



Social and Emotional Development of Students with LDs

Listeners' Guide

Social and Emotional Development of Students with LDs: Listeners' Guide

This podcast features a one-on-one interview with Dr. Judith Wiener, Professor in the Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), at the University of Toronto. In this podcast, Dr. Wiener shares her knowledge and perspective on the impact educators and learning environments can have on the social and emotional development of students with learning disabilities (LDs) and their success in the classroom.

This listeners' guide provides you with the opportunity to reflect on your thoughts and practices relating to the social and emotional development of students with LDs, both individually and as a group. The listeners' guide includes the following three sections:

- *KWL Strategy* – this pre-listening activity is intended to develop or further an understanding of the social and emotional development of students with LDs by completing the KWL chart and by reading an article from the LD@school website, Social & Emotional Development and LDs.
- *Key Takeaways* – during the podcast, listeners will complete a graphic organizer based on the perspectives and considerations discussed in the podcast. Listeners will add any notes, linkages or “aha” moments that come to mind.
- *Fostering Positive Social & Emotional Development* – after listening to the podcast, listeners will create a bank of positive comments that can be shared with students with LDs in order to support social and emotional development and to promote self-esteem.



KWL Strategy:

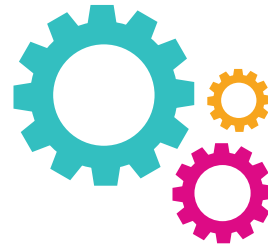
Pre-listening Activity

Prior to reading the LD@school article on Social & Emotional Development and LDs, complete the first two sections of the table below. List what you already know in the “What I KNOW” sections and what you would like to learn in the “What I WANT to Know” sections. Once you have read the article, return to this chart and complete the “What I LEARNED” sections.

What I KNOW



What I WANT to know



What I LEARNED



➤ You can also access a PDF of this chart to download, print, and use with your students on the LD@school website by clicking here (www.LDatSchool.ca/literacy/the-kwl-strategy/).

Social & Emotional Development and LDs

Children with LDs often have difficulties that go far beyond those in reading, writing, math, memory, or organization. When they experience constant struggle and failure, students may develop negative self-esteem, even when others offer support and encouragement. Low self-esteem and a lack of confidence only serve to further interfere with learning and academic success and can reinforce a cycle of failure and negativity. For many, strong feelings of frustration, anger, sadness, or shame can lead to psychological difficulties such as anxiety and depression.

Research has also shown that students with LDs are often less accepted and may be rejected by their peers. Social rejection can result in feelings of loneliness, which, in turn, may lead to psychological difficulties such as anxiety and depression. Students with LDs are also at risk of experiencing bullying for some of the following reasons:

- Being different from their peers can set students up for targeting by bullies.
- Peers may taunt students over their attendance in a special education program.
- Students with LDs may feel less competent and less confident than their peers and therefore feel less able and less entitled to stand up for themselves. This may be aggravated by their difficulty expressing thoughts and feelings.
- They may have difficulty understanding verbal or nonverbal communications and the intentions and expectations of others.
- They may not follow the rules in games and the unwritten rules of conversations.
- They may have difficulty managing their own behaviour and feelings. They may be too loud, hyper, disruptive, talkative, etc. Peers may find this sort of behaviour irritating.
- Some students with LDs are 'too honest' and are unable to conceal their weaknesses and mistakes, thus leaving them vulnerable to others.

(Adapted from *Bullying and Learning Disabilities*, an Integra Tip Sheet. [Click here to access the tip sheet. \(www.Integra.on.ca/Bullying.pdf\)](http://www.Integra.on.ca/Bullying.pdf).)

It is important to remember that there are students with LDs for whom social skills are an area of strength, and many are able to negotiate emotional challenges without needing support. Even when students have social and/or emotional difficulties, some are more resilient than others. Long-term studies which included young people with LDs have found that several protective factors increase the probability of good life outcomes, including:

- Developing a special skill or talent that helps students to be successful and appreciated for their contributions.
- Supportive adults outside the home, including educators who foster trust and act as gatekeepers for the future.

Drs. Sam Goldstein and Robert Brooks, authors of *Raising Resilient Children*, recommend the following five strategies to help students with LDs become more resilient:

1. Teach empathy
2. Teach responsibility by encouraging contributions
3. Teach decision-making and problem-solving skills that reinforce self-discipline
4. Offer encouragement and positive feedback
5. Help children learn to deal with mistakes

The following is a short list of ways that educators can promote the social and emotional well being of students with LDs (adapted from *The Social and Emotional Side of Learning Disabilities* by Sheldon H. Horowitz, Ed.D.

➤ **Click here to access the article (www.YoungReaders.ca/?p=965):**

1. Recognize the student's specific areas of strength (competence) and need, and look for (or create) teachable moments to model and reinforce positive skills.
2. Teach social skills the same way you would academic skills: proceed in small steps, demonstrate and give multiple examples, offer practice and feedback (reinforcement and praise), and systematically find opportunities to generalize (apply) newly learned skills and behaviours to different settings.
3. Find ways to build the student's self-concept, and help them to achieve and sustain a level of appreciation and positive status among their peers.
4. Try to minimize competition and focus instead on cooperative learning by creating opportunities for shared learning and joint activities.

➤ **Click here to access the article, "Social & Emotional Development and LDs" (www.LDatSchool.ca/learn-about-LDs/social-emotional-development-and-LDs).**



Key Takeaways:

Listening Activity

While listening to the podcast, fill in the graphic organizer below, based on the strategies and key points discussed in the podcast. Add any notes, linkages or “aha” moments that come to mind.

The graphic organizer consists of five light gray rounded rectangular boxes. At the top left is a box labeled 'Key Points'. To its right is a box labeled 'Implications for Practice'. In the center is a box with a dotted border labeled 'Social & Emotional Development'. At the bottom left is a box labeled 'Aha!'. To its right is a box labeled 'Collaborating with Parents'. Each box is intended for handwritten notes.

Key Points

Implications for Practice

Social & Emotional Development

Aha!

Collaborating with Parents

Fostering Positive Social and Emotional Development: *Post-listening Activity*

Use the diagram below to list positive comments that you might say to a student with LDs to build their self-esteem and foster positive social and emotional development; this activity may be completed independently or with a partner. Each box in the diagram below contains different areas for consideration. When completing this activity, it is best to think of a specific student with LDs. After the activity is completed, participants should share their thoughts with each other.



Relevant Resources on the LD@school website

- ▶ **Click here** to access the webinar entitled, *Supporting the Social and Emotional Development of Students with Learning Disabilities*, presented by Dr. Colin King (www.LDatSchool.ca/socialemotional-development/supporting-S-and-E-development-of-students-with-LDs).
 - ▶ **Click here** to access the evidence-informed summary, *Promoting Social and Emotional Competence Through Mindfulness Peer Mediated Learning Approaches*, by Dr. Jillian Haydicky and Dr. Judith Wiener (www.LDatSchool.ca/socialemotional-development/promoting-S-and-E-competence-through-mindfulness).
 - ▶ **Click here** to access the evidence-informed summary, *Social Skills Training (SST) for Students with Learning Disabilities*, by Mariam Mansour and Dr. Judith Wiener (www.LDatSchool.ca/socialemotional-development/social-skills-training).
 - ▶ **Click here** to access the evidence-informed summary, *Self-regulation*, by Michael Fairbrother and Dr. Jessica Whitley (www.LDatSchool.ca/learn-about-LDs/self-regulation).
 - ▶ **Click here** to access the practice-informed summary, *Learning Disabilities and Mental Health*, by Cindy Perras (www.LDatSchool.ca/socialemotional-development/learning-disabilities-and-mental-health).
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Here is an opportunity to help out other educators!

Do you have any information on the social/emotional development of students with LDs that you would like to share with LD@school? Or do you know of a specific strategy, practice or approach that has worked well in supporting the needs of students with LDs at school?

▶ **Click here to send your ideas to info@LDatSchool.ca.**

