

UNDERSTANDING NEURODIVERSITY

Stephen Gaynor School Glossary of Terms



DEFINITION: LEARNING DIFFERENCE

Learning disability/difference is an umbrella term for neurologically-based challenges in the brain's ability to receive, process, or respond to information. They can impact academic skill acquisition in reading, writing, and/or math. Learning differences may take many forms, including dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and executive functioning issues. Research shows that brain structure and function are different in people who have learning differences, and learning differences are not related to intelligence. Evidence-based strategies, supports, and teaching approaches can help people with learning differences find the path to academic success.

1 IN 5 CHILDREN IN THE U.S. HAVE LEARNING AND ATTENTION ISSUES

Dyslexia: a learning difference that affects reading and language-processing skills

Dysgraphia: a learning difference that affects handwriting and fine motor skills

Dyscalculia: a learning difference that affects the ability to understand numbers and learn math facts

ADHD: a common condition that's caused by differences in the brain and impacts attention, physical and emotional regulation, social skills, and learning

Executive Functioning Issues: trouble with a group of key skills that are used to plan, organize, schedule, and complete tasks

OUR MISSION

At Stephen Gaynor School, students with learning differences develop essential academic and critical thinking skills through **individualized** and **evidence-based** approaches, empowering them to reach their full potential. Students learn to **advocate** for themselves and others while actively building an inclusive community, a sense of belonging, and a belief in their own possibilities.

OUR STUDENTS

Gaynor is a school for students with a strong cognitive profile but often have difficulty with the acquisition of reading and writing skills due to dyslexia or other **language-based learning differences**. Our students may also have overlapping attentional or executive functioning challenges (such as ADHD).

OUR APPROACH

Gaynor realizes that every child is unique, and each child learns in a different way. We develop an individualized, **intellectually rich curriculum** with multi-sensory techniques that fits the learning style of each child. Students at Gaynor learn within a **traditional school atmosphere** and classroom setting.

ONE OF GAYNOR'S CORE TENETS IS AN **INDIVIDUALIZED CURRICULUM** FOR EACH STUDENT

DEFINITION: DIAGNOSTIC-PRESCRIPTIVE INSTRUCTION

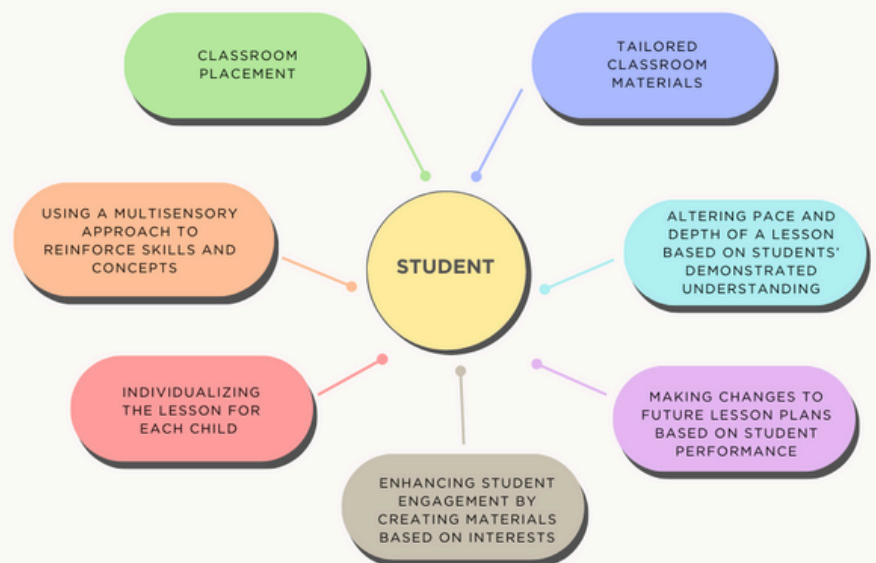
A diagnostic-prescriptive approach is a method to curriculum design that entails analysis on two levels. The first, the diagnostic, involves the development of a comprehensive understanding of each student's strengths and abilities, affinities, areas of struggle, and vulnerabilities. The second part, the prescriptive, uses the profile developed in the diagnostic phase to create a plan for remediating areas of struggle and ensuring that students are appropriately challenged. The approach allows for adjustments and revisions by the teacher in the moment in order for students to retain what was taught and demonstrate an understanding of skills and content.



**THE APPROACH
ALLOWS FOR AN
INDIVIDUALIZED
CURRICULUM FOR
EACH STUDENT**

EXAMPLES OF DIAGNOSTIC-PRESCRIPTIVE INSTRUCTION

Informed and flexible teachers creating dynamic instruction to meet each student's needs



WHAT IT MEANS AT GAYNOR

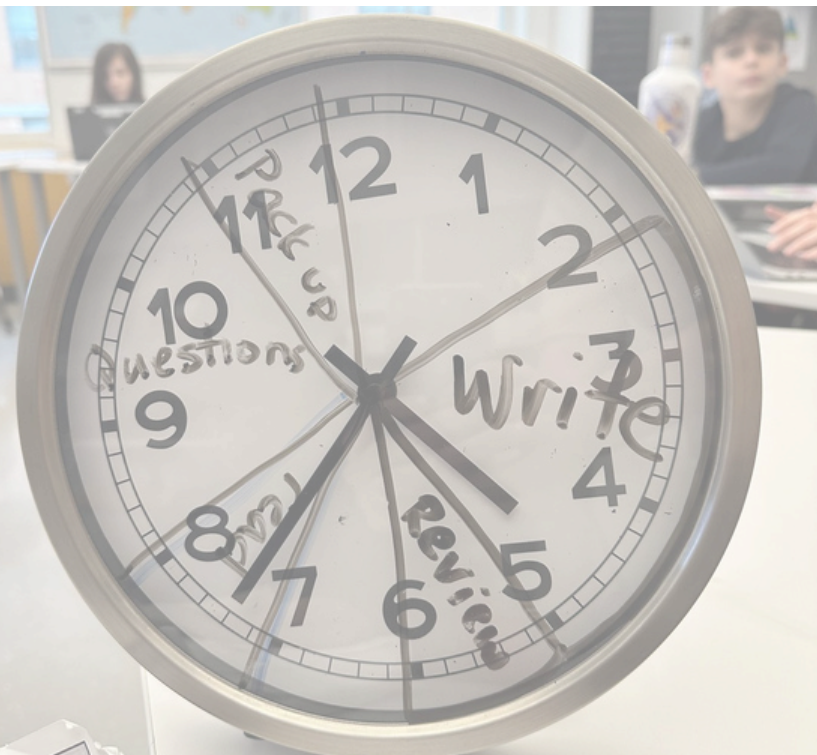
Using a diagnostic-prescriptive approach enables the educators at Gaynor to remain focused on each child's individual learning style and provide them with curriculum tailored to unlock their true potential. Most important at Gaynor is frequent observation of students in their daily school lives and analysis of regular student work by all members of the educational team—teachers, therapists, specialists, and administrators.



DEFINITION: EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

Executive functions are a set of processes that have to do with managing oneself and one's resources in order to achieve a goal. The processes include sustained attention, working memory, inhibition, shifting from one task to another, initiating tasks, self monitoring, abstract reasoning, categorization, planning, and organization. Children with executive function issues have difficulty with one or more of these processes.

**90% OF CHILDREN
WITH ADHD
STRUGGLE WITH
EXECUTIVE
FUNCTIONING
SKILLS**



WHAT IT MEANS AT GAYNOR

Executive function training is embedded throughout the Gaynor curriculum. Students receive scaffolded support to manage their daily responsibilities as they develop these skills independently. Additionally, this skills training is seamlessly integrated into the classes across subject matter from reading class to physical education class, from the Early Childhood program to the Middle School. Gaynor's oldest students also have a chance to participate in an executive functioning after school class.

DEFINITION: SCAFFOLDING

Scaffolding is a method of teaching that breaks learning into chunks. The term scaffolding refers to a process in which teachers model or demonstrate how to solve a problem, and then step back, offering multisensory supports as needed.

8 KEY EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS THAT CAN AFFECT A CHILD'S DAY-TO-DAY LIFE:

1. **Impulse Control**
2. **Emotional Control**
3. **Flexible Thinking**
4. **Working Memory**
5. **Self-Monitoring**
6. **Planning and Prioritizing**
7. **Task Initiation**
8. **Organization**

DEFINITION: MULTISENSORY APPROACH

A multisensory approach is the use of visual, tactile, auditory, and kinesthetic senses. It helps students better understand and retain the skills or concepts they are learning.



DEFINITION: ORTON-GILLINGHAM

Orton-Gillingham is an evidence-based, structured literacy approach and involves breaking reading and spelling down into smaller skills involving letters and sounds, and then building on these skills over time. The approach explicitly teaches the connections between letters and sounds, and is particularly effective in teaching those with dyslexia.

Both the Orton-Gillingham approach and Gaynor's reading instruction are rooted in the Science of Reading research.



WHAT IT MEANS AT GAYNOR

Gaynor uses an individualized and multisensory approach throughout all subject areas, and Orton-Gillingham is a natural fit, since it uses sight, hearing, touch, and movement to help students become confident, fluent readers. At Gaynor, Orton-Gillingham is integrated throughout the curriculum. Over the last 10 years we have used Edwards Orton-Gillingham, founded by Ann Edwards, a Fellow with the OG Academy to provide training and certification for our teachers in reading. One of the ways in which Gaynor ensures this school-wide approach is through intensive teacher training and mentoring during the school's two-week Summer Institute for teachers that precedes each academic year. In addition, the school also offers a two-day intensive OG training for current parents. Gaynor is an Organizational Member of the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators and a member of the Academy's Council of Accredited Programs — the only school in the New York metropolitan area to be so certified. We are also proud that two of our faculty members are Fellows in Training, a designation that requires hundreds of hours to attain.

DEFINITION: SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social-emotional learning (SEL) instruction helps kids learn how to cope with feelings, set goals, make decisions, and get along with others.

DEFINITION: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) are the values held by a community in the effort to create an environment of belonging for each of its members.

WHAT IT MEANS AT GAYNOR

For Social and Emotional Learning, Gaynor uses the RULER approach. Developed at Yale, the program integrates into all content areas. The Mood Meter is a commonly used tool at Gaynor, which helps both students and educators become more mindful of how their emotions change throughout the day, how their emotions in turn affect their actions, and how to modify a feeling for the appropriate setting.

Stephen Gaynor School is dedicated to promoting and advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion within our school community. DEI is the lens through which we evaluate all aspects of the school. We celebrate many types of diversity including neurodiversity, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, ability, religion, sexual orientation, family composition, language, and gender identity/expression. A foundational element of our mission, Gaynor's commitment to DEI challenges all members of our community to continually reflect and refine our curricula, policies and practices as we work to embody these values everyday. The DEI office, parent DEI committee, and employee DEI committee are some of the pillars in place to support the school's strategic DEI initiatives. With the commitment of the entire school community, Gaynor fosters an inclusive environment that supports and celebrates each individual in our school community, while ensuring that the values of inclusion and diversity are infused in all aspects of the school for students of all ages.

- R**ecognizing emotions in self and others
- U**nderstanding the causes and consequences of emotions
- L**abeling emotions accurately
- E**xpressing emotions appropriately
- R**egulating emotions effectively

DEFINITION: SELF-ADVOCACY

Self-advocacy is the ability to speak up for yourself and the issues that are important to you. For individuals with learning differences, self-advocacy means that you can confidently explain what accommodations you may need.

WHAT IT MEANS AT GAYNOR

At Gaynor, students learn self-advocacy skills through our Advocacy Program. Discussions about learning differences are initiated in the Lower School, primarily through literature and teacher-initiated conversation. The Student Advocacy Program helps students to understand their learning differences, their strengths and developing skills, and to increase their self-awareness. These skills prepare them to effectively self-advocate throughout their lives by helping them reflect and learn about themselves, their strengths and goals, and how to ask for help.

LOW SELF-ESTEEM AND STIGMA HELP EXPLAIN WHY ONLY 1 IN 4 STUDENTS WITH A LEARNING DIFFERENCE TELL THEIR COLLEGE THEY HAVE A DISABILITY

DEFINITION: EARLY INTERVENTION

Nationally, Early Intervention (EI) is a system of services that helps children birth to age three who are at risk for developmental delay. EI support services can include special educators, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, and counselors, and target areas of deficit, in order to remediate or support proper development of skills. Research has found that children who participate in EI services demonstrate improvement developmentally across multiple areas, including cognition, language, communication, social-emotional skills, and motor skills.



**HIGH-QUALITY EARLY
INTERVENTION SERVICES
HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO
CHANGE A CHILD'S
DEVELOPMENTAL
TRAJECTORY AND
IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL
OUTCOMES FOR
STUDENTS**

WHAT IT MEANS AT GAYNOR

Once children are older than three, the idea of early intervention takes on a different meaning, and that is the focus of the Early Childhood program of Stephen Gaynor School.

The Early Childhood program (EC) is a unique and innovative model of early intervention for students with learning differences, ages three to six and the only one of its kind in New York City. EC classroom teams include teachers, a speech-language pathologist, and an occupational therapist; therapists are dedicated to each classroom for 50% of each school week. The EC combines traditional early childhood experiences with the most effective learning strategies, helping students make great strides in their education, social, physical, and emotional development and puts them on the path to sustained academic success.

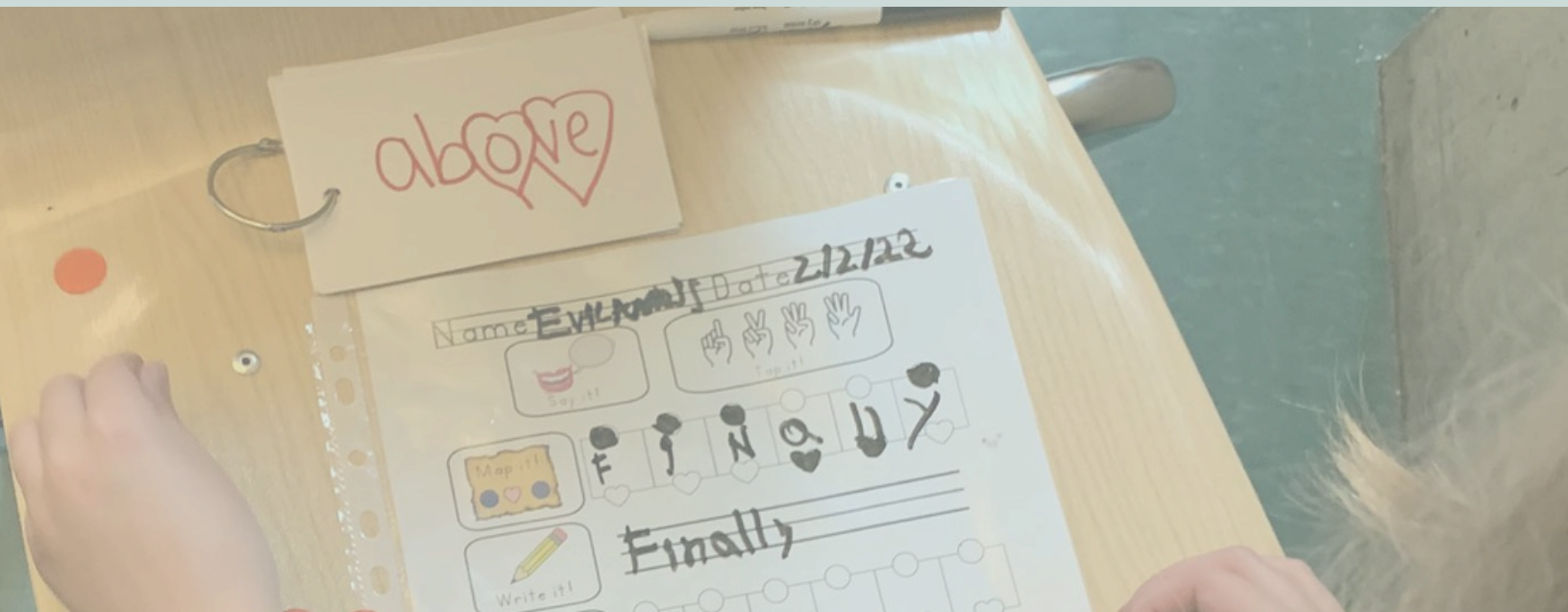
ADDITIONAL DEFINITIONS:

Expressive: Using words through speaking and writing to share thoughts and ideas

Receptive: Understanding spoken or written words

Occupational Therapy (OT): A form of therapy that includes focusing on fine and gross motor skills, activities of daily living, handwriting, perceptual skills, sensory processing, and executive functioning skills.

Speech Language Pathologist (SLP): A specialist who evaluates and works to prevent, assess, diagnose, and/or treat patients with speech and language delays or disorders.



SOURCES CITED:

www.stephengaynor.org

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

Learning Disabilities Association of America

National Center for Learning Disabilities

www.additudemag.com

www.understood.org

Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence



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