

LEARNING DIFFERENCES Newsletter

A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO *Panorama*

The Facts

- ◆ Over 30 million people in the United States have a learning disability or ADHD.
- ◆ Of these, the majority have average an above-average IQ.
- ◆ 1.8% go on to 4 year college education.
- ◆ Only 5% will go on to any form of higher education.
- ◆ 1 in 5 children is diagnosed with reading disability or attention disorder
- ◆ Over 60% never graduate from high school.
- ◆ Only 10% of Americans teachers are appropriately trained to meet the needs of LD/ADHD kids
- ◆ More than 50% of LD/ADHD children drop out of high school, abuse substances, or spend time in jail
- ◆ As adults, 42% of LD/ADHD parents are below or near the federal poverty line, compared to the national average of 16%
- ◆ LD/ADHD adults constitute over 16 % of adults in literacy programs
- ◆ 25-40% of adults have temporary assistance for needy families. That is the same percent of all welfare recipients.

Congratulations to the students of the Learning Differences Discussion Group who have worked together to publish the premier issue of the Learning Differences Newsletter. Their accomplishment signals a positive turning point in our attitudes and provides useful insights and information for the entire Parker Community about this important educational challenge.

Special thanks to Josh Simons whose initiative and tireless good humor made the Newsletter a reality.

—Christine Martin

Writing with ADHD*

* Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder

by Owen Parker '03

"It's fun!!!"
Hi my name i
Stare out window for 12 seconds
Hi my name is Owen, a
Look at pen/nails/pencil/
shoes/pants anything attached to you
body

Hi my name is Owen, and I
Erase "I" until you write it perfectly and try, for realism's sake to write it in progressively sloppier styles every time you rewrite it. If your task seems impossible, you're getting the hang of it. When it is just too much to bear. Write your best "I" on the paper that should, by now, be heavily smudged with graphite.

Hi my name is Owen and I I I I I I
have ADHD. To give you a glimpse of what it's like to try to type 4

Cross out "4" and replace with "four"

Hi my name is Owen and I I I I I I
have ADHD. To give you a glimpse of what it's like to try write a 4 four sentence on paper, I have treid

State at your spelling mistake for 30 second, reasoning whether "e" comes before "i". Then ignore the subject completely for a bit, doesn't matter how long, as long as it's over a minute. When you are done, spell "treid" like this:

tried

Be sure to cross out the original misspelling with a heavy line and lots of smudging.

Hi my name is Owen, and I I I I I I
have ADHD. To give you a glimpse of what it's like to try to write a 4 four sentence on poaper, I have treid tried to make it as realistic as possible.

Realize that it looks sloppy as hell and start over.

Hi my name is Owen and I I I I I I
have SDHD. To give you a glimpse of what it's like to try to write a 4 four sentence on paper, I have treid to make it as realistic as possible.

Hi my name is Owen, and I have ADHD. To give you a glimpse of what it's like to write four sentence on paper,

I have made an

Pause and think of a better word then "made", meanwhile let your mind drift as far as possible, the more obscure, the better.

Hi my name is Owen, and I have ADHD. To give you a glimpse of what it's like to write four sentences on paper, I have typed have

Think, "Damn it, Why on earth am I doing this? Where is everyone going?"

Let the realization that not everyone has extended time sink in, and then feel very lonely. Look at your work so far with as much resentment as you can muster. Now cross out your work violently and start over. I'll save you some time and allow you to skip the many other problems that come up when writing. As a final exercise, write this line the first piece of paper you can find.

Why me?

Revel in its quite and peaceful plainness. The simple beauty of two words, unsullied with your blasphemous handwriting.

Imagine this as an everyday ritual, one that extends through every class and permeates the endless grind that is your life. Now imagine trying to grow up among people who don't have to pause every other minute so that they can reconcentrate, that don't have to take pills to function normally, that can't and will never understand that extended time and class exemptions are not a gift, but a badge of shame. Imagine distraction as something more than escaping work, but a feeling of release that is unparalleled by any acitivity. Then go and look at some young kid who's unable to sit still, who simply cannot finish his assignment with the natural ease that his friends can and do take for granted. Repress the wrenching desire not to tell him that it's 'all gonna be alright in the end,' because you know you would be lying. Now lose the frown and tilt your head up, you've got a long day ahead of you.

How a Person Can Cope Living with a Learning Disability

by James Woods-Corwin '03

Coping with a learning disability, for some can be very stressful and difficult, both socially and academically. Sometimes people grow out of their disability, and sometimes you have to work your way out of it, or just work your way to dealing with it if it does go away. There are tons of things students and parents can do to help themselves, or their child, deal with their disability. Below are some tips and techniques for keeping yourself or your child focused and under control.

[These tips were composed by students in the Learning Differences Group, which meets once a week to discuss issues associated with learning differences —Ed.]

Students

- Take a deep breath, and try your hardest to focus on the topic or situation at hand. Ignore anyone who is being disruptive or bothering you.
- Keep eye -contact with the teacher or speaker
- Ask teachers for class notes beforehand
- Work hard, there is no excuse not to
- Plan your time
- Have an outlet, something you enjoy that makes you feel good
- Write big!

Parents

- Talk to your children, find out how they feel.
- Do some research on the disability your child has, and even ask doctors if there are ways to make it easier on your child
- Stay positive with kids; emphasize accomplishments
- Set goals they can reach but still have to work for
- Read with your kids

Friends

- Keep a positive attitude
- Don't compare each other
- Be patient if they ask you for help

I have a terrible spelling disability. To this day I struggle with spelling correctly. However, today I have strategies for compensating for this disability. Growing up, I did not. I was always a voracious reader, but that didn't translate to being a good speller. Although I was considered "smart," my inadequate spelling left me frequently feeling "dumb." Good spelling was somehow linked to intelligence. Teachers would say, "I can't believe you can't spell that word!"

Now, of course, I know that spelling poorly is not about being "dumb." I constantly look up words in the dictionary and I use my trusty spell check on every document that I type or write. Go forth and write, but check your spelling!

— Susan Kjeldsen Roos

Being LD at Packer

Johanna Neufield '03

Having a learning disability is hard enough, but having one where everyone else is exceptionally intelligent makes things that much more difficult. Not only are we compared to the same people that do not have an LD, but our standards are the same (maybe as they should be) but without much recognition of the fact that we do not learn in the same ways. Persons with LDs are just as intelligent, and achieve the same goals in life as anyone else. We just have to work harder to get there, and have different ways of expressing it.

Being at Packer I have had mixed experiences pertaining to my learning disability. Packer sent me for testing a few times in Lower School, and then again in ninth grade. I was not "diagnosed" with anything in particular.

However, the fact that my learning style is different from most is very apparent, and it has been since I was learning to read and write, and moving at a much slower pace than most. I have been able to modify my curriculum to meet my needs, and the school has been great with helping me to make courses that also fulfill my graduation requirements. The one place that they have fallen short is around informing teachers of how to teach in other ways than they might be used to. While it is my job as the student to work hard and strive to understand material, I believe that the teachers should understand that they too need to bend, and make some changes in how they teach so that people with LD's are able to have a more normal educational experience.

Who are they?

The following famous people have some kind of learning disability. Can you guess who they are? (Answers at bottom)

1. This genius did not begin to speak until the age of three. He found school work, especially math, difficult and was unable to express himself in written language. He was thought to be simple-minded until it was realized that we was able to conceptualize by visualization, rather than the use of language.
2. This great inventor was unable to read until he was twelve years old and his writing skills remained poor throughout his life.
3. Although "first in the hearts of his countrymen" he was unable to spell correctly throughout his life. His brother suggested that surveying in the back woods might be a suitable career for him.
4. He was a longtime governor of New York State and a U.S. vice president despite being severely dyslexic.
5. This star of "Mrs. Doubtfire" has been diagnosed with ADHD.