

Learning Disabilities – Working with Neurodiverse Learners

Alberta Routes

Tip Sheet 12

Neurodiversity

“Neurodiversity” is a word used to explain the unique ways people’s brains work. While everyone’s brain develops similarly, no two brains function just alike. Being neurodivergent means having a brain that works differently from the average or “neurotypical” person. This may be differences in social preferences, ways of learning, ways of communicating and/or ways of perceiving the environment. Because of this, a neurodivergent person has different struggles and unique strengths. People who are neurodivergent can benefit from education and programs that help them develop their strengths using them to their benefit to live happy, healthy lives.’¹

Learning Disabilities

A learning disability is actually not a disability at all. Individuals diagnosed with a learning disability are neurodiverse learners. They do not learn in the same way as a ‘neurotypical’ person and therefore will need to discover different strategies and accommodations to help them in an educational environment that for the ‘neurotypical’ learner.

¹ <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/symptoms/23154-neurodivergent>

Common Types of Learning Disabilities

Neurodiverse learners often feel frustrated due to their ability to excel in some areas while struggling in others. It helps to know a little bit about some of the common types of learning disabilities so that you can identify them and offer the appropriate support and accommodations.

NOTE: Many ESL literacy learners struggle with the same tasks identified below; therefore, it is important to determine if the learner displays the learning style in their first language or just as they are trying to learn a new one. See Alberta Routes Tip Sheet – “Working with ESL Literacy Learners.”

Dyslexia	Broad category of language diversity in the ability to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hear and manipulate sounds ○ Read and spell words accurately and fluently ○ Develop vocabulary quickly
Dysgraphia	Individuals who do not use the neurotypical ways of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Handwriting, spelling, and grammar ○ Writing thoughts on paper ○ Vocabulary retrieval ○ Clarity of thought ○ Memory
Dyscalculia	Refers to people who process the following uniquely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number sense and concepts ○ Mathematical calculations and reasonings²

² Information was retrieved from: National Institute for Learning Development Canada (NILDCanada) <https://nildcanada.org/learning-disabilities/>

Resources

- Learning Disability Association of Alberta <https://www.ldalberta.ca/>
- <file:///Users/hilary.mchale/Desktop/Templates/norquest.ca>

Alberta Routes Workshops

<https://albertaroutes.norquest.ca/events.aspx>

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Revision History

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