Learning Disabilities and Mental Health

“Why can’t I just get it like everybody else?”
Specific Learning Disability

one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written, and affects a person's ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.
Diagnoses

- **Reading Disorder** – reading achievement that is substantially below expected
- **Mathematics Disorder** – mathematical ability is substantially below expected
- **Disorder of Written Expression** – writing skills substantially below expected
- **Learning Disorder Not Otherwise Specified** – may include problems in all 3 areas that interfere with academic achievement even though scores are not substantially below expected

Measured by individually administered **standardized** assessments
43.3% of students in the K-12 public school, Special Education system, receive services under “Specific Learning Disability”
Learning Disabilities May Also Include:

- Problems with visual, hearing, or motor disabilities
- Problems that result from cognitive disabilities or emotional disturbance
Mental Health

What if I have a learning disability?  
How am I supposed to tell my instructor?

What if other students think I’m dumb?  
Why can’t I understand the reading?

What if I can’t divide those numbers?  
Why can’t I produce a good essay?

How am I going to tell my friends about this?  
Why can’t I just get it like everyone else?

Possible mental health concerns due patterns of failing grades or of significant or regular under-achievement
Mental Health Considerations

“Some experts in the field state that students feel overwhelming pressure to be successful in college and that they must make the most of the investment or not let other people down.”

– John DeLorey of College Planning Services

“There are certain aspects of learning disabilities which increase the risk for an individual to experience mental health issues.

• Failure to identify a learning disability at an early age and to consequently delay the provision of intensive, individualized instruction results in school failure.
• A child who was well-adjusted as a five or six year old can acquire overlays of emotional disturbance after years of school failure.
• Anxiety and depression would be likely experiences for such a child from the age of nine or ten.”

– Learning Disabilities Association of America
Mental Health – Other Considerations

For students without a 2-parent household, students that attended multiple school settings, and students that attended urban schools, there is a higher likelihood that students with an LD have been suspended or expelled from school.


“Studies show that learning disabilities do not fall evenly across racial and ethnic groups. For instance, in 2001, 1% of white children and 2.6% of non-Hispanic black children were receiving LD-related special education services. The same studies suggest that this has to do with economic status and not ethnic background. Learning disabilities are not caused by economic disadvantage, but in low-income communities there is increased risk of exposure to harmful toxins (lead, tobacco, alcohol, etc.) at early stages of development.”

Mental Health – Final Considerations


Results indicate that socio-demographic characteristics are predictive of identification with a learning disability. [AKA]…Differences in socioeconomic status entirely account for African American and Hispanic disproportionality.”


*There is a bigger, underlying problem that schools cannot fix – individuals must be valued for their intrinsic worth as human beings.
Preventative Care for Students with LD: Self-Determination & Efficacy

• Don’t Ever Settle for Less than Intrinsic Value
  • Know Self
  • Know Rights (IDEIA, ADAAA)
• Know Teachers/Instructors
• Know the Intervention Specialist
• Value Self

• Plan Ahead
  • Act
• Do Research
• Learn from Experience
• Environment
• Counseling/Support Services
• Family Support
• Relational Support
Resources & Contact Information

- [www.nclld.org](http://www.nclld.org) National Consortium on Learning Disabilities
- [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org) Mental Health America
- [www.collegeplanningservices.org](http://www.collegeplanningservices.org) John DeLorey, BS
- [www.ldaa.org](http://www.ldaa.org) Learning Disabilities Association of America
- [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/ldprobs/ldprobs.pdf](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/ldprobs/ldprobs.pdf) Center for Mental Health in Schools


Adrienne H. Luke
Disability Services Advocate
aluke2@cscc.edu
614-287-2831