Researching Learning Disabilities
Education and Training
Learning disabilities are a group of neurological disorders that have a negative impact on learning. Learning disabilities affect the brain’s ability to receive, process, store, and respond to information and may affect a student’s ability to speak, listen, think, read, write, spell or compute. There are 2.4 million students diagnosed with learning disabilities that receive special education services in schools. Students with learning disabilities are served by both special education teachers and regular education teachers.

View the link on the slide and discuss it with the students.

(Information from www.tafeonline.org.)
How are students with specific learning disabilities identified? The way that students are identified as having a specific learning disability has changed. Until recently, a student was identified by looking at their classroom performance and standardized test scores, and scores on intelligence and classroom achievement tests. Educators grew unhappy with this type of screening and admission process for students with learning disabilities because they felt it did not meet the early educational needs of students. Therefore, the identification process changed. So, how are they identified now?
The new process educators have agreed upon for identifying students with specific learning disabilities is to collaborate with other teachers, administrators and parents in an ARD (Admission, Review and Dismissal) Committee. First, the teacher attempts intervention techniques to address the needs of the student. If the teacher is unable to meet the student’s needs through small group settings, one-on-one tutoring or trying new study strategies, then it is likely that the student has a learning disability. Then, the diagnostician will set up a series of evaluations for the student to determine if they qualify for special education services. After reviewing the results of the evaluations, the ARD committee meets to discuss what modifications and accommodations can be made for the student. Some modifications and accommodations include teaching in smaller steps, giving manipulatives, using technology, increased time on tests and assignments, decreased writing, decreased answer choices, providing outlines, charts and other types of graphic organizers and modeling examples of problems.
Often students with learning disabilities will have problems learning one or more subjects such as reading, writing, spelling or math. It is sometimes easier for students with learning disabilities to grasp information in an elective class because elective courses are something the student signed up for and a subject they are very interested in.
HOW DO THEY OCCUR?
Although the causes of learning disabilities are not exactly known, there are three theories for why they develop. One theory suggests that genetics play a role in the development of learning disabilities. Researchers are unsure if it is passed down genetically, or if children are just modeling their parents behavior.

Another theory suggests children have some type of complication with brain development as a result of low birth weight, lack of oxygen or are born prematurely.

The third theory of how children develop learning disabilities is through exposure to environmental toxins such as lead.
There are five specific learning disabilities: dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia, and dysphasia (also known as aphasia or global aphasia). The education-related act that ensures services to students who have been diagnosed with a learning disability is called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
Dyslexia affects the area of the brain responsible for processing language. Students affected by dyslexia might experience problems with reading, writing and spelling.
Dyscalculia affects the area of the brain responsible for processing math skills. Students affected by dyscalculia might experience problems with computation, remembering math facts and concepts of time and money.
Dysgraphia affects the area of the brain responsible for written expression. Students affected by dysgraphia might experience problems with poor handwriting, composition and spelling.
Dyspraxia affects the area of the brain responsible for fine motor skills. Students affected by dyspraxia might experience problems with coordination and manual dexterity.
Dysphasia affects the area of the brain responsible for speech. Students affected by dysphasia might experience problems with articulation and pronunciation.
Review the TAFE Competition Researching Learning Disabilities.
Resources


Resources
