



LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION  
OF NEW BRUNSWICK/  
TROUBLES D'APPRENTISSAGE -  
ASSOCIATION DU NOUVEAU-BRUNSWICK INC.

PRESENTATION TO

THE COMMISSION ON  
POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IN  
NEW BRUNSWICK

---

# **INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES**

April 2007

# Background Information:

The Learning Disabilities Association of New Brunswick/ Troubles d'apprentissage – association du Nouveau-Brunswick (LDANB/TAANB) has worked on behalf of persons with Learning Disabilities since 1970. LDANB/TAANB is a non-profit, volunteer organization affiliated with the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. There are similar associations in each province and territory with a network of chapters in more than 140 communities in the country. We share the same aims and goals.

Our mission is to promote the understanding and acceptance of the ability of persons with learning disabilities (LD) to lead meaningful and successful lives. We have and continue to make our community more aware of learning disabilities and work to see increased services for persons with learning disabilities from early identification to advanced education and the workplace.

## Learning Disabilities ...What are they?.....

Learning disabilities refer “to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate **at least average abilities** essential for thinking and/or reasoning,”<sup>1</sup> Indeed some individuals are deemed gifted.

- Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning.
- Learning disabilities range in severity and may affect any or several areas of life
- Learning disabilities are lifelong
- Learning disabilities are neurological and/or genetic in origin.

An estimated 10% of our population has a learning disability. The most common form of learning disabilities, an estimated 80%, lies in the area of reading and reading comprehension or dyslexia. The learning of these basic skills in school is much more difficult for children with learning disabilities leading to a lack of success and increased

---

<sup>1</sup> The LDAC definition of Learning Disabilities (2002) can be found at the following address <http://www.ldac-taac.ca/> or can be requested by post from the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC), 323 Chapel St, #2, Ottawa, ON, K1N 7Z2. (This definition has been adopted and endorsed by LDAC and its provincial affiliates, the Canadian Teachers Federation, National Education Association of Disabled Students, some provincial Ministries of Education, etc.), para. 1.

drop out rates. Drop-out rates are high among persons with learning disabilities in our school systems - twice the rate of their non-disabled peers.<sup>2</sup>

*"Through elementary school, junior high and high school, everyone knew that there was something wrong, but I was always pawned off as the dumb kid. I wasn't diagnosed until I was 26."<sup>3</sup>*

But for those who have support from family, knowledgeable teachers, an appropriate psychoeducational assessment determining their area of difficulty and the necessary accommodations, postsecondary education is a reality.

## **Learning Disabilities and Accessibility to Post Secondary Studies.....**

- 7.5% of students with learning disabilities enter into some form of postsecondary education. In the general population the percentage is 43%.<sup>4</sup>

Post secondary institutions in New Brunswick have gradually come to see the importance of understanding the needs of persons with learning disabilities as being directly proportional to decrease in their dismal drop out rates. CCNB are now seeing learning disabilities as the largest disability group and with increased appropriate interventions with the help of knowledgeable staff saw their drop out rate improve from 25% to 8%. Their foresight and interventions led potentially productive, capable individuals to completing their courses and achieving their dreams at a much higher rate than ever before.

Some of our universities have been very proactive in providing accommodations for students with Learning Disabilities, example the Meighen Centre of Mount Allison University which is in its 19<sup>th</sup> year of operation. Others have gradually come on board but ensuring that adequate services are available is only one part of the solution. Ensuring the teaching staff is knowledgeable of learning disabilities is a large and important component.

*"I went through a university that had a centre for students with learning disabilities. I was very lucky."<sup>5</sup>*

---

<sup>2</sup> Wagner, National Longitudinal Transition Study, 1991

<sup>3</sup> PACFOLD Focus Groups, Highlights from Discussions, 2005

<sup>4</sup> Health and Activity Limitation Survey - Statistics Canada (HALS), 1991

<sup>5</sup> PACFOLD Focus Groups, Highlights from Discussions, 2005

This is especially important in New Brunswick where along with a drastic decrease in population we are seeing a labour market experiencing a shortage of trained and capable workers. Numerous studies have made us all aware that postsecondary education is becoming more and more important - "more than 70% of all new jobs in Canada will require some form of post secondary education"<sup>6</sup>.

Persons with learning disabilities have not been able to access postsecondary education in New Brunswick because:

- They do not know the difficulty they are experiencing is due to a Learning Disability. Our school system is choosing not to do assessments. Thus students not only do not know of their disability and how to advocate but do not know that accommodations they may have received in school will not be put into place in post secondary institutes unless a current assessment is available.
- Post secondary institutes do not always have trained staff or instructors.
- Accommodations are still viewed as privileges not necessities, unlike other more readily visible disabilities.

We are therefore in New Brunswick choosing to leave approximately this important sector of our population unable to participate fully in our society due to our lack of knowledge and services. For those who do not have this opportunity to receive postsecondary training, employments possibilities are limited.

*In a pattern that remains constant throughout their lifetimes, just over half of adults with LD aged 30 to 44 (51%) reported being employed the week prior to the 2001 census, compared to 89.1% of the total population in the same age group.<sup>7</sup>*

As a province we can no longer ignore the capabilities of persons with learning disabilities and our neglect of their needs.

## **Recommendations:**

To ensure more person with learning disabilities have access to postsecondary education and contributing to our communities and workplaces, we need:

1. Increased understanding of need for psychoeducational assessment by all levels of education.
2. Access to diagnosis similar to other disabilities.
3. Increased knowledgeable staff at postsecondary levels.

---

<sup>6</sup> Government of Canada, 2002

<sup>7</sup> PACFOLD, 2007

4. Access to transitional assistance for students with learning disabilities entering postsecondary education.
5. Access to competent persons to help guide students with learning disabilities through grant/student loan application, assistive technology, etc.
6. Credit for courses on use of Assistive Technology.
7. Increase awareness among our employers to ensure smoother transition to employment. Many employers already have employees who have undetected learning disabilities.

*From a young adult: "I think that we're a lot stronger because of our learning disabilities. We're jumping over the hurdles that are put in front of us. We don't give up."<sup>8</sup>*

Contact information:

LDANB/TAANB  
203-403 Regent  
Fredericton, NB E3B 3X6  
Telephone: 459-7852  
Fax: 455-9300  
Email: [ldanb@nald.ca](mailto:ldanb@nald.ca)  
[www.nald.ca/ldanb](http://www.nald.ca/ldanb)  
President: Kathrin Pader

---

<sup>8</sup> PACFOLD Focus Groups, *Highlights from Discussions, 2005*