



# **Idanr** • Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region

*The right to learn, the power to achieve*



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Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region



# Agenda

- **What is a ‘Learning Disability’?**
  - LD Definition
  - Importance of Early Intervention
  - Signs of a potential LD
  - Strategies to support children with LD
- **Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region (LDANR)**
  - Who we are
  - Programs
  - Additional resources



What is a learning disability? You may be surprised to know that it is as not having the ability to understand or use what you learn or see, hear, or think, even though your intelligence is normal, and you are of average or above-average ability. You may have a learning disability in one or more of the following areas: reading, writing, or doing math. You may have a learning disability in one or more of the following areas: understanding oral or written information, organizing your thoughts, or remembering information. You may have a learning disability in one or more of the following areas: understanding oral or written information, organizing your thoughts, or remembering information. You may have a learning disability in one or more of the following areas: understanding oral or written information, organizing your thoughts, or remembering information.



# Ministry of Education – LD Definition

A 'Learning Disability' (LD) is a **neurodevelopmental disorder** that results in:

- The inability to process verbal/non-verbal information, with **intellectual abilities at least in the average range**
- (a) **academic underachievement inconsistent with their intellectual abilities** (at least in the average range) and/or (b) academic achievement that can be maintained only with extremely high levels of effort and/or additional support
- difficulties in one or more of the following: reading (dyslexia), writing, math, work habits, learning skills.



*Source: Ministry of Education PPM-8 (2015)*

# Exclusion of other causes

A LD is NOT the result of:

- Hearing and/or vision impairments
- Intellectual disabilities (e.g., Autism, Mild Intellectual Disability, Down Syndrome etc.)
- Socio-economic factors
- Cultural differences
- Lack of proficiency in the language of instruction
- Lack of motivation/effort
- Gaps in school attendance



LD is what  
I have,  
NOT  
who I am.

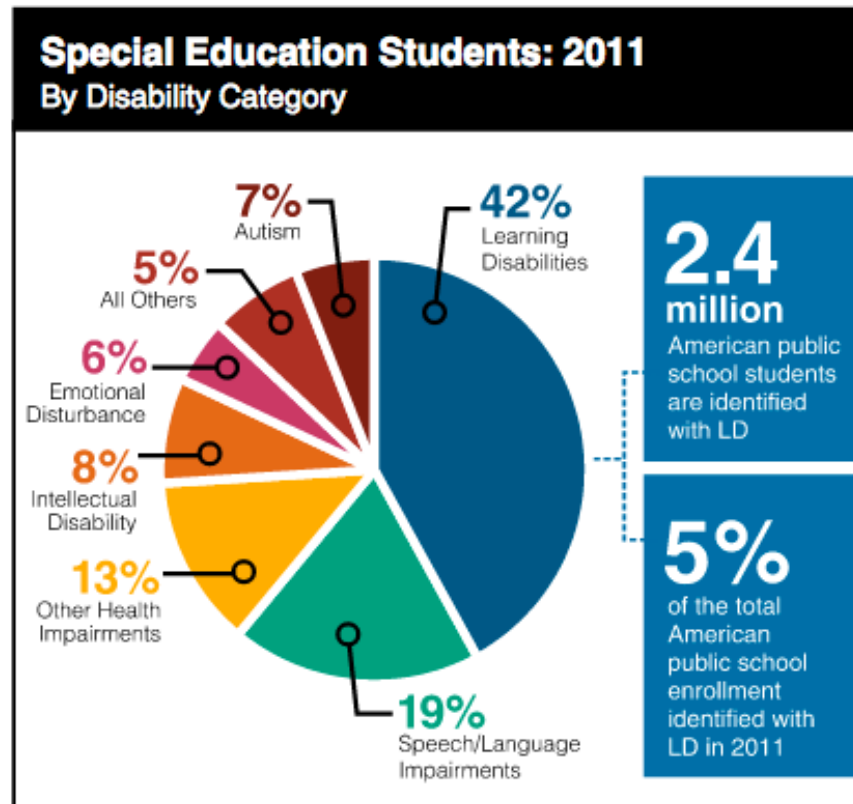


Did you know...?

**1 in  
10** Canadian  
kids has a  
learning  
disability



# Prevalence of LD



Source: IDEA Part B Child Count, Ages 6–21. Does not include Developmental Delay category (allowable to age 9).



1-2 children in every classroom have a  
learning disability...

*...and it's invisible!*





**MYTH:** LDs are all the same.

**FACT:** LDs are complicated and affect each person differently.



# Types of LDs

- **Dyslexia** (schools refer to as Reading Disability)
- **Dyscalculia** (math)
- **Dysgraphia** (writing)
- **Nonverbal LD** (not related to language)
- **Executive Functioning** (organization)

DID YOU  
KNOW?

1 in 10 children and youth live with a **LEARNING DISABILITY**.  
80% of these kids are struggling with a **READING DISABILITY**.



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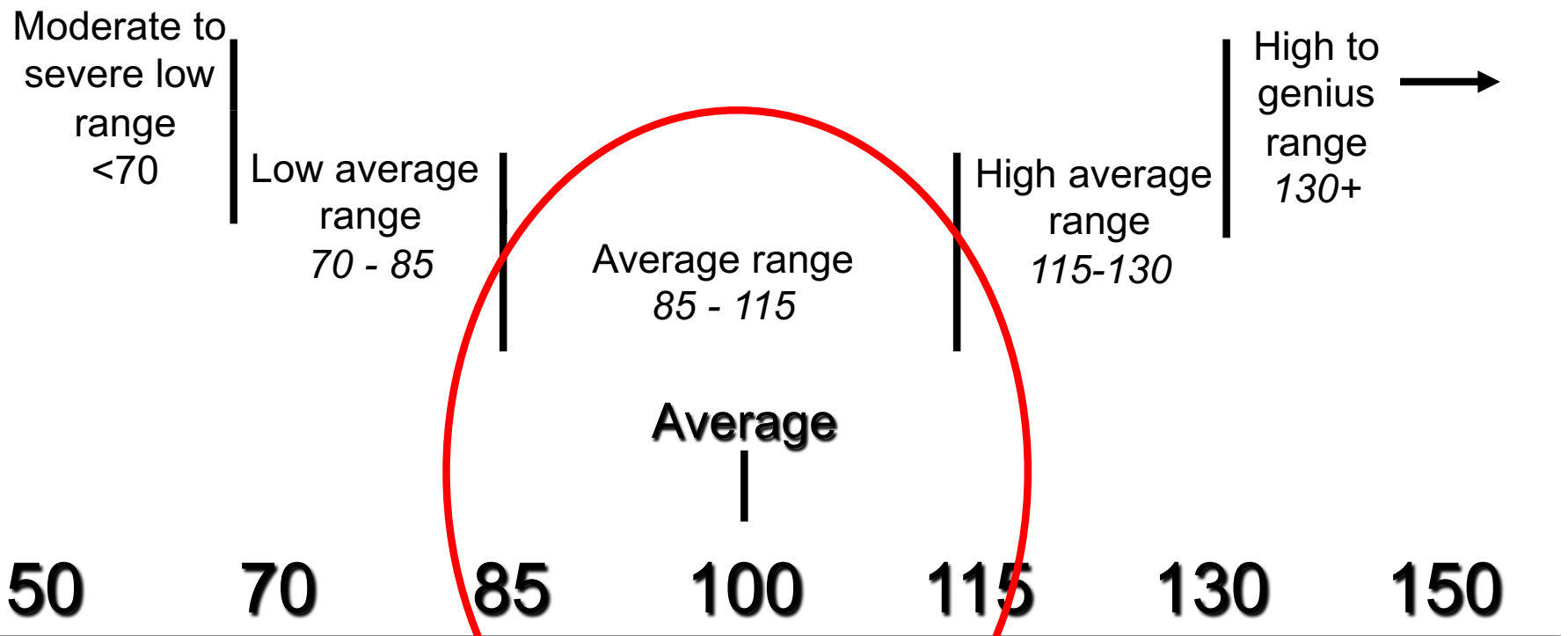


# What **DYSLEXIA** looks like



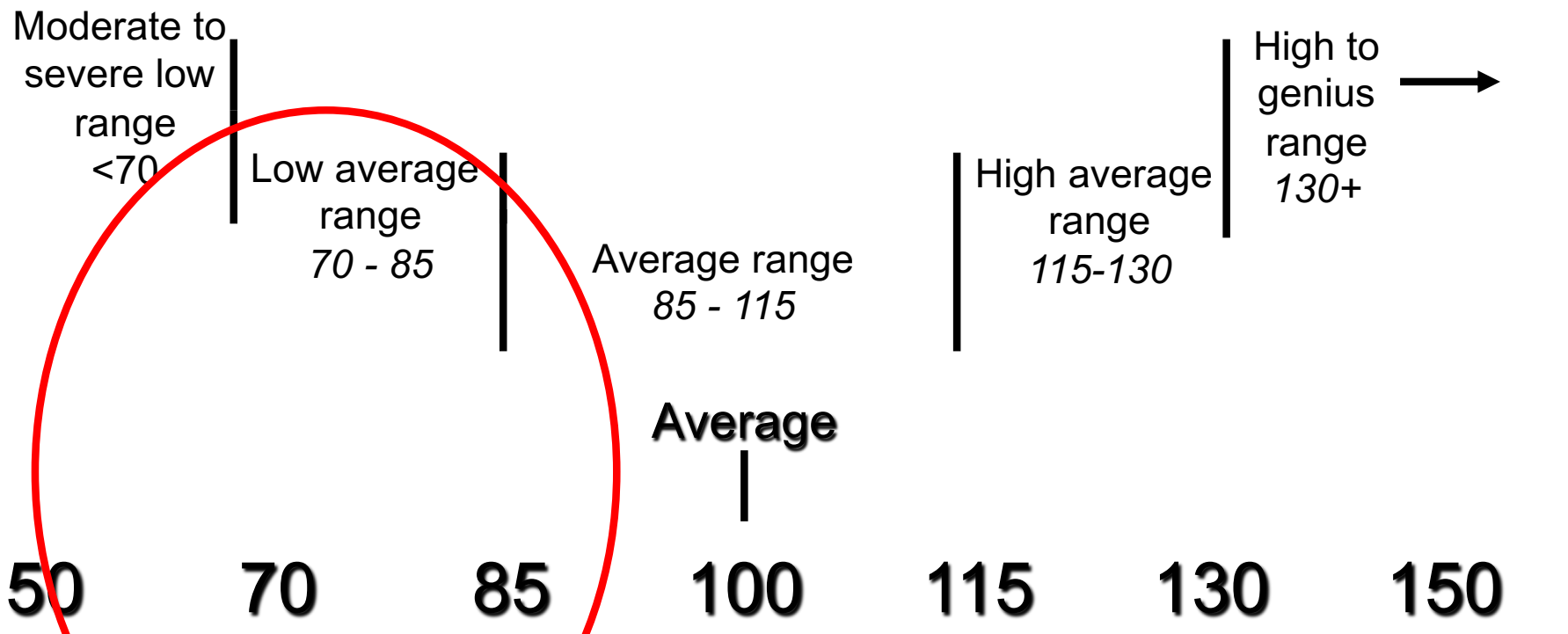
# Discrepancy between potential and achievement

## Range of Intelligence



# Discrepancy between potential and achievement

## Achievement (Reading)

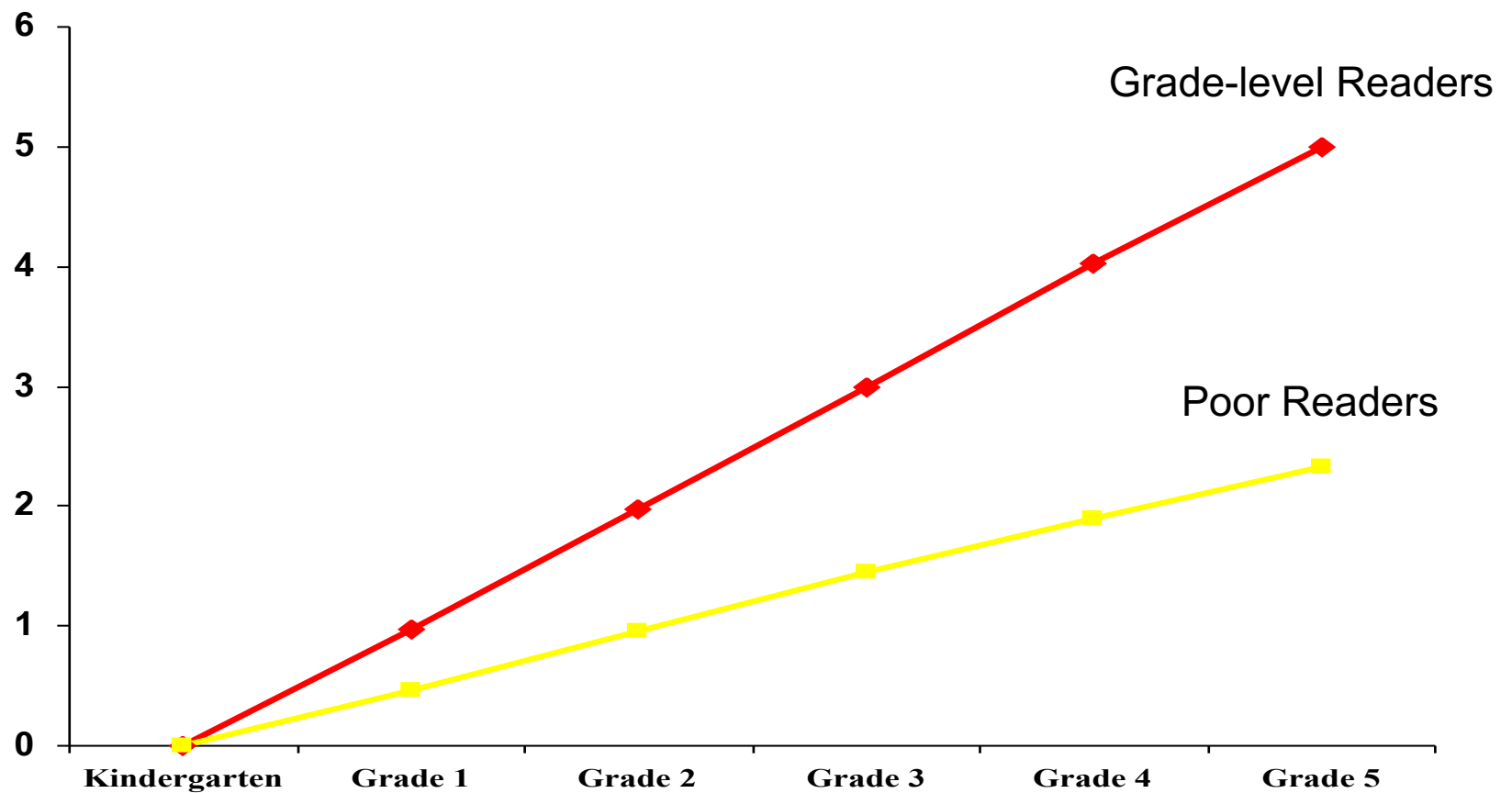


The common result of a reading disability...



# The Matthew Effect

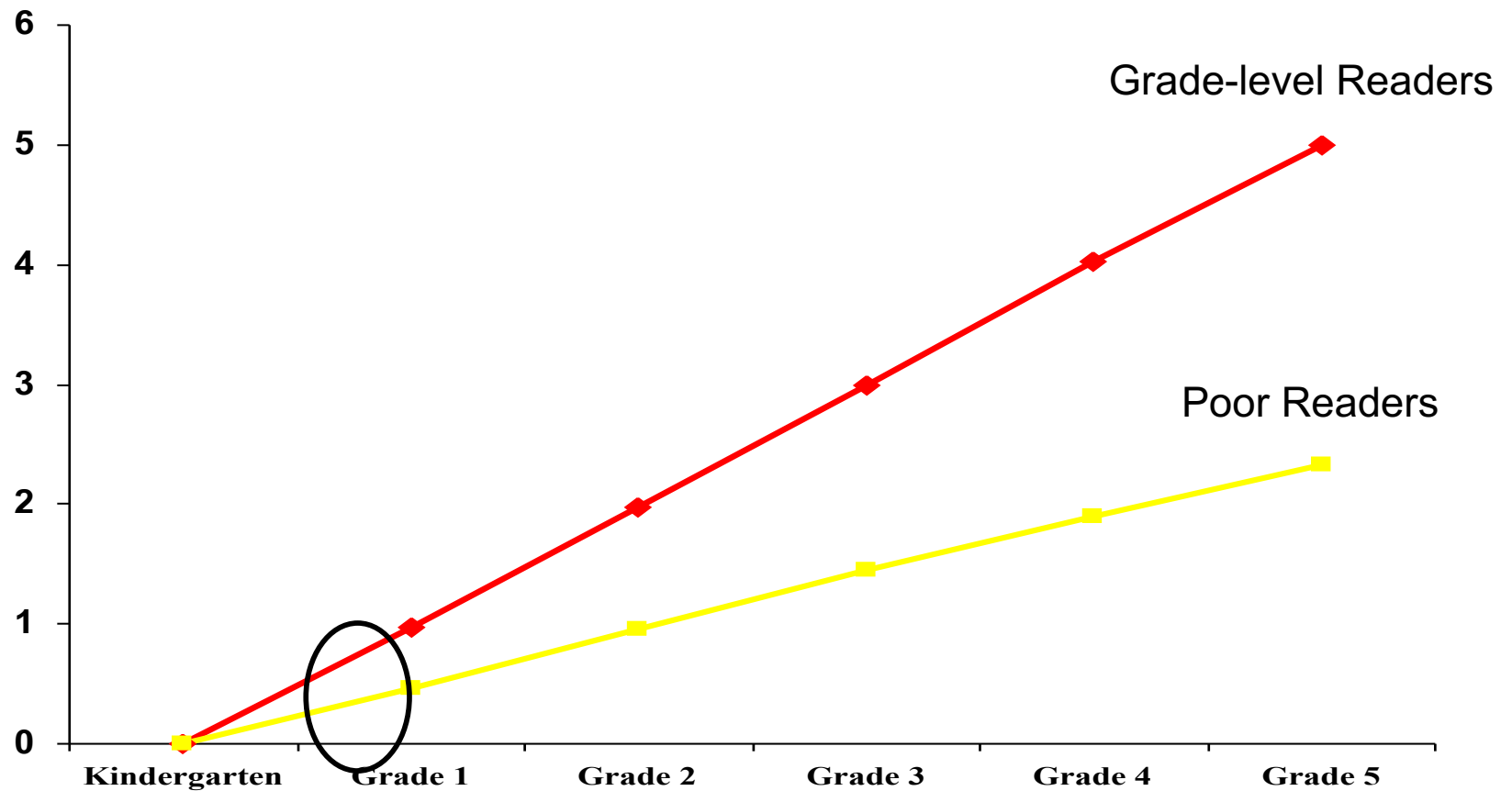
*“The rich get richer and the poor get poorer”*





# The Matthew Effect

*“The rich get richer and the poor get poorer”*



# Identification and Diagnosis

*Discrepancy between potential and achievement*

*Problematic...*

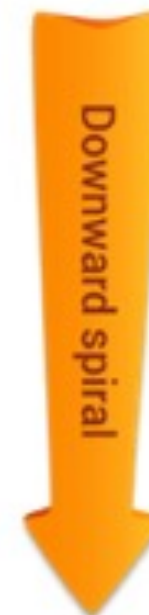
*Wait to Fail Model*



# Importance of Early Intervention

- Parents and teachers need to be alert to possible signs of an LD
- Without proper supports and accommodations, they fall further behind their peers
- Lower motivation increases gap







# Secondary Characteristics



- Low self-esteem
- Low self-concept
- Poor academic outcomes
- Social and emotional difficulties
- Lack of motivation
- Health related problems
- Etc.



# Early Signs of a LD

## Pre-school

- Parents can be the first to notice a potential LD
- Indicators can manifest themselves as early as age two
- Some signs to look for in pre-school aged children:



- Takes longer to begin speaking
- Difficulty pronouncing common words
- Slow vocabulary growth; struggles to find right word
- Trouble rhyming words
- Struggles to learn alphabet



# Early Signs of a LD

## Kindergarten – Grade 4

- LD can become apparent once a child enters elementary school
- Early detection + resources = greater potential for success in school and later in life
- Some signs to look for in Kindergarten – Gr 4 students:



- Slow to learn connection between letters and sounds
- Difficulty blending sounds to form words (i.e. C/A/T/)
- Makes consistent reading and spelling errors (i.e. letter reversals (b/d), inversions (m/w), transpositions (left/felt) and substitutions (house/home))
- Relies heavily on memorization
- \*\*Seems to demonstrate struggles in certain areas despite having average to above average intelligence





# Signs of a LD

## Grade 5 – 8

- Some signs to look for in Grade 5 – 8 students:



- Reverses letter sequences (soiled/solid, left/felt)
- Slow to learn prefixes, suffixes, root words and other spelling strategies
- Avoids or refuses to read aloud
- \*\*Seems to demonstrate struggles in certain areas despite having average to above average intelligence



**FACT:** LDs are lifelong.

Although they are typically noticed in school, LDs affect the person throughout their life. Often by adulthood, people have found ways to better leverage their strengths and minimize the impact of their difficulties.

**MYTH:** All LDs are outgrown by adulthood.



# Celebrities



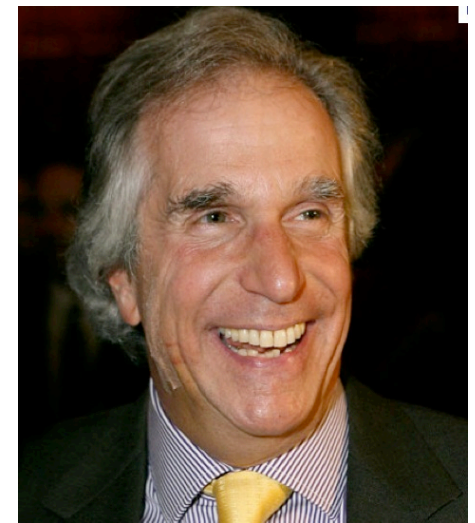
Patrick Dempsey

Diagnosed with Dyslexia at age 12

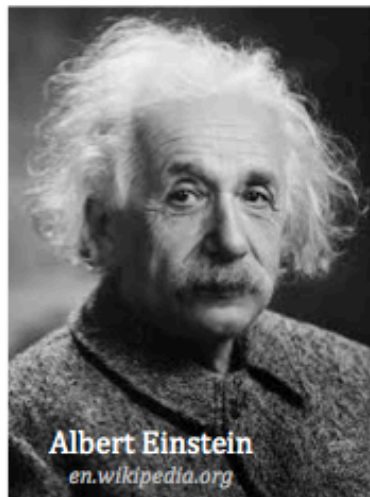
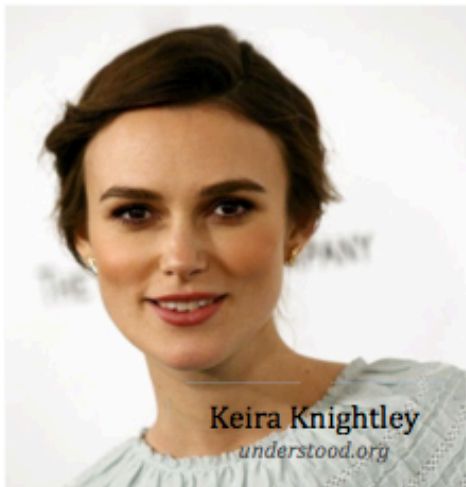
*"I think that's when I get the most insecure...it's very hard for me to read it off the page. I need to memorize it, in order to go on. It's made me who I am today. It's given me a perspective of – you have to keep working. I have never given up."*

Henry Winkler (aka The Fonz)

"When I was growing up," he recalls, "no one knew what learning challenges were. So, I was called '*stupid,*' '*lazy,*' and '*not living up to my potential*' - because I was very verbal, and I guess I had a sense of humor." As a result, Winkler often felt that the person he was inside was invisible to others. "*Inside you feel one way, and people are telling you that you are another way,*" he says, "and I couldn't reconcile that."



# Celebrities have LDs too!



# General Strategies for Kids with LD

- Although a LD cannot be outgrown, **children can successfully cope with their LD when resources and strategies are put in place**
- For success, students with LDs need specialized interventions at home and school, appropriate to their individual strengths/needs, including:
  - Development of compensatory strategies;
  - Development of self-advocacy skills;
  - Appropriate accommodations;
  - Specific skill instruction.



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# Compensatory Strategies

- These strategies will be different for each child
- Focuses on their **strengths** and how they can use these to compensate for their weaknesses
  - *e.g., if not good at reading but good at listening, perhaps they can listen to an audio book instead*
- Keep in mind, while this is important, it is still important for them to practice their weaknesses



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  - **Development of self-advocacy skills;**
  - Appropriate accommodations;
  - Specific skill instruction.





# Self-Advocacy Skills

- Successful self advocacy includes three parts:
  1. Understanding their **strengths and weaknesses**
  2. Knowing **what they need** in order to succeed
    - E.g., **learning style** (e.g., visual, kinesthetic, auditory, etc.) and what **types of strategies and accommodations** will help them reach their potential (e.g., extra time, speech-to-text software, etc.)
  3. Knowing how to **communicate** this
    - E.g., A self-advocacy page or brochure with this information to give to their teacher



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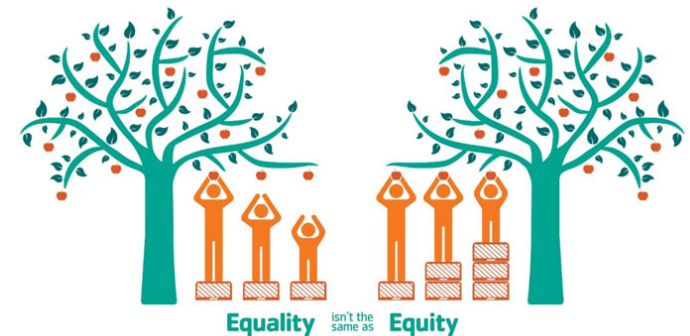
**MYTH:** Accommodations give an unfair advantage.

**FACT:** Fair is not always equal.  
Accommodations level the playing field and allow people with LDs to work to their level of ability.



# Appropriate Accommodations

- Accommodations in the classroom are supports and services provided to help a student access the curriculum and demonstrate their learning
  - Changes to HOW they're taught and assessed
- Accommodations will be outlined in a students' Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Examples:
  - Provide on-task/focusing prompts
  - Timing (e.g., allow extended time, breaks)
  - Setting (e.g., minimal distractions, preferential seating)
  - Presentation (e.g., audio tape, large print, direct step-by-step instructions)
  - Response (e.g., allow use of assistive technology, allow use of scribe, verbal responses)



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  - Development of self-advocacy skills;
  - Appropriate accommodations;
  - **Specific skill instruction.**



# Specific Skill Instruction

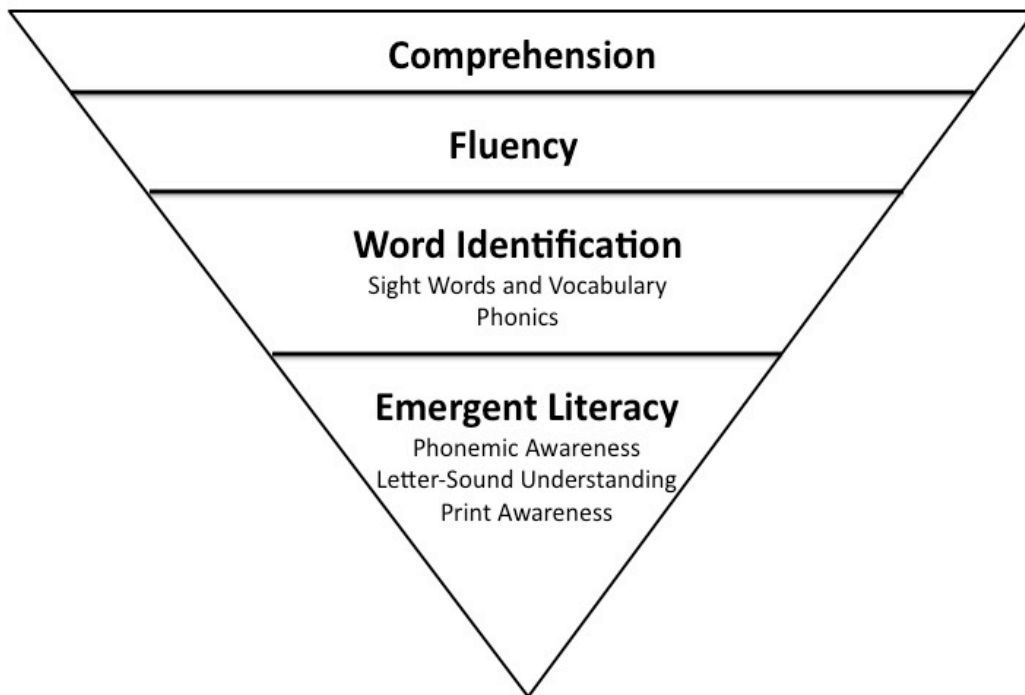
**Specific Skill Instruction** for students with LD needs to be:

- Systematic
- Direct & Explicit
- Small group as possible
- Ongoing



# Specific Skill Instruction

## Systematic Instruction



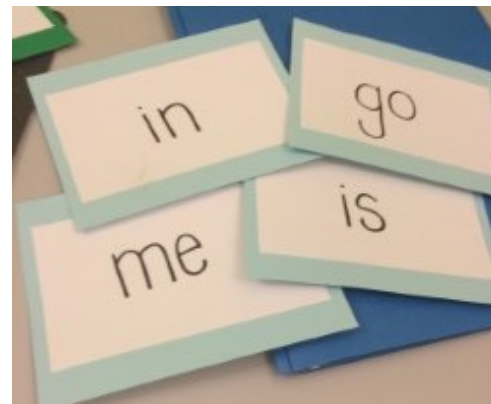
- Understand the reading process
- Learn where your child's needs are
- Work towards the ultimate goal of comprehension
- Approach



# Specific Skill Instruction

## Direct and Explicit Instruction

- Don't leave to guessing
- Drill and practice a few skills at a time
- Always work to **mastery** – promoting automaticity
- Reinforce with **games and activities**
- **Hands-on** learning
  - Avoid pencil and paper
- Move things along quickly





# Specific Skill Instruction

- **Motivation!**

- Make it FUN
- Use topics that interest them
- Let your child see their own success
- Graph their progress
- Setting goals – self-regulation
- Focus on **internal motivation** NOT external motivation
- Use motivating and direct language
  - i.e. not just ‘good job!’
  - Praise the PROCESS, not the person



# Working with a child with LD ...

- It is not that they *can't learn*, they just **learn differently**
- Practice, practice, practice!
  - Recipes, signs, grocery lists, etc.
- Importance of reading
  - Model fluent reading
  - Demonstrate enjoyment of reading
- Practice empathy, patience, understanding
- Encourage a **growth mindset**
  - Praise perseverance, engagement, strategies, improvements



# Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region (LDANR)

- A chapter of the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO)
- Non-profit Organization

*Our purpose is to provide resources and support to individuals who are affected by learning disabilities within the Niagara Region. We provide leadership in learning disabilities **advocacy, research, education and services**, and advance the full participation in society of children, youth and adults with learning differences.*



# What LDANR Does

## Advocacy

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- Special Education Advisory Committee (DSBN & NCDSB)
- Community Awareness
- Guest Speakers



NIAGARA CATHOLIC  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



## Research

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- LDANR has post-secondary students conduct research to test the efficacy of LDANR programming.



# What LDANR Does

## Programming & Services

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- **Reading Rocks**
  - 1-1 literacy support
- **Better Emotional & Social Times (B.E.S.T.)**
  - Self-advocacy and coping skills
- **Reading Rocks Junior**
  - Small group early literacy intervention
- **Let's R.E.A.D.**
  - Small group literacy support
- **Summer, Learning, Achievement, & More! (S.L.A.M.)**
  - Full day literacy summer camp



*Currently piloting a Math support program (S.M.A.R.T.)*

# Who do we serve?

- Children and youth with diagnosed, identified or *suspected* learning disabilities
- Some may also have AD(H)D



# About our programs

- Offer approximately **500 program** spots per year
- Approximately **10 children per site**
  - Adult/child ratio typically 1 adult: 3 children



# Reading Rocks

An Individualized Tutoring Program

Gr.  
2 – 10



## What You Need to Know

- After school program
- Twice per week (1 hr each) for 8 wks
- Targets **phonics, sight words, fluency**
- Each child is paired with a qualified volunteer tutor
- Affordable for families
- Offered in St. Catharines, Welland, and Beamsville

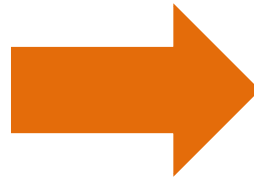
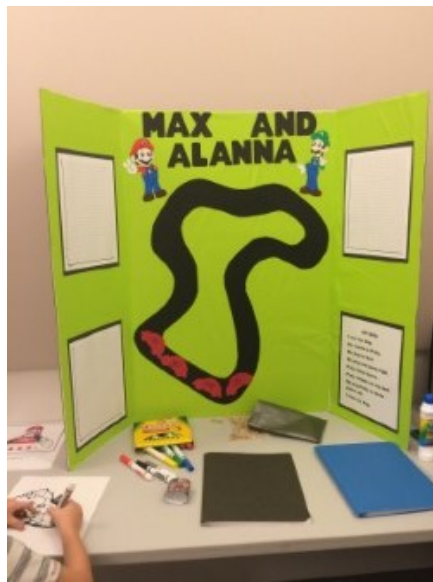


- Approx. 10 children per site
- Approx. 10 volunteers per site
- 1 Facilitator per site

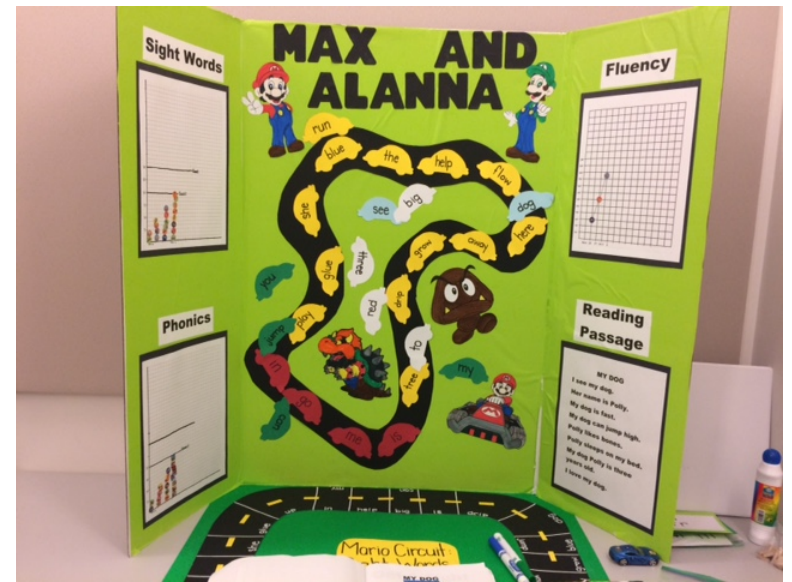


# Reading Rocks

An Individualized Tutoring Program



*Individualized workstation to track child's progress and increase motivation*



- 4 X 15-minute blocks – Phonics, sight words, fluency, flex block
- Games and activities to reinforce skills
- Graph success



# Reading Rocks Junior

An Early Literacy Intervention

**ELKP  
Gr. 1**



## What You Need to Know

- After school program
- Twice per week (1 hr each) for 8 wks
- Targets **phonics, sight words, printing**
- Qualified staff and volunteers provided
- Affordable for families
- Offered at local elementary schools across Niagara



- Approx. 10 children per site
- Ideally 3 volunteers per site
- 2 Instructors per site (Group & 1-1)

# Reading Rocks Junior

An Early Literacy Intervention



St. Catharines - Niagara Falls - Fort Erie - Fonthill

- Book Crawl
- 3 literacy stations - Phonics, sight words, printing
- 12 minutes at each
- Games and activities to reinforce skills



# Let's R.E.A.D.

Read, Explore And Discover

Gr.  
2 - 4



## What You Need to Know

- After school program
- Twice per week (1 hr each) for 8 wks
- Targets **phonics, sight words, fluency**
- Qualified staff and volunteers provided
- Affordable for families
- Offered in more remote areas of Niagara



- Approx. 10 children per site
- Ideally 3 volunteers per site
- 2 Instructors per site (Group & 1-1)

# Let's R.E.A.D.

Read, Explore And Discover



- 3 literacy stations - Phonics, sight words, fluency
- 15 minutes at each
- Games and activities to reinforce skills

St. Catharines - Niagara Falls - Fort Erie - Port Colborne



# B.E.S.T.

Better Emotional and Social Times

Gr.  
3 - 5



## What You Need to Know

- After school program
- One session per week (1.5 hrs)
- Targets **social skills, coping strategies and mindfulness**
- Affordable for families
- Offered in St. Catharines



- Approx. 8 children per site
- Ideally 3 volunteers per site
- 2 Instructors per site (Group & 1-1)

# S.L.A.M.

Summer, Learning Achievement and More!

Ages  
6 - 11



## What You Need to Know

- Full day summer camp
- 6 weeks; 9:00 am – 4:00 pm
- Targets **phonics, sight words, fluency, social and coping skills**
- Qualified staff and volunteers provided
- Affordable for families



- 2 groups of 10 children per site
- Ideally 4 volunteers per site
- 5 Instructors per site (Site Supervisor, 2 X Group, 2 X One-to-one)

# S.L.A.M.

Summer, Learning Achievement and More!



- ½ day on literacy stations (phonics, sight words, fluency)
- ½ day on recreational/social skill activities
- Games and activities to reinforce skills
- Therapy dogs too!

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St. Catharines - Niagara Falls - Welland





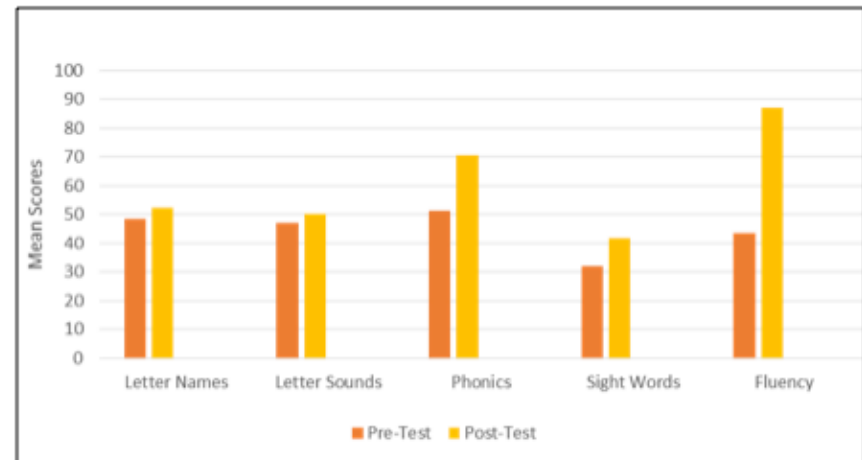


- Therapy dogs
- Fun, hands on academic games
- Graphing success



# Outcomes

- The LDANR evaluates our programs on a regular and ongoing basis
- Pre and post assessments are conducted at each program site
- Analysis done in partnership with Brock University
- Used to:
  - Inform instruction
  - Evaluate programs
  - Report to funders



*Pre- and Post-test Mean Scores for Emergent Literacy Skills*



# Outcomes

*“My son has improved 5 reading levels at school and his teacher is also impressed! We have gone from tears at homework time to his near complete independence. What used to take him 3 days of struggles he now completes on one morning of the weekend before we start the day! The activities that he is engaged in truly inspire him. His tutor has gone to the effort of discussing his interests and tailoring the lessons according to his tastes. This program is such a valuable asset to our community. I also believe the tutors’ passion and commitment are reflected in the relationship they build with the students which is essential to the learning process.”*

- Winter 2019 Program Parent



# Program Costs

- **After-school Programs – Small group** (8 weeks)
  - LDA Member fee: **\$70**
  - Non-LDA Member fee: **\$105**
- **After-school Programs – One to one** (8 weeks)
  - LDA Member fee: **\$100**
  - Non-LDA Member fee: **\$150**
- **Full-day Summer Camp**
  - LDA Member fee: **\$175/week**
  - Non-LDA Member fee: **\$225/week**



*\*Subsidy and payment plans are available*

# Application Process

1. Submit **Program Application Form** (online or hard-copy)
2. Submit **Supporting Documents**
  - Most recent report card (required)
  - Individualized Education Plan (if applicable)
  - Assessments (if applicable)
  - Teacher Feedback Form (if possible)
3. **Screening process** conducted by LDANR



[Program Application Form](#)

[Reading Rocks](#)

[Reading Rocks Jr](#)

[Let's R.E.A.D.](#)

[B.E.S.T.](#)

[S.M.A.R.T. Math \\*New\\*](#)

[C.H.A.M.P.S](#)

[S.L.A.M. Summer Camp](#)

[Financial Aid](#)



The right to learn, the power to achieve.



# Other Services

- CHAMPS
  - United Way after-school homework program
- HOPE (Helping Others Parent Effectively)
  - Parent-led support program for parents with children with ADHD
- Math support program



# Additional Resources

## LD@Home

- LDAO parent support website
  - Articles
  - Videos
  - Webinars

## Understood.org

- Personalized strategies for your child
- Up-to-date resources

## Smart Kids with LD

- Advice and support from parents
- Inspiration from successful adults





# Think a child might have Dyslexia?

Encourage parents to:

- Talk to their family doctor
- Talk to a psychologist
- Talk with the child's teacher or resource teacher



# In Summary

- Individuals with LDs are intelligent – they just process information differently
- There are various signs of LDs to be aware of
- With the proper supports, individuals with LDs can be extremely successful
- If you know of a child with an identified or suspected LD:
  - Encourage them to develop **compensatory strategies**
  - Help them learn to **self-advocate**
  - Ensure they receive proper **accommodations**
  - Provide/seek out **support in their area of need**



What a child wanted her  
new teacher to know...

[Click for Video](#)



Thank you! 😊





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## Samantha Sendzik

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*Interested in receiving program info?  
Add your email to the list, or sign up online!*