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## The Role of Teachers and Parents for Students with Learning and Behavior Disorders

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The Role of Teachers and Parents for Students with  
Learning and Behavior Disorders

By  
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## **Abstract**

Teacher collaboration is crucial to student success. The achievement of the student's goals and objectives is ultimately up to the student but relies on the teacher's ability to set up the correct educational plans. Teachers should be looking at students' progress and struggles individually so that those students who need to be accommodated for are not neglected. It is easy to overlook a learning disability when students react to their educational weaknesses with aggressive or inappropriate behaviors. Generally, in cases like these, a student would need to be assessed for learning and behavior disorders. By definition, a learning disorder is an information-processing problem that prevents a person from learning a skill and using it effectively. While behavior disorders involve a pattern of disruptive behaviors in children that last for at least six months and cause problems in school, at home, and in some social situations. When you get a combination of the two, you must plan accordingly. Things to consider while developing an educational plan are, identifying, assessing, accommodations, the least restrictive environment, and most importantly, the help of other teachers and faculty.

*Keywords: Assessments, accommodations, least restrictive environment*

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## **Introduction**

A healthy parent-teacher relationship is very important for students' educational and social life. For many students, the most important people in their lives are parents, caretakers, and teachers. When teachers and parents have good positive relationships and work together, students are more inclined to see improvements in things like social skills, academic achievements, and emotional well-being. If students have a good strong support system at school, and that doesn't transfer over to their home lives, it could become difficult to stay focused or motivated. That goes for behaviors as well, if a student is not being taught how to behave themselves, control their emotions, or not being held responsible for their actions, those behaviors become a part of their school life. The goal here is for parents and teachers to be on the same page when it comes to achieving student goals and continuing them throughout their life. When parents and teachers can work together as partners, everything runs smoothly throughout home and school life. The focus of this paper is to analyze the role of parents and teachers for students with learning and behavior disorders.

## **Learning Disorders**

According to IDA America, "learning disabilities are due to genetic and/or neurobiological factors that alter brain functioning in a manner which affects one or more cognitive processes related to learning" (Learning Disabilities Association of America, 2019, para 1). People who suffer from learning disorders usually struggle (more than what is considered average) with specific subjects like reading, writing, and math. Though, in many cases it can go as far as affecting daily living skills like time management, organization, and long and short-term memory.

Those who have learning disorders don't show any physical traits. They simply cannot comprehend or demonstrate things on an appropriate skill level. Instead of being a freshman in high school learning ninth grade level curriculum, students with learning disorders may be in a resource class learning seventh grade material.

There are many different types of learning disorders that fall under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). There are thirteen categories of disability under this law, the first category covers specific learning disabilities. This category covers a specific group of learning challenges that affect a student's ability to read, write, listen, speak, reason, or do math. According to understood.org, in the 2018-2019 school year, about 33% of students who qualified did so under this category. Some examples of what disabilities would fall under this category are Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, and Dyslexia. Dyscalculia affects a person's ability to understand numbers and learn math facts. Dysgraphia affects a person's handwriting ability and fine motor skills. Dyslexia affects reading and related language-based processing skills (*Types of Learning Disabilities* [ldaamerica.org/types-of-learning-disabilities](http://ldaamerica.org/types-of-learning-disabilities), 2013).

The second category under IDEA is "Other Health Impairments". This category focuses on conditions that limit a person's strength, energy, or alertness. The disabilities that fall under this category include asthma, ADD, ADHD, diabetes, epilepsy, etc. Category number three is all about Autism Spectrum Disorder. It is a developmental disability that involves a wide range of symptoms. It mainly affects a person's social and communication skills as well as behavior. Category number four is Emotional Disturbance. Mental health issues that could fall under this category are things like anxiety, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and depression. Category number five covers difficulties with speech and language. If a person has trouble speaking, in terms of stuttering, or pronunciation. It also covers language problems that make it hard for

people to understand words or express themselves. Categories six through nine cover visual and hearing impairments. They have them covered from partial impairments to complete hearing or vision loss. Category number ten covers orthopedic impairment which is when a person lacks function or ability in their body. So, these would be more focused on physical disabilities like cerebral palsy. Category number eleven covers intellectual disabilities. People with this have below average intellectual ability. They may also experience poor communication, self-care, and social skills. An example of this would be Down syndrome. Category number twelve covers traumatic brain injuries. A brain injury caused by an accident or physical force affects everyday life. Last, but not least, is category number thirteen. Multiple disabilities are when a person has more than one condition covered by IDEA. Under this category educational needs cannot be met in a program designed for any one disability (*Types of Learning Disabilities* [ldaamerica.org/types-of-learning-disabilities](http://ldaamerica.org/types-of-learning-disabilities), 2013).

### **Behavioral Disorders**

According to (CDC, 2019), “A behavior disorder may be diagnosed when the disruptive behaviors are uncommon for their age at the time, persists over time, or are severe” (para. 1). All mental disorders can affect a person’s behavior to a certain degree, but behavioral disorders refer to a specific group of distinct mental conditions. Behavioral disorders can be impulsive and disruptive to everyone around them. /this is something that most classes have experienced. When a student has an episode in a least restrictive environment, it takes away from crucial class time. It makes the teacher stop their lesson to handle the situation and throws the other students off task. The American Psychiatric Association and the DSM-5 identified these behavioral disorders: Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD),

Conduct Disorder, Intermittent Explosive Disorder (IED), and Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder (DMDD).

Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a condition that impairs an individual's ability to properly focus and to control impulsive behaviors. ADHD is more common in males than females with males being two times more likely than females to have the condition, according to the Wexner Medical Center at Ohio State University. ADHD has three different categories: Inattentive type, hyperactive/impulsive type, and combined type meaning a person meets the criteria for the first two types. This condition is progressive, and symptoms may come and go affecting diagnosis with different presenting symptoms. Children who are sixteen and younger must show six symptoms to be diagnosed, while adults seventeen and older only have to show five to be diagnosed. Regardless of age, this condition can cause issues with daily life, school, work, and relationships but it is treatable with medication, skill building, and therapy (Puskar, 2019).

Oppositional Defiant Disorder is a behavioral disorder characterized by hostile, irritable, and uncooperative attitudes. People with ODD may be spiteful or irritating purposefully and they generally direct these negative actions towards authoritative figures. People with ODD function best when they are put into an authoritative position. Symptoms must be present for six months before being diagnosed. Researchers have not determined the cause for ODD, but they have developed two theories for what could cause this condition. The first theory is called the developmental theory. It states that ODD occurs when people are toddlers, and stems from difficulties of learning how to be independent of their parents or guardians. The second theory is called the learning theory. This theory suggests that these attitudes are learned behaviors through negative reinforcement, and ODD behaviors help them get what they want. Early diagnosis of

this condition is crucial because if it goes undetected, a person could end up going down a dark, violent path.

Conduct Disorder is diagnosed when people show an ongoing pattern of aggression towards others, and serious violations of rules and social norms. This could be at home, school, work, or with peers. Conduct disorder is much more severe than ODD, it is more aggressive and tactical. Conduct Disorder can only be diagnosed in people who are eighteen or younger. Adults who experience these symptoms are usually diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder. Family therapy is a treatment for conduct disorder. It can promote positive parenting skills and help kids learn to deal with and work through their emotions.

Intermittent Explosive Disorder (IED) is another aggressive type of behavioral disorder. This is manifested during childhood. Unlike the other aggressive behavioral disorders, these symptoms are impulsive. Usually, this behavior comes in the form of angry outburst with little provocation, and they are more commonly blown out of proportion. This condition can lead to temper-tantrums, arguments, and potential harm of others, animals, or property. To be diagnosed with IED, it must cause significant impairment at school and work. Unfortunately, there is a risk factor that comes with this disorder. Being exposed to physical and emotional trauma so young can lead to other conditions like PTSD, anxiety, depression and more. Therapy is a good way to address traumas and behaviors and medicine can be used to help calm a person and control their outbursts.

Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder is characterized by extreme irritability, anger, and frequent outburst. What separates DMDD from the other aggressive behavioral disorders is how persistent the anger is. In DMDD the feelings can linger around much longer (than IED) and kids are irritable for the majority of the day. They can have verbal or physical outbursts three or

more times per week. To be diagnosed with DMDD, you must be six years old or older, but no older than seventeen. A person must also show symptoms for more than twelve months.

Treatment for DMDD is usually psychotherapy and parent training and if necessary, medication (*Temper Tantrums Are a Key Sign of DMDD*, 2016).

### **Teachers' roles**

LBD teachers are considered Special Education teachers. They can teach all the way from Preschool through the twelfth grade to students who have learning and behavior disabilities. They sometimes co-teach with general education teachers by pulling specific students to get into a small group and work on the lesson as a team. Their most important job is adapting the general curriculum to meet their student's specific needs. To do this, they must create an Individualized plan for each student, update IEP's throughout the year. And share feedback about student progress with family members, teachers, counselors, and administrators. These teachers are responsible for sending all their students through the Special

### **Special Education Process.**

The goal of Special Education is to provide equal access to education for children through age twenty-one by providing specialized services that help them experience success in the classroom and beyond. Before a student is considered eligible for special education services, they must be evaluated to determine how severe their learning problems or behavioral issues are and if a disability exists (*The Special Education Process in 6 Steps*, 2017).

### **Evaluation**

Once a student's parents or teacher are ready to have the child evaluated, they must participate in a special education meeting. In this meeting a SPED teacher, general education teacher, counselor, an administrative staff member, and the parents will talk about the process

and if the parent wishes to continue with their decision, they must sign a formal consent for evaluation. Next, the child must complete a series of different tests that will provide an overview of the student's school performance, strength, and weaknesses, hearing and vision, and cognitive functioning. After the evaluation is complete, there will be another Special Education meeting to discuss the results with the SPED team. If the results say that the child qualifies for Special Education Services then a date will be set for an IEP meeting. An IEP is an individualized Education Plan. It is an action plan designed to help students reach their educational goals.

### **IEP**

An IEP is like a roadmap. It establishes where a student is in their educational journey, where you would like them to be at the end of the school year, and it maps out the steps to take to help them get there. Under The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), it is required that an IEP must include a minimum set of components that show key information about a student and when and how the plan will be implemented. There are eight components to an IEP. The first is to include a description of the student's current skill level in all areas of concern. The teacher must also include an explanation of how their disability affects their progress in the general education classroom. As well as assess other performances in non-academic areas. I.e., motor skills, behavior, and relationships. Second, you must include the student's goals. Goals can be academic, behavioral, physical, etc. It all depends on those specific students' challenges. These goals must be updated every year and they must be measurable and realistic. The third component is about tracking student progress. In the IEP, you have to be very exact when explaining how a student's goals will be measured. It could be measured through teacher feedback, or through testing. The next component focuses on the special education services the student will be receiving. In this section, teachers will provide details on the types of

accommodations and modifications a student is allowed. Along with that, teachers are required to include a beginning and end date for services proposed by the IEP team. This must also include details about how often they will be receiving services as well as where they will be received. The next components are participation in mainstream classrooms.

When planning IEPs for students, it is crucial that they are being taught in the least restrictive environment. We aim for inclusion, so this section of the IEP explains how a student can join the general education classroom environment when it is appropriate. The teacher must specify how much time a student will spend in general education classrooms along with an explanation for that decision. Next is testing adaptations. /the IEP must state if a student will participate in state or local achievement testing. If a student will take those tests, the IEP should specify the types of accommodations that will be used. If a teacher decides to go an alternative route, then their decision needs to be explained and rationalized under this section of the IEP. The last part of the IEP is called Transitional Goals and Services. This starts around the time a student has their fourteenth birthday. The IEP must include plans for transitioning a student beyond grade school. Transitional goals and services focus on instruction and support services needed to help students shift from the school environment and into a job, vocational school, or other program to promote independent living (*The Special Education Process in 6 Steps*, 2017).

### **Assessment**

Special Education evaluations guide districts in providing a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment. Special Education assessments must be completed by qualified, licensed staff for each area of assessment. Standardized testing will produce qualified information that may be used in screening eligibility for Special Education services. It also identifies areas of strength and needs of a student compared to their peers.

Teachers must identify a tool of assessment for each area as well as who will assess. There are many types of assessments available, some Special Education Assessments are...

General Intelligence/ IQ, this measures a student's ability to reason, problem solve, and use cognitive processing. Common IQ assessment tools may include Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) According to ARC Minnesota, WISC had been considered the most valid measure of intelligence because it contains language and symbol-based items, as well as performance-based items. There are four index scores which allow for verbal scores to be compared to performance scores. This helps identify the disparity between language and special intelligence. The four index scores are verbal comprehension, perceptual reasoning, working memory and processing speed. (*Arc Guide to Special Education Evaluation Tools*, 2019)

The Woodcock-Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities (WJ-III) measures disparities between achievement and predicted achievement based on cognitive ability levels. A general intellectual ability comes from cognitive performance clusters in verbal ability, thinking ability and cognitive efficiency. The scores are related to verbal comprehension, visual auditory learning, special relationships, sound blending, concept formation, visual matching, and numbers reversal.

The Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (CTONI – 2) is a non-verbal format that measures analogical reasoning, categorical classification, and sequential reasoning. There are six subtests in two different contexts of pictures of familiar objects and geometric designs.

The Differential Abilities Scale (DAS-II) assesses cognitive abilities that are important for learning across a broad range of developmental levels. Diagnostic subtests measure cognitive abilities in verbal and visual working memory; immediate and delayed recall; visual recognition

and matching; processing and naming speed; phonological processing; and understanding basic number concepts.

The Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (KABC-II) assesses children from a mainstream cultural and language background with testing batteries that minimize verbal instructions and responses. There are two separate core battery forms – Luria model excludes verbal ability, CHC model is for children from a mainstream cultural and language background. The scales and subtests include Simultaneous/GV (triangles, face recognition, pattern reasoning, block counting, story completion, conceptual thinking, rover, and Gestalt closure); Sequential/Gsm (word order, number recall and hand movements); Planning/Gf (pattern reasoning and story completion); Learning/Glr (Atlantis/Atlantis delayed, Rebus/Rebus delayed); Knowledge/Gc (CHC model only) (riddles, expressive vocabulary and verbal knowledge) (*Arc Guide to Special Education Evaluation Tools*, 2019).

The next set of tools focus on individualized achievement and academic performances. These tests measure pre-academic and academic behaviors/skills. They can also be useful in evaluating academic learning needs. Academic Achievement Assessments are administered by a special education teacher and include these tools:

The Woodcock Johnson Test of Achievement gives diagnostic information and grade level performances on distinct literacy and math skills. This test can be used for anyone between the ages of two and ninety.

Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills provides diagnostic information on reading, math, and other academic skills. There are four subtests that observe academic readiness, reading, language arts and math. This test can be used for anyone between pre-k and ninth grade.

The Wechsler Individualized Achievement Test identifies academic strengths and weaknesses through nine subtests that measure oral reading, math fluency, early reading skills, listening comprehension, oral expression, and written expression. This test is available for anyone between the ages of four and eighty-five.

Peabody Individual Achievement Test Revised assesses children with severe disabilities that require pointing responses for most items. A multiple-choice format assesses academic skill in general information, reading comprehension, written expression, math, and spelling. This test is available for anyone from ages five to twenty-two (*Arc Guide to Special Education Evaluation Tools*, 2019).

Social, Emotional, Behavioral assessments help identify the behavior patterns, emotions, feelings, and potential academic and social issues that may be experienced in a school setting. Usually, these assessments are completed by a school psychologist. Some of the most common standardized assessments include:

The Behavior Assessment System for Children is a comprehensive set of rating scales that gather information from teachers, parents, a self-report, observation, and review of developmental history. These tests observe hyperactivity, aggression, conduct issues, anxiety, depression, somatization, atypicality, social skills, leadership, activities of daily living and functional communication.

Adaptive Behavior/Functional Skills assessments observe student behavior patterns and independent everyday skills to help establish how they manage throughout the school day. Assessments are typically completed by the Special education teacher and include:

Behavior Rating Inventory for Executive Functioning assesses cognitive processes that regulate, control, and manage other cognitive processes like planning, working memory,

attention, problem solving, verbal reasoning, inhibition, mental flexibility, task switching, initiation, and monitoring of actions. It measures how a child manages, organizes, and responds to, learning and interpretation of information. Eight clinical scales measure a child's ability to: inhibit, shift, emotional control, initiate, working memory, plan/organize, organization of materials, and monitor.

Adaptive Behavior Assessment Scale assesses adaptive skills across the lifespan. Rating scales are completed by parent, teacher, and a self-report for adults. Ten skill areas measure independence and need for assistance. There is a general adaptive composite made up of three adaptive domains. Conceptual, which includes communication skills, functional academics, and self-direction. Social, which includes social and leisure skills. Last is Practical, which includes self-care, home/school living, community work, health, and safety (*Arc Guide to Special Education Evaluation Tools*, 2019).

Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale is a measure of personal and social skills. There are five domains that are assessed: Communication which assesses receptive a, expressive and written; Daily Living Skills which assesses personal, domestic, and community; Socialization which assesses interpersonal relationships, play and leisure time, and coping skills; Motor skills which assesses fine and gross; and the optional Maladaptive Behavior Index which assesses internalizing, externalizing, and others.

Scales for Independent Behavior is a comprehensive assessment that observes fourteen areas of adaptive behavior and eight areas of problem behavior. Assessment results are used to determine the support, supervision, and resources a person may need throughout the day. It can also help determine support needs in broad independence, motor skills, social interaction and communication skills, personal living skills, and community living skills.

Transition assessments focus on training, education, employment and living skills.

Transition assessment should be an on-going process for the Special Education teacher to collect information on a students' strengths, needs, preferences, and interests as they relate to the demands of current and future living, learning and work environments. Transition must be implemented in the ninth grade. The information obtained from the transition assessment should be used as a foundation for an IEP and transition planning. Some of the standardized tools used for transition assessments include:

Enderle Severson Transition Rating Scale assessment initiates a description of a student's strengths and possible areas concerning the five transition areas of employment, recreation and leisure, home living, community participation, and postsecondary education. There are multiple versions of these assessments so that it can match a student's language and skills. This assessment addressed desired future goals, current skills, skills needed to achieve goals, and planning for success in vocational, residential, and community environments. A narrative description of strengths and areas of concern evolves as independence and need for assistance with behaviors and skills are identified.

Brigrance Transition Skills Inventory is an inventory of life skills and employment skills that assess the four traditional skill areas of: Academics focusing on planning for post-secondary education/training. Post-Secondary includes employment and education/training. Independent Living includes managing food, clothing, housing, finance, etc. Community Participation includes interaction with community resources, good citizenship, etc. (*Arc Guide to Special Education Evaluation Tools*, 2019).

Transition Planning Inventory generates a student's planning statement profile of over six hundred transition goals through results gathered from student, parent, and school staff. The

inventory uses rating scales and open-ended questions to determine student preferences, interests, and strengths, based on ability and experiences. The assessment compares responses to see whether they align with each other and identifies areas of transition and instructional need.

Casey Life Skills assesses the behaviors and competencies necessary to develop healthy, productive lives. They observe healthy relationships, planning and goal setting, using community resources, daily living skills, budgeting and paying bills, computer literacy, and permanent connections to caring adults. This assessment is designed to be used in collaborative conversation with an educator, mentor, case worker, or other service provider (*Arc Guide to Special Education Evaluation Tools*, 2019).

### **Accommodations**

Students with learning disabilities may have a hard time acquiring or demonstrating knowledge. Often auditory, visual, or tactical information can become jumbled at any point when being transmitted, received, processed, or retransmitted. It may take longer for some students to process written information, making lengthy reading or writing assignments or tests difficult to complete in a standard amount of time. Some students who have learning disabilities may find it difficult to process and digest oral instruction and lectures. Some students may be able to organize and communicate their thoughts in a one-on-one conversation but may find it difficult to articulate those same ideas in a noisy classroom.

This is the reason that students are given accommodations. Accommodations are alterations in the way tasks are presented that allow students with learning disabilities to complete the same assignment as other students. Accommodations do not alter the content of assignments, give students an unfair advantage or in the case of assessments, change what a test

measures. They do make it possible for students with LD to show what they know without being impeded by their disability (National Center for Learning Disabilities, n.d.).

Once a student has been identified with a LD, the student or parent may request accommodations for that student's specific needs. The IDEA states that a child's IEP team must decide what accommodations are appropriate for him or her. Any appropriate accommodation should be recorded in the IEP. Some examples of accommodations include note takers and scribes: visual, aural, and tactile demonstrations incorporated into directions: computers with speech output, spelling checker, and grammar checker; course and lecture outlines; and extra time or alternate testing arrangements.

An IEP contains accommodations that may be broken into six categories. These categories include presentation, response, timing, setting, test scheduling, and other (National Center for Learning Disabilities, n.d.). *Presentation* accommodations include providing audio tape, larger print, reducing the number of items per page or line, providing a designated reader, or providing instruction orally. These accommodations are designed to help a student better understand an instructor's presentation. For example, when asked to identify key information, it may be helpful to advanced organizers, study guides, visual cues like color coding key information, or auditory clues like saying to yourself, "ok, this is important" (*IRIS / Page 5: Presentation Accommodations*, n.d.).

When using *response presentations* there are five different accommodations. The first allows a student to respond verbally. Another response accommodation allows a student to dictate their answer to a scribe. A third response accommodation allows a student to use a tape recorder to capture their response. The fourth response accommodation permits a student to give their response via a computer. The final response accommodation allows a student to record their

response directly into a test booklet. Some examples of these accommodations include speech-to-text software, visuals like cue cards, graphic organizers, templates, and checklists (*IRIS / Page 5: Presentation Accommodations*, n.d.).

There are two *timing* accommodations. The first allows students to take frequent breaks. During the course of a 45-minute class period this may mean a student has the opportunity to take a short break every ten minutes. The second timing accommodation allows for students to have extended test time. For example, this could mean if a student is taking a time test that is scheduled for sixty minutes, it is extended to 120 minutes.

In addition to timing accommodations an IEP provides for *setting accommodations*. The first setting accommodations is preferential seating i.e., allowing students to sit in the front of the classroom. The second setting accommodation provides for special lighting or acoustics. This may mean that the school needs to invest in special lighting or allow students to wear hats or glasses to help with light sensitivity. A third accommodation is designed to provide a space in which the student is faced with minimal distractions. The final two setting accommodations address testing. The first allows students to take their test in a small group setting. In practice this would mean students would be escorted to a separate room, and a teacher would go through and read each question-and-answer choice and give students time to answer the question on their own. The second allows for a test to be administered in a private room or at an alternative test site. In practice this would mean students are escorted to a separate room to take the test, this will lessen the distractions.

To further assist with testing an IEP provides an accommodation for *test scheduling*. This category of accommodations includes the administration of a test in several timed sessions or over several days. Another option is to allow for students to take subtests in a different order.

The final test scheduling accommodation allows for a test to be scheduled at a specific time of day.

Three accommodations make up the *other* category. This includes the provision of special test preparations. This could include pulling a student out of class to test in an environment with minimal distractions. It also includes the provision of on-task/focusing prompts. An example of this accommodation is a history teacher providing questions to answer as the students read the chapter of the text. The final other accommodation is the provision of any reasonable accommodation that a student needs that does not fit under an existing category.

School assignments and tests completed with accommodations should be graded the same way as those completed without accommodations. They are there to level the playing field by providing equal and ready access to the task at hand, and not meant to provide an undue advantage to the user. Selecting and monitoring the effectiveness of accommodations should be an ongoing process, and changes should be made as often as needed. The key is to be sure that chosen accommodations address students' specific areas of need and facilitate the demonstration of skill and knowledge (*IRIS / Page 5: Presentation Accommodations*, n.d.).

### **Setting Goals**

According to (Brown, n.d.), the Frostig Center did twenty years of research on what makes people with learning disabilities successful as adults. Goal setting was one of six success attributes. Unfortunately, many students with learning disabilities find goal setting challenging. They often have executive Function Disorder which is a miswiring of the brain and makes it hard for them to plan, to start and stop what they wish to do, and monitor their behavior. To make matters more complicated, the school system and society set goals for them. Goals like having good grades and performing well on standardized tests. These goals challenge them in their area

of disability, and when they don't receive proper accommodations, they get discouraged and lose confidence. There are ways to help students set their own goals and reach them without making them feel overwhelmed.

Listen to your students, ask them open-ended questions in response to their thoughts. If the ideas seem unrealistic, don't put them down, just shape them. For example, let's say a student who is failing most of their classes tells you that they want to be a doctor. You may not think that is impossible, but instead of telling them that you could suggest other ways the student could help or heal others. That could give him or her the motivation they need to get better grades.

You can also encourage them to set goals that relate directly to their desire. Their own desire will fuel their motivation. According to [howtolearn.com](http://howtolearn.com), Jack Horner, a world-renowned paleontologist, was fascinated by dinosaurs. In his autobiography, he talks about how he was unsuccessful in school but excelled in science projects. "My goal in life was simple," he explained in his *Intellectual Autobiography*, "I wanted to be a dinosaur paleontologist." He met his goal. As an adult, he discovered the world's largest Tyrannosaurus Rex and advised director Steven Spielberg about the science in the Jurassic Park movies.

### **Least Restrictive Environment**

Least Restrictive Environment is a guiding principle in the IDEA. LRE plays a critical role in determining not only where a student will spend his or her time in school but also how special education services will be provided. The LRE requirement within IDEA necessitates those students with disabilities receive their education alongside their peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate. It also states that students should not be removed from the general education classroom unless learning cannot be achieved even with the use of supplementary aids and services.

LRE is fixed on a case-by-case basis during the development of a student's individualized education program. (IEP) The IEP team will discuss what individualized program of instruction and related services the student requires based on the student's present levels of performance and areas of strengths and needs. These services and supports should give them the opportunity to make progress toward meeting identified academic or functional annual goals, be involved and make progress in the general education curriculum as well as to participate in extracurricular and other non-academic activities, and take part in these activities with other students, both with and without disabilities. The term "environment" in least restrictive environment can be interpreted to imply that LRE is a place or location. In fact, LRE does not merely refer to a particular setting. Rather, identifying the LRE involves making program decisions about what services and supports a student needs to be successful and where and how those services and supports can be provided effectively (*Introduction to LRE, 2018*).

Because LRE is determined by the student's individualized program of instruction and related services rather than by setting, IDEA requires that school districts create a continuum of alternative placement options. This continuum represents a range of educational placements in which an IEP can be implemented to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities. These placement options range from the least restrictive setting or general education classroom to the most restrictive ones like residential facilities. When using the continuum to establish where services will be provided, the IEP team should try to place and maintain the student in the general education setting first. Remember that according to IDEA, students with disabilities should be educated with their peers without disabilities as much as appropriately possible. The student should also be receiving supplementary aids and services while in the general education classroom. However, when the nature or severity of the disability is so much that satisfactory

progress cannot be achieved in this setting, with all accommodations and modifications, it may be necessary for them to be put in a more restrictive placement setting to warrant an appropriate education.

Special Education services and supports can be delivered in many ways. The first way is inside the General Education Classroom students receive instruction in the general education classroom and services are provided by the general education teacher, with accommodations or modifications as needed. Instruction is supported with specialized materials, equipment, or instructional methods. In a special education setting students receive instruction in a special education classroom for a portion of the day. Most of the instruction is provided in the general education classroom with accommodations or modifications as needed. Services provided by the special education teacher may include individualized or small-group instruction in a separate classroom, often called a resource room or “pull out”. Consultation and collaboration with general education teachers to plan and provide instruction. In the Special Education Classroom most of the instruction is provided in the special education classroom. The general education teachers consult with the special education teacher to provide effective instruction and support. Services provided by the special education teacher may include specialized instruction in a separate classroom with a small group of students with similar characteristics or needs. Consultation with general education teachers to plan and provide individualized instruction aligned with the gen. ed. Curriculum (*Introduction to LRE*, 2018).

Next is Special Schools, this is where students receive instruction for most of the school day in a separate public or private facility. Services are provided in a school that is designed, staffed, and resourced for the care and education of students with similar disability related needs.

Homebound is when students receive instruction at home for most of the school day. Students in this setting may have physical or mental health challenges that prevent or restrict participation at school. A homebound teacher may provide services like individualized instruction on a schedule convenient for the student. As well as consultation and collaboration with general and special education teachers to plan and provide instruction.

Last is a hospital or residential facility, in this setting students receive instruction in a hospital for most of the school day. Students in a hospital setting may have physical or mental health challenges that require admission for an extended period of time. An education professional may provide services like individualized instruction per a schedule convenient to the student's needs. They may also use consultation and collaboration with the general education and special education teachers to plan and provide instruction (*Introduction to LRE*, 2018).

### **Parent Teacher Communication**

#### **Parent Contact**

Communicating with parents is one of the most important things to do as a special education teacher. Many students with disabilities cannot or will not communicate things about their day when they get home. It is the job of special education teachers to make sure that parents have the information they need to be successful at home as well as some fun information about their child's day. There are a variety of ways to communicate with parents. You can make parent contact by email, phone, mail, text, and even apps. On an elementary level, some teachers use communication binders. Communication binders are easy to send back and forth from school to home, and both the teacher and parent can record how the student's day went at school, or how their night went at home. It's simple enough for all parents to understand.

It is important to keep things positive when communicating with parents. Of course, you have to notify parents of the not-so-positive things when those happen, but it's always good to start and end everything on a positive note. I've heard teachers call this technique "sandwiching". It's also important to keep things short, if you give a ton of information at once, it can be overwhelming and who wants to read a super long note? Keep it short and to the point. Long notes leave too much room for negative interpretation, and we want to keep everything positive! If you feel like a long note is necessary to get the whole point across, it's probably best to make a call home.

Often students don't like to talk about their home life, or they just don't. So, it's important to keep things open when communicating with parents. Ask questions about the student home life, even if it is as simple as "Emily loved playing catch outside at recess! What does she like to do at home?" This shows parents that you care about them and are interested in their interests. It also builds positive relationships with parents when you keep an open and free consistent communication (*Why Parents Have Such an Important Role in Special Education*, n.d.).

### **Parent Roles**

Many parents of children with learning and behavioral disabilities wonder what they can do at home to help their student. Generally, you should try to understand the student's disabilities and think about how these differences may affect self-help skills, communication, discipline, play and independence. Though parents should understand their student's weaknesses, they should also encourage them to focus on their strengths to build self-esteem and to help them become an essential part of the family.

Students with any kind of special needs should be supported and encouraged daily, both at school and at home. Students in special education spend most of the day with teachers and the rest of the time with parents or guardians. Parents and guardians have the most complete understanding of a student's physical, social, developmental, and family history. They are the only adults in the educational process who have been and will be deeply involved throughout the student's school career. Though parents may not be educators, they bring years of experience in other professions and aspects of life to the process, along with their experience with their own students.

Students attend school about seven hours a day, where they may not get the full one-on-one help and conversations. Parents have the opportunity to sit side-by-side with their students and work through homework and other learning activities together. Parents may be the only adult(s) who closely observe a student's work and get feedback from their student (*Why Parents Have Such an Important Role in Special Education*, n.d.).

A parent's role is always changing, every day is a new day with a new set of challenges as well as a new set of praises. Parents give love, support, and guidance to their students through easy and tough situations throughout their lives. Knowing the specific needs of a student makes it a little easier. The more a parent knows, the better they can prepare to help them. Oftentimes when parents don't spend the time to educate themselves on their student's disabilities, they focus on the things that the student cannot do instead of what they can. This is counterproductive and will hinder the student's development. It's important that parents stay positive. Some students may have a particular way of doing things, which may not be seen as the "norm", but parents should embrace the new normal and stay positive and fair. Children don't like to think that they are different. It puts a dent on their self-confidence and makes them struggle in the

classroom. The doubt will also affect how they interact with their peers. When their students are feeling down, parents should talk with their students to try to understand why and encourage the conversation. Simply having this conversation will make them feel heard, and it shows them that their parents genuinely care about their well-being.

Parents are preparing their students for their future. Whether that's having a job, a family, and going beyond having good grades. So, the main focus should be helping their students become independent. It's important that parents allow their students to grow into their unique personalities. As they get older, they will not need a babysitter 24/7. They need to transition into being independent. Even though a student has special needs, to teach them to be more independent, parents should set rules and follow them up with discipline. Parents must teach their students to understand and respect rules set by their parents, and teachers. This will help in school and at home, and if parents stick to this plan, they will take the lesson even further and realize there are rules society must follow as well. If parents teach their students from an early age that there are consequences to every action, then they're more likely to have a positive future. Parents should develop a healthy lifestyle that best suits their child. Some possibilities include eating healthy, getting plenty of exercise, sticking to a sleeping schedule and playing outside. All of these things contribute to students' overall attitudes. A healthy lifestyle encourages students to stay focused and positive. Setting a specific time for doing homework with their child will encourage their learning drive and make them more confident. Ask questions and be patient while they figure out the answers, and don't forget to praise them for their correct answers. With all of these responsibilities, it would be unreasonable if parents didn't make time for themselves as well. It wouldn't do any good if parents burned themselves out tending to their child's needs, Parents need to be emotionally and mentally fit to create a healthy

lifestyle. Parents won't be much help if they're exhausted and stressed, so it's just as important for the parents to have some fun, get a good amount of sleep, and eat healthy. If parents are feeling down, there are support groups to join, where they're welcome to talk and share freely about the daily struggles. This helps parents see that they are not alone, it also allows parents to encourage and support each other in difficult times. Don't be afraid to ask for help (*A Parent's Role In The Development Of A Child With Special Needs - Behavioral Health Works*, 2018).

### **Communication Dysfunction**

Stereotypes and prejudices affect everyone, including people in education. Studies show that stereotypes cause a breakdown in communication between parents and teachers, leaving a damaging effect on a student's education. Ineffective communication between parents and teachers can be a major issue when trying to solve problems with students, but it can be improved. There are two major causes of communication dysfunction. The first is what is referred to as judgement. Teachers judge the parents of their students constantly. They are judged based on the students' language, hygiene, dress and social skills. Parents also judge their child's teachers, based on comments from the students. Sometimes students accuse teachers of being unfair, picking on them, being prejudiced or other questionable treatments. A lot of times it seems that the students who stay out of trouble and do what is asked of them want their parents and teachers to like each other. But a student who is in trouble often, wants the opposite. They want their parents and teachers to have a negative relationship because it is easier to manipulate them both in that situation. Many students see this as an opportunity to benefit from animosity between parents and teachers and play one against the other (Curwin, 2012).

The second problem is called "dumping". When teachers get frustrated or angry, they tend to call parents about their child and "dump" the problem in the parents' lap. They tell what

the child did to get into trouble and tell the parent that they must do something about it. This is just as ineffective as if a parent called their student's teacher about an issue the student is having at home and tells the teacher that they need to fix it. It's also common for parents to "dump" things onto teachers. They insinuate that the teacher is the reason their student has bad grades, behavior issues or bad attitudes. They demand the teacher to change her teaching style. Parent dumping is reaching extremely high levels with more disrespect and less belief in the professionalism of the teachers. When parents and teachers blame each other and make unreasonable demands, the one who suffers the most is the student. Parents and teachers both want the best for the student. So, the solution to the dysfunction may be to remove the student from parent/teacher communication. This will allow the adults to build a relationship of their own by talking directly to each other (Curwin, 2012).

### **Building a Positive Relationship**

#### **Benefits**

Building and maintaining a positive parent/teacher relationship is a crucial part of the educational process. Positive connections between parents and teachers have been shown to improve children's academic achievement, social competencies, and emotional well-being. When parents and teachers work as partners student's work habits, attitudes about school and grades improve. They show better social skills, fewer behavioral problems and a greater ability to adapt to situations and get along. Students aren't the only ones benefiting from these positive relationships. Parents and teachers benefit from this as well. According to *Building Parent-Teacher Relationship* (2013) The way that the schools communicate and interact with parents affects the extent and quality of parents' home involvement with their children's learning. Parents also benefit from being involved in their children's education by getting ideas from

school on how to help and support their children and by learning more about the school's academic program and how it works. One of the most important benefits that parents earn is being able to be confident in the role they play in their child's education.

Teachers benefit from Parental involvement because it can free teachers to focus more on the task of teaching. Also, by having more contact with parents, teachers learn more about students' needs and home environment, which is information they can apply toward better meeting those needs. When parents and teachers of special education students interact on an only occasional basis, it's hard for both to completely understand the issues the student may struggle with. Parents who feel comfortable approaching teachers with any concerns about their child and their progress feel like their input is valued and respected. Consistent and healthy communication between teachers and parents will increase the likelihood of a special education student achieving overall success (*Building Parent-Teacher Relationships*, 2013).

### **Positive communication**

According to Sheridan (2018), Partnerships are most powerful when they include three main components, represented as the three c's: Communication, consistency, and collaboration.

First is communication between home and school. This should be a frequent two-way communication. It is important to keep parents updated on what is happening at school, and to learn from parents' important things about a student's situation at home. It is so important that parents and teachers communicate early in the school year. This way, teachers can inform the parents on what is expected in the classroom, parents can also let teachers know that they want to play their part in their child's education. Parents and teachers should discuss and come up with the best ways to communicate. The communication method has many ways. Notes, voicemails, emails, etc. It's important to discuss which way is preferred so that there is no

miscommunication. Communication between parents and teachers should be clear, open, constructive, and timely.

The second component of an effective partnership is consistency. This focuses on creating routines and providing consistent opportunities to enhance students' learning at home reinforces the notion that the parent and teacher are working together to support the student. A good way to establish a positive parent teacher relationship is for teachers to use "The Three Call Method". As early in the year as possible, teachers need to call as many parents on the phone as possible. This will welcome the parents into the learning community and establish a positive communication line. There are three phone calls in this method. The first phone call should be an introduction/reassurance. An example of this call would be, "Hi Mrs. Smith. I'm Amanda's teacher. I'm very excited to have Amanda in my classroom this year! I want to let you know that if there are any issues, I'd be happy to speak with you so we can work it out together to make things better."

The second call is a compliment call. This call is to brag about a student to their parents. This call should be focused on behavior, improvement, and quality of work. An example of this call would be, "Hi Mr. Greene. This is Ms. Baker, Jonny's teacher. I just wanted to give you a call and let you know that Jonny's reading level went up 4 points, and he has not had to clip down once this week!" The third call is when teachers should address the issues the student is having in the classroom. In this method, the issues should not be mentioned until you've made the first two positive phone calls. This is because after the first two phone calls, parents and teachers have already established a trusting, workable relationship that significantly diminishes blaming. Teachers should also reach out to parents often just to check in or give them their props (Sheridan, 2018).

The third C is collaboration. A collaborative cooperative partnership involves planning and problem-solving to develop specific, positive strategies to help children achieve to their highest potential. Collaboration is easier if communication is consistent and frequent. This component focuses on specific, positive strategies to help students achieve to the best of their potential. Planning and problem-solving are forms of collaboration and will be especially important when the student needs extra support to reach a goal. Parents should try to understand the teacher's goals and expectations for their students, and let teachers know about goals that are in place at home. Communicate about how to help each other help the student achieve their goals (Sheridan, 2018).

### **Strategies for Effective Relationships**

Good two-way communication between families and school is necessary for student success. Research shows that the more parents and teachers share relevant information with each other about a student, the better equipped both will be to help that student achieve academically. Some examples of two-way communication are Parent conferences; parent-teacher organizations or school community councils; weekly or monthly folders of student work sent home for parent review and comment; phone calls and emails or school websites.

The most effective form of communication in school trickles down to conferences, home visits, telephone calls, and open houses. Though it seems that the home-school communication has grown more complex as society has changed. Not everyone relies on a voice message at the end of the day. Some people don't have the time to meet, or even a phone to call. That is why teachers should have a list of possible communication strategies to try out and see which works best for each student. Some of these communication strategies include parent newsletters; Annual Open houses, home visits, phone calls, school calendars, insets in local newspapers,

annual “special persons” day, homework hotlines, annual field days, notices and handouts in local businesses, website for the school, parent workshops, and father focus communication (*Building Parent-Teacher Relationships*, 2013).

Some of the most effective parent/teacher communication ideas involve; Initiation: teachers should initiate contact as soon as they know which students will be in their classroom for the school year. Contact can occur by means of an introductory phone call or a letter to the home giving an introduction and establishing expectations. Timeliness: Adults should make contact soon after a problem has been identified, so a timely solution can be found. Waiting too long can create a new problem through the frustration of those involved. Consistency and frequency: Parents want frequent feedback about how this student is performing with homework, and in the classroom. Follow-through: Parents and teachers each want to see that the other will actually do what they say they will do. Clarity and usefulness of communication: Parents and teachers should have the information they need to help students, in a form and language that makes sense to them (*Building Parent-Teacher Relationships*, 2013).

Parents like surprises, positive ones! Usually, if the school calls home, parents are already preparing themselves for the worst. So, it would be nice to call often just to reassure them that their child is doing well or has improved in their area of concern. When you make calls to share positive information with parents, be prepared for them to sound pleasantly surprised. Research shows that school-home communication is increased through personalized positive phone contact between teachers and parents.

Become a team, not adversaries! Teachers and parents should share their perceptions honestly. Let each other know what is and isn't working out at school or at home. They should work as a team to find out a plan of action to try and be flexible enough to change it if it doesn't

help. Setting up effective communication and forming a team are very powerful tools in helping students be successful in school. Students spend most of their time at home and in school so when teachers and parents are allies and teammates, their combined influence on children is very powerful (Curwin, 2012).

## **Transitioning out of School**

### **Transitioning from School to Work**

One of the most important things, when transitioning a student with LBD from school to work, is that the individual understands and can explain their functional limitations. These individuals should understand their unique learning style and be able to describe accommodations that lighten the impact of the learning or behavior disorder. To determine a student's knowledge in this area they could be asked, "What do you feel is the primary disability they have led you to utilize special education services?" When the student responds, try to dig deeper into their answer by asking what they mean, clarifying the questions and the answers, and guide them. Give them examples of times they may be hindered by their disorder and give them the opportunity to explain to you how they would handle the situation.

Parents, teachers, and counselors all play a critical role in assisting students with LBD to identify, understand, and articulate the functional impact of a learning disorder. Asking questions that focus on function and breaking down broad questions into smaller parts will help complete this process. The goal is for students with LBD to clearly describe the learning and/or work environment that they function best in. Some guiding questions include: How do you learn most effectively? (Reading, listening, demonstration), How does your disorder affect your reading, writing? Do you have difficulty understanding verbal instruction and information? If needed, continue breaking the questions down into smaller parts until the student can clearly articulate

the functional impact of the disorder. It's useful to have the explanation recorded or written on index cards to inform the employer of the disorder and possible accommodations (Stern, 2013).

### **Three-Step Process**

The next step is for students to brainstorm some accommodations with their counselor. Sometimes the accommodations used in a school setting can transfer directly to the workplace, though it is still necessary to discuss how they will be used. For example, if a student uses a recorder in lectures, it may also be useful at work when a supervisor gives verbal instructions. Other accommodations that directly transfer to the work environment are computers with assistive technology, a quiet place to work, a co-worker to take notes in meetings, etc. There is a three-step process that helps determine the need for and type of accommodations a student may require in the type of work they are interested in. Step one focuses on the job. In this step Students need to gather information about the type of work they are interested in. They can do this by researching job postings, contacting human resource personnel, and talking with current employees. This information is gathered during the career decision making process instead of waiting until the student is transitioning to work. The types of questions that can be used to guide students to their desired work include: What is the purpose of the job? What are the job duties? What are the most important qualifications to succeed in the job? How much writing does the job require? (Stern, 2013).

Step two uses the information about the disorder, and the information collected in step one to identify and document potential struggles and functional limitations that could impact access or success on the job. Step three is where students identify possible accommodations and describe past accommodations. In this step students should research the costs and availability of accommodations and assess their effectiveness. Students should reach out to someone in their

potential career field who has performed the same type of work to share some ideas, get feedback and determine if the accommodations are effective and achievable in the work setting. Students should think outside of the box when identifying accommodations. Some people in the work setting believe that “this is the way we’ve always done it, so let’s stick with it”, but for an individual who is transitioning from LBD to a work environment, you have to get creative (Stern, 2013).

### **Disability Laws**

Students with LBD should also become familiar with the laws that protect them at work, especially Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act and any state employment laws that provide broader protections beyond the federal law. Having this knowledge enables students to identify legal and illegal interview questions, clarify issues related to disclosure and non-disclosure of disability and enables them to assist employers in understanding and adhering to the laws (*Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, As Amended*, 2016).

Title I of the ADA protects the civil rights of people with disabilities in employment. This law was made to level the playing field by providing equal access and opportunity for success in the workplace. Under Title I it is unlawful to discriminate against a qualified individual with a known disability who can perform the essential functions of a job with or without reasonable accommodation. This law requires employers to provide effective accommodations unless it results in inordinate adversity or direct threat. It covers employers with fifteen or more employees and does not interfere with the employer’s right to hire the best qualified candidate nor does it establish hiring quotas. To be covered by the ADA an applicant must be considered as having a disability under the law. It’s required to meet at least one of the three criteria: 1) Have an impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; 2)

Have a record of said impairment; or 3) be regarded as having said impairment (*Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, As Amended, 2016*).

Students should be aware of the potential disclosure vs. non-disclosure of their disability. They should make a list of the pros and cons of disclosure and nondisclosure for all phases of the employment process. It is a struggle for students when deciding whether to disclose a disability. It's reasonable for students to anticipate the assumptions that may be made if they do decide to disclose vs. if they decide not to. There are catch 22 situations, for example, let's say a student whose disorder impacts the ability to write faces an issue if the interviewer asks for a verbal answer related to writing important information on a white board. In this situation, the cons may weigh out the pros by not disclosing. Though, there is also a risk in disclosing, students must be prepared to address the writing issue and describe accommodations that will reduce the impact of the disorder while clearly suggesting potential for success in the job. Most people look at it this way, if there is no need for accommodations, why should it be disclosed?

The purpose of the interview is to decide whether the applicant is qualified to do the job. Interview questions should draw out information that assists the interviewer to identify if the candidate will be successful in the position. If an applicant has not disclosed their disorder, it is illegal for an interviewer to ask these questions before an offer for employment is made: Do you need any accommodations to perform this job? Do you have a disability that may impact your ability to do this job? An interviewer is allowed to ask narrowly focused questions to follow up on disability related information that a candidate has disclosed. The questions should be job related and should not ask any person questions about it (*Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, As Amended, 2016*).

## **Interview Tips**

The purpose of the interview from the interviewee perspective is to get the job. In order to get a job offer, applicants are expected to convince the employer that they will be successful, make positive contributions and fit well into the work culture. Some basic tips for accomplishing this include the applicant should focus on function and success by clearly describing relevant qualifications, skills, and experience. Describe brief examples that demonstrate the potential to add to value and improve the workplace. Ask questions to figure out what the interviewers' needs are. Be open-minded and try to understand the interviewer's point of view. If the disability is disclosed in the interview, be prepared for stereotypes, myths and fears that may contribute to the outcome of the interview and dispel them. Focus on common goals (Raskind & Goldberg, 2019).

## **Job Retention**

Internships before graduation from college are one of the most effective ways students can enhance their potential for retention in a future job. Participating in an internship in the field of choice is an effective way to identify and understand realistic information and more independence. Internships give students the chance to experiment with accommodations and practice skills and apply knowledge that they are learning in school. School takes on a new and enhanced importance and relevance when students participate in internships. Developing effective communication strategies is also important to job retention. Internships allow students to practice discussing disability related issues with co-workers, supervisors, and managers. If a disability creates difficulties or poses barriers to success, the student should engage the employer in problem solving without making judgement. It's important to remember that the student/employee is not the problem. The problem is to clearly identify how the disability is creating difficulties and to brainstorm accommodations to fix it (Raskind & Goldberg, 2019).

## **Success After School**

### **Life success**

Success is one of those words that can be defined differently depending on who is being asked, or at what time in their life they're being asked. However, although views of success may differ, there are some things that most people include when they think of success. These include good friends, positive family relations, being loved, self-approval, job satisfaction, physical and mental health, financial comfort, spiritual contentment, and an overall sense of meaning in one's life. Of course, every person will put emphasis on these components.

Children with learning disorders grow up to be adults with learning disorders. Many of the difficulties experienced in childhood continue into and through adulthood. Fortunately, some people with learning disorders follow a life path that leads them to success. They become productive members of society and live satisfying and rewarding lives. Unfortunately, others are barely able to keep their heads above water, and feel like they are failing emotionally, socially, or financially. So why, despite similar backgrounds and learning issues, does one person end up with a rewarding career, long-term friendships, and financial stability, yet the other has a lonely life, and financial stress? According to the Frostig Center, and several major studies by others, it has focused on identifying which factors contribute to success for individuals with learning disabilities. The results show the importance of a set of personal characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors that can help lead people to successful outcomes. These studies trace the lives of individuals with learning disabilities throughout their lifespan and have revealed a number of "Success attributes" that guide people to positive or negative outcomes. (Raskind & Goldberg, 2019).

## Success Attributes

The Frostig Center did a twenty-year study and highlighted the importance of six success attributes for people with learning disabilities. These attributes include self-awareness, proactivity, perseverance, goal-setting, the presence and use of effective support systems, and emotional coping strategies. Not every successful person presents each of these attributes, and some of the attributes may be present to a lower or higher extent. Even people who may be seen as “unsuccessful” may possess some of these attributes. All this just means that people who are successful are more likely to have the attributes listed above than a person who is considered unsuccessful. It’s important to know that having these attributes does not guarantee success, but it increases the chances of achieving a fulfilling and successful life (Raskind & Goldberg, 2019).

The first attribute is self-awareness. Successful people with learning disabilities are aware of the types of problems they have, including academic problems like reading and math, academic related problems such as attentional or organizational difficulties, and non-academic problems like motor deficits or emotional/behavior problems. They are open and specific about their difficulties, and they understand how they affect their lives. These individuals also can compartmentalize their disability. This means that they understand that their disability is only one part of them, and they are not overly defined by them. Successful people with LD recognize their talents along with accepting their limitations. In addition to recognizing their strengths, weaknesses, and special talents, successful adults with LD are also able to find jobs that best match their abilities. For example, a person with severe reading difficulties, but amazing woodworking skills might find a successful career in cabinet making rather than a copy editor. People with learning disabilities who are less successful, usually fail to recognize both their

strengths and limitations, accept their difficulties, compartmentalize their learning disability, and find employment that provides the best fit for their abilities (Raskind & Goldberg, 2019).

Proactivity is another attribute for success in individuals with learning disabilities. These individuals are generally actively involved in society – politically, economically, and socially. They participate in community activities and take an active role in their families, neighborhoods, and friendship groups. In addition, they often step into leadership roles at work, in the community, and in social and family settings. So, successful people with learning disabilities believe that they have the power to control their own destiny and affect the outcome of their lives.

In contrast, people who are less successful usually don't attend events and are passive. Successful adults can make decisions and act upon them. They also assume responsibility for their actions and resulting outcomes. A willingness to consult with others while making decisions is also a characteristic of successful people with learning disabilities, and they also appear to be flexible in considering and weighing options. In contrast, others often do not recognize that situations can be altered or that multiple solutions may exist. Instead, they are either passive, making no decisions, or conversely, stick rigidly to a simplistic, rule-based decision even if it ultimately fails. Successful individuals on the other hand, take responsibility for both positive and negative outcomes of their decisions and actions (Raskind & Goldberg, 2019).

Another attribute is Perseverance. Many people with learning disabilities show great perseverance and keep pursuing their chosen path regardless of difficulties. They often describe themselves as not being a “quitter” and “never giving up”. However, successful individuals know when they need to quit. Although they hardly ever give up on general goals, they may

change the way they go about achieving it depending on the situation. These individuals can see and pursue alternative strategies until they find one that works, creating a better chance for success. On the other hand, other individuals are typically not flexible, and often fail to realize when it's time to reevaluate their strategies, or the goal itself. Successful individuals appear to learn from their hardships and agree that difficult situations are necessary for learning. Other individuals are often overwhelmed by adversity, back away from challenges, and give up much more easily and quickly than successful peers.

Goal-setting is another attribute. Successful individuals set goals that are specific, yet flexible so they can be changed to adjust to specific circumstances and situations. These goals cover a number of areas including education, employment, family, spiritual and personal development. In addition, successful individuals include strategies to help reach the goals. They also understand that the goal setting process is a step-by-step process. These goals are usually concrete, realistic, and attainable while other individuals usually have vague, unrealistic, or grandiose goals that are not in line with their strengths, weaknesses, or special abilities. For example, an individual having extreme problems with hand-eye coordination and spatial relations aspired to be an airline pilot, while another with severe reading, writing, and organization difficulties wanted to become an executive secretary. Both are unsuccessful at their attempts to reach these goals and experience frustration and stress as a result (Raskind & Goldberg, 2019).

Presence and use of effective support systems is the fifth attribute. Both successful and unsuccessful individuals with learning disabilities receive some form of support and assistance from others over the course of their lives. Guidance, support, and encouragement come from all the people in their lives. However successful individuals become more independent as they move

into adulthood. Oftentimes they find the roles switched, an individual who supported and encouraged them, now needs that same effort. Other individuals usually are unable to “cut the cord” and as they transition into adulthood and end up remaining highly dependent on others. The people who provide support to successful individuals with learning disabilities generally hold clear and realistic expectations regarding life goals and outcomes, guiding them to identify and achieve realistic goals without being harsh or judgmental. They were also able to help them change directions when attempting to achieve goals or modify the goals if necessary. Successful individuals with learning disabilities also actively seek the support of others. They don’t sit around quietly waiting for someone to ask if they need help, instead they take initiative and ask for help when they need it as well as accept it when offered (Raskind & Goldberg, 2019).

The last attribute is emotional coping strategies. All people with learning disabilities experience stress in their lives because of living with these disabilities. Stress can be experienced in school, work, home, and social life. Sometimes the stress may be so overwhelming that it leads to psychological difficulties like anxiety and depression. While all individuals with learning disabilities experience disability related stress, successful individuals seem to have developed effective means of reducing and coping with stress, frustration, and the emotional aspects of their learning disabilities. There are three components of successful emotional coping: Awareness of the situation that triggers stress; Recognition of developing stress; availability/access to and use of coping strategies. The strategies that successful individuals developed for reducing stress and avoiding psychological difficulties include: seeking counseling, asking others to do unmanageable tasks on the job, changing activities periodically so stress does not build up, expressing feelings, asserting oneself, utilizing peer support and encouragement, learning to ask for helps, planning ahead for difficult situations, staying away

from negative, or judgmental people, getting medication if needed, working out issues with friends and family, and sharing with sympathetic family members. While recognizing triggers and using coping strategies helps successful individuals with learning disabilities cope, unsuccessful people with learning disabilities report being blindsided by events that cause stress. When they are overly stressed or emotionally distraught, they have a lot of difficulty thinking of potential resources to help them reduce stress and regain stability (Raskind & Goldberg, 2019).

### **How to develop success attributes**

Research shows that self-awareness, proactivity, perseverance, goal-setting, the presence and use of effective support systems, and emotional coping strategies help lead people with learning disabilities to success. Although, there is no research that states how to teach these attributes. Yet, research does show several key components and areas that need to be considered in fostering success attributes in children with learning disabilities. Research suggests that self-awareness is made up of several components. These components must be addressed in any disability. They deal with both general self-awareness and awareness related specifically to the learning disability. These components include seeing if your child is; aware of her academic strengths and weaknesses, non-academic strengths and weaknesses, special talents and abilities, feelings, opinions, and values as well as if she is able to match activities to strengths and understand her specific learning disability, is able to compartmentalize, and use strategies to work around the learning disability (Raskind & Goldberg, 2019).

To develop general self-awareness, people with learning disabilities need to: understand what self-awareness is and its importance; develop awareness of personal strengths, weaknesses, and talents in various settings; gain awareness of their feelings, opinions, and personal values and how they relate to those of others; develop their own definition of success; and develop skills

to match their abilities to specific settings. To develop learning disability awareness, people with learning disabilities need to: develop an understanding of their specific learning disability and how it may affect their life; develop awareness of successful coping strategies to compensate for their learning disability; learn to accept and compartmentalize their learning disability. Usually, the development of self-awareness focuses almost completely on academic performance at school. However, to gain the highest level of self-awareness and acceptance, an individual must understand his or her strengths, weaknesses, special talents, desires, fears, and beliefs in a number of areas. These include psychological/emotional; physical; social; educational; communicative; and philosophical (personal values, ethics). Some activities to help parents and teachers foster self-awareness in their children/students include: working with the child to develop and discuss lists of their individual strengths, weaknesses, and special talents or interests in all areas; Use the words “strength”, “weakness”, “limitations”, and “special talents” to describe the behavior of everyone around; arrange for the child to talk to adults with similar issues about their experiences- struggles and accomplishments; and help the child choose potential jobs and careers that best match their abilities and discuss relevant choices (Raskind & Goldberg, 2019).

In individuals with learning disorders, it is also important to develop learning disorder awareness. To do this, these individuals should develop an understanding of their specific learning disorder and how it may affect their life. For example, if a person’s learning disorder is reading related then they should know their strengths and weaknesses and make notes of what they can and cannot do. Individuals with LD should also develop awareness of successful coping strategies to compensate for their learning disabilities. For example, in a work setting where the employee must read their tasks from a list and check them off, it may be helpful to have an audio

tape of the tasks at hand. This way, the job has more potential for success. Along with those, learning to accept and compartmentalize the learning disability helps develop self-awareness. Being able to accept the disorder as well as separate it from the person as an individual will make success more likely. Too often, the development of self-awareness focuses mostly on academic performance in school. Yet, to gain the highest level of self-awareness and acceptance, an individual must understand his or her strengths and weaknesses, special talents, desires, fears, and beliefs in numerous areas.

Some things children can do to help with the development of proactivity include participating in classroom and extracurricular activities, making decisions, and acting upon those decisions, understanding the advantages/disadvantages of making certain decisions, recognizing when a decision needs to be made, knowing how to evaluate the decisions, and being assertive and self-confident (Raskind & Goldberg, 2019).

### **Success in Students with Behavioral Disorders**

Schools are important systems when shaping the lives of youth. Students spend most of their day in the school setting. Students learn academic skills, social skills, and vocational skills that begin preparing them for their adult lives. Specifically, students with an EBD have much more difficult time transitioning to adult life than students without educational diagnosis due to higher drop-out rates (Carter, et al., 2009) and lack of integration and use of services within the community (Bullis & Cheney, 1999; Lane & Carter, 2006; Wagner & Blackorby, 1996). As evidenced, the transition for students with an EBD is challenged in many ways; legislation has been put in place by the United States Departments of Education to better serve students.

In school students begin to learn the skills and behaviors needed to become successful when they enter the adult world. Unfortunately, many students are ill equipped to enter this adult

work, and oftentimes their transition needs do not receive as much attention (committee on Disability in America, 2007). Research reviewed for this study has indicated many barriers that students with an EBD face when transitioning to life after high school. Many studies within the literature focused on work programs and others focused on the need yet to be addressed in the present day, such as programming, adequate assessment, support, social skills, and others. (Bradley et al., 2008; Bullis & Cheney, 2012). However, there was a gap in the research; the voices of students or perceived voices of students with an EBDs who are preparing for adult life have not been studied.

When planning for a student's transition from the structured high school environment to independent adulthood many areas, like employment, education, and independent living, have been the focus of attention. There are seven key domains: community areas of living, daily independent living, social functioning, employment, education, support, and personal skills. Community areas of living are important in this transition. An individual must be an active participant in the community. Another area of importance for successful transitions from high school to adult life is independent living skills. Daily independent living, which include activities like maintaining adequate health, and housing and quality of life is key for success (Carrab et al. (2005). In addition to skills required for adult life, social functioning within the adult system is crucial for success. Social functioning, like participating in extracurricular activities, interpersonal relationships, the ability to participate in leisure activities and general social abilities are necessary to function in adulthood (Bullis & Cheney, 1999). Employment and education are important factors in the process of transitioning into adulthood. Another factor to cater to this is career-oriented education, graduation, a plan to participate in

post-high school education or training, vocational courses, time spent in general education rooms, and tutoring (Bullis & Cheney, 1999).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, teacher collaboration is crucial to student success. It is completely up to the student to meet their goals and objectives. However, the teacher is expected to design an effective educational plan ending in success for the students. Teachers should be taking time to examine students' progress and hardships individually. This way, the students who need accommodations are not looked over and left behind. It is easy to overlook a learning disability when students react to their educational weaknesses with aggressive or inappropriate behaviors. Too often, these behaviors give teachers the impression that the student is simply "bad". That is not the case, those students need to be assessed for learning and behavior disorders. By definition, a learning disorder is an information-processing problem that prevents a person from learning a skill and using it effectively. While behavior disorders involve a pattern of disruptive behaviors in children that last for at least six months and cause problems in school, at home, and in some social situations. Some individuals with LBD may find it harder than usual to check off their goals and transition to a new environment. It may be harder for them, however with the help of teachers, family, friends, counselors, and employers, all students have the potential to be successful in school, college, a career, or life in general.

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