

FYI from DSPS

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19th Annual Central Coast Learning Disability Conference

- Topic: Learning Disabilities and Student Success
- Speaker: **Mel Levine, M.D.**
- Date: **November 16, 2007**. Time: **7:30am to 3:30pm**
- Cost: **Before October 21 – \$70, After October 20 – \$90.**



Nationally known speaker, Dr. Mel Levine will discuss the educational implications of Learning Disabilities.

Learning Disability Testing

Hedy Carra & Karen Waska, DSPS Specialists

Students who have academic difficulties caused by problems with reading, writing, comprehending, test-taking, working with numbers, or processing information can get tested in DSPS to find out if they are eligible for services as a student with a learning disability.

California Community College eligibility guidelines state a student must meet the following criteria of the Title 5 learning disabilities definition.

- Average to above average intellectual ability
- Measured achievement in an instructional (or employment) setting
- Severe processing deficit(s)
- Severe aptitude-achievement discrepancy(ies)

Note: K-12 uses different criteria to assess and determine learning disabilities.

Note: A developmentally delayed learner (DDL) is

different than LD in that the DDL individual has below average intellectual ability.

Learning disability testing is available on the San Luis Obispo and North County campuses for students currently registered in a Cuesta course. DSPS has a limited number of testing appointments available each semester; students are tested on a first-come, first-served basis.

The learning disability testing process at Cuesta involves four steps.

The student must:

1. Complete an application and an educational and personal history intake.
2. Attend a group testing (2 hours) which includes timed reading and vocabulary tests and an informal writing sample.
3. Complete a one-to-one testing session (5 hours) with a learning disabilities specialist. This includes a battery of standardized cognitive tests for ability/aptitude and a battery of academic achievement tests. Cognitive tests

include the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale III or the Woodcock-Johnson III Cognitive Ability Tests. Achievement tests include the Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement and the Nelson-Denny Reading and Vocabulary tests.

4. Meet with the learning disability specialist (2 hours) to discuss the test results. If the student meets the learning disability eligibility requirements, a Student Educational Contract will be written. This includes authorizing services for which the student is eligible based on educational limitations determined from the test results. Students who do not meet the eligibility requirements are provided campus references and referrals. Information regarding learning styles and academic strategies are also shared.

Students interested in learning disability testing should speak with DSPS staff who can guide them into the testing process. On the San Luis Obispo campus, the DSPS office is located on the bottom floor of the High Tech building and in Room 3024 on the NCC.

Director's Notes: Disabled Students and the Law

Patrick Schwab, Ed. D., Director, Academic Support/DSPS

Several federal and state laws control how and why we provide services to qualified disabled students. The first law, passed in 1973, is the Rehab Act. The section we look at is Section 504. If we accept federal dollars, according to 504, we have to make our programs and facilities accessible to all qualified disabled individuals. Section 508 says all electronic media must be accessible. In 1990, congress passes the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). ADA picked up where the Rehab Act left off by further stating all public programs must be accessible. In California law, title 5 provides funding and more explicit details as to how services are to be provided to disabled students as interpreted by the Chancellor's office. Finally, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) provides oversight and legal remedies for disabled students.

Our Students are Your Students



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Alternative Media

Patrick Schwab, Ed.D., Director, Academic Support/DSPS

When we talk about providing accessibility to college programs, many people think about wheelchairs and interpreters. Sometimes our biggest challenge is not getting the student into the building but it is getting our instructional materials into a format that allows the student to compete in the classroom on an equal base. Some of the formats with which we deal are taped text, large print, Braille, tactile diagrams, closed captioned videos, electronic text or E-Text (such as Microsoft Word, Adobe PDF, Kurzweil KES, or text files).

Alternate Media simply refers to changing the way information is presented. A print document can be read aloud into a tape recorder. A video tape can have closed captions added. A textbook can be scanned into a computer, proof read, and formatted as a MS Word document. These three methods all change the format of the information, but they do not change the information itself.

Our Alternative Media Facilitator, Kelly Whitten, does an excellent job finding or creating the materials for Cuesta's students. When it comes to creating some of these formats, time is of the essence. Once the student identifies the class she is taking Kelly needs a copy of the syllabus. We try to get the materials to the student in the order they are needed. If, for instance, the instructor is starting on chapter 5 of the book we don't want to give them the first three chapters to get them started. Braille production is very labor intensive, even

with computers and usually the students do not start out with the all the materials the class requires.

Sometimes we get lucky and one of the various clearing-houses has a copy of the book in the format that is required. With textbook versions changing so often we have to create or pay someone to create the material. Captioned videos are an excellent example. Most current instructional videos are captioned. When an instructor has a specific instructional need for a video that is not captioned then DSPS might send the video out to a service that will caption the video.

The Importance of Learning Styles

Lisa Curtis, DSPS Specialist

We've all heard about different learning styles and the importance of recognizing that our students may access information differently, whether visually, auditorily, tactilely, kinesthetically or through a variety of combinations of styles. What we may not realize is that our own learning styles as instructors are just as important. We tend to teach the way we learn. People who are balanced learners (incorporating all 4 styles) are generally balanced teachers. Are you a teacher who stands still and lectures? Do you move around and draw on the board while you talk? Do you incorporate manipulatives, videos, charts, graphs, and illustrations to demonstrate your point? Are students required to participate in classroom activities or do they just sit and listen? Understanding your own learning style can help you to analyze your

teaching methods and make decisions regarding the incorporation of new methods and materials in order to better reach your students. Students who are balanced learners will tend to "get it" no matter how a subject is taught. They are able to access information through a variety of methods and have already learned to translate a given style of presentation into a preferred method of learning. For example, a student who understands that he/she learns best visually may automatically transfer auditory lecture material into visual format (tables, charts, pictures, etc.). The student who learns best auditorily may decide to tape record a lecture in order to listen to it again and take or clarify notes. The auditory student may need to subvocalize during testing or while taking notes in class. The same student may prefer to read aloud or use books on tape to better understand text material.

Students with disabilities such as acquired brain injury or a learning disability may need help in identifying their preferred learning style. They may also need help in translating information from one format to another or may request that an instructor vary the teaching method in order to accommodate them. Academic Skills courses such as ACASK 5, 20, 25 or 32 may be of assistance in teaching some of these key translation tools for students who are having difficulty. Go to www.metamath.com to learn more about learning styles.

Congratulations Jeannie

Jeannie Leleaux is leaving DSPS. She has accepted the Department Assistant position for Engineering and Technology. We know Jeannie will be an excellent addition to our colleagues on the technical/professional side of the house. Good luck Jeannie.