

**Rutgers University
Graduate School of Education
Department of Educational Psychology, Special Education Program
Spring, 2015 (1/12/15 rev.)**

Learning Disabilities

15.293.522.01

Mondays, 4:50 – 7:30 pm, MURRAY Room 204

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

Matthew J. Mayer, Ph.D.	mayerma@rci.rutgers.edu
848-932-0843	10 Seminar Pl Rm 335
Office Hours: Tue 1:00 – 3:00 pm (or by appt.)	Prerequisites or other limitations: N/A
Mode of Instruction: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lecture <input type="checkbox"/> Seminar <input type="checkbox"/> Hybrid <input type="checkbox"/> Online <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Permission required: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Directions about where to get permission numbers: N/A

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).

SPECIAL EDUCATION MASTERS PROGRAM GOALS

Learning Goal 1: Attain mastery of the essential aspects of practice and research in the field of special education.

Learning Goal 2: Attain in-depth understanding of Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) professional standards and code of ethics for special education professionals.

Learning Goal 3: Further develop critical professional dispositions that help education professionals promote improvement in the lives of their students (commitment to ongoing professional development, using data-informed approaches, collaborative approaches, developing cultural competencies, etc.).

Learning Goal 4: Prepare to be professionals in special education or closely allied professional fields or to further advance in their professional work.

COURSE CATALOG DESCRIPTION

15:293:522 Learning Disabilities (3) Origins of the concept of learning disabilities (LD). Cognitive and neuropsychological test patterns as LD indicators. Emphasis on cognitive characteristics that distinguish students with disabilities in the areas of reading, mathematics, attentional processes, organization for learning, and executive functioning. Influence of emotional and sociocultural factors on self-image and academic performance.

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, regular in-class learning activities, **TWELVE graded** team-based class homework assignments, with student submissions to be publicly posted on the class SAKAI site as a shared learning resource, and a Website resource review project.

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 or not) 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. Similar to the expectation for teachers reporting to work each morning, 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/retarded*. 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. 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 assignment due dates.**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY and STUDENT CONDUCT

The Office of Student Conduct supervises issues related to violations of academic integrity (see <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>). Please familiarize yourself with the university policy on academic integrity at http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_2013.pdf

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

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.

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES: ACCOMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES

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>.

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.

COURSE GRADING PLAN

1. Participation (@ 2 points per class x 14 sessions = 28 points).
2. Quizzes (4 quizzes at 15 points each = 60 points)
3. Homework Assignments (12 HWs at 15 points each = 180 points)
4. Student-Led Presentation/Discussion (30 points)
5. Website Review Sheets (30 points)

Course Grades: (out of 328 possible points)

GRADE	PERCENT	POINTS
A	93.00 – 100.0 %	Point totals will be converted to percentages. 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.
B+	87.00 – 92.99 %	
B	81.00 – 86.99 %	
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 absence is unexcused; 1 point is awarded for excused absence cases of serious, documented emergencies/religious observance/illness/etc.)

2. **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).

3. **Homework Assignments.** Students will be assigned TWELVE (12) graded team-based class homework assignments, with student submissions to be publicly posted on the class SAKAI site as a shared learning resource (all grading/evaluative feedback kept confidential). This is part of an approach that models professional learning communities in schools. The purpose of the HW assignments is to help students bridge research to practice, especially connecting prior assessment and methods courses learning, and practica/student teaching experiences, to more advanced knowledge on LD gained in this course. The HW assignments will vary, with some involving framing issues, others involving using applied tools

and/or techniques, where others may involve applying and extending knowledge to problem-solving, given a school-based scenario where students will describe possible answers/solutions, and discuss key issues. Still other HW assignments may involve crafting specific unit, lesson or strategy-based instructional approaches designed to meet specific areas of need for students with LD or at risk for LD and related learning difficulties. At least one HW assignment will involve synthesizing/summarizing knowledge taken from a combination of readings, producing a tutorial PPT (this HW assignment may allow for slightly larger team membership).

The HWs may be submitted by teams of 1-3 students, with limitations on team membership numbers varying from week to week (sometimes a maximum of 2, or 3 on a team, depending on the particular assignment). Team membership can change from week to week as students prefer. Due dates will be assigned with each HW assignment, but generally speaking, they will be due by the Sunday evening following the class at which they were assigned (but HW #12 for week #14 content is due at the last class session—you need to do this HW assignment in advance—this HW info will be posted at class #13). Students will receive a written guidance sheet for each HW assignment which will be posted on SAKAI as part of the class PPT notes no later than the day of the class at which the HW is assigned (including team membership requirements).

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 8-9 minutes, to be followed by 9-10 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 - 7 challenging discussion questions (higher order thinking) for the class with prepared follow-up probes in case of limited audience response on certain questions.

N.B. Students wishing to embed a brief video segment into their presentation (generally 15-45 seconds max.) should arrange to have the videos pre-saved as a mpg file and already embedded in the PPT. Dr. Mayer can assist in capturing/converting YouTube video files if students provide 1-week advance notice.

5. **Website Review Sheets:** Students will review selected LD and related special education resource Websites, filling out a review sheet on each of 15 Websites (review sheets provided by Dr. Mayer at class session #2). 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.

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 (1/26)	<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 (2/2)	<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 (2/9) HW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Identification and Intervention • Assessment • Preview of Movement Toward RTI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&P Chapter 13 & 4 • LD Assessment-Speece & Hines (2007) • Patterns of Cognitive Strengths and Weaknesses-Identification Rates, Agreement, and Validity for Learning Disabilities Identification • Rethinking LD-Chapter 12 (Previews Week 4 content)
4 (2/16) HW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges to Traditional Views • A Chronological Overview of 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) • Fuchs & Deschler: What We Need to Know About RTI (2007) • Smart RTI (Fuchs, 2012) • Response to Intervention and the Identification of Specific Learning Disabilities (Reschly, 2014)
5 (2/23) HW	<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 (3/2) HW	<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 Competence/Social Skills of Students with LD: Interventions and Issues

<p>7 (3/9)</p> <p>HW</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ADHD (START THIS WEEK'S READING IN ADVANCE) <p>NOTE: SPRING BREAK (March 16-22)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> M&P Chapter 3 ADHD-Nigg & Barkley (2014) Pfiffner & DuPaul, Chapter 24 (2014) Rethinking ADHD and LD in DSM-5: Proposed Changes in Diagnostic Criteria
<p>8 (3/23)</p> <p>HW</p>	<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 Conronym: 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
<p>9 (3/30)</p> <p>HW</p>	<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
<p>10 (4/6)</p> <p>HW</p>	<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 (4/13)</p> <p>HW</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 (4/20)</p> <p>HW</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 (4/27)</p> <p>HW</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Math 	<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 Disabilities I Balancing Perspectives on Mathematics Instruction

<p>14</p> <p>(5/4)</p> <p>HW</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) <p>http://www.udlcenter.org/implementation/examples</p>
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