

# 2020

## annual report

---

50 Years of Transforming  
Learning and Life  
Outcomes





---

## contents

03

about LDS

04

values

05

message from the  
Executive Director

06

message from the  
Board Chair

07

2020 at a glance

08

transforming lives  
through learning

11

growth & impact

12

excellence through  
expertise & technology

14

accessible & inclusive  
support

16

partnering with our  
community

18

news & highlights

23

2021 to date

24

financial update



# about LDS

---

## who we are

Learning Disabilities Society of Greater Vancouver (LDS) is a growing, research-based, nonprofit charitable organization serving children and youth with learning differences. We offer affordable, evidence-based individualized programs to ensure that all students have an opportunity to realize their full potential.

Our expanding programs and services, including our core Research-informed Individualized Student Education (RISE) programming, currently operate from our Learning Centres in East Vancouver and North Vancouver, from a growing list of local schools, and online via our RISE at Home learning platform.

---

## purpose

LDS supports elementary and high school children with suspected or diagnosed learning disabilities. Our primary RISE instruction program targets student-specific learning needs and provides one-to-one, customized, remedial instruction and tutoring. Since 1970, LDS has sought to ensure the most vulnerable children in our community are supported by making our programs financially accessible and inclusive.

---

## mission

Our mission is to empower all children and youth with learning disabilities to recognize their unique strengths and develop the tools to achieve lifelong confidence and success.

---

## vision

We believe that all children should have access to the academic support they need to succeed. LDS is focused on promoting community awareness and fostering a greater understanding of the issues and challenges faced by children with learning differences. Through early intervention, our goal is to make a transformative difference in the learning and life outcomes of students. Our ultimate goal is to effect system change with wide-ranging societal benefits.

## service principles

### holistic

We coordinate with parents and guardians, general classroom teachers, resource teachers, counsellors, psychologists, family doctors, pediatricians and other professionals to build a full picture of each student's learning profile.

### individualized

We develop customized learning plans and practice careful instructor matching for each unique student.

### accessible & inclusive

We work to design our spaces and deliver our programming so that students and families find them inclusive and physically as well as financially accessible.

### technology enhanced

We are integrating assistive technologies into programs and making these available to empower students and enhance student learning and progress.

### integrated

We strive to complement and enhance students' experiences at school and to empower children and families toward self-advocacy.

# values

We are driven by and committed to the following core values: community, kindness, acceptance, and achievement. Here's what our students and families have to say.

## achievement

*"The instructor assigned to us by LDS is amazing at getting my daughter engaged and excited to learn. She has grown by leaps and bounds and is getting better at reading all the time. Thank you I could not do this alone!"*

- mother of a grade 3 student

## acceptance

*"My child can't wait to come to camp each morning. The inclusive environment that LDS creates allows my child to express themselves and feel confident with who they are and one where they don't feel judged or excluded. We are excited about LDS and can't wait for Fall 1:1 instruction where my child can continue to grow and feel confident."*

- mother of a grade 5 student

## community

*"Thank you again for all the staff at LDS. My daughter had so much fun! As soon as I pick her up after camp every day, she is very excited to tell me what she did. What a great improvement! I really can't wait for more great things to happen! "*

- parent of a summer camper

## kindness

*"Just dropping a note to say that [ my daughter ] is enjoying her instruction sessions and finding them both really helpful! This is great news, I am really pleased. She finds [ her instructor's ] choice of reading matter very interesting - donkeys and hippos. She has found it easier to read and research her science project since starting. And she said she is finding her math sessions with her other instructor really, really helpful! She can tell a difference at school already. "*

- mother of a grade 6 student



# message from the Executive Director

On a world stage, it's a given that 2020's defining feature was the COVID-19 pandemic. I am exceedingly proud that, despite the pervasive impact of the pandemic, we did not let it define LDS. Thanks to years of robust planning and management, we were able to nimbly build on our foundations, innovating to create more and increasingly accessible programs and supports for our students and their families.

I am proud of our families, who have shown incredible resilience over the past year and continue to demonstrate an unwavering dedication to supporting their children's learning, social-emotional, and related needs at an extraordinary time. As a result of school disruptions and increased remote schooling, many families have become more involved in their child's learning. We are pleased that, with the support of new funders, we have been able to grow our programs to include many that have parent participation or family coaching aspects (including PEERS, RISE to Readiness, Family Coaching), helping to empower parents and guardians to be advocates for their child's learning needs.

I am proud of our growing community collaborations. This past year we have created dozens of collaborations and partnerships with other institutions, companies, and organizations in our local and national communities who share our dedication to excellence. Each collaboration translates directly into more financially accessible services, diversified programming options for varied learning and social-emotional needs, and higher quality curriculum and educational supports.

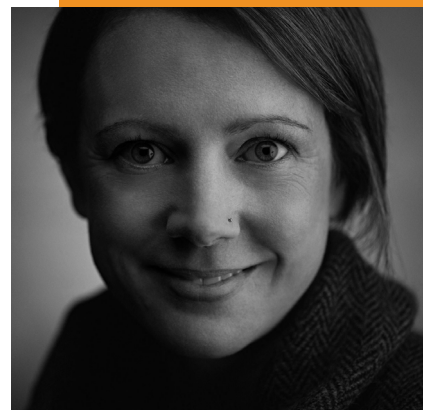
Finally, I am proud of our expanding community of supporters, funders and donors. 2020 set records for LDS, in terms of number of new supporters, size of our internal bursary fund, and number of children and youth served. Every new foundation, corporate sponsor, government funding program and individual donor has made a significant difference in ensuring our programming was available to the most vulnerable learners whose families were hit the hardest by the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

I am confident that in several years' time, we will look back on 2020 and see not the devastation of COVID, but rather the power of community. Thank you to each and every person involved in our growing community of families, students, staff, partners, funders and donors. We are here, thriving, because of you and remain proudly in service to transform the lives and learning outcomes of the current and future generations of our communities.

Yours in community,



**Rachel S. Forbes**  
Executive Director





## message from the Board Chair



2020 was a transformative year for the Learning Disabilities Society. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we transformed the ways in which we could offer our services and remain accessible and inclusive. We transformed our programming through the development of additional services that supported children and youth in increasingly comprehensive ways. We transformed our technology platform through the development of our online service and our assistive technology program. We transformed our partnership network through the addition of impactful new educational, community, technology and financial partners. And we transformed our resources with significant increases in funding and investment in staff and instructors. And with our dedication to excellence through expertise and technology during 2020 we transformed the learning and life outcomes of more children and youth than ever before.

On behalf of the LDS Board, I sincerely thank our dedicated, passionate, and resourceful staff and instructors for your courageous and inspiring work this past year. Your unwavering commitment to our values and individualized student-centered approach through unprecedented challenge stands as a testament to your resolve to help vulnerable students when they need it the most. Your actions have made a transformative difference in the lives of so many children and youth in our region with profound short, medium and long-term positive community impact.

Thank you to our Board of Directors for your dedicated commitment to our cause and mission and the generous volunteering of your time and resources.

Our LDS community continues to grow and we thank all of our student families, education partners, community partners, and media supporters for all of your heartwarming, wonderful support.

None of our work would be possible without the ongoing support from our thoughtful and caring donors, sponsors, and financial partners. We are ever grateful for your kind and generous commitment of your financial support, time and enthusiasm that have enabled us to continue to innovate and grow our services to support an increasing number of vulnerable children and youth in increasingly comprehensive ways.

With your ongoing support in 2021 we look forward to continuing the advancement of our mission to support all children and youth with learning differences achieve lifelong confidence and success!

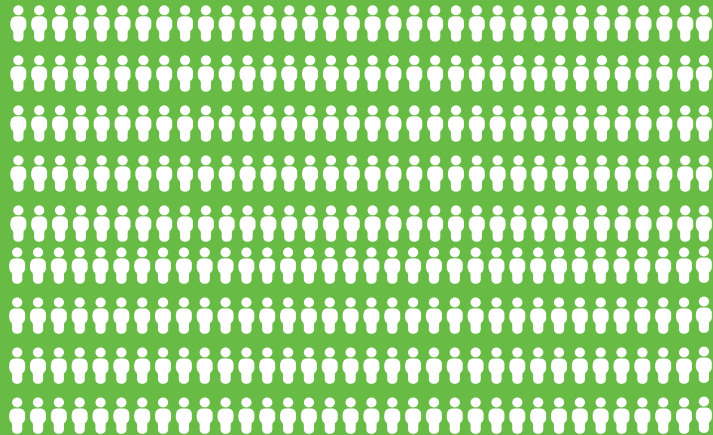
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory D. Sullivan".

**Gregory D. Sullivan, Ph.D**  
Board Chair

# 2020 at a glance

306

UNIQUE STUDENTS  
SERVED IN 2020  
ACROSS ALL  
PROGRAMS

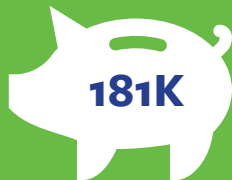


50 YEARS  
SERVING CHILDREN  
WITH LEARNING  
DIFFERENCES

30

REMEDIAL  
INSTRUCTORS

with specialized training  
supporting students with  
learning disabilities social-  
emotional, mental health,  
attention deficit and other  
needs



in donations raised for  
our internal bursary fund  
during our 2020 RISE to the  
Challenge \$100K for 100 Kids  
fundraising campaign

15

features in local  
television, radio,  
print and online  
news outlets

4500 families  
provided with  
information and  
resources



RISE at School  
programs in local and  
independent schools  
throughout the  
region



# transforming lives through learning

*"My daughter has been enjoying her sessions with our tutor using TutorCruncher and LessonSpace, it's almost a better way to interact for her as she is a "techie" kind of kid so anything on a computer she likes! Overall big thumbs up at this end. We'll certainly sign up for regular sessions when they become available."*

**- father of grade 7 student**

*"We discovered LDS and started with a pro day camp and my daughter loved all the people there. We then started instruction and her instructor was amazing at following where she was at and using things that she loved to keep her attention. I love that after every lesson they record how focused the child was and how motivated the child was. They also let you know what they are working on so you can use that information to connect with the school if you need to. I am so happy I found LDS and look forward to continue doing instruction and camps and watching my daughter learn to enjoy learning!"*

**- mother of a grade 3 student**

*"The LDS instructor is an integral part of my son's education, as she helps him with his novel study for language arts. The magnitude of this assignment would be overwhelming for him, if not for this help."*

**- mother of LDS student**

LDS remedial instruction programs follow our unique Research-informed Individualized Student Education (RISE) methodology and are pursued with dedication to excellence through expertise and technology. LDS offers one-to-one programs for students who are not meeting learning objectives in the classroom and need extra support. RISE programs aim to help students with diagnosed or suspected learning disabilities develop learning strategies in reading, written expression, and/or math. In addition, RISE programs focus on improving self-esteem, self-advocacy, and student's understanding of their unique strengths so they may find success in school. RISE also represents our mission to help students rise — in confidence and ability—and realize better learning and life outcomes.

In direct response to the growing and diversifying needs of the students and families we serve, in 2020 we were able to grow enrollment in our core programs and develop and deliver many new programs that include RISE methodology at their core. RISE at our Learning Centres is our one-to-one remedial instruction, homework support and explicit instruction at LDS East Vancouver and North Vancouver Learning Centres. RISE at Home is the same programming delivered through our adaptive and interactive online learning platform. RISE at School is our one-to-one instruction delivered at and in partnership with a growing number of local elementary and secondary schools.

In 2020, we delivered our programming to almost 100 more students than in 2019, representing a 38% increase.

---

## Speech Language Pathology sessions

New in 2020, our Speech Language Pathology (SLP) sessions provide another service to our growing portfolio of holistic and comprehensive supports for children and youth with learning differences. Our SLPs work with you and your child to establish student-centered goals. Using evidence-based methods, we create a speech therapy program for your child, ensuring that sessions are fun, motivating and goal-oriented.





## camps: RISE & Solve and RISE & Tell

In 2020 we introduced RISE Summer Camps, offering two themes to campers: RISE & Tell and RISE & Solve. The customized programming of our camps responds to the campers' individual student intake assessments and includes fun, skill- and confidence-building activities, social skills, mental health support strategies and key learning fundamentals for students with suspected or diagnosed learning differences. RISE Camps were a big success in 2020, and we are offering them again in 2021 during spring break and the summer.

We would like to thank CKNW Kids Fund and the Hamber Foundation for support of our inaugural year of RISE Summer Camps.

### LDS SUMMER CAMPS 2020



*"Thank you so much! I am emotional right now because I have never seen [my daughter] this way, how happy she is during the camp. Actually, during our prayer time, she always mentions how grateful she is going to LDS. She always has a story to tell soon as I pick her up from LDS. ... I can't thank you enough. One day, I will be able to give back to the organization."*

– mother of a grade 6 student

*"My daughter enjoys the program and she said the instructors are very nice. Thank you for giving my daughter the opportunity to experience this educational camp. I am looking forward to her improvement and confidence in learning."*

– parent of a grade 5 student

## resource highlights

RISE is an individualized program – we know that each student has a unique way of learning. Therefore, we draw from a variety of resources and curricula to develop a customized plan for our one-to-one instruction. In addition to our growing in person and online resource library, as well as our RISE-Assistive Technology studio, our curricula options grew in 2020 to include:

- Sound Partners
- REWARDS
- Wordly Wise
- Social Thinking
- Reading A to Z
- Orton-Gillingham
- Words Their Way
- Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD)
- JUMP Math
- Singapore Math
- Dynamic Math





---

## instructors

Our group of incredible instructors forms the foundation of our RISE program. We recruit, hire and train instructors with diverse skill sets and abilities to provide exceptional support for LDS students. Our growing group of professional, dedicated and passionate instructors place LDS students in the center, providing customized student learning to create an individualized experience for each of their students and incorporating technology tools to deliver specialized education that targets a student's specific learning challenges.

Below is a sample of biographies from our exceptional group of instructors. You can read a current, full list of biographies on our site, under "Our Team".

### Anisa

Anisa is a BC Certified teacher with a strong background in Chemistry and Math. She is working on completing her Diploma in Special Education from UBC. Anisa has worked with students at all levels, from elementary through to high school, and she has taught a wide range of subjects including Chemistry, Math and English. Her favorite subject to teach is Math. She teaches because she loves the "Ah Ha" moments and enjoys seeing students achieve success. In addition to keeping busy with teaching, Anisa is kept on her toes by her two daughters who are navigating learning online. As both a parent and instructor, Anisa offers a unique perspective on setting children up for home learning success.

### Gabe

Gabe is passionate about inclusive and accessible pedagogy — particularly as it relates to mathematics, a subject with a history of traumatizing and exclusionary teaching practices. He finds this especially unfortunate because mathematics can be an incredibly uplifting subject, full of elegance and beauty. At LDS, Gabe helps students of all backgrounds achieve their mathematical goals, whether that be adding fractions or integrating functions. He is also excited to support students in reading and writing, and to learn more about doing so in an effective, learner-focused way. A favourite quote of his comes from the mathematical physicist Michael Atiyah: "I always try to understand why things work. I'm not interested in getting a formula without knowing what it means. I always try to dig behind the scenes, so if I have a formula, I know why it's there."

### Hiu

Hiu has 15 years of combined experience as a BC Certified Teacher, RCM Music Teacher and Volunteer Tutor at the BC Dyslexia Centre. Growing up in Vancouver, he attended UBC and completed a BA in English, BEd and TESL Diploma. Hiu is also certified as both an IDA Structured Literacy Dyslexia Interventionist and AOGPE Associate Member. Hiu takes great joy in tutoring children with learning differences, and is excited to be involved with LDS. In his spare time, Hiu can be found travelling with his wife and two children, or going flat out on some racetrack.

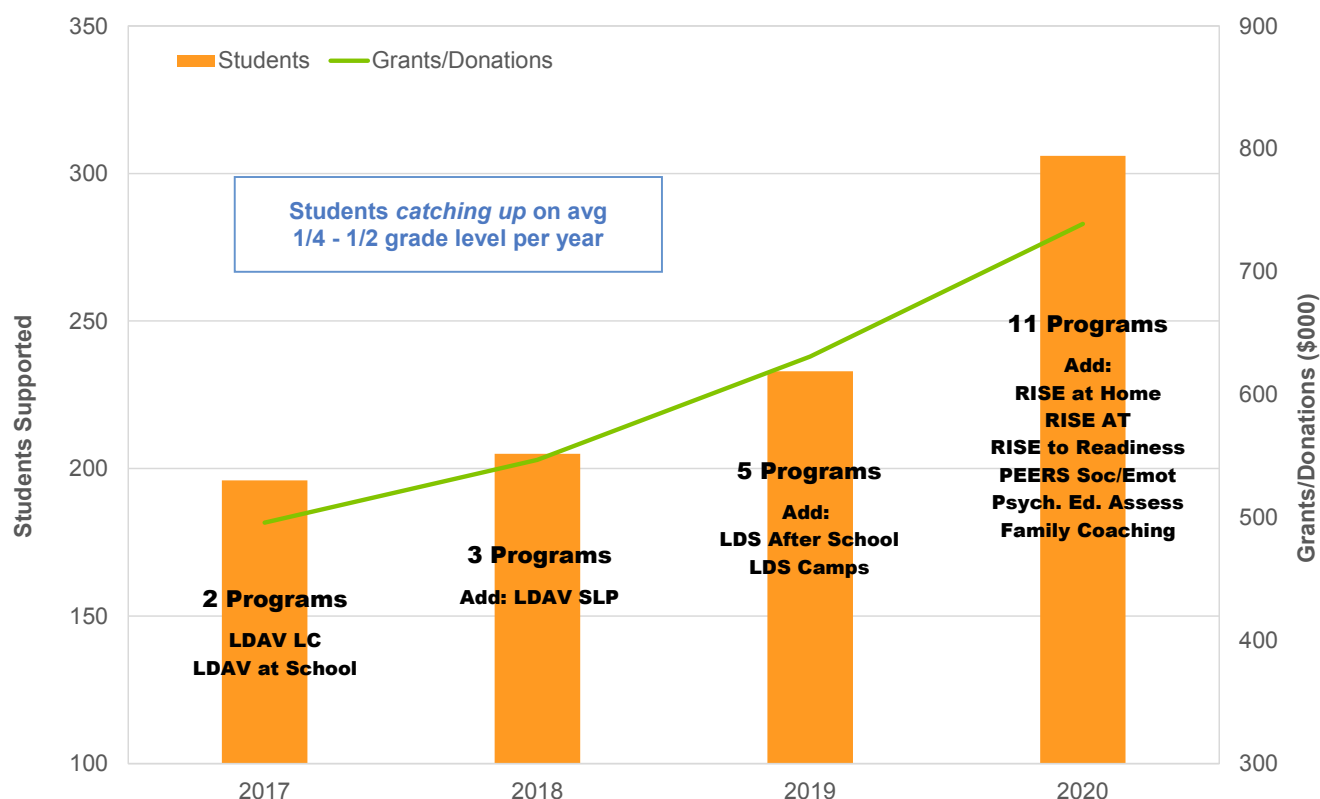
### June

Originally from Scotland June moved to Vancouver in 2019. She is a linguist (a French and Italian speaker) who is passionate about helping students with learning differences and she specializes in students with specific learning disorders. Trained originally as an elementary teacher, she has a wealth of varied teaching experience in ELL and remedial teaching to children and young adults. She trained as a Specialist Dyslexia Teacher at Manchester Metropolitan University in 2009 and she taught at a large high school in Cheshire as a one-to-one remedial teacher for 10 years.



# growth & impact

**LDS Growth and Impact: 2017-2020**



*\*M. Sager, Internal LDS Report 2020*

The above graphic shows the growth in our LDS financial support from donors and grantors over the past 4 years. This increase in financial support has enabled us to transform our programming from 2 core programs in 2017 to 11(!) programs in 2020 and significant growth in children and youth supported from just under 200 in 2017 to over 300(!) in 2020. With continued increase in our capacity, we are continuing to add additional programs in 2021 and further increase the number of children and youth served. And our longitudinal studies of LDS student progress conducted with UBC show that our LDS students are now catching up 1/4 to 1/2 grade level vs general classroom peers each year! These transformative changes in individual outcomes multiplied through by our growing annual enrollment are translating to increasing significant, material positive impact in our community and region.



# excellence through expertise & technology

During 2020 with increased LDS resources and capacity we undertook to develop our new assistive technology program, RISE-AT. The goals of this program were to further the accessibility and inclusiveness of our support, to provide students additional opportunities to leverage their individual strengths, and to help LDS instructors teach more effectively, promote greater student engagement, and to enhance student learning and progress.

In the late spring of 2020, with initial support from one of our Canada Summer Jobs grants, we hired a recent university graduate with a Master's degree in engineering as our Assistive Technology Specialist and conducted extensive research investigating assistive technology usage around the world to support individuals with learning differences. With knowledge gained from our review, we then initiated discussions with a number of leading assistive technology organizations and were fortunate to secure product and service support from 15 technology companies who now sponsor our RISE-AT program. With this generous support, we then carefully assembled a group of hardware and software tools that could provide new strategies and avenues to support our students and help to build greater engagement, confidence and ability to self-regulate.

---

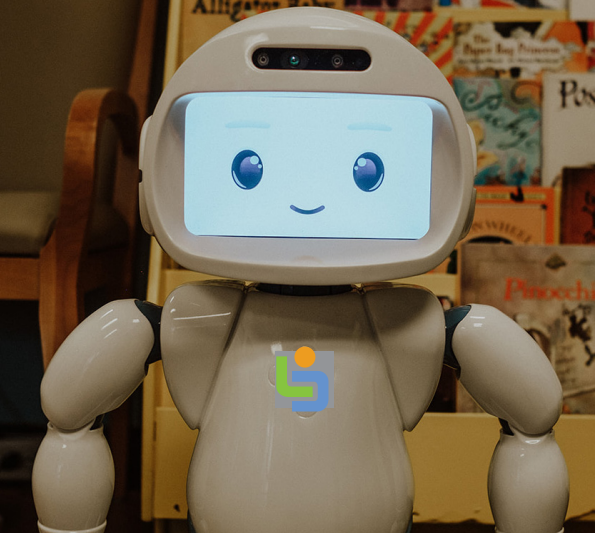
Our RISE-AT selected tools included: SMART Board and SMART software from SMART Technologies, Read&Write by Texthelp, Mindmeister by MeisterLabs, BeeLine Reader by BeeLine Reader, Juno by FrontRow, Grammarly by Grammarly, Echo SmartPen by Livescribe, C-Pen Reader by Scanning Pens, Lexilight by Lexilife, specialized monitors by Microsoft, Muse by InteraXon, Focus Calm by BrainCo, calming weighted accessories from Harkla, Osmo education games by Osmo, and LIVEIT programs by LIVEIT.



*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.*

**- Melanie Hanson, whose daughter in grade 3 has a diagnosed learning disability.**





To further inspire community engagement and access, in the late summer 2020 we built our RISE-AT Studio which showcased leading-edge assistive hardware and software tools and was available for public access and trial. The goal of our RISE-AT Studio was 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.

*My son has shown an interest in writing well in his school assignments and often has me help him edit an assignment before it is due. He has been very open to using Grammarly as an integrated tool in Microsoft Word and often uses it as he is writing and as a final check before he hands it in. Between the help he gets from me and the extra support of Grammarly he is able to hand in well polished writing that he feels a deep sense of pride in. For a child with a written expression disorder it is really fantastic to see him use the tools available to him and flourish!*

**- parent of an LDS student and early AT – adopter**

*Our company is honoured to be partnering with LDS to help students with learning differences. 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.*

**- Jeffrey Kassa, MeisterLab**

Building on the success of LDS RISE-AT, in the late fall, 2020 we formed a partnership with the University of Waterloo's Social and Intelligent Robotics Research Laboratory (SIRRL) to study the potential for assistive robot technology incorporation in programs for children with learning differences. This exciting initiative expanded our assistive technology program to incorporate developments in state-of-the-art assistive robotics with multiple potential benefits that included increased engagement, improved speech language progress, enhanced social-emotional learning, and enhanced accessibility during periods with restrictive COVID-19 protocols. The SIRRL partnership provided LDS the opportunity to study the incorporation of leading-edge social robotics technology that have been used successfully to advance social skills and emotion control with children with cognitive disabilities including autism.

We plan to commence a pilot assistive robot study with students at our Learning Centre starting in 2021 with significant potential for program expansion over time.

*I am excited to partner with the Learning Disabilities Society to investigate assistive robot interaction with students with learning and related disabilities. During my research over the past 20 years, I have observed remarkable engagement of children with autism with assistive robots that the children found highly approachable. I am excited to extend this work to now include students with learning and related disabilities and to incorporate our findings into individual programs with very material, positive impact.*

**- Professor Kerstin Dautenhahn, Director SIRRL.**



# accessible & inclusive support

Access to much-needed learning support is not equally distributed amongst all families. A key part of LDS's mission is to level the playing field and ensure all students have access to the learning supports they need to succeed in school and throughout life. In 2020 we made great strides towards removing some key barriers to support that many families face, including facilitating access to below-market sliding scale psychoeducational assessments, providing social skills support to teens and guardians, and creating a fully funded back to high school transition program.

## psychoeducational, neuropsychological, & level B assessments

LDS is thrilled that we are able to offer referrals for psychoeducational and neuropsychological evaluations to many of our families. In 2020 we launched a collaboration with the University of British Columbia's Psychological Services and Counselling Training Centre (PSCTC). The PSCTC is a university-based setting for clinical training and research within the Faculty of Education. Through this partnership, we are able to refer qualifying LDS families for affordable assessments over a time span that is potentially years faster than currently available via other means.

We also added to our in-house evaluation and assessment portfolio and now have three staff who are trained and qualified to deliver the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement Third Edition (KTEA™-3), an individually administered battery that provides in-depth assessment and evaluation of key academic skills.

Having this additional evidence and deeper understanding about a child's learning strengths and stretches helps both families and LDS be better advocates for each child and ensure they get learning supports that are tailored to their needs.





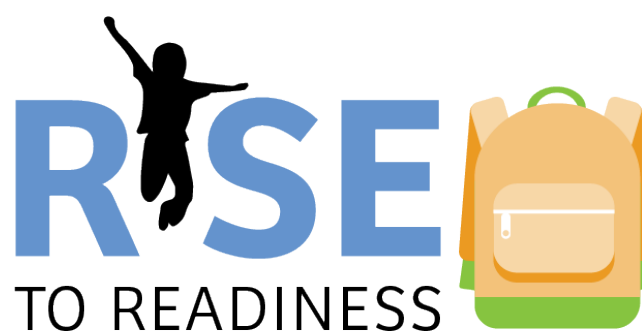


## family coaching

---

LDS Family Coaching was developed in direct response to the needs of our parents and guardians, particularly as they navigated the need for additional at-home learning support during school disruptions. Family Coaching pairs guardians and parents with our trained coaches to provide guidance, strategies, tools, and mentorship to help best support the learning needs of each child. Our goal with Family Coaching is to provide knowledge, tools, and techniques to give parents and guardians the confidence to help set their child up for success.

We would like to thank Community Foundations of Canada, via Vancouver Foundation, who provided support for family coaching in 2020 and through early 2021 for those families who live within the City of Vancouver.



## RISE to Readiness

---

RISE to Readiness was a new, COVID-responsive program funded by the Government of Canada's Emergency Community Support Fund through the United Way of the Lower Mainland.

The primary aim of the program was to assist students and their families prepare for returning to school in September by developing planning, organizational, health and safety, and stress and anxiety reduction skills and strategies. The program included both student-specific and guardian-specific sessions. The goal was to facilitate a successful return to the classroom in September following a several month-long break for most students due to COVID-19.

## PEERS

---

In 2020, we trained staff in PEERS and recruited for our first parent and teenager cohort, which was delivered in early 2021.

Developed by Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson at UCLA, the Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS®) is world-renowned for providing evidence-based social skills programming to preschoolers, adolescents and young adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, depression, and socio-emotional issues. Research studies indicate that PEERS improves teen social skills and mental health symptoms, as well as family stress levels.

We would like to thank the CLICK (Contributing to Lives of Inner City Kids) Foundation for offering bursaries for PEERS participants.





# partnering with our community

In 2020, LDS was able to grow and develop our community partnerships to enhance the quality, diversity and accessibility of services we offer to our families.

To help us provide the highest quality research and evidence-based education services, our current education partners include UBC Departments of Education and Psychology, University of Waterloo's Social and Intelligent Robotics Research Laboratory (SIRRL), and the Possibility Engineering and Research Lab (PEARL) at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital.

LDS also provides volunteering opportunities through our programs like RISE after School for senior high school and university students to enable volunteer learning opportunities and support LDS instruction after school.

We have been fortunate to develop community partnerships with other nonprofit organizations and to receive professional advice and capacity building services from businesses and organizations with various expertise. Some examples include:

- The Social Venture Partners Vancouver Information Technology Community of Practice was able to help us transform our operations and our programming by conducting research on various software options, allowing us to make an informed and credible choice and mobilize quickly to respond to the needs of our community.
- Stigma Free Society, which does great work in de-stigmatizing mental health and other 'invisible' health issues, has been a great new collaborator, and we have been very proud to integrate some of their training into our programming.
- SAP selected LDS as one of a few very fortunate recipients of their global Social Sabbatical program, whereby three full time staff were seconded to our charity for two weeks in summer 2020 to help us with some technology-based problem solving. It was wonderful to have their input and expertise to inform and facilitate our own growth and decision making!





## our technology partners and sponsors

---



BeeLine Reader



lexilife



PYXERA Global



texthelp®



Microsoft



HARKLA™



FocusCalm



mind  
meister



SAP

frontrow™  
your school. connected.

SMART™  
Technologies

muse™  
the brain sensina headband



grammarly

Livescribe

Osmo

scanningpens

## community collaborators

---

Dr. Candace Murray

T.J. Firenze of Firenze Financial

Greater Vancouver Board of Trade

Kenneth Gordon Maplewood School

Presentation House Theatre

University of British Columbia Faculty of Education,  
Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special  
Education

University of British Columbia Psychological Services &  
Counselling Training Centre (PSCTC)

Simon Fraser University Cooperative Education

University of British Columbia Cooperative Education

University of Waterloo's Social and Intelligent Robotics  
Research Laboratory

PEARL (Possibility Engineering And Research Lab) at Holland  
Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

Douglas College

SAP

Social Venture Partners Vancouver – Communities of Practice

Tekworks

Vancity Economic Inclusion group

Vancity Community Investment group

PlayRoly

OurKids

Chatterblock

VancouverMom

NorthShore News

Postmedia

BC Catholic

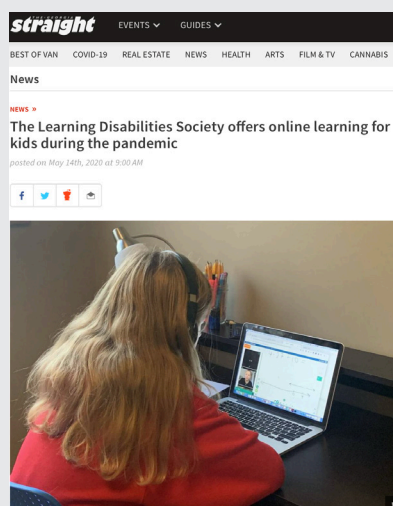
Catholic Educators Conference



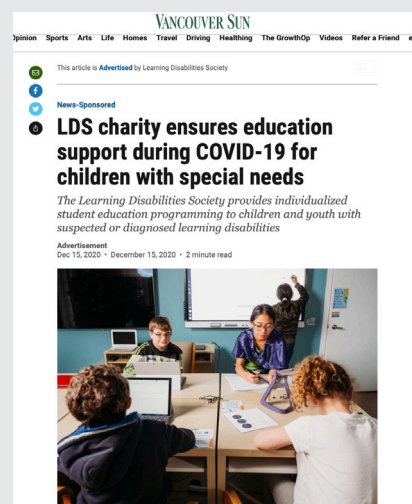
# news & highlights

In 2020 we were pleased to have our initiatives and activities featured in over a dozen media stories in local and provincial television, radio, print and online publications. We were also interviewed on social media and as part of several stories on the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable learners. Such coverage is vital in fulfilling our goal of raising awareness and understanding of learning differences, of LDS, and of the students and families we serve.

In 2020 we also disseminated resources and information to our families and to the public regularly through our ARISE monthly newsletter, online and in person workshops, social media channels, and our informative blog (including the internationally-clicked comprehensive resource list, “Online Learning Tools and Resources for At-Home Study”).



May 14, 2020 – The Georgia Straight profiles LDS’s RISE at Home remote learning program, and invites families to apply for the service.



December 15, 2020 – The Vancouver Sun profiles LDS’s new assistive technology programs to help keep high quality research-based learning supports accessible for all children with learning differences.



December 16, 2020 – Global News features LDS as part of its Month of Giving Back. In this feature, our Executive Director Rachel Forbes speaks about our mission and our efforts to continually increase our accessibility and services to support more children and youth.



# human resources

---



## **Sierra Gemma, Communications & Fundraising Manager**

Sierra (she/her) is the parent of an adult child with a learning difference and a former LDS parent. Sierra returned to the LDS family, bringing ten years of experience writing for digital communications, grants, and fundraising and 15 years of volunteer and paid work with nonprofit organizations. She has a BA in History and Sociology and an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia. Her passion is writing, and her literary nonfiction has garnered a National Newspaper Award and a National Magazine Award. She has recently completed courses in Foundations in Diversity and Inclusion, Building Donor Diversity, and the Art of Storytelling in the Digital Age. Sierra's other interests include social justice, community building, reading, and crafting.



## **Sarah Vopni, Community Manager**

Sarah (she/her) is our Community Manager who brings kindness, positive energy, and a big-picture vision to our team. Sarah has a background in public relations and communications from Humber College and has a BA in Global Development from Queen's University. She believes in and is excited to be furthering the goals of LDS to impact and support individual lives to help create positive change both personally and in communities. Most recently, Sarah has enrolled in a nonprofit management certificate at Simon Fraser University to take a new approach to management and LDS's reach its vision and mandate.



## **Melissa Sager, Associate Director of Learning Support**

Melissa (she/her) has over fifteen years of experience working with children and youth that have special needs in both public and private settings. While completing her Master's in Education, she taught diverse student populations with learning disabilities in a special education classroom. She became very interested in the field of Behaviour Analysis and later worked with several organizations to implement early intervention programs for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

After seeing the positive impact individualized instruction had on her students over many years, Melissa decided to create a small "homeschool" where she focused on the unique strengths, needs, and interests her of students and was responsible for implementing the curriculum for grades 4-7. She worked with a team of multidisciplinary professionals to address academic, social, emotional, behavioural, and executive function goals, while nurturing maximum student engagement through interest-based learning. She is grateful to be a part of LDS, where she continues to collaborate with specialists, instructors, students, parents, schools, and staff to help children and youth reach their full potential.



## board of directors

---

Our Board of Directors is comprised of a dedicated group of professionals with a breadth of experience including in special education, accounting and finance, risk management, governance, advancement, law, and business development. Each director is passionate about our mission, and many of our directors have close connections to youth with learning differences.

In 2020 we were grateful for the ongoing volunteer contributions of Susan Aitchison, Kevin Riley, Greg Sullivan, Ph.D, Hon. Wendy Harris Q.C., Melinda Markey and Hamlet Abnoui. We welcomed two key new directors to the Board as well as to our Communications and Educations Committees, respectively:



### **Joyce Wagenaar, Communications Consultant**

Joyce is a communications and public affairs professional with 20 years of progressive experience and is recognized for effectively managing the public perception of an organization's reputation through strategic advice, issues management, media relations and proactive public awareness initiatives.

Joyce has a Bachelor of Arts in Communications from Simon Fraser University located in British Columbia. She is trained in public engagement and has a Certificate in Public Participation from the International Association of Public Participation as well as having a Certificate in Digital Marketing from Red Academy.

Joyce chairs LDS's Communications Committee and assists in amplifying our programs and impact in the community.



### **Dr. Nancy Perry, Ph.D, University of British Columbia, Professor and Dorothy Lam Chair in Special Education**

Dr. Perry worked as a classroom and resource teacher in school districts in British Columbia, Canada, before obtaining her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1996. Today she is the Dorothy Lam Chair in Special Education and Professor of Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education at the University of British Columbia (UBC), Canada. There, she teaches courses in two program areas—Human Development, Learning, and Culture; and Special Education—and supports students in a B.Ed. cohort that focuses on promoting self-regulated learning (SRL) in the middle years. She is a recipient of UBC's Killam Teaching Prize and the Robbie Case Memorial Award for Outstanding Contributions to Educational Psychology in Canada.

Her research has two main goals: (a) understanding how children develop self-regulated learning (SRL); and (b) working with teachers to design activities and structure interactions with students to support SRL. Dr. Perry is a main contributor to our understanding that young children can and do regulate for learning and how classroom tasks, instructional practices, and interpersonal relationships influence their SRL. She is also a leader in the development and use of assessments that reveal children's self-regulation in situ. Dr. Perry is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association (APA), has served as President of Division 15, Educational Psychology, of APA, and the Canadian Association of Educational Psychologists, as Associate Editor for the Journal of Learning and Instruction, and on editorial boards of the top journals in Educational Psychology, including the Journal of Educational Psychology, Educational Psychologist, Journal of Learning and Instruction, and Metacognition and Learning.





# development

We are dedicated to our mission to serve all children and youth with suspected or diagnosed learning differences. In most years this requires that we develop financial support for at least 60% of families, and in years such as 2020 with significant social and economic stress this percentage climbed to above 85%. Consequently, LDS seeks financial support from a wide range of organizations and individuals in order to ensure ongoing accessible and inclusive support for a growing number of families.

## grants

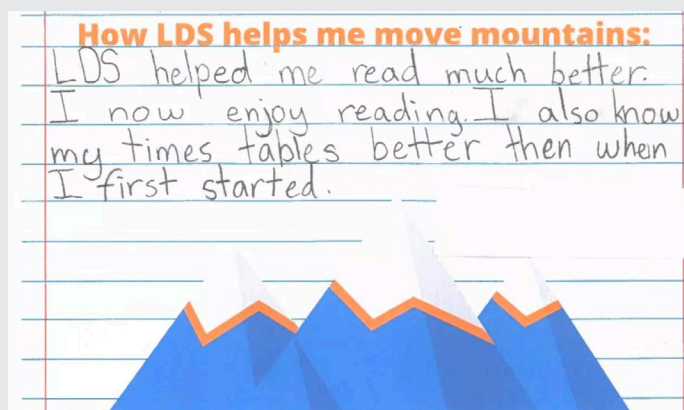
Grants are a critical part of our diversified revenue sources. In 2020, we were grateful to receive significant program, COVID-responsive and core funding from Social Venture Partners Vancouver, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia Gaming Branch, Community Foundations of Canada, Vancity, Vancouver Foundation, United Way of the Lower Mainland, Port of Vancouver, RBC Foundation, CKNW Kids Fund, and several anonymous funding sources. We also would like to acknowledge external grant funds that go directly to our families in order to assist them, including from CKNW Kids Fund, Variety Children's Charity, Jordan's Principle, and BC government autism funding unit.

## 100K for 100 Kids RISE to the Challenge Campaign

Through the kind generosity of our donors, our 2020 \$100K for 100Kids campaign raised an amazing \$181,461! The thoughtful contributions of 214 donors have enabled us to support over 180 children and youth in 2021 with our expanded comprehensive programming. We were overwhelmed by the outpouring of support from individual, foundation, and corporate identities—especially in the final weeks of RISE to the Challenge—and were touched by heartwarming notes of encouragement. To every donor, we thank you for making a difference for the students, families, and communities that LDS serves. With your help, 2021 will be bringing further transformation in the lives of children and youth with learning differences.



We are very grateful for the ongoing support of our individual donors, corporate sponsors, and granting partners for their endorsement of the LDS mission. Please join us in applauding the following individuals, companies, foundations, and agencies for their efforts:



## our donors

Alice Santilli	Dave Eleiter	John Horning	Pamela & David Richardson Family Fund, held at Nicola Wealth Private Giving Foundation	Shelley Gray
Almunir Kamdar	Dave Harris	Johnny Chen		Sierra Skye Gemma
Alysia Baldwin	Dave Panko	Joyce Wagenaar		Sonia Basso
Amy Chessell	David Toole	Kari Koskela	Patricia Rupnow	Sonia Basso & Bruce Barker
Andrea Davidson	Dr. James Wortman & Anne LeBlanc	Karina Ho	Paul Sarachman	St. Mark's College, UBC
Andrea Prout-Bernett	Dr. Meagan Smith	Khamil Alhade	Phil and Cathy McLay	Stephanie Snow
Angus Reid	Edward & Dana Wright	L. Achtemichuk	Praveen & Anuja Varshney	Steven
Anna Wex	Edwin Ochmanek	Lara Kilbertus	Rachel Forbes	Stewart McCuaig
Anonymous Donors	Eleanor Melanson	Larry Peterson	Reg Chow	Sue Jamieson
Anton Minnion	Else & Greg Sullivan	Laura Covaza	Rick & Kelly Eng	Susan Dvorak
Arianne Bilas	Emily Sullivan	Laura Sullivan	Robert Bernett	Susan Yurkovich
Ashish KC	Emma Sutcliffe	Marianne Wilson	Robert McDonald	The Geyer Family
Audree Munn	EMSAY Studio	Marisa Cruickshank	Robertshaw Family	Thelma Masindo
Bernie & Grace Hensel	Ericka Parr	Mark Bromfield	Robyn Rapske	Thomas A & Ida M Tait
Brian Duong	Eva Cipera & Dan Howe	Mark Brown	Rohan Roy	Timothy Hoggan
Brian H	Finan Family	Martin Ertl	Ronith Cogswell & Paul Dorby	Tina Caron Ahroon
Brigid	Fletcher Family Foundation	Mary Addison	Rowan Minnion	Tony Guglielmin
Bruce Forbes	Franco Trasolini	Mary Hammond	Rubia Apdal-Villamin	Trista Baldwin
Buchanan & Chris Mullen	Gillian Verge	Matt Davison	Ryan Vopni	Tyler Fairbrother
Caitlin Lloyd	Glenn Eleiter	Matthew Moradian	Salina, Ara, Hamlet	V.V.
Carlo & Sophia De Mello	Han Lei Huang	Melissa Henderson	Sally Morrison	Vicki Vopni
Chris Sager	Harold & Margaret Hoffman	Michael Manion	Sara L	Wendy & Eric Harris
Chris Stuart	Helpalittle Foundation	Mike Bryden	Sarah Vopni	Wendy Simmonds
Christa Couture	Jeff Sterzuk	Naomi Devine	Sarah W	Westbourne Projects Ltd.
Christine Bergeron	Jennifer Dober	Naslishah Thony	Scot Atkinson & Lisa Dalton	William Flood
Christopher Bjerrisgaard	Jillian Gear	Neil Jensen	Scott Martin	Windsor Plywood Foundation
Christopher Thomson	Jim & Susan Aitchison	Nejeed Kassam	Sean Luck	Zhivago
Dan Howe	JoAnn Kwantes	Nick Maile	Semanur Gulen	Marakathalingasivam
Danielle Cowley	Joel Nitikman & Liny Chan	Paisley Murray	Shawn Aspden	
Darya Abdollahi		Pam Sack		

## our sponsors





# 2021 to date

We are actively and strategically building on the successes and growth of 2020, and are very excited about the additional services and benefits we'll be bringing to our families and our community in 2021. In addition to growth and enhancements of our existing programs, here's a sneak peek at some key developments taking place in 2021.

## LDS Access

LDS Access is an electric vehicle mobile classroom service that will provide in-neighbourhood specialized instruction and mental health support to children and youth in communities where they live. Look for our LDS Access mobile classroom hitting the road in summer 2021.



## Early RISers

The early childhood years are critical for all children and especially so for those with learning and related disabilities. It is important that young children with special needs are actively engaged in learning in the early years to minimize performance lags early in primary school. Research shows that early intervention accelerates cognitive and social development, reduces behavioural problems, and can prevent the occurrence of secondary compounding problems.

With growth in our LDS programs, we have received increasing demand for early childhood programming focused on ages 3-6 yrs. We are pleased that, with foundational support from Social Venture Partners Vancouver's Early Years program, we will be able to develop and deliver the first of many cohorts of Early RISers in autumn 2021.

## RISE TEAM

RISE TEAM combines our Research-informed Individualized Student Education (RISE) with additional Training to become an Educational Advancement Mentor (TEAM) to help younger kids with learning differences. RISE TEAM participants receive remedial instruction and learning support, resume, cover and reference letter workshops, mentorship and leadership training, volunteer experience, and the opportunity to apply for paid work experience with LDS. This innovative employment readiness project is designed to help teens with learning differences transition from high school to paid employment. This program is generously funded by an Accessibility Project Grant via Disability Alliance British Columbia (DABC).





# financial update

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer's Report as at and for the year ended December 31, 2020

This report is intended to be read in conjunction with the audited financial statements of the Learning Disabilities Society of Greater Vancouver ("the Society") for the year ended December 31, 2020, on which MNP LLP issued a qualified opinion on May 20, 2021.

Over recent years the Society has established a key strategic focus on continuing to build the infrastructure to ensure the Society is able to the scale operations and provide services to the largest number of children and youth with learning differences possible. While the COVID-19 pandemic required the Society to adapt and change during 2020, the long-term strategic focus remains unchanged. We continue to focus on establishing a reliable and consistent funding base while being diligent in displaying fiscal responsibility with the concentrated use of funds to deliver our programs.

To mitigate the financial impact of COVID-19 the Society applied for and received Government Emergency Wage Subsidy and Temporary Wage Subsidy, Government Emergency Rent Subsidy, and the Canada Emergency Business Account loan, receiving approximately \$230,000 in funding. This funding ensured the Society was able to adapt existing programs and develop additional services to remain accessible for those who rely on our services.

The Society continues to prepare itself to provide services to an increasing number of children and youth with learning differences in future years. These include the following, which are reflected in the financial results for 2020:

- **Program Delivery and Organizational Staffing**

The Society continues to build our future program delivery staff, which is reflected in the increase in program expenditures wages and benefits from \$356,000 in 2019 to \$505,000 in 2020. This has allowed the Society to continue to expand on existing services and be innovative with new service models in 2020 and beyond.

- **Funding**

The Society continued to focus on securing additional funding to be used towards providing program services in future years. In addition to building on existing funding partnerships and our fundraising drive efforts, the Society was able to engage a number of new funding partners during 2020. The continued success of this initiative resulted in the Society obtaining grants and donations totaling \$734,000, compared to \$630,000 in 2019.

- **Administration Expenditure Limitation**

The Society continues to focus on limiting administrative expenditures and maximizing the effectiveness of directing funding resources towards delivering programs. In 2020, general and administrative expenditures were 8.3% of total expenditures (8.8% in 2019, 10.9% in 2018).

While the Society successfully continued a number of areas of focus during 2020, to ensure the success of future programs there continues to be a concentration on securing increased funding and the fiscally responsible use of all funding received. This focus is paramount in ensuring the Society is able to achieve our mission of ensuring children and youth with learning differences and their families have access to the tools they need to increase self-esteem and achieve transformative, lasting success in school and in life.





**LEARNING DISABILITIES  
SOCIETY OF GREATER  
VANCOUVER**

**Statement of Operations**  
for the year ended  
December 31, 2020

	2020	2019
<b>Program revenues</b>	\$ 250,756	\$ 267,989
<b>Program expenditures</b>		
Communications	62,427	21,329
Instructors	345,078	239,311
Learning Centre facilities	170,846	128,670
Training and development	12,101	47,410
Wages and benefits	504,642	356,084
	1,095,094	792,804
<b>General and administrative expenditures</b>		
Amortization of deferred equipment	(1,382)	(1,212)
Amortization of equipment	1,463	1,446
Interest and bank charges	8,883	7,204
Office and miscellaneous	28,817	26,044
Professional fees	10,363	7,688
Salaries and related benefits	52,001	35,339
	100,145	76,509
<b>Program loss before funding</b>	(944,483)	(601,324)
<b>Funding</b>		
Grants	423,820	418,287
Donations	309,923	212,891
Interest and other income	19,406	13,619
	753,149	644,797
<b>(Deficiency) excess of revenues over expenditures before other items</b>	(191,334)	43,473
<b>Other items</b>		
Government Emergency Rent Subsidy	9,060	—
Government Emergency Wage Subsidy and Temporary Wage Subsidy	180,656	—
Government forgiveness	10,000	—
(Loss) on sale of investments	(216)	—
	199,500	—
<b>Excess of revenues over expenditures for the year</b>	8,166	43,473

## Learning Disabilities Society

3292 East Broadway, Vancouver BC  
Coast Salish Territories  
V5M 1Z8

604.873.8139  
[info@ldsociety.ca](mailto:info@ldsociety.ca)

[ldsociety.ca](http://ldsociety.ca)