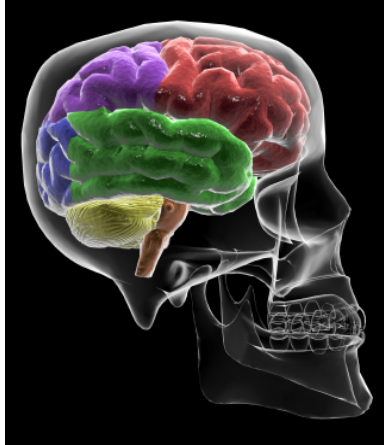


## Non Verbal Learning Disabilities (NVLD/NLD)

Adapted from Elizabeth Kenny-Foggin, MS, MA

Difficulties with Non Verbal Learning Disabilities are in the right hemisphere of the Brain.



The **right Hemisphere** is dominant for the following behaviors-

- Spatial Abilities
- Face Recognition
- Visual Imagery
- Music

If information is processed primarily on the right side intuition is used.

Each hemisphere is dominant for specific behaviors.

The **left Hemisphere** is dominant for the following behaviors-

- Language
- Math
- Logic

Diagnosis is difficult since the compensatory mechanisms of advanced speech and memorization skills imply a normal educational aptitude. However, as the child matures and learning becomes more dependent upon abstractions, particularly in areas of non-verbal ability such as spatial, motor, and social relationships, this deficit becomes more apparent. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition, does not include a specific category for NLD.

**Students are classified typically under SLD in the following categories:**

- Reading comprehension
- Basic Reading Skills
- Calculations
- Listening Comprehension
- Reading Fluency
- Math Reasoning
- Written Expression
- Oral Expression

**The main areas of difficulties include:**

1. Difficulties with social skills- struggle with literal comprehension, transitions in social situations.
2. Problem noted in visual- spatial- lack of image poor visual recall, faulty spatial perception, difficulties with spatial relations (i.e., directions)
3. Motor problems that typically involve fine graph motor and gross motor skills.

The condition has a range of severity, some students have minimum challenges, and others have many.

**Characteristics of NLD Kids...**

- Speaks constantly and appears to have “high-level” verbal skills. Auditory processing is an area of strength for these children
- Inappropriate with social comments. May appear precocious and/or bold, or “knows it all”
- We communicate 65%-85% through facial and body language. They tend to miss these cues and do **not** read facial expressions like typical age kids
- Strong rote memory
- Requires a great deal of support and assurance that the tasks they are engaged in on being completed adequately
- Often uses strategies that do not fit the “social occasion” or the “academic expectations”
- “People pleasers”
- Experience significant “anxiety” even though they present as confident students
- The way they learn is by asking questions. Then, they need to redefine, or tackle the same question from another perspective, which can be quite time consuming.



## Challenges in Instructional Settings

- The area of NLD is **not** a field with “oodles” of current research
- There is research available, but it is not as current as would be expected.
- Teaching approaches most effective are a mixture of approaches for students with language based challenges **AND** Asperger’s Syndrome
- Language comprehension is extremely literal, and what can often be described as one dimensional thinking of a word or concept. This can or may be attributed to their inability to generalize information presented.
- It is common for teachers to use the expression, “I just can’t quite put my finger on it” when initially working with a child with NLD.

## Classroom Challenges

- Students typically need frequent assurance when involved with academic work
- Students tend to go to adults rather than peers for support
- Struggle with social relationship, friendships (attributed to difficulties in right hemisphere)
- Teaching is quite a demanding profession, and when a student is continually interrupting or asking for clarification of information presented, this can become frustrating.

## Accommodations

- Require structured, predictable approach to learning
- Preview Material
- Use of graphic organizer
- Use of check lists which promote semi-or total independence
- Allow students opportunities to summarize directions to ensure all is understood
- Provide the “whole picture” so student is able to prepare/predict possible outcomes of social/academic situations
- Role playing situations prior to, or after situations
- Additional time to complete homework, etc. due to misinterpretation of assignment

- Safety and security in a classroom is the most important aspect for learning.
- Predictable approach to learning works since they understand class, teacher personal expectation in the classroom to learn. Open-ended approach is extremely difficult for students with NLD.
- It is worth providing parents with information on Friday regarding the upcoming weeks work.
- Graphic organizers serve to reduce the motor challenges faced by many NLD kids. Also they help students to concretely understand what academic work needs to be completed.
- It is important not to just have a child restate directions but to summarize in their own words. Then, you can really identify if all is understood. In the end time taken to address concerns before prevents “triage” later.
- If accommodations are created for the student with NLD it will make a less stressful environment for both the student and the teacher.