



Learning Disabilities Association of Utah

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President's Message

By Deanne Shields, LDAU President

Did you know that there are 27,617 students in Utah who have an identified learning disability? These students have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and receive a majority of their instruction in general education classrooms. This number doesn't include students with learning disabilities who are served under section 504 or those who are struggling because no one knows they have a learning disability. That is a lot of children! I don't even have a number for adults in Utah with learning disabilities.

The Learning Disabilities Association of Utah has had a busy year. As the host city for the LDA National Conference, we were responsible for obtaining and coordinating many, many volunteers to make sure the conference ran smoothly. We also gave out 27 scholarships to the conference with the generous help of the Utah State Office of Education.

At the conference we got to know many parents, teachers, and individuals who work with these 27,000-plus children and adults with LD in Utah. I was impressed with the number of teachers and parents who wanted to make changes, who wanted to help these children become successful. I talked with many of you at the conference, and you told me of your struggles.

Many people told me they didn't even know LDAU existed before the conference. So who are we? The Learning Disabilities Association of Utah is a non-profit volunteer organization supporting people with learning disabilities, their families, and their teachers.

It is a unique organization made up of parents, teachers, adults with learning disabilities, and other professionals. We envision a world where all those with learning disabilities, their families, concerned professionals, and other advocates receive the love, support, training, and mentoring they deserve to thrive.

The support of our members makes it possible for us to provide training, conferences, and advocacy. The word is spreading, and our organization is growing. Imagine a world where the parents and teachers of more than 27,000 students worked together! That's our goal, and we are going to work hard this year for students, parents, teachers, and adults.

Thanks to our members and great volunteers, the conference ran smoothly and was a success! We are already planning next year's state conference for the end of February. We will have a lot of great presentations for parents, teachers, and adults. I hope everyone plans to attend and bring a friend!

If you didn't have an opportunity to fill out a survey at the conference, please take a couple of minutes to do so now. It's easy and will let us know how we can better serve you. Please access the survey by clicking on the following link:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=Yaz_2bpGqLpf0R8W5hYqiSXA_3d_3d

Thanks for all you do!

Thank You



LDAU board member Gaylia Tanner spent countless hours organizing the many volunteers needed for the recent national LDA conference held in Salt Lake City.

We owe her many thanks for this service and for her many years of work on behalf of LDAU and LDA national. We appreciate you!

Bookshare: Help for Print Disabilities

We want to educate our members about Bookshare. Bookshare provides accessible books and periodicals for readers with print disabilities. Bookshare is free for all U.S. students with qualifying disabilities and also offers affordable memberships for readers of all ages.

To find out more, go to <http://www.bookshare.org>. If you decide to become a member of Bookshare, please put LDAUT in the PROMO CODE prompt when signing up. By doing this, LDAU will become eligible to receive a Classmate reader from HumanWare.

Response to Intervention (RTI)

By Janet Gibbs, USOE/Education Specialist/Special Education

As a parent you may have heard the term response to intervention or RTI while in your child's school or at an IEP meeting or mentioned in the education literature.

But what is it? The following is a brief article explaining some of the basic principles of the process called response to intervention (RTI).

This short article does not go into the detail that you can obtain from several resources, but it will be a good start to help with the basic understanding.

WHAT IS RTI?

RTI is a process of instruction that allows schools to identify struggling students early (as early as kindergarten) and provide appropriate instruction and instructional interventions. It is usually a "tier" process, generally with 3 tiers.

WHY SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT THIS?

Being an informed parent will increase your opportunities as a partner in your child's school to provide quality instruction and interventions, as needed. The school should be informing you of your child's academic progress and understanding RTI will enable this to be done in a systematic way.

ARE THERE SPECIFIC CRITERIA FOR AN RTI PROCESS?

Generally instruction is delivered in tiers or levels. The tiers are identified by the intensity of intervention a student may need based on data collected by the general education classroom

WHAT RTI IS NOT:

- Special seating in classroom
- Shortened assignments
- Parent-teacher conference
- Suspension
- Retention

teacher. Tiers 1 and 2 are under the direction of the general education classroom teacher with support from specialists. As a general rule the top tier, or tier 3, instructional intervention is delivered by specialists outside of the classroom.

Data is the basis for making any instructional decision, whether it is basic instruction or intervention. There are other criteria or components, but they will be addressed in future articles.

In the next newsletter, I will list additional criteria or components of an RTI process and some questions that a parent may wish to ask of their child's school in regards to response to intervention.

I have listed below two websites that a parent may wish to access for additional information.

www.wrightslaw.com

www.interventioncentral.org

Legislative Notes: Impacts on State Disabilities Agency

By Trisha Beck, A Mom and a State Legislator

The Division of Services for People with Disabilities is preparing for massive changes due to nearly \$1 million in budget cuts made during the 2009 legislative session.

Alan Ormsby, division director, said after careful deliberation by division members, three main goals were identified as most important.

They are to:

- Protect services for disabled Utahns
- Avoid layoffs as much as possible
- Prepare for possible future cuts

I attended the standing-room-only meeting held by the Division of Services for People with Disabilities following the legislative session. As I listened to the parents, advocates, providers and three legislators address their concerns regarding these massive cuts, I too felt emotional.

Not only am I a mom of a son with a disability, but I'm a legislator as well. In fact, it was because of the birth of my son 26 years ago that I became involved in the legislative process.

I found it extremely difficult this past legislative session to enact cuts to programs and eliminate boards that I

feel are critical to the well being of the most vulnerable members of our society.

I would implore us as a community to unify, to contact our legislators and to let them know how our families will be impacted by these severe cuts. However, I urge you to please be nice—many of us are trying to do our very best.



Rep. Trisha Beck (D) (Sandy) is not only an elected Utah Representative, but is a parent of children with disabilities including a son with learning disabilities. Rep. Beck has spent the last four years serving as the legislative representative for the LDAU Board. Rep. Beck has legislative assignments on the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee; House Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Committee; House Health and Human Services Committee. Take a moment to get to know Rep. Beck and send her a thank you note for her hard work in behalf of all individuals with learning disabilities during this past legislative session. Her e-mail address is tbeck@utah.gov.

Transition Planning: From High School to a Post-Secondary Institution

By **Steven Lewis, M.S.**
SLCC Learning Specialist

Thinking about attending college or post-secondary training for most high school students with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) seems to be a distant and rather daunting task.

High School students should begin the transition process early in order to avoid many possible pitfalls. Students with SLD have many opportunities to be successful in college or in any post-secondary training environment. Preparing for proper transitioning is essential.

Let me first address the terminology issue. Public Education under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (I.D.E.A.) classifies students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). Under the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (A.D.A.), we speak more frequently about the limitations than the disabling condition.

When labeling the student's disability, post-secondary institutions use the terms Learning Disorders or Learning Disability as spelled out in the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV). For this paper I will use the term LD as the label even though they are not exactly the same thing per se'.

First, laws affecting eligibility differ greatly from public education to the post-secondary setting. High school students with LD should be tested as close

to graduation as possible in order to have as "fresh" an evaluation as possible.

Many school psychologists who perform LD testing can give the student a DSM-IV diagnosis. This is a critical component to qualify for services from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at the college level.

More recent testing will also aid the post-secondary personnel in identifying "current limitations." This is the starting point for a college to identify services for which a student qualifies.

Colleges provide individualized accommodations based on the limitations caused by a disability, not the disability itself. Therefore, a DSM-IV diagnosis and current limitations are essential to qualifying for services in a post-secondary setting.

A student must meet the minimal requirements of each class in order to be successful. This is an important consideration when choosing a major, and this choice should be made

with a student's strengths and desires in mind.

Finally, a student with LD should be able to discuss his/her disability and the limitations it imparts on their ability to learn or complete the class without accommodation(s). Students should be able to clearly articulate how the accommodations provided address their limitations as well as be able to demonstrate proficiency in the subject area despite the accommodation.

Although the qualification process can be a somewhat of a nightmare, once you are registered with the DRC, the services available to students with LD will greatly improve the probability of success. The DRC advisor will then as-

It is also important to realize that post-secondary institutions cannot "water down" or alter the course requirements because someone has LD.

sist the student in obtaining appropriate academic accommodations as well as assist the student in conveying these requests to the instructors.

Salt Lake Community College (SLCC) works with more than 300 students with LD each year. In addition to providing ADA accommodations, the college offers a Learning Enrichment program. This program assists students in becoming the best learners they can be by learning academic success skills and strategies.

SLCC also offers a wide variety of adaptive equipment, software, and other electronic products that can assist students with LD in their areas of limitation.



To begin the transition process to SLCC early, you may contact the department at (801) 957-4659 to make an appointment.

Job Success Tips:

By Leah Lobato, Employer Relations Specialist, USOR
From 2009 LDA Presentation

- A positive attitude is one of the most important factors in achieving success.
- Always be on time.
- Good attendance and promptness is always important.
- Know and follow all office rules, policies, and procedures.
- Listen and learn.
- Learn all you can about the job you were hired to do before thinking about moving up.

<http://www.usor.utah.gov>



- ◆ **Be a little bit early each day; but never leave early.**
- ◆ **Skill is only half of your job; getting along well with others is the other.**
- ◆ **Do not express political, religious, or other controversial opinions at work.**

Accommodations

By Wendy Carver

We have an accommodations policy in Utah for English language learners, students with disabilities, and students on Section 504 plans. It is called Utah's Assessment Participation and Accommodations Policy. It is updated every year in July. This policy covers the assessments that are required in Utah and accommodations that can be used for instruction and assessment. You can find it at:

http://www.schools.utah.gov/assessment/documents/Special_Needs_Accommodations_Policy.pdf.

We know that all students must be assessed. Students with disabilities can be assessed on the regular assessment without accommodations, on the regular assessment with accommodations, or on Utah's Alternate Assessment (UAA). Equal access to grade level content is the goal. Classroom instruction should be based on the grade level content standards and classroom assessments should be based on the instruction and therefore, on the grade level content standards. The statewide assessments are definitely based on grade level content standards.

What are accommodations?

Accommodations are practices and procedures in the areas of presentation, response, setting, and timing/scheduling that provide equitable instructional and assessment access.

Some accommodations are appropriate for instruction but not for assessments.

Some examples of accommodations are use of a calculator on a non-calculator section of an assessment or reading aloud the math or science assessment questions.

What are modifications?

Modifications are changing, lowering, or reducing learning or assessment expectations which may result in implications that could adversely affect a student throughout that individual's educational career. Examples include reading aloud something that should not be read aloud on a language arts assessment. Modified tests will NOT be counted toward proficiency or PARTICIPATION in AYP.

**Accommodations
reduce or eliminate
the effects of a
student's disability
and
do not reduce
learning
expectations.**

Use of Utah's Assessment Participation and Accommodations Policy will help determine which accommodations may or may not be used on each assessment for students with disabilities, English language learners, or students on Section 504 plans.

Generally speaking, people with learning disabilities are of average or above average intelligence. There often appears to be a gap between the individual's potential and actual achievement. This is why learning disabilities are referred to as "hidden disabilities:" the person looks perfectly "normal" and seems to be a very bright and intelligent person, yet may be unable to demonstrate the skill level expected from someone of a similar age.



Check out LDAU's Website

<http://www.ldau.org>

Calendar Dates

- May 12** LDAU Board meeting,
Library, 10673 S. Redwood Rd.,
South Jordan
- June 9** LDAU Board meeting
- June 30** Provo group
Provo City Library,
550 N. University Ave., Provo

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