

# Evaluation of National Institute of Learning Development (NILD) and Discovery Educational Therapy Program

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### Abstract

This qualitative study evaluated the NILD and Discovery Therapy Educational Program at one Christian school, for effectiveness and academic progress of students with learning disabilities (LD) who receive the therapy. This study leads to positive social change as leaders of Christian schools and parents see the need and provide interventional programs for LD students.

### Problem

Assuring academic excellence for all students is a necessity, but for students with learning disabilities (LDs), the push to achieve academic excellence is an uphill battle. Students with LDs need interventional help that provides them with the tools and skills to succeed academically.

The lack of interventional programs in some Christian schools in Maryland renders the LD students ineffective academically. Some Christian schools in the state of Maryland have no Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) programs or special education programs in place for students with LDs who have enrolled in these schools. The hope that these students with LDs can achieve academic excellence in this situation is almost at zero.

Christian school administrators, the policy makers, and all the stakeholders needed more information to provide interventional programs for the students with LDs who are enrolled in Christian schools.

### Purpose

The purpose of this program evaluation of NILD and Discovery Educational Therapy Program at one of the Christian schools was to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and therapy techniques, the academic progress of the LD students, and if the program was worth duplicating in other Christian schools.

### Relevant Literature

Evaluators should conduct program evaluation to make decisions that will affect the program or the organization (Spaulding, 2008, p. 5). Program evaluation gives stakeholders the window of opportunity to ascertain from the program what things are working well, what needs to be improved, and what is not working toward the desired goal.

Tyler's (1942) **objective-based evaluation theory**, as the framework, provided me with ample opportunity to study and discuss

- the objectives of the NILD and Discovery Educational Therapy Program, and
- how the program is providing adequate educational therapy to the students with LDs the skills and the tools to achieve academic success.

Torgesen (1986), Lerner & Johns (2012), Gallegos, Langley, and Villagas (2012), Bryck and Fisher (2012), and other scholars in behavioral and cognitive psychology, sociology, neuroscience, and neuropsychology provided the information in the study concerning how to study and understand the learning behaviors of the students with LDs.

### Research Questions

**What are the goals and objectives of the NILD and Discovery Educational Therapy program?**

**What are the strengths and weakness of the NILD and Discovery Therapy techniques in meeting these goals and objectives?**

The probing questions that guided the verbal interviews included:

- What is the average length of time before any noticeable improvement takes place?
- What makes the NILD and Discovery Therapy Program unique?
- What can be considered as the contributing factor(s) to the program's effectiveness or ineffectiveness?

### Procedures

#### Design

- Bounded case study and program evaluation

#### Sample

- A convenience sample of 16 participants: 5 NILD educational therapists, the NILD and Discovery therapy Program Coordinator, the elementary school principal, 3 elementary school teachers and 6 parents of students enrolled in the program.

#### Data Collection

- 7 semi-structured interview questionnaire were used to collect the data.
- The open-ended interview protocol was conducted by following 6 questions.

#### Procedure

- The semi-structured questionnaires was followed up with a verbal, open-ended interviews.
- The therapists also voluntarily provided additional information concerning the therapy techniques, their personal experiences and training.

### Data Analysis

The data were organized by themes, color-coded, categorized, transcribed, triangulated and synthesized.

### Findings

The findings provided useful information that highlighted how effective the NILD and Discovery Therapy Program and its therapy techniques were.

It was also found that through the effective techniques, the therapists have been providing the students with LDs the learning tools and skills to succeed academically.

Major causes that will render the program and the program techniques ineffective were also highlighted and discussed.

### Limitations

Participants may have withheld information from the researcher. But because the researcher was at the school as an external evaluator, and has no direct obligation to the school or to the program, participants were opened and sincere to provide all the necessary data for the study.

Although helpful for elaboration, the information from the program's archive was limited.

### Conclusions

The findings in study provide Christian school administrators, stakeholders, and policy makers some rich information that will help them to assess the learning needs of the students with LDs in their schools and provide them with the necessary interventional program that will equip them with the skills and learning tools to succeed academically.

### Social Change Implications

This study leads to positive social change by informing leaders of Christian schools and parents whose children with LDs attend Christian schools of the effectiveness of the NILD and Discovery Educational Therapy Program and the need to provide interventional programs for students with LDs in Christian schools.

The long term benefits will include the students with LDs becoming independent learners, both parents and classroom teachers will appreciate the academic successes of the students with LDs, and the society at large will benefit from the social contributions that the students with LDs will make to society.

### Committee

*Dr. Dennis Lawrence (Chair), Dr. Joe Ann Hinrichs (Committee Member), and Dr. David Bail, (University Reviewer)*