TEACHING STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

- Reading comprehension difficulties
- Listening difficulties (problems picking out key points, distractible, problems processing what is said, etc.)
- Writing problems (speed of writing, legibility problems)
- Math problems (may include math anxiety, dyscalculia, difficulty comprehending word problems, difficulty focusing on a single problem on the page, difficulty copying numbers and symbols accurately, inversions and reversals of numbers, etc)
- Social problems (immature, inappropriate comments, difficulty interacting in small or large group activities, difficulty interpreting social cues, fails to understand humor, etc)
- ADD / ADHD (difficulty focusing, over-activity with obvious repetitive sounds, inappropriate comments, inability to organize studies, etc.)
- Organizational problems (this impacts completing projects, doing homework, allocating enough time for social and academic activities, etc.)
- Psychological problems (difficulty maintaining relationships, lack of self esteem, fear of ridicule of learning problems, etc)

POSSIBLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Decisions as to appropriate accommodations are on a case-by-case basis. No particular accommodations are appropriate for all students, but below are some common ones offered students with learning disabilities.

- Note-taker or tape-recorder
- Quiet room for testing
- Alternate testing formats (oral, projects, portfolios, application term papers, etc.)
- Seating in the least distractible area of the classroom (away from the doorway or pencil sharpener)
- Extended time for tests
- Lecture outline provided ahead of time
- E-text

TEACHING TIPS

- Present material in a variety of ways, not just through the lecture method. Consider visual aids, hands-on materials, DVDs, computer enhanced instruction, etc. This will allow students to use whatever their strengths are in processing materials,
- Allow students to reveal what they have retained in a variety of ways, not simply paper and pen tests. Consider students presentations, long term projects, small group presentations, term papers, individual oral testing, etc.
- Consider posting class notes or an outline of key concepts on Blackboard before classes.
- Post major due dates for assignments and tests in the same place in the classroom each week, even though they are indicated in your syllabus. Explain to students at the beginning of the term where they will be posted and that it is their responsibility to note these deadlines.

WHEN LECTURING

- Use advanced organizers. That is, explain what you will be discussing, how it fits into the previous lesson, and why it is relevant to students before proceeding with the lecture. This sets the stage for learning.
- Provide an outline (e.g., in a handout, or an overhead projector, or on Blackboard) so students will be able to see the structure of the lesson and know what to expect.
- Emphasize key concepts by slowing down and repeating them when they are introduced.
- Use a variety of media in presenting lessons. Consider hands-on objects, whenever possible, charts, DVDs, audio clips from UTube, hand out of key concepts, etc.
- Pause and ask questions throughout, rather than just at the end. Ask the students to explain what they have just been taught. Call on students at random. Give students time to ask clarifying questions.
- Give concrete examples of key concepts.