

Rutgers University
Graduate School of Education
Department of Educational Psychology, Special Education
15.293.522 Learning Disabilities
Spring, 2014 (1/13/14 rev.)

Spring, 2014
Mondays
4:50 – 7:30 pm
Location: MURRAY 204
3 credits

Matthew J. Mayer, Ph.D.
Office: Room 335, GSE
Phone: (848) 932-0843
Email: mayerma@rutgers.edu
Office Hours: TUE 1:00 – 3:00 pm (or by appt.)

Note: To reach me, you will be most successful using email.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This advanced level graduate course provides an overview of the field of learning disabilities (LD). The focus of the course is on causes, characteristics, assessment, and instructional needs of students with LD. Topical coverage addresses cognitive characteristics that distinguish students with LD in areas of attention, memory, and organization, and the academic needs of students in writing, reading, and math, and social competence. The needs of students with LD across the continuum of educational placements will be examined. Ongoing developments in the field with changing conceptualizations of LD and alternative identification methods to IQ-achievement discrepancy (e.g., RTI) will be covered in depth.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students can expect to:

- Identify and describe the historical milestones, legal basis, and current issues in educational programs for students with learning disabilities;
- Understand the current educational definition of individuals with LD, including identification criteria, labeling issues, and current incidence (2014 New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards # 1 & 2);
- Understand the psychological characteristics of students with LD across the lifespan, including intelligence, perception, memory, metacognition, attention, and language development (2014 New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards # 1 & 2);
- Understand the academic characteristics of individuals with LD in reading, written language, and mathematics (2014 New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards # 1 & 2);
- Understand key diversity and disproportionality related issues concerning students with LD (2014 New Jersey Professional Teaching Standard # 2);

- Understand approaches to assessment and instrumentation used in the field of LD (2014 New Jersey Professional Teaching Standard # 6);
- Understand the social-emotional characteristics of individuals with LD, including emotional self-awareness and self-regulation, self-concept, social imperceptiveness, and learned helplessness (2014 New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards # 1 & 2);
- Identify and describe basic research supported instructional strategies and practices for teaching individuals with LD (2014 New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards # 1, 2, 3, 7, 8);
- Identify professional organizations, governmental agencies, and advocacy groups relevant to providing services and supports to individuals with LD, as well as related journals and Web-based resources (2014 New Jersey Professional Teaching Standard # 10).

OVERVIEW OF COURSE ACTIVITIES

The course includes substantial weekly readings, structured interactive review of readings and additional content, **FOUR unannounced** in-class quizzes on the readings, student-led presentation/discussions, in-class activities, online discussions, Website resource review project, field observation project, and a take-home final exam.

COURSE MATERIALS

- Mercer & Pullen (2009). *Students with Learning Disabilities* (7th edition). Merrill. ISBN 0132228424 (**The text is referred to as M&P in the readings assignments section**)
- Swanson, Harris, & Graham (2013). *Handbook of Learning Disabilities* (2nd ed.). ISBN-10: 1462508499 Guilford Press.
- Other required readings available online at SAKAI: <https://sakai.rutgers.edu>

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are required to attend every class. More than one unexcused absence will result in lowering the student's final grade by the equivalent of one full letter grade (e.g., from B+ to C+) for each additional unexcused absence beyond one (except for documented emergencies, illness, religious observance, or other serious needs). More than three absences total (regardless of absences being excused) will likely necessitate repeating the course to earn credit. Bona fide emergencies and highly unusual situations should be discussed in private with the instructor to explore the possibility of special accommodations and/or arrangements.

Class starts at 4:50 sharp. Just as teachers are expected to arrive at their school each morning by the required reporting time, students are expected to arrive at class a few minutes before class begins. Students who will arrive late for a legitimate reason are expected to email the professor in advance or in case of a last minute delay (traffic jam), call the professor's office number (see top of syllabus) and leave a message to that effect. Two unexcused tardy arrivals (defined as arriving more than 10 minutes late for class) constitute one unexcused absence.

PROFESSIONAL DEMEANOR

As current and future teaching and allied field professionals, students are expected to present themselves and act in class as they would in a professional meeting in the school district where they work. This applies to several dimensions of professional conduct:

- Students are expected to focus totally on class activities and not engage in alternate activities (social conversations, text messaging, email/Web multitasking, etc.).
- Students are expected to be respectful of divergent beliefs and opinions that may be voiced in class discussions, offering constructive questioning and feedback as appropriate.
- Except where otherwise customary (e.g., deaf community terminology), students are expected to use person-first language when speaking of students with disabilities (e.g., student with a learning disability, NOT, LD student), and never use demeaning terms such as retard. Students should avoid terminology that objectifies human beings as “things” of pity, such as, wheelchair-**bound**, **confined** to a wheelchair, or **suffers** a disability.

APPROPRIATE & INAPPROPRIATE USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES

This course will utilize a Student Response System (handheld radio frequency “clickers”) as part of an effort to offer improved learning options and greater variability in class activities. Students will be oriented to clicker use at the first class session. This technology facilitates instant feedback from students on an anonymous basis and can support student learning and engagement in multiple ways. This technology should comprise less than 10% of total class learning activity, and will be used selectively and strategically. Students are expected to use these clickers appropriately per guidelines discussed in class. Clickers are provided to students by the instructor at the beginning of each class.

Students are expected to put all other electronic devices away during class, including telephones/text messaging devices. Students with bona fide reason for accessing text messaging during class (e.g., family member in hospital) will be permitted to do so, but are requested to privately contact the instructor in advance as to the need. Laptop/notebook computers are not to be used in class unless by special advance arrangement with the instructor (students are provided class PPT notes for every session).

LATE ASSIGNMENTS POLICY

All assignments are expected on time. Late assignments will receive a reduced grade, generally, the equivalent of 10% of the total possible project grade per day late (or part thereof). Students with bona fide emergencies should contact the instructor as soon as possible to discuss special arrangements in order to avoid grade penalties. The instructor will work constructively and collaboratively with students who **communicate early** regarding special problems completing assignments on time, with no grade penalties in special situations where advance communication takes place and the circumstances are deemed reasonable, but **will not be supportive of last minute requests for extensions on project due dates.**

STUDENT CONDUCT and ACADEMIC HONESTY

The Rutgers University Code of Student Conduct can be accessed at:
<http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/university-code-of-student-conduct>

For information on the Rutgers University academic integrity policy, please go to:
<http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity>

Related policies and procedures may also be found in the Rutgers Graduate School of Education Catalog:
http://catalogs.rutgers.edu/generated/gse_current/pg32.html

For any and all assignments and class activities, **no copying of any kind is allowed**, unless copied text is placed within quotations and author/source is appropriately cited. Excessive use of quoted material in essay assignments, quizzes, and tests is strongly discouraged and this will tend to result in lower grades (students need to express themselves using their own language).

Clear evidence of extensive plagiarism will likely result in a grade of F for the assignment AND course.

ACCOMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES

Students requiring accommodations related to disabilities will be provided all necessary supports and accommodations. In such circumstances, students should make sure that they communicate their needs in advance to the instructor in coordination with the Rutgers Office of Disability Services (<http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>) to ensure that they receive appropriate supports commensurate with their needs.

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

COURSE GRADING PLAN

1. Participation (@ 2 points per class x 14 sessions = 28 points).
2. Online weekly discussions (14 weeks at 4 points each = 56 points)
3. Quizzes (4 quizzes at 15 points each = 60 points)
4. Student-Led Presentation/Discussion (30 points)
5. Website Review Sheets (24 points)
6. LD Class Observation Project (80 points)
7. Take-home final exam (60 points)

Course Grades: (out of 338 possible points)

GRADE	PERCENT	POINTS
A	93.00 – 100.0 %	Point totals will be converted to percentages.
B+	87.00 – 92.99 %	

B	81.00 – 86.99 %	N.B. A grade of 86.99 earns a B, not a B+ Any mid-course modification of course assignments that result in changes to possible point totals will be reflected accurately as percentage of total possible points earned.
C+	77.00 – 80.99 %	
C	70.00 – 76.99 %	
F	Under 70 %	

ASSIGNMENT/GRADING REQUIREMENTS: ADDITIONAL DETAILS

- 1. Participation:** Students are expected to come to class having completed all assigned readings for that week **in advance** and to participate in class discussions, offering **informed** ideas and opinions.

Breakdown: 1 point for attendance AND active attention throughout class session; 1 point for active discussion/participation (no points earned when absent, except in excused absence cases of serious, documented emergencies/religious observance/illness/etc.—then 1 point is awarded)

- 2. Online Weekly Discussions:** Students are required to participate in weekly online class discussions that are **closely linked to the assigned readings**. For each weekly session, the instructor will post 2 discussion prompts. For each discussion prompt, each student is required to post an original contribution (about 6-8 sentences, or a bit more), and also at least one reply to another student’s original posting or student’s response to another student’s original posting (about 5-6 sentences). Students’ will be graded on the thoughtfulness, **connections to the readings**, originality, and overall quality of their postings/replies to others. **Page citations from the readings are required for all posts.** Students must post all of their comments for that week by 10pm ET Sunday night. **Students are required to read all other student postings.**

EXAMPLE DISCUSSION PROMPT: *Discuss what you see as potential promises and pitfalls associated with RTI.*

EXAMPLE high-quality posting: I believe that RTI is not a panacea, but rather, an unproven approach to LD identification and prevention of early reading problems that may hold promise. Using early screening and intervention for emerging reading problems, avoiding a “wait-to-fail” approach (Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, & Young, p. 158), RTI can help change the learning trajectory for many early elementary students for the better. But as suggested by Fuchs, Fuchs, and Compton (2012, p. 2), and the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2005, pp. 8-10), to do this well would require a massive commitment of financial and human resources, professional development, staff buy-in, and administrative leadership in the schools. This points to much needed major infrastructure development nationally across school districts in 50 states. And the question remains, once a student receives remediation through multiple RTI tiers, and is subsequently referred, evaluated, and classified as having a learning disability, what types and intensities of academic services will they receive, compared to those in the RTI tiers to which they were not fully responsive (Fuchs, Fuchs, and Compton, 2012, pp. 12-13)? Consider that most students with LD are educated in the general education classroom, but may receive fewer accommodations and supports there than they received in the most intensively supported tier of RTI that preceded their classification as LD. Concern also exists over the varying approaches to measuring and determining responsiveness under an RTI approach. Fuchs and Deschler (2007, pp. 133-134) and others (Handbook of LD, p. 533) reported on research demonstrating that multiple methods used by leading researchers to identify responsiveness ended up classifying somewhat different, yet overlapping groups of students. This research review suggests that there is yet to be an agreed upon evidence-based way to measure responsiveness to intervention leading to a special education classification decision. We also need to consider the new roles for both general and special education teachers under an RTI approach and the data management systems necessary to

help make it all work well (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2005, pp. 4, 8, 9-10). Thus, there remain many challenges and much to learn about how to make implementation of RTI successful.

EXAMPLE low-quality posting: I like what Robert said about RTI and I agree with most of his points. His response was very thoughtful. I mean, you can't expect schools and teachers to solve all of the world's problems—there really are limits. And what about the parents? What are their responsibilities to help kids learn to read early on? Everybody needs to work together under an RTI model to help kids succeed.

3. **Quizzes:** The course includes FOUR **unannounced** quizzes based on the required readings. Students will be required to demonstrate a complete knowledge of key points and issues in the readings and also to apply this knowledge with critical thought. Quizzes will be *open notes, open book*. **Students are strongly encouraged to highlight, underline, and take notes on readings—available for use on quizzes.** Bring all assigned readings for the week to each class. Students who do not bring their materials may not borrow the instructor's or classmates' materials during quizzes. There will be make-ups for quizzes **ONLY** in cases of excused absences (usually requiring documentation on the reason for absence, or in an obvious emergency or other serious situation).

Students are strongly encouraged to form study groups and email Dr. Mayer about parts of the readings for which they have questions (at least one full day prior to class).

4. **Student-led presentation/discussion.** Beginning at session #2, one or more students will present on a selected reading during each class. Some will be team presentations. Following a brief introduction in which the presenter states the topic and previews the main presentation content (1 minute, with accompanying presentation overview slide), the main content part of the presentation will last 9-10 minutes, to be followed by 8-9 minutes of facilitated (by the presenter) discussion (or, discussion can be embedded throughout the presentation), and a 1-minute summary/closure with accompanying slide. **Under no circumstances can the total time exceed 20 minutes per presenter** (due to other content coverage and activities during class). Students should rehearse to make sure their presentation timing is appropriate and they are responsible to bring a small clock or other timing device to help them manage their presentation time. Students will sign up for topics during session #1. The oral presentation should **cover just the main concepts and major informational points** from the selected reading—not all of the content. A rubric will be distributed at class session #1. The student must prepare three things to accompany the presentation:

- a. A brief PowerPoint slide show for the presentation. Email the PPT to Dr. Mayer no later than 5pm the day before the presentation. **See the exemplar PPT with content, design, and presentation TIPS for student presenters on SAKAI**
- b. Copies of a 4- to 6-page (single spaced) detailed study guide handout (with more detail than in the PPT show) for class members containing summary information (see exemplar on SAKAI)
- c. A list of 5 - 6 challenging discussion questions (higher order thinking) for the class with prepared follow-up probes in case of limited audience response on certain questions.

5. **LD Class Observation:** Each student will spend a **minimum of 6 hours of total** observational time across a minimum of **4 separate visits** in an inclusion class, resource room, or self-contained special education room addressing the needs of several students with LD. **The target students for the observation must be formally classified as having a learning disability, receiving special education services under an IEP.** The observations must be with the same special education teacher. The graduate student will interview the special education teacher and

will also collect samples of teaching and assessment materials. The student will write a paper that examines how the needs of students with LD are being served, based on the observations, interview, and document review. A project rubric with greater detail on the assignment and the required report format will be distributed and discussed at class session #2. **The project is due at class session #13.** Students needing help securing school placements should contact Dr. Mayer no later than the end of class session #2.

- 6. Website Review Sheets:** Students will review selected LD and related special education resource Websites, filling out a review sheet on each of 18 Websites (review sheets provided by Dr. Mayer at class session #3). Students will complete the review sheets individually and **turn them in at class session #12.** Some websites may have been already reviewed in the Classroom Organization course and also may be assigned in the EBD course. Students may simply copy and edit/resubmit their own previously completed website review sheets in cases of identical websites under review.
- 7. Take-Home Final Exam:** The final exam will contain three sections: (1) **Test of Specific Knowledge** (25 T-F/Mult. Choice), (2) **Framing Issues** (One shorter essay response: 2 pages), (3) **Applying and Extending Knowledge to Problem-Solving:** Given a school-based scenario, students will describe possible answers/solutions, and discuss key issues (One longer essay response: 3 pages).

SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY READINGS AND CONTENT COVERAGE

Assigned reading to be completed BEFORE the session (except Week#1, with optional extra credit).

M&P= Mercer & Pullen text

Handbook of LD = Swanson, Harris, & Graham text

All other readings are on SAKAI: <https://sakai.rutgers.edu>

SESSION #	CONTENT COVERAGE	READINGS (by informal, shortened name)
1 (1/27)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Introduction • Overview of Learning Disabilities (extra credit for advance reading with bulleted outline notes submitted at class session #1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 1 • Handbook of LD-Chapter 2: A Brief History of the Field of Learning Disabilities
2 (2/3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of LD (continued) • Medical Aspects of Learning Disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 2 • Handbook of Neurodevelopmental and Genetic Disorders in Children-Chapter 6 • Swanson, Harris, & Graham (2013) - Chapter 34 (Skim past anatomical and more technical terms; read for basic meaning & main findings) • Swanson, Harris, & Graham (2013) - Chapter 8 (Neurobiology Research on LD & Genetics of LD Research - pp. 132-136) (Skim past more technical terms; read for basic meaning & main findings)
3 (2/10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Identification and Intervention • Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 13 & 4 • LD Assessment-Speece & Hines (2007) • Rethinking LD-Chapter 12 (Previews Week 4 content)
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges to Traditional Views • RTI and Evolving Views of LD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Redefining LD as Inadequate RTI</i> (2003)<i>RTI: Definitions, Evidence, and Implications</i> (2003)

(2/17)	(START THIS WEEK'S READING IN ADVANCE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fuchs & Fuchs RTI Blueprint (2004) • Fuchs & Deschler: What We Need to Know About RTI (2007) • Fuchs et al: Blurring of Special Education (2010) • Smart RTI • Swanson, Harris, & Graham (2013) – Chapter 8 (Response to Intervention - pp. 130-132--2.5 pp.)
5 (2/24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with Families • Adolescents with LD • Transition Programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapters 12 & 14 • Handbook of LD Chapter 20: Reading Comprehension for Adolescents with Significant Reading Problems • Transition: Why it does not work (2010)
6 (3/3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social-Emotional-Behavioral Issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 11 • Handbook of LD-Chapter 15: Social Cognition of Children and Adolescents with LD: Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Perspectives • Social-Emotional Learning and LD • Social-Emotional Side of LD
7 (3/10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADHD <p>(START THIS WEEK'S READING IN ADVANCE)</p> <p>NOTE: SPRING BREAK (March 15-23)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 3 • ADHD-Nigg & Barkley (2014) (uncorrected prepublication chap.) • Pfiffner, Barkley, & DuPaul, Chapter 15 • Rethinking ADHD and LD in DSM-5: Proposed Changes in Diagnostic Criteria
8 (3/24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theory & Practice Addressing LD • Educational Settings & Services • Instructional Models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapters 5 & 6 • Handbook of LD Chapter 26: Direct Instruction as Eo nomine and Contronym: Why the Right Words and the Details Matter • Handbook of LD Chapter 27: Cooperative Learning for Students with Learning Disabilities: Advice and Caution Derived from the Evidence • Handbook of LD Chapter 28: Data-Based Individualization as a Means of Providing Intensive Instruction to Students with Serious Learning Disorders
9 (3/31)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spoken Language and Related Learning Processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 7 • Child and Adolescent Development for Educators Chapter 7 (Language Development) • Early Language Development and Language Learning Disabilities • Handbook of LD Chapter 14: Language Processes: Characterization and Prevention of Language-Learning Disabilities
10 (4/7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive, Metacognitive, and Memory Issues with LD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handbook of LD-Chapter 12: Memory Difficulties in Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities • Metacognition and LD • Handbook of Educational Psychology Chapter 12 • Handbook of LD-Chapter 17 : Diagnosing and Treating Specific Learning Disabilities in Reference to the Brain's Working Memory System

<p>11 (4/14)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 8 • Handbook of LD Chapter 10: Rapid Automatized Naming and Reading: A Review • Handbook of LD Chapter 11: Basic Cognitive Processes and Reading Disabilities • Handbook of LD Chapter 18: Word Identification Difficulties in Children and Adolescents with Reading Disabilities: Intervention Research Findings • Handbook of LD Chapter 19: Developing a New Intervention to Teach Text Structure at the Elementary Level
<p>12 (4/21)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing <p>WEBSITE REVIEWS DUE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 9 • Handbook of LD – Swanson, Harris, & Graham (1st Edition) Chapter 21 (Handwriting/Spelling) -on SAKAI • Swanson, Harris, & Graham (2013) – Chapter 22 (Writing of Students with LD – SRSD)-SKIM bottom p. 411-p.425 • Want to Improve Children’s Writing? • Effective Writing Instruction Across the Grades
<p>13 (4/28)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Math <p>FIELD PROJECTS DUE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 10 • Handbook of LD Chapter 13: Learning Disabilities in Mathematics: Recent Advances • Handbook of LD Chapter 21: Instructional Intervention for Students with Mathematics Learning Disabilities1 • Balancing Perspectives on Mathematics Instruction
<p>14 (5/5)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to the General Education Curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handbook of LD Chapter 30: Technology Applications for Improving Literacy: A Review of Research • Strategies to Improve Access to the General Education Curriculum • Universal Design for Learning –Delaware • SKIM Checkpoints 1.1 to 9.3 (EXPLORE 1 link from each of 9 sections) http://www.udlcenter.org/implementation/examples