

Psychoeducational Foundations of Learning Disabilities

Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology
18:826:557

Tuesdays, 2:00pm to 4:45pm

Location: GSAPP A340

Canvas Site: <https://rutgers.instructure.com/courses/247459>

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Course Information

Instructor

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Course Format & Website

This course is offered in person. However, if necessary for health and safety, we can adapt portions of this course to an online format. We will make limited use of Canvas—primarily for lecture slides, quizzes, handouts, and readings online. Students can log in to the Canvas website using their Rutgers RUID and password. The URL for this course is: <https://rutgers.instructure.com/courses/296848>

Course Purpose & Objectives

In keeping with a practitioner-scholar model, this course will provide students with a strong foundation in learning disability research and best practices in administering assessments of academic skills. Legal and ethical issues will be discussed to provide students with an understanding of federal law, NJ administrative code 6A:14, and professional standards related to psychoeducational assessment. Students will be provided with experiences in administering and interpreting standardized academic tests, integrating these data within a comprehensive assessment battery, and communicating assessment results and recommendations. An overview of evidence-based interventions will be reviewed.

Course Objectives

- Understand the historical and legal foundations of specific learning disabilities (SLD).
- Gain familiarity with the scientific knowledge base on SLD from behavioral, cognitive, and neurological perspectives.
- Understand the three major paradigms of evaluation for SLD, and how paradigmatic differences translate into differences in practice. Also, understand the strengths and limitations of each major paradigm.
- Understand the primary skills and constructs targeted in assessment for SLD.
- Students will become proficient in planning evaluations to address concerns about student development in reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Gain proficiency in administration and interpretation of core subtests in the WJ-IV Tests of Achievement; gain familiarity with core subtests of the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test.
- Students will gain proficiency in the integration of assessment information to inform intensive, individualized intervention.

Required Reading

Students are expected to acquire a copy of Learning Disabilities: From Identification to Intervention, 2nd Edition, by Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, and Barns. Additional readings will be posted on the Canvas website for this course and listed on this syllabus.

Fletcher, J. M., Lyon, G. R., Fuchs, L. S., & Barnes, M. A. (2018). *Learning disabilities: From identification to intervention*. Guilford Publications.

Profession-Wide and Competencies & Discipline-Specific Knowledge

Profession-Wide Competencies

- **2.1** Demonstrates knowledge of and adherence to APA Ethical Principles, Code of Conduct, and relevant laws, professional standards, and guidelines governing psychological practice.
- **2.2** Recognizes ethical dilemmas as they arise and applies ethical decision-making processes in order to resolve those dilemmas.
- **2.3** Conducts self in an ethical manner across professional activities.
- **3.1** Displays an awareness of how personal bias and cultural history, attitudes, and biases affect understanding and interactions with people different from themselves.
- **3.4** Works effectively with diverse individuals and groups, including those whose group membership, demographic characteristics, or worldviews are different from or similar to their own.
- **4.1** Behaves in ways that reflect the values and attitudes of psychology, including integrity, deportment, professional identity, accountability, lifelong learning, and concern for the welfare of others.
- **5.1** Develops and maintains effective relationships with students, teachers, parents, other health service professionals, and other stakeholders in the provision of psychological services.
- **5.2** Demonstrates skills in producing, comprehending, and integrating oral, nonverbal, and written communications that are informative and well-integrated across a range of situations, populations, and systems.
- **6.1** Selects and conducts psychological assessments that are multi-method and multisource, technically adequate, and relevant to service recipient needs and the goals of the assessment.
- **6.2** Interprets and uses assessment results that guide case conceptualization, classification, and recommendations while recognizing the multiple systems impacting student functioning.
- **6.3** Communicates orally and in writing assessment results in an accurate and effective manner sensitive to a range of audiences.
- **6.4** Demonstrates current knowledge of diagnostic classification systems, adaptive and maladaptive behaviors, and the impact of client behaviors on functioning.
- **6.5** Demonstrates the ability to apply knowledge of functional and maladaptive behaviors to the assessment and/or diagnostic process.
- **7.3** Applies relevant literature and empirically-based principles to clinical decision making.
- **9.2** Provides evidence-based consultation and technical assistance to teachers, administrators, parents, and other health service professionals to identify effective strategies for addressing educational, social, and emotional problems and needs.

Discipline-Specific Knowledge

- **Biological Aspects of Behavior**, including multiple biological underpinnings of behavior, such as neural, physiological, anatomical, and genetic aspects of behavior. Although neuropsychological assessment and psychopharmacology can be included in this category, they do not, by themselves, fulfill this category.
- **Cognitive Aspects of Behavior**, including topics such as learning, memory, thought processes, and decision-making. Cognitive testing and cognitive therapy do not, by themselves, fulfill this category.
- **Developmental Aspects of Behavior**, including transitions, growth, and development across an individual's life. A coverage limited to one developmental period (e.g., infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, or late life) is not sufficient.

Course Calendar, Topics, Readings, and Deadlines

Date	Topics	Readings	Due
Unit 1: Historical & Practical Foundations			
9/3/2024	Course introduction & overview of SLD as a disability category in education. Review assessment & measurement. Introduction to WJ-IV Ach.		
9/10/2024	Models of SLD identification. Intro to special ed. law and procedures (evaluations and IEPs).	NJ Code; Fletcher et al. Ch. 2 & 3	Check out test kits
Unit 2: Development & Assessment of Skills in Reading and Writing			
9/17/2024	Development and assessment of basic reading skills.	Fletcher et al. Ch. 4 & 6; Church et al (2021)	Quiz 1
9/24/2024	Development and assessment of higher-order reading skills (comprehension).	Fletcher et al., Ch. 7	Quiz 2
10/1/2024	Development and assessment of skills in written expression.	Fletcher et al., Ch. 9; NCLD (2020) On Disproportionality	Quiz 3
Unit 3: Development & Assessment of Skills in Mathematics			
10/8/2024	Development and assessment of calculation skills.	Fletcher et al., Ch. 8	Quiz 4; WJ-IV Practice Admin #1
10/15/2024	Development and assessment of quantitative problem-solving skills.	Fletcher et al., Ch. 8; Fuchs et al. (2020)	Quiz 5
Unit 4: Evaluation & Planning for Specific Learning Disabilities			
10/22/2024	IQ-Ability Discrepancy Model CHC theory & relationships between cognitive processes and academic achievement.	Schneider & Kaufman (2017) Flanagan et al. (2018)	Quiz 6
10/29/2024	Patterns of Strengths and Weakness Approach	Maki, Kranzler, & Moody (2022)	Quiz 7; WJ-IV Practice Admin #2
11/5/2024	Response to Intervention Approach [WJ-IV Ach. Competency Exams start.]	Reschly (2014); Barret & Newman (2018)	Quiz 8
Unit 5: Practical Considerations in Evaluation and Other Service Delivery			
11/12/2024	SLD identification & cultural and linguistic diversity.	Benson et al. (2020); Ortiz, Piazza, Ochoa, & Dynda (2018)	Quiz 9;
11/19/2024	Principals of instruction and learning.	Fletcher et al., Ch 5; Sabnis et al. (2020)	
11/26/2024	Linking evaluation results to instructional recommendations. Writing psychoeducational evaluation reports.	Dombrowski, Ch. 5	Quiz 10
12/3/2024	Consultation & Collaboration - Working beyond the evaluation report.	Peltier et al. (2022); Lichtenstein (2022)	Test Review & Critique
12/10/2024	Planning instruction & accommodation for students with learning disabilities; IEP in-class activity.	Handout on Canvas	Complete evaluation report

Quick Reference Calendar

Week #	Session Date	Task / Assignment Due
1	9/3/2024	None!
2	9/10/2024	Check out WJ-IV Ach. Test Kits
3	9/17/2024	Quiz 1
4	9/24/2024	Quiz 2
5	10/1/2024	Quiz 3
6	10/8/2024	Quiz 4 WJ-IV Practice Admin. & Report 1
7	10/15/2024	Quiz 5
8	10/22/2024	Quiz 6
9	10/29/2024	Quiz 7 WJ-IV Practice Admin. & Report 2
10	11/5/2024	Quiz 8
11	11/12/2024	Quiz 9
12	11/19/2024	None!
13	11/26/2024	Quiz 10
14	12/3/2024	Return Test Kits Test Review & Critique
15	12/10/2024	Complete Evaluation Report

Assignments, Grading, and Course Expectations

Assignments

Formative Assessments (Quizzes; 10 points)

Students will complete a set of 10 quizzes on our Canvas site throughout the course. These quizzes will not be graded based on accuracy. Instead, they are intended to be a way to (1) give students credit for engagement with course content, and (2) give the instructor some feedback on students' progress, and (3) opportunities for students to receive feedback. Each quiz will consist of a small number of questions (typically multiple-choice, sometimes open-ended) based on the reading for the preceding week. Each quiz is worth 1 point, and just needs to be submitted prior to class on the date it is due.

WJ-IV Achievement Practice Administrations #1 and #2 (#1 = 10 points, #2 = 15 points)

Working in pairs, students will administer the standard battery of WJ-IV Ach. tests twice and write a brief summary report for both administrations (one person in each pair will be the other person's examinee). The purpose of these exercises is to give students multiple opportunities for practice and feedback on test administration and communication of achievement test results. WJ-IV Ach. #1 due 10-10-23; WJ-IV Ach. #2 due 10-31-23.

Full Evaluation & Report (20 points)

Students will be given a scenario, including scores from cognitive testing, WJ-IV Ach. scores, and other relevant assessment information. Students will score, summarize, and synthesize these data in a full psychoeducational report culminating in a determination of the hypothetical examinee's need and eligibility for special education under the category of SLD, as well as evidence-based recommendations for intervention and accommodation.

WJ-IV Administration Competency Exam (15 points)

Students will demonstrate proficient in administration of WJ-IV Ach. tests (standard batter) with the course instructor. We will offer opportunities for practice likely the week before competency testing; competency tests are tentatively scheduled to occur between 11/5/2024 and 11/12/2024.

Test Review (15 points)

There are many constructs relevant to the development and functioning of academic skills, and many more tests dedicated to these skills and associated constructs—far more than we can cover in one semester. Working in pairs, students will select a test of a specific academic skill or associated construct and will generate a descriptive report of that test for their peers, including a summary of strengths and limitations of that instrument. Reviews written by each pair will be compiled and shared with the entire class.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP; 15 Points)

Students will write an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for the fictional student who was the focus of the comprehensive evaluation described above. This plan will include descriptions of the student's present skill levels, goals, and instructional activities, as well as any indicated accommodations/modifications. This assignment will be completed in class on or near 12/10/2024.

Determination of Course Grades

Grading will follow Rutgers' criteria: 100-90 A; 89-85 B+; 84-80 B; 79-75 C+; 74-70 C; 69-60 D; 59-0 F

Course Expectations

- ✓ All assignments must be completed on time. Please note assignments received after due dates can receive grade reduction.
- ✓ Assignments can be submitted via email to the course instructor. Submission of hard copies in class is also acceptable.
- ✓ APA Style 7th Edition must be used with all written assignments. See link to most up to date APA version: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/>.
- ✓ Because assessment and data-based decision making comprise a set of skills that can only be developed through practice and feedback in addition to direct instruction, students are expected to participate actively in class discussions and activities.
- ✓ Students are expected to make arrangements with the instructor in the event of course absences to cover any missed content or activities.
- ✓ All students must review the Rutgers University policy on academic integrity: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers/>.

Student Success

Support for Students

The faculty and staff at Rutgers are committed to your success. Students who are successful tend to seek out resources that enable them to excel academically, maintain their health and wellness, prepare for future careers, navigate college life and finances, and connect with the RU community. Resources that can help you succeed and connect with the Rutgers community can be found at success.rutgers.edu, and nearly all services and resources that are typically provided in-person are now available remotely.

Disability Accommodation

Any student who believes that s/he may need an accommodation in this class due to a disability should contact the University Office of Disability Services, Lucy Stone Hall, Livingston Campus 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Suite A145, Piscataway, NJ 08854-8045, email address: dsoffice@rci.rutgers, Phone: (848) 445-6800, fax: (732) 445-3388, for a letter of accommodation. (Undergraduate New Brunswick students should contact the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities for their College.). Any student who has already received a letter of accommodation should contact the instructor privately to discuss implementation of his/her accommodations immediately.

Course Evaluation

Rutgers University issues a survey that evaluates both the course and instructor. Students will complete this survey toward the end of the semester, and students' identities cannot be connected to their responses. The aggregated numerical results are public, and the numerical results and comments are shared with the instructor, and GSAPP. This survey will also be used by GSAPP to conduct a mid-point evaluation, the results of which are confidential to the instructor and school.

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