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## Accommodating Nursing Students with Learning Disabilities

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**SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF NURSING**

**MASTER'S PROGRAM PROJECT OPTION (PLAN B)  
PROJECT SIGNATURE FORM**

STUDENT NAME Debraugh Gayle

SEMESTER ENROLLED Spring 2000

TITLE OF PROJECT Accommodating nursing  
students with learning disabilities

NAME OF JOURNAL Journal of nursing education

The project and manuscript have been successfully completed and meet the standards of the School of Nursing at San Jose State University. The project demonstrates the application of professional knowledge, clinical expertise, and scholarly thinking. An abstract of the project and two copies of the manuscript are attached.

Kathleen Goss  
ADVISOR'S SIGNATURE

May 17, 2000  
DATE

Maui Ann Reilly  
ADVISOR'S SIGNATURE

17 May 2000  
DATE

Please submit this form to the Graduate Coordinator. Attach abstract, two copies of the manuscript, and documentation of submission to the journal (i.e., postal receipt).

Debrayh Gaylle MS, RN  
[REDACTED]

May 28, 2000

Christine A. Tanner, Ph.D., RN, FAAN

Dear MS. Tanner:

Enclosed is a manuscript for review entitled Accommodating Nursing Students with Learning Disabilities. I believe this is an important and timely manuscript for Nurse Educator's. Thank you for considering it for the Journal of Nursing Education.

I look forward to hearing from you soon. You may contact me by mail at [REDACTED] or by telephone at [REDACTED], or email at [REDACTED]. However, I will be out of the country from June 30<sup>th</sup> through July 14<sup>th</sup>, during that time you may contact the second author Kathy Abriam-Yago by mail at [REDACTED], or phone at [REDACTED], fax [REDACTED], and email [REDACTED].

Thank you,

Debrayh Gaylle, MS, RN

Running head: ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THE LEARNING DISABLED

Accommodating Nursing Students with Learning Disabilities

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## Accommodating Nursing Students with Learning Disabilities

Learning disabled (LD) students have been enrolling in colleges and universities in record numbers. Enrollment increased from 15% in 1985 to 25% in 1991 (Letizia, 1995). Although incidence figures vary, the increasing enrollment of LD students has been attributed to the passage of legislation designed to create greater opportunities for and to protect the rights of disabled persons. The enactment of Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, created a learning environment on the elementary and secondary level that provided LD students with increased preparation for transition to post-secondary settings (Letizia, 1995). Also in 1990, the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provided LD students with increased protection from discrimination. These laws coupled with Public Law 93-112 (the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which mandated accessibility to post-secondary education for all LD students) created an educational environment in which LD students could reach their fullest potential.

As a result of legislation that protected and guaranteed the rights of disabled individuals, more students with LD who graduated from high school were prepared for and sought post-secondary education. However, despite the protective legislation, students with LD continued to encounter prejudicial attitudes from peers and faculty (Houck, Asselin, Troutman, & Arrington 1992). These prejudicial attitudes may be the result of limited resources, lack of knowledge, or the perceived difficulty of providing accommodations for LD students (Bourke, Strehorn, & Silver, 1997). Baggett (1994) suggested that this phenomenon could be the result of traditionally conservative attitudes and preferences for maintaining the status quo by collegiate administrators.

The number of LD students entering collegiate nursing education is increasing. Statistics

indicated that in 1992 one third of all identified LD freshman declared nursing as their number one career choice (Colon, 1997). Tumminia and Weinfield (1983) contended that “to the nursing educator, this student may be viewed as a frustration, a challenge, or even as a punishment” (p. 12). Faculty attitudes have set the environmental tone in which the student learns. Research has shown that the perceptions and attitudes of the instructor toward students with learning disabilities have influenced the student’s rate of failure or success (Clark, 1997). Bourke, Strehorn, and Silver (1997) maintained that situational and environmental factors, such as perceived lack of support from Disabled Student Services or departmental heads, affected faculty beliefs about the efficacy of accommodations and understanding of their importance. Redmond and Sorrell (1996) found that nursing students valued the caring behavior and positive attitudes of instructors and reported feeling empowered and positive toward their role as future nurses when instructors exhibited genuine concern for the student’s well-being.

Existing law has dictated that all post-secondary schools must provide accommodations to LD students (Letizia, 1995). In order for nurse educators to provide an appropriate learning environment for LD students, research must be conducted which examines the factors that facilitate or hinder the provision of accommodations. Empirical research that identifies the ease or difficulty experienced by nursing faculty in providing accommodations to LD students will give nurse educators the tools needed to examine existing policies. Providing a clearer understanding of faculty beliefs concerning the provision of accommodations will assist in the development of new instructional strategies as well as facilitate improvements in departmental and institutional support systems which will benefit both faculty and students. It is essential to address the institutional factors within schools of nursing that create barriers to the provision of accommodations for LD students. It is also important to facilitate the provision of

accommodations for creating an environment where students learn and are empowered.

### Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore faculty attitudes about factors which hinder or facilitate the provision of classroom and testing accommodations for LD nursing students. This study was modeled after the work of Bourke, Strehorn, and Silver (1997) who surveyed the faculty at the University of Massachusetts, and asked the following questions:

1. What is the perceived degree of ease or difficulty experienced by nursing faculty in implementing various accommodations for LD nursing students?
2. How is the provision of accommodations impacted by the perceived level of adequacy of support, perceived level of sufficiency of resources for providing accommodations, and faculty's beliefs and understanding concerning the need for and benefit of providing accommodations?
3. Are there demographic characteristics which significantly relate to the provision of accommodations, perceived support, and understanding of the need for accommodations?

### Operational Definitions

#### Accommodations

According to Cindy Marota (personal communication, October, 1999), Associate Director of the Disability Resource Center at San Jose State University, testing accommodations include additional time to complete exams in the classroom, proctored exams in an alternative setting such as a quiet office with no extraneous distractions, and alternative types of exams such as oral versus written or computerized testing. Classroom accommodations include providing copies of notes and outlines to students, note takers, additional time to complete projects, books on tape,

tutors, spell checkers or dictionaries, calculators, and tape recorders in the classroom. Learning disabilities manifest differently in each individual and this has created a need for personalization of accommodations (Eliason, 1992). This study will only address testing accommodations and classroom accommodations provided to LD nursing students. Accommodations made in the clinical setting will not be addressed.

### Disability

This study used the definition of disability as outlined by the ADA (1990) which stated "disability means, with respect to an individual: (a) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual, (b) a record of such an impairment, or (c) being regarded as having such an impairment" (section 3.2).

Individuals with "specific learning disabilities" have a mental impairment which limits one or more life activities and symptoms of which manifest differently in each individual and must be diagnosed and treated on an individual basis (Eliason, 1992). Within the literature, there are many definitions of specific learning disability (Pelosi, 1981). This study used the definition of specific learning disability as outlined by guidelines from the Association of Higher Education and Disability which states:

Specific learning disabilities are a chronic condition of presumed neurological origin which selectively interferes with the development, integration, and/or demonstration of verbal and nonverbal abilities. Specific learning disabilities exist as a distinct handicapping condition in the presence of average to superior intelligence, adequate sensory and motor systems, and adequate learning opportunities. The disorder may manifest itself in problems related to listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing,



spelling, or doing mathematical calculations. Specific learning disability is not synonymous with under achievement (Association of Higher Education and Disability, 1999).

Individuals whose learning problems are primarily the result of mental retardation or visual, hearing, or motor disabilities will be excluded from this study.

### Literature Review

Extensive research has been conducted on children with learning disabilities (Cooper & Burger, 1980; Freize & Snyder, 1980; Graham, 1991; Larkin & Ellis, 1995; Licht, 1983; Thompson, 1992; Vaughn, 1995). However, limited research has addressed the issues faced by faculty and LD students in post-secondary settings (Bagget, 1994; Bourke, Strehom, & Silver, 1996; Houck, Asselin, Troutman, & Arrington 1992; Spillane, Mcguire & Norlander, 1992). Five percent of LD college freshman declare nursing as their career choice (Henderson, 1991). The enrollment of these students has created a need for nurse educators to address the issues related to providing appropriate support to LD nursing students. A review of nursing literature found several informative articles defining learning disabilities, outlining existing laws, and suggesting possible accommodations (Eliason, 1992; Letizia, 1995; Shellenbarger, 1993; Shuler, 1990; Tumminia & Weinfield, 1983). Empirical research on this topic is limited. Nurse educators must comply with existing laws and provide accommodations for LD students. Failure to comply with existing legislation could result in time consuming and costly litigation (Colon, 1997). Colon (1997) wrote that in order to reduce the risk of discrimination litigation, more research must be conducted and made available to nursing faculty so they can utilize available resources to facilitate student success.

This review of the literature presents two studies about faculty attitudes toward the provision of accommodations and levels of institutional support for all LD students. As well as, three studies from nursing literature which explore methods used to identify the existence of learning disabilities, and the types of accommodations provided for LD nursing students. No empirical research has been published focusing on institutional factors within schools of nursing that facilitate or hinder the process of providing accommodations to LD nursing students.

Many colleges and universities felt unprepared to handle the influx of first generation LD students (Vogel, 1982). In an effort to identify student and faculty perceptions toward individuals with learning disabilities, Houck, Asselin, Troutman, and Arrington (1992) surveyed randomly selected faculty, non-disabled students, and disabled students from all eight colleges at a large East Coast University. The researchers contacted: (a) 117 faculty of which 109 (93%) responded, (b) 206 non-disabled students of which 194 (94%) responded, and (c) 47 students identified as LD by the office of Disabled Student Services of which 46 (94%) responded. Houck, Asselin, Troutman, and Arrington (1992) found 76% of LD students were reluctant to disclose their disability fearing negative reactions from peers and faculty. A significant discrepancy was found between faculty and student perceptions. Forty-seven percent of faculty perceived themselves as willing to accommodate LD students' special needs, whereas 33% of LD students perceived faculty as willing to accommodation their special needs (Houck, Asselin, Troutman, & Arrington, 1992). Furthermore, this research found that 31% of non-disabled students as well as 7% of the faculty questioned the fairness of accommodations and the ability of LD students to keep up with their non-disabled classmates. Houck, Asselin, Troutman, and Arrington (1992) concluded that there was "a need for efforts to generate increased faculty and student awareness and sensitivity to the needs of students with LD" (p. 683).

Bourke, Strehom, and Silver (1996) explored institutional factors that either facilitate or hinder the accommodation process for LD students. Surveys were mailed to 485 faculty members at the University of Massachusetts with a return rate of 35% (N=170). There was a positive correlation between faculty's perceived level of support, adequacy of resources, and faculty understanding of the need for and efficacy of accommodations for LD students. Additionally, the study found a significant relationship between the amount of resources available to faculty and the provision of accommodations to LD students. The study was limited to one university and the results could not be generalized. There is the need for further research to delineate the types of resources essential to the success of LD students.

Houck, Asselin, Troutman, and Arrington (1992) and Bourke, Strehom, and Silver (1996) focused on LD students enrolled in all major areas of study. An intensive review of nursing literature only found three empirically based studies addressing issues created by the enrollment of LD students. As the number of LD nursing students increases, nurse educators must be prepared to provide appropriate accommodations while serving as the gatekeepers of their profession.

Colon (1997) conducted a descriptive study which explored: (a) the extent to which schools of nursing admitted LD nursing students, (b) how LD nursing students were identified, and (c) types of accommodations provided for LD students. Surveys were mailed to the deans of all 54 nursing programs in North Carolina. Forty-five (83%) deans responded; one third reported enrolling LD students and providing them with accommodations. Twenty-nine percent of respondents reported that the faculty identified LD students based upon student performance and referred them for testing, while 23% of respondents reported LD students identified themselves to faculty (Colon, 1997). The most common accommodations reported were tutors (48%),

referral to counselors (44%), tape-recorded lectures (43%), and use of computers (33%). Colon (1997) concludes, "The findings of this study suggest that the nurturing and caring image of nursing is being modeled by nursing program administrators and nursing faculty as they provide an environment conducive to the success of all nursing students" (p. 376).

Watson (1995) mailed surveys to 420 baccalaureate-nursing programs nationwide in an effort to determine their methods to identify students with disabilities as well as special services and accommodations provided for disabled students. Fifty-nine percent ( $N=247$ ) of the surveys were returned. Thirty-five percent ( $n=85$ ) of the responding schools stated they had admitted students with disabilities and 24% of the respondents reported graduating seniors with disabilities. "Among the substantial number of individuals with disabilities seeking admission to nursing programs, learning disability has emerged as the most common disability disclosed" (Watson, 1995, p. 152). Early identification of students with disabilities played an essential role in the students' success rates. Watson (1995) wrote that 53% of the schools reported attempting to determine student disability before admission. Specific strategies included: (a) requesting voluntary disclosure of disability on the admission forms, (b) pre-admission interview which included specific questions related to special needs, and (c) printed materials included in the college catalogs or bulletins. It was found that 66% ( $n=151$ ) of the responding schools reported the presence of Disabled Student Services on their campuses and a variety of services for assisting disabled students were identified by the 35% of respondents who reported admitting disabled students. These services included tutoring, counseling, calculators, books on tape, tape recorders, and computer software. The influence of disability legislation is likely to result in more students with disabilities seeking admission to nursing programs, and this will create a greater need for nurse educators to address the issue of identification and accommodation of

students with disabilities.

Magilvy and Mitchell (1995) conducted a nationwide mail survey of 200 baccalaureate and associate degree schools to explore the extent to which nursing schools have admitted students with disabilities. The subjects included students with physical disabilities, mental disabilities, and learning disabilities. Eighty-six of the schools responded resulting in a response rate of 43%. Fifty-seven percent ( $n=39$ ) of responding schools reported having students with learning disabilities. "The results of quantitative descriptive analysis indicate a high level of awareness of the potential for students with special needs, but limited experience and accommodation" (Magilvy & Mitchell, 1995, p. 33).

These three descriptive studies have begun to explore the issues faced by disabled students enrolled in nursing programs. Colon (1997), Magilvy and Mitchell (1995), and Watson (1995) concluded that further study must be conducted in order for nurse educators to continue to foster a sensitive, caring environment, promoting the success of all students as well as addressing the needs of academically qualified LD students.

#### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was Leininger's (1991) culture care theory. Leininger's theory put forth two basic principles. The first principle states caring is the essence and focus of nursing which enables individuals to support and assist each other. The second principle states the culture and context of caring must be transmitted as shared belief, values, and norms within a given context. Leininger defined culture as the shared values, beliefs, and norms which guide decision making and patterns of behavior within a given group (Marriner-Tomey, 1994).

Students are dependent upon instructors to assist them to find their place within the

cultural context of nursing (Redmond & Sorrell, 1996). The nursing instructor's role is to nurture the creative abilities and natural curiosity of the student while also assisting them in acquiring the skills needed to become a competent caring professional (Bevis & Watson, 1989). Within the context of Leininger's (1991) theory, the nurse educator's goal must be the development of a caring curriculum that promotes the integration of the individual into the culture of nursing.

Students with LD struggle throughout their academic careers with the processing of written and/or verbal information. Additional difficulties faced by LD students are poor self-esteem as well as difficulty with organizational and social skills (Letizia, 1995). "Nurse educators help develop the concept of caring in their students as they themselves exhibit caring behaviors in their interactions with students" (Colon, 1997, p. 373). By providing individualized and appropriate accommodations in a sensitive and caring manner, the nurse educator models the caring role of the nurse. This assists the LD student to achieve a sense of success and personal satisfaction while becoming incorporated into the caring culture of nursing.

#### Research Design and Methodology

This study used a non-experimental descriptive survey design and was modeled after the earlier work of Bourke, Strehorn and Silver (1997). The survey explored the ease or difficulty experienced by faculty in providing accommodations, faculty beliefs about the need for and efficacy of accommodations, and the perceived level of support received from Disabled Student Services, the department, and university. Permission was received to use the survey instrument developed for the original study conducted at the University of Massachusetts (see Appendix A). In contrast to Bourke, Strehorn and Silver's work which focused on faculty from all disciplines, the subjects for this study were full-time and part-time nursing faculty at National League of Nursing (NLN) accredited associate degree (ADN) and baccalaureate degree (BSN) nursing

programs in the state of California.

A list of accredited nursing schools was obtained from the NLN. Nursing schools were chosen for inclusion in the study if they had a web site, which listed the instructor's names and the school's mailing address. An information packet containing the following items was mailed to each instructor a cover letter introducing the researcher and explaining the purpose of the study, time required to complete the study instrument, the return date, a statement insuring respondent anonymity, and information regarding the dissemination of study results (see Appendix B). The survey instrument consisted of a 13 item survey using a 5 point Likert scale and a 7 item survey soliciting demographic data (see Appendix C). The possible item response on the Likert scale was (a) Strongly Agree, (b) Agree, (c) Disagree, (d) Strongly Disagree, or (e) Not applicable or does not apply. The estimated time for completion of the survey packet was 10 minutes. Return of the completed surveys indicated informed consent.

Surveys were mailed to 150 nursing faculty at ADN schools and 150 nursing faculty at BSN schools. One hundred and nine surveys were returned 48 (32%) from ADN faculty and 66 (44%) from BSN faculty, for a response rate of 36%. Four surveys were discarded because the respondents identified themselves and one survey was returned unanswered.

Surveys were coded to differentiate between ADN and BSN programs. In an effort to assure confidentiality and increase the possibility for unbiased responses, no other identifying data was included on questionnaires. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data for frequencies of response to instrument items. In addition, the correlational coefficient ( $r$ ) was calculated to identify correlations between the associate degree and baccalaureate degree groups.

#### Demographics

Demographic data regarding gender, age, years of teaching experience, full or part time

status, academic title, professional duties, and any close association (i.e., family member or friend) with a LD person was requested. The majority respondents were female, 89% (n=41) in the ADN group and 97% (n=61) in the BSN group. The majority of ADN respondents 83% (n=23) reported being between 41 to 50 years old, while the majority of BSN respondents 53% (n=34) reported being between 51 to 60 years old (see Table 1). The range of teaching experience for ADN instructor's was distributed between 1-2 years (5%), 3-6 years (30%), 7-14 years (30%), and over 14 years (28%). The range of teaching experience for the BSN instructors was 1-2 years (1%), 3-6 years (19%), 7-14 years (19%) and more than 14 years (58%) (see Table 2). Sixty seven percent of responding BSN faculty reported working full-time as compared to 87% of ADN faculty. BSN respondents reported their professional title as lecturer (35%), assistant professor (13%), associate professor (9%), and professor (43%). Primary duties of BSN respondents were teaching (79%), teaching and research (12%), administration (4%), teaching and administration (3%), and student advising (2%). In the ADN group professional titles were lecturer (9%), assistant professor (24%), associate professor (13%), professor (24%), and other (30%). Primary duties of ADN respondents were teaching (98%), student advising (1%), and administration (1%) (see Table 3 & Table 4). Thirty percent ( $n = 14$ ) of ADN and 45% ( $n = 28$ ) of BSN respondents reported having a close friend or family member with a learning disability (see Table 5).



Table 1

Demographic Data on Age Categories (N = 109)

Age Category	Frequency for ADN ( $n = 46$ )	Frequency for BSN ( $n = 62$ )
Under 30	0	1(1%)
31 - 40	9(20%)	1(1%)
41 - 50	23(83%)	19(39%)
51 - 60	12(26%)	34(53%)
61 - 70	2(4%)	7(11%)

Note. One BSN respondent declined to state age in demographic data.

Table 2

Demographic Data of Teaching Experience (N = 109)

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Years of Experience	Frequency from ADN ( <u>n</u> = 46)	Frequency from BSN ( <u>n</u> = 63)
1 - 2 Years	5(11%)	1(1%)
3 - 6 Years	14(30%)	12(19%)
7 -14 Years	14(30%)	12(19%)
More than 14 Years	13(28%)	37(58%)

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Table 3

Demographic Data Professional Title (N = 109)

Professional Title	Frequency from ADN ( $n = 46$ )	Frequency from BSN ( $n = 63$ )
Lecturer	4(9%)	22(35%)
Assistant Professor	11(24%)	8(13%)
Associate Professor	6(13%)	6(9%)
Professor	11(24%)	26(43%)
Other	14(30%)	0

Table 4

Demographic Data Primary Duties (N = 109)

Professional Title	Frequency from ADN ( $n = 46$ )	Frequency from BSN ( $n = 63$ )
Teaching	45 (98%)	49(79%)
Research	0	0
Teaching/Research	0	7(12%)
Administration	1(1%)	3(4%)
Advising	1(1%)	1(2%)
Teaching/Administration	0	2(3%)

Table 5

Demographic Data Close Association with a Person With Learning Disabilities (N = 109)

Association Category	Frequency from ADN ( $n = 46$ )	Frequency from BSN ( $n = 63$ )
Close Association	14(30%)	28(45%)
No Close Association	28(61%)	28(45%)
Declined to State	4(9%)	7(11%)

## Results

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data from the survey given to the faculty of ADN and BSN schools. Correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) statistics were used to compare responses from the ADN and BSN faculty. An  $r$  value greater than 0.7 is considered strongly correlated which means the responses are very similar. An  $r$  value between 0.4 and 0.7 is considered moderately correlated which means there is some difference of opinion between the two groups. In this study, the researchers found that the BSN respondents were older, had more years teaching experience, and had more professional responsibilities than ADN respondents. Despite these demographic differences, there was almost no difference in the responses of ADN and BSN instructors to survey items 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6 the provision of accommodations, items 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12 availability of support and resources, and items 7 & 13 beliefs about the need for and efficacy of accommodations. However, there was a statistically significant difference ( $r = 0.529$ ) for Item 1 which asked about the ease with which an instructor could arrange for un-timed exams in a quiet area. It is unlikely that random chance caused the ADN responses ( $n = 15$  out of the 46) to disagree that it has been easy to arrange un-timed exams in a quiet place, while the BSN ( $n = 23$  out of 66) responded that they agreed that it was easy to arrange the un-timed exams in a quiet place. This was the only item on the survey where there was significant disagreement in the responses from ADN and BSN faculty. Response rates to each of the 13 items are shown in Table 6.

Faculty from both the ADN and BSN schools responded that Items 4, 5, and 10 did not apply or were not applicable to their experiences. These were the questions about difficulty to recruit note takers (Item 4), request for alternative type exams (Item 5), and support from the Faculty Senate (Item 10).

The majority of ADN and BSN faculty stated that it was easy to provide copies of notes or outlines prior to class, (Item 3), accommodating LD students did help them to succeed, (Item 7), received adequate support from Disabled Student Services, (Item 8), received adequate support from the Department, (Item 9), and had a good understanding of why accommodations for LD students were necessary, (Item 13). The responses indicated that both the ADN and the BSN faculty found that it was not difficult to arrange proctored exams, (Item 2), it was not difficult to allow extra time to complete assignments, (Item 6) they aware of who to call with questions about accommodating LD student, (Item 11), and there were sufficient resources to implement accommodations (Item 12).

The responses were analyzed for a correlation between the ADN and BSN faculty who had a family member or friend with a learning disability and Item 6 giving the LD student extra time to complete assignments. There was a moderate correlation ( $r = 0.608$ ) in that the ADN responses indicated there were some barriers to providing extra time to accommodate the LD student which differed from the BSN response that there was not a problem. If there was not a disabled family member or friend, the responses were strongly correlated ( $r = 0.921$ ) and that response was that there was no problem giving the extra time. Responses to Item 13 about understanding the need for accommodating students with learning disabilities strongly correlated ( $r = 0.964$ ) with both the ADN and the BSN faculty who had a family member or friend with a LD; there also was no difference in the responses from ADN and BSN responses if they did not have a friend or family member with a learning disability ( $r = 0.947$ ).

Table 6

## Frequency of Responses to Survey Items (N = 109)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
1) It has been easy to arrange un-timed exams in quiet areas of my department.	ADN 10.86% BSN 20.63%	ADN 23.91% BSN 36.50%	ADN 32.60% BSN 25.39%	ADN 17.39% BSN 9.52%	ADN 5.21% BSN 7.93%
2) It has been difficult for me to arrange proctored exams at Disabled Student Services.	ADN 2.17% BSN 3.17%	ADN 6.52% BSN 3.17%	ADN 30.43% BSN 22.22%	ADN 53.33% BSN 42.85%	ADN 8.69% BSN 26.98%
3) It has been easy to provide copies of notes/outlines to students with learning disabilities prior to class.	ADN 19.56% BSN 22.22%	ADN 36.95% BSN 34.92%	ADN 8.69% BSN 11.11%	ADN 17.39% BSN 3.17%	ADN 7.39% BSN 28.57%
4) It has been difficult to recruit note takers for students with learning disabilities.	ADN 4.34% BSN 3.17	ADN 19.56% BSN 11.11%	ADN 15.21% BSN 7.93%	ADN 13.04% BSN 11.11%	ADN 47.82% BSN 66.66%
5) It has been easy to provide alternative types of exams when requested.	ADN 0% BSN 3.17%	ADN 13.04% BSN 12.69%	ADN 13.04% BSN 19.04%	ADN 28.26% BSN 19.04%	ADN 45.65% BSN 44.44%
6) It has been difficult to provide students the accommodations of additional time to complete assignments	ADN 13.04% BSN 3.17%	ADN 19.56% BSN 15.87%	ADN 36.95% BSN 34.92%	ADN 21.73% BSN 41.26%	ADN 8.69% BSN 3.17%
7) I believe the accommodations provided for students with learning disabilities helps them to succeed better in my course(s).	ADN 8.69% BSN 38.09%	ADN 78.26% BSN 52.38%	ADN 4.34% BSN 6.34%	ADN 4.34% BSN 1.58%	ADN 4.34% BSN .58%
8) I receive adequate support from the office of Disabled Student Services in working with students who have learning disabilities.	ADN 34.78% BSN 28.57%	ADN 45.65% BSN 49.20%	ADN 13.04% BSN 7.93%	ADN 2.17% BSN 3.17%	ADN 4.34% BSN 11.11%
9) I receive adequate support from my Department in working with students who have learning disabilities.	ADN 21.73% BSN 19.04%	ADN 60.86% BSN 58.73%	ADN 10.86% BSN 7.93%	ADN 6.52% BSN 3.17%	ADN 0% BSN 9.52%
10) I receive adequate support from the Faculty Senate in working with students who have learning disabilities.	ADN 4.34% BSN 3.17%	ADN 34.78% BSN 19.04%	ADN 8.69% BSN 6.34%	ADN 0% BSN 1.58%	ADN 53.33% BSN 68.25%
11) I am uncertain who to call when I have a question regarding students' accommodations for their learning disabilities.	ADN 0% BSN 0%	ADN 15.21% BSN 11.11%	ADN 45.65% BSN 31.74%	ADN 34.78% BSN 52.38%	ADN 4.34% BSN 3.17%
12) My resources are insufficient to implement the requested accommodations.	ADN 2.17% BSN 3.17%	ADN 17.39% BSN 15.87%	ADN 53.33% BSN 38.09%	ADN 23.91% BSN 34.92%	ADN 4.34% BSN 7.93%
13) I have a good understanding of why accommodations for students with learning disabilities are necessary.	ADN 41.30% BSN 47.67%	ADN 45.65% BSN 44.44%	ADN 10.86% BSN 6.34%	ADN 2.17% BSN 0%	ADN 0% BSN 1.58%



### Implications

The purpose of this study was to explore faculty attitudes about factors that facilitate or hinder the process of providing accommodations to LD nursing students. The survey items were divided into two groups. The first group items were internal factors which the educator had control over (items 3, 5, 6, 7, 12, & 13) such as the length of time allowed for the exam and the recruiting of note takers. The second group items were external factors that are difficult to control but impact the education of learning disabled students (items 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, & 11) such as the support of the Faculty Senate, recruiting outside help and who to call for assistance. The survey indicated that the majority of respondents did not experience difficulty providing accommodations. However, when internal and external factors were examined results suggest external factors were more problematic. Age and teaching experience did not play a statistically significant role in instructors' understanding of the need for providing accommodations to LD students as 92% of BSN respondents and 87% of ADN respondents rated themselves as having a good understanding of why accommodations are needed. Overall, the answers from both groups were very similar and might be what was expected of people in a care giving profession.

### Limitations

This research was limited by a convenience sample rather than a random sample. There is limited generalizability due to small sample size. In addition, there was a poor response rate to the mailing of the surveys. Reliability and validity of the survey tool was not documented. There could be the bias typical of self-selection to answer the survey and give the expected answers to the questions (DePoy & Gitlin, 1998).

### Recommendations

Further research studies could be done using a random sample. The researchers could follow up on surveys that were not returned. Reliability and validity of the survey could be statistically calculated or evaluated by other researchers. Further research could be conducted by surveying and correlating responses from the LD nursing students, nursing faculty, and nursing students without learning disabilities. It might be interesting to survey nursing students and faculty for attitudes concerning diagnosed LD students.

### Conclusion

The three research questions and conclusions were:

1. What is the perceived degree of ease or difficulty experienced by nursing faculty in implementing various accommodations for LD nursing students? The overall survey did not indicate that there was a perceived difficulty in implementing accommodations, however, the ADN and the BSN groups did have a different perception of the difficulty in arranging un-timed exams for LD students.

2. How is the provision of accommodations impacted by the perceived level of adequacy of support, perceived level of sufficiency of resources for providing accommodations, and faculty's beliefs and understanding concerning the need for and benefit of providing accommodations? There was no perceived lack of support, and the faculty perceived that they understood the need to accommodate the LD students.

3. Are there demographic characteristics which significantly relate to the provision of accommodations, perceived support, and understanding of the need for accommodations? The responses were similar for almost all items, and this survey did not identify any significant

demographic characteristics.

Nurse educators are becoming aware of the issues faced by LD nursing students (Eliason, 1992; Letizia, 1995; Shellenbarger 1993; Shuler, 1990). Eliason (1992) wrote that “learning disabilities often affect a student’s self-esteem, confidence, and motivation...some students with LD are reluctant to tell anyone, even their instructors” (p.376). Providing accommodations for LD nursing students creates a difficult challenge for nurse educators. The nurse educators must comply with Federal laws and mandates to provide appropriate accommodations for LD nursing students, but they must also insure that the student has the skills needed to practice nursing in a safe and competent manner. Learning disabilities manifest differently in each individual and the nurse educator must work with each student to develop an individualized plan for accommodations (Eliason, 1992). Shuler (1990) stated that an educational program which fosters individualized, humanized learning will make the needed modifications without jeopardizing the standards of nursing care. Nurse educators must serve as the gatekeepers of the profession while also mentoring and nurturing the next generation of nursing professionals. The results of this study showed that nursing faculty were aware of the need for and efficacy of providing accommodations to LD nursing students, however, barriers continue to exist and further research is needed to identify and remove these barriers.

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**Andrew B. Bourke, Ph.D., LICSW  
12 Crosby Street  
Northampton, Massachusetts 01060  
(413) 585-8678**

March 11, 1999

Ms. Debrayh Gaylle, RN, BSN  
537 Redwood Ave  
Milpitas, CA 95033

Dear Ms. Gaylle:

It was with interest that I received your letter requesting permission to use the survey questions from our study entitled: *Tracing the Chain of Accommodations...* I have communicated with Dr. Strehorn and both he and I are happy to give you permission to use the questions in your research. I have enclosed a copy of the original survey for your reference.

Best of luck in conducting your study.

Sincerely,



Andrew Bourke, Ph.D., LICSW





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UNIVERSITY

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Dr. Bobby Gorenberg

Appendix B

30

January 30, 2000

Debrayh Gaylle RN, BSN  
537 Redwood Ave  
Milpitas, CA 95035

Dear Nurse Educator:

You are invited to participate in a research study investigating nursing faculty views on factors that impeded or facilitate the process of providing accommodations for nursing students with specific learning disabilities. My name is Debrayh Gaylle and I am a Masters student at San Jose State University. I am conducting this study, the purpose of which is to investigate the degree of ease or difficulty experienced by nursing faculty in providing testing and classroom accommodations for learning disabled students. As well as, explore faculty views on the need for and benefit of providing accommodations to nursing students with learning disabilities. Participation involves filling out a four-page survey. The estimated time for completion of the survey is 10 minutes.

The study is voluntary and by completing and returning the survey, you are consenting to be a participant in the study. Results of this study may be published neither respondents or their affiliated schools will be identified. Choosing not to participate, in the study, or any part of the study will not affect your relationship with the researcher or San Jose State University. To insure complete anonymity do not sign the survey

Please return completed surveys in the enclosed envelope on or before March 10, 2000. If you would like to receive a copy of the results mail the enclosed postcard with your name and address separately from the survey. I will forward you a copy of the completed research.

If you have questions about this study, I will be happy to speak with you. I can be reached at 408-262-1882 or you can email your questions to [Debrayh@yahoo.com](mailto:Debrayh@yahoo.com). If you have question or complaints about research subjects' rights, or in the event of a research related injury, please contact Dr. Bobby Gorenberg, Director of the School of Nursing San Jose State University at 408-924-3130 or Dr. Nabil Ibrahim, Associate Academic Vice President for Graduate Studies and Research, at 408-924-2480.

Thank you,

Debrayh Gaylle RN, BSN

The California State University:  
Chancellor's Office  
Bakersfield, Chico, Dominguez Hills,  
Fresno, Fullerton, Hayward, Humboldt,  
Long Beach, Los Angeles, Maritime Academy,  
Monterey Bay, Northridge, Pomona,  
Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego,  
San Francisco, San Jose, San Luis Obispo,  
San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus

Instructions: Please circle a number that most closely reflects your agreement or disagreement with each statement.

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>NA</b>
1) It has been easy to arrange un-timed exams in quiet areas of my department.	1	2	3	4	5
2) It has been difficult for me to arrange proctored exams at Disabled Student Services.	1	2	3	4	5
3) It has been easy to provide copies of notes/outlines to students with learning disabilities prior to class.	1	2	3	4	5
4) It has been difficult to recruit note takers for students with learning disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
5) It has been easy to provide alternative types of exams when requested.	1	2	3	4	5
6) It has been difficult to provide students the accommodation of additional time to complete assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
7) I believe the accommodations provided for students with learning disabilities helps them to succeed better in my course(s).	1	2	3	4	5
8) I receive adequate support from the office of Disabled Student Services in working with students who have learning disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
9) I receive adequate support from my Department in working with students who have learning disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
10) I receive adequate support from the Faculty Senate in working with students who have learning disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
11) I am uncertain who to call when I have a question regarding students' accommodations for their learning disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
12) My resources are insufficient to implement the requested accommodations.	1	2	3	4	5
13) I have a good understanding of why accommodations for students with learning disabilities are necessary	1	2	3	4	5

Please list any resources that would be necessary to help you better provide accommodations for students with learning disabilities.

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Circle the number of students who have requested accommodations for learning disabilities in your course(s) during the last two years.

0    1-5    6-10    11-15    >16

## RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Instructions: The questions below provide information about different groups of respondents. No attempt will be made to identify individual faculty members. This assessment has been constructed to ensure anonymity and to encourage accurate honest responses. Please circle the appropriate response.

## Academic title:

- 1) Lecturer
- 2) Assistant Professor
- 3) Associate Professor
- 4) Professor
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_

## Employment status:

- 1) Full time
- 2) Part time

## Primary Responsibility

- 1) Teaching
- 2) Research
- 3) Teaching/Research
- 4) Administration
- 5) Advising
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_

## Years of teaching experience in higher education

- 1) less than 1
- 2) 1-2
- 3) 3-6
- 4) 7-14
- 5) greater than 15

## Sex:

- 1) Female
- 2) Male

## Age:

- 1) 30 or younger
- 2) 31-40
- 3) 41-50
- 4) 51-60
- 5) 61-70
- 6) over 71

Do you have a family member or friend with  
learning disabilities?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No

Thank you for your time and participation in this study. I will be sharing the results of this study with you as soon as the data is analyzed.

**ACCOMMODATING NURSING STUDENTS  
WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

**A Research Study  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the School of Nursing  
San Jose State University**

**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science**

**By  
Debrayh Gayle, BSN, RN**

**May, 2000**

Abstract

This study examined factors that facilitated or hindered the process of accommodating learning disabled nursing students in the classroom. Surveys were mailed to 300 faculty at associate and baccalaureate degree schools of nursing. The survey focused on faculty members' degree of ease or difficulty in providing accommodations, their perceptions of the adequacy of institutional support, and their own beliefs and understanding of the accommodation process. Analysis of the 109 returned surveys suggest the majority of faculty understood the need for accommodations. The majority of respondents stated they received adequate support from their respective institutions and were able to provide the requested accommodations.

Instructions: Please circle a number that most closely reflects your agreement or disagreement with each statement.

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>NA</b>
1) It has been easy to arrange un-timed exams in quiet areas of my department.	1	2	3	4	5
2) It has been difficult for me to arrange proctored exams at Disabled Student Services.	1	2	3	4	5
3) It has been easy to provide copies of notes/outlines to students with learning disabilities prior to class.	1	2	3	4	5
4) It has been difficult to recruit note takers for students with learning disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
5) It has been easy to provide alternative types of exams when requested.	1	2	3	4	5
6) It has been difficult to provide students the accommodation of additional time to complete assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
7) I believe the accommodations provided for students with learning disabilities helps them to succeed better in my course(s).	1	2	3	4	5
8) I receive adequate support from the office of Disabled Student Services in working with students who have learning disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
9) I receive adequate support from my Department in working with students who have learning disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
10) I receive adequate support from the Faculty Senate in working with students who have learning disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
11) I am uncertain who to call when I have a question regarding students' accommodations for their learning disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
12) My resources are insufficient to implement the requested accommodations.	1	2	3	4	5
13) I have a good understanding of why accommodations for students with learning disabilities are necessary	1	2	3	4	5