

# Learning Disabilities: Practical Information for Classroom Teachers

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## Introduction

*Learning Disabilities: Practical Information for Classroom Teachers*, is an interactive computer-based instruction (CBI) course, which provides an introduction to the field of Learning Disabilities for special education teachers, general classroom teachers, integration teachers and related professionals, especially those working in the areas of language, psychology and counselling.

This course will cover diverse theoretical approaches, lay the foundations for sensitive and appropriate assessment and evaluation of students, provide directions for program planning and implementation, indicate the importance of and the need for a close, positive partnership with parents (or alternative caregivers) and consider ways for ensuring that the home-school axis is effective and meaningful. It will also consider some major trends and unresolved issues in the field of Learning Disabilities.

The course is organized around four major sections. Each in turn has a number of chapters that highlight new, sometimes controversial, but always relevant views or practices to this most dynamic of educational fields. Each chapter will include a list of objectives. The objectives will help you focus your readings and discussions as well as clarify tasks that you should undertake to marry theory and practice.

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## Course Materials

Title: Learning Disabilities: Practical Information for the Classroom Teacher  
Author: Dr. A.N. (Bob) Pillay  
Publisher: Virtual Education Software, Inc. ©2001, Revised 2002  
Instructor: Dr. A.N. (Bob) Pillay

**There is a \$25 replacement fee for CD-ROMs.**

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## Academic Integrity Statement

The structure and format of most distance-learning courses presume a high level of personal and academic integrity in completion and submission of coursework. Individuals enrolled in a CBI distance-learning course are expected to adhere to the following standards of academic conduct.

### Academic Work

Academic work submitted by the individual (such as papers, assignments, reports, tests) shall be the student's own work or appropriately attributed, in part or in whole, to its correct source. Submission of commercially prepared (or group prepared) materials as if they are one's own work is unacceptable.

### Aiding Honesty in Others

The individual will encourage honesty in others by refraining from providing materials or information to another person with knowledge that these materials or information will be used improperly.

*Violations of these academic standards may result in the assignment of a failing grade and subsequent loss of credit for the course.*

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### **Course Objectives**

- To answer written examination questions on the major causes of learning disabilities.
  - To answer written examination questions on the main factors that impact social understanding of learning disabilities.
  - To answer written examination questions on the models and types of assessments used to evaluate students for a possible learning disability.
  - To answer written examination questions on the primary sources from which curriculum is derived for LD students.
  - To answer written examination questions the required pieces of a complete Individualized Educational Plan.
  - To answer written examination questions on strategies for instructional planning and programming.
  - To answer written examination questions on the major professional and parent pitfalls that impact the working relationship between parents and teacher.
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### **Course Description**

The four sections to be covered in this course are:

- Introduction
- Assessment
- Working with the Student, Family and Curriculum
- Parent Involvement and Issues

### **Section 1: Introduction**

#### **Chapter 1: Introduction, Definition, Characteristics and Causes**

This chapter presents an introduction to the concept of learning disabilities. It emphasizes the definition(s), the learner characteristics, etiology and the theoretical foundations that underpin policy and program directions in the field.

The problem of formulating a definition that is universally acceptable is discussed as we analyze some of the more "well regarded and influential" definitions. Learner characteristics, especially as they impact teachers and other service providers within a school context, will be considered. However it is important not to ignore the role and major contributions of the other related disciplines, especially medicine, psychology and psychometrics.

What causes learning disabilities? Our brief consideration of this issue is intended to draw attention to the link between learning disabilities and the central nervous system, the issues resulting from this, and the impact it has on practices, definitions and views of learning disabilities.

The history of special education has influenced our attitudes, philosophies, practices and programs. Research, changes in social justice perspectives, societal changes and "new" community standards and expectations, "discoveries", to name a few factors, all impact the field of learning disabilities. The various "leaders" in the history of special education influence all our practices and our programs.

A brief note about outstanding individuals who have influenced this area of study is included in our coverage of the history of learning disabilities.

### **Section 2: Assessment**

#### **Chapter 2: Assessment**

Assessment is an integral part of the identification and education of children with learning disabilities. As such its main purpose is to improve learning. Other purposes take on a lower priority for us as teachers but assume a higher priority for other professions. New laws, philosophies and new or improved assessment instruments all impact this area (For a start consider IDEA, high stakes assessment, alternative/authentic assessment or sophisticated technology--scans, data analysis, etc.). This chapter will consider the purposes and the assumptions that underpin assessment. We will also consider the steps that need to be followed if the assessment task is to be undertaken in a systematic way. Learning disabilities is a dynamic field and it is nowhere more evident than in assessment, where the cry is for more responsive and

authentic ways of assessing students. We discuss this and also cover the material related to conventional areas of assessment in our effort to identify accurately a very nebulous concept.

### **Section 3: Working with the Student, Family and Curriculum**

#### **Chapter 3: Working with the Student, Family and Curriculum**

We begin this chapter by looking at a definition of curriculum, and then, consider how the information gathered under assessment can be structured to provide direction to the work that needs to be undertaken with a student who has learning disabilities. We look at the different sources of the curriculum and consider the variables that influence the curriculum and the program. How all of this fits into the IEP is a major undertaking of this chapter.

### **Section 4: Parent Involvement and Issues**

#### **Chapter 4: Conferences**

How to improve and plan conferences is covered in this chapter as well as a discussion of research literature, policy initiatives and legislation that address parent and family involvement in the school lives of special education students. The numerous challenges encountered when parents and teachers work together as a team to help the learning disabled are also included.

#### **Chapter 5: Working with the Family**

Family involvement in educational planning is a central point in both policy and legislation related to students with disabilities. Research, however, shows that problems still persist in creating the context in which families feel welcome, empowered and valued. How to react to this situation is a major focus of this chapter. We look at the benefits of the partnership and the areas where parents and teachers might work closely together. We consider the pitfalls from both perspectives, and then, look closely at the parent-teacher conference as the point where the partnership truly takes root and marks the beginning of the program response for the student.

#### **Chapter 6: Problem Solving and Technology**

Learning disabilities is the most dynamic of all the areas in special education. With so many disciplines having a vested interest in this area, it is no wonder that there is such a large number of what may be called "unresolved issues." Each of the major topics we studied in this overview of learning disabilities presents us with a number of such issues. We touch upon two that are topical.

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### **Student Expectations**

As a student, you will be expected to:

- Complete all exams covering *Learning Disabilities*, showing a competent understanding of the material presented.
- Complete a review of any section on which your examination score was below 70%.
- Retake any chapter examination, after completing an information review, to increase that final examination score to a minimum of 70% (**maximum of three attempts**).
- Complete all course journal article and essay writing assignments with the minimum word count shown for each writing assignment.
- Complete a course evaluation form at the end of the course.

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### **Examinations**

At the end of each section, you will be expected to complete an examination designed to assess your knowledge. You may take these exams a total of three times. After your third attempt, each examination will lock and not allow further access. Your final grade for this course will be determined by calculating an average score of all exams. This score will be printed on your final certificate. As this is a self-paced computerized instruction program, you may review course information as often as necessary. You will not be able to exit any examinations until you have answered all questions. If you try to exit the exam section before you complete all questions, your information will be lost. You are expected to complete the entire exam in one sitting.

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## Writing Assignments

This course has two required writing components:

### TO SAVE YOUR ESSAYS:

**Macintosh:** When you select the question or article you wish to write on, simple text or text edit will automatically be launched. When you are finished, simply click on FILE>SAVE. **Do not select SAVE AS.** You do not need to give the document a name before saving. When you are done, select FILE>QUIT. **You must quit before you write another essay.**

**Windows:** When you select the question or article, notepad will automatically launch. When you are finished, click on FILE>SAVE. **Do not select SAVE AS.** You do not need to give the document a name before saving.

#### 1) *Essay Requirement: Critical Thinking Questions*

There is a *critical thinking question* for each chapter or section. You will do research on the question and write a brief essay upon relating it to the course content (and your personal experiences when possible). To view the questions, click on ESSAY REQ, then on CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS. You will see the questions, one for each chapter or section. Click on the question you would like to work on; this will bring up a screen where you can enter your essay. You must write a minimum of 500 words per essay.

#### 2) *Essay Requirement: Journal Articles*

This task requires you to write a review of three journal articles of your choice on a topic related to this course. You may choose journal articles outside the instructor's selected list, provided the content of the article relates to the course and you provide the journal name, volume, date and critical information so that the instructor can access and review that article. You must write a minimum of 200 words for each essay. To view the instructor list of journal articles and write your essays, click on ESSAY REQ. The VIEW ARTICLE button will lead you to a document, listing articles the instructor recommends for your research. In the dialog box below that, click on JOURNAL ARTICLE ASSIGNMENT; this will expand the folder, which contains links to the screens where you can write your reviews. When you are ready to stop, click on FILE>SAVE. You may go back at any point to edit your essays. For more information on the features of this assignment, please consult the HELP menu.

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## Instructor Description

Dr. Bob Pillay is a doctorate level instructor who has been teaching in the field of Special Education for the past 30 years. Dr. Pillay has received numerous national and international awards for his research in the field. He has headed boards and committees in more than five countries to develop and strengthen special services for Australia, the Philippines, and Southeast Asia. Dr. Pillay has extensive knowledge of special education issue in the USA due to his doctorate studies at the University of Louisville. Dr. Pillay is currently the Senior Lecturer and Executive Officer of Special Education at the University of Melbourne.

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## Contacting the Instructor

You may contact the instructor by emailing [bobp@virtualeduc.com](mailto:bobp@virtualeduc.com) or by calling (509) 891-7219 Monday through Friday. When calling during office hours messages will be answered within 24 hours. Phone conferences will be limited to ten minutes per student, per day, given that this is a self-paced instructional program. Please do not contact the instructor about technical problems, course glitches, or other issues that involve the operation of the course.

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## Technical Questions

If you have questions or problems related to the operation of this course CD, please try everything twice. If the problem persists please check our support pages for FAQs and known issues at [www.virtualeduc.com](http://www.virtualeduc.com) and also the Help section on your course disk.

If you need personal assistance then email [support@virtualeduc.com](mailto:support@virtualeduc.com) or call (509) 891-7219. When contacting technical support, please know your course version number, it is printed on the CD label, your operating system and be seated in front of the computer at the time of your call.

## **Minimum Requirements**

### *Macintosh Operating Systems*

Mac OS 9.x or OS 10.x, 256MB of RAM and 5MB of free hard disk space, 15" or larger color monitor with a minimum resolution of 800x600, CD driver 4x minimum speed and a printer connected to your computer.

### *Windows Operating Systems*

Windows 2000, XP Home, Professional or newer, 256MB of RAM and 5MB of free hard disk space; 15" or larger color monitor with a minimum resolution of 800x600, CD driver 4x minimum speed and a printer connected to your computer.

Please contact VESi if you have any questions about the compatibility of these systems.

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***Refer to the addendum included with your software package regarding Grading Criteria, Course Completion Information, Items to be Submitted, and where to send your completed information.***

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## **Bibliography (Suggested reading)**

Ariel, A. (1992). *Education of Children and Adolescents with Learning Disabilities*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.

McLoughlin, J.A., & Lewis, R.B. (1995) *Assessing Special Students* (3rd ed.) Merrill Publishing.

Mercer, C.D. (1997). *Students with Learning Disabilities* (5th ed.) New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Lerner, J. (1997) *Learning Disabilities*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Smith, T.E.C., Dowdy, C.A., Polloway, E.A., & Blalock, G.E. (1997). *Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Wong, B.Y.L. (1997). *The ABCs of Learning Disabilities*. San Diego: Academic Press.

## **Journals**

Academic Therapy, Annals of Dyslexia, ASHA, Australian Citizen Limited, Australian Journal of Learning Disabilities, Australian Journal of Remedial Education, Australian Journal of Special Education, Educational Leadership, Exceptional Children, Children Quarterly, Exceptional Parent, Focus on Exceptional Children, Instructor, Journal of Applied Behaviour Analysis, Journal of Learning Disabilities, Journal of Reading, Journal of Special Education, Kappa Delta Phi Record, Learning Disabilities Quarterly, Learning Disabilities Research and Practice, Reading Research Quarterly, The Reading Teacher, Remedial and Special Education, Teaching Exceptional Children

## **Web Sites**

ADHD and Learning Disabilities, <http://nncf.unl.edu/pc.addsilv.html>

Adults with Learning Disabilities, <http://novel.nifl.gov/nalld/definiti.htm>

Special Education Links, <http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Studio/4436/links.html>

Information about Learning Disabilities, [http://nclld.org/info\\_ld.html](http://nclld.org/info_ld.html)

Information about Learning disability, [http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/general\\_info/gen-2.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/general_info/gen-2.html)

Learning Disabilities, <http://gcunix.gc.maricopa.edu/English/disability.html>

Do a search for this on the Internet: 'NICHCY'