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Meeting the Needs of College Students With Learning Disabilities

Rita Garrett Foster
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Education

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Rita Garrett Foster

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

Review Committee

Dr. Sydney Parent, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Carole Pearce, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Jean Sorrell, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2019

Abstract

Meeting the Needs of College Students With
Learning Disabilities

by

Rita Garrett Foster

MEd, Strayer University, 2010

BS, Virginia Union University, 1979

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

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Abstract

Although more students with learning disabilities (LDs) are attending postsecondary institutions, faculty lacks the necessary training to educate students with LDs. A need exists to ensure that their college experiences include resources or support services to help students meet their academic requirements. Without support services, students may encounter poor outcomes in postsecondary education. This bounded, qualitative case study was designed to explore perspectives and experiences of students with LDs related to student services and accommodations at a postsecondary institution. Knowles's theory of andragogy formed the study's conceptual framework. A purposeful sample of 6 students, who were medically diagnosed as having a learning disability and who were, at the time of the study, receiving support services from the office of student support services, participated in the semistructured interviews. Qualitative data were analyzed using open and axial coding to search for patterns and emerging themes. Key results included that even though students were satisfied overall with the services and accommodations provided by the university, they lacked adequate support from some of the faculty on the importance of accommodations and services and how they influence academic success in postsecondary education. Based on the findings, a 3-day professional development training was developed to educate faculty in learning disabilities, understanding accommodations, and enhancing their abilities to provide support in working with students with LDs. These endeavors may promote positive faculty-student relationships and increased academic success of students with LDs in postsecondary education.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

In this doctoral study, I explored academic experiences and perspectives of students with learning disabilities (LDs) who were enrolled in a 4-year college in a mid-Atlantic state. To help them make their college experience positive and meaningful, the school needed to not only provide various learning and remedial resources, but also revisit its own understanding of what reasonable accommodations mean for these students (Shaw, 2009). With this diverse population of students, needs of the students may change; therefore, the college must be proactive in providing and supporting any accommodations are necessary.

My focus in this study included student perspectives of their academic college experiences. Statistics showed that 54% of freshmen who have an LD attended 2-year colleges and 45% attended 4-year colleges (Ferguson, 2017). Students with LDs may be more apt to attend community colleges or vocational programs and less apt to pursue a degree. With this in mind, legislative mandates (Shaw, 2009) ensure support of these students who attend postsecondary institutions. For example, the Individual Disabilities Education Act set the basis for mandatory academic support for students in higher education institutions, yet previously academic support was not required (Conner, 2012). Students with LDs are entitled to receive accommodations through the campus Office of Student Support Services (OSSS) at the university under study if they disclose that they have such a disability. This support may include services such as assistance with classroom assignments organizational skills, time management skills, providing

textbooks on tape, and extra time to complete tests. These support services may help students to have a positive college experience; therefore, in this research, I will address how students with LDs perceive the support services available to them.

Definition of the Problem

Existing researchers have indicated that the quality of secondary education support services provided to students with LDs is a strong factor in the students' success in postsecondary education (Gerber, 2012). The problem of students not reporting their LD may affect academic success. In 2016, public data supplied by the OSSS showed that the site of my study had an enrollment of 1,400 students with 20% being labeled LD. Data showed that 10% of the students with LDs reported their disability but only 7% accessed support services (State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, 2016).

As a result of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), increasing numbers of students with intellectual deficits are attending postsecondary institutions (Gerber, 2012). In this study, I focused on students at a local university located in a mid-Atlantic state. My primary goal in this study was to focus on the experiences of students with LDs in this 4-year university. Students at 4-year institutions must meet the same requirements as students who do not have LDs. Requirements include a specific grade point average, Standardized Achievement Test (SAT) scores, references, and possibly writing samples.

Faculty who teach in a 4-year university may lack the necessary training to educate students with LDs; therefore, this problem may affect students resulting in

feelings of isolation and inadequacy. Faculty members may express concerns about students with LDs and strategies to meet the needs of these students. Faculty cannot fully assist students if they lack the training and understanding of teaching students with LDs. Faculty and administrators must raise awareness of LDs by seeking resources and requesting training which will enhance collaboration among faculty and staff to ensure accommodations for students with LDs leading to student academic success.

Access to support services is essential in the postsecondary success for students with LDs. Despite the differences in the disability laws in secondary versus postsecondary education, it is the responsibility of the student and/or their parents to understand the laws. Secondary schools must design an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for students who are diagnosed as having an LD. This plan includes special accommodations that must be provided to the student in all classes and school activities. The student is not required to request these services at the college level. It is the student's responsibility to provide information to the university concerning any disability and needed accommodations. College students with LDs may feel stigmatized, resulting in a reluctance to advocate for academic assistance (Cawthorn & Cole, 2010). However, college students with LDs may demonstrate self-advocacy skills to make self-determination a reality resulting in success in college (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Shogren, Williams-Diehm, & Soukup, 2010). Students may disclose their disability to the office of student services and they must consistently communicate with this office to ensure that services are being provided in the classroom (Wehmeyer et al., 2010). Assisting students with LDs in the college environment must be a collaborative effort for all

stakeholders, including faculty, college administration, counselors, students and parents; consequently, these efforts may provide a more productive environment for students to experience academic success.

Rationale

In the past 30 years, the college student in the United States population has become more diverse, including more students with LDs (Lindstrom, Doren & Miesch, 2011). For this reason, in this study, I addressed experiences of students with LDs pursuing higher education. Studies also show that, because of various deficits that students with LDs exhibit, these students may encounter poorer outcomes in postsecondary education (Hadley, 2017).

DaDeppo (2009) asserted that students with LDs do not complete their college requirements for graduation at the same rates as students who do not have disabilities despite the increase in enrollment and persistence of these students. Students with LDs may need more time to complete graduation requirements with the assistance of support services, due to academic deficits, as well as social skills (DaDeppo, 2009). As a result of this situation, support services are needed to help students strengthen their academic and social skills.

LDs are the most prevalent type of disabilities found in the postsecondary population (McCleary-Jones, 2008). Taymans (2012) found that LDs tend to affect cognitive skills, which are relevant to memory and perception; therefore, students with LDs may exhibit deficits in reading, writing, or mathematics. Standardized and psychological tests are used to identify LDs and assess a student's level of intelligence

and performance in reading, writing, and math (Taymans, 2012). In the elementary or secondary school environment, if the student is found to have an LD using these assessment tools, an IEP will be written to include the student's level of performance, strengths and weaknesses, and objectives and goals (Taymans, 2012). During elementary or secondary school, the IEP is the education plan for the student, although, during the postsecondary level, 504 access services are provided (Taymans, 2012). Regardless of whether high school students with LDs had an IEP or a 504 plan, it is important for them to receive assistance with transition skills so that they are prepared to make the adjustment from secondary to postsecondary education (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002). This assistance may include time management skills and study skills, as well as self-advocacy skills. If the skills are not developed at the secondary level, they must be provided at the postsecondary level to enhance success.

With the increase of students with LDs at the postsecondary level, universities must be committed to provide a learning environment that will also focus on retaining this special population. In addition, they must be committed to excellence and strive to provide students with necessary tools to enhance their academic experiences. Furthermore, universities must make appropriate academic adjustments to meet the needs of students with LDs. Although the college system has a commitment to meet the needs of students with LDs, it is important to ensure that students are consistently receiving the required services (Allan, 2011).

Because universities offer educational opportunities for students with LDs, it is important that stakeholders, and educators, who work in the area of secondary special

education, postsecondary administrators, parents, and students with LDs advocate for this population of students. This advocacy could be an important component of the success of students with LDs at the study site. Thus, the information from this study may aid in the awareness of the needs of this population of students in a 4-year university setting.

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Site

The study site that I selected for my project had an enrollment of approximately 1,400 students in 2016. Many students who are enrolled at the university struggle in their classes and are failing due to the lack of their decision to seek the help that they need (personal communication, director of student support services, October 18, 2016). In 2016, according to public data, only 5% of the students at the study site disclosed that they have an LD. Public data supplied by the OSSS and the OSSS showed that 22% of the student population at the study site had IEPs while in high school. In 2018, public data showed that 12% of students with LDs disclosed their disability and were eligible for services, which are a significant increase compared with data from previous years. However, only 6% of students with LDs were receiving services from OSSS, which is cause for concern. Support services may include academic counseling, study skills training, time management skills, and mentoring to improve social skills. In essence, students with LDs at the study site should access and take advantage of support services, which may help them reach their potential in postsecondary education.

Evidence of the Problem From Professional Literature

Lightner, Kipps-Vaughan, Schulte, and Trice (2012) found that many students with LDs at a certain 4-year university do not access necessary support services because they make the decision not to disclose their disabilities to support staff. One reason for students with LDs making the decision not to disclose their disabilities is related to the stigma of having a disability. Cawthorn and Cole (2010) asserted that issues of stigma often involve interpersonal as well as intrapersonal issues, which may cause feelings of being misunderstood. These issues may also contribute to students with LDs' feelings of inadequacy in the postsecondary environment. Other issues that may influence a student's decision to seek services include understanding one's disability and specific knowledge about the disability (Lightner et al., 2012). The authors concluded that students with LDs do not access services because of their inability to establish an identity independent of their disability status, feelings of shame, and feelings that receiving assistance from the office of support services would be "cheating" (Lightner et al., 2012). Researchers have also stated that students with LDs complain of a lack of time to seek assistance with academics, conflicts with daily class schedules, and a mistaken feeling of excelling academically without assistance.

Mytkowicz, Goss, and College (2012) found that though 4-year universities provide support services for students with LDs, students may not access services if they lack self-advocacy skills, which may affect the students' ability to seek academic assistance. Also important is the lack of emotional support that may interfere with the students' perceptions of themselves as learners. Bursuck, Rose, Cowen, and Yahaya

(1989) discussed the issue of 4-year universities providing services for students with LDs. Bursuck et al. (1989) also indicated that services provided by universities may vary based on service goal priorities, the size of the institution, and the degrees granted. These issues may affect accessibility of support services for students with LDs at a 4-year institution.

Definitions

The following terms are defined in the context of this study.

Andragogy: Based on the assumptions that adults prefer knowing the purpose of learning, develop motivation through personal experiences, and take responsibility for learning (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011)

Individual Education Plan (IEP): A written educational plan developed in consultation with a special education student's parents and professional educator based on information from formal assessments (Westwood, 2003).

Learning disabilities: A term that refers to disorders that may affect reading, math, and writing but cannot be attributed to deficits in mental intellect, senses, socioeconomic environment, or insufficient school instruction (Westwood, 2003).

Self-determination skills: Skills that affect the ability to make decisions that will enhance educational, vocational, and life skills (Olson & Pratt, 2004, p. 360).

Section 504: A federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disabilities (Olson & Pratt, 2004).

Transition activities: Activities that are designed to promote movement from high school to postsecondary institutions and are based on the individual needs and interest of the student (Olson & Pratt, 2004, p. 361).

Transition services: Activities that are provided to LD secondary education students to help prepare them for postsecondary education, career training, and employment (Olson & Pratt, 2004, p. 360).

Significance

An increase in students with LDs is occurring in students attending post secondary education institutions (Plotner & May, 2019). Lindstrom et al. (2011) advocated that students with LDs have the desire to attend postsecondary education institutions; yet, they may not be successful without support services. Garrison-Wade and Lehmann (2009) asserted that without attention of academic skills and supports necessary in postsecondary institutions, students with LDs may not succeed in completing postsecondary studies. The significance of my study was to obtain students' perspectives on support services, other resources and how these support features have influenced their academic success. I recruited students with LDs as participants in this study to ascertain their needs to be academically successful at the study site. These findings may provide school administrators and faculty information that will highlight what students with LDs perceive as being necessary for their academic success at the study site.

Although support services were available at the study site, with the increase of students with LDs attending postsecondary institutions, a need still exists for students to use these services. Students with LDs must be afforded necessary support to aid them in

postsecondary education (Garrison-Wade & Lehmann, 2009). With support services being offered at the study site, students may be able to use the resources that are provided to reach their academic goals which would include graduation.

Research Questions

With an increase of students with LDs attending postsecondary institutions, it is important to examine factors that may be helpful to their academic success. The sample in this study consisted of students with LDs who currently received services from the OSSS at the study site. With an array of support resources made accessible to students in 4-year institutions, students with disabilities have the opportunity to acquire and use these resources to their advantage. The more support students receive, the more confident they may feel about learning (Roberts, Ju, & Zhang, 2016).

There is a need to ensure that the college experience of students with LDs includes resources and support services to help them meet their academic requirements. Without support services, students with LDs may encounter poor outcomes in postsecondary education. I developed research questions that aligned with the problem of this study:

1. What are the experiences of students with LDs who receive support services from the office of student support services in meeting academic requirements at a 4-year university?
2. What resources do students with LDs who receive support services from the office of student support services use in meeting academic requirements?

3. What factors do students with LDs who receive support services from the office of student support services identify as most influencing their academic success?

Review of the Literature

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that I selected for this study is Knowles's andragogy. Andragogy is based on the assumptions that adults need to know why they are learning, their role of personal experiences in learning, readiness to learn, and motivation to learn (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011). These assumptions of andragogy are prevalent in the learning/teaching process of adult learners as well as adult learners with LDs. Adult learners prefer knowing the purpose of learning particular information, developing motivation through personal experiences to enhance their readiness to learn, and taking responsibility for their determination and independency in making their own decisions (Knowles et al., 2011).

Chan (2010) addressed andragogy as essential to active learning. Students who are engaged in active learning experience exploring, analyzing, communicating, creating, reflection, and use of new information or experiences (Ota, DiCarlo, Burts, Laird, & Gioe, 2006). These practices are in line with the assumptions of andragogy (student-centered learning, and self-directed learning for a purpose and sharing experiences with others) (Hatcher & Cutler-White, 2009).

In addition, andragogy is based on the assumption that adult learners desire involvement in their learning with motivation being a necessary component that is essential to the learning process (Chan, 2010). Though andragogy focuses on more

student-centered learning, students need motivation, which may influence them to participate more in their learning. Motivation may lead to students being able to take more responsibility and self-monitor their learning. When students are motivated during the learning process, they are more likely to have continuing interest in what they have learned and to use what they have learned (Knowles et al., 2011).

Traore (2008) related the strategy of learning circles to the assumptions of andragogy as a concept to help adult students create and adapt to a learning environment which is student-centered. This strategy relates to active learning in creating a student-centered environment focused on the success of adult learners and adult learners with LDs in postsecondary education. By integrating experiences of exploring, analyzing, communicating, creating, and reflection, students may be more apt to adjust to different learning environments that promote learning.

Research Literature

The review of literature included searches from ERIC, EBSCO, and SAGE databases. In this review, I present literature relating to concepts that affect students with LDs in postsecondary levels of education and the services that are required. Search terms that I used included *transition services, postsecondary school, special education, self-determination, accommodations, faculty perceptions, learning disabilities, and learning strategies*.

Students with LDs need services to help them to succeed in postsecondary education. Students are responsible for disclosing their disability to the office of student support services (Conner, 2012). Once this information is documented, appropriate

support services must be made available to students. Academic support services are provided to students based on the individual need of the student (Garrison-Wade & Lehmann, 2009). Students with LDs should be afforded the same opportunities to succeed as their peers, but with accommodations. For example, a student may have the skills to succeed in a higher level math, but may need added support of a tutor. This support could be essential to the student's academic success in the class.

Research literature from various sources presented the challenges and needs of students with LDs at the postsecondary level. The literature brings to light that many students may not experience success in college without the necessary academic and social skills that are deemed essential for success. With the increase of students with LDs attending postsecondary institutions, the literature presented information crucial to the academic and emotional support of students with LDs.

In support of the needs of students with LDs, the following themes were present in various articles used in the literature review. I used themes from the literature to shape this doctoral study. These include access to support services and accommodations, self-determination, tutoring, mentoring, remedial classes, social/interpersonal skills, and faculty support.

Access to Support Services and Accommodations

Students with LDs in postsecondary education institutions need to have access to services that will provide positive experiences to strengthen their academic skills and self-confidence in their academic journeys. Support services for many students with disabilities may include academic tutors, positive role models, collaborative planning of

support services based on student deficits, diverse learning strategies in decision making, various teaching strategies, and faculty with positive attitudes toward working with students with LDs (Cawthorn & Cole, 2010; Garrison-Wade & Lehmann, 2009; Yu, Novak, Lavery, Vostal, & Matuga, 2018). Literature has indicated that the success of students with LDs is contingent upon receiving the appropriate support and services such as extra time to complete tests, a classroom note taker, oral administration of tests or quizzes, and taped lectures. Because many of these students may have experienced problems throughout secondary school due to their disabilities, many will be successful only with accommodations to meet their individual needs in college (Cawthorn & Cole, 2010; Joshi & Bouck, 2017; Lyman et al., 2016). Therefore, many students with LDs have experienced little success (Morningstar & Frey, 2010), but they do want to be successful.

Cleary, Walter, and Jackson (2011) asserted that the number of students with LDs and psychological disabilities at the postsecondary level has increased in the last decade. Psychological disabilities may cause anxiety and may affect academic progress. Specific percentages are not known but evidence showed an increase in this population of students at the postsecondary level (Belch, 2011; Cleary et al., 2011; Hadley, 2018).

College students with LDs may exhibit difficulties balancing academics and other responsibilities such as work and family roles. Succeeding in college is challenging for most college students, but students with disabilities face even more challenges due to academic and social deficits. For students who have LDs and also exhibit psychological problems, they may experience feelings of anxiety which may

affect their abilities to function under academic pressure, adjust to new social environments without family support, and adjust to pressures of survival in the college environment (Rosenstreich, Feldman, Davidson, Maza, & Margalit, 2015; Stein, 2012). Therefore, appropriate support services and accommodations such as help with time management and organizational skills, course/curriculum advising, advocacy goal setting, extended time on test, and note taking must be used by these students (Eitzen, Kinney, & Grillo, 2016; Ray, 2019; Stein, 2012). Without the benefits of these supports, students with LDs and psychological deficits may not be able to succeed in postsecondary education.

Disclosing an LD is the initial step to assessing services and accommodations in postsecondary institutions (Conner, 2012; Thompson-Ebanks & Jarman, 2018; Wessel, 2019). Unlike in high school, students with LDs in postsecondary institutions must disclose their disability to the office of student support services (Conner, 2012). Once information is documented, appropriate support services and accommodations must be provided to the student based on the individual needs of the student. For example, students with LDs may require additional time to complete tests, an isolated quiet room for test taking, and taped lectures or a designated person to take class notes. Koch and Mamiseishvili (2012) studied continuous retention among students with LDs and noted helpful accommodations which affected student persistence as being able to substitute one course for another, the elimination of certain classes and having a note taker. Although class substitution or elimination of classes would require approval from student services or school administration, these accommodations provide alternatives

which may be considered, based on the individual documentation of services for the individual student. In addition, Troiano, Liefeld, and Trachtenberg (2010) investigated the relationship between high rates of students attending the academic support center and increase in grade point average. The findings of this study asserted that students who attended the support center by choice rather than being referred did show success in the classroom and an increase in grade point average.

Self-Determination Skills

Self-determination skills are necessary if students with LDs are to make decisions regarding their success in postsecondary education (Getzel & Thoma, 2008; Mazher & Waseem, 2019). Through self-determination, students are able to develop insight into what they want to accomplish academically (Bergman, 2005). Ideally, self-determination skills should be focused on initially for students with LDs; however, these skills may be lacking in the postsecondary level (Carter, Trainor, Owens, Swedeen, & Sun, 2009). Cobb, Lehmann, Newman-Gonchar, and Atwell (2009) claimed the importance of self-determination in adjusting to postsecondary education. Ankeny and Lehmann (2010) asserted that the earlier students are exposed to self-determination skills; they are more likely to exhibit assertiveness in a postsecondary environment. In addition, these skills must be taught in the context of other skills, not in isolation (Konrad, Fowler, Walker, Test, & Wood, 2007).

Self-determination skills in students with LDs may be achieved in postsecondary education by developing collaborative relationships. For example, Parker and Boutelle (2009) created an executive functioning coaching program that included

establishing collaborative relationships with students that focused on modeling appropriate behaviors and as a result, self-determination skills improved. These collaborative relationships not only improved self-determination, but enlightened students in life skills (Parker & Boutelle, 2009).

Students with LDs must have the ability to self-advocate, which may lead to developing strong self-determination skills. Getzel and Thoma (2008) conducted a study among postsecondary students with LDs in a college setting and identified skills that effective self-advocates used to stay in college and identified essential self-determination skills needed to remain and persist in college. The strategies identified included (a) critical thinking skills to address issues, (b) disability awareness, (c) decision making, and (d) self-advocacy (Ferguson, 2017; Getzel & Thoma, 2008). Wehmeyer et al., (2010) advocated that self-determination skills have been attributed to successful postsecondary achievement for students with LDs. In essence, self-determination is an overall skill necessary to succeed in postsecondary education and in life (Collins, Azmat, & Rentschler, 2019; Getzel & Thoma, 2008).

Tutoring

Students with LDs may benefit from academic tutoring at the postsecondary level. Academic tutoring can benefit students with LDs by providing academic learning strategies that will help students improve their academic skills (reading, writing, organization, and time management skills). Tutoring may contribute to the academic progress of students with LDs because it gives students an opportunity to work on essential skills that will enhance learning (DuPaul et al., 2017; Reed, Kennett, Lewis,

Lund-Lucas, Stallberg, & Newbold, 2009). Tutoring may be provided in a group setting or a one-on-one setting. Some students may feel more comfortable working in a one-on-one environment, whereas other students who are more confident may function better in a group setting. If students take advantage of tutoring services, grade point average and class attendance may improve (Troiano, et al., 2010; Zeng, Ju, & Hord, 2018).

Peer tutoring is an appropriate support service for students with LDs in postsecondary education (Michael, 2016; Vogel, Fresko, & Wertheim, 2007). This support service is a learning process that teaches problem solving and academic strategies, and also provides opportunities for skill practice and social interaction that are meaningful for students with LDs (Chen & Liu, 2011). Reciprocal Peer Tutoring, a collaborative learning approach has been successful in providing tutoring that involves forming groups or pairs of students who work together and are trained to work on a specific academic task (Dioso-Henson, 2012). Students alternate, taking the role of tutor or tutee. Tutors collaborate to create strategies to monitor and evaluate each other. Reciprocal tutoring is appropriate for students with LDs in higher education and may take place in the university support service office, library, or a dormitory. Tutoring programs may be instrumental in enhancing academics.

Vogel et al. (2007) researched a peer tutoring project from the views of the tutor and tutees and found that the success of the project was based on perceptions of the needs of the student, focus and use of diverse learning activities, experiences of tutors, tutee's attitude, and problems that may affect the overall tutoring process. Overall, tutors and tutees perceived tutoring as being effective and there was a high level of

satisfaction. Students who are interested in tutoring fill out application forms providing personal and academic information, and provide references. Students are selected through the office of student services based on criteria set by the school.

Students may benefit from working with tutors who share a common interest. Vogel et al. (2007) asserted that one of the organizational aspects of a tutoring program is the need to pair tutors and tutees based on a common college major. This common interest may lead to positive tutoring outcomes as well as positive relationships between tutors and tutees. Tutors would be identified by a common college major based on interviews, information on their application, and references. Students may be selected by the office of student support services based on the criteria set by the school. Chen and Liu (2011) asserted that peer tutoring may involve individuals of the same social group tutoring each other when one peer may have more knowledge than the others. Tutors would be chosen and matched with tutees based on the application that would include the name of social organizations that promote tutoring.

Mentoring

Mentoring is an invaluable asset for postsecondary students with LDs in providing academic and social support needed to remain in college and reach their ambition of graduation. Mentoring can provide direction and reassurance to students who lack the persistence to succeed without help and may promote more student engagement and interaction which can improve student outcomes (Brown, Takahashi, & Roberts, 2010; Feldman, Davidson, Ben-Naim, Maza, & Margalit, 2016). Conner (2012)

stated that mentoring is valuable to students with LDs and may lead to positive outcomes such as, enhanced enrollment and retention.

Brown et al. (2010) acknowledged that students may benefit from faculty mentors who serve as role models, give guidance, and provide advice. This may positively affect academic achievement as well as provide support in acquiring social skills. Mentoring provides students with individual attention which allows the mentor to focus on issues and concerns that are important to the student. Mentoring provided by university faculty may also positively affect student achievement and self-determination (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Dean & Forray, 2017). Faculty mentors are important in mentoring as they may help students make sense of their educational experiences while also providing academic and social support. In addition, faculty mentors may challenge students to not only succeed, but to examine their own self-worth and to develop new perspectives of what can be accomplished (Brown et al., 2010).

Cornelius and Wood (2012) researched the importance of universities with faculty mentoring students and students mentoring their peers. The research showed that when students have a positive mentoring experience, their postsecondary experience may be more positive. This positive experience may also affect retention (Cornelius & Wood, 2012; Jorgensen, Budd, Fichten, Nguyen, & Havel, 2018).

Remedial Classes

Madaus and Shaw (2006) found that LDs are the most prevalent disabilities among college students in the United States. Because students with LDs lag behind in academic performance, many of these students may benefit from remedial classes.

Remedial classes have contributed to student academic success in postsecondary institutions by allowing students with different levels of academic readiness and students with LDs to take courses in reading, writing, and math to prepare them for college-level academics (Bettinger & Long, 2009; Boatman & Long, 2010). The purpose of remedial classes is to address skills that were not acquired in high school. Students with LDs may benefit from remedial classes that offer material that is not on a college level (Chen, Wu, & Tasoff, 2010). Bailey, Jeong, and Cho (2010) estimated that 40% of first time freshmen, including students with LDs, are enrolled in remedial classes. Students with or without LDs may be identified by counselors or academic advisors and requested to enroll in these classes (Ben-Naim, Laslo-Roth, Einav, Biran, & Margalit, 2017; Kane, Schmidt, & Walker, 2011). Remedial classes may include the use of various learning models as well as innovative strategies to enhance learning (Edgecombe, 2011; Epper & Baker, 2009). A learning model is a framework that consists of systematic procedures to achieve specific learning objectives. Learning models may assist students with LDs in acquiring strategies in organizing and modifying information for retention and the use of course modules that allow students to work on specific skills and not repeat material already mastered.

Upon enrollment into college, students may need to progress through remedial classes that lay the foundation for classes in an academic curriculum. Researchers have shown that 30% of all college students, regardless of LDs, referred to remedial courses did not enroll and only 60% of referred students actually enrolled in the remedial courses to which they were referred (Bailey et al., 2010). Statistics also showed that 74% of all

college students completed remedial classes and continued their coursework (Attewell, Lavin, Domina, & Levey, 2006; Theobald, Goldhaber, Gratz, & Holden, 2019). This included students regardless of LDs. Students with LDs could benefit from remedial classes because it would allow them more time to acquire skills and strategies that are necessary to successfully move on to college level classes. Although some students may not enroll into remedial classes, these classes should be available to students who make a decision to enroll.

Social/Interpersonal Skills

The ability to interact with peers is an important skill that many students with LDs in postsecondary education need, yet research reported that socialization is not a natural occurring process for them (Hendrickson, Vander Busard, Rodgers, & Scheidecker, 2013). The lack of appropriate social skills may result in social isolation in school as well as in the community. Systematic instruction stressing social skills must be taught to students with LDs who lack or have deficits in this area (Conner, 2012; McKay, Banner, Sherif, Rhodes, & University of Kentucky, H.D.I., 2015).

Students need social skills to assist in adapting to new people and new environments when they enter postsecondary education (Hadley, 2017; Hong, Ivy, Gonzalez, & Ehrensberger, 2007; Plotner & May, 2019). With there being a heavier workload in postsecondary education, more academic decisions to be made, and daily living demands, students with LDs may be able to make this transition more smoothly if they are able to interact with others in seeking help when needed. By learning positive

social skills, students with LDs will be able to ask questions, communicate with faculty and peers, and voice opinions without becoming defensive (Hong et al., 2007).

Students with LDs who are in the postsecondary setting need interpersonal skills that are essential to them in forming relationships with other students and faculty. These skills are important in developing strategies to (a) managing frustration and anger, (b) speaking in a way that conveys a positive self-image, and (c) showing awareness and concern for the feelings of others (Hong et al., 2007). Interpersonal skills may also enhance communication skills that are necessary in forming relationships with others.

Hendrickson et al. (2013) examined the success of students with LDs living in a college dormitory with first-year students who did not have LDs. Both groups of students received support from counselors that included activity engagement, communication and behavioral guidance, and stress management. The students with LDs developed more positive social engagement because of their consistent interaction with the other group of students and the staff support that they received daily. By providing an inclusive residence hall environment for students with LDs in postsecondary education, students with LDs may develop positive social skills and interaction, which may enrich their college life experience.

Faculty Attitudes

Faculty attitudes may affect the academic success of students with LDs in postsecondary education (Reynolds & Hitchcock, 2014; Stevens, Schneider, & Bederman-Miller, 2018). The willingness of faculty to assist students may be affected by faculty attitudes and an understanding of working with students with LDs. University

faculty have the responsibility of helping students gain access to academic knowledge and they are also responsible for determining the competence of students in acquiring knowledge (Murray, Flannery, & Wren, 2009). Consequently, faculty may face a greater demand to increase their understanding of LD as a disability, evaluate their attitude toward teaching students with LDs, and provide learning strategies that may enhance learning proficiency for students with LDs in postsecondary education (Banks, 2019; Lindstrom et al., 2011).

Murray et al. (2009) conducted a survey that examined faculty attitudes related to students with LDs in postsecondary education. A survey was distributed to 300 faculty with 70 participants responding. Findings indicated that faculty generally had positive perceptions toward students who have LDs and were willing to provide support and appropriate accommodations in the classroom. Findings suggested that accommodations such as reading or interpreting paperwork and forms, providing extra classroom time and rescheduling missed appointments were considered as appropriate by faculty.

Dallas, Sprong, and Upton (2014) examined faculty attitudes towards providing classroom accommodations and teaching students with LDs. On-line surveys were used among the faculty at a university. Although there were differences in teaching experience, and prior training in working with students with LDs, overall faculty showed positive attitudes toward serving students with LDs in postsecondary education.

Reynolds and Hitchcock (2014) delved into factors that most influence student success and retention for students with LDs. It was found that although academic challenges and peer relationships were important, faculty attitudes were the most

important to students. Thus, negative attitudes exhibited by faculty may cause discouragement in students.

Implications

Based on the findings of this research, a need exists for collaborative efforts to ensure that more students with LDs are receiving support services. The findings of this study led to emphasis on motivating more students to take advantage of support services provided by the university. The information collected from student perspectives in this study led to the development of a project to be used for professional development for all faculty at the research site. The project consists of information to educate faculty in understanding accommodations, and enhancing their ability to teach students with LDs. Factors that influence academic success and ways to influence more students to access academic support services are also included.

Summary

In summary, in Section 1 of the doctoral study, I presented information pertaining to the importance of support services for students with LDs at the postsecondary level. Because more students with LDs are attending college, these students require different teaching strategies and attention that they may not be receiving. In Section 1, I provided an introduction, definition of the problem, rationale, definition of terms, significance, research questions, review of literature, and implications. In Section 1, I also provided literature to support the importance of academic support for students with LDs. In Section 2, I identify and explain the methodology of my research. I also include a step-by-step discussion of my data collection and analysis. In the methodology section, I present my

purpose in the research and also lay a foundation for the doctoral study. In Section 3, I include a description and my goals of the project, rationale, and a review of literature relevant to the project. Also included are the project description, implementation, evaluation, and implications. In Section 4, I include reflections and conclusions that I gained from my project, which include project strengths, limitations, and recommendations for alternative approaches.

Section 2: The Methodology

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

My purpose in this study was to explore the perspectives and experiences of students with LDs related to the support services and accommodations they currently receive at the study site. In this section, I include the research design and approach, sampling, access to participants, researcher-participant relationship, participants' rights, data collection method, data analysis, and data analysis results. I focused on learning about factors that may influence academic success and may also provide information on ways to influence more students to access academic support services. This problem of learning about factors that may influence academic success and information on ways to influence more students with LDs to access academic support services warranted a qualitative research design. This design allowed for using detailed descriptions from the perspectives of the participants as a means of examining specific issues and problems under study while answering the research questions. Qualitative researchers seek to understand how people make sense of the experiences that they encounter in their lives (Merriam, 2009). The qualitative research design of this study was derived logically by allowing me, the researcher, to gather rich in-depth data from the participants in their natural settings (Creswell, 2009). This design provided a structure to gain deep understanding of the experiences of postsecondary students with LDs and provided insight into and understanding of what factors influence their success. In qualitative case study, cases are bounded in time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information

using a variety of data collection procedures such as interviews, observations, documents, and reports (Creswell, 2009).

Neither a quantitative nor mixed methods research design was appropriate for this study. The quantitative research process is deductive and focuses on prediction, control, and hypothesis testing rather than understanding, description, and discovery (Merriam, 2009). A mixed methods study would not have been appropriate because this method would include extensive analyzing of text and numerical data (Creswell, 2009). In addition, the mixed methods design was not appropriate because it was not necessary to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to understand the research problem or answer the research questions in this study.

I considered various types of qualitative research approaches for this research study but rejected them. I considered grounded theory, ethnography, and phenomenology but deemed them not appropriate. It was not my plan to present or build a theory based on the information collected as in grounded theory. The result of grounded theory is a theory that emerges from the data collection (Creswell, 2012). Ethnographic studies require that the researcher gain the perspectives of the participants by becoming part of the group being studied (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2010). Ethnography focuses on human society and culture including beliefs, values, and attributes that structure behavior patterns of a specific group of people (Merriam, 2009). My goal in this study was to explore individual perspectives and experiences of students with LDs rather than the culture of students with LDs. Creswell (2009) asserted that a qualitative study is interested in the immense or underlying structure of a phenomenon and seeks to

understand the experiences of the participants. Phenomenology studies are often of human experiences such as love, anger, or betrayal; therefore, this approach is not appropriate as the aim of this study is to seek individual participants' perspectives and to explore how these perspectives affect their experiences at the research site. A qualitative case study was appropriate for this study because of its feature that includes an in-depth analysis of a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). The bounded system in this study, 2010-2011, is when students with LDs have accessed support services from the office of student support services while in higher education.

Participants

I used purposeful sampling to best select the individuals who would help me understand the central problem from their perspectives. The purposeful sample included students who were at least 18 years of age, medically diagnosed as having an LD, and presently receiving support services from the OSSS. Lodico et al. (2010) asserted that case study is focused on a small group of individuals within a larger setting as a way to understand a particular issue or problem. Creswell (2009) suggested that enough participants should be interviewed to provide different perspectives on the issue and to gain rich in-depth information from each participant. My initial intent was to recruit eight to 12 participants for the study. Ten students expressed an interest in participating in the study; however, because of their final exam schedules, only six students were available to participate.

Access to Participants

To gain access to the participants, I sought permission from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), the Vice President of Research and Planning at the study site, and the office of student support services at the study site. After receiving permission to access participants, I developed a flyer (see Appendix B) to solicit volunteers for the one-on-one interviews and short answer open-ended questionnaires. The flyer included the title, purpose of the study, the selection criteria, notice of an informational meeting, my personal information including e-mail address, and the deadline to respond to me for participation in the research. Prospective participants were asked to contact me within two weeks of the date on the flyer. Participants were at least 18 years old, medically diagnosed with an LD, and presently receiving services from the office of student support services. Flyers were posted and available for students to pick up in the office of student support services. I posted flyers in other locations on campus (i.e., dorms, cafeteria, student center) once I secured permission from the appropriate school contact. As part of the original IRB approval, when I did not receive enough responses, I asked the Office of Student Support Services to assist me by contacting students who met the participant criteria and sending their contact information to me.

Researcher-Participant Relationship

Establishing a positive researcher-participant working relationship was essential to the progress and outcome of the study (Glesne, 2011). To maintain the privacy of the participants, I spoke by phone to each potential participant who responded to the flyer. This phone meeting was used to establish a positive rapport with potential participants.

After repeated recruitment efforts, I determined that the maximum number of participants I could recruit was six. So, I contacted each potential participant by e-mail to set up a time for an initial phone meeting. During the phone meeting, I explained the nature of the study and the benefits of the research to each student and the university. I explained my role and restated the role of the participants. I made participants aware that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant was assured the protection of privacy, confidentiality, and treatment of respect. Participants were reminded that their perspectives would provide valuable data and these collected data would be the findings of the study, the findings would provide information that would lead to the project phase of the study. This phone meeting also provided an opportunity for each perspective participant to ask questions and share concerns related to the study. I stressed to students that their experiences were important and that their contribution to this study was vital.

Participants' Rights

To ensure the participants' rights were considered in this study, I submitted the Research Ethics Review application to the IRB of Walden University for approval. The IRB approval # 04-13-15-0237552 was granted. After IRB approval, I submitted an application to the Vice President of Research Planning at the study site seeking approval to conduct research. This application, which was approved, outlined the purpose and guidelines of the study, research procedures, and potential benefits of the study to the university. These benefits included providing a better understanding of how students felt

concerning their academic experiences and how they viewed the support services in relation to meeting their academic requirements.

I met with each student at the research site in a private conference room where each student signed an informed consent form that guaranteed protection of his or her rights, stated their agreement to participate in the study, and explained all procedures to ensure privacy and protection from harm. The participants were informed that they had the right to discontinue their participation in the research at any time due to any discomfort and that they were voluntarily participating in this research study. To protect the privacy of the participants, I put safeguards in place to keep all research data confidential, and I will not share information without prior approval from a participant. I protected the confidentiality of each participant by the use of an assigned pseudonym or code name. I protected the anonymity of the research site by the use of a more obscure description. All interviews were held at the research site in a private conference room. To ensure privacy, a “Do not disturb” sign was placed on the conference room door. Confidentiality of the participants was protected by storing all interview transcripts and audiotapes in a locked file cabinet at my home. I will erase all audiotapes after 5 years. In addition, I will delete files stored on my password-protected computer after five years.

Data Collection Methods

Data Collection Process

The data collection process consisted of one-on-one interviews. The interview is an appropriate data set in qualitative research because it will allow free and open discussions of experiences, beliefs, and knowledge on the issues discussed in the

interviews (Creswell, 2009). I conducted these interviews with students with LDs who received services from student support services at the study site.

Interviews

Audio taped interviews provided insight into experiences and perspectives of six students with LDs in the postsecondary setting who were receiving services from the office of student support services. All interviews followed a list of interview questions (see Appendix C) which enabled me to keep focused on the study (Creswell, 2009). The interviews were audio taped and this allowed for free and open discussions where participants could share in-depth information individually (Creswell, 2009). Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. All participants were asked the same questions in the same order to ensure consistency. Upon completion of each interview, I transcribed the audiotapes into a word document on my computer and assigned a pseudonym for each participant. I reminded the participants of their rights and my expectations.

I used a reflective journal to take notes and keep track of data during each interview. The purpose of the reflective journal was to record my personal thoughts, to include insights, hunches, or broad ideas that emerged during the interviews (Creswell, 2012). My reflective notes were also typed into a word document on my password protected computer. A pseudonym assigned to each participant matched the one used in the audio taped transcript.

Role of the Researcher

I am a retired special education teacher of students with LDs. I taught in the public school (inner-city) for 30 years and worked in elementary, middle, and high schools. As a former special education teacher, I understand the issues that students with LDs experience and I am concerned about their ability to succeed in college. Although I do not hold a professional role at the study site, nor do I hold a professional relationship with participants of the study, past experience as a special education teacher working with students with LDs will prevent bias. Field notes were jotted at the end of the interview to track personal reflections and other thoughts or questions that surfaced during the interview, and I kept a reflective journal to minimize any personal biases that were present in my personal thoughts.

Creswell (2009) stated that researchers must consistently bracket their beliefs and emotions so that they make meaning of and objectively view the data with an impartial lens of the phenomenon. I used bracketing to identify personal biases and to reduce their effect on the analysis of the data. My role as a researcher was to collect, analyze, and report the data accurately while protecting the privacy of the participants.

Data Analysis

Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence, to produce empirically based findings (Yin, 2014). Analyzing case study data is especially difficult because the techniques still have not been well defined (Yin, 2014). The analysis can begin by reading the data and searching for promising patterns, insights, or concepts, the goal being to define priorities for what to

analyze and why (Yin, 2014). The best preparation for conducting case study analysis is to have a general analytic strategy to link case study data to the concept of interest (Yin, 2014).

As the researcher, during the analysis, I looked for emerging themes and patterns from the data that would answer the research questions. Upon the completion of data collection, the data analysis process consisted of preparation and organization of the data for analysis, exploring and coding the data, using codes for categories and/or themes, interpretation of qualitative findings, reporting of the qualitative findings, and validation of the accuracy of findings (Creswell, 2012).

Prepare and Organize Data

I transcribed interviews within a day of interview completion, preparing the data for analysis which consisted of entering the data on a spreadsheet and organizing it by participant. Reflective notes were used for my own personal use but not used in the data analysis process.

Code and Develop Themes

Once the data were prepared and organized by participant, the next step was to explore the data. I explored the data by reading the transcribed data several times to gain a general sense of the content. Yin (2014) stated that there is no clear cut-off point for collecting data, yet enough data should be collected so that (a) I have a confirmatory evidence (evidence from two or more different sources) for most of the main topics, and (b) my evidence includes attempts to investigate major rival hypotheses or explanations. If more data were needed, I may have secured more participants. The six participants

provided perspectives related to being a learner with an LD. Due to the projected size of the transcribed database, I decided to manually analyze the qualitative data, which gave me the opportunity to read and understand the data thoroughly. This also included marking data by hand (coding) and clustering into parts to build themes (Creswell, 2012).

Coding is the process of reducing a text or image database to descriptions and themes of people, places, or events (Creswell, 2012). This step involved reading through and making sense of the text data, dividing the text data into segments of information, eliminating overlapping or redundant codes, and placing the codes into broad themes (Creswell, 2012). As the transcriptions were read, I made a list of topics and clustered similar topics together. Major topics were grouped into columns.

Throughout the coding process, I returned to the data and abbreviated each topic with an appropriate code and then added codes to the applicable section of the text. I identified my research topics and converted them to categories. The categories were then reduced, grouped by topics that were related, abbreviated by category, and codes were alphabetized. These codes were used in forming a description of the central phenomenon. Codes may also be grouped together to form broader themes that are used in the study as key findings (Merriam, 2009). Codes may be further reduced into major themes through the process of eliminating redundancy (Creswell, 2012). Open coding was first used to create categories and then axial coding was used to mark text. As I re-read the transcripts, themes emerged (Creswell, 2009). During the interpretation stage, new themes were identified that were not foreseen previously (Creswell, 2009). These themes were determined as a result of my further reviewing the findings and noting new questions that

were raised by the data analysis. The reoccurring comments and explanations from participants reflected their experiences and perspectives.

When analyzing the data, I confirmed that themes, which emerged from the coding, were supported by the data. No discrepant data were evident. In this qualitative study, I was the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis. Therefore, it was important to identify and monitor any personal biases that affected my interpretation of the findings (Merriam, 2009). Personal biases may have included my own personal experiences and perceptions of teaching students with LDs. I was also careful not to consider personal perceptions regarding factors that may affect students reporting their disability in college.

Validation

Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, it was important to make sure that the findings and interpretations of the research were accurate. Creswell (2009) asserted that “validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the reader of the account” (p.191). I used member checking to ensure validity of the research findings.

Member Checking

Once I interpreted the findings of the research, I returned the findings to the participants for their review, which aided in the credibility of the results. Creswell (2009) stated that member checking is used to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings by taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants to

determine whether the findings are accurate. I e-mailed each participant to inform them of a specific time and place to meet to review the findings for accuracy. This meeting was held in a reserved school conference room at the research site. Each participant met with me individually and reviewed the summary of findings to determine accuracy of their data and results. All participants responded to the summary, and no corrections or changes had to be made. Member checking was important to rule out any misinterpretations of what the participants said and to potentially identify any bias that may have occurred or misinterpretations of the data (Merriam, 2009).

Data Analysis Results

Data analysis is the process of moving from raw interview data to evidence-based interpretations that are the foundation for published reports. Analysis entails classifying, comparing, weighing, and combining original material to extract meaning and to reveal patterns. Researchers construct informed, vivid reports that reflect an understanding of the phenomenon.

Data for this qualitative study were generated from one-on-one semistructured interviews conducted with students with LDs who received support services at the study site. Data were taped, transcribed, and recorded on a spreadsheet. Findings supported the need to insure that the college experience of students with LDs included resources and support services to help them meet their academic requirements. The outcomes of the findings led to my developing a 3-day, face to face professional development training program for university faculty who work with students with LDs. The framework of Androgogy was used in creating the professional development because it involved

dialogue and collaboration among faculty, relevant learning, and applying new knowledge (Knowles et al., 2011).

Overall, the findings of the research were consistent with the literature in Section 1. Participants expressed the importance of students with LDs receiving academic services and support, which is a strong factor in the students' academic success (Gerber, 2012). Students reported better preparation for tests as well as strengthened study skills, due to their receiving accommodations and support services. The majority of participants described tutoring as the most helpful support service. Due to one-on-one tutoring, students learned how to take notes, organize notes, and improve reading comprehension and writing mechanics (Reed et al., 2009).

Participants highlighted the significance of faculty understanding, acceptance and academic support, and tutoring as common support services. Participants described the importance of peer role model support relationships as being a key factor in supporting students with LDs. Participants stressed the importance of support from students who could relate to LDs because they too, had struggled with the disability and had struggled to overcome obstacles in postsecondary education.

Participants further reported that they found it difficult to adjust to rigorous classes and teaching styles of some professors. It was reported that some faculty did not modify assignments or use various teaching approaches to meet the needs of students with LDs, which caused students to be apprehensive in reaching out to professors for help. Negative attitudes exhibited by faculty caused discouragement in students (Reynolds & Hitchcock, 2014). Even with faculty support, participants stated that though

they did advocate for themselves in secondary school, they agreed that they continued to struggle with self-advocacy skills which may include more independence, self-regulation, and self-control pertaining to academic achievement (Getzel & Thoma, 2008).

Participant Characteristics

Six students ranging in age from 18 to 24 years, with three male participants and three female participants agreed to participate in the study. Three participants were majoring in education, one participant in mathematics, one in history, and one in general studies. Students who participated met the criteria of being at least 18 years old, medically diagnosed as having an LD, and had received services through the office of student support services. Confirmation of criteria was provided by participants and verified by the office of student support services.

Participant 1. Participant 1 was a 20-year-old male enrolled in his second year of postsecondary study. He was enrolled in a general studies program combining dual curriculum courses in business. Participant 1 enrolled in his postsecondary institution immediately upon graduation from high school. He attended summer school last summer and passed all of his classes. As a result of him passing his classes, his grade point average increased which resulted in his qualifying for an academic scholarship. Participant 1 planned to major in business administration.

Participant 2. Participant 2 was a 21-year-old male who was enrolled in his third-year of postsecondary study. Participant 2 previously attended another university before transferring to the study site. He was working towards a degree in education with emphasis in special education. During the summer, Participant 2 worked with children

with special needs and decided that special education was his passion. He indicated that after graduation from postsecondary education, he anticipated teaching children with disabilities.

Participant 3. Participant 3 was a 20-year-old female who enrolled in her postsecondary institution upon graduating from high school. She was majoring in education and her long time goal was to teach children with disabilities. Participant 3 also had an interest in working as a school counselor.

Participant 4. Participant 4 was a 24-year-old female. She attended a postsecondary institution for one year, but dropped out because of family obligations. Upon deciding to complete her postsecondary studies, Participant 4 enrolled in the study site and decided to major in history. Immediately upon graduation, her goal is to attend graduate school and pursue a master's degree in history education.

Participant 5. Participant 5 was a 20-year-old male enrolled in his final year of postsecondary studies in his chosen postsecondary institution. He previously enrolled in another postsecondary institution directly upon completing high school. He later transferred to the study site and decided to major in mathematics.

Participant 6. Participant 6 was a 22-year-old female who enrolled in postsecondary studies immediately upon graduating from high school. She was on the dean's list for the last school year due to high grade point average. Participant 6 was an education major and planned to attend graduate school.

Results and Analysis

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives and experiences of students with LDs related to the support services and accommodations they currently receive at the study site. Through one-on-one semi structured interviews, which were analyzed using open and axial coding, six students with LDs offered their perceptions, beliefs, and ideas that aligned with the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of students with LDs who receive support services from the office of student support services in meeting academic requirements at a 4-year university?
2. What resources do students with LDs who receive support services from the office of student support services use in meeting academic requirements?
3. What factors do students with LDs who receive support services from the office of student support services identify as most influencing their academic success?

Themes

The themes that emerged from the data analysis revealed perspectives of students concerning their academic success in postsecondary, their accommodations they received, and the extent that they viewed these services and accommodations as factors in academic success in college. Themes included *college academic experiences, common accommodations and services in college, peer/ role model support factors, and self-advocacy skills* that contribute to academic success.

RQ1: What are the experiences of students with LDs who receive support services from the office of student support services in meeting academic requirements at a four-year university?

Theme 1: College Academic Experience

Participants shared that they had positive academic experiences as well as obstacles that affected their academic success in meeting their academic requirements. All students stated that they progressed in their classes in spite of stringent academic demands of postsecondary education. Students worked to complete assignments and projects by using time management skills. Students were more prepared for tests because they were able to acquire accommodations to help them strengthen study skills. Since students understood that their disabilities could affect their academic abilities, students focused positively on their academic support services which were important to their being successful. Obstacles included students having feelings of intimidation when seeking help from their instructors. Participant 1 stated, “When I approached my professor to ask questions or to ask for help I felt stupid and intimidated because my professor did not realize that he needed to augment my instruction.” Students also noted the lack of differentiation and lack of flexible teaching approaches used by instructors when seeking help.

Participant 3 stated:

When I had a conference with one of my professor, she stated that she was not familiar with working with students with LDs nor was she familiar with

accommodations that are used in meeting academic requirements. I just don't understand this. How can they help me if they don't know what to do?

Participant 5 stated:

My professors acted like they were not interested in getting to know me. They didn't allow me to be open and talk about my disability or my accommodations.

So I just struggled! This really affected how I felt about trying to finish college.

RQ 2: What resources do students with LDs who receive support services from the office of student support services use in meeting academic requirements?

Theme 2: Common Accommodations and Services in College

The most common accommodations given to participants included extended time on exams, alternate testing sites, and note taking services. However, some participants mentioned that some faculty members were not aware of the positive effects of accommodations and services in relation to students meeting their postsecondary academic requirements. Tutoring was also noted as a common support service. According to five participants, the use of tutoring was the most helpful support service. Participant 6 stated, "Tutoring has helped me to understand how to take notes in class, so I can better prepare for tests." Participants agreed that tutoring was helpful in the areas of organizing notes, reading comprehension, and writing mechanics. Participants reported that they were very satisfied with the tutoring experience, although some felt that because of their class schedules, time restraints prevented them from meeting with tutors more frequently and for extended time periods.

RQ 3: What factors do students with LDs who receive support services from the office of student support services identify as most influencing their academic success?

Theme 3: Peer/Role Model Support Factors

The participants provided insight regarding the importance of students with LDs having a strong support system which was critical in providing on-going support. Participants identified the importance of having supportive peer relationships during their postsecondary education experiences. In addition, participants viewed friend and peer support as one of the best resources for positive postsecondary success. Peer support, particularly from peers who could identify with LDs, was reported as being a key factor in supporting students to completing postsecondary education. Many of these peers had struggled to overcome academic obstacles in postsecondary education; therefore, they could provide insights to students to help them overcome academic obstacles which might impede success. One participant emphasized that peer support was critical due to peers being “totally encouraging and telling me that I can succeed even if I have to work harder.” All participants highlighted the importance of having peers who could provide critical strategic support for coping with an LD within a postsecondary context and who understood the level of effort that was required to be successful in meeting academic requirements.

Experiences provided by role models were also identified as key factors that contributed to academic success. For some participants, similarities between themselves and role models were deemed as very important because the role models truly understood their struggles. Participants also highlighted that having someone close to them, who

struggled with an LD but worked hard to achieve their academic goals and had been successful in postsecondary education, was important in setting an example of persistence. This persistence contributed to increased confidence and motivation for students to reach academic success.

Theme 4: Self-Advocacy Skills

Self-advocacy skills are important in influencing academic success for students with LDs who receive support services. Participants provided that even though students began to acquire self-advocacy skills in secondary school, they continued to struggle in postsecondary education with being able to identify their own needs and desires, set goals, make plans to achieve those goals, and follow through with them. Students highlighted that they had problems being able to communicate and effectively measure their progress toward achieving academic goals, and wanted to feel proud of their accomplishments. All felt that because of their LDs and how they had struggled academically, they were apprehensive in reaching out to professors and discussing their needs. One participant shared that he found it difficult to adjust to the rigorous classes and the teaching styles of the faculty. Participants agreed that they needed to continuously work to develop more independence, self-regulation, and self-control pertaining to academic achievement. There was a consensus that by further developing self-advocacy skills, students would be more likely to set higher academic expectations and this factor would contribute to academic success. Self-advocacy includes student understanding of their needs, recognizing their abilities, and setting realistic goals. The

notion of students advocating for themselves was a prevalent theme that was expressed by the students.

Evidence of Quality

To ensure that the researcher's own biases do not influence how the perspectives are portrayed, many researchers use member checking (Lodico et al., 2010). While providing quality in the implementation of this study, reporting of the findings, and the interpretation of the findings, I used member checking in which each participant of the study was given a copy of their transcribed interview and preliminary findings and asked to review them for any discrepancies. No changes or recommendations were made. Six participants in the study provided information from their personal perspectives, providing multiple sources of data. The validity and reliability of data were ensured by using member checking. In addition, coding, analyzing, and re-viewing the data also increased validity.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives and experiences of students with LDs related to the support services and accommodations they currently receive at the study site. The findings of the study pointed to the need for more faculty awareness and knowledge of students with LDs and what they need to be successful in postsecondary education. I used purposeful sampling to select six participants. Data were collected using one-on-one semistructured interview questions. After data were collected and analyzed, four themes emerged. The themes from the study included college academic experiences, common accommodations and services in

college, peer/role model support factors, and self-advocacy skills. In theme one, I concluded that the students were satisfied overall with services that affect their skills yet, they did not get the academic support that they needed from some faculty. In theme 2, the importance of accommodations and how they affect academic success were highlighted. These two themes are findings supported by the data and aligned with the overarching research question related to academic experiences of students with LDs.

The conceptual framework selected for this study was Knowles's andragogy. Andragogy is based on the assumptions that adults need to know why they are learning their role of personal experiences in learning, readiness to learn, and motivation to learn (Knowles et al., 2011). The perception of the themes is that teacher knowledge of LDs and understanding of accommodations are important in faculty support of students with LDs. The learning practices of students with LDs are in line with the assumptions of andragogy. With students with LDs needing support, working to develop independency, motivation, and self-determination, faculty support is crucial to student success.

The first research question was "What are the experiences of students with LDs who receive services from the OSSS in meeting academic requirements at a 4-year university?" Results from the study showed similarities between the perceptions of students with LDs and the literature in regards to support services for students with LDs. For example, Knight, Wessell, and Markle, (2018); Russak and Hellwing, (2019) asserted that if students with LDs have not developed academic skills and strategies before entering college, they must receive the necessary academic support for success while attending college. Participants reported it necessary to use academic support in college

due to inadequate reading and writing skills, lack of study skills, lack of time management, and overall trouble coping with the demands of postsecondary education.

The second research question was “What resources do students with LDs who receive support services from the OSSS use in meeting academic requirements?” Results showed that students with LDs use resources to help them improve academically and also resources to help them improve their social skills which are necessary for students to self-advocate. These resources may include academic/social support center tutoring, peer tutoring, faculty tutoring, mentoring, and campus programs to enhance self-determination skills, psychological services, and self-advocacy. Literature supports the need for various types of accommodations for students with LDs. A study revealed that students felt alone and lost while trying to navigate the daily responsibilities of college life without accommodations (Hong, 2015). A study investigated how first year students with LDs adjusted in college. Results revealed that students began their classes without their accommodations but were not successful with reports of anxiety during tests. It was concluded that accommodations directly affect success for students with LDs (Russak & Hellwing, 2019).

The third research question was “What factors do students with LDs who receive support services identify as most influencing their academic success?” The results from the research study showed similarities in the perceptions of participants. For example, peer/role model support, particularly from peers who could identify with LDs, was reported as the key factor in supporting students in completing postsecondary education. Some peers had struggled to adjust to obstacles related to LDs and were able to provide

encouragement, motivation, and understanding. Participants felt that having someone close to them who had worked hard to meet their academic goals in postsecondary education could set an example of persistence. In contrast, the literature did not list a particular support service as being key to academic success in postsecondary education. Research showed that when students with LDs have a social support system and appropriate academic accommodations, they are more apt to be successful in postsecondary education (Feldman et al., 2016).

The perception of the themes is that teacher knowledge of LDs and understanding of accommodations are important in faculty support of students with LDs. Literature supports the findings of the research. Katsiyannis, Landmark, Reber, and Zhang (2009) stated that faculty in higher education have little knowledge concerning LDs and their obligation in serving students with disabilities. This lack of understanding may cause faculty to feel justified for not providing reasonable accommodations.

The logical outcomes of the themes are the need for faculty training in LDs and the need for faculty to understand the importance and influence of student accommodations so that faculty will learn how to work with students with LDs (Katsiyannis et al., 2009). This outcome supports the importance of faculty utilizing professional development. The professional development training allows the faculty the opportunity to participate and facilitate learning for students with LDs. Faculty will have an opportunity to explore, analyze, and be reflective together during professional development (Knowles et al., 2011).

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

Included in this section are a description and the goals of the project, rationale, and a review of literature relevant to the project. In addition, I provide implementation, with noted barriers, support systems and timeline. In the conclusion section, I discuss project evaluation and effects on social change. The project deliverable, a professional development training project, was the outcome of the findings of the data analysis in this study.

The data that I obtained from the one-on-one interviews helped me to understand the perspectives of students with LDs at the study site. The two major themes that emerged from the study included college academic experiences and common accommodations and services in college. The outcomes led to the idea of a professional development training project for faculty members at the study site. I developed a 3-day professional development training project to educate faculty in LDs, understanding accommodations, and enhancing their abilities to provide support in working with students with LDs. My goals in this project were to increase faculty knowledge of LDs, enhance the skills of faculty in working with these students, and to improve faculty-student experiences. A professional development training project may assist faculty in improving skills that are important in assisting students in meeting their academic requirements.

Rationale

Professional development training is an effective model for professional growth (Joyce & Calhoun, 2010). A well-designed interactive professional development project may provide practical and effective solutions to what has been identified as concerns of the participants in the study. The findings of the data analysis were that even though students with LDs were satisfied overall with services at the study site, they were not receiving academic support from some teachers. The outcomes of the findings that led to this project included the need for faculty training to increase faculty understanding and knowledge of LDs, understanding of accommodations, and enhanced faculty teaching strategies to help increase the academic success of students with LDs.

As a result of professional development, there may be more awareness of the needs of students with LDs. Park, Roberts, and Stodden (2012) stated that professional development may be used to enhance faculty competence in meeting the needs of students and to encourage faculty development of positive attitudes towards students as valued learners. Although the professional development is not designed or intended to solve a concern, I chose this genre because participants will be able to engage in professional dialogue, to encourage the importance of acquiring and applying new knowledge, skills, and strategies in their daily work.

Andragogy offers a framework for this professional development in that it encourages learning through goal exploration, faculty collaboration, formulation of learning objectives, and goal setting (Knowles et al., 2011). The principles of andragogy also focus on making learning relevant and meaningful which may stimulate excitement,

engagement, and participation. Professional development may also provide for more immediate feedback and direct information on different aspects of the feedback which may help foster instructional practice. Instead of providing a series of lectures, professional development is a constructive way to share current ideas and present new material on a topic.

Review of the Literature

The review of literature helped to shape the development of the project, a professional development training program on LDs. Key phrases searched were *professional development, development and training, disability, accommodations, characteristics of learning disabilities, post secondary education of students with LDs, and college faculty training*. The databases that I used to search were EBSCO, ERIC, ProQuest and Education Research Complete. An extensive review of literature provided an opportunity to bring together key concepts on professional development training and LDs. The literature review is divided into two sections: professional development and teaching students with LDs. My goals of the professional development training are to increase faculty knowledge of LDs, enhance the skills of faculty in working with students with LDs, and improve faculty-student experiences. These experiences may include more positive faculty encouragement and positive expectations of students with LDs. The coupling of the information on professional development and LDs assisted in shaping the project.

Professional Development

Researchers studied many of the factors that contribute to higher education's effort to provide opportunities of professional development for college faculty and staff (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014; McKee, Johnson, Ritchie, & Tew, 2013; Wynants & Dennis, 2017). University faculty must continuously keep up with changing trends and strategies to effectively educate students with LDs (Bickerstaff & Cormier, 2015; Squires, 2015). Professional development should enhance professional knowledge, skills, and attitude so the students learning outcomes can be improved (MacPhail et al., 2018; Saleem, Masrur, & Afzal, 2014). Professional development encompasses all types of learning opportunities ranging from formal course work to conferences and a variety of informal learning opportunities (Elliott, 2014; Roth, Pure, Rabinowitz, & Kaufman-Scarborough, 2018). Professional training may include short courses, workshops, seminars, conferences, and practical information and skills (Gerken, Beausaert, & Segers, 2016; McLachlan & Davis, 2013). In developing an effective professional training program, it should be based on several layers of knowledge (Saleem et al., 2014). One layer deals with the learning process of the students with reference to their needs and capabilities. The second layer deals with the learning of the educators themselves in relation to their respective students. The next layer is how to combine the other two layers into a coherent educator professional development training program. The fourth layer deals with the delivery of knowledge and skills in an effective manner (Saleem et al., 2014). Opre, Zaharie, Opre, Ciascai, and Ghimbulut (2009) found that faculty

professional development is more effective if it addresses the specific needs and knowledge of the faculty.

Technology and online opportunities for professional development may also be used for training (Condie & Livingston, 2007; Czajka & McConnell, 2016; Ellis & Kisling, 2009). Moreover, online learning can include a combination of professional development designs available at any place and any time (Ellis et al., 2009; Moraña, Cortés-Vega, Molina, 2015). Hence, it is vital for professional developers to be selective about the most appropriate model or combination of models when planning professional development (Echols, Neely, & Dusick, 2018). In essence, professional development must be appropriate for the content, desired learning outcomes, and local context. Professional development is important and effective for educators at all career levels (Kennedy, 2016).

Teaching Students With Learning Disabilities

Professional development is one way to provide training to university faculty to enhance their attitudes, knowledge, and skills in meeting the diverse needs of students with LDs (Dallas et al., 2014; Majoko, 2018; Park et al., 2012). Postsecondary educators are faced with teaching students with various learning strengths and challenges (Kinsman & Showers, 2017; Murray et al., 2009). These students present a range of challenges that affect their education process, and in turn, the educator's instructional practice (Griful-Freixenet, Struyven, Verstichele, & Andries, 2017). Some postsecondary students with LDs are provided with learning accommodations which involves minor changes to assist students functioning in the classroom by offering alternate ways of handling a task. The

most common types of accommodations provided in postsecondary institutions for students with LDs include extended time on exams, alternate exam formats and assistance with note taking, study skills, and learning strategies (Lombardi, Murray, & Gerdes, 2011; Weis, Dean, & Osborne, 2016). With students receiving accommodations for their learning needs, educators must implement their planning through differentiated instruction based on self-advocacy and its role in the academic success of students with LDs in postsecondary education (Ju, Zeng, & Landmark, 2017; Kell, Kraglund-Gauthier, & Young, 2014; Roberts, et al., 2016; Squires, Burnell, McCarty, & Schnackenberg, 2018).

With the increase of children being diagnosed with learning disabilities and receiving academic accommodations in elementary and secondary schools, the number of students with disabilities attending postsecondary institutions is increasing (Collins et al., 2019; Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2013; Katsiyannis et al., 2009; U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). According to Orr and Bachman-Hammig (2009) one in every 11 postsecondary undergraduates report having an LD. With this increase in enrollment of students with LDs attending postsecondary education institutions, educating university faculty about the academic needs of students with LDs may lead to increased faculty understanding, which may encourage more faculty support (Sniatecki, Perry, & Snell, 2015).

In addition to professional development training on the purpose and benefit of accommodations, faculty in postsecondary institutions need adequate knowledge and understanding concerning disability laws that mandate accommodations and services to

students. This lack of understanding can make faculty feel justified in not providing reasonable accommodations to students (Blanton & Stylianou, 2009). Training to adequately address these common concerns may increase faculty's willingness to provide accommodations to postsecondary students (Lipka, Baruch, & Meer, 2019).

Navigating instructional strategies necessary in teaching students with LDs can be a challenge for postsecondary educators who may lack skills and knowledge (McLachlan & Davis, 2013; Muller, 2006). Lombardi et al., (2011) stated that college faculty generally endorse positive attitudes towards students with LDs, including a willingness to provide accommodations, but often feel underprepared to provide support due to lack of knowledge on the subject of LDs.

Accommodations in postsecondary institutions may assist with success for students with LDs. Students must first report and provide documentation of their disability, yet many do not (Bolt, Decker, Lloyd, & Murdock, 2011). Further emphasis on students self-reporting their disability and acquiring appropriate accommodations is crucial to greater academic success for students with LDs (Bolt et al., 2011; Grimes, Southgate, Scevak, & Buchanan, 2019). Requesting accommodations in postsecondary education is the responsibility of the student. This can either work well or result in issues of poor performance. Those students who are able to share their disability with their instructors and make requests for accommodations fare well. Others who do not make the request or follow through are lost to weak performance (Couzens et al., 2015). Self-identification to the office of support services is the most important part of the rate of

success statistic and increases the completion rate of the enrolled students (Stodden & Roberts, 2010).

Even though students with LDs are of average to above average intelligence, they appear to struggle and fail or drop out of college. Research indicates that this population of students has not developed sufficient study skills or decision-making and time management skills necessary for college success (Russak & Hellwing, 2019). Students with LDs seem to have a gap between academic ability and academic achievement and have trouble coping with the demands of postsecondary education (Belch, 2011). Many students with LDs have inadequate reading and writing proficiency necessary for college work that hinders their academic success. Students with LDs must study and learn strategies before entering college that will help them build solid academic skills necessary for academic success (Ellis et al., 2009; Knight, Wessell, & Markle, 2018).

A study was conducted to investigate how first year students with LDs made adjustment to college. Results revealed that students found it necessary to continue using academic supports in college (Hadley, 2007; Hong, 2015; Lombardi, Murray, & Kowitt, 2016). The majority of the students reported test anxiety and the need for untimed exams. The participants in the study also reported that they required a learning center where they could receive individualized support, but small group instruction is also encouraged so that students can learn from each other. Getzel and Wehman (2005) concluded that academic accommodations had a direct effect on the success for students with LDs.

Project Description

Needed Resources and Existing Supports

The support system for the professional development training project would include division chairs, department deans, and the university administration. I will send a letter to the administration requesting a meeting to share the importance of my research and findings and to request permission to present my professional development 3-day training session to full-time faculty members. Resources that I will need include a conference room, tables, computer, and overhead projector for the PowerPoint presentation, note pads, chart paper, markers and pencils.

Potential Barriers and Potential Solutions

Lack of funding may be a potential barrier. Seeking funding would be important, if needed, to cover expenses for handouts, guides, refreshments, lunch and any other expenses. Securing a grant may be an option, yet this may not be feasible because of the timeline for grant applications and the complications of this type of a process. If funds are needed, I will solicit funding from the university.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

The proposal for the professional development training project will be presented to full time faculty, university administration, division deans, and division chairs in the spring of 2020 and if approved implemented in the fall of 2020. The 3-day training session would take place in August, if scheduling permits, prior to the beginning of the fall 2020 semester. If scheduling does not permit the professional development training to take place prior to the fall 2020 semester, it will be scheduled when time is available. Six

months following implementation, I would meet with university administration to discuss the strengths of the professional development training project, based on survey responses, and make a decision with the school administration whether or not to continue the professional development training in future semesters.

Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others

If any new project is to be successfully developed, it is important that everyone involved knows what their particular roles and responsibilities are. For this professional training project, my role is to design, present, and facilitate the project. As designer, I will be responsible for developing the professional development training project. As presenter, I am responsible for presenting the training to participants. As facilitator, I will ensure that the professional training project begins and ends as scheduled, make sure that the room is secured and set up to accommodate the participants, and make sure that refreshments are available for participants. I will encourage group interaction between group members by encouraging them to work effectively and collaboratively together with mutual understanding and shared responsibility among members.

I will provide information to include topics such as the characteristics of LDs, the increase in the number of students with LDs in higher education, issues concerning retention and performance of students with disabilities, and how this may affect students, stakeholders, and universities. Information will also include factors which prevent students with LDs from reporting their disability and the importance of students using services and accommodations that are needed for academic success. Division chairs, university administration, and administrative deans will be responsible for approval only. Full-time

faculty members will be responsible for attending the training program and implementation.

Project Evaluation

Evaluation is a systematic process used in assessing learning outcomes (Visser, Coenders, Pieters, & Terlouw, 2013). At the end of the 3-day professional development training, which will be planned for the fall semester of 2020, the key stakeholders, which include faculty members at the university, will be asked to complete a written summative evaluation (Appendix A). A summative evaluation survey will be provided to all participants at the conclusion of the training to assess the effectiveness of the professional development training. The goals of the project are to increase faculty knowledge of LDs, enhance the skills of faculty in working with these students, and to improve faculty-student experiences. The survey will include feedback and determine strengths and weaknesses of the project. A summative evaluation is justified, as it will be used to document the results of the training program at the end of the 3-day professional development training session (Visser et al., 2013).

Six months after the completion of the professional development training project, a follow-up summative survey will be sent to all participants of the professional development training. The follow-up summative survey will be used to identify strengths and or weaknesses in the professional development training, and will be used to make the decision of whether or not the program should be continued. If the program is continued, I will use the results from the surveys to improve future training sessions. The purpose of

evaluating the project is to determine if the project addresses the needs and improves the experiences of the students with LDs attending a 4-year institution.

Implications Including Social Change

Local Community

This professional development training (See Appendix A) project has the potential to provide faculty at the study site with knowledge and skills to effectively work students with LDs and as a result, students may be more successful in meeting their academic requirements. Implementing this professional development project could lead to more success of students with LDs in meeting their needs for graduation and applying what they have learned in the real world and making a difference in their lives and in their communities.

Far-Reaching

This program could benefit the larger context in that it could be a catalyst in forming relationships between the research site and other universities that choose to adapt the training. If students attend institutions where faculty receive training in working with students with LDs, faculty may be more prepared to provide the tools needed to help students meet their academic requirements for graduation. Faculty may also help students gain the skills needed to prepare for work and success in society after graduation.

Conclusion

The goals of the project are to increase faculty knowledge of LDs, enhance the skills of faculty in working with these students, and to improve faculty-student experiences. Faculty training through professional development may improve knowledge

and skills in meeting the needs of students with LDs. A literature review provided background to the benefits of professional development with emphasis on teaching students with LDs. Also included are project description, implementation, evaluation, and implications. Section 4 will discuss reflections and conclusions of the project which include project strengths, limitations, and recommendations for alternative approaches.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

In Section 4, I provide reflections and conclusions of the project which include project strengths, limitations, and recommendations for alternative approaches. I also include scholarship, project development, leadership and change, reflection on the importance of the work. Finally, I have included implications, applications, and directions for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

With an increase of students with LDs attending postsecondary education institutions, need exists to provide a learning environment and services that students deem as beneficial to them in completing postsecondary education. The outcomes of the findings in Section 2 led to the need for faculty training to increase understanding and knowledge of LDs. Also, the training may increase understanding and the importance of accommodations in the academic success of students with LDs.

One strength of my project is that information that will be disseminated in the professional development training and is based on the outcomes of the data analysis. Implementing a professional development program may provide knowledge to help educators provide the tools needed in assisting students with LDs in higher education (McKee et al., 2013). Information will include *the definitions of LD, characteristics of students with LDs, and learning and teaching strategies*. Ideally, this information may be helpful in providing more faculty understanding about students with LDs. Finally, a strength of my project is that I created it from the perspective of adult learning theory,

andragogy. Adult learners need autonomy and the opportunities to use their vast experiences to direct learning that is relevant to them (Knowles et al., 2011).

Limitations of this project involve time restraints. It may be difficult for faculty, at any university, to have time in their schedules to attend 3 full days of professional development training. This would involve cancelling classes which may not be fair to students. However, the training could be provided for faculty during the summer, prior to the return of students to campus or online. This, in turn, would prevent the problem of cancelling classes and disruption of the class schedule.

Another limitation is that adjunct faculty at the university are not required to attend the training. Due to low enrollment and lack of adequate funding at many universities, many adjunct professors teach classes and work closely with students with LDs. With this being said, the professional development training project may be beneficial, if provided to adjunct faculty, due to the expected effect on student success.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Future research could include other student populations such as students with physical disabilities and students with psychological disabilities. Researchers could also address high school preparedness, or lack thereof, in relationship to what students with disabilities should expect when they attend college. Students with LDs may exhibit problems with social skills, self-determination skills, and self-efficacy skills that affect their ability to form relationships and to cope in daily life. These problems could possibly be addressed by the development of a learning model at the university that would include

social skills training to assist students with LDs with enhancing their ability to function in a university setting and society.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

As I reflect on the doctoral process, I find that my research skills have been strengthened. I learned how to read and scrutinize research articles quickly to determine whether they were relevant to the study. I enjoy reading research and find myself questioning information that I read. I also realized that scholarship can be exhibited by anyone who has an interest in and a passion for a topic. As I work to conclude the doctoral process, I now understand the importance of the correlation between the research and developing a project. Also, I learned the importance of putting my biases aside and allowing the research to guide me in developing conclusions. I learned that the key to a successful professional development project is to know as much as possible about the participants and their needs. Once I learned the needs of the participants, I focused on meeting those needs as I worked to develop the project. To remain focused on participant needs while developing the project, I considered the participants' needs as the gap between what is expected and the existing conditions.

Project Development

Through the development of a project, I learned that everything must relate back to the original research problem and the literature. This connection helps give the project credibility and also allows others to gain an understanding of why the project was developed in the way it was. It also allowed me, as the developer, to reflect on every

aspect of the project. I learned that evaluation needs to be specific with the developer determining goals and determining if the goals have been met. Evaluation is crucial in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the project. I also learned that evaluation is important in the success of a program and should not be taken personally by the developer.

Leadership and Change

Throughout the development of the project, I learned that being a leader may include not working in isolation. I learned that it was appropriate to ask for assistance when needed and to take advice from others. I also learned that being a leader does not mean knowing all the answers.

Even though change may not take place without the involvement of all stakeholders, it also takes someone to initially lead the change. Leadership and change point to growing and sharing in knowledge to foster new practices to meet the needs of students of today and the future.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

As I reflect on myself as a scholar, the experience of the doctoral process has strengthened my overall research skills. I learned that research may not provide a definitive answer to every situation, but rather involves problem solving and not guesswork. As I read research, I am more able to comprehend other author's work. I also learned that gaining and consuming knowledge of how to conduct background research of the problem is necessary prior to planning a professional development project. These

skills were significantly strengthened during the research process of the problem. As a first time researcher, I had to learn how to develop a project on my own.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

As an educator, I have developed more appreciation and understanding of the importance of professional development training. I understand that professional development training may be an effective way to improve faculty professional skills which may improve student learning. As I work with students with LDs, it is my responsibility to provide effective educational practices to increase learning of the students. As a practitioner, new knowledge and ideas learned from professional development will be used to facilitate learning. I learned that the professional development training project is a way to disseminate information that is related to research. The findings from the research analysis have added to my perspectives of the needs of students with LDs in postsecondary education institutions as they work to be successful in college and graduate.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

As a project developer, I learned that prior planning and designing is important to creating a project. I found that it is appropriate to experiment with various options of program development and ask others for ideas and feedback. Moreover, I now view feedback not as being negative, but as a way to improve as a learner, scholar and developer.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

As I reflect on the overall work, this research and professional development project may be a valuable asset to students who have LDs and faculty who teach them. It may provide needed knowledge and skills that may increase faculty effectiveness which in turn may enhance student progress in meeting academic requirements.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This project may positively affect social change. Because more students with LDs are attending postsecondary institutions, this professional training project for faculty members may improve the knowledge gap in regards to their understanding of LDs and the tools needed in teaching these students. With faculty training, there may be more positive relationships and interactions between students and faculty, which may enhance the overall persistence of students. If students with LDs are successful and graduate from college, they are more likely to gain employment, be self-sufficient, and make a positive contribution to society. Their productivity in society will contribute to social change.

This project could help faculty to better foster the learning of students with LDs to include required services and accommodations needed for them to complete their postsecondary requirements. If more faculty could provide more encouragement to students with LDs, there may be an increase in students reporting their disability, which may lead to increased retention and graduation. Implications for further research may lead to a curriculum development plan that would extend what was learned in the professional development. Future research of this topic may include conducting a duplicate study in three years at the same research site. This study may verify whether

there were any changes that were directly related to the professional development training project.

Conclusion

This doctoral study consists of pertinent information that led to the development of a professional training project. I learned from my research that students were motivated by faculty support. Also important was a need for faculty to display positive attitudes towards students as valued learners. The training consists of strategies to enhance faculty development of positive attitudes and support. The professional development training I created to mitigate the problem of the need for more awareness of LDs understanding, accommodations, and teaching strategies to help increase academic success of students with LDs project, may provide background information to key stakeholders on LDs and information concerning students meeting their academic requirements.

This professional development project may serve as a catalyst to the development of a statewide training project for university faculty to further develop effective, supportive strategies to help students succeed, and interventions to prevent failure for students with LDs in higher education. The professional development project may lead to higher retention and graduation rates of students with LDs which could assist the university with meeting accreditation requirements.

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Appendix A: The Project

Professional Development Training

Workshop

Meeting the Needs of Students with

Learning Disabilities

What is My Role When Students in Higher Education Have Learning Disabilities?

A Three – Day Professional Development Series for Faculty and Staff

Professional Development Training Workshop

Meeting the Needs of Students with Learning Disabilities in Higher Education

General Overview: Literature indicates that support services provided to LD students are a strong factor in student success. Students with LD at 4-year universities must meet the same requirements as students who do not have learning disabilities. Even though some LD students decide not to report their disability, when they do report, faculty who work with these students must understand learning disabilities and how to teach these diverse students. Data obtained from the one-on-one interviews helped me to understand the perspectives of LD students at the study site. Following my study, it was determined that faculty may need more education to increase the successes for LD students in higher education, when students report their disability. The study explored perspectives and experiences of students with LD related to college academic experiences, support services and accommodations received at the study site, and lack of faculty understanding and knowledge of LD.

Purpose: The purpose of this 3-day professional development workshop is to educate faculty about LD as a disability, understand, and enhance their ability to teach and

support students with LD. Information was included to enhance faculty skills in meeting the needs of students with LD, as the students strive to meet academic requirements in postsecondary education. The professional development workshop will include an overview of research in LD, characteristics of LD, roles and responsibilities of instructors, and strategies that may work with LD students.

Goals: The goals of the workshop are to increase faculty knowledge of LD, enhance the understanding of accommodations and support services as related to LD students, and to improve faculty-student experiences. The information that will be provided during the workshop may help participants in improving classroom practices, as well as strategies and techniques that are important in student success. The workshop may also enhance more positive faculty perspectives in regard to students with LD.

Target Audience: Participants of the workshop will be key stakeholders, which include full-time faculty members at the study site.

Timeline: The workshop will include 3 full days of training. Details are listed in the daily workshop plan.

Materials: Computer and overhead projector will be needed for PowerPoint presentation. The professional development training agendas, folders, notepads, and pens will be provided for participants. Table and chairs will be used.

Location: The professional development training will take place in the university Learning Center.

Description of Workshop: PowerPoint presentations will include information concerning LD and issues that affect students with LD in postsecondary education. Participants will participate in group discussions in regards to the PowerPoint presentations. During a skit and role play, workshop participants will discuss and reflect on issues that were displayed. Ample time will be provided for networking to allow participants to discuss issues in regards to learning disabilities. Participants will be asked to share personal experiences that they have encountered in working with students with learning disabilities.

The 3-day professional development training is planned for the fall semester of 2020. At the conclusion of the 3-day session, participants will be asked to complete a written summative evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the professional development training. Six months after the completion of the professional development, a follow-up summative survey will be sent to all participants of the training. The follow-up summative survey will be used to identify strengths and or weaknesses in the professional development training, and will be used to make the decision of whether or not the training program should be continued.

Session 1 Lesson Plan	
8:30 am - 9:00 am	<p style="text-align: center;">Overview, Welcome, Group Introductions, Distribute, and Discuss The Agenda</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(PowerPoint Slides 1-4)</p> <p>Group Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name • Classes taught at university/years at the university • Personal interests in the professional development training • Show respect for colleagues • Create a positive learning environment. • Each participant will share their personal expectations of the professional development training.
9:00 am - 9:30 am	<p>Overview of Learning Disabilities and Implications</p> <p>(PowerPoint Slides 5-8)</p>
9:30 am – 10:00 am	<p style="text-align: center;">Group Discussion</p> <p>Group participants will sit at random tables in the conference room.</p> <p>A reporter and scribe will be appointed by each group. Participants will respond to questions on paper.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have you worked with students in your class who were LD? 2. Share past experiences with the students (academic and social). 3. Share strategies that you have used in working with LD students.
10:45 am – 11:00 am	Break
11:00 am - 12:00 pm	<p>Overview of Learning Disabilities and Implications</p> <p>(PowerPoint Slides 9-14)</p>
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm – 1:30 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Group Table Discussion</p> <p>Each group will answer and discuss the following questions:</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you identify students in your class who exhibited characteristics of LD that were mentioned in the PowerPoint? 2. What are your thoughts about how those students performed in the classroom? 3. Did you observe the students' need for more academic assistance? Explain.
1:30 pm – 2:00 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Open Dialogue</p> <p>Following discussion, each group will post responses on the wall around the room. An open discussion will be facilitated by the reporter to compare and contrast observations and conclusions.</p>
2:00 pm – 2:15 pm	Break
2:15pm – 2:45 pm	Overview of Research on Learning Disabilities (Power Point Slide 15-17)
2:45 pm - 3:30 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Reflection/Table Discussion Activity Think, Pair, and Share</p> <p>Participants will work with a partner to answer the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As a college student, did you ever feel as if you could not comprehend the material that was being taught in any of your classes? 2. Share how you felt and also, did you seek assistance? 3. Did these feelings affect your overall academic progress? Explain! Share!
3:30 pm - 4:00 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Dialogue</p> <p>The reporter from each table will present responses and facilitate an open discussion for all participants of the workshop. Responses will include participants sharing similarities and differences in their personal experiences as students.</p>
4:00 pm - 4:15 pm	Recap/Review of today's session.
4:15 pm – 4:30 pm	Questions/Closing

Session 2 Lesson Plan	
8:30 am - 8:40 am	Welcome/ Feedback from Day 1
8:40 am – 8:55 am	Types of Learning Disabilities (PowerPoint Slides 18-20)
8:55 am - 9:05 am	<p style="text-align: center;">Group Interactive Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each group of participants will form a circle. • The facilitator will ask participants to step forward if they have taught a student with learning disabilities in either of the following categories: Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, or Dyscalculia. • Participants will step forward if they have received any training in learning disabilities. • Participants will step forward if they have prejudged and formed negative perceptions of students with learning disabilities. • Participants will step forward if they have neglected to provide accommodations to students in their class with learning disabilities • Participants will step forward if you have had a student or students with disabilities who were successful in your class and graduated from the university. • The recorder will record the number of participants who meet each category.
9:05 am – 9:45 am	<p style="text-align: center;">Reflection/Table Discussion</p> <p>Ask participants to return to their tables to discuss the previous group activity. Participants will respond to the questions on paper.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What were your observations at the conclusion of the previous activity? 2. Each participant will reflect on similarities and differences in their experiences teaching students with learning disabilities.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Reflect on how you feel about working with students with learning disabilities. 4. Is it surprising that you and other participants have similar views relating to students with learning disabilities?
9:45 am – 10:45 am	Report–out/Open dialogue
	Following the table discussion, each group will post clip chart sheets on the wall around the room. The reporter will reference his table while sharing the groups’ observations and/or conclusions.
10:45 am – 11:00 am	Break
11:00 am – 11:30 am	Role and Responsibilities of University Faculty (PowerPoint Slides 21-27)
11:30 am - 12:15 pm	Brainstorming
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In pairs, list and discuss reasons why it is important for faculty to understand LD and to understand how to teach these students. • Next, discuss the important roles and responsibilities of faculty working with students with LD.
12:15 pm – 1:15 pm	Lunch
1:15 pm – 2:00 pm	Group Activity by Discipline
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As participants return from lunch, each will be given a sticker with a particular color that represents a teaching discipline. Participants will move to tables by discipline (i.e. Liberal Arts, Sciences, Mathematics). • Participants will be instructed to discuss teaching strategies that may be beneficial in teaching students with LD within their respective discipline. • In pairs, participants in each discipline will create a lesson plan for a LD student using strategies discussed in the power point slide.
2:00 pm – 2:45 pm	Report–out/Open dialogue
	Following the group activity, participants will share lesson plans and explain the strategies that were included in their plan and why.
2:45 pm – 3:00 pm	Break
3:00 pm – 3:15 pm	Reflection/Table Discussion

	<p>Each table will answer and discuss the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you feel that faculty perception of LD can affect the overall success of students with LD? 2. Why or why not? 3. Share an example of how a previous preconception or misconception of LD has affected your ability to successfully work with LD students? Explain.
3:15 pm – 4:00 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Role play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting: University science class • Faculty Participant: 1 science instructor • Student Participants: 15 students, including 5 LD students • Activity: Instructor will present new material to students on the Human Digestive System. During the instructional period, 5 students will exhibit characteristics of LD at different times. 2 students will constantly ask questions that have already been answered. 1 student will continuously talk and discuss irrelevant issues amongst their classmates. 1 student will exit their seat and leave the classroom while the instructor is teaching. When that student returns, they will ask the teacher to repeat any material that was discussed when the student was out of the classroom. During this time, the remaining 1 student will continuously ask his classmate to explain the material discussed by the instructor. • The instructor will ignore questions asked by the LD students and provide more assistance to the remaining 10 students who seem to understand the instructions and the textbook material. The instructor will ask other students to answer questions asked by the LD students. The instructor will portray frustration and impatience with the behavior exhibited by the LD students. • Discussion of Role Play Activity.
4:00 pm - 4:15 pm	Recap/Review of today's session.
4:15 pm – 4:30 pm	Questions/Closing

Session 3 Lesson Plan	
8:30 am - 8:45 am	Welcome/Feedback from Day 2
8:45 am – 9:30 am	Access to Support Services and Accommodations (PowerPoint Slides 28-44)
9:30 am – 10:00 am	<p style="text-align: center;">Group Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the difference between the process of students qualifying for and accessing support services at the university level vs. students in the elementary and secondary school level. • Should there be a different process? Why or why not? <p>The scribe at each table will write the groups' comments and conclusions.</p>
10:00 am – 10:45 am	<p style="text-align: center;">Report out/Open dialogue</p> <p>Following discussion, the reporter from each table will post the groups' comments on the wall using clip chart paper and reference his table while sharing the comments with all participants.</p>
10:45 am – 11:00 am	Break
11:00 am - 11:30 am	Support Services and Accommodations for Success (Power Point Slides 44-65)
11:30 am – 12:00 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Group Discussion</p> <p>Do you feel that with appropriate accommodations, students with LD can be successful? Why or why not?</p>
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch

1:00 pm – 1:30 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Report-out/Open dialogue</p> <p>Following discussion, the reporter from each table will post the groups' comments on the wall using clip chart paper and reference his table while sharing the comments with all participants.</p>
1:30 pm – 2:00 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Group Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will read a case study of a student with LD. https://www.washington.edu/doit/caryn-and-visual-arts-case-study-accommodating-learning-disability • What characteristics did the student exhibit? • Discuss the student's needs and appropriate accommodations for academic success.
2:00 pm – 2:30 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Group Discussion</p> <p>Following the group activity, participants will discuss other accommodations that may have been beneficial to the student from the case study?</p>
2:30pm - 3:00pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Report-out/Open Dialogue</p> <p>Following discussion, the reporter from each table will post the groups' comments on the wall using clip chart paper and reference his table while sharing the comments with all participants.</p>
3:00 pm - 3:15 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Break</p>
3:15 pm - 3:45 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Group Review</p> <p>All flip chart notes will be returned to each table group. Each group will review all flip chart notes from Session 1, Session 2 and Session 3. Participants will network with other group participants and engage in discussion of the training.</p>
3:45 pm – 4:15 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Questions/Closing</p>
4:15 pm – 4:30 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Complete Summative Evaluation</p>

Case example: Learning disability

Caryn and Visual Arts: A Case Study in Accommodating a Learning Disability

Background

My name is Caryn. I am an 18-year-old freshman entering a small private university. I am studying the visual arts and eventually plan to attend graduate school for a masters in fine arts.

Access Issues

Although I'm an art major, I have to take two English courses and four semesters of a second language that are required by the university. I have a language-learning disability which makes it difficult for me to understand and organize large amounts of verbal information. Writing was my most challenging academic area in high school. I was worried that I would not be able to keep up with the course workloads and failing a course my first semester was not an option.

Solution

Initially, I did not want to disclose my learning disability. However, I was very worried about these course requirements, especially since it was my first semester of college. I contacted my advisor in the art department and mentioned my concerns. After an appointment with the disabled student services counselor where I presented documentation of my disability, we decided on the following. I was able to substitute the foreign language course requirement for two courses in the social sciences. I also learned about the freshman writing lab. I set up a series of weekly private appointments with a writing tutor to review my English coursework. I borrowed a computer from the disabled student services department equipped with a speech-to-text option to use during the academic year. With this assistive technology, I could speak into the computer and my speech is translated into text. Without this accommodation, my thoughts and writing could become disorganized or jumbled.

Discussion Points

This case study illustrates that assistance from the campus disabled student services department can help a student with a disability:

1. Obtain program adjustments to meet university coursework requirements.
2. Gain access to accessible electronic and information technology to accommodate her disability.
3. Make use of campus services available to all students.

Professional Development PowerPoint Presentation



Professional Development Training For University Faculty

THREE DAY WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

- Overview of research on students with LD and effective practices
- Role and responsibility of University Instructors
- Sharing strategies that work
- Formative Evaluation

Welcome, Group Introductions and Agenda

- Group Introductions
- Name
- Classes taught at university/years at the university
- Personal interests in the professional development training
- Personal expectations of the professional development training.

Overview of Learning Disabilities and Implications

- Learning disability is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding, which may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.

Overview of Learning Disabilities and Implications (cont'd)

- ◉ Learning Disabilities arise from neurological differences in brain structure and affect the ability to receive, store, process, retrieve, or communicate information
- ◉ Learning disabilities may be a consequence of the developing brain before or during birth, involving factors such as maternal illness or injury, drug or alcohol use during pregnancy, low birth weight, oxygen deprivation, premature birth

Overview of Learning Disabilities and Implications (cont'd)

- ◉ There is a higher reported incident of learning disabilities among people who live in poverty
- ◉ Could be due to increased risk of exposure to poor nutrition
- ◉ Ingested and environmental toxins
- ◉ Other risk factors during early stages of development

Overview of Learning Disabilities and Implications (cont'd)

- Many people never discover that learning disabilities are responsible for life long difficulties and are not diagnosed until adulthood
- They cause low self-esteem, low expectations of goals, underachievement, un-employment, lack of friends and positive relationships

Overview of Learning Disabilities and Implications (cont'd)

- Learning disabilities are described as unexpected, significant difficulties in academic achievement and related areas of learning and behavior in individuals who are not able to respond to high-quality instruction
- Struggle cannot be attributed to medical, educational, environmental, or psychiatric causes (Conner, 2012)
- Learning disabilities are real and permanent

Overview of Learning Disabilities and Implications (cont'd)

- ◉ The number of students in postsecondary education with learning disabilities and psychological disabilities has increased since 2011
- ◉ Psychological disabilities can cause anxiety, difficulties in balancing academics and responsibilities of work and family
- ◉ Students with LD and exhibiting psychological deficits may experience an inability to function under pressure and adjust to pressures of a new environment to thrive in college (Belch, 2011)

Overview of Learning Disabilities and Implications (cont'd)

- ◉ Also affected may be the ability to adjust to new social environments without family support and the ability to adjust to pressures of survival in the college environment (Stein, 2012)

Overview of Learning Disabilities and Implications (cont'd)

- Many LD students in universities do not access support services because they make the decision not to disclose their disability (Lightner, Kipps-Vaughn, Schulte & Trice, 2011)
- Students may lack self-advocacy skills which can affect the ability to seek academic assistance

Overview of Learning Disabilities and Implications (cont'd)

- LD students do not complete their college requirements for graduation at the same rate as students who do not have disabilities
- LD students may need more time to complete requirements with the assistance of support services due to academic deficits (DaDeppo, 2009)

Overview of Learning Disabilities and Implications (cont'd)

- ◉ Learning disability tends to affect cognitive skills which are relevant to memory and perception
- ◉ Learning disabilities may cause deficits in reading, writing, or math
- ◉ Standardized and psychological tests are used to identify learning disabilities and assess levels of intelligence and performance in reading, writing, and math (Simons, 2012)

What Researchers Say!

- ◉ Statistics showed 59% of freshmen who have a learning disability attended two year colleges and 40% attended 4-year colleges (McCleary-Jones, 2008)
- ◉ Students with LD are more apt to attend community colleges or vocational programs
- ◉ LD students are less likely to pursue a degree

What Researchers Say! (cont'd)

- ◉ Legislative mandates ensure support of these students who attend postsecondary education (Shaw, 2009)
- ◉ In the last 30 years, college student population has become more diverse, including LD students (Lindstrom, Doren, & Miesch, 2011)
- ◉ Due to various deficits that students with learning disabilities exhibit, these students may encounter poorer outcomes in college (Ellis, Ellis, & Hayes, 2009)

What Researchers Say! (cont'd)

- ◉ Many LD students do not access necessary support services because they make the decision not to disclose their disability

Types of Learning Disabilities

Dyslexia

- Dyslexia is the most common learning disability
- It involves problems with basic understanding of words, letters, and sounds
- Involves problems with reading comprehension
- It is the inability to understand meaning of words, phrases, or paragraphs
- Involves poor spelling, inability to decode words, and poor writing skills

Types of Learning Disabilities

Dyscalculia

- Disorder of understanding numbers
- Severe deficits in dealing with numbers
- Difficulties interpreting and solving word problems
- Less common learning disability

Types of Learning Disabilities

Dysgraphia

- Learning disability that affects writing skills
- Writing proficiency is below chronological age potential
- Poor motor control
- Poor reading and spelling skills

Roles and Responsibilities of University Faculty

- Willingness to assist LD students
- Helping students to gain access to academic knowledge
- Responsibility of determining the competence of students acquiring knowledge
- Faculty must increase their understanding of LD as a disability

Roles and Responsibilities of University Faculty (cont'd)

- ◉ Evaluate their attitude towards teaching students with LD
- ◉ Faculty attitudes are most important to students
- ◉ Negative attitudes by faculty may cause discouragement in students

Roles and Responsibilities of University Faculty (cont'd)

- ◉ Must be consistent communication between the Office of Student Support Services, faculty, and student
- ◉ Assisting students with LD in the postsecondary environment must be a collaborative effort to help provide a more productive environment for students to experience academic success

Roles and Responsibilities of University Faculty (cont'd)

- ◉ Faculty must be educated in LD
- ◉ Lack of faculty training and awareness may affect students
- ◉ May cause students to feel isolated and inadequate
- ◉ Faculty and university administration must raise awareness of LD

Roles and Responsibilities of University Faculty (cont'd)

- ◉ University must be committed to provide a learning environment that will focus on retaining students with LD
- ◉ Must ensure that students are provided the necessary tools to enhance a positive academic experience (Allan, 2011)
- ◉ Must encourage students to seek assistance

Roles and Responsibilities of University Faculty (cont'd)

- ◉ Students must have help with time management skills
- ◉ Organizational skills advising
- ◉ Course/curriculum advising
- ◉ Advocacy goal setting (Stein, 2012)

It's The Law!

- ◉ Legislative mandates ensure support of LD students in postsecondary institutions
- ◉ The Individual Disabilities Education Act set basis for mandatory academic support for LD students in higher education institutions yet, previously academic support was not required
- ◉ (Conner, 2012; Shaw, 2009)

Support Services /Accommodations

Self-determination skills:

- ◉ Leads to decision making
- ◉ Achieved by collaborative relationships
- ◉ Assertiveness
- ◉ Skills must be taught in context of other skills, not in isolation

Tutoring/One on One

- ◉ Academic tutoring can provide academic learning strategies to improve reading, writing, organization, and time management skills
- ◉ Provides opportunity to enhance learning
- ◉ May be provided in one-on-one environment or group setting

Group Tutoring

- ◉ Some students prefer group tutoring that includes their peers
- ◉ Requires more self-confidence
- ◉ Many LD students may function better in an environment with others which may provide a sense of support
- ◉ Tutors may be selected by office of student support services based on criteria set by school

Peer Tutoring

- ◉ Peer tutoring involves individuals of the same social group, tutoring each other when one peer may have more knowledge than the others (Chen & Liu, 2001)
- ◉ Peer tutoring also involves problem solving, academic strategies, skill practice, and social interaction

Reciprocal Peer Tutoring

- Collaborative learning approach involves forming groups or pairs of students who work on a specific academic task
- Students alternate taking role of tutor or tutee
- Tutors collaborate to create strategies to monitor and evaluate each other

Reciprocal Peer Tutoring (cont'd)

- Appropriate for students with LD in higher education
- May take place in university support service office, library, or dormitory

Tutors with Common Interests

- ◉ Tutors paired with tutees based on a common college major
- ◉ May also lead to positive tutoring outcomes as well as positive relationships between tutors and tutees
- ◉ Tutors identified by academic major, interviews, and references

Strategies That Work

- ◉ Problem-solving
- ◉ Understanding one's disability
- ◉ Setting goals
- ◉ Self-management (Getzel & Thoma, 2008)

Mentoring as an Invaluable Asset

- Mentoring provides academic and social support for students with LD
- Mentoring provides direction and reassurance to students who may lack persistence to succeed without help (Brown, Takahashi, & Roberts, 2010)

Mentoring is Valuable

- Mentoring may lead to positive outcomes for students with LD which, include higher grades and graduation
- Enhanced enrollment and retention at the university

Impact of Faculty Mentoring

- Mentors serve as role models
- Give guidance
- Give advice
- Provide support in acquiring social skills

Impact of Faculty Mentoring (cont'd)

- Provides students with individual attention
- Allows mentor to focus on issues and concerns that are important to the individual student
- Affect student achievement and self-determination (Crisp & Cruz, 2009)

Impact of Faculty Mentoring (cont'd)

- ◉ Faculty mentors help LD students make sense of educational experiences
- ◉ Provide academic and social support
- ◉ Challenge students to not only succeed, but examine their own self-worth (Brown, Takahashi, & Roberts, 2010)

Impact of Faculty Mentoring (cont'd)

- ◉ Faculty mentoring at universities is very important in creating positive student relationships and enhancing positive faculty perceptions
- ◉ Positive mentoring experiences lead to positive postsecondary experience (Cornelius & Wood, 2012)

Impact of Faculty Mentoring (cont'd)

- ◉ Remedial classes address skills that were not addressed in high school (Education Trust, 2009)
- ◉ Students with LD may benefit from remedial classes that offer material that is not on a college level (Chen, Wu, & Tasoff, 2010)

Impact of Faculty Mentoring (cont'd)

- ◉ Forty percent of first time freshmen, including students with LD, are enrolled in remedial classes (Bailey, Jeong, and Cho, 2010)
- ◉ Students with or without LD may be identified by counselors or academic advisors and requested to enroll in remedial classes (Kane, Schmidt, & Walker, 2011)

How Do Remedial Classes Assist LD Students?

- ◉ Has contributed to student academic success in post secondary institutions
- ◉ Allows students with different levels of academic readiness, and students with LD to take courses in reading, writing, and math to prepare them for college level academics (Bettinger & Long, 2009; Boatman & Long, 2010; Garcia & Tenney, 2009)

Social Skills

- ◉ Needed to assist LD students in adapting to new people and new environments
- ◉ Important in academic decision making
- ◉ Crucial in adhering to daily living demands
- ◉ Smooth transition when interacting to seek help when needed

Social-Interpersonal Skills

- ◉ Able to ask questions
- ◉ Communicate with faculty and peers
- ◉ Voice opinions without becoming defensive (Hong, 2015)

Social-Interpersonal Skills (Cont'd)

- ◉ Forming relationships
- ◉ Managing frustration and anger
- ◉ Speaking in a way that conveys a positive self-image
- ◉ Shows awareness and concern for the feelings of others

Why are Social-Interpersonal Skills Important?

- ◉ Ability to interact with peers and form relationships
- ◉ Socialization is difficult for students with LD due to feelings of low self-esteem and lack of communication skills (Hendrickson, Busard, Rodgers, Rodgers, & Scheidecker, 2013)
- ◉ Lack of appropriate social skills may result in isolation in school and community (Conner, 2012)

Assistance from Counselors Provides Support

- ◉ Activity engagement
- ◉ Communication and behavioral guidance
- ◉ Stress management

Do Faculty Attitudes Affect Academic Success Of LD Students?

- ◉ Willingness of faculty to assist students may be affected by faculty attitudes and lack of understanding of LD
- ◉ University faculty have responsibility to gain access to academic knowledge of LD (Murray, Flannery, & Wren, 2009)

Do Faculty Attitudes Affect Academic Success Of LD Students? (cont'd)

- ◉ Faculty may face a greater demand to increase knowledge of LD as a disability
- ◉ Evaluate their attitude towards teaching LD students
- ◉ Provide learning strategies that may enhance learning proficiency for LD students (Lindstrom, Doren, & Miesch, 2011).

Do Faculty Attitudes Affect Academic Success Of LD Students? (cont'd)

- Research shows that some faculty exhibit positive attitudes towards serving students with LD but many prejudice and have negative perceptions
- Faculty training is needed
- Faculty attitudes are most important to LD students
- Negative attitudes exhibited by faculty may cause discouragement in students (Reynolds & Hitchcock, 2014)

Strategies That May Help LD Students

- Break learning tasks into small steps
- Provide remediation to check understanding
- Provide regular feedback to student to ensure comprehension
- Present information to student orally and visually

Strategies That May Help LD Students (cont'd)

- Have student recite instructions after hearing them to check for understanding
- Use diagrams, graphics, and pictures as needed to support instruction
- Provide instructions by using an independent model to provide more understanding for student.

Implications?

- There is a need for collaborative efforts to ensure that students with LD are receiving support services



Disclosing Disability

- ◉ Students are responsible for disclosing their disability to the Office of Student Support Services at the university
- ◉ Following documentation, support services must be made available
- ◉ Services are based on the individual needs of the student
- ◉ Students may not succeed without services (Garrison-Wade, & Lehmann, 2012).

Why Students Do Not Disclose Disability

- ◉ Stigma of having a disability
- ◉ Interpersonal issues
- ◉ Intrapersonal issues
- ◉ Feelings of being misunderstood
- ◉ Feelings of inadequacy

Why Students Do Not Disclose Disability (cont'd)

- ◉ inability to establish an identity independent of their disability
- ◉ Feelings of shame
- ◉ Feelings that receiving assistance from support services would be like cheating

Why Students Do Not Disclose Disability (cont'd)

- ◉ Lack of time to seek assistance with academics
- ◉ Conflicts with daily class schedules
- ◉ Mistaken feelings of excelling without assistance (Lightner & Kops-Vaughan, 2011)

Why Students Do Not Disclose Disability (cont'd)

- Students who attended the support center by choice rather than being referred may show success in the classroom and an increase in grade point average (Irolano, Liefeld, & Trachtenberg, 2010)

Why Students Do Not Disclose Disability (cont'd)

- Lack of consistent self-determination skills
- Lack of the ability to make decisions that will enhance future educational, vocational, and life skills
- Lack of adequate transition activities designed to promote successful preparation for movement from high school to postsecondary institutions (Olson & Pratt, 2004)

Why Students Do Not Disclose Disability (cont'd)

- ◉ Lack of self-advocacy skills
- ◉ Lack ability to seek assistance
- ◉ Lack of emotional support that may interfere with students' perception of themselves as learners (Bursuck, Rose, Cowen, & Yohaya, 1989)

LD Students Success

- ◉ Smaller classes
- ◉ More individual classroom engagement with faculty and classmates
- ◉ Increased personal attention from faculty
- ◉ More campus involvement to help improve social skills

LD Students Success (cont'd)

- ◉ Tutoring
- ◉ Mentoring
- ◉ Positive faculty relationships

Conclusion

- ◉ THINK!
- ◉ DISCUSS!
- ◉ REFLECT!
- ◉ HOW WILL YOU USE THIS INFORMATION?

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Professional Development Training Workshop

Meeting the Needs of Students With Learning Disabilities in Higher Education

Evaluation

We value your opinions and would like you to share your thoughts on this workshop training. These evaluations will help us know what is working and what needs to be improved upon.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
The training was relevant to my teaching environment				
The training addressed my needs and specific issues				

The training provided strategies that can be implemented in my teaching environment				
The facilitator was knowledgeable about subject matter				
Ample time was given to ask questions, discuss, and reflect				
Workshop pace was appropriate and effective				
Workshop objectives were achieved				
I understand more clearly the issues that LD students face and how I can help them achieve their educational goals				
I would recommend this workshop to others				
Additional Comments:				

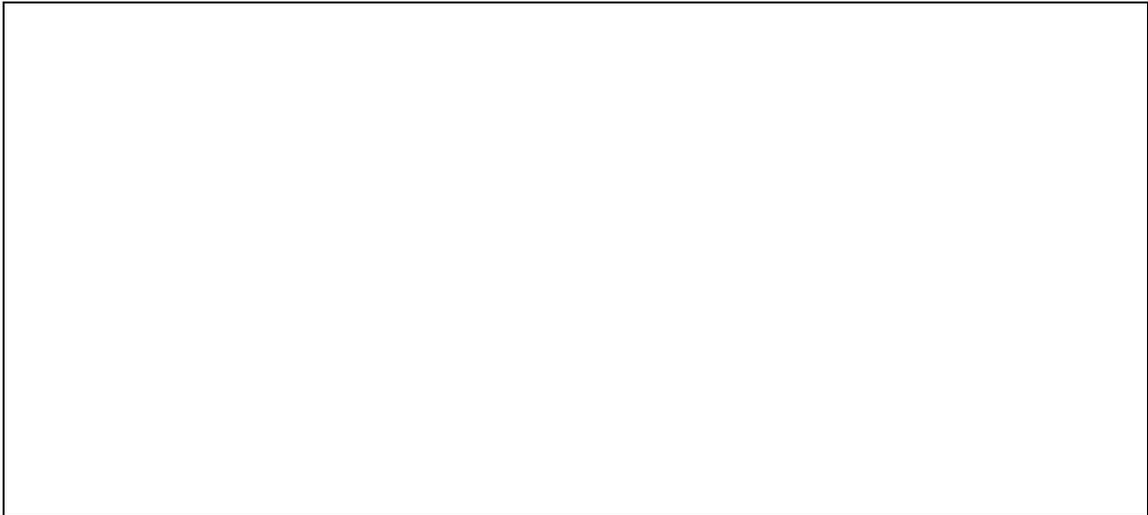
Professional Development Training Workshop

Meeting the Needs of Students With Learning Disabilities in Higher Education

Six Month Follow-up Evaluation

Please answer the following questions as you reflect on the professional training program, *Meeting The Needs of Students with Learning Disabilities in Higher Education* and your experiences working with students with learning disabilities in higher education.

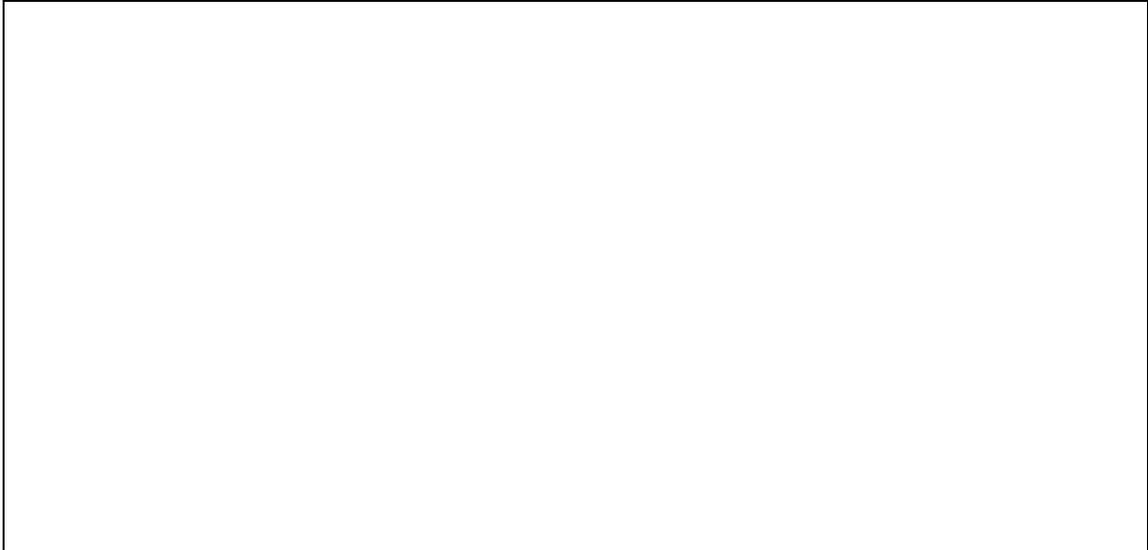
1. Have the knowledge and tools presented in the workshop increased your understanding of learning disabilities? If so, or if not, please explain.



2. Based on the information learned in the workshop, do you feel more comfortable in discussing with your students their disability and accommodations? If so, or if not, please explain.



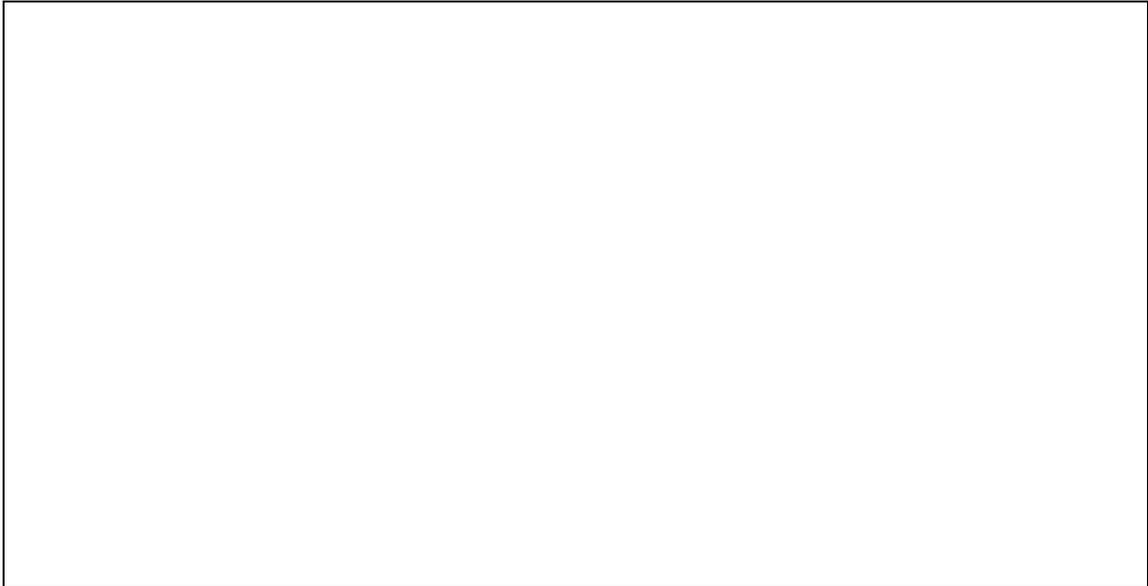
3. Based on the information learned in the workshop, do you have a better understanding of the academic accommodations and support services that are needed for students with learning disabilities? If so, or if not, please explain.



4. Have you seen an increase in the use of accommodations by students since you have been working more closely with students with learning disabilities? Please give examples.



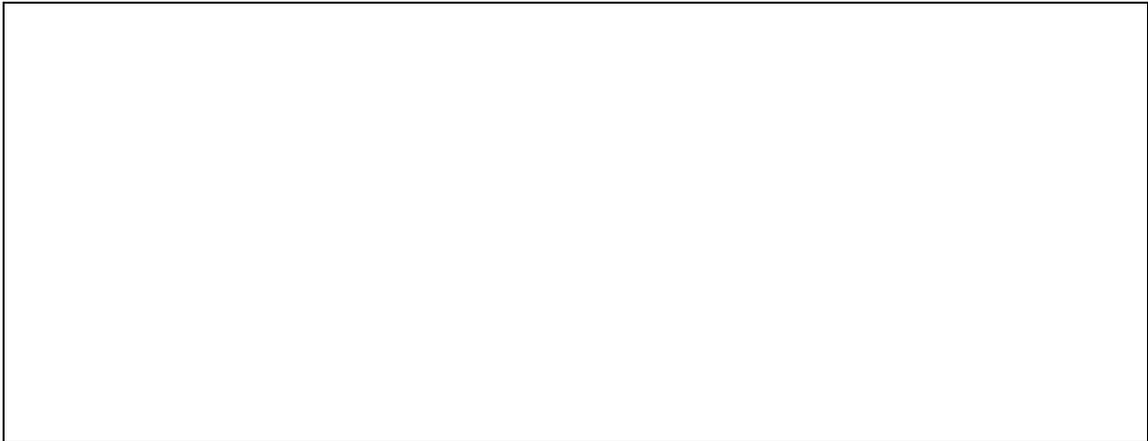
5. As a faculty member, are you able to integrate various learning strategies with accommodations to promote student learning? Please explain.



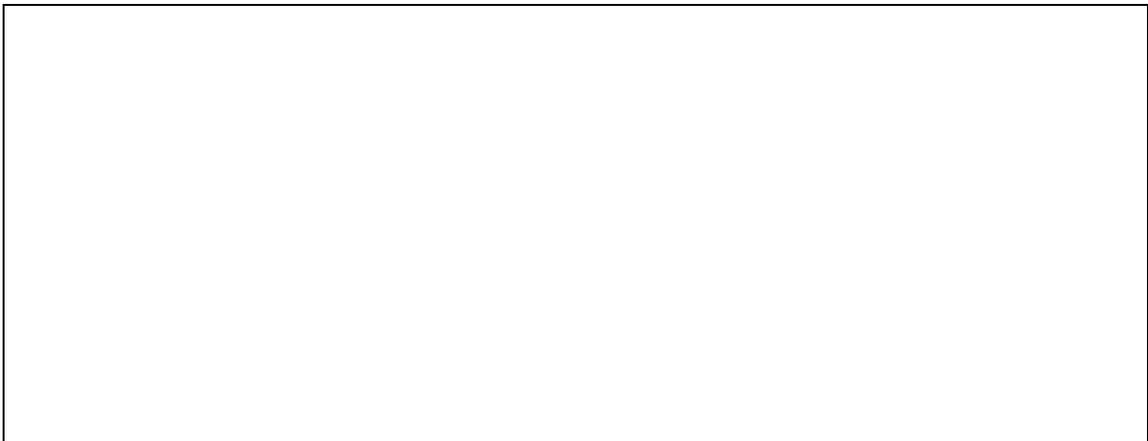
6. As a result of the workshop, do you feel more equipped in meeting the academic demands of working with students with learning disabilities and helping them meet their postsecondary academic requirements? If so, or if not, please explain.

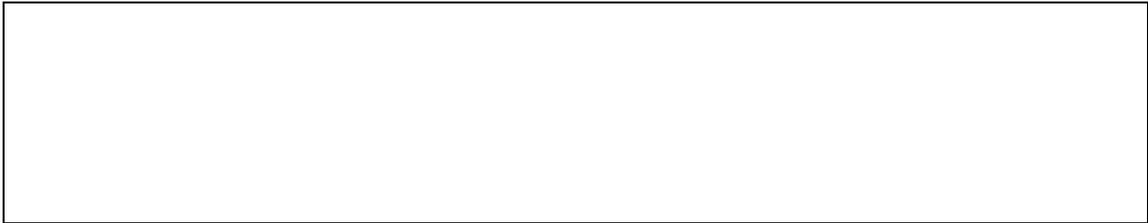


7. Based on the workshop, what was the most valuable learning strategy that you have implemented to improve the learning environment for students with learning disabilities?



8. Based on the workshop and your implementation of the learning strategies, have you noticed an increase in self confidence, a greater use of accommodations, and an overall improvement in the academic success of your students with learning disabilities?





Appendix B: Participant's Flyer

Flyer for Student Recruitment



Here is your chance to be part of an exciting research study!

**Title: "Meeting the Needs of Students With Learning
Disabilities in Higher Education"**

Participant Criteria

- 1. Medically identified learning disability**
- 2. 18 Years of age**
- 3. Presently receiving services from the office of student support services**

Research Study

- 1. Confidential participation – your name will not appear in the study**
- 2. An Informal meeting will be held for all participants on xx/xx/xxxx in room xxx located in the library**

For more information: Contact Researcher Rita Foster at rita.foster@waldenu.edu

Appendix C: Individual Interview Questions

1. Describe how your learning disability affects your academic experience?
2. Please briefly describe the support services that you are receiving.
3. Please briefly describe what support services have been the most helpful to you.
4. Please briefly describe how support services could be improved.
5. Describe how your academic relationship with your college professors affects your college experience.
6. What resources have been the most useful to you in meeting your academic requirements?
7. Please explain how these resources could be even more effective in meeting your academic requirements.
8. What factors have greatly contributed to your academic success?
9. What other information would you like to include describing your experiences in your college setting?