

LDA Minnesota Learning TIMES

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Learning Connections

Closing the Achievement Gap for Low-income Kids



"One of the most effective interventions I've observed in my 26 years of school administration."

Minneapolis Elementary School Principal, 2006

Too many low-income children in Minnesota lag behind grade level in reading and math. These struggling students have come to school with poor early learning preparation and/or have not received the kind of instruction they need to master basic skills. Without intensive early intervention, they will continue on an academic trajectory with an ever-increasing gap between grade-level expectations and individual achievement.

LDA's Learning Connections program serves these students who have fallen behind, but who do not receive special education services. Currently at work

in 14 Twin Cities inner-city schools, the program's specially-trained teachers use both prevention and intervention approaches to build student proficiency. With twice-weekly intensive instruction in small groups, students gain successful learning strategies while remediating deficit skills. A rigorous evaluation and accountability system documents each child's progress with pre- and post-testing. Biweekly progress testing also indicates when particular interventions have ceased to work and new approaches are necessary.

Learning Connections helps students close the achievement gap by mastering basic skills, advancing proficiency to grade level expectations, and returning to the classroom with upgraded competence, on track for academic success. Mid-way through the 2007-08 school year, Learning Connections students had achieved the following spectacular results:

- 93% gained skills and improved academic achievement
- 62% were on track to closing the achievement gap by making gains greater than expected for students at their grade levels.
- 34% were making "ambitious growth," accelerating achievement and closing the achievement gap as quickly as possible.

Learning Connections is generously funded by The Cargill Foundation, Greater Twin Cities United Way, and Deluxe Foundation. For more information, contact Liz Rey, Program Manager, at 952-582-6018; lr@daminnesota.org

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Safe Baby Products Bill Vetoed by the Governor!

You may already have heard about the recent Safe Baby Products Bill to make products toxic-free and safe for young children in Minnesota.

Phthalates (pronounced tha-lates) are toxic chemicals used to soften PVC plastic and found in toys such as rubber ducky and teething rings. It is known to be a hormone-disrupter. **Babies and toddlers are the most vulnerable since their brains and bodies are still developing and because they frequently put toys in their mouths.** Phthalates are associated with learning disabilities, reproductive development problems in boys, and early onset puberty in girls.

In May 2008, the Minnesota House and Senate passed two important measures that would protect Minnesota's children. The Safe Baby Products bill would phase out phthalates from products geared towards children under three years. The bill passed with bipartisan support and final counts of 93-39 in the House and 45-20 in the Senate. A second bill would phase out the toxic flame retardant deca-BDE from home electronics and textiles by the year 2011. Deca is linked to brain damage, liver and thyroid, in addition to hormone disruption. These two bills were packaged together as a public health policy bill. Unfortunately, this bill was vetoed by the Governor.

You can still take action to prevent unsafe products and support this bill for next year by calling your legislators or writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper expressing your concern.



LDA Minnesota works to achieve a healthy and clean environment with statewide partners and is a founding member of Healthy Legacy Coalition. Healthy Legacy supports the production and use of everyday products without toxic chemicals, while advocating for safe alternatives across Minnesota.

Parenting Corner

Home & School Checklist

A Tool for Parents and Teachers

You are the expert on your child. No one—not coach nor therapist—knows more about your child's strengths, passions, or dreams than you. But what's the best way to convey your insights and practical knowledge to your child's teacher to help him/her succeed at school?

LDA Minnesota has developed the *Home and School Checklist* to serve as an MRI of your child's learning abilities. This handy tool works in several ways: 1) facilitates communication between you and the teacher; 2) sends the message that you are a valuable resource and part of the team; 3) prompts the teacher to share with you effective classroom strategies that can help at home.

Using the Checklist:

List your child's skills and passions on the cover sheet. Categories include: Best Qualities, Strengths, Favorite Activities, Interpersonal Skills, Motivators. The cover sheet will create the initial impression of your child, so make your statements upbeat and affirmative.

Share what you write. Tell your child what he or she does well and how much you value him. Children often need help recognizing their strengths and encouragement to focus on them.

Fill out the checklist. The checklist itself has two headings: "When You See This" and "Try These." Your job is to honestly assess your child's academic difficulties and list specifically how you, or previous teachers, have dealt with them in the past.

Set up a meeting. Send the cover sheet and checklist to the teacher with a note requesting a meeting—no more than 30 minutes.

Listen and learn. Go to the meeting with an open mind. You may not agree with everything the teacher says, but don't accuse him/her of being wrong or mistaken. The goal of the meeting and checklist is for you to learn what goes on in the classroom and the teacher to learn what goes on at home. Children often act differently in the safety of their home than they do at school.

Give and take. Be receptive to the teacher's suggestions, including the areas of academic difficulty that both of you will work on, a strategy timeline, and when you plan to talk again, whether it is by phone, e-mail, or a note.

Wrap it up. Before leaving, explain to the teacher that you know he/she has a roomful of students to attend to and you appreciate any help he/she can provide, and you will do your best as well. Thank the teacher for his/her time and all the hard work being done for your child. Follow up with a thank-you note or an e-mail.

To download the complete *Home and School Checklist*, visit Idaminnesota.org.



Logo created by Bob Wold

Join us for the LDA Golf Benefit

Play A Round for Kids!

Title Sponsor: TCF Bank

LDA Minnesota's inaugural *Play-A-Round for Kids!* golf tournament is coming up **Monday, August 25, 2008**. Proceeds from the event will help LDA serve children with learning disabilities and other learning difficulties so that they become successful learners. The event will include a shotgun golf tournament, box lunch, dinner, and silent auction at the Edinburgh USA, with exclusive use of the St. Andrews Club facilities.

Please let us know if you or your company is interested in being a sponsor of *Play-A-Round for Kids!* Sponsors will be recognized in several ways at the tournament and in promotional materials leading up to the event, including the LDA Newsletter, website, and print materials. **We are also collecting donations for raffle prizes and welcome your gifts.**

Space is limited, so reserve your spot soon! You can register in various ways from a foursome to individual, and we will pair you up. **Please contact Amanda at 952.582.6021 / aw@ldaminnesota.org for more information, or if you are interested in volunteering for the event.**

Sponsors of the event include, but are not limited to:

- **TCF Bank** - Title Sponsor
- **LarsonAllen LLP** - Eagle Sponsor
- **Children's Hospitals & Clinics of MN** - Longest Drive
- **General Mills** - Hole-in-One Sponsor
- **HealthPartners** - Hole Sponsor

LDA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, and all golf donations and sponsorships are partially tax-deductible.

The mission of LDA Minnesota is to help children, youth, and adults with learning difficulties *learn successfully, dream of possibilities, and achieve their goals.*

Visit Us!

www.ldaminnesota.org

Whom We Serve

A learning disability is a lifelong neurobiological disorder that causes a person to have trouble storing, processing, and/or producing information. Often, a person with learning disability has difficulty listening, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, reasoning, recalling, and/or organizing information. ADHD is a neurobiological disorder in which a person typically has developmentally inappropriate levels of inattention, hyperactivity, impulsivity, working memory, and/or executive function problems.

Through community-based programs such as **Learning Connections, Parents-as-Partners, Early Literacy, Transition Connections**, and statewide **Adult Connections**, LDA Minnesota provides services to children, youth, and adults with learning disabilities, attention deficits, and other learning difficulties. LDA offers public education and support and training for parents, teachers, and employers to improve the likelihood of successful outcomes for individuals with learning challenges. Many of LDA's services are offered free to the community; approximately 80% of the individuals LDA serves are economically disadvantaged.

In addition, LDA provides the following fee-based services:

- Assessments and consultations for children and adults for specific learning disabilities (SLD) or other learning difficulties
- Diagnostic assessments to determine the presence or absence of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- GED accommodations assessments
- Early Reading Profile for children ages 5-9 with reading difficulties
- ADHD workshops and support groups for parents and affected adults
- 1:1 Transition Coaching for young adults with LD and/or ADHD ages 14-21



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Upcoming ADHD Workshops & Support Groups

June 5	Money Management Skills
June 17	Medications: Issues & Answers
June 19	What Exercise Can Do for Children with ADHD
June 23	Building Friendships
June 26	ADHD & Social Skills: Strategies that Help
Aug. 5	Budgeting & Bill Paying I
Aug. 12	Budgeting & Bill Paying II
Aug. 14	Strategies for School
Aug. 21	ADHD Home & School Checklist
Sept. 11	Homework: From Hassles to Strategies
Sept. 15	Self-Talk: Friend or Foe
Sept. 16	Why is My Child Always Angry?
Sept. 29	Tools for School

All workshops and support groups meet 7:00-9:00 pm at LDA. Workshops are \$30 per person or \$40 for two family members, unless otherwise noted. Support group sessions are \$20.

Register by phone 952.922.8374 or online at ldaminnesota.org.

Call our ADHD Specialist for a **FREE** phone consultation.
(ADHD services also available in Spanish.)

DID YOU KNOW? 6–10% of Americans have ADHD, and 30% of those with ADHD also have an LD.

June Sale at Creative Kidstuff

Creative Kidstuff is having its once-and-only-once a year sale event in June. Save 25% off everything in their stores and online from June 5th - 8th.

Creative Way to Donate Online to LDA

LDA is registered at Creative Kidstuff Gift Registry. Purchase any registered LDA item and it will be donated directly to LDA to help supply ongoing educational programs with useful *kid-friendly* learning tools and supplies.

Donations can be directly used for the following:

- Raffle prizes for LDA's Golf Benefit
- Books for summer reading
- Educational supplies for LDA teachers

Visit www.creativekidstuff.com and go to gift registry to enter Firstname: LDA Lastname: Minnesota. Your gift donations are greatly appreciated!

LDA Minnesota is the selected non-profit partner of Creative Kidstuff for 2008



LDA Minnesota Partners & Community Sites

Minneapolis Public and Non-public Schools

- All Minneapolis Public High Schools
- Andersen Open School
- Anishinabe Academy
- Hall Elementary
- Jefferson Elementary
- Nawayee Center School
- Richard Green Elementary
- Risen Christ School
- San Miguel School
- Sheridan Global Arts School

St. Paul Non-public Schools

- Christ's Household of Faith School
- St. Matthew Catholic School
- St. Thomas More School

Metro Area Partners

- Edina Public Schools
- Robbinsdale Area Schools

Statewide Partners

- Healthy Legacy Coalition
- Minnesota Department of Education – Adult Basic Education (ABE)
- Minnesota Office of Higher Education

LDA Minnesota is affiliated with these organizations:

