



Local Charity Provides Children with Learning Disabilities Access to Leading Edge Assistive Technologies to Help Them Excel in School and Life

VANCOUVER., November 23, 2020 - Today, the Learning Disabilities Society (LDS) announced the launch of its RISE Assistive Technology Program (RISE-AT) which incorporates an impressive collection of leading-edge assistive technology hardware and software tools to assist children and youth with learning disabilities and social-emotional challenges.

LDS is a local non-profit charity that currently provides Research-informed Individualized Student Education (RISE) programming to students with suspected or diagnosed learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, auditory processing disorders, ADHD and others. LDS is now furthering the accessibility and inclusiveness of its support with the launch of RISE-AT to provide students with additional opportunities to leverage their individual strengths. RISE-AT is helping LDS instructors teach more effectively, promote greater student engagement, and enhance student learning and progress.

“I am extremely proud to be collaborating with our growing list of 15 technology company sponsors to be able to offer this exceptional collection of assistive technology educational supports to our students,” said Rachel Forbes, Executive Director, Learning Disabilities Society. “After doing extensive research on how assistive technology is being used effectively with children with learning differences around the world, we have assembled a group of software and hardware tools that will not only provide our students new tools and strategies for academic success, but will also help build their engagement, confidence and ability to self-regulate.”

To further inspire community engagement and access, LDS has built its RISE-AT Studio which showcases leading-edge assistive hardware and software tools and is available for public access and trial. LDS’s goal is to inspire a collaborative

community of technology users and developers to advance assistive technology innovation and adoption to support the advancement of accessible and inclusive education for those with special education needs.

Highlights of LDS's current RISE-AT offering include:

- A large format interactive SMART Board and SMART software from **SMART Technologies** used for in-person and online instruction;
- Read&Write by **Texthelp**, a powerful software tool that offers a range of literacy support features to help students create and engage with content across all grade levels and subjects, allowing them to optimize their own personal learning styles to meet their full potential;
- Mindmeister by **MeisterLabs**, an intuitive visual mind mapping tool that assists students with their creative thinking, self-regulation, organization and planning;
- BeeLine Reader by **BeeLine Reader**, a software system which adds colour gradients to digital text to improve reading ability and focus;
- Juno by **FrontRow**, an auditory and voice command system that boosts listening, participation, confidence, and comprehension;
- Grammarly by **Grammarly**, software tools for digital writing assistance;
- Echo SmartPen by **Livescribe**, a handwriting tool that transcribes written notes to digital text and voice;
- C-Pen Reader by **Scanning Pens**, a text-to-speech scanner specially designed for individuals with dyslexia;
- Lexilight by **Lexilife**, a specially designed reading aid lamp for individuals with dyslexia;
- A large screen monitor and 12 Surface Pros donated by **Microsoft** that facilitate access to RISE-AT software tools; and
- Calming and meditation tools, including Muse by **InteraXon**, Focus Calm by **BrainCo**, calming weighted accessories from **Harkla**, and other manipulatives and technology-enhanced accessories that will make up our multi-sensory calming room.

Melanie, whose daughter in Grade 3 has a diagnosed learning disability, appreciates LDS's research-based, technology-enhanced approach: "Coming from a research background myself, I value that LDS's instruction and methodology is based on the latest research, and that my daughter can access learning supports including assistive technology that are at the forefront of what's available for students with learning differences."

"Our company is honoured to be partnering with LDS to help students with learning differences," says Jeffrey Kassa of MindMeister. "We are excited to see the real life impact that our creative and flexible software tools can have on the learning outcomes of children and youth with learning differences."

LDS is grateful to its thoughtful and generous community of supporters who through financial and in-kind donations are enabling LDS to rapidly develop and expand its assistive technology offerings for children and youth in Greater Vancouver and virtually throughout BC.

“As a charity, we serve many families who are disproportionately affected by the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Forbes. “With LDS RISE-AT we further our commitment to ensure that all children and youth have continuous access to research-based learning supports of the highest quality and integrity. ”

As a non-profit, LDS relies on donations and community support in order to sustain its programming and provide bursaries to families in financial need. Those interested in making a financial contribution to help vulnerable students access RISE-AT are encouraged to visit LDS’s Giving page: <https://ldsociety.ca/giving/> .

Media Contact:

Rachel S. Forbes

Executive Director, Learning Disabilities Society

604.345.9129 (mobile) ed@ldsociety.ca

Technology Company Contacts (contact details available on request):

- Laura James, FrontRow
- Jeffrey Kassa, MindMeister
- Alek Kolga, SMART Technologies

Resources:

- In person or virtual tours of our RISE-AT Studio available by appointment
- Photos available at <https://ldsociety.ca/assistivetechology/> (high resolution by request)
- Assistive Technology video available at <https://youtu.be/RgXjlqqeMmg>
- Parent interview contact information available by request

About Learning Disabilities Society (LDS):

Founded in 1970, LDS is a non-profit charity that serves children with suspected or diagnosed learning disabilities by providing customized learning support. LDS’s Research-informed Individualized Student Education (RISE) program enables students to understand their unique strengths and find success in the classroom and beyond. LDS is committed to making high-quality, affordable learning support accessible to all families, regardless of circumstance.