

# **A SOURCE BOOK ABOUT LIGHTHOUSE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AND LEARNING DISABILITIES**

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# **LIGHTHOUSE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES**

## **An Information Overview**

One of the major goals of parents is to oversee the development of the whole child. We feel a responsibility to enable every child to realize his or her full potential.. This program serves students who have difficulty learning in the traditional classroom environment to help them become independent learners & thinkers, to eventually function more efficiently and effectively.

### **Lighthouse Educational Services Program**

Lighthouse Educational Services is a program for students with learning disabilities. By definition, a student with learning disabilities has adequate motor ability, hearing and vision within normal limits, and has average to above average intelligence, but is having difficulty learning in the regular classroom. The learning problems he/she experiences arise when information from the senses is not accurately received by the brain. These children are often improperly labeled as slow learners, immature or lazy. Some symptoms commonly observed are:

- |                                       |                                     |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ( ) Inconsistent academic achievement | ( ) Difficulty in abstract thinking |
| ( ) Short attention span              | ( ) Confusion with left and right   |
| ( ) Poor listening skills             | ( ) Hyperactivity                   |
| ( ) Reversals of letters or numbers   | ( ) Difficulty following directions |
| ( ) Cramped or illegible writing      | ( ) Disorganization                 |

Lighthouse Educational Services works to strengthen deficit areas of perception and cognition so that these students can reach their academic potential.

### **Structure of Lighthouse Educational Services**

Students may receive 60-90 minutes of individual educational therapy once or twice a week depending on the mildness or severity of need to strengthen his/her deficit areas. The number of years a student is enrolled in the program varies according to the severity of the deficit and the progress made in educational therapy. The parents of each student may be involved through monthly observation of educational therapy.

They also supervise additional homework assignments and Rhythmic Writing exercises at home.

### **Admission to Lighthouse Educational Services**

Lighthouse Educational Services is open to students in pre-school through grade twelve as well as college students and adults. A teacher or parent can recommend a child for testing and evaluation. An educational testing battery, which assesses academic skills and performance, is administered by an educational therapist. The school psychologist administers a cognitive assessment and any social/emotional/behavioral screenings. The results of these tests are discussed at a conference with the parents and classroom teachers. If the tests indicate a need for educational therapy and parents desire this intervention, we move forward with further academic achievement testing and informal assessments to fully capture the child's current functioning levels. An effort is made to best match your child's needs with a capable educational therapist who can address those needs.

### **What is Educational Therapy?**

Lighthouse Educational Services uses a program based on the techniques developed by the National Institute for Learning Development ([www.nild.org](http://www.nild.org)), which focuses on strengthening areas of weakness in perception and on developing thinking processes. Intensive, individualized one-on-one educational therapy is given in two ninety minute sessions per week. Techniques are used which are especially designed to improve performance by integrating perception and cognition in the context of linguistic interaction. Parents are involved in the process at home daily or at least four times a week and are invited to observe educational therapy sessions on a monthly basis. The duration of a student's enrollment in the program will vary with the severity of the deficit or progress made in educational therapy. The average length of involvement is three to five years. Again, this will vary from student to student, depending on how much other intervention or remediation he/she has already had before beginning educational therapy.

## **Characteristics of Learning Disabilities**

The U.S. government definition of learning disabilities: “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 problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicap, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage. This definition and criteria were published in the Federal Register in 1977. In addition, there are 50 different state level definitions which are variations on the same theme. Most definitions indicate that there must be a significant discrepancy between the actual level of functioning of the child and the level of functioning that might be expected considering intellectual potential, sensory capability, and educational experiences.

### **Characteristics of Learning Disabilities**

1. Hyperactivity and/or Short attention span
2. Difficulty with symbols or sound/symbol association
3. Difficulty in abstract thinking
4. Poor auditory discrimination
5. Poor recall - inability to retain
6. Poor fine muscle control
7. Inability to generalize
8. Uneven levels in academic achievement
9. Difficulty with math skills
10. Difficulty learning to read
11. Reversals of letters, words or other symbols
12. Difficulty writing on a straight line
13. Cramped or illegible handwriting
14. Persistent spelling errors
15. Difficulty in directionality and laterality
16. Continued uncertainty of left/right handedness
17. Average to above average ability with limiting deficits
18. Difficulty finding the right word when speaking
19. Lack of organizational skills
20. Excessive yawning and sleepiness in class

Of course, any child will demonstrate some of these symptoms some of the time. The key is frequency, intensity, and duration. Evaluate any child's behaviors with the FID (frequency, intensity, and duration) criteria in mind.

### **How Does a Child get into Lighthouse Educational Services?**

#### **REFERRAL PROCESS**

1. Teacher or parent identifies some learning difficulties.
2. Teacher fills out referral form, passes information on to the parents, who inform Lighthouse Educational Services.
3. Parents fill out "Application for Testing" for Lighthouse Educational Services.
4. Parents arrange for scheduling educational and psychological testing.
5. Testing may be done at my office, at school and/or at other approved clinic.
6. Conference with parents, teachers, educational therapist and possibly psychologist to go over test results.
7. If the student is NOT recommended for therapy: Strategies are given to the classroom teacher.
8. If the student IS recommended for therapy but the parents decide NOT to enroll: Strategies are given to the classroom teacher, but no modifications or accommodations are made. Parents are responsible to set up tutoring or meet the student's needs themselves.
9. If the student IS recommended for therapy and parents decide TO enroll the student, the student's name is placed on waiting list and strategies are given to the classroom teacher. Accommodations and modifications can/may be made by the school.

## **Educational Therapy from the Student's Perspective**

The following are some thoughts about what therapy is like from a student's perspective:

First, for the student who is involved in educational therapy, this process involves a certain amount of intellectual stress. Our approach to the remediation of learning disabilities involves intense stimulation of the deficit areas. This challenge creates an intellectual tension in the student.

Secondly, in order to help L.D. students in the most effective way, each one is dealt with individually. This means the student may have to miss classes while he is in educational therapy, unless he/she has educational therapy after school. For some students this can become frustrating. To make this easier, many teachers try to be aware of when students will be out and try not to schedule major test review sessions or special events during that time. It helps to write it into the planbook. As much as possible, a student should not be asked to make up what he has missed, unless it is foundational to future material.

Another aspect of educational therapy from a student's perspective is homework. Students who are in educational therapy are given homework by their educational therapists. They are involved in memorizing from The Blue Book (phonics & spelling) as well as doing other work designed to reinforce concepts taught in the sessions. They are required to do Rhythmic Writing at home 10 -15 minutes each time, 4 times a week. This work is an integral part of educational therapy but it does put an extra burden on the student. Many times classroom teachers can be a great help by reducing homework assignments for L.D. students. This is quite "fair" since these students have extra homework otherwise.

Finally it is important to remember that a child who is in educational therapy will begin to see personal progress toward overcoming his learning difficulties. Yes, he/she is different from his/her classmates, but he/she knows that he/she is working at succeeding. Often these students have experienced more failures than most of us could handle, and each success is an important step toward increasing self-esteem. The more his/her parents and teachers can understand what he/she is going through, the easier it will be for him/her to keep trying.

## **The Challenges of Parenting An L.D. Child**

Imagine what it would be like to be the parent of an L.D. child. You receive a phone call every autumn from “Johnny’s” teacher complaining about his work. You listen to friends brag about their child’s academic successes. You deal with the child’s poor memory and lack of organizational skills 365 days a year.

Parents of L.D. students may experience any or all of the following feelings:

- emotional drain
- guilt
- shame
- humiliation
- grief
- chronic sorrow
- self pity
- inadequacy
- worry and/or fear (especially about the future)
- anger
- frustration
- social isolation
- disappointment
- resistance to help

All of us can deal sensitively with the needs of each other. Take time to listen to each other, accept them, and be sensitive to the feelings behind any words they share with you.

Parents often appreciate teachers alerting the child’s next teacher to the child’s needs and what works well with him/her so that they don’t need to “start over” every year.

## **The Role of the Classroom Teacher**

### **Key Ideas To Keep In Mind When Working With Students who have Learning Disabilities:**

1. Never assume that they understand or remember previously learned material.
2. Realize that in order to learn they need to over-learn.
3. Be aware that personal attention is essential to discover and solve learning problems they may be having in your class. (Students with Learning Disabilities are labor intensive students.)

### **Specific Practical Methods That Will Benefit the L.D. Student In Your Class:**

\*It is important to remember that most strategies you use to help L.D. students will be beneficial to ALL of your students. Not all of these modifications would be appropriate to use with every LD student, but should be selected and applied on an individually needed basis. The following list of suggestions is by no means complete but will provide ideas from which the parents, teachers, and coordinators can select what is appropriate for that student.

1. Lighten the load - give 10 spelling words instead of 20, cut down on the number of math problems, shorten or simplify memory passages.
2. Modify the method of response - try oral tests, responding on tape, oral book reports.
3. Try alternative methods of input - have someone read the text onto a tape, highlight an old textbook that the child can take home, highlight study sheets by picking out the most important concepts and test only those.
4. Give additional time to do assignments.
5. Break work down into pieces, tear math worksheets in half, only give one seatwork assignment at a time.
6. Teach to all modalities - visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile. Evaluate lesson plans to see if they include all modalities.
7. Give simple directions and have the child explain them back to you so you can see if he really understands. (A nodding head does not necessarily mean an understanding mind!)
8. Figure out where you naturally focus your attention most often in the classroom and seat L.D. students in that area. Maintain eye contact with L.D. students.
9. Be organized and plan ahead with L.D. students specifically in mind. You may need to do special things in your teaching to make the work easier to learn.



10. Provide a structured classroom with clear goals - the child should have no question about what is expected of him/her. He/She should learn order and organization by example.
11. Prepare L.D. students for changes well in advance.
12. Provide students with a glossary of terms that they are expected to know - they have a hard time picking out what is important on their own.
13. Ask another student who is good at taking notes to be a scribe (photocopy notes). L.D. students may still be required to take notes but will also have the others to count on.
14. Provide blank outlines for lectures to older students. This way they'll know exactly where you are headed and what is important.
15. Provide a quiet, sheltered place to work if a child is easily distracted. (Be sure that it is not viewed as a punishment).
16. Allow students to use concrete learning aids as long as they need them.
17. Make sure tests and worksheets are clear and legible; especially on Math tests- allow student to write answers on same test sheet, not copy from the book or board.
18. Use graph paper in math to help structure and organize work and align numbers properly.
19. Check on students regularly to make sure they are grasping the material. Do this, especially before a quiz or test.
20. Don't grade on spelling when spelling is not the focus.
21. Teach students to mark "SP" by words when they're not sure of the correct spelling.
22. Teach children organizational skills just as you would teach any other subject. Important organizational skills are:
  - a. Keeping an assignment book
  - b. Breaking down and scheduling long assignments into weekly segments and putting into assignment notebook
  - c. Using a monthly calendar for long- range planning
  - d. Organizing a notebook
  - e. Outlining
  - f. Note taking
  - g. Making good use of free time - even if it is only a few minutesAgain, don't assume that children will do this naturally or will learn on their own. L.D. children, especially, need to be taught these skills.
23. Grading:
  - a. Clearly explain your grading system. i.e. exactly how much weight will be placed on tests, quizzes, reports, classwork, participation, etc.
  - b. Consider giving special study sheets and special test to L.D. students. Circle the questions that are the most vital to the topic and have the child answer only those.

- c. Observe daily and write down what you observe.
  - d. Grade the child where he is working, ie: "These grades reflect Sam's individual educational potential."
  - e. Base grades on many different types of assignments so that the student will have an opportunity to demonstrate what he knows in an area of strength.
  - f. Allow students to retake tests on which they received a D or F, and average the grades or take the highest grade.
  - g. Remember they need to overlearn. They may need to take the test in an isolater or quiet setting. Parent aides may be of help here. You might also consider retaking incorrect questions orally, which might be even more helpful.
  - h. Try to avoid "pop" quizzes. L.D. students usually cannot show their real knowledge under these circumstances.
  - i. Try not to give a multiple penalty for one area of weakness. i.e. child is confused in directionality and gets four questions about map wrong because of this deficit. Adjust the grade so that it will not be unbalanced.
24. Try to alleviate the guilt a child may have developed about his difficulty with learning. Let him know that you will try to find ways to teach him that will make learning easier. You might say, "I'll have to work at teaching that differently."
25. A word about what is "fair"; Keep in mind that it is fair to adjust classroom procedures for L.D. students. What is not fair is asking all students to perform exactly the same. This means much more work for L.D. students.

### **SPECIFIC CONCERNS IN SPECIAL SUBJECTS:**

- Phys. Ed.     - L.D. students may need rules explained one-on-one  
                   - Balance, coordination, directionality and muscle tone may be weak areas.  
                   - L.D. students are often much more sensitive to criticism than their peers.
- Music           - Rhythm and pitch can be affected by a learning disability.  
                   - Visual perception difficulties can making reading notes close to impossible (ex. Recorder Fingering).
- Art             - Lack of organizational skills may show up clearly in art class.  
                   - If art is a strength, it should be encouraged and praised.  
                   - If art is a weakness, it should be downplayed.

Foreign Languages and Bible or Religion classes are often the first choices for a secondary student to replace with a study hall, or these classes may need more modifications when a student is only attending it part-time. Due to the nature of the

language deficits in most LD students, LD students may be exempt from Spanish with the approval of the parents and the principal, or may consider taking American Sign Language or Latin for their Foreign Language credits.

In all of these areas, teachers might consider grading students with an “S” for Satisfactory rather than a letter grade, or a Pass/Fail grade, especially if the students have missed class fairly often to come to educational therapy. These modifications should be approved as part of the student’s Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan.

## **Glossary of Terms**

AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION - Ability to distinguish auditorily between slight differences in sounds.

AUDITORY MEMORY - Ability to recall spoken words, digits and so forth in a meaningful manner; includes memory of meaning.

AUDITORY PERCEPTION - Ability to receive sounds accurately and to understand what they mean.

AUDITORY SEQUENCING - Ability to recall information in the sequence in which it was spoken.

AUDITORY CLOSURE - Combining (blending) of sounds and sound sequences into larger units the synthesis of component sounds into syllables or words.

COGNITION - The mental process of recognizing, identifying, and associating ideas that permits a person to infer information, understand concepts, and apply concepts to new learning.

DIRECTIONALITY - The perception of positions of objects in space in relation to oneself and other objects.

DISTRACTIBILITY - Tendency to be easily drawn away from any task at hand and to focus on extraneous stimuli of the moment.

DYSCALCULIA- A severe difficulty in understanding and using the symbols or functions needed for success in mathematics.

DYSGRAPHIA- A severe difficulty in producing handwriting that is legible and written at an age-appropriate speed.

DYSLEXIA - Reading and language difficulty stemming from neurological differences, especially affecting decoding (reading) and encoding (spelling) skills.

DYSNOMIA- A marked difficulty in remembering names or recalling words 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.

**EYE-HAND COORDINATION** - Ability of the eye and hand to perform effectively together.

**FIGURE-GROUND** - Discrimination of an object or sound from its background. The ability to focus upon selected figures or sounds and to screen out irrelevant stimuli in the background; Examples: “busy” worksheets or extraneous playground noise.

**HYPERACTIVITY** - Above normal level of activity, particularly for an individual of a given age in a given setting. Often denotes disruptive activity.

**HYPOACTIVITY** - A condition characterized by lethargy and lack of activity. Opposite of hyperactivity.

**LATERALITY** - The orientation of one’s own body in space, especially in sensing “left” and “right.”

**MEMORY** - Recollection of dominant features of one stimulus or recalling the sequence of several items. The ability to store and recall information presented either visually or auditorily.

**MIXED DOMINANCE** - Tendency for neither side (hemisphere) of the brain to be dominant possibly contributing to confusion and inconsistent performance.

**MIXED LATERALITY** - Tendency to perform some acts with a right-side preference and others with a left, or the shifting from right to left for certain activities.

**PERCEPTION** - The way the brain processes visual, auditory or other sensory input.

**REVERSAL** - A transposition of letters, numbers, sounds, symbols or concepts.

**VISUAL DISCRIMINATION** - Seeing likenesses and differences between different objects and accurately perceiving size, shape and orientation of different objects.

**VISUAL PERCEPTION** - The identification, organization, and interpretation of sensory data received by a person through the eyes.