columns of numbers or distinguishing numbers or operational symbols such as + (plus sign) and - (minus sign).

Dysgraphia - Difficulty in writing well, as marked by slow writing rate, limited vocabulary, poor grammar, poor sentence structure, incorrect use of punctuation, poor penmanship, or trouble organizing and sequencing ideas on paper.

Dyslexia - A specific language-based disorder characterized by problems in learning to read, write, and spell.

Dysnomia - Difficulty in remembering names or other words that are needed for oral or written language.

Dyspraxia - A severe difficulty in performing drawing, writing, buttoning, and other tasks requiring fine motor skill, or in sequencing the necessary movements.

Encoding - In spelling, a process by which students segment sounds of a word, translate each phoneme into its corresponding letter, and then spell the word. Encoding requires predictable sound-symbol correspondences and phonic generalizations (spelling rules).

Enduring instruction - A key principle of LD-appropriate instruction, involves acknowledging and committing the time necessary to ensure that the information is mastered by the learner and used to increase success in life.

Evaluated instruction - A key principle of LD-appropriate instruction, involves adapting instruction based on assessing the adult's progress and response to previous attempts at instruction.

Explicit instruction - A key principle of LD-appropriate instruction, involves providing detailed explanations and models about how to approach, think about, perform, and evaluate learning and performance.

GED tests - General Educational Development Tests: five tests in the areas of writing skills, social studies, science, interpreting literature and the arts, and mathematics; successful completion of these tests results in award of a high school equivalency diploma.

Generalizable instruction - A key principle of LD-appropriate instruction, involves using activities before, during, and after information has been mastered that ensures continued application of the information by the learner to increase life success outside of the literacy setting.

Graphic organizer - Visual depiction of the organization of information used to enhance the comprehension of information. Graphic organizers can be used in advance, during, and/or after presentation of information.

Hyperactivity - Excessive or exaggerated motor activity, as evidenced in an individual's inability to sit still.

Impulsivity - Acting on impulse with no prior consideration of the consequences of one's actions.

Incidence - The number of new cases occurring in a population during a specific time interval.

Independent practice - The learner works independently or with other learners to practice new skills or strategies.

Individualized education plan (IEP) - A specifically tailored program designed to meet the distinctive needs of students diagnosed with a disability.

Informative instruction - A key principle of LD-appropriate instruction, involves making sure that adults learn how they are being taught, what is expected during the instructional situation, and how they can improve learning and performance.

Instructional adaptation - Alternative techniques and/or materials that are provided for an individual by a literacy practitioner to increase the effectiveness of instruction.

Integration - The process in which the brain groups, organizes, reserves, and reconstructs information.

Intensive instruction - A key principle of LD-appropriate instruction, involves maintaining a high degree of learner attention and response during ongoing instructional interactions that are scheduled as frequently and as close together as possible.

Kinesthetic - Learning by doing.

Laterality - A complete awareness of both sides of the body.

Learned helplessness - A tendency to be a passive learner who depends on others for decisions and guidance. In individuals with LD, continued struggle and failure can heighten this lack of self-confidence.

Learning disability - A variety of neurological disorders, including differences in one or more of the basic processes involved in understanding or using spoken or written language. Learning disabilities are lifelong conditions that are not related to visual or auditory deficiencies. Learning disabilities are not the result of delays in mental development.

Learning modalities - The means through which information is perceived, such as visual, auditory, or kinesthetic means.

Learning strategies - How a person approaches learning; includes how a person thinks and acts before, during, and after a task and how a person evaluates the impact of the strategy on learning and performance.

Learning strategy approaches - Instructional approaches that focus on efficient ways to learn, rather than on curriculum. They include specific techniques for organizing, actively interacting with material, memorizing, and monitoring any content or subject.

Learning styles - The learning process that uses one's preferred modality (visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic). Approaches to assessment or instruction that emphasize the variations in temperament, attitude, and preferred manner of tackling a task. Typically considered are styles along the active/passive, reflective/impulsive, or verbal/spatial dimensions.

Literacy - An individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, and to communicate and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, and to achieve one's goals and develop one's knowledge and potential.

Locus of control - The tendency to attribute success and difficulties either to internal factors such as effort or to external factors such as chance. Individuals with learning disabilities tend to blame failure on themselves and achievement on luck, leading to frustration and passivity.

Metacognition - The ability to perceive or gain awareness about one's own thoughts or learning process and, acting upon this awareness, to choose appropriate learning strategies.

Metacognitive learning - Instructional approaches emphasizing awareness of the cognitive processes that facilitate one's own learning and its application to academic and work assignments. Typical metacognitive techniques include systematic rehearsal of steps or conscious selection among strategies for completing a task.

Minimal brain dysfunction (MBD) - A medical and psychological term originally used to refer to the learning difficulties that seemed to result from identified or presumed damage to the brain. It reflects a medical, rather than educational or vocational orientation.

Mnemonic - Pertaining to memory.

Mnemonic device - A method of remembering information by linking key information to a word or phrase that reminds the learner, such as using the word GAIN to help a person remember the routine for mailing a package: Gather materials, Address envelope, Inspect address for accuracy, Notify mailroom to pick up package.

Morpheme - The smallest unit of meaning in a word, including prefixes, root words, and suffixes. They can be free-form (as in the word pin) or bound (as in the s in pins).

Multisensory learning - An instructional approach that combines auditory, visual, and tactile elements into a learning task. Moving one's finger under each syllable of a word as the word is read and sounded out would be multi-sensory learning.

Neuropsychological examination - A series of tasks that allow observation of performance that is presumed to be related to the intactness of brain function.

Norms - Standard test scores generally based on a national cross-section of representatives.

Orthography - The total writing system of spoken language. The term also refers to the established spelling rules of a written language.

Perception - A process involving the reception, selection, differentiation, and integration of sensory stimuli. The teacher of dyslexics must teach the student to attend actively and consciously to aspects of the perception process until it becomes automatic.

Perceptual handicap - Difficulty in accurately processing, organizing, and discriminating among visual, auditory, or tactile information. A person with a perceptual handicap may say that "cap/cup" sound the same or that "b" and "d" look the same. However, glasses or hearing aids do not necessarily indicate a perceptual handicap.

Phoneme - The smallest unit of speech that serves to distinguish one utterance from another in a language or dialect (as in the /b/ of bat and /m/ of mat). English is made up of 44 phonemes.

Phoneme awareness - Awareness of the phonological structure of words is exemplified by the ability to manipulate or separate the sounds within words (e.g., which sounds come first or last; which words rhyme; which sounds are the same or different), implying meta-linguistic knowledge.

Phonemic segmentation - The process of sequentially isolating the speech sounds which comprise a spoken word or syllable.

Phonetics - The study of speech sounds, how they are produced (articulatory phonetics), how they are perceived (auditory phonetics), and what are their physical properties (acoustic phonetics).

Phonics - A teaching approach that gives attention to letter-sound correspondences in the teaching of reading and spelling. Phonics is a teaching approach and should not be confused with phonetics.

Phonological awareness - Speech sound awareness is the conscious awareness of the sounds of language; the ability to reflect on the sounds in words separate from the meanings of words.

Phonology - The sound system of a language; the part of grammar which includes the inventory of sounds and rules for their combination and pronunciation; the study of the sound systems of all languages.

Process-sensitive instruction - A key principle of LD-appropriate instruction, involves reshaping the activities within the instructional sequence to take into consideration various cognitive barriers that might inhibit learning.

Reliability (of tests) - The accuracy or precision of a measurement instrument; consistency among measurements in a series.

Remediation - The repeated instruction of skills not learned in the usual time or the usual manner.

Screening instrument - Initial test(s) in a sequence of tests; usually quickly administered. The results are used to determine whether further testing is necessary and possibly to guide the selection of other tests to be administered.

Screening process - A process of collecting information through a variety of sources over time that would lead to the conclusion that an individual might be significantly at risk for a specific condition such as a learning disability.

Self-advocacy - The ability of individuals with learning disabilities to explain their disabilities effectively to others, to request legal accommodations, to act independently, and to cope positively with the attitudes of peers, parents, teachers, and employers.

Specific learning disability (SLD) - The official term used in federal legislation to refer to difficulty in certain areas of learning, rather than in all areas of learning. Synonymous with learning disabilities.

Structured instruction - A key principle of LD-appropriate instruction, involves systematically teaching information that has been chunked into manageable pieces.

Subtype research - A recently developed research method that seeks to identify characteristics that are common to specific groups within the larger population of individuals identified as having learning disabilities.

Syllabication - Breaking a word into its syllables.

Tactile - Relating to the sense of touch; tactile learning is learning by touching.

Think aloud - A metacognitive strategy in which the teacher or tutor models thinking, describing thoughts, as he/she reads the text or completes a task.

Transition - Commonly used to refer to the change from secondary school to postsecondary programs, work, and independent living typical of young adults. The term is also used to describe other periods of major change such as from early childhood to school or from more specialized to mainstreamed settings.

Validity (of tests) - Indication that the instrument really measures what it claims to measure.

Visual - Of or relating to the sense of vision.

Visual discrimination - Assuming normal visual acuity, the ability to distinguish slight differences in stimuli, especially in letters and words, which have graphic similarities.

Visual perception - The ability to recognize visual stimuli. Individuals with this learning disability may have problems with such activities as reading, writing, tracking, recognizing people or items, or reading a map or graphic display.

Word attack skills - The ability to decode words using knowledge of the sound-letter correspondence of the language.

Word decoding - A process used to identify words through sounding out letters, letter patterns, or blended sounds.

DEFINITIONS OF THE TERM 'LEARNING DISABILITIES'

When researching information, one finds a multitude of different definitions for the term "learning disabilities" that have evolved over time. These definitions have been attempts at describing a condition that had been labeled such things as developmental aphasia, brain injury, perceptual handicap, Straus syndrome, and minimal brain dysfunction. As terms like minimal brain dysfunction and Straus syndrome began to be less accepted in professional discussions, the term *learning disabilities* became more popular. Since school-related issues were directly related to learning disabilities, the emphasis became less on establishing a medical cause and more on developing educational accommodations and instructional strategies. Many of the definitions share common elements including: 1) problems are not due to environmental disadvantage, mental retardation, or emotional disturbance; 2) an uneven pattern in academic, perceptual, language, and physical development is manifested; 3) the cause of LD may be the result of a problem in the central nervous system; 4) difficulty making progress in academic achievement with noted discrepancies between potential and actual achievement, 5) problems occur in understanding spoken or written language, and 6) learning disabilities can be present at any age. Still, difficulty arises in the field due to the lack of common usage. Because of the multidisciplinary nature of the field, there continues to be ongoing debate regarding definition. The following definitions have been taken from a number of different sources. They are listed in chronological order.

A. A. Strauss and L. Lehtinen - 1947

A brain-injured child is a child who before, during, or after birth has received an injury to, or suffered an infection of, the brain. As a result of such organic impairment, defects of the neuromuscular system may be present or absent, however such a child may show disturbances in perception, thinking, and emotional behavior, either separately or in combination. These disturbances can be demonstrated by specific tests. These disturbances prevent or impede a normal learning process. (Note: This is a precursor of the term learning disabilities as found in: *Psychopathology of the brain-injured child*. NY: Grune & Stratton, page 4.)

Dr. Samuel A. Kirk - 1962

(Note: Many textbooks and articles suggest that Dr. Samuel A. Kirk was the first to originate and use the term learning disabilities. This definition was found in Dr. Kirk's works from the early 1960s.) A learning disability refers to a retardation, disorder, or delayed development in one or more of the processes of speech, language, reading, spelling, writing, or arithmetic resulting from a possible cerebral dysfunction and/or emotional or behavioral disturbance and not from mental retardation, sensory deprivation, or cultural or instruction factors. (Note: Kirk, S. A. (1962). *Educating exceptional children*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, page 261.)

Dr. Samuel A. Kirk - 1963

(The following quote was delivered at the Conference on Exploration into Problems of the Perceptually Handicapped Child in 1993 by Dr. Samuel A. Kirk.) "I have used the term 'learning disabilities' to describe a group of children who have disorders in development in language, speech, reading, and associated communication skills needed for social interaction. In this group I do not include children who have sensory handicaps such as blindness or deafness, because we have methods of managing and training the deaf and the blind. I also exclude from this group children who have generalized mental retardation."

Barbara Bateman - 1965

Children who have learning disorders are those who manifest an educationally significant discrepancy between their estimated intellectual potential and actual level of performance related to basic disorders in the learning processes, which may or may not be accompanied by demonstrable central nervous system dysfunction, and which are not secondary to generalized disturbance or sensory loss. [Note: *An educator's view of a diagnostic approach to learning disorders*. In J. Hellmuth (Ed.), *Learning disorders* (Vol. 1, 217-239). Seattle: Special Child.]

National Institutes of Neurological Diseases and Blindness - 1966

Minimal brain dysfunction refers to children of near average, average, or above average general intelligence with certain learning or behavioral disabilities ranging from mild to severe, which are associated with deviations of function of the central nervous system. These deviations may manifest themselves by various combinations of impairment in perception, conceptualization, language, memory and control of attention, impulse, or motor function.

National Advisory Committee of Handicapped Children - 1968

Children with special learning disabilities exhibit a disorder in one or more of the basic, psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language. These may be manifested in disorders of listening, thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling, or arithmetic. They include conditions which have been referred to as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, developmental aphasia, etc. They do not include learning problems which are due primarily to visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, to mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or to environmental deprivation (disadvantage). (Note: From *First Annual Report on Handicapped Children* given by Dr. Samuel A. Kirk to the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.)

Education for All Handicapped Children Act: Public Law 94-142 - 1975

Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, or mental retardation, or emotional disturbance or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

U.S. Office of Education - 1977

The term specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not

include children who have learning disabilities which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, or mental retardation, or emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. (Note: *Definition and criteria for defining students as learning disabled*. Federal Register, 42:250, page 65083. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.)

National Joint Council on Learning Disabilities and Learning Disabilities Association - 1981

(Note: The continuance of the PL 94-142 definition in federal law prompted further analysis. In the early '80s a group of stakeholders, described as the National Joint Council on Learning Disabilities and the Learning Disabilities Association, proposed an alternative definition) Learning disabilities 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 and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. Even though a learning disability may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions it is not the direct result of those conditions or influences.

Canadian Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities - (CACLD) - 1981.

Learning disabilities is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders due to identifiable or inferred central nervous system dysfunction. Such disorders may be manifested by delays in early development and/or difficulties in any of the following areas: attention, memory, reasoning, coordination, communicating, reading, writing, spelling, calculation, social competence, and emotional maturation. Learning disabilities are intrinsic to the individual, and may affect learning and behaviour in any individual, including those with potentially average, average, or above average intelligence. Learning disabilities are not due primarily to visual, hearing, or motor handicaps; to mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or environmental disadvantage; although they may occur concurrently with any of these. Learning disabilities may arise from genetic variations, biochemical factors, events in the pre-to perinatal period, or any other subsequent events resulting in neurological impairment. (Note: The CACLD is now the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada.)

Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) -1985

A specific learning disability is a disorder in one or more of the central nervous system processes involved in perceiving, understanding, and/or using concepts through verbal (spoken or written) language or nonverbal means. This disorder manifests itself with a deficit in one or more of the following areas: attention, reasoning, processing, memory, communication, reading, writing, spelling, calculation, coordination, social competence, and emotional maturity.

Learning Disabilities Association of America - 1986

Specific learning disabilities is a chronic condition of presumed neurological origin which selectively interferes with the development, integration, and/or demonstration of verbal and/or nonverbal abilities. Specific learning disabilities exist as a distinct handicapping condition and varies in its manifestations and in degree of severity. Throughout life, the condition can affect self esteem, education, vocation, socialization, and/or daily living activities. (Note: The Association for Children with Learning Disabilities was primarily a parent group whose members rejected the definition accepted by the National Joint Council on Learning Disabilities. The group, now called the Learning Disabilities Association of America, accepted the above definition instead.)

U.S. Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities - 1987

Learning disabilities is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities, or of social skills. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. Even though a learning disability may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g., sensory impairment, mental retardation, social and emotional disturbance), with socioenvironmental influences (e.g., cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction, psychogenic factors), and especially with attention deficit disorder, all of which may cause learning problems, a learning disability is not the direct result of those conditions or influences.

National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities - 1988 (Revised)

Learning disabilities is a general 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. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g., sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance) or with extrinsic influences (e.g., cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) - 1990

Specific learning disabilities means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding and using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual abilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. (Note: The current IDEA definition remains unchanged from Public Law 94-142.)

Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia - 1991

(Note: All institutions of the University System employ the same definition of learning disabilities in order to promote evenness in the way that students with learning disabilities are accommodated and to serve as the basis for a diagnosis.) Learning disabilities 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, or of social skills. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. Even though a learning disability may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g., sensory impairment, mental retardation, social and emotion disturbance), with socio-environmental influences (e.g., cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction, psychogenic factors), and especially with attention deficit disorder, all of which may cause learning problems, a learning disability is not the direct result of those conditions or influences.

National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH) - 1993

Learning disabilities is a disorder that affects people's ability to either interpret what they see and hear, or to link information from different parts of the brain. These limitations can show up in many ways - as specific difficulties with spoken and written language, coordination, self-control, or attention. Such difficulties extend to schoolwork and can impede learning to read or write, or to do math. Learning disabilities can be lifelong conditions that, in some cases, affect many parts of a person's life: school or work, daily routines, family life, and sometimes even friendships and play. In some people, many overlapping learning disabilities may be apparent. Other people may have a single, isolated learning problem that has little impact on other areas of their lives.

National Joint Commission on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) - 1994 revision

Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities, but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example, sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance) disability. or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction).

Bridges to Practice: A Research-Based Guide for Literacy Practitioners Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities - 1995

Learning disabilities are a neurological problem often genetic that affect the way that persons process visual, auditory, or other sensory information.

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC) - 2002

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 under-achievement 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 brain functioning in a manner which affects one or more processes related to learning. These disorders are not due primarily to hearing and/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, behavioural 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 workplace settings. The interventions need to be appropriate for each individual's learning disability subtype and, at a minimum, include the provision of: specific skill instruction; accommodations; compensatory strategies; and self-advocacy skills.

National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center (NALLD)

Learning disabilities is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities, or of social skills. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. Even though a learning disability may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g., sensory impairment, mental retardation, social and emotional disturbance), with socio-environmental influences (e.g., cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction, psychogenic factors), and especially attention deficit disorder, all of which may cause learning problems, a learning disability is not the direct result of those conditions or influences. (Note: This definition was selected because it reflected current information and issues associated with LD, allowed for the presence of LD at any age, and was accepted by a committee with broad representation in the learning disabilities community.)

GED Testing Service

A learning disability is a permanent-information processing deficit (disorder) that affects the manner in which individuals with average to above average intelligence learn. Deficits in areas such as reading, mathematics, and written language are presumed to be due to a central nervous system dysfunction. Learning disabilities occur regardless of gender, race, or ethnic origin and they are not the result of a poor academic background, mental retardation, or emotional disorders. (Note: *How to Request Accommodations When Taking the GED High School Equivalency Tests if You Have a Learning Disability*. Washington,DC: GED Testing Service of the American Council of Education.)

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, Canada (LDAOC)

Learning disabilities refers to a variety of disorders that affect the acquisition, retention, understanding, organization, or use of verbal and/or non-verbal information. These disorders result from impairments in one or more psychological processes related to learning, in combination with otherwise average abilities essential for thinking and reasoning. Learning disabilities are specific not global impairments and as such are distinct from intellectual disabilities.

State of Oregon Department of Education

Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations. Specific learning disability includes conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, dyslexia, minimal brain dysfunction and developmental aphasia. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

Dr. Roy McConkey, University of Ulster

Learning disability and learning difficulties are used in the United States and sometimes elsewhere to denote educational problems of a specific nature, such as dyslexia. In Great Britain, the Department of Health adopted learning disability as the preferred alternative to mental handicap. However it has been argued that intellectual disability is a more accurate term. This term is used by the World Health Organization (WHO) as well as in Australia.