**Handout 1: Characteristics of LDs and Language Learning**

Learning disabilities (LDs) are invisible, and if left undiagnosed, there is possible comorbidity with anxiety and depression. Characteristics of LDs usually appear in both the first and other languages that are learned.

**Reading**

* Difficulty remembering the sounds and letters of the alphabet, high frequency words, and vocabulary – needs more repetition
* Confusion with similar words, problems reading multi-syllable words
* Poor reading fluency and slow reading rate
* Difficulty with comprehension and retention of material that is read, but not when presented orally
* Difficulty identifying the main idea (focuses on the details) and summarizing
* Misreads information
* Avoids reading and writing tasks

**Written Expression and Handwriting**

* Express themselves better orally than in writing
* Difficulty with sentence structure, poor grammar, lack of capitals and punctuation, missing words
* Frequent spelling errors, inconsistent spelling – can’t sound out the words or remember how to spell high frequency words
* Difficulty expressing themselves clearly and precisely
* Difficulty organizing ideas
* Difficulty copying from the board or screen
* Poorly formed letters, difficulty with spacing, capitals, and punctuation

**Oral Language – Listening and Speaking**

* Difficulty processing information presented orally, despite normal hearing
* Difficulty attending to spoken language, inconsistent concentration
* Difficulty expressing ideas orally, although they may seem to understand the ideas
* Problems describing events or the plot in proper sequence
* Problems with grammar

**Study Skills**

* Use of ineffective study skills
* Poor organization and time management
* Difficulty following directions – may need instructions to be given one at a time and to be demonstrated instead of in writing or orally, say “First ..., Second …”
* Difficulty taking notes and difficulty recognizing important ideas
* Poor organization of notes and other written materials
* Needs extra time to complete assignments and write tests

**Social and Emotional**

* Low self-esteem – “I can’t”, attributes success to luck rather than hard work, feeling of not being worthy of achievement
* Forgets, argues, postpones, procrastinates, doesn’t complete assignments, and misses deadlines
* Difficulty interpreting verbal language (especially idioms) and non-verbal cues
* Problems with relationships – perceiving social situations appropriately, regulating emotions, reacting impulsively, getting along with others
* Quick to anger – possibly due to frustration
* Seems unmotivated

**Other**

* Easily distracted, trouble focusing for longer periods
* May need more breaks
* Poor sequencing and difficulty following oral and written directions
* Problems with integration – putting information in the right order, making sense of the information, and using it to form complete thoughts
* Poor test results
* Difficulty meeting expectations – ability does not match performance (e.g., may be fine orally, but can’t seem to read or write)