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Pobody's Nerfect: Improving the Identification and Diagnosis of Learning Disabilities

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Abstract

The focus of this Capstone Project is on improving the identification and diagnosis of learning disabilities. This is important because diagnosing a child properly will help teachers understand the students' learning styles and better position the teachers to create more effective learning environments. Also, teachers will be able to better support and accommodate their students both academically and socially. It is argued that many teachers do not have the right resources, understanding, or authority to diagnose learning disabilities. The primary stakeholder perspectives obtained were from teachers, staff, and students because of their relevant experiences and roles in identifying and addressing learning disabilities. After interviewing the participants, three action options emerged from an analysis of the data and were explored as ways to address the issue presented. Implementing monthly check-ups and annual teacher trainings are argued to be the most effective way to achieve the goals of improving the identification and diagnosis of learning disabilities.

Setting the Stage: Improving the Identification and Diagnosis of Learning Disabilities

When I was in kindergarten getting ready to get tested for special education, the school psychologist at an elementary school thought I had autism. The school psychologist believed that I should be tested at a children's hospital as soon as possible. Just before that, in private school, the kindergarten teacher had wanted me to go back to pre-kindergarten. Unfortunately, the director lacked experience with children with special needs. When I went to the children's hospital the doctors said I have a speech-language impairment, and I did not have autism. They found out that I can communicate and then I was able to interact with other people. After a lot of testing, I had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting with the school psychologist at my elementary school. I ended up starting school in January after winter break. When it came to kindergarten graduation, my kindergarten teacher did not allow me to graduate because of my learning disability, and she did not want to mainstream me. It was sad because I had to watch my brother graduate kindergarten. My parents put me into a new school for a special education program.

In the first grade, my mom took me to a children's hospital to get my ears tested. When it was time to go to the audiologist the doctor found out I lost my hearing on my right ear, while my left ear was normal. The doctor found out that my hearing was severely-profound on my right ear hearing loss. In addition, the doctor diagnosed with unilateral sensorineural hearing loss. When the doctor wanted me to go to a CAT scan to see what was wrong with my right ear. When I took the CAT scan the doctor found out that my auditory nerve did not develop properly. The doctor gave me recommendations for accommodations that I need for school. She recommended that I sit in front of the class and have the teacher do an FM system in school.

When it came to middle school and high school, my learning disability was misdiagnosed repeatedly with a couple of teachers. When I was in the 7th grade, my special education teacher incorrectly diagnosed me with autism on my IEP. My parents told him to take it off and to make sure that the school had the right learning disability on record. They explained to him that I have speech and language impairment and am hard of hearing. When it came to junior year in high school another special education teacher labeled me on the disability form with three learning disabilities which were autism, hearing impairment in the right ear, and speech and language impairment to show my culinary skills and art teacher. My parents told her to take that learning disability autism off. This shows that I could have the power to stop misdiagnosis by informing others who have a learning disability of my experience. I proved to the special education teacher that I can communicate with students. Being misdiagnosed with a learning disability made me feel hurt.

In my high school and college, I did not have to argue with my teachers about my misdiagnosis of a learning disability. I was able to get the support on what I needed and met with teachers about going over my accommodations. In my freshman year in high school, My homeroom teacher took my paper away when I was not done with an assignment. She ignored my accommodations and did not care whether I finished my assignments on time. I told my parents about that incident and they went to the principal and the Department head of Special Education. The head of Special Education gave the teacher a warning, however, the principal did nothing. After my freshman year, my experiences were much better. The other teachers were very accommodating and understanding of my needs.

In my senior year in high school and my first year in college, I learned how to use resources such as the Reading and Writing (RAW) Center and the tutorial center. My Disability

Student Programs and Services (DSPS) Counselor at Las Positas College taught me how to advocate for myself and obtain needed accommodations.

When I transferred to Cal State Monterey Bay (CSUMB), it was important to ask the front desk what the policy of accommodating students with learning disabilities is by using the Cooperative Learning Center (CLC). I found the CLC by using a campus map. The front desk showed me how to use the CLC. When I was told to use two appointments each day, I thought this was so helpful for me because I needed a lot of help with my writing. I was struggling to find good research on my essay. It takes a lot of time to think about how to pick the right research for an essay. Near the end of my first year as a transfer student, I got scolded by a liberal studies instructor for using the CLC too much. She expected me to work independently and not to use tutoring for input. This was not correct because I have accommodations and I need the help I can get. Overall, most of my instructors were supportive and honored my accommodations and I did not get misdiagnosed.

In conclusion, I have to know what it feels like to have a learning disability. It is tough for people who have a learning disability because students have to live with it. Even when a teacher or a school psychologist makes a mistake, parents or yourself can correct the learning disability that the student is diagnosed with, but it can be an uphill battle. This mistake can be corrected by telling what their learning disabilities are. The student might feel hurt when they get misdiagnosed on what their learning disability is, and maybe an easy target for bullying. It is important to understand their learning disabilities and get rid of our stigmas. It is important for all levels of our students to not get discouraged by their counselor because this can make the student feel disheartened. Students with learning disabilities should pull themselves together; they should believe that they can do it.

Literature Synthesis & Integration: Difficulties of Diagnosing Children's Learning Disabilities

Have you experienced diagnosing children with learning disabilities? For my focus topic, I am talking about the difficulties of diagnosing children's learning disabilities. As a child growing up, I was diagnosed with a learning disability. I was recommended to get tested in order to qualify for special education. I needed so much help with school. I was diagnosed with two learning disabilities which are speech and language impairment and hearing impairment on the right ear. Because of my personal experience, I have always wanted to spread awareness about learning disabilities. These learning challenges can affect the students who go undiagnosed with a learning disability. It is difficult to tell which student has a learning disability; therefore, there is a need to adopt proper methods for the early diagnosis of a disability a student might be going through.

What is the problem?

Students are facing challenges in being diagnosed with a learning disability. According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2019), a learning disability is "when disorders can be affecting the ability to understand spoken, written language, math calculations, coordinate movements or direct attention" (Definition). In the article "Invisible Scholars Students with Learning Disabilities" the Stage & Milne (1996) state "The term "learning disabled" describes a heterogeneous group of individuals who are unable to learn specific academic skills often despite having normal or above normal intelligence" (p. 426). According to LD Online, a learning disability has no cure or fix, so it can be a lifelong issue (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2021). Many children who have a learning disability can struggle in school before it gets diagnosed (Mayo

Clinic, 2021). This is why early diagnosis is important. A child's teacher, parents, or guardian, doctor, and other professional requests to evaluate the concerns for learning problems (Mayo Clinic, 2021). Determining whether a student has a learning disability is based on test results, getting feedback from the teacher, input from parents or guardians, and review on academic performance (Mayo Clinic, 2021). Therefore the problem I am researching is the difficulties or challenges of diagnosing learning disabilities in K-12 students.

It is difficult to diagnose students with learning disabilities because there is no list of symptoms that fits all children (Byrd, 2020). For example, Mullet and Rinn (2015) state that there are many symptoms for gifted abilities that are the same as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Students may try to run away from their problems, complain about doing homework, or not wanting to attend school (Byrd, 2020). Also, many learning disabilities are not recognizable, or it is hard to tell who needs help. Support can help students with disabilities to receive accommodations in school that are tailored to their specific needs. There are also different plans and laws to protect students with learning disabilities. A 504 plan offers accommodations that can help services for general education for students, who get diagnosed with a learning disability, but do not need special education. Moreover students who have IEPs or 504 plans get protected from being discriminated against in school (National Center with Learning Disabilities, 2017). The schools should also be able to provide students with specialists who are readily available to work with students with IEP or 504 plans. This could include making a different department for the specialists and the students.

Why is it an Issue?

In special education the services that are provided are reliant on correctly identifying the students' disabilities (Maki & Adams, 2020). This means that students' diagnosis is dependent

on, for example, the work of school psychologists, special educators and teachers. Sometimes the mislabeling can be as simple as a minor mistake or misfile of paperwork. If a teacher makes a mistake on a person's learning disability, the teacher may give the student the wrong accommodations. The student will feel ashamed for performing poorly in school. Students are not getting the proper help if the diagnosis is wrong. The student can correct their teacher on their diagnosis of what learning disability they have. This can reduce the misdiagnosis of what learning disability the student has.

When students' learning disabilities are not diagnosed this is a problem because it can lead to low self-esteem issues, lack of employment and an increased risk of having problems with the justice system (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2017). Students get the wrong diagnosis based on their learning disability: "When a learning disability is not detected early, diagnosed correctly, and treated effectively, it can cause a number of other problems. These additional difficulties may be emotional, and a child can show signs of sadness, frustration, or disappointment. Behavior problems like acting out might occur" (Diagnosing a Learning Disability, 2015, para. 2). This shows that when a learning disability is not diagnosed on time, this can result in emotional and behavioral problems. Those problems can affect how the child feels about school. In addition, "Individuals may experience a lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem through not being able to keep up with their peers or being labelled lazy or stupid" (Certificate in Understanding Specific Learning Difficulties, 2017, p.8). Although students appear to be lazy, or unmotivated, they may have become discouraged about their learning disabilities over time, especially if they have not been diagnosed (Reader, 2020). For these reasons people who are not diagnosed with learning disabilities could suffer long-term consequences.

What Should be Done?

There are many things that should be done to correctly diagnose students with learning disabilities. According to *Learning Disorders in Children* (2021), accurately diagnosing children is important in order to get them the support they need since each child has a different learning style. In "Inside an Evaluation for Learning Disorders", Cruger states that in the beginning you have to find your child's learning profile to see what their strengths and weaknesses are in order to suggest what support the student needs to learn properly (Cruger, 2021). The children can get the help and support they need only when schools are able to include different learning styles. It is important to account for different learning styles and accommodations to show how you care for the students and how you want them to succeed. Similarly, it is also common for children to hide their learning disorders (Byrd, 2020). It is important to make the student with a learning disability feel welcome with their peers. In order for students to feel welcome in the classroom awareness needs to be raised about different conditions a peer may have in life. The overall point in understanding different learning styles and disabilities is to feel supported and succeed well in school.

In addition, parents also need to be educated to spot children with learning disabilities early in their life. Parents often are crucial and important individuals when it comes to advocating for their children when they get diagnosed with a learning disability to implement classroom assistance and interference (Borst, 2021). For the same reason, we should use different programs and strategies for quicker and reliable identification to assist families. For example, the Learning Disability Annual Health Check introduced in the UK measures different ways to improve the identification and health risks for people who are diagnosed with a learning

disability (Giles, Ling, & Gordon, 2020). This states that the people can get the right diagnosis of a learning disability. Parents can help the child who gets diagnosed with a learning disability.

Similarly, teachers can be taught and trained to recognize students who have learning disabilities. Teachers often can tell if the child has a possibility of having a learning disability by observing their performance in school (Jacobson, 2021). The traits can include lack of socialization with peers and trouble keeping up with their schoolwork. Teachers can identify if a student has a learning disability when the child makes an effort, but fails to succeed. Another example can be when a child does exceptionally well in one area but poor in another.

According to the article "The Use of RTI to Identify Students With Learning Disabilities: A Review of the Research", a longstanding problem in special education is finding the accurate learning disability that a student is diagnosed with because there are problems associated with overidentification (Hughes & Dexter, n.d.). The reason why is that the IQ test is not an accurate method and too many people do poorly on it. The low achievement for many students is actually caused by poor instruction rather than disability (Fuchs, Mock, Morgan, & Young, 2003 as cited in Hughes & Dexter, n.d.). In order to improve the problem with overidentification, researchers recommended the RTI method "response to intervention". There are two aspects of RTI that are presented to address the problem of overidentification. The first one is giving students access to effective instruction and curriculum. The second one is making sure the student is diagnosed early for an early intervention (Hughes & Dexter, n.d.). Similarly, RTI also helps us to reduce disproportionality. The first reason is that the RTI curriculum is based on measures that are unbiased versus other alternative forms of assessment. Also, RTI instruction is based on individual academic performance and has different tiers with more intensive instructions (Hughes & Dexter, n.d.).

Response to Intervention is a multi-tier path to find an early identification of students who have learning and behavior problems. The RTI development starts with high quality direction and universal screening for all the children in the general education classroom (What is Response to Intervention (RTI)?, n.d.). In Response to Intervention make sure someone pays attention and identifies the students who have a possibility of having a learning problem (“How are learning disabilities diagnosed?”, 2018). Make sure teachers pay attention to students who have a possibility of having learning disabilities. Teachers should observe all the students carefully to identify if any student is struggling due to a learning disability. After the disability is identified, more help can be offered to that student to help them learn and reach their goals despite their learning disability. Move the children to get extra help they need in order to do well in their school (“How are learning disabilities diagnosed?”,2018). This can help the children be successful in their studies, they are working on reaching their goals. Early response is very helpful for students who are diagnosed with a learning disability. It is important to help the child who needs help as soon as possible.

In order to identify learning disabilities early intervention by parents or teachers plays a huge role and might help in reducing the effect of the learning disability on the child's life. In the process of diagnosis of children's learning disabilities “A broad consensus has been achieved regarding the importance of early primary and secondary interventions for children in academic domains for the purposes of improving overall academic competencies and preventing low achievement that often leads to a diagnosis of specific learning disability (SLD) and long-term special education placement” (Reschly, 2005, p. 510). Using these past researches, we can tell that different forms of intervention might be really helpful in improving the identification of diagnosis of learning disabilities.

Similarly, school psychologists could be very resourceful since they get trained in both education and psychology. They can assist with diagnosing students who have learning disabilities and help the students' parents and educators come up with a plan to improve their learning ability (How are learning disabilities diagnosed, 2018). A full evaluation with detailed steps can help improve the diagnosis of students with learning disabilities. The first step is a medical exam with a neurological assessment to give out other possible results of the child's other abilities and difficulties. This could include emotional disorders, intellectual and developmental disabilities and brain diseases. The second step includes re-examining a child's developmental, social and school performance, followed by a discussion about family history, academic and psychological testing (How are learning disabilities diagnosed, 2018). To better diagnose students with learning disabilities in a classroom full of students, we would need to supervise all the students' progress carefully to identify what their learning disability is. It is best when we analyze how well the student is performing in school. We should also offer help to children who have issues on different learning levels. As the students begin making improvements, we can move them up to the upper tiers to offer increased support, and to acknowledge their development (How are learning disabilities diagnosed, 2018). In summary, early intervention from parents and teachers can be helpful in diagnosing students with learning disabilities. On the other hand, overidentification of diagnosis should be reduced and tools like Response to Intervention could be helpful. Finally, school psychologists and teachers should receive training to better diagnose their students' learning disabilities.

Conclusion

Learning disabilities can be difficult to diagnose sometimes. The student can appear to look normal, but can be struggling to learn properly. Students can learn to do well in school,

when they receive accurate diagnosis and help from the concerned departments. Sometimes the students live with labels when it is not true. The student goes on believing they have a label which can affect their self confidence and self esteem. In addition, it is important that teachers and parents are familiar with early signs of a possible learning disability to get the child required help as soon as possible. In this research, I present that parents, teachers, tools like Response to Intervention, and school psychologists can identify what the students' learning disability is and can contribute to the early identification process. This will help the students to not fall behind and not get held back a grade in school. It is important to not misdiagnose a student's learning disabilities and get an accurate diagnosis as soon as possible so they can learn and grow physically, mentally and emotionally.

Method

For this Capstone Project, the researchers investigated how teachers and students view difficulties in diagnosing children's learning disabilities and what they think could improve them. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, the researchers used what they have learned to formulate an action that responds to the difficulties of diagnosing children's learning disabilities in a way that inspires, informs, or involves a particular audience.

Context

Each of the researchers collected data from different schools. Those schools will be described below.

Estela

Sky Union Elementary School is located just south of the city of Salinas California. The school is close to the fields and small, but it is one of the top 50% of public schools in California and serves 330 students. The minority enrollment, 99% of the students are Hispanic according to

their 2019-2020 SARC.

Mariposa High School is located in Mariposa California. Mariposa High was opened in 2006 and is within the Monterey Peninsula Unified School district. According to their SARC 2019-2020, the school serves 600 students in grades 9-12 and 23.1% of students are Hispanic, 45.1% are White, Asian 23.3%, and African American 1.0%. In addition, the school has a great program to support students with learning disabilities

Jizelle

Clydesdale Elementary School¹ is located in Southern California. The school is situated in an equestrian district, having large ranches surrounding the school. The two largest ethnic groups in the students' population are Hispanic at 95.6% and Asian at 4%. According to their 2019-2020 SARC (School Accountability Report Card), the school is in good physical condition. Out of the whole student population, 12.5% of students have disabilities.

Akers Elementary School is located in Central California. The school is situated in the middle of a residential neighborhood, next to an open-field park. The two largest ethnic groups in the students' population are Hispanic at 71.5% and white at 11.6%. Relevant statistics indicate that 13.4% of the students have disabilities. According to their 2019-2020 SARC, the school is in good physical condition.

Jocelyn

Card View Elementary is located in Monterey, California. They offer transitional kindergarten (TK) through sixth grade. According to the 2019-2020 SARC, the two largest racial groups are White (at 50.1%) and Hispanic or Latino (at 30.7%). Out of the entire school population, 6.8% of the students have disabilities. When all students with disabilities took the

¹ Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations.

CAASPP, only 17.65% met or exceeded the standards. The school does not have any full-time support services staff. It seems the only support program they have is their Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) system.

Sand Carla School District is located in the Bay Area. They offer kindergarten through eighth grade. According to the 2019-2020 SARC, the two largest racial groups are White (at 56.73%) and Hispanic or Latino (at 14.86%). Out of the entire school population, 7.06% of the students have disabilities. The school does not have any full-time support services staff. However, they do have at least one part-time counselor for social, behavioral, or career development, at least one part-time psychologist, and at least one part-time speech, language, and hearing specialist.

Charles Water is located in Monterey County. They offer second grade through twelfth grade. According to the 2019-2020 SARC, the two largest racial groups are White (at 78%) and Hispanic or Latino (at 12%). Out of the entire school population, 100% of the students have disabilities. When all students with disabilities took the CAASPP, only 44.5% met or exceeded the standards. The school has academic counselors, a behavior specialist, learning specialists, a speech and language pathologist, an occupational therapist. and classroom aides and assistants.

Katie

Las Positas Elementary school is located in Northern California and opened in September 1973. According to their 2019-2020 SARC, the two largest groups are Asian at 71% and White at 18.5%. Out of the entire school population, about 6.8% have learning disabilities. The school's physical condition is fair.

Birdie Falcon High School is in Bay Area, California and was opened in 1973. According to the 2019-2020 SARC, the two largest groups are Asian at 42% and White at 37.8%.

Additionally, 7.5% of the students have learning disabilities. The school's condition is exemplary.

Maddie

Watson school is located in Seashore, California. The elementary school was opened in 1983. The 2019-2020 SARC states that the student population is 78% white, 12% Hispanic or Latino, 5% Asian and African descent. The school facility is in moderate condition.

Christian Church School is a school located in Mountain, California. The School was founded in 1898. According to the Christian Church website, since it is a private school, it does not produce a SARC report. The school has served students from all over Mountain California for 123 years. The school is a faith-based school that teaches religious views along with academics. Many historical buildings at Christian Church School are in good condition.

Participants and Participant Selection

Each researcher interviewed at least two participants.

Estella

K. Farson. A special education teacher at Mariposa High School who teaches ninth grade. Before becoming a Special ED teacher, she started as a Behavior Technician in the LEAP program at Mariposa High School, where she was the support staff in the Special Education classrooms.

B. Jonn. General ED Teacher at Sky elementary school. Took twelve units of special ED classes and have being colabollative with special ED teachers

Jizelle

Y. Rather. A Hispanic teacher at Clydesdale Elementary School who teaches a first and kindergarten combination class. She has taught at charter and public schools. She has over ten

years of teaching experience.

D. Cross. A behavior intervention assistant at Akers Elementary School. She helps students with disabilities and behavioral issues by coming up with solutions and teaching appropriate behavior for the classroom.

Jocelyn

J. Hayes. This teacher in training at Card View Elementary was invited to participate due to her relevant experience and role as a kindergarten teacher.

M. Nike. This student attended schools in Sand Carla School District from kindergarten to eighth grade and Charles Water for high school. She was invited to participate due to her relevant experience and role as a student with a learning disability.

Katie

K. Paterson. A white female kindergarten teacher at Las Positas Elementary School. She has been teaching for 30 years at multiple schools. She has taught students with and without learning disabilities.

P. Mason. A white male special education teacher. He has taught at Birdie Falcon High School for three years. He is part of the Special Education program. He teaches Algebra, English, and Learning Lab. He taught Special Education Mild to Moderate last year.

Maddy

C. Royal. A white female principal at Christian Church School. She has taught many students of all different backgrounds of learning for 30 years. She has served as a teacher at other schools conducting special education in grades kindergarten through eighth grade.

M. Road. A white female teacher at Watson school for 20 years. In her time teaching at Watson school, she obtained a degree in teaching and special education. Her goal as a teacher is

to help students with learning disabilities be successful in their academics.

A. Numa. A white female principal was also at Watson school for five years. As a principal at Watson school, she has tremendously changed Watson school to be a more accepting and focused school on learning disabilities.

Researcher

Below, each researcher will reflect on their relationship to the issue of the identification and diagnosis of learning disabilities.

Estella

I am interested in this topic because I have relatives who have special needs. I also want to become an elementary school teacher, so having knowledge about this topic will help me to understand my students and to be able to address their problems when necessary. I want to have a better understanding of this topic as some of the participants have educational backgrounds working with learning disabilities. I will gain insights as my understanding of this topic is very limited. I believe that getting this knowledge from people who already work with students will help me in the long run, and I will be more aware of their needs.

Jizelle

This topic is important to me because, as a child, I was diagnosed with dyslexia. Still, upon further testing, the school psychologist at my elementary school found that I did not have dyslexia but a visual processing disorder. Having a correct diagnosis would have given my teachers a clearer lesson plan that would have benefitted my learning outcome.

I am pursuing a degree in teaching, so I have chosen my participants to be people with educational backgrounds. They also have knowledge of special education and learning

disabilities. I am not as well-rounded in disabilities as the participants, but I have a limited understanding of the subject. Being someone with a disability and being misdiagnosed gives me an understanding of how this may impact a student's behavior and academic performance. I learned more about the process that teachers, staff, and school administrators have to help teachers and parents create a learning environment that will help their students academically and emotionally.

Jocelyn

I am interested in teaching special education in elementary school. By researching this topic, I will better understand my students, even in other types of classrooms besides special education. I will also be able to assist students with learning disabilities better. I am similar to our participants because I want to teach in an elementary school. A few of our participants are special education teachers, while others are general education teachers. I am different from the participants because I do not know how to aid students with learning disabilities. I need to be open-minded when listening to my group members and the participants, and I should also keep in mind that I should ask my group members for help.

Katie

When I was five years old, my parents and I went to a psychiatrist at Dawn Elementary School to find out what my learning disability results were before getting ready for Henry Elementary School. The school psychologist thought I had Autism and had me tested, but I did not have Autism. The school psychologist wanted to send me to Children's Hospital to get more testing. The psychiatrist at Children's Hospital wanted to know if I could interact with the doctors to measure my social interactions, which I was able to do. I found out later that I had speech and language impairment.

The participants are people who have an educational background. I see most teachers who teach special education and they do not appear to have a learning disability. It can be hard to tell if the teacher has a learning disability, so we do not know if the participants have a learning disability. There are other people who have a learning disability like me. We all go through different experiences. I have a background in special education but do not have a background in teaching like the participants.

I feel like we need to get in communication with my group for this project. I think my group should do roles on what we need to do. We should all work as a team. This can help everyone go forward with the project. When I work with students with learning disabilities you have to show care and patience with people. We should make sure we watch out for the timing schedule when we set up a meeting on Zoom.

Maddy

This topic is meaningful to me because, in first grade, I was diagnosed with a learning disability called auditory processing disorder, which causes the brain to process slower than the average person. This has had not only a significant impact on my learning but also my daily life. My goal as a teacher is to show students what they can do despite their disabilities. As for this subject, I feel over the years, I have gained more knowledge not only about my disability but other disabilities as well. This is an excellent tool for our project to understand the difference between misdiagnosing and diagnosing disabilities. Because this topic connects well with my life, the participants I chose understand and have experience in knowing about learning disabilities. These people include connections from schools I have been to and teachers I have developed relationships with. As for differences, I can not say I know all the knowledge about every disability and what other participants have gone through in their own experiences with a

learning disability. Still, I will try my best to understand. As for my thoughts, feelings, or assumptions, I need to be mindful of others as I continue with this project by being flexible and coordinating with others' lives outside of class. I will also understand and listen to other thoughts and opinions about the project.

Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions

For this project, three different groups served as participants and unique interview questions were developed for each group. The questions are shared below.

Teacher Interview. The following questions were asked to the teacher and teacher in training participants.

1. What is your background in teaching and working with students with special needs?
2. What are your or your school's protocols to diagnose students with learning disabilities?
3. What are you most concerned about when it comes to identifying and diagnosing children with learning disabilities?
4. What is currently being done to improve the identification and diagnosis of students with learning disabilities - by whom - and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts?
5. What do you think should be done to improve the identification and diagnosis of students with learning disabilities?
6. Is there anything else that you would like to say about the identification and diagnosis of students with learning disabilities?

Student Survey. The following questions were asked to student participants.

1. What was your schooling experience like regarding having a learning disability?

2. How were you diagnosed? Did the school have any part in diagnosing you?
3. Based on your experience, what are you most concerned about when it comes to identifying and diagnosing children with learning disabilities?
4. When you were in K-12, was there anything being done to improve the identification and diagnosis of students with learning disabilities - by whom - and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts?
5. What do you think should be done to improve the identification and diagnosis of students with learning disabilities?
6. Is there anything else that you would like to say about the identification and diagnosis of students with learning disabilities?

Procedure

Participants have been interviewed. All interviews were conducted individually. When it was not possible to interview participants in person, they were invited to complete a phone interview or a paper and pencil survey of the same questions. Face-to-Face interviews took less than one hour, audio-recorded (with participant consent), and taken at the participant's school. A semi-structured interview format was used for face-to-face interviews to allow follow-up questions to unclear, interesting, or unexpected responses. All interviews and surveys were scheduled at the convenience of the interviewee and took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews were coded and analyzed for emergent themes.

Results

For this Capstone Project, teachers and school staff were interviewed to see what they think could improve the methods for identifying and diagnosing children with learning

disabilities. This is important because diagnosing a child properly will help teachers understand the students' learning styles and create the proper learning environment for the children's needs. The hope is that teachers will be better able to support and accommodate their students academically. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, three themes emerged (see Table 1). Evidence-based decision-making required evaluating each potential option by the following criteria: time, cost, and effectiveness. Time is an essential aspect because the following actions must fit with the schedules of those that are affected and doing the action. Cost can be a determining factor for a school because the cost of implementation must be within the school’s annual budget. Effectiveness plays a crucial role, as it considers how successful the outcome could be. Based on the evaluation of each option, an action will be recommended and justified.

Table 1

Evaluation of Action Options

Options↓	Criteria→ Time	Cost	Effectiveness
Monthly Check Ups	Medium	Low	Medium
Annual Teacher Training	Medium	Medium	High
Student Improvement Plan	High	Low	Medium

Monthly Check Ups

Monthly check ups are vital because they give school staff a detailed monthly report on all students’ who are displaying an academic achievement gap. Based on the data provided from

the participant interviews, monthly meetings on the student's progress will give a consistent record of the student's academic and behavioral growth.

This option would not require extra allotted time to be given to school staff or teachers. Many schools already have teachers conducting meetings to check their classrooms' overall academic progress, so adding a monthly check up on students will not need a different time frame. One of the participants had mentioned, "most schools have monthly cycles of inquiry in which students are discussed on a monthly basis based on summative and formative assessments" (Y. Rather, personal communication, November 5, 2021). Based on students' results on these assessments, teachers will decide how to help students that may show a learning gap.

A monthly check up would not have a cost, nor would it need a specific budget. Checking on academic and behavioral report cards from previous years and semesters that previous teachers conducted can be one form of doing the check up. The monthly report will be conducted by the student's current teacher, and the content within the report will be observational and statistical data from tests, work, and behavior. Analyzing the students' behavior in the classroom and going over their in-class assignments and homework will give substantial evidence of their academic progress.

The effectiveness of monthly checkups is moderate. When a teacher analyzes the data and finds a learning gap within the student, the teacher will then make accommodations for the student. Although they do provide a consistent paper trail of a student's progress, it may be difficult for teachers and administrators to identify traits of specific learning disabilities if they do not know how to spot these traits. One of the teachers that have been interviewed mentioned, "We normally need to meet three times in a year before we can even get the student to be

considered for testing instead” (B. Jonn, personal communication, October, 28, 2021). Having the monthly meetings can help expedite the process, since there is evidence of an academic achievement gap.

Annual Teacher Training

Teachers will have an annual mandatory teacher training that focuses on learning disabilities. As the behavior intervention assistant interviewee Cross stated, “As there is a rise in more students having learning disabilities throughout the years, teachers as well should be given training that helps them understand different learning disabilities” (D. Cross, personal communication, October 18, 2021). The training will go over ways to create a better learning environment and identify traits commonly found in specific disabilities. Based on the data provided through the interviews, providing learning disability training helps teachers recognize the signs when students may need help (K. Fason, personal communication, October 27, 2021).

This option would not affect a school's amount of available time because the training would be given during a teacher in-service day, in which students do not attend school, but teachers go to work. The only cost for the training would be bringing in a specialist that knows about learning disabilities, if schools decide to pay for the specialist. Some schools might get volunteer specialists instead of having to pay them. This option would be effective in schools because teachers would know what signs to look for instead of not knowing how to help their students. One of the interviewees stated that, “I feel that if a teacher does not have the training that they need, they can't provide quality instruction” (K. Fason, personal communication, October 27, 2021). Which means that training is a must for teachers to be prepared in order to provide good services for their students. Even though the teachers would not diagnose the students themselves, interviewee Nike asserted that, “Teachers should gain more knowledge

about the topic of learning disabilities”(M. Nike, personal communication, November 12, 2021).

By gaining more knowledge about the topic, they would go to the school's psychologist or an appropriate administrator with their concerns. Furthermore, Fason agreed that we need quality trained teachers to better support students with learning disabilities, “We need to have more quality trained or trained teachers” (K. Fason, personal communication, October 27, 2021).

Student Improvement Plans

The third strategy to help students is with a Student Improvement Plan. The Student Improvement Plan is made specific to students' individual needs. Students Improvement Plans are created by a student support team. A student support team is a team of school staff that is assigned to a specific student in order to help support the student’s educational needs. The team of staff can include the student’s teacher, the school psychologist, a counselor, the student’s parent/guardian, and any person that has resources to benefit the student. Often, teachers meet with parents and work together on the student’s plan. If the student plan does not seem to give positive results, then the teacher collaborates and cooperates with the student support teams and special education teachers to make required changes. When their needs are adequately met, students with learning disabilities can reach their full potential (Sansom, 2015).

The amount of time for this option is considered high. There are multiple people involved, meaning time will be taken from multiple staff members. Also, the team will meet multiple times to discuss the student plans. So this will take more time from the staff. The cost for this option is considered low. There is no specific budget for student plans and the student support team. Staff members are voluntarily participating in the team, so there will not be a need to pay them more than their salary.

The effectiveness of student improvement plans is medium. Student support teams meet to discuss ways that they can help the student. As mentioned in an interview, “we do a Student Improvement Plan and meet with parents and set goals for six weeks. If needed, we make a second six week improvement plan and goals” (K. Paterson, personal communication, October 15, 2021). The plan is made for a fixed period of time to assess its effectiveness in helping the student academically so the achievement gap reduces. In kindergarten teacher Paterson's words, “if they do not meet their goals on both of those, we bring it up to the student support team with administrators and our special education teachers” (K. Paterson, personal communication, October 15, 2021). The student support team tries its best to help the student do better in school, but there is no guarantee that the student will be diagnosed with a learning disability. As interviewee Mason stated, “When students have been identified, it is the school psychologist that knows the diagnosis” (P. Mason, personal communication, October 18, 2021). This would mean only one person has the knowledge and authority to diagnose the student. As interviewee Rather mentions, “Most SSTs do not lead to an evaluation, but the team of educators, instructional staff, parents, and psychologists work together to support students’ needs” (Y. Rather, personal communication, November 5, 2021). So, even if a student is not evaluated, the team still finds ways to aid the student. Being able to meet their needs and provide any other support to help them will increase their learning (Samson, 2015).

Conclusion

Based on the evaluation of the action options, the recommendation would be to implement monthly check ups and annual teacher training. Schools would either ask a specialist to volunteer to give the training on learning disabilities or hire a specialist if it is within their budget. The training would be given during a teacher in-service day. Using the information

teachers learn from the training, they would do monthly check ups on their students' academic progress and behavior to see if any students show signs of a learning disability. This would allow teachers to bring any concerns they may have to an administrator or the school psychologist. The administrator or psychologist would take the information given to them and take appropriate steps to get support for the student.

Concessions. The first and second options being recommended as the best options to use does not mean that the third option would not be effective. It is best to see how well the child is doing in school. Based on research, the Student Improvement Plan is not being primarily recommended because there is no direct help from specialists, teachers, or school psychologists. Similarly, through the Student Improvement Plan, students usually do not get any further assistance for evaluations. However, it is important that the purpose of the Student Improvement Plan is to increase the chance of learning. A way of offering support to students would be to encourage teamwork and collaboration.

Limitations. While this recommendation is the best option from the action options provided, it does have limitations. Schools may not be able to get a specialist to volunteer if they can not afford to hire one. This would cause the training to be less effective since teachers would be getting incomplete or possibly incorrect information. If there is no designated administrator for teachers to bring their concerns to, then there will not be a way for students to get support. Not all teachers would feel comfortable bringing up their concerns to a parent or the student directly.

Potential negative outcomes. If this action is implemented, there could be negative outcomes. Students that are diagnosed with a learning disability might not accept their status. This could lead to negative emotions such as frustration, agitation, and sadness. It could also lead

to students developing generalized anxiety and clinical depression. Also, even if a student is diagnosed with a learning disability, that does not mean the school has the necessary resources to support the student and give them accommodations. Teachers may not be able to meet students' needs, and their teaching styles may not match the students' learning styles.

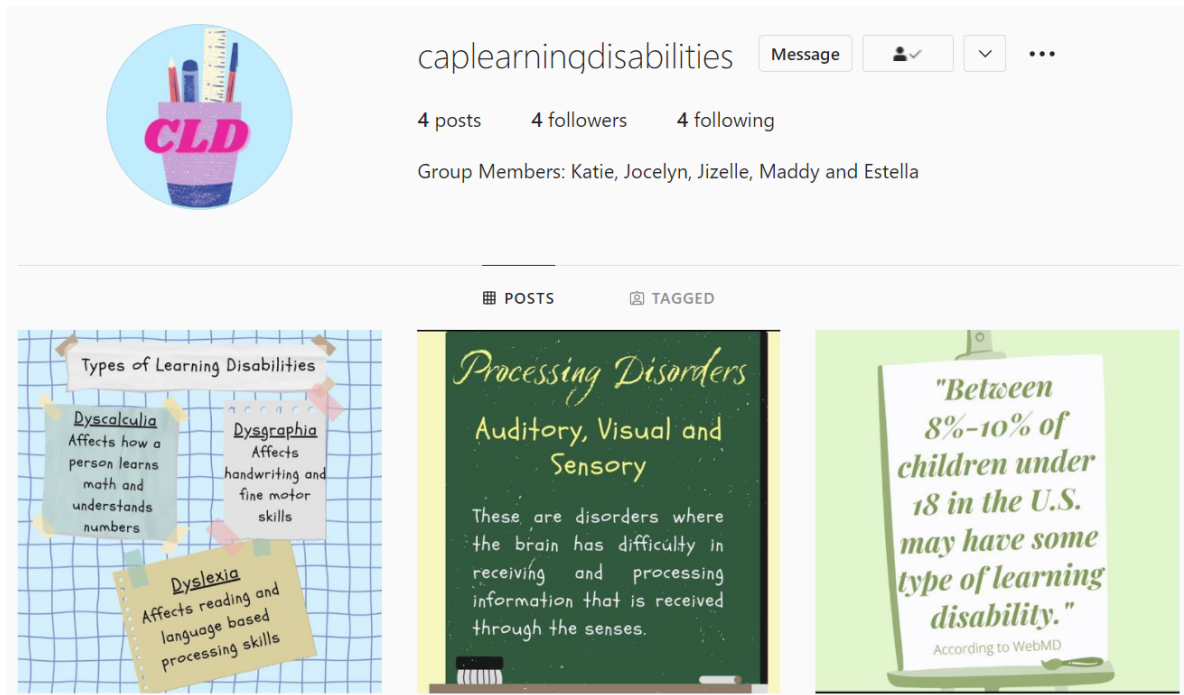
Conclusion.

Despite the concessions, limitations, and potential adverse outcomes, the best action option to recommend is implementing monthly check ups and annual teacher training to help reduce the difficulties of diagnosing students with learning disabilities. The combination of these two action options has the most potential reach. Both monthly check ups and teacher training do not need outside scheduled time, making it easy for staff and teachers to implement it in their busy schedules. They also do not have a high cost making it easy to fit with a school's annual budget. Monthly checkups and annual teacher training work hand in hand. Monthly check ups become more effective when teachers get the proper training to understand and spot learning disabilities characteristics. For these reasons, having annual training and monthly check ups are highly beneficial to easing the stress in diagnosing students with learning disabilities.

Action Documentation and Critical Reflection

The focus issue for this project is improving the methods for identifying and diagnosing children with learning disabilities. For our data, we interviewed a mix of teachers, school staff, and students. Three action options that emerged were monthly check ups, annual teacher training, and student improvement plans. We were unable to implement our action options, so we chose to create an Instagram account that promotes information about students with learning disabilities. This option was picked because it reaches a larger audience, including our intended audience, parents, teachers, and administrators. The platform is easy to use, and is installed on

most people's smart devices. It is also accessible through a search engine or browser, making it accessible to all.



<https://www.instagram.com/caplearningdisabilities/>

Action Research Project Documentation and Reflection

For this project, we researched our audience on Instagram to take action in promoting how teachers can be aware of their students' learning styles when they are dealing with a child with a learning disability in the classroom environment. On the Instagram account, we created posts with flyers and different photos to promote to the audience how to advocate for the students and give them the right tools to be successful. From doing this method of action, we found that our project did encourage teachers to take action in the classroom when handling students with learning disabilities. It was also surprising to see how engaged people were with the Instagram account. We made some changes and improvements when conducting this by directing our social media posts more towards educators than a regular Instagram audience.

Because our topic is aimed to change the classroom setting, our audience would take action towards educators who need to be aware of this.

We wish we knew from the start how important it is to research a topic before diving into it. It is essential to get feedback from a professional who has handled students with learning disabilities along with resources we can use. We learned that working towards change can have an enormous impact on someone's academic career. Even though this is a small step, it is a significant step in empowering students to be advocated for and supported.

Critical Reflection

Estella

Taking the LS400 course was an eye-opener for me, because I learned a lot more than I expected to get from the course. Although it has been difficult for me personally during this semester, I was able to move forward with the project. Well, from this project, what I have learned about myself is that I am able to do these things even in the difficulties I was going through. I found really interesting facts and studies when I was doing my research on learning disabilities. Without imagining that this would help me to be more aware of the needs that students may need and help them appropriately in the future when I work as a teacher. I one thing I noticed is that working towards change can be challenging, but with the right support, information and collaboration with the right people, change can happen, although it won't happen overnight. In addition, I was fortunate to have amazing group members to work with and collaborate on for this capstone project.

Jizelle

In the LS 400 - Senior Capstone course I have learned more about myself, the world of education, and working towards change. Putting a whole semester into working towards an

educational issue that is important to me, has put perspective on how much work it truly takes to make a change in any social justice issue. I have worked for one semester and have only scratched the surface on how to improve the difficulties in diagnosing children for learning disabilities. People are also working towards improvement, making me not feel alone when it comes to doing the research. There will always be an audience for making change for the greater good. I learned that there is more to education than teaching. Teachers are always trying their best to teach children how to be their best selves, but there is more to that. They are also teaching them how to move forward in a path of strength and knowledge. Yet, there are obstacles in both the learning and teaching. Most schools do not have that many resources and if they do they have to share them within the district. That is why helping educational programs and schools is the best way to ease or lower the amount of obstacles that they have to endure. Not only did I learn about an educational issue, but I learned more about myself. I learned about the way I would want to manage my future classroom in order to help accommodate every students' educational needs. I also have learned that I want to continue advocating for students with learning disabilities. There is still more to be done, so bringing light to it will help expedite the process closing the educational disabilities gap.

Jocelyn

Throughout participating in the Liberal Studies 400 course and completing the capstone project, I learned some things about myself, teaching and learning, and working towards change. In the past, I have struggled with my time management and spacing things out, so I have enough time to work on them. Doing the paper sections at different times in the semester helped me learn how to break complex tasks into parts and steps, which has helped me ease my stress levels. Also, it helped me learn how to manage my time better so that I do not overwhelm myself. In my

past Liberal Studies courses, I realized that teachers should depend on their coworkers and that they should work in groups. I think working on this project in a group gave me a glimpse into what working with my future coworkers will be like. I learned to listen to other suggestions and how to work with them, which increased my knowledge about the topic. When my group members voiced their opinions, I listened to them and did not judge. When I start working in a school, I will use the knowledge I gained from my group work to participate in group discussions with my fellow teachers. Through doing the research for our topic, I learned different ways to collect information and how to interpret the information. I can use what I learned to look into other challenges that I, my students, or anyone I know face so I can determine ways to help them.

Katie

For my last semester at Cal State Monterey Bay (CSUMB), I thought school was going to be challenging for me. I did not know how I was going to get help, especially taking online classes. I have a different learning style in school. What I discovered is that I have a great personality that classmates enjoyed in exploring teaching methods. I want to show care with everyone in class. This class was able to help me to understand more. I thought I could do the LS 400 Capstone class in person, but sadly it was canceled due to low enrollment this semester. For LS 400 Capstone class, I had to think of the ideas on what topic I wanted to talk about. For this course, I asked for help by using the services on campus such as the Cooperative Learning Center (CLC). My topic is about Improving the Students with Learning Disabilities. I thought that improving the diagnosis of students with learning disabilities would be great for me to talk about since I have seen teachers misdiagnose students with learning disabilities. Overall, I enjoyed working with the LS 400 Capstone as a group. I was worried that I had to do the project

alone. Luckily it was great to collaborate with my group. I was so thankful that my community partners talked about their experiences during the past years.

Through this course, I also learned that getting teachers trained to recognize learning disabilities can be extremely helpful. There are students that have different learning abilities, and students can learn to do well in school, when they receive accurate and timely diagnosis from the concerned departments. School psychologists or doctors could also help students with learning disabilities. Also, when students receive extra help from trained teachers, they are also more likely to succeed in school. In order to work towards change, one needs to have self confidence and express how they feel. We should also make sure that the students' learning disabilities get diagnosed correctly so that they do not fall behind in school. This could include steps like going to the doctor for an early intervention and analyzing symptoms for learning disabilities. Similarly, through Response to Intervention, schools and parents can recognize early signs of learning and behavior problems. If schools, teachers, parents and school psychologists can help diagnose students with learning disabilities, the student is eligible for Special Education. Therefore, to receive equal access to education, students with learning disabilities should be accurately diagnosed.

Maddy

For this project, I learned about how important it is to understand students with disabilities and truly as for my disability I was both unsure but confident in my last semester. Overall, from learning from taking courses at CSUMB it has taught me to be more confident in not only my disability but be successful in my learning styles. From learning over the course of the past three years of earning this degree, it helped me understand how I can prioritize my students with learning disabilities and learning styles. From taking this course LS 400 Capstone,

it helped me learn even more about this topic and how we change this in our school environments. As for my learning style this semester, it helped me as a writer understand more in depth how to research and summarize information more effectively. To dive deeper into the topic me and my group choose, we choose to take action with helping and supporting students with learning disabilities. I felt from learning about this topic, I also improved my knowledge of how I as an educator can acknowledge a learning disability at a young age so he or she can be supported. In this course the instructor gave me many different methods to identify and analyze learning disabilities as a whole. With this knowledge I can help in my future job accommodate students with learning disabilities so they can succeed in school. My goal is to make sure that students with disabilities feel both accepted and comfortable in the classroom environment. We should also as a general rule make sure that they are given equal opportunities as students without disabilities.

Estela

When I started CSUMB I never thought I would go this far with my education. As I am the first generation to get a higher education, it is very difficult for me to navigate and find the right resources to successfully achieve my goals. Even struggling financially and personally, I was able to overcome my problems and stay focused with all my courses. However, the Liberal Studies helped me as a student and prepared me with the right skills as a teacher. MLO 1: This research project helped me gain more knowledge about the topic that I was not aware of. I just knew that I was going to be a teacher without really knowing that students can face difficulty with learning. I have developed skills thinking outside the box and communication. MLO 2: Since I am a Triqui (indigeous) doing this project helps understand how big our diversity can be in our school and community. Although CSUMB is not very diverse, they have done a great job

by providing multicultural courses and being open to the different backgrounds of their students.

MLO 3: Today it;s very important to know and be an expert in technology since we are in an era where everything is technology now. Since the Covid-19 hit, school and work places have changed, with changes we are able to learn more and capable of using technology in our favor.

MLO 4: Most of the courses I have taken in the liberal studies program have been planned well.

It helped build knowledge on subjects that were essential. Practicing how to work and be ethical and how to advocate for students when it is needed. MLO 5: Liberal studies programs have

provided a great program for students where our knowledge and skills are tested in order to become the person we want to be. Working as a teacher is not an easy job, but all the courses I have taken have prepared me well professionally. I believe the next steps I need to take in order to become the professional that I envision being is to get more educated professionally and personally because in order to become that person you want to be, you have to work hard, believe and never give up on yourself. Also being open to the opportunity around me.

Jizelle

The Liberal Studies Main Learning Outcomes helped me as a student. It has provided me with the skills I would need to become a teacher. MLO 1: When entering California State University Monterey Bay my speaking and writing skills were under college level. I had taken an English Literature summer course, but I still was not at the correct level that I should have been entering university. CSUMB had placed me into a communication course for the first two semesters of my freshman year. After taking the course I had developed professional writing and communication skills. I now feel confident with any verbal communication that will be taken in a professional setting. MLO 2: Although CSUMB is not diverse in their student population they have made courses surrounding different multicultural backgrounds. I have taken multiple

courses talking about educational and social issues that involve the Latino community. Taking these social issues into account will be a great way to help my future students. Knowing the history of different cultures creates a safe environment for my students as they will appreciate each other's backgrounds. MLO 3: Knowing how to use technology in the classroom is vital in today's technological age. Csumb has provided me with different technological applications that can be used in a classroom setting, or a professional workplace. Having classes online and completing service learning hours in a virtual setting have also made a difference in how I would manage my classroom in an online environment. MLO 4: CSUMB's LS 300 and LS 400 courses have taught me how to conduct research on social justice issues in education. There are many other courses that also cover social justice issues in other aspects, such as race. These two work hand in hand as they can cover a wide spread of issues that are happening in a professional, and a classroom setting. Being able to uncover the injustices that are happening within my community will help create a wide range of solutions that can benefit my students and their community. MLO 5: CSUMB Liberal Studies program has created a plan of multi subject classes that is well fit for any person entering public education. The wide range of courses offered make it easy for you to comprehend what would be taught in a public school. It tests your knowledge of all subjects in order for you to teach the subject in the most effective and efficient manner possible. The next step I need to take to become the professional I envision in being is learning the needs of others. Everyone learns differently. I need to take all the information that I have learned and find what my future students would need from me to be successful.

Jocelyn

During my time at California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB) as a Liberal Studies (LS) major, I have taken courses that impacted my professional development. Every LS

course I took in the past years taught me something new about being a teacher (MLO 1). I used to despise public speaking, but now I understand how to control my stress and anxiety while talking to people I do not know and groups of people. Through different presentations I gave and different groups that I worked with, I found my own ways of being confident in myself. My organizational skills have increased since I started my LS courses. Any time conflict occurred, I learned different ways to handle it and resolve issues, whether it was between myself and someone else or other people. Motivation, encouragement, and support are the foundations of building up my future students, and I acquired knowledge about how to do these things. Students require helpful feedback, and through truly useful and unfortunately insignificant feedback that I received from professors, I learned what type of feedback students will appreciate. Before I started college, many people told me that I can be very empathetic, but I never understood how. Through my courses at CSUMB, I gained knowledge about what it means to be empathetic and how to be empathetic, so I understand better now.

There have been LS classes that were specifically about social identities and multiculturalism (MLO 2). I learned a lot about what contributed to what myself and others went through in school based on how we identify ourselves. Due to my white privilege (even when I was unaware of what this term means), I received opportunities and resources that my peers and students at other schools may not have received. Also, I learned about ways I can help my students that are experiencing inequity in their schooling. Everyone goes through things outside of school, and we should all respect that even when we are unaware of what might be happening.

There was a LS course that was specifically about technology and how to use it in school. While I do not remember the number for it, I do remember what I learned in that class (MLO 3). On a daily basis, I use my personal laptop to complete assignments, and I did so in high school

as well. Access to technology starting in elementary school can broaden students' learning and teachers' instruction. Using technology incorporates different learning styles, can improve collaboration, allows students to be more creative, and prepares students for the real world.

The courses that I have taken in which I was required to complete a research project taught me about social change and how to achieve it, even through little acts (MLO 4). I learned about different methods to collect data from stakeholders and how to execute those methods. By collecting data, I can define ways that I can support others, not just my students, in schooling. Overall, I believe that by passing my California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST) after my first year of college, receiving a California Subject Matter Exams (CSET) waiver, being accepted into a dual credential program, and graduating from CSUMB as an LS major shows that I am proficient in the subject areas that were covered in the LS courses and will be successful in my future career steps (MLO 5).

The next step that I will take on my route to becoming a teacher is attending California State University, Fresno as a dual credential program student. I will be taking classes for two years that will allow me to apply for my multiple subject teaching and my education specialist mild/moderate credentials. Then, I will take classes for another year to achieve my Master of Arts in Special Education. While I take my classes at Fresno State, I will also gain experience as a multiple subject teacher and a special education teacher. Through working in a school, I will make relationships with the staff and administrators that can help me when it comes time to apply for a job after I graduate.

Katie

During my time at CSUMB, I thought I was not going to do well in my classes. I came to CSUMB as a transfer student. I felt like I did not belong at CSUMB. There were some teachers

who believed that I could not go to college. A teacher thought if I got a certificate from high school it would not help me go to college. MLO 1: Developing Educator: Getting help with the CLC really helped me improve my writing and thinking critically. This helped me to speak with confidence. It is best to show enthusiasm with our students by telling stories. It is important to show confidence because the students may like you and get inspired by you. Students will try to get to know you and start to learn better. I had some teachers that showed me how to be an educator. MLO 2: Diversity and Multicultural Scholar: As for my race, I am Chinese American. I always speak English when I go to school, and only rarely speak Chinese when I am at home. I was feeling the pressure when I had to talk about my race. I felt like I had to talk about my life growing up. I feel very good about myself for this semester because I can tell a story to my students about my background on race. I can support my students about my life and experiences. MLO 3: Innovative Technology Practitioner: Using the technology was quite an adjustment. These resources can help me based on my learning disability. Being online was not going to be easy for me. The technology had to help me with accommodations that I needed to do in online school. Tape recording my lectures really helps, note taking and closed captions were really helpful because this can help me to use my listening ears in school. I have to make sure I stay organized in school. Also, I have to make sure I achieve well in school. As for my Service Learning, I helped the kids get adjusted to technology such as using the computer. There might be students who do not like to write on paper, but they like writing on a computer better. MLO 4: Social Justice Collaborator: During my Liberal Studies 300 and 400 classes, I was to conduct research on my paper. Also I needed to think critically when writing a paper. The paper had to be about my education. It is best to understand and know how to change a situation like bullying, so everyone is aware of it. I created a change to educate all the students with learning disabilities

equitably and treat the students with respect. Each student with a learning disability goes their different ways based on the pace. Disabled students are denied educational opportunities. As a person with Speech and Hearing disorders, by educating my classmates I combat these inequalities. MLO 5: Subject Matter Generalist: I was very successful with my writing during this semester. I thought I was very successful in doing my Setting the Stage as well. I had to tell a story about the time I was diagnosed and misdiagnosed with a learning disability. Thus, when working with students with learning disabilities, it is important that I show care and patience. Each student learns differently in school. Moreover, some students work at their own pace. It is important to be aware of the students' accommodations. You never know what the students' ability is on how they learn in school. As I move forward to becoming an educator, I have to use my confidence when I am writing, speaking and thinking. The greatest thing I learned is to never quit and always do my best in school. Also, I need to make sure I practice critical thinking. This Action Research Project impacted my professional development because it helped me become very responsible in getting to know the students with learning disabilities.

Next step I am going to take is to get my teaching credential. If I learn how to ask for help, I can be very successful in school when pursuing the teaching credential. I do not want to listen to roadblock teachers in school. A roadblock means that someone believes that you cannot succeed in school. Roadblocks can stop me from going to school. The best thing to do is to always keep trying. If I practice the best that I can, I am positive that I will do very well in school. One thing educators can do is make sure students with learning disabilities do not go through negative experiences like I did. I will succeed because I have people who believe in me. For the credential program, I need to make sure I set up a routine. After the credential program, I will also make sure I do my student teaching.

Maddy

From Attending CSUMB the resource that helped me the most in my academic career was the Student Disability Resource Center. From using this center it has helped me advocate to my fellow teachers my rights as a student with a disability and receive the accommodations I needed.

MLO 1: Hence transferring to CSUMB was a huge transition from my community college MPC.

After graduating MPC my writing and english skills were still a major struggle of mine. Because of my processing learning disability it caused my thought process of understanding the concept of writing to be more as a struggle than enjoyable. When I finally decided to apply for the

Disability Resource it changed my perspective and accommodated me to get the help I needed from the instructor to help me improve my writing skills and support me through my educational journey. This changed my learning pathway tremendously and taught me to feel assured that my

learning style is although different but I can succeed. **MLO 2:** In the character of my ethnicity, I am of Caucasian descent. Because of my American race, I always spoke English in both my

home and classroom environments. From being of Caucasian descent, I felt growing up I was continually educated about diversity and often accepted learning about other cultures and ethnicities besides my own. This semester, I think I have expanded my horizons and educated and respected other cultures with different diversity. I feel it is vital to encourage others to be

accepting of each other. **MLO 3:** For students, having the right technology tools is essential when accommodating students with learning disabilities. Having these resources and changing

their classes to be online has helped me adapt my learning disability and adjust to different styles of learning methods from the CSUMB accommodation center. Structures that can be used to

engage students from a different perspective—being on a technology-based platform for all my classes taught me how to incorporate accommodations and support for my students while

learning through online technology. Overall being online has changed my learning perspective on my dependency on organizing my assignment and preparing to keep me on a successful pathway. **MLO 4:** In general, both Seminar and Capstone have taught me different issues that have changed my perspective on educating myself about modern-day topics in the education system. The first being is opening up my horizons to other aspects of diversity. This can include the equitability of education.

Numerous teachers have not been educated enough about learning disabilities as a society. Being able to take this class and connect with an issue that is happening daily really motivated me as a future educator that this issue my group and I picked needs to be discussed and taken action too. Having a learning disability and learning to find the proper accommodations for many years showed me why I want to be an educator. As a future educator, having students with learning disabilities will help me better understand how to accommodate them. **MLO 5:** I feel I have gained more knowledge and understanding of my understanding of the topic of identifying a student with a learning disability. There are numerous ways an educator can provide accommodation for a student to receive the support they need in the classroom. The first method to accommodate students with learning disabilities is by being trained to know the background information of each student's learning style. Each student understands, and the learning style is different and has vast resources that work for each student. Another method is giving assignments that break down the information more complex than the regular assignment. As an educator, my vision is to teach students to feel self-assured in their learning styles. I also strive to see as an educator how I can support my students from learning about this topic to help them succeed.

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