

**Rutgers University Graduate School of Education  
Department of Educational Psychology  
Special Education**

**Learning Disabilities  
15.293.522:90  
Fall 2016  
3 Credits**

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

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<b>Phone Number: By arrangement</b>	<b>Location: <a href="http://ecollege.rutgers.edu">http://ecollege.rutgers.edu</a></b>
<b>Office Hours: By arrangement</b>	<b>Prerequisites: none</b>
<b>Mode: Online</b>	<b>Permission Required: none</b>

**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, 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 review and discussion of readings and associated topics, 12 Quizzes on the readings, six research-to-practice Homework Assignments, and a Website resource review project. PowerPoint slides that highlight select content from each week's assigned readings, reinforcing key concepts and providing a partial review will be posted on the eCollege site by the instructor. Each week of the course will run from Monday morning through Sunday night (with the exception of the first week, which begins on a Tuesday). No class activity required during Spring Break, although the Course will remain open for your convenience. **Students are strongly encouraged to complete all or most of the assigned week's course readings during the weekend preceding each week of the course.** Please note the split schedule in Week 12 which is designed to accommodate the Thanksgiving Break.

## COURSE MATERIALS

- Mercer & Pullen (2009). *Students with Learning Disabilities (7th edition)*. Merrill.  
ISBN 0132228424
- Swanson, Harris, & Graham (2013). *Handbook of Learning Disabilities (2nd ed.)*. PAPERBACK  
ISBN-10: 1462518680 Guilford Press.  
**(earlier editions of required texts are NOT acceptable)**
- Other required readings available online in the eCollege course site.

## ONLINE STUDY GROUPS

**Students are strongly encouraged to form online study groups.** All students who wish to exchange names and email addresses to help find study group partners should email the instructor who will post the list of names and email addresses on the class eCollege site, available to all enrolled students. After that, students can contact one another about forming study groups.

## Q & A FORUM

Students are encouraged to post questions they have about the more challenging parts of the assigned readings, as well as related topics the class covers, and other course requirements, in the online **QUESTION and ANSWER Forum**. It is always a good idea to first try to answer your own questions by rereading content and conferring with fellow students—hopefully, you are part of a study group. But if you can't resolve the issue, post the question and the instructor will usually post an answer later that day (or sometimes the next day, depending on when the question was posted). Chances are that if you are confused about part of the readings or some aspect of an assignment, some fellow students are also confused, so everyone can benefit from this feature of the course. The Q&A Forum can also be used for general course housekeeping issues. Sensitive/confidential issues should be handled via private email to the instructor and not through the Q & A forum.

## PROFESSIONAL DISCOURSE

As current and future teaching and allied field professionals, students are expected to present themselves and act in the online class discussions 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 be respectful of divergent beliefs and opinions that may be voiced in online 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 outdated and inappropriate terms such as *retarded*. Students should avoid language that objectifies human beings as “things” of pity, such as, *wheelchair-bound*, *confined to a wheelchair*, or *suffers a disability*.

## LATE ASSIGNMENTS POLICY

**All assignments are expected on time.** Late assignments will receive a reduced grade, generally, a flat reduction in grade equivalent to 10% of the total possible assignment 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.**

## STUDENT CONDUCT and ACADEMIC HONESTY

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](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.**

### ACCOMMODATIONS 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. Class discussion participation (@ 4 points per class x 14 sessions = 56 points).
2. Quizzes (12 quizzes at 10 points each = 120 points)
3. Homework Assignments (6 HWs at 20 points each = 120 points)
4. Website Review Sheets (24 points)

#### Course Grades: (out of 320 possible points)

GRADE	PERCENT	POINTS
A	93.00 – 100.0 %	<b>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 will be reflected accurately as percentage of total possible points earned.</b>
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 required to participate in weekly online class discussions. For each weekly session, the instructor will usually post from 2 to 4

discussion prompts. For **each** discussion prompt, each student is required to post an original contribution (about 4-6 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 (also about 4-6 sentences). Students will be graded on the thoughtfulness, meaningful and correctly cited connections to the readings, originality, and overall quality of their postings/replies to others. Students must post all of their comments for that week by midnight on Sunday. **Students are required to read all other student and instructor postings. This may require returning to Discussions some time after you have completed your posts.**

2. **APA Formatting:** Information regarding APA citation formats can be found in Doc Sharing. There is an entry entitled "APA Citation Revised" that you will find helpful. There are also a number of excellent websites. Two of these are as follows: [www.apastyle.org](http://www.apastyle.org) (click on The Basics of APA Style) and [owl.english.purdue.edu](http://owl.english.purdue.edu) (click on APA Formatting and Style Guide).

**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) 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.

**2. Quizzes:** The course includes 12 weekly quizzes (weeks 2-13) based on the assigned readings. The quizzes are designed to help students engage in structured review of critical content from each week's assigned 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*, but students are not permitted to use the Internet and they are not allowed to consult with other people regarding the quiz questions. Quizzes are due Midnight, Sunday at the close of the week for which they are assigned. **Any questions regarding the quizzes must be directed to the course instructor.**

**3. Homework Assignments.** Students will be assigned SIX (6) graded class research to practice homework assignments, with student submissions to be publicly posted on the class eCollege 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 field experiences, to more advanced knowledge on LD gained in this course.

**The HWs may be submitted by individuals or teams of 2 students (NOTE that all other course assignments are done on an individual basis).** 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 second Sunday evening following the class at which they were assigned. Note that Homework Assignment #3 is impacted by the Spring Recess. Students will receive a written guidance for each HW assignment which will be posted on eCollege in each of the related Homework Brainstorming Forums as discussed below.

Students will be supported in orienting themselves to each HW through a **Homework Brainstorming Forum**, which will be an open discussion section on eCollege. The purpose of this discussion forum is for students to post some general ideas along with a few specific brief examples of different ways to think about the particular HW assignment and ways to organize their approach to the assignment. This HW brainstorming forum is meant to take the place of some 40-minute breakout activities used in the face-to-face LD class for the purpose of priming students to be well positioned to take on the HW assignment. **It is important that the postings on this discussion forum not be so detailed and extensive that they relieve others of the necessity of thinking through their approach to the HW assignment. This should be seen as a form of support providing a helping hand getting started on the assignment.** All students are strongly encouraged to participate in the Homework Brainstorming Forum.

**4. Website Review Sheets:** Students will review 8 selected LD and related special education resource Websites, filling out a review sheet on each Website (review sheets posted on the course eCollege site). Students will complete the review sheets individually and **upload them any time earlier in the semester, but they are due by the end of class session #10.**

### **SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY READINGS AND CONTENT COVERAGE**

Most readings are in the 2 course texts [Mercer & Pullen (2009) and Swanson, Harris, & Graham (2013)]. **All other assigned readings are available on the course eCollege site in Doc Sharing and identified by Italics in the Schedule below. [Please let me know if you find any errors or omissions!]**



WEEK #	CONTENT COVERAGE	READINGS (by informal, shortened name)
1 9/6-9/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Course Introduction</li> <li>Overview of Learning Disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mercer &amp; Pullen – Chapter 1</li> <li>Handbook of LD (2013) – Chapter 2: A Brief History of the Field of Learning Disabilities</li> </ul>
2 9/12-9/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overview of LD (cont'd.)</li> <li>Medical Aspects of LD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mercer &amp; Pullen – Chapter 2</li> <li><i>Handbook of Neurodevelopmental and Genetic Disorders in Children – Chapter 6</i></li> <li>Handbook of LD (2013) – Chapter 34 (Skim through anatomical and more technical terms; read for basic meaning &amp; main findings)</li> <li>Handbook of LD (2013) – Chapter 8 (Neurobiology of Research on LD &amp; Genetics of LD Research – pp. 132-136 (Skim through technical terms; read for basic meaning &amp; main findings)</li> </ul>
3 9/19-9/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early Identification and Intervention</li> <li>Assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mercer &amp; Pullen – Chapters 4 &amp; 13</li> <li><i>LD Assessment – Speece &amp; Hines (2007)</i></li> <li><i>Patterns of Cognitive Strengths and Weaknesses – Identification Rates, Agreement, and Validity for Learning Disabilities Identification (Miciak et al., 2014)</i></li> <li><i>Rethinking LD (Lyon et al.) [Preview of Week 4]</i></li> </ul>
4 9/26-10/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenges to Traditional Views</li> <li>RTI &amp; Evolving Views of LD</li> </ul> <p><b>HW #1 Assigned Due: Sunday, 10/9</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Redefining LD as Inadequate (Vaughn &amp; Fuchs, 2003)</i></li> <li><i>RTI: Definitions, Evidence, and Implications (Fuchs et al., 2003)</i></li> <li><i>What We Need to Know about RTI (Fuchs &amp; Deshler, 2007)</i></li> <li><i>Smart RTI (Fuchs et al., 2012)</i></li> <li><i>Response to Intervention and the Identification of Specific Learning Disabilities (Reschly, 2014)</i></li> <li><i>Responsiveness-to-Intervention: A Blueprint for Practitioners, Policymakers, &amp; Parents (Fuchs &amp; Fuchs, 2005)</i></li> </ul>
5 10/3-10/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with Families</li> <li>Adolescents with LD</li> <li>Transition Programming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mercer &amp; Pullen – Chapters 12 &amp; 14</li> <li>Handbook of LD (2013) – Chapter 20: Reading Comprehension for Adolescents with Significant Reading Problems</li> <li><i>Transition: Why It Does Not Work (McCollin &amp; Obiakor, 2010)</i></li> </ul>
6 10/10-10/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social-Emotional-Behavioral Issues</li> </ul> <p><b>HW #2 Assigned Due: Sunday, 10/23</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mercer &amp; Pullen – Chapter 11</li> <li>Handbook of LD (2013) – Chapter 15: Social Cognition of Children and Adolescents with LD: Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Perspectives</li> <li><i>Social-Emotional Learning and LD (Elias, 2004)</i></li> <li><i>Social Competence / Social Skills of Students with LD: Interventions and Issues (Vaughn et al., 2004)</i></li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ADHD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mercer &amp; Pullen – Chapter 3</li> <li><i>ADHD – Chapter 24 (Pfiffner &amp; DuPaul, 2014)</i></li> </ul>

10/17-10/23		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>ADHD (Nigg &amp; Barkley, 2014)</i></li> <li>• <i>Rethinking ADHD and LD in DSM-5: Proposed Changes in Diagnostic Criteria (2004)</i></li> </ul>
8 10/24-10/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory &amp; Practice Addressing LD</li> <li>• Educational Settings &amp; Services</li> <li>• Instructional Models</li> </ul> <p><b>HW #3 Assigned</b> <b>Due: Sunday, 11/6</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mercer &amp; Pullen – Chapters 5 &amp; 6</li> <li>• Handbook of LD (2013) – Chapter 26: Direct Instruction (pp. 490-498)</li> <li>• Handbook of LD (2013) – Chapter 27: Cooperative Learning</li> <li>• Handbook of LD (2013) – Chapter 28: Data-Based Individualization as a Means of Providing Intensive Instruction to Students with Serious Learning Disorders</li> </ul>
9 10/31-11/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spoken Language</li> </ul> <p><b>HW #4 Assigned</b> <b>Due: Sunday 11/13</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mercer &amp; Pullen – Chapter 7</li> <li>• <i>Child and Adolescent Development for Educators: Chapter 7: Language Development</i></li> <li>• <i>Early Language Development (Grizzle &amp; Simms, 2005)</i></li> <li>• Handbook of LD (2013) – Chapter 14: Language Processes: Characterization and Prevention of Language Learning Disabilities</li> </ul>
10 11/7-11/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Math</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mercer &amp; Pullen – Chapter 10</li> <li>• Handbook of LD (2013) – Chapter 13: Learning Disabilities in Mathematics: Recent Advances</li> <li>• Handbook of LD (2013) – Chapter 21: Instructional Intervention for Students with Mathematics Learning Disabilities</li> <li>• <i>Balancing Perspectives on Mathematics Instruction (Jones &amp; Southern)</i></li> </ul>
11 11/14-11/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading</li> </ul> <p><b>HW #5 Assigned</b> <b>Due: Sunday, 11/27</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mercer &amp; Pullen – Chapter 8</li> <li>• Handbook of LD (2013) – Chapter 10: Rapid Automatized Naming and Reading: A Review</li> <li>• Handbook of LD (2013) – Chapter 11: Basic Cognitive Processes and Reading Disabilities</li> <li>• Handbook of LD (2013) – Chapter 18: Word Identification Difficulties in Children and Adolescents with Reading Disabilities: Intervention Research Findings</li> <li>• Handbook of LD (2013) – Chapter 19: Developing a New Intervention to Teach Text Structure at the Elementary Level</li> </ul>
12 11/21-11/23 & 12/12-12/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive, Metacognitive, &amp; Memory Issues with LD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handbook of LD (2013) – Chapter 12: Memory Difficulties in Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities</li> <li>• <i>Metacognition and LD (Butler, 1998)</i></li> <li>• <i>Handbook of Educational Psychology – Chapter 12: Cognitive Strategies Instruction (Pressley &amp; Harris, 2006)</i></li> <li>• Handbook of LD (2013) – Chapter 17: Diagnosing and Treating Specific Learning Disabilities in Reference to</li> </ul>

