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Learning Disabilities in the Higher Education Setting

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LEARNING DISABILITIES IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SETTING

by

Taylor Jessamy

B.A., Hampton University, 2009

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Master of Science Degree

Rehabilitation Institute

in the Graduate School

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

May 2012

RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

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in the field of Rehabilitation Administration and Services

Approved by:

Dr. Carl Flowers, Chair

Graduate School

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

April 10, 2012

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CHAPTER 1

Harris and Turkington (2003) stated that learning disabilities impact one in five children and one in seven adults. Every year 120,000 diagnoses occur in students. According to these authors approximately thirty five percent of students identified with learning disabilities drop out of high school. Learning disorders are also linked to low self esteem and delinquency. In addition, Isreal and Wicks-Nelson (2007) report that students with learning disabilities tend to enter a negative motivational cycle including academic failure, low sense of capabilities and the tendency to give up on achieving goals. Early learning deficiencies are linked to later educational and occupational status as well as psychological adjustments. The lack of knowledge on the available accommodations may deter a potential student with a learning disability from attending college. Consequently, a lack of enrollment of students with learning disabilities may prevent schools from expanding upon or actively promoting the available resources for students with learning disabilities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this literature review is to examine the available resources and accommodations that are available to students who have learning disabilities in the collegiate setting. In addition, this review will discuss federal regulations and program development as it relates to learning disabilities. This will be accomplished by an analysis of research that has been conducted involving the services provided to individuals with learning disabilities. These specific questions will be addressed:

1. What specific accommodations, services or compensatory strategies are available to students with learning disabilities in higher education settings?
2. What federal mandates are in place for students with learning disabilities at the collegiate level?
3. What are the components of program development regarding services for students with learning disabilities?

Definitions

The following is a list of definitions or terms that are used throughout the paper:

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): An acronym that represents Adequate Yearly Progress as established by the No Child Left Behind Act. The AYP requires all states to measure each public school's and districts established annual achievement targets for the state (Baker & Gully, 2004).

Autism Spectrum: Autism is a developmental disability that causes complications with social interaction and communication. Delay of skills can develop in infancy and last until adulthood. Autism spectrum refers to a group of disorders with similar features that can range from mild to profound (http://www.nichd.nih.gov).

Higher Education Settings: Post-secondary institutions including two or four year colleges, trade schools or vocational schools that award academic degrees or professional certificates.

Learning Disability (LD): a neurobiological disorder in which a person's brain works or is structured differently. This disability usually affects the basic processes involved in understanding or using language or mathematics. Ultimately, this disability may hinder skills such as spelling, listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing or mathematics. A learning disability of any specific form is not restricted by age or education level (Harris & Turkington, 2003). Some common forms of LD include dysgraphia; dyscalculia, dyslexia, and dyspraxia which are specific difficulties in forming letters, understanding math concepts, letter reversals and lack of language comprehension, respectively. Other forms of LD include Attention Deficit Disorders with or without hyperactivity (ADD / ADHD). There are also non-verbal learning disorders such as below average motor coordination and visual spatial organization. Most recently, some school have started categorizing poor social skills as a form of LD (http://www.washington.edu).

CHAPTER 2

Research Question #1: What specific accommodations, services or compensatory strategies are available to students with learning disabilities in higher education settings?

There are many principles that can facilitate a student in compensating for learning disabilities (LD). This chapter will introduce the reader to strategies, methods and services that have been found to benefit students with LD, as they pursue a post-secondary degree. These methods include, but are not limited to providing supplemental instruction, use of mentors or incorporating systematic instruction that is student-specific. All of these principles will be expanded upon within the chapter.

According to Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, and Barnes (2007), there are specific general principles used for instructing students with learning disorders. The goal for interventions for students with LD should be to supplement instruction. The first step in any intervention is to increase time on a task. Secondly, provide an instructional approach that is organized and offers opportunity for cumulative review of previously mastered content. Additionally, allow students to continuously monitor their own academic progress and set individual goals. Finally, incorporate peer mediation that creates opportunity for structured activities to enhance acquisition of knowledge.

Other steps include integrating systematic instruction so that foundational skills are strengthened. Incorporate instructional programs to achieve a set of competencies that are desirable for students with LD. This can be done by integrating interventions with general education practices and modifying the interventions on the basis of scientific evidence. When doing so, progress should be monitored frequently.

Fletcher et al. (2007) concluded the following about LD services. General education and special education must collaborate in order to bridge the gap between traditional learning and special education. More systematic screening and assessment and better teacher preparation will help facilitate this change. Fletcher and colleagues also suggested there should be a reform in special education to accommodate all students with LD.

Other services that pertain to assisting students with LD include employing mentoring services. A recent study found that young adults with learning disabilities tend to have better outcomes as they relate to academics, self-esteem and graduation rates when they have a naturally acquired mentor. According to Ahrens, Dubois, Lozano, and Richardson (2010), youth that were mentored by teachers or guidance counselors reported more positive outcomes than their non-mentored peers. The purpose of this study was to evaluate whether or not having a naturally acquired mentor during adolescence was associated with improved adult outcomes among youth with learning disabilities.

There were two primary objectives in this study. The first objective was to increase understanding of the descriptive characteristics of naturally occurring mentoring relationships among youth with learning disabilities. Features of these characteristics consider the type of mentor, relationship duration and the different types of support within the relationship. The second objective was to determine whether the presence of a natural mentoring relationship during adolescence is associated with improvements in young adult outcomes for youth with learning disabilities.

A youth was considered to be mentored if they answered yes to the following question; "other than your parents or step-parents, has an adult made and important positive difference in your life at any time since you were 14 years old?"(Ahrens et al., 2010; p. 209). Secondly,

indicated response would have to reveal that the mentor relationship had become important before the age of 18 and had lasted for at least two years.

Over a six year period, research was gathered through questionnaires and parent interviews. Most youth indicated that they received guidance and advice, emotional support and role-modeling. Results indicated that the mentored youth were more likely to attend post-secondary schools when compared to non-mentored youth. In addition, when compared to non mentored youth with learning disabilities, mentored youth were more likely to score above the median on the self-esteem scale.

Overall, Ahrens et al. (2010) reported in their research, that mentoring relationships with this population tend to have benefits that contribute to academic success. For example, there have been reported improvements in the participant's self-esteem, social competence, academic performance and educational attainment. Classroom conduct and performance were also measured and found to have improved. As a result, employability and job-training skills were increased as well as independent living skills in these youth with LD.

A different study, conducted by Allsopp, Minskoff, and Bolt (2005), indicated the following steps would be helpful when working with students that have learning disabilities. More specifically, an individualized strategy instruction model which is designed to assist postsecondary students with learning disabilities that would incorporate the following; informal assessment of a student's individual learning needs that is tied to learning a strategy. However, results from formal evaluations tend to lack the specific information on the disability.

An alternative to find out this information is to create a questionnaire, asking students to assess themselves in the areas of organization, test taking, study skills, note taking, reading and writing. This is done by selecting learning strategies that meet the unique needs of each student

based on the results of the questionnaire. Teach learning strategies using systematic explicit instruction within the context of the classes that the student is taking. It has been found that students with LD and ADHD have difficulty applying learning strategies on their own. Therefore, provided instruction must be explicit and systematic so that students can learn to apply strategies effectively. Finally, Allsopp et al.(2005) states that one should evaluate the impact of the individualized strategy instruction model by qualitative and quantitative analysis.

This particular study focused on 46 participants who received individualized strategy instruction by graduate students in special education. Of these participants, 76 percent of the participants attended a four year public university, 15 percent attended a small four year private university. Nine percent of the participants attended a community college. This was a three year assessment of course specific strategy instruction for college students with LD and ADHD.

The qualitative analysis of this study indicated two important factors related to the success of the student. The first factor included independent use of strategies. These strategies are discussed above. An example of a strategy used would be the RAPQ method. This strategy was used specifically for memory retrieval related to reading text. In this method, a student would R- read a paragraph or section. A- ask what the main ideas are. P- put the ideas in their own words. Finally, the last step, Q- ask questions about the readings (Allsopp et al., 2005).

As the participant would have questions about the readings, he or she would write a question about the main idea on the front of a cue card and write the answer on the back. This would aid the student in studying, and result in a more successful learning experience. Other strategies would include the use of mnemonics, and color coding important words or steps. Finally, thinking out loud and following modeling of instructors were strategies that were used in this program. According to Allsopp and colleagues, students would ideally receive these types of

independent strategies, as mentioned above, during secondary instruction. Consequentially, students would continue to receive these instructions throughout post- secondary instructions.

The second important factor was the supportive nature of the instructor-student relationship. Common feedback related to the supportive nature of the instructor was that the students instructor valued them as individuals who had learning needs that were unique to them. That particular variable was especially important to the 83 percent of participants who were on academic probation or suspension. The areas that were addressed in this study were organization, test taking, study skills, note taking, reading, writing, mathematics and advanced thinking. The researchers also indicated students on academic probation and suspension significantly improved grades and sustained this improvement over time.

Various areas of support should be addressed when considering the needs of students with LD in college settings. An article found in the Chicago Tribune that was authored by Dr. Michael McManmon entitled the *Top 10 Areas of Support for College Students with Learning Differences*, indicated the following areas of support that can help the LD population transition successfully to college (McManmon, 2011). One main area that was mentioned in the article was executive functioning and scheduling. The author states that working in small groups and using visual prompts will facilitate the skills of young adults. Another idea under executive functioning and organization is to develop organizational and follow through strategies for the students' academic schedule.

McManmon (2011) found that scheduling tutorials and study groups that meet on regular basis usually benefit students with LD. Individual and group tutoring sessions that meet throughout the week will keep students on track. The support should be personalized and routine and should help students to build competency in college courses. Students should be encouraged

to consistently attend tutoring sessions. This will bring stability and the ability to predict and plan for challenges.

The author suggested having social competency as the third key area of support. He encourages students to interpret what others are thinking and feeling by assuming another's perspective. Interpreting facial expressions can be challenging for individuals on the autism spectrum. He also noted that individuals with ADHD can have a challenging time appreciating alternative perspectives. To compensate for this, strategies can be used such as having the students' participate in small group sessions to discuss perspectives and practice real- life social situations. Practice ideas for these types of scenarios include reciprocal conversation, eye contact and spatial awareness.

The fourth factor is sensory integration. Students with processing delays or attention deficits tend to benefit from having a holistic understanding of their environmental factors and sensory issues that affect their performance. Examples of this include finding the best seat in their classroom, identifying distraction- free environments and preparing for sensory triggers such as heat, cold or noise. As a result, students can be prepared and receptive to the start of class. Internship placements are also a good way to bridge a student's transitions from school to work. A counselor, teacher or educational therapist can assist with assessing their interest and goals and finding an appropriate work environment. Community service was determined to be another factor that will allow students to gain a sense of accomplishments and gain an exposure to different fields and various work settings.

McManmon (2011) identified wellness as an additional factor. A healthy lifestyle can help students reduce stress and offer students the opportunity to function at a healthy level. A good diet and regular exercise can increase energy levels and promote positive social behaviors.

Another key transitioning component is reframing. Reframing is a practice that helps students understand the relationship between behavior and emotion. Reframing is a major contribution that is considered a pro- social activity and will promote the ability to understanding themselves and adding daily structure to their lives.

Relationship developments is an additional feature that students with learning differences whom may have had limited exposure to healthy relationship development lack. Many students with learning differences may need basic instruction in common strategies such as initiating friendships and conversations and learning how and when to be intimate. These are skills that are especially crucial to students that are transitioning to college as dorm life is a huge social component of college.

The final component that is an area of support for students with LD transitioning into college is individual therapy. Individual therapy can support students with social anxiety and sensory issues. Individual therapy can encourage skills such as developing typical college friendships, learning how to work in a group or asking a professor for help during office hours. Cognitive behavior therapy in individual counseling can promote students having a sense of independent problem solving skills and having a good handle on their emotions (MacManmon, 2011).

Research Question # 2: What federal mandates are in place for students with learning disabilities at the collegiate level?

There have been many laws and regulations that were established by the federal government to assure equality for persons with disabilities in work and school settings. This chapter will review these mandates and discuss how they relate specifically to students with learning disabilities. More specifically, the Rehabilitation Act, 29 U.S.C. § 794 et seq. (1973), Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 12101 (1990), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1400 (1990), and the No Child Left Behind Act 20 USC 6301(2001) will be addressed as noted by the Federal Disability Law Guide (http://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm). This chapter will provide an overview of each act and discuss its benefits or hindrance to students with learning disabilities.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was enacted to protect the rights of individuals on the basis of a disability within programs that are funded by the federal government. Although the Rehabilitation Act has multiple sections to it, Section 504 would be the most applicable to students with learning disabilities. This section forbids organizations and employers from excluding or denying individuals with disabilities the right to participate in, and have access to program benefits and services (http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights/resources). Section 504 requires recipients to provide students with disabilities, appropriate educational services designed to meet the individual needs of students to the same extent that it provides to students without a disability.

In accordance with the Rehabilitation Act, a student is considered to have a disability when they are determined to: (a) have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits

one or more major activities; or (b) has a record of such an impairment; or (c) be regarded as having such an impairment. In the college or university setting, a qualified student with a disability will meet the academic and technical standards requisite for admission or participation in the institution's educational program or activity (http://www2.ed.gov). Essentially, this act ensures that students with LD can attend any state college or university as long as they are qualified and receive adequate accommodations while decreasing the barriers of discrimination.

Another federally mandated act that provides protection for students is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Grant, Barger-Anderson, and Fulcher (2004) states the ADA is a civil rights act that applies to almost any entity with the exception of churches and private clubs. This act was signed in 1990 under the Bush Administration. The primary purpose of the ADA was to reduce discrimination of persons with disabilities in private and public sectors (Grant et al., 2004). The ADA also provides reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities when accessing goods and services.

There are five titles that encompass the ADA. Titles I through V address discrimination in places of employment and government agencies, including public schools, public accommodations, telecommunications and miscellaneous provisions, respectively. (Grant et al., 2004). Many higher education institutions have made great efforts towards compliance. This is due to the publicity, civil rights laws and an increase in student's requesting accommodations. Unfortunately, the act is not as detailed in terms of regulations as it is with elementary and secondary level schools.

Considering the total number of students identified with having a disability as they enter freshman year of college, 35 percent have a learning disability (Grant et al., 2004). The 1999 Federal Register has established criteria for identification of students with a specific learning

disability. The criteria include: (a) presence of academic difficulties; (b) perceptual disabilities; (c) brain injury; minimal brain dysfunction; (e) dyslexia; and (f) developmental aphasia. Some believe that request for learning disabilities are unreasonable. This belief stems from the idea that the prevalence of students classified as learning disabled, reflect an overrepresentation and misdiagnosis of low-achieving students. Supporters of this idea believe that as a result, there is a reduction in the amount of resources available to serve students with true learning disabilities (Grant et al., 2004).

According to Grant and colleagues (2004), an example of the above idea was demonstrated in a lawsuit entitled *Guckenberger vs. Boston University.* Boston University (BU) is traditionally known for providing accommodations to students with learning disabilities. However, in 1995, the Provost of BU, Jon Westling openly spoke against providing accommodations for students with learning disabilities. He believed that students with learning disabilities would rather ask for help then try and do their own work. The Provost established new procedure for allowing objectionable accommodations for learning disabilities and retesting procedures, paid for by the student with a fee of up to $1,000. Additionally, the Disabilities Student Services office was staffed with unqualified individuals. Students of BU filed a suit against the school and won the case. The court ordered accommodations to be reconsidered as being fair and a waiver was accepted in place of the retesting procedures. The court also determined that Mr.Westling and his staff had biases against persons with learning disabilities (Grant et al., 2004). To date, some professors regard accommodations as an extra burden on themselves as well as an unfair advantage to students who are without a learning disability. However, the ADA and other mandates are in place to protect against discrimination towards students with any type of disability.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that ensures educational services to youth with disabilities throughout the nation. Youth ages three to 21 are covered under part "B" of the act. The reauthorization of IDEA was signed into law by the Bush Administration in 2004. According to act regulations, there are procedures in place for identifying students with specific learning disabilities. The United States Department of Education's website specifies that the act has explicit mandates for identifying learning disabilities. There are many people involved in the process of identifying LD amongst the student, specifically, "additional group members". These additional group members include the students' parents or a team of qualified professionals. IDEA also specifies criteria for determining a specific learning disability and describing the required observation (http://www.ideapartnership.org).

The IDEA Act uses a team of multi-disciplinary professionals to get involved in students progress throughout secondary school. Individual Education Plans (IEP) are put in place for students with learning disabilities. These plans include a benchmark of short term objectives for each student within the general curriculum, measurable long-term goals and a statement of special education and related services to be provided (http://www.ideapartnership.org). Schools are held accountable for monitoring, enforcing and annual protection, as they provide for students with disabilities. Ultimately, improving educational results and functional outcomes for all students with disabilities and ensuring that public agencies meet the program requirements under part "B" of the act, are the long term goals of this act (http://www.ideapartnership.org).

The final act to be discussed in addressing this research question is the No Child Left Behind Act. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was signed into law in January 2002 under the Bush Administration. It is regarded by some as the most significant federal education policy

initiative in its generation. NCLB is a revision of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as introduced by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The objectives of NCLB are to support higher student achievement, stronger public schools and a better- prepared teacher workforce (Baker & Gulley, 2004).

The ultimate goal of the NCLB is to raise national student achievement and eliminate the achievement gap between students from varying backgrounds. It is estimated that four million students attend over 8,000 public schools that are not educating students to meet state academic standard (Baker & Gulley, 2004). Richards and Dooley (2004) state that NCLB is based on four principles designed to increase educational outcomes for schools. Those principles are as follows: *accountability, local control, highly qualified teachers* and *research based education practices*. *Accountability* is the determination of each school by the standards of achievement, a system created to measure the results, especially in reading and math. The *local control* is a principle that eliminates many federal educational programs, which gives more control to each state to make decisions at the local level. *Highly qualified teachers* comprise the third principle. This principle is the intention to train and retain highly qualified teachers, while raising the minimum qualifications of paraprofessionals in title I schools. The final principle, *research based education*, requires schools to use scientifically based research to positively influence public school reading levels(Richards & Dooley, 2004).

The NCLB does not define students with disabilities. More specifically, it fails to address students with LD as a subcategory. The assumption is that students with disabilities addressed by NCLBA are those also defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Essentially, students with LD are categorized along with students with disabilities in general, who receive services through IDEA. According to the IDEA, a student with a disability is one

with mental retardation, hearing or visual impairments, speech and language impairment, emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments or specific learning disabilities who by reason thereof, needs special education and related services(Richards & Dooley, 2004).

In Burkhardt, Obiakoro, and Rotatori (2004), the authors state: "The United States government will judge all schools by one measure and one measure alone whether every boy and every girl is learning- regardless of race, family background, or disability status" (pg. 94). Students learning capabilities are measured by goals and objectives within the curriculum. However, for students with learning disabilities, their achievements have been determined by completions of goals and objectives stated within their individualized education plans (IEP) and not necessarily within standards that are set in the general curriculum.

The belief that students with LD should have access to the general curriculum is supported by both NCLBA and the Individuals with disabilities act (IDEA), as stated by Burkhardt et al. (2004). Standard based reform has promoted the fact that students with disabilities should be included in state assessments, which will essentially transform the curriculum to meet the needs of all students. According to Burkhardt et al., in order for students with LD to have access to the general curriculum, three main components must be met as mandated by the U.S. Department of Education. There must be high expectations for student achievement and learning must be promoted. Systematic and appropriate assessment must be enforced. Instructional accommodations must be used. Finally, access to a full range of secondary education curricula and programs must be ensured.

Research Question # 3: What are the components of program development regarding services for students with learning disabilities?

In the past, socioeconomic status and learning aptitude would determine where an individual would attend school. Now, do to federal mandated accommodations and developmental programs many more students can be admitted to institutions of higher learning. According to Obi (2004), colleges and universities offer an age- appropriate, integrated environment in which students can expand personal, social, and academic abilities, leading to an expansion of career goals and employment options. However, college and universities tend to lack consistency in the way that the institutions provide services to students with LD. In addition, some students tend to lack the skills necessary to transition from secondary to post-secondary education. This often results in under-prepared students who lack college readiness. This chapter seeks to expand information pertaining to program development for LD services on college campuses and will discuss examples of universities that offer programs strictly dedicated to LD.

Programs for LD have been around for a number of years, they were often labeled as developmental studies or learning assistance programs. Since 1978, postsecondary institutions have experienced a significant increase of students enrolling with a learning disability. The statistic of 1.2 percent of entering first time, full time students increased to 3.5 percent a decade later. Fundamentally, of the 1.6 million students enrolled in college, almost 155,000 were reported to have disabilities and almost 59,000 of those students were considered learning disabled (Obi, 2004). This increase of enrollment amongst students with learning disabilities can be contributed to acts such as the ADA or IDEA for example. Secondly, students are aspiring to pursue an occupation that requires postsecondary education. The third attributing factor includes

the idea that the number of students with disabilities continuing their education may be due to the enhanced educational requirements for jobs. For example, the economy has shifted from a manual labor workforce to a science and technology based workforce (Obi, 2004).

However, considering all of the above factors, students with LD may still find themselves ill-prepared for college. This may be due to a lack of knowledge in subject content, poor organizational skills and time management, poor test taking abilities and low self-esteem (Obi, 2004). Once a student is diagnosed with LD, it is the student's responsibility to disclose their learning disability (Hadley, 2007). Appropriate documentation must be provided in order for a student to receive their particular services as well.

After being accepted to the university or college of his or her choice, the student is generally required to provide documentation of their disability with the office with students with disabilities. The documentation should validate the need for services based on the students current level of functioning in the educational setting. Laws such as Rehabilitation Act and Americans with Disabilities Act assure services to students. However, the students are still required to self-advocate as it relates to the students understanding of the disability and articulating reasonable need for academic accommodations (Hadley, 2007).

A recent study found that students benefit from direct services as they relate to LD. In this particular research, information was collected on individual student artifacts, individual interviews, and focus groups. Artifacts were comprised of class schedules, copies of written assignments for their class syllabi and tutoring reports. Focus group questions were based on developing competence. Students discussed how they felt about challenges presented to them and expressed feelings about the services they received.

Students also discussed how they perceived themselves developing the skills needed for college level work. The students indicated that they found it necessary to continue using academic services as they transition from high school to higher education settings. All students agreed on the increased demands of college writing expectations, compared to high school. As these particular students integrated into the institution, students sought extra support for extended times for tests, writing assistance and note-taking assistance.

All of the students labeled themselves with test anxiety but stated having a sense of comfort in knowing they could take their time to finish a test and have more time with extensive writing. Regarding note-taking, students found that class notes were an essential accommodation because students were unclear as to what to write down during class lecture. Some students even found it necessary to bring a tape-recorder to class or ask a professor or classmate for his or her notes. Students expressed interest in receiving class notes without extra attention being brought to them and revealing that they have a learning disability. Additionally, students expressed interest in having one place where they could have distraction free rooms and extended time, pick up notes and meet with tutors, (Hadley, 2007).

Obi (2004) addresses questions that students should consider when transitioning to a post-secondary school. When students with LD are looking to attend college, it is important that they consider or have a greater understanding of the following. (a) Does the college offer specific services for students with LD? If so, the full time or part-time coordinator of services should be contacted (b) Does the curriculum design include a study skills course work or remedial and basic skills classes? (c) Are there feedback systems from professors to coordinator services for students with learning disabilities? (d) Does the college or department furnish services such as recorded lectures or provide books on tape? Since federal mandates require many of these

services to be furnished by the school, it is important for the student to understand how to go about obtaining these services.

Students are urged to find out if the college mandates services such as a modified admissions process. For example, some schools will have a pre-college program or one that is similar if the student is admitted to the university on a probationary basis. The student should know if the college allows for visits to the college classroom in advance of enrolling or allow for advanced acquisition of required reading assignments and varied testing options. Other inquiries include: Does the college supply services such as educators to assist with the needs of students with LD? Is there guidance in structuring the students workday and does the student have access to early registration procedures? (Obi, 2004).

In order for students with LD to successfully integrate into the traditional college setting, there needs to be a consistent method for how institutions provide services to these students. Strategies for innovative approaches that ensure successful services for students with LD include the following. According to Kroeger and Schuck (1993), creating a responsive environment calls for organizing and structuring services, clarifying available sources and allocating funds for services. In addition, consistently evaluating services and developing models for collaborating with faculty would elevate the program services, Obi (2004). There are four key recommendations for building a responsive campus community to provide appropriate services to students with LD. These areas consist of reviewing the structure of the institution, establishing policies, promoting awareness and collaboration with administrators and staff (Obi, 2004).

Obi (2004) outlines the process of establishing LD services with the following crucial key areas. Reviewing the structure of the institution consist of ensuring that written college and university policy statements regarding services for students with LD are consistent with the

mission of the institution. Ensure that campus literature has statements of equal access as well as the procedures that students with LD must follow to request services. Finally, consider housing the office for disability support services in the academic affairs office or an equivalent administrative office. This will ensure that effective reporting and support are supplied within the facility.

Establish policies to ensure confidentiality of the student information. Policies and procedures should be written including appeal processes, regarding students with LD in the areas of admission, documentation, curriculum adjustment and academic accommodations. Make policies and procedures available to the entire campus community through student handbooks, catalogs and websites. Promoting awareness will establish a mechanism for dissemination of information about learning disabilities to students, administration, and service professionals. This information should also be shared within the campus community. Faculty, staff , students and administration should be familiar with laws governing accommodations for students with learning disabilities. The individuals who make the decisions regarding accommodations should be designated.

The fourth key element mentioned above was collaboration. This can be done through building campus expertise through collaboration and consultation. A team of service providers should be established for decision making in regards to admission, adjustments, documentation and program accommodations for students with LD. Faculty and staff should also ensure to remain current on the knowledge regarding LD, legislation and accommodations. The final goal of collaboration would be to provide cost-effective, reasonable accommodations for students with LD (Obi, 2004).

Bender (2004) described the following as adequate ways LD departments could function. The following services can ensure that adequate services are provided to students with LD. The department should arrange for tape-recorded lectures. Copies of class notes from others can be obtained and distributed amongst students with the program. Clinicians or case managers can also provide assistance in time management in order to plan for projects, exams and weekly assignments. Encourage an appropriate load of courses or a lighter load of credit hours per semester. Provide assistance in completing homework or any other daily assignment. Arrange for the use of highlighted books or audio-books, previously known as "books on tape". Dedicate a faculty member who is always willing to assist students in their classes. Finally, instruct the student in learning strategies that promote meta-cognitive understanding the material to be learned.

Students who are used to the special education environment or have an IEP or receive accommodations in a classroom setting, may have challenges as they transition to a less structured environment. The college setting requires most students to possess diligence, self-control, self-evaluation, decision-making and goal setting. Often, students are not prepared and lack those characteristics (Trojano, Liefield, & Trachtenburg, 2010).

However, many comprehensive programs that are designed to promote independence, self-esteem and self-advocacy are readily available today, more than ever. These programs range in the support they offer. They are usually programs that are established strictly for compliance purposes or complete and comprehensive programs that offer structure and support. A recent study investigated the connection between support centers and college success.

The focus of the research were on eight aspects of the program: textbook reading, note taking, test preparation, test taking, writing strategies, research skills, time management and self-

advocacy. In addition to small group work and individual group work that the students received, they also had access to testing accommodations and program modifications. The results indicated that students who consistently attended academic support center appointments had higher rates of success than those who did not attend as often or did not attend at all. According to this research, college success is defined as the following: (a) graduation from the college and (b) higher grade point average (GPA). Conversely, students who had failing grade point averages typically attended fewer than 50 percent of scheduled appointments at the learning center. In conclusion, the results generated by this study demonstrate that the degree of learning support is a good predictor of graduation from college, according to Trojano et al. (2010).

Hadley (2007) describes the following as necessary components of a comprehensive postsecondary learning disabilities program. The components are diagnostic testing, academic advising, subject area tutoring and counseling. Structured programs would offer these services and would be staffed by LD professionals, advisors and tutors. Critical aspects of LD programs are individualized, based on diagnostic data and coordinated by professionals with specialization in learning disabilities.

New student orientation programs in connection with the admissions office and the disability support office can have a major implication to the LD population. It can also impact how the LD population will acclimate to the university and advance through their courses. Finally, higher learning institutions should train faculty, staff and students to deal with a diverse student population, so that students with LD or any disability can feel included in the campus community (Hadley, 2007).

According to its website, the University of Indianapolis has a program specifically catered to students with learning disabilities. This program is called the Build program. It was

established in 1990 and is designed for students who have already been diagnosed with LD, ADHD or Aspergers Syndrome and are looking for a college education. However, the potential student must have already met the criteria for admission and have a full scale intelligence above 80.

This program provides accommodations for its students which include alternative exam formats, extended time on exams and distraction free rooms to take the exam. The staff can also negotiate with the professors for their students to get extended time on papers and projects and taped lectures. Furthermore, accommodations that Build students receive include note takers and books on tape (http://build.uindy.edu/).

The University of Indianapolis Build Program lists additional resources on their website. These resources are available to the general public as well as students, faculty and staff. These resources include talking points for the professor. This gives an outline or guide for apprehensive students to approach their professor about having a learning disability. There are also self advocacy principles. An example of these principles would be practicing how to approach, explain and negotiate classroom accommodations and needs. Having a student keep a copy of all written communication regarding their education would be another example of self-advocacy principles. Self advocacy also includes learning about individual disabilities, needs, strengths and weaknesses and having the ability to describe them. Finally, the website gives a direct link that describes the legal rights and responsibilities of students with disabilities (http://build.uindy.edu/).

The Achieve Program at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, is a program that was created for students who have been admitted to SIUC and have learning disabilities. This program has been in existence since 1978. The program is affiliated with university through the

Clinical Center, but is separate from the Disability Support Services office. Through the Achieve

program, students who have already been diagnosed with learning disabilities, attention deficit

disorders and autism spectrum disorders can receive accommodations. These accommodations

include a note taker for each class, test proctor, organizational assistance books on tape and a

tutor for most courses (http://achieveprogram.siuc.edu).

A unique aspect of the Achieve Program is that it provides an individual case manager

for each student. The case manager is responsible for monitoring academic progress and serving

as a liaison between students, parents and professors. Students meet with their case manager on a

weekly basis and discuss overcoming barriers associated with LD, self-advocacy and strategies

to help improve academic performance. Students in the Achieve program also have access to a

computer lab, resource lab with general tutors who are available and a math lab

(http://achieveprogram.siuc.edu).

CHAPTER 3

This research served as an investigation of the various forms of learning disabilities and

its impact on academic and vocational success. More specifically, this literature focused on

accommodations and resources that are available in the higher education setting for students with

learning disabilities. In addition, this review was a source of information regarding rights for

students with learning disabilities and the responsibilities of individuals who are diagnosed with

a learning disability from a legal and ethical standpoint. This project has aimed to discuss the

most beneficial services, strategies, or sources of motivation for students that have learning

disabilities in the collegiate setting. Finally, this research discussed components of program

development for learning disability related services and federal mandates that contribute to their

regulations.

This review introduced the reader to compensatory strategies that were beneficial to

students with LD. This included incorporating supplemental instruction which entails self-

monitoring of skills and progress and peer mediation. Employing mentoring services were

discussed, in effort to gain better outcomes relating to academics, self-esteem and graduation

rates when the students have a naturally acquired mentor. Additionally, teaching learning

strategies using systematic explicit instruction so that students with LD can learn to apply

learning tactics on their own. Organization and social competency were also found to be key

elements to success as well as sensory integration and a healthy lifestyle to support students with

LD as they transition into college.

Federal mandates were discussed in this review including the following. Section 504 of

the Rehab Act provides assurance of appropriate educational services designed to meet the

individuals needs of students with disabilities to the same extent that it provides to students

without a disability. The ADA is designed to reduce discrimination of persons with disabilities in private and public sectors. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures educational services to youth with disabilities throughout the nation. As it relates to students with learning disabilities, individuals education plans (IEP's) are provided with objectives and goals within the general curriculum, as well as statement of special education and services. The No Child Left Behind is designed to support higher student achievement, stronger public schools and better-prepared teacher workforce.

This review also discussed the transitioning skills necessary for college matriculation. Many students have difficulty transitioning to post-secondary education due to lack of knowledge in subject content, poor organizational skills, time management, poor test taking and low self-esteem. Students are encouraged to provide appropriate documentation so they can receive individual services. Suggestions for students to transition to post-secondary education were also made, including locating services on campus, contacting service coordinators and self-advocating on campus.

Finally, policies and procedures were discussed regarding program development for students with LD. These ideas include campus wide dissemination of information about LD services, housing LD programs in the same building as disability support services and the student affairs office. LD program administrators were also encouraged to stay current with federal mandates and confidentiality regulations. The research stated that critical aspects of LD programs are individualized, based on diagnostic data and coordinated by professionals with specialization in learning disabilities. The literature review concluded by discussing two examples of programs that are strictly dedicated to providing services for students with learning disabilities in the higher learning setting.

There is a lack of available information on the amount of students who have a learning disability at the collegiate level. There is also a shortage of information on specific accommodations that may be available such as the amount of tutoring, test proctoring, note takers, audio books or support services for students that have already been diagnosed prior to entering college. Suggestions for future research include accumulating more statistics about LD services offered at each college and university and how they impact students' grade point average, retention and graduation rates. Finally, future research should indicate how federal regulations influence services being offered to students as well as program development for LD services in the collegiate setting.

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Research Paper Title:
    Learning Disabilities in the Higher Education Setting

Major Professor: Dr. Carl Flowers