

Date: August 21 2016
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Subject: Recommendations Regarding Research Completed

Purpose

The purpose of this notice is to inform you of our findings thus far and to make suggestions for informed protocol regarding the issue discussed: Preparing teachers to instruct potentially learning disabled students and communicate with parents when uncertain of the severity or even presence of a disability.

Summary

Parents and adult students, if they are aware, are expected to tell educators about mental/physical performance limitations. Teachers need this information to teach effectively. However, for a variety of reasons, this does not always occur. How then to prepare teachers to accommodate learning disabled students when they cannot be positively identified or even discussed as such, possibly because of a lack of diagnosis, denial, or failure to acknowledge or share information on the condition of the child by the parent?

This was the question that we addressed with this study, and the hope was that we could find some more cohesive and easily applied combinations of techniques for education. We spent a lot of time looking at the existing methods and overall situation when dealing with this issue. It is not an easy thing to educate students even when all of the methods are perfect. There are initial issues such as aspirations, home-life, and yes, aptitude. For most of the issues dealt with in education, teachers cannot prepare; but interestingly, when it comes to aptitude,

teachers can increase a student's abilities in certain circumstances. This can occur when students click with teachers due to certain techniques or just by personality. Further, though *learning styles* are regarded by some as ad hoc, there are many applicable positive possibilities for learning disabled students when applying certain *learning styles* skills. There are additional assistance measures found in most environments for students, but not all, and it hurts mainstreaming, which is a focus when it comes to special needs students.

In our research we were able to follow our schedule and adhere to the methods described. Although the work is not completed, individual teams have been hard at work solving this problem. We have acquired some information from all of the stages of our research and are now in the process of interpreting said information and resolving any inconsistencies. Further, we still have people looking into more information. A positive of working with true professionals is that they put in the extra work, so we've been fortunate in that regard.

Through our research, we have found that though *learning styles* are used more like the bone-saw than the scalpel, and this is a tragedy for many students. For the well-adjusted student, there are no special considerations or techniques that need to be employed. But for special needs students, these *learning styles* techniques can be applied to great effect when used deliberately and with care. Creating awareness for the proper applications of *learning styles* would be truly revolutionary in education, and whomever exposed and consolidated such revisions would be rewarded as such. There are also less well-known methods that are effective and should be considered in this capacity. Still, we have only broken ground on this research, and to be truly comprehensive, reaping the rewards of this promising revelation, it would benefit all parties involved to continue forward. Please consider our work thus far and decide on any considerations regarding format and usage as there are many options.

Introduction

As learning disabled students often go undiagnosed, it can be difficult for teachers to instruct students who may have gone undiagnosed without proper training. Further, different professionals are necessary for every stage of the process. Our research has found some potential shortcuts however. Many resources could be abbreviated into

a format that would allow for effective, ethically and legally responsible training. This has a variety of applications.

The stages of working with potentially learning disabled students involve diagnosis, communication, and strategising. Missteps in any of these efforts can potentially result in legal or financial trouble and/or failure to help a student in need. With these potential pitfalls, to avoid teachers from simply doing as little as possible so as to do no harm, effective methods for communication and education need to be compiled.

Through compiling existing research, consulting on the issues with those who've dealt with them, and finding the overlaps of positive methods, we've found some interesting results. Following are the specific methods we used, our results, conclusions that can be drawn therefrom, recommendations on what to consider in the future regarding this research, and a reference list of preexisting research that we made use of.

Program And Schedule

There are three stages of the process, each taking approximately one month, beginning at the start of what would be the summer break for education professionals. At the moment, we have begun Stage 3 and are interpreting our findings. We have reached some conclusions, but we are still finding and compiling more.

Stage 1. — Completed

Initial research, brainstorming, and defining of the problem among team members would take place from mid-June to mid-July.

Specifically we used online resources to find solutions to the various shapes of the problem as we saw it. We clarified what we saw and looked for the quickest and most versatile methods that would have nearly universal application.

Stage 2. — Completed

Surveying of concerned professionals, institutions, and family members of learning disabled students would occur from mid-July to mid-August.

We mostly used email correspondence, but we also made use of blogs, health service websites, and even specialised chat rooms. Questions were answered with zeal in almost all

cases; however, as to actual resources and lesson plans that may be of use in this regard, most people contacted were less helpful. Many health professionals consider their resources part of their paid services like teachers do with their created materials, so they prefer to keep these resources to themselves or even sell them.

Stage 3. - Initiated

Compilation and discussion of data and findings would occur from mid-August to mid-September. A period of time not exceeding six months following would be suggested to allow for peer review and corrections.

Results

1.

Our initial results have proven promising. There are already several methods to assist education of learning disabled students in mainstream classrooms. Though we've found that the separation of the various procedures such as liaisons by specialists in liaisons, diagnoses by specialists in diagnoses, and in-class assistance from special education specialists, is still the best way to make sure these students have the best opportunities, we realise that this is not always possible. These are all individual issues with individual fields, but since the onus so often falls to the teacher, methods of preparation can be made. We have found that providing certain material used to provide fundamental training to specialists in related fields can be of great assistance.

2.

It is also our finding that *learning styles* approaches to education are particularly useful for the actual education process, but teachers are not trained to use them in this way. *Learning styles* education processes are applied to all students so as to get the best out of every student. Although the usefulness of *learning styles* is controversial among researchers, it is nonetheless the standard focus for training and certifying teachers. With the continually growing definitions of disabilities and the variety of challenges in the classroom, these methods can be channeled effectively. Many special needs students, such as those with, for example, ADD or Asperger's, weren't considered learning/developmentally disabled so long ago. The line blurs, so the treatment must be a bit generic, but applied with care and at the educator's discretion.

Conclusions

In regard to our first discovery, it is important to be aware of various time limitations. That being said, resource limitations will not be a major issue in most circumstances. When they are, the most essential consideration is that educators will do what they can with what they have, and that includes information. Generally, the more easily accessible and reliable the information, the more it will be used. If there is training early on and documents that are provided rather than just made available, educators can inform themselves on what resources will be available to them in their unique circumstance.

Whether in dealing with parents of potentially learning disabled students, or with the students themselves, teachers should use appropriate resources in appropriate amounts. At the same time, they must remember that special education is a specialised field for a reason, and they can only do so much. We will have more on this subject and what effective means can be employed as our research develops.

As to *learning styles* it is important to look at the fact that researchers consider a healthy brain to work in certain ways, but it should be noted that there is variation that occurs naturally in the populace. Not only are some students undiagnosed, but students may also suffer from conditions yet undiscovered. There is also a push to reconsider disabilities like ADD as even existing, or at least being as prevalent or defined so broadly. With the mainstreaming of special needs students and the changing definitions of disabilities, we need to find a constant.

Though *learning styles* will hopefully continue to be revised and reinterpreted as all good ideas should be, the framework appears to be a good place to start due to its widespread application and support. Four common *learning styles* divisions of learners are verbalizers, visualizers, analytical and wholistic. These preferences can, in fact, correspond to various learning disabilities in some circumstances. For example, students with auditory processing disabilities can benefit from extra practice within the verbalizer type, but may benefit more from other methods, which they may be stronger with; students with focus related disabilities may benefit from a flashy image

under the visualizer type; and so on.

Focusing now on some common disabilities for learners, we can consider things from a perspective more consistent with this research, and probably more beneficial to the students who need it most. As common disabilities, dysgraphia and dyslexia would require a sufferer to have more of a focus on practice for skills related to writing and reading. Students with dyspraxia, likewise, should not be put in situations where their motor skills would be unfairly or dangerously challenged. Overall, it's important to consider the whole picture of education rather than individual skills, and to remember that while a student may be poor in one area, others will be better. Identifying those areas that need improvement and creating approaches to educating based on those areas and practices used for both *learning styles* and special needs education may complete the puzzle that we've begun to solve.

More importantly than the concept, though, are the specific activities which teachers can be trained in. If these activities place a focus on not only preference as they do now, but aptitude relating to mental processes and the limitations thereof, the application of *learning styles* can be refined and used to the benefit of special needs students. We will need to continue reaching out to teachers and families, asking for material and suggestions. As these are two occupations that are focused on caring for others, it's assumed that minimal or absent compensation of these parties will still net a wealth of positive information and material, which is ideal because since this is a specialised area, more specialists will need to be consulted.

Further, in continuing our research, we hope to continue to find the most effective of these, and continue to define/narrow down the discussed overlaps of *learning styles* student framework practices and specific special needs education practices.

Recommendation

In viewing our findings thus far, it appears that the initial definition and solution to the problem as predicted for research is only part of the solution. In addition to compiling information, staff training will be an extremely important element. *Learning styles* may be the key here because of its wide use and potential for application. It may perhaps be even more geared toward learning disabled

students than their counterparts. Using this wealth of information is a no-brainer; however, in the future, the neuroscientific community and education community need to work together to come to a consensus regarding the viability of *learning styles* for students. Until then though, using these techniques to the benefit of the undiagnosed learning disabled and applying them efficiently can be a useful focus, particularly in cases of undeterminate status regarding disabilities. In lieu of such training, viewing of information such as that which we've begun to compile would be extremely useful. It's also essential to cherry-pick techniques that are effective, so reviewing more activity-based websites and consulting specialists will continue to be useful. After all, it is only the trained professional who really knows how much time should likely be dedicated to difficult tasks for students rather than those that the student may find more palatable.

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