

What is a Nonverbal Learning Disorder (NVLD)?

A **nonverbal learning disorder (NVLD or NLD)** is a neurological condition believed to affect the right hemisphere of the brain. This disorder can significantly impact four major areas of functioning: visual/spatial/organizational, social, motor, and academic.

Children with NVLD present a puzzling and challenging profile to their parents and teachers. They have definite strengths but also significant weaknesses. This profile often leads parents and teachers to overestimate the child's ability and set unrealistic demands. This can lead to frustration and other emotional problems in the child.

NVLD is frequently misdiagnosed or not diagnosed until late elementary or middle school years. It persists into adulthood and is often accompanied by anxiety, depression, social isolation, and relationship and employment difficulties. It can be present along with other disabilities or conditions.

It is a clinical diagnosis and currently there are no standard criteria to define it from the medical or educational fields. It is not a category in special education, but children may receive special services if they meet state criteria for Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), Other Health Impaired (OHI), Emotional Behavior Disorders (EBD), or Autism.

What are some common characteristics of NVLD?

- Performance IQ significantly lower than Verbal IQ
- Early speech and vocabulary development
- Remarkable rote memory skills
- Attention to detail
- Early reading skills development
- Excellent spelling skills
- Strong verbal expression
- Lack of coordination and balance problems
- Difficulties with fine motor skills
- Poor visual recall
- Difficulties with spatial relations
- Poor comprehension of nonverbal communication
- Difficulties adjusting to changes and new situations
- Significant difficulties in social judgment and interaction

Early identification and intervention is the key.

What are some appropriate interventions?

Preschool Years

- Encourage peer interaction or parallel play
- Prepare for changes
- Occasionally pair with an adult for cooperative activities
- Limit the amount of coloring or cutting
- Highlight verbal strengths

Elementary Years

- Provide assignment notebook and assist with completion
- Give explicit and verbal instructions
- Prepare for changes in routine or schedule
- Allow extra time to get places and complete work
- Provide opportunities for structured group work

Middle School Years

- Provide assignment notebook and continue to assist with completion
- Provide color-coded folders and notebooks for each subject
- Allow extra time to get places and complete work
- Provide social skills training and non-threatening peer interaction
- Teach memory and comprehension strategies

High School Years

- Prepare for quarter or semester changes
- Provide assignment notebook
- Modify the length of writing assignments
- Promote relationships through social skills groups
- Be sensitive to the tendency of “overload”

Where can I find further information on NVLD?

LDA of Minnesota’s tutoring and individualized consultations at 952-922-8374

Minnesota Department of Education/Special Education (2002) *Introduction to Nonverbal Learning Disorders*. http://cfl.state.mn.us/SPECED/sld/NVLD_info-final.pdf

www.drdeanmooney.com

Thompson, S. (1997) *The GRAM: Nonverbal Learning Disorders*. Learning Disabilities Association of California. <http://www.ldaca.org/gram/thompson.htm>

Thompson, S. (1997) *The Source for Nonverbal Learning Disorders*. Linguistics, Inc. East Moline, IL. ISBN 0-7606-0163-1

LDA of Minnesota

For more than 36 years, **Learning Disabilities Association of Minnesota** has been serving the needs of people of all ages at risk for learning disabilities or related learning difficulties by maximizing their potential so that they may lead more productive and fulfilled lives. Services include educational assessments, one-to-one and small group tutoring, consultations, family literacy activities, school-to-work transition programming, professional training, public education, and high-quality educational products.

LDA of Minnesota is the state affiliate of LDA of America, a non-profit organization of volunteers dedicated to identifying causes, promoting prevention of learning disabilities, and enhancing the quality of life for all individuals with learning disabilities and their families by encouraging effective identification and intervention, fostering research, and protecting their rights under law.