

**Learning Disabilities in IEPs: Proactive Approaches for Supporting Students**  
**Maiko Hata, [hata@uoregon.edu](mailto:hata@uoregon.edu) – American English Institute, University of Oregon**  
**<https://learningdifferencesinesl.wordpress.com/> (Learning Differences in ESL)**

### The research project

- Online Qualtrics survey distributed over multiple listserv
- 104 responses from over 50 IEPs participated

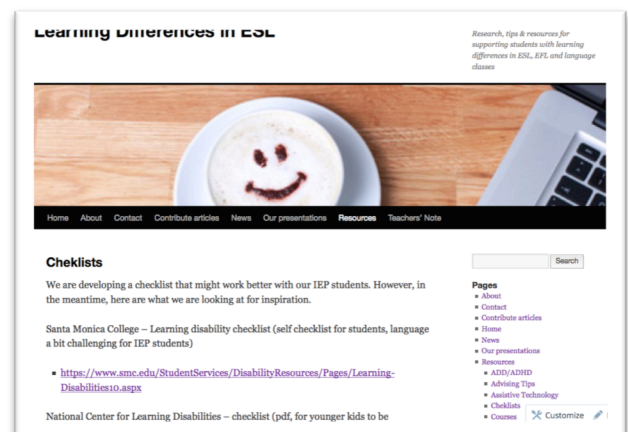
### LDs and IEPs

- 102 said they have suspected that an IEP student in their program might have an LD, autism or invisible illness such as mental illness and depression. Only 1 chose “No”.
- 70 said they have suspected that fewer than 5% of their IEP students might have an LD, autism or invisible illness. 19 chose 6-10%, 3 chose “Other”.
- The top ten “clues” that made them suspect are: specific conditions (such as dyslexia, ADD/ADHD) (52), slow/no progress (39), social challenges (35), emotional challenges (34), and poor concentration (28).
- Only 12 said they have a strategy for assessing students with the conditions mentioned above, while 88 said they have no strategies.
- 68 said their IEP students have access to a free, university resource, while 26 chose a fee-based community resource. 2 chose fee-based university resource, and 9 chose a free, community resource.
- 25 said they were satisfied with the level of services students receive. 76 said they were not satisfied, even though 68 said their students have access to a free, university resource.
- The services that are contributing to their satisfaction include counseling service on campus (4), disability services (4), dedicated faculty/staff member within IEP (3), accommodations and support services on campus (3).
- The reasons for dissatisfaction are difficulty assessing students in their L1 and that assessments are only available in English (13), no resource available (13), no training for teachers (12), resources only available with diagnosis (10), support staff not trained to work with international students (7).

### Strategies at IEPs

- Many responded that they coach students on strategies including study skills (84), organizational skills (70), and time-management skills (69).
- They also refer students to resources (69), provide classroom accommodations (54), implemented an ongoing orientation course (27), implemented workshops (24), and gave teachers/staff members FTE (18).
- Only 10 said they use Universal Design.
- Classroom accommodations they have given include extended test time (48), homework assistance (32), supplemental instruction (32), alternative testing format (22), and note taker/reader/scribe (21).

***Go to [learningdifferencesinesl.wordpress.com](https://learningdifferencesinesl.wordpress.com/) for this presentation, handouts for IEP students, discussion boards and links for Learning Differences in ESL contexts ☺***



## Being proactive

No appropriate diagnostics

- “DS coordinator works directly with students and IEP director to determine appropriate accommodations, provides learning strategy support directly to students, coordinates participation in social groups, ... is available for teacher questions, etc.”
- Ask for a list of community counselors or create one.
- Suggest getting diagnosed back home in their L1.

Lack of resource/information

- “Within the IEP, Student Services and Orientation personnel who are highly dedicated and capable – intervenes and makes referrals, follow up with students with special needs as well...”
- “We’ve arranged brown bags for our faculty with our Center for Students with Disabilities as well as consultations with cohorts of instructors... Also joined a recent webinar directed at ESL programs, but found it minimally useful.”

Fighting stigma

- “... more media/awareness is being presented to students (e.g. video on mental health and breaking down cultural stereotypes on receiving help for mental health during student orientation)... Helpful literature and resources are being compiled and made available for all.”
- Talk about it with student. By the time they seek help, they are often desperate and well aware of their differences. They might be ready for their teachers to address this with them. Invite students and teachers to come talk to you about their concerns.

SLA or LD?

- “A checklist to see if students are exhibiting symptoms. If one teacher thinks yes, we’ll have a second teacher do it to compare results. Based on how many symptoms, we diagnose and make a plan for helping the students cope.”

Behaviors associated with LD	Behaviors when acquiring an L2
Difficulty following directions	Difficulty following directions <b>in English when they are not well understood</b>
Difficulty with phonological awareness	Difficulty distinguishing <b>between sounds not in L1</b>
Slow to learn sound-symbol correspondence	Confusion w/ sound-symbol correspondence <b>when different than L1</b>
Difficulty remembering sight words	Difficulty remembering sight words <b>when word meaning not understood</b>
Difficulty retelling a story in sequence	<b>May understand more than can convey in L2</b>
May have poor auditory memory	Better auditory memory <b>in L1</b>
Confused by figurative language	Confused by <b>unfamiliar</b> figurative language
May have difficulty concentrating	<b>Processing a L2 can be tiring</b>
May seem easily frustrated	<b>May seem easily frustrated</b>

*Klinger, J (2013). Distinguishing between language acquisition and learning disabilities.*

## Contact Information

Maiko Hata – Associate Academic Advisor [hata@uoregon.edu](mailto:hata@uoregon.edu)  
American English Institute, University of Oregon <http://aei.uoregon.edu/>