LEARNING DIFFERENCES: WHAT’S IT ALL ABOUT?

Faculty Teaching & Learning Conference

6 May 2011
Today’s Conversation

- What do learning differences look like in our students?  *Judy*

- What might you observe in the classroom?  *Elisabeth*

- How do we accommodate students with disabilities?  *Lavonne*

- Situations and Solutions.  *Open Discussion*

- Closing Comments.  *Judy*
STUDENT PROFILES
&
LEARNING CHALLENGES
Academic Focus

- 600+ students enrolled in PLuS and OSD
- any full-time or part-time student @ DePaul
- undergraduate & graduate status
- all colleges & schools @ DePaul
2010-2011 Student Profiles

- AD/HD: 43%
- LD: 39%
- Asperger: 9%
- NVLD: 7%
- GAD: 2%
Learning Differences: An Overview

Learning Disabilities
• may include several disorders in which a student has difficulty learning in a typical manner

• affects the brain’s ability to receive and process information

• problematic for a student to learn as quickly or in the same way as a student who is not affected by a learning disability

• have trouble performing specific types of skills or completing tasks if left to figure things out by themselves or if taught in conventional ways.

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)
• symptoms typically identified before age seven

• attentional problems with/without hyperactivity

• executive function disorders

• chronic disorder with 30-50% diagnosed in childhood continuing with symptoms into adulthood
Comorbid Disorders (associated with AD/HD but usually diagnosed separately)

• obsessive compulsive disorder (anxiety disorder producing uneasiness, apprehension, fear, or worry, by repetitive behaviors aimed at reducing anxiety)

• oppositional defiant disorder (disobedient, hostile and defiant behavior, especially toward authority figures)

• bipolar disorder (elevated mood disorders, manic/depressive)

• anxiety disorders (abnormal/heightened fear and anxiety)

Asperger Syndrome

• high functioning autism

• significant difficulties in social interaction

• restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior

• intense interests
Non-verbal Learning Disability
• involves deficits in perception, coordination, socialization, non-verbal problem solving and understanding of humor

• Well developed rote learning

• Ongoing debate surrounding the relationship between Asperger syndrome and NVLD
Learning Process

Attention
- focus attention on incoming information

Perception
- sort and clarify incoming information

Short-term Memory
- temporarily store information

Comprehension
- interpret or attach meaning

Metacognition
- observe and reflect on our own learning and devise strategies to learn more effectively and efficiently.

Long-term Memory
- store *patterns* of information that are related and connected to other information

Retrieval
- find the information we have already stored and know what to use.

Formulation
- take an idea and translate so it can be clearly communicated.

Motor Planning
- we must use some part of our body to communicate the information. brain programs how to move to speak, draw, write etc.
Learning Profile

INTELLIGENCE
- verbal performance

THINKING SKILL
- verbal
- non-verbal

AUDITORY RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE
- vocabulary
- discrimination
- grammar
- connected language

AUDITORY EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE
- vocabulary
- grammar
- connected language

MEMORY
- auditory
- visual
- combined a-v
- word retrieval

OTHER PROCESSING SKILLS
- auditory
- visual

READING
- single words
- oral context
- phonic word attack
- comprehension

WRITTEN LANGUAGE
- visual motor integration
- spelling
- written expression

MATH
- calculations
- applications
- concepts

From College Students with Learning Disabilities: A Student's Perspective by Carol Wren and Laura Segal.
WHAT YOU MIGHT OBSERVE IN THE CLASSROOM
Comprehension

• Not able to listen and take notes
• Not able to get concepts down fast enough
• Missing instructions when given only verbally/written
• Difficulty making connections
Difficulties in Reading

- Falls behind in or avoids the reading
- Lack of fluency
- Avoids reading aloud
Difficulties in Writing

- Abundant mechanical and spelling errors
- Homophone confusions
- Disorganized structure
- Overly simplistic vocabulary
- Late or incomplete work
- When testing at PLuS, essays typed
Difficulties in Math

- Difficulties with directionality
- Lack of fluency in calculation
- Problems sequencing, maintaining or reproducing a pattern
Social Skills

- Lack of awareness of length of “turn”
- Interruptions
- Off-topic comments
- Not understanding social boundaries
- Clumsiness
Executive Function Difficulties

- Late for class
- Doesn’t have papers needed
- Notes a mess
- Omits details requested in paper
- Misses appointments
- Does not respond to email on time
Behavioral Difficulties

- Monopolizes class discussions
- Argumentative/Inflexible
- Fixates on a discussion point
- Too absorbed in detail
- Appears as if not listening
- Sleepiness
Communication Difficulties

- Doesn’t read social cues
  - Social distances
  - Facial expressions
  - Discomfort
- Overly long explanations or short to the point of rudeness
- Lack of communication
- Timing off
- “Rude”
ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Accommodations

• Level the playing field
• No modifications to curriculum

• Assigned using:
  • Psycho-educational Evaluation/ADHD Verification Form
  • Case History
  • Intake interview
## Examples of Accommodations & Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodations</th>
<th>Services</th>
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<td>Extra time on exams in a quiet, distraction-free</td>
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<td>environment</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
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<td>Reader and/or scribe for exams</td>
<td>Clinician Services</td>
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<td>Using a computer for exams</td>
<td>Assistive Technology</td>
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<td>Textbooks in alternative format</td>
<td>Course selection advising</td>
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<td>Notetaking assistance</td>
<td>Assistance locating tutors</td>
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<td>No scantron</td>
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<td>Laptop for classroom notes</td>
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<td>Recording class lectures</td>
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<td>Priority Registration</td>
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Accommodation Letter Example

Productive Learning Strategies
DePaul University

Participation in the PLuS Program – Winter 2010-2011

PLuS Student #1234567

is participating in the Productive Learning Strategies (PLuS) Program while studying at DePaul. PLuS is DePaul University’s support program for students with Learning Disabilities and/or Attention Deficit Disorders.

In order to help this student get the maximum out of your course and demonstrate knowledge acquired, certain accommodations are necessary. The following recommendations are based on the information PLuS has on file for the student, and/or federal and state law requirements. Depending on the nature of your course the student may choose to use all, some or none of the following checked accommodations:

- ☑ Extended time on exams
- ☑ Assistive listening devices
- ☐ 1 1/2 time
- ☐ 2 times
- ☐ 3 times
- ☐ Exams taken in a separate room
- ☑ Exams taken on computer
- ☐ Exams read orally
- ☐ Exams transcribed
- ☐ Course materials handed earlier to be enlarged
- ☐ Course materials handed earlier to be put on tape/CD/mp3
- ☐ Assistance locating tutors
- ☐ Assistance locating note-taker
- ☑ Tape recorder in class
- ☐ Course assignments in written format
- ☐ Assignments’ instructions in written format
- ☑ Priority Registration
- ☐ Advocacy
- ☐ Other:

PLuS will make any necessary arrangements for these accommodations, including proctoring exams. For more information on exam proctoring visit www.studentaffairs.depaul.edu/plus/documents_forms.html and click on ‘Forms’ and then ‘Exam Proctoring Procedures’.

Please note that this information has been disclosed with the student’s consent and is therefore confidential. You may not share the contents of this letter or any other information regarding the student’s disability with anyone unless you obtain a signed release of information permission from the student. If you have any questions please contact me at x59565 or jkolar@depaul.edu.

Thank you for your help with this student.

Judith R. Kolar
PLuS Program Director

Academic Year 2010-2011
Test-taking at PLuS/OSD
**Exam Proctoring Information**

**Students:** Please complete the top part of this form and e-mail to your course professor for completion. He/she will return this to us with the exam. This should be done at least one week in advance of your exam.

**Professors:** Please complete Sections II and III and e-mail or fax this to the PLuS Program together with exam. We would appreciate receiving the exams 48 hours in advance for processing. Send exam to Elena Hernandez, SC #370, fax 773.325.3720; e-mail: ehemand@depaul.edu. E-mail preferred.

**I. Students:** Complete all information in this section. Contact info about professor is in your syllabus.

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**II. Professors:** Please indicate proctoring instructions, e.g., notes, no notes, open/closed book, etc.

-Can we contact you if a student has a question during test-taking? E-mail##? CellPhone##? 

-Is untimed testing acceptable to you for this exam? Yes__ No___

-If no, to the previous question, PLuS will calculate extended time limits. Please indicate how much time is allotted for the other students in your class to take this exam. __________ minutes

**III. Professors:** Please indicate your preferences below for the delivery and return of the exam.

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ISSUES & SOLUTIONS

... sharing situations and discussing strategies...
Thank You for all your support of our students!

Judith Kolar, Director  -  jkolar@depaul.edu

Elisabeth Sullivan, Assistant Director  -  esulli15@depaul.edu

Lavonne Kopca, LD Specialist  -  lkopca@depaul.edu