

First, a Ministry could convene a meeting of university teachers to identify the substance and learning skills considered to be the **sole** responsibility of the public school. Second, it could convene a meeting of teachers from the schools to prepare a curriculum of the substance and learning skills identified by the university scholars. The Ministry could convene a meeting between the teachers and other community agencies to prepare a supplementary program of non-credit mainly recreational/artistic and "on-the-job" vocational activities run cooperatively by the school and other agencies.

In 1970 Ivan Illich urged the "deschooling of society" because "the right to learn is curtailed by the obligation to attend school." Harold Disbrowe has a more modest proposal to improve schooling, and hence, learning. He wants to restore the main purpose of schooling to what Aldburey Castell called "the teachers' world...the pedagogical encounter in which congenital ignorance is deliberately attacked...where other activities go on, but are derivative and peripheral."

That ignorance can be reduced only by knowledge coming from the Pierian Spring mainly controlled by scholars and teachers liberally educated in the humanities and the sciences. Why not enlist their help to reconnect the public school with the spring of liberal education? One suspects that Harold Disbrowe would applaud the effort.

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**Charles T. Mangrum II and Stephen S. Strichart.**  
**COLLEGE AND THE LEARNING DISABLED STUDENT: A GUIDE TO PROGRAM SELECTION, DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION.**

**Orlando: Grune & Stratton, Inc., 1984.**  
**209 pp. \$33.25.**

In 1965, when the late Sam Rabinovitch was ready to report on his new program for learning disabled students at the Montreal Children's Hospital, the most interested audience he could find was an international conference on mental retardation. Few at that conference would have foreseen that twenty years later there would be a significant market for a book entitled **College and The Learning Disabled Student.**

Today sophisticated educators no longer confuse intellectual deficits with learning deficits. While the learning disabled student remains a puzzling and challenging pedagogical problem, teachers and parents, and these students themselves, have come to appreciate that learning disabilities are unrelated to intelligence.

Intelligent learning disabled adolescents, like their intelligent classmates, now aspire to continue their education beyond high school, and into college and university.

That's why this book is timely. As more is understood about the cognitive, linguistic, and academic lags of these students, more learning disabled students have begun to learn and succeed in secondary schools. Their high schools have learned how to make the modifications that these intelligent but disabled learners require to learn more complex and challenging subjects. These do not include all high schools, and not nearly enough of these students, as a 1979 survey by Deshler and Alley revealed, but there are more each year. And those with the requisite intelligence, ambition, and academic skills are beginning to apply for college entrance. This book addresses the problems that will arise as their colleges and universities attempt to appreciate what it means to be an intelligent student with specific lags and gaps.

Unfortunately, the admissions officers and guidance counsellors who read this book won't learn much about that student. Although an entire chapter is devoted to "Characteristics of Learning Disabled College Students," listing four pages of deficits and would give pause to the hardest and most well-intentioned college administrator, nowhere in this book is there a simple description or definition of learning disabilities. The only definition, included in Chapter 2, is one quoted from the California Education Code, and is a hodge-podge of the prevailing, but unsubstantiated hypotheses extant in 1976, when it became part of that code.

Let me offer a common current definition: a learning disability is a lag or a deficit in one or more areas of cognitive functioning that interferes with learning. Despite their specific deficits, learning disabled students score at average or above average levels on standard intelligence tests. Many sources of these learning deficits have been suggested, and are under investigation, but no direct specific causal link has yet been demonstrated. Simply put, this means that learning disabled students may be competent learners in many domains, but have difficulty, sometimes profound difficulty, learning in other domains.

Some learning disabled students have difficulty learning about space and spatial sequences and relationships, and this group often has much trouble learning mathematical concepts. Other learning disabled students have difficulty understanding and using language. This deficit has an obvious impact on their ability to manipulate and order higher cognitive categories. A third group of learning disabled students have very specific problems in discriminating and remembering symbols, and are most easily recognized by their marked difficulty in learning to read and spell. No individual learning disabled student will fit precisely into one or another of

these three categories, but it is important to recognize the difference between, for example, a linguistically able student who is not a fluent reader, a fluent reader who has difficulty unpacking information from complex texts, and a voracious and efficient reader who cannot comprehend calculus.

If Mangrum and Strichart had based their book on this or a similar definition of the problems that a learning disabled student must deal with to succeed at college, this book would have been presented differently. Instead of beginning with a detailed description of the legislation related to the provision of post-secondary education to this population, and other disabled students (relevant in the United States, but of little interest to Canadians), they would have focused on this student as a learner. When they do begin describing the learning disabled college student, in Chapter 3, what is presented is a detailed, but unselected list of "problems" reported by directors of college learning disability programs -- really a detailed description of the student as a non-learner. Without a frame of reference, anyone reading through this list would expect an incompetent and dependent learner, instead of the reflective student with well defined areas of deficit, but with good coping strategies, that most learning disabled adolescents have become when they are ready to face college.

Of course problem areas, both academic and non-academic, need to be signalled, as these authors note. The goal they describe is not a taxonomy of the correlates of learning disabilities, but success at college for the learning disabled student. It is difficult to see how that goal may be reached through reading this book.

These authors surveyed, visited, and interviewed directors of college programs for the learning disabled, and the strongest sections of their book are the descriptions of good programs they have encountered. They also include some good general suggestions for developing a college level learning disabilities program. However the specifics of their suggestions are open to serious question. For example, the thirty pages they devote to diagnostic testing include little more than lists and descriptions of tests. Many of the tests they list are totally inappropriate for college students -- for example, KeyMath, which is an elementary school measure; or the Bender-Gestalt, of little use after 10 or 12. Once again, without a clear and simple definition of what they are looking for, college guidance officers will have difficulty using this section to locate and assist learning disabled students.

The best chapter in this book is "Teaching the Learning Disabled Student in the College Classroom". Good resources for improving instruction are described, and simple, effective strategies are presented. Every learning disabled student going off to college should have a copy of this chapter as a tactful

prod for any disbelieving professors. The chapter directed towards high school guidance personnel about preparing college-bound learning disabled students is also well done. These two chapters constitute only thirteen pages of this book, and come nearly at the end. They desire more prominence. There are also several useful references and appendices.

The survey of college programs for the learning disabled, which served as the original source of this book, would have been better presented as a journal article, substantiated with more data and less "personal communication", and, thus, available for peer review. Combining clinical hunch, taxonomies of deficit, and unannotated lists of tests, with prescriptive suggestions, does not seem a particularly effective way to reach the obvious goal of these authors, the enhancement of college success for learning disabled students.

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**WRITING CENTERS: THEORY AND ADMINISTRATION**  
**Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1984**  
**247 pp. \$15.50**

A collection of nineteen essays by writing specialists at colleges and universities in the United States, this publication offers the first comprehensive study of the theory and practice of individualized writing instruction. Professor Gary Olson, director of the Center for Writing at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington, has assembled a knowledgeable and experienced group of teachers to provide an in-depth study of the writing centre and its purpose and function.

The book's three sections are devoted to a consideration of (1) Theory; (2) Administration; and (3) Special Concerns, all