
2019

annual report



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about Learning Disabilities Society

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.

WHO WE ARE

Learning Disabilities Society of Greater Vancouver (LDS) is a growing, research-based, non-profit 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.



values & impact

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.

kindness

What a transformation in such a short time for my daughter. Every day after summer camp, she tells me how she had so much fun! Every day she would tell me enthusiastically what they did in camp and that the tutors and staff were very kind and amazing. After only one week, I saw her improvements in speaking, thinking, and self-confidence. I am very grateful to all the staff in LDS for the opportunity given to my daughter and I am looking forward for more of her improvements.... Thank you!

Parent of a grade 6 LDS student

achievement

From Grades 4 through 6, my son Jason received individualized instruction from LDS. He went from being a C- student to being a B+ student. When Jason graduated elementary school, he won the award for most improved student. Besides improved grades, my son experienced other outcomes from his LDS instruction. Over the three years that Jason attended sessions at LDS, his confidence, ability to advocate for himself in class, and organizational skills improved dramatically. He learned the tools he needed to be able to handle schoolwork and homework on his own. Jason's grades continued to improve and, by his senior year, he became an A/A+ student.

Mother of a former LDS student

acceptance

I thought I was alone—the only one who couldn't do the work. Now I know that LD is a normal thing. I am still learning about it. I was insecure before I came to LDS, now my confidence has gone way up.

14 year old LDS student

community

My daughter can't wait to come to camp each morning. The inclusive environment that LDS creates allows my daughter to express herself and feel confident with who she is and one where she doesn't feel judged or excluded. We are excited about LDS and can't wait for Fall 1:1 instruction where my daughter can continue to grow and feel confident.

Mother of a grade 5 LDS student

Message from the Executive Director



The year 2019 marked an important time for Learning Disabilities Society. Drawing from the latest research and our own gathered data, we enhanced our educational programming to better meet the needs of each individual student. We delivered services in a growing number of schools and communities in order to reach as many students with learning differences as we could. And we worked hard to build an even stronger foundation from which we could continue to grow.

We have already seen this foundational work pay off in student achievements.

For example, based on the results from a longitudinal research study conducted with the University of British Columbia, LDS RISE (Research-informed Individualized Student Education) students are catching up to their general classroom peers by a quarter or half grade level in one year!

Just as importantly, we have seen how academic improvement leads to improved confidence of our students –

“What a transformation in such a short time for my child. Every day ...she tells me how she had so much fun! ...After a short time, I have seen her improvements in speaking, thinking and self-confidence. I am very grateful to all the staff in LDS for the opportunity given to my daughter and I am looking forward to more of her improvements and transformation.”

Parent of a grade 5 student

Our staff and instructors take note each and every time a student gains confidence, smiles about school work, or pushes past a learning goal. This is because the success of our charity is made up of each student’s success. We are honoured to be sharing in these victories with our families, and to grow these achievements in our students and throughout our organization as we move into our 50th year.

To everyone in our growing community, I sincerely thank you for your ongoing participation, contributions, support and commitment in ensuring all students have access to the learning supports they need to succeed!

Yours in community,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "RS Forbes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rachel S. Forbes
Executive Director

Message from the Board Chair



Over the past year at Learning Disabilities Society we continued to build our foundation, grow our organization, expand our community, and advance our mission. We supported a growing number of children and youth with broader services, remaining focused on our vision of accessibility and inclusion.

On behalf of the LDS Board, I would like to thank our dedicated, passionate, and resourceful staff and instructors for your inspiring work. Your commitment to our values and student-centered education has provided so many heart-warming stories of student accomplishment in the face of adversity. You are truly transforming the learning and life outcomes of vulnerable learners!

Thank you to our Board of Directors for your unwavering 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 wonderful support.

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

With your ongoing support in 2020 we look forward to continuing the advancement of our mission to ultimately support all children and youth with learning differences achieve lifelong confidence and success!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory D. Sullivan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gregory D. Sullivan, Ph.D
Board Chair

2019 AT A GLANCE

3600 families provided with information and resources



30

REMEDIAL INSTRUCTORS

with specialized training supporting students with learning disabilities



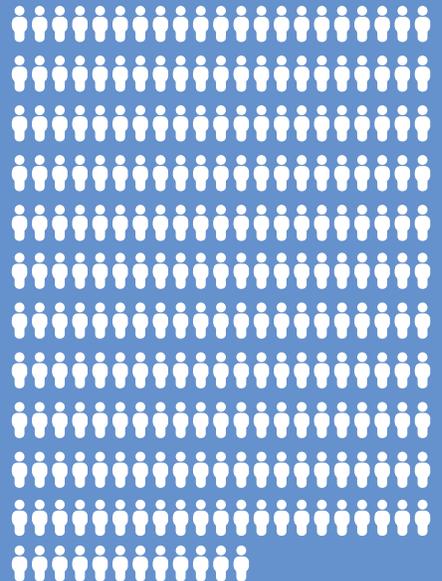
in donations raised for our internal bursary fund during our 2019 *\$100K for 100Kids* winter fundraising campaign

50 YEARS

SERVING CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

243

CHILDREN SERVED IN 2019 ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS



2019 highlights

HUMAN RESOURCES

In 2019, LDS made a number of strategic staff hires that have enabled our organization to advance our programming, including quickly modifying our service delivery with the emergence of COVID-19 in March, 2020. Our dedicated, passionate and energetic team is central to our success. Here are some of the new team members that joined us in 2019.

Claire Matthews

Program Manager

Claire began transitioning into the Program Manager role in 2019, after having spent over a year as an instructor with us. In this position, she performs student intakes, matches students with instructors, manages instructor scheduling, develops programming, and leads instructors in LDS best practices. Claire has a Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia, and over six years of teaching experience educating children and adults. Claire is passionate about education and committed to supporting instructors in providing superior delivery of programs to our students.

Trista Baldwin

Communications Specialist

Trista has been working with LDS since November of 2019. A writer, editor, and graphic designer, Trista has over 12 years of experience in print and digital content creation. Trista moved to Vancouver after spending eight years in Shanghai, China, where she worked as a magazine editor and in marketing communications. As a freelance publishing professional, she's worked with a variety of businesses and organizations in Vancouver. She has a BA in History and International Development, a diploma in Publishing, and a certificate in Creative Writing.

Melissa Henderson

Learning Support Manager

Melissa came onboard in May 2019 as our Learning Support Manager. She completed a BA in Speech Sciences at UBC and has a passion for linguistics and education. With prior experience in remedial instruction and administration within remedial therapy organizations, she has seen the difference that proper support and quality instruction can make in the lives of students with learning disabilities. Melissa is truly excited to be a part of an organization that helps to make learning accessible for all students.

Rachel S. Forbes, JD

Executive Director

Rachel joined LDS as the Interim Executive Director in November 2019 (she is now the Executive Director). Rachel has a formal education in social geography, communications and law. Over the past 20 years, she has worked with dozens of non-profits, charities and companies, including serving as executive director, program lead, staff lawyer, and also in a volunteer capacity on various non-profit boards. She enjoys utilizing her breadth of experience in governance, strategy, project management, communications, and fundraising to build capacity within LDS as it continues in a period of strategic growth. Rachel is passionate about ensuring every child has access to the support they need to thrive in their education and throughout their lives.

The year 2019 marked a time of growth and transition at LDS.

Two key staff members who were instrumental in building our programs and in nurturing family relationships and community partnerships moved on to new pursuits at the close of 2019.

We would like to extend sincere appreciation to Kathleen Raven, former Executive Director, and Norlan Cabot, former Director of Learning Support, for the years of dedication, passion and expertise that they each put into moving LDS's mission forward.



DEVELOPMENT

Grants

Grants are a critical part of our diversified revenue sources. In 2019 we were grateful to receive significant program or core funding from Social Venture Partners Vancouver, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia Gaming Branch, United Way of the Lower Mainland and CKNW Kids Fund. 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, and BC government autism funding.

Bursaries

LDS is committed to making RISE programming accessible to vulnerable learners across our region. With the generous support of our donors, we offer bursaries that support families in financial need, transforming learning and life outcomes. Historically, 60% of our clients have required some amount of financial assistance in order to access remedial instruction. In 2019, we saw that need grow. We remain fully committed to ensuring that children with learning disabilities can access the educational supports they need, regardless of their family's financial situation.

I cannot contain my happiness after I had the chance to speak to my daughter's teacher last night. She commented that [my daughter] is doing good in her class. We are so very thankful that we found you! ... We will forever be indebted to all of the staff of LDS.

Parent of a LDS student

100K for 100 Kids Winter Campaign

After raising \$67,000 in 2018, we set an ambitious goal for our 2019 winter fundraising campaign. Titled “100K for 100 Kids,” our 2019 campaign raised an incredible \$129,705. Thanks to the support of the LDS community, this enabled us to make critical learning support services affordable and accessible for over 100 students with learning disabilities in 2020.

New LDS Trust Fund Established

Inspired by the message and goals of our 100K for 100 Kids campaign, one generous family established a new \$50,000 Nitikman/Chan Trust Fund for LDS. Each year, LDS will use income from the Trust Fund to support children and youth with learning disabilities who are in need. We are grateful for the commitment and passion that this donor, and the LDS community, has shown for supporting children with learning disabilities.

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 2019 we were grateful for the ongoing volunteer contributions of Susan Aitchison, Kevin Riley, Pam Sack, Greg Sullivan, Ph.D, Hon. Wendy Harris Q.C., and Brigid Lumholst-Smith. We welcomed new director Hamlet Abnoui, and we paid homage to the years of dedication from now-retired directors Sterett Mercer, Ph.D, and Virginie Vigeant. We also thanked Susan Aitchison for her tireless efforts as Chair of our Board, and welcomed Greg Sullivan into that role while Susan transitioned to Vice Chair.

You can read the biographies of our current directors at ldsociety.ca under “Our Team”.



2019 accomplishments

Program Development & Delivery

During 2019 we continued to advance and develop our holistic, student-centered approach to supporting vulnerable learners. Over the past year we established new branding, expansion of programming services, and increased staffing to ensure LDS programming is accessible to children and youth throughout our region. We also developed more resources for our instructors to draw from, offered training workshops for our instructors, and advocacy and support workshops for our parents, such as Walk a Mile in My Shoes.



RESEARCH-INFORMED
INDIVIDUALIZED
STUDENT EDUCATION

RISE

In 2019, we established RISE to describe our core educational programming and methodology of instruction. RISE— Research-informed Individualized Student Education— reflects LDS's commitment to providing highly customized instruction that is informed by individual student needs and the latest in evidence-based instruction techniques. RISE also represents our mission to help students rise—in confidence and ability—and realize better learning and life outcomes.



LDS RISE Students Maintaining or Improving Standing Relative to General Classroom Norms

RISE OUTCOMES

Based on the results from a longitudinal research study conducted with the University of British Columbia, within one year LDS RISE students saw a 5 percentile point improvement (e.g., moving from 25th to 30th percentile) in literacy (reading and writing) and a 3 percentile point improvement in mathematics, relative to general education norms. This means LDS students are catching up to their general classroom peers by $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ grade level in one year! Overall, over 80% of LDS students are now maintaining or improving their standing relative to their general classroom peers!

RISE PROGRAMMING

Our RISE programs provide one-to-one or small group learning support for children and youth aged 6-18 with diagnosed or suspected learning disabilities. Offered online, in school, through various camps and workshops, and at our LDS Learning Centres, RISE programs are available throughout the entire year. Each student receives a professional intake and evaluation and subsequent one-to-one instruction includes three individual learning goals and objectives at the beginning of the term. Student progress is then measured, tracked, and reported twice annually. Short-term project efficacy and success is measured through a combination of indicators: learning goals, written language samples, and a post-program parent survey. Long-term success is established when students transition from remedial instruction to independent schoolwork, typically within 2-3 years of beginning weekly remedial instruction sessions.

RISE AT LDS

Our two Learning Centres, located in East Vancouver and North Vancouver, continue to offer year-round, in-person, one-to-one instruction to students, ages 6-18.

RISE AT SCHOOL

In 2019, our RISE at School program (formerly our Satellite School Program) expanded to more partner schools including Thunderbird Elementary and five Catholic independent school locations. In 2019, RISE at School served over 50 students and offered workshops and information sessions for parents, school staff, and teachers. Many of the children who attended these school programs experienced additional barriers that prevented them from attending our after-school programs (such as language barriers, unstable living situations, financial constraints, and physical disabilities).

RISE NOW (ADULTS)

Encouraged by the results of our adult learning pilot project in 2018, we spent 2019 working on the development of a group of services for adults with learning disabilities. These follow the same research-based, data-driven standards as our RISE youth programming, but will be delivered in small groups, online and/or in person. Our goal is to develop funding for RISE Now in 2020 and begin sessions by late 2020 or early 2021.

LDS instructors

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".

Catherine P.

Catherine is a language specialist with formal training in Speech and Language Pathology. She worked as a Speech Language Pathologist and Literacy Specialist in the UK before coming to Canada in July 2019. She is especially passionate about helping early learners and elementary-aged children who need a little "extra" support, whether it's addressing language delays, executive functioning challenges, or difficulties staying on task. Catherine utilizes her expertise from multiple disciplines to create highly structured and customized lessons for maximum student engagement. She is a dynamic and creative instructor whose passion for helping students with learning differences is evident in every lesson and family interaction.

Scott L.

Scott has been working with people with learning disabilities in a variety of settings for the past 25 years following his training at Douglas College. His areas of expertise include precalculus, chemistry and physics. He hopes to act as a bridge for people to unearth gifts and talents yet to be discovered.

Larry P.

Larry has a Master's Degree in Science and Engineering and previously taught math and chemistry for two years at night school at Sierra College in California. Later Larry became a certified flight instructor and worked extensively with youth cadets in aviation training. After retiring from engineering Larry wanted to be involved again in teaching youth so he completed the initial level training to become an Orton Gillingham Certified tutor. Larry enjoys seeing his students thrive and discover they really can do what seemed to them so difficult until receiving instruction especially tailored to the ways they learn.

Jennie L.

Jennie is a BC certified teacher and holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English Language and a Bachelor of Education from the University of British Columbia. She loves to teach early reading skills, Language Arts, writing and math. Jennie is excited to be a part of the LDS team, where students receive one-to-one, personalized instruction, and where teachers are provided with ongoing professional development and resources to provide the best support for their students.

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.

2020 update

We recognize that families and students need our support now more than ever. In 2020 we continue to advance our mission, and are on track to serve more students and employ more specialized instructors than ever before. We look forward to reporting to our community in more detail on 2020's successes in 2021.

During 2019 our staff, board and instructors continued to make great efforts to increase LDS financial and operational strength. When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in early 2020, LDS's sound financial position and strong governance enabled our skilled and dedicated team to respond quickly and effectively to ensure continuity of support for our vulnerable learners. When school disruptions and closures occurred in March 2020, our LDS team quickly mobilized to accelerate the development and implementation of RISE at Home, our adaptive online learning platform. When our students returned from spring break, we were able to offer continuity of service and a piece of familiar routine to our student families during a time of heightened uncertainty.

During 2020 we have continued to proactively identify additional academic and related social-emotional needs of our families, and have worked diligently to design, fund and implement a remarkable 10! new supportive programs, including:

- RISE at Home: adaptive online learning for students throughout the lower mainland and BC;
- Rise Summer Camps: fun, enriching, safe, specialized small group summer camp activities;
- RISE to Readiness: back to school mental health and academic preparatory camp for students and their parents;
- LDS Speech: speech language pathology sessions and small group story telling club;
- PEERS: the world's only research-based social skills program for teens;
- LDS Family Coaching: educational support for families to help support their child's learning needs;
- RISE Assistive Technology: specialized software and hardware tools provided to our student families to further boost student growth and progress;
- RISE Assistive Technology Studio: providing community access to leading-edge software and hardware assistive technology devices.



financial update

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer's Report as at and for the year ended December 31, 2019

Kevin Riley
Board Treasurer

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, 2019, on which Masuch + Mellios LLP issued a qualified opinion on October 9, 2020.

A key strategic focus for the Society during the year ending December 31, 2019 was to continue to expand the scalability of operations to ensure the Society is able to provide services to the largest number of children with learning disabilities possible in upcoming years. In order to deliver on the planned future programs, enhancements were continued during 2019 to increase the organizational capacity and to ensure the Society is adequately funded.

Through the key financial initiatives undertaken during 2019, the Society has prepared itself to be able to provide services to a continuously increasing number of children with learning disabilities in future years. These include the following, which are reflected in the financial results for 2019:

- **Program Delivery and Organizational Staffing**

To provide scalability, the Society identified future program delivery staffing requirements in 2018 and continued to fill identified opportunities during 2019. This is reflected in the increase in Program expenditures wages and benefits from \$231,000 in 2018 to \$356,000 in 2019. This has allowed the Society to continue to expand on services provided, as exemplified by the increase in total cash used for program expenditures from \$644,000 in 2018 to \$803,000 in 2019.

- **Funding**

The Society continued to focus on securing additional funding to be used towards providing program services in future years. Key funding partnerships were strengthened, a fundraising drive was led in late 2019/early 2020, and additional grant/donation funding was secured during 2019. The continued success of this initiative resulted in the Society realizing a net cash outflow during 2019 of \$19,000 despite the significantly greater increase in program spending.

- **Administration Expenditure Limitation**

The Society has historically maintained a focus on limiting administrative expenditures. The Society continued to focus on maximizing the effectiveness of funding resource allocation towards delivering programs in 2019, as evidenced by the continued reduction in general and administrative expenditures as a percentage of total expenditures to 8.8% in 2019 (13.8% in 2017 and 10.9% in 2018).

While the Society successfully continued a number of areas of focus during 2019, 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 with learning disabilities and their families have access to the tools they need to increase self-esteem and achieve academic success.

**LEARNING DISABILITIES
SOCIETY OF GREATER
VANCOUVER**

Statement of Operations

For the year ended
December 31, 2019

	2019	2018
Program revenues	\$ 267,989	\$ 236,250
Program expenditures		
Communications	21,329	15,078
Instructors	239,311	192,539
Learning centre facility	128,670	177,579
Training and development	47,410	50,941
Wages and benefits	356,084	230,955
	<u>792,804</u>	<u>667,092</u>
General and administrative expenditures		
Amortization of deferred equipment	(1,212)	(1,219)
Amortization of equipment	1,446	1,878
Interest and bank charges	7,204	7,078
Office and miscellaneous	26,044	19,620
Professional fees	7,688	10,403
Salaries and related benefits	35,339	43,993
	<u>76,509</u>	<u>81,753</u>
Program loss before funding	<u>(601,324)</u>	<u>(512,595)</u>
Funding		
Grants	418,287	365,195
Donations (see notes)	212,891	181,616
Other income	13,619	9,353
	<u>644,797</u>	<u>556,164</u>
Excess of revenues over expenditures for the year	<u>43,473</u>	<u>43,569</u>

in gratitude

Our charity relies on the generosity of our community to make sure that every student has access to the learning supports they deserve, and need, to succeed. We are very grateful to our individual donors, corporate sponsors, and granting partners for their ongoing support of the LDS mission. Please join us in applauding the following individuals, companies, foundations, and agencies for their efforts:

Our Donors

Anonymous Donors	Nick Maile	Larry Peterson	Patricia Rupnow	St. Mark's College, UBC
James Belsheim	Edward Wright	Fletcher Family Foundation	Michael Manion	Chris Stuart
Buchanan & Chris Mullen	Westbourne Projects Ltd.	Laura Sullivan	Rachel Forbes	Tony Guglielmin
Dr. Sterett Mercer	Franco Trasolini	Brigid Lumholz-Smith	Weathertop Foundation	Larry Achtemichuk
Carlo and Sophia De Mello	Laura Covaza	Wendy and Eric Harris	Susan Dvorak	Dan Howe
Jim and Susan Aitchison	Robertshaw Family	Praveen and Anuja Varshney	Ronith Cogswell	Susan Yurkovich
Emily Sullivan	PNG Enterprise Foundation	Han Lei Huang	Thomas A & Ida M Tait	David Toole
Windsor Plywood Foundation	NovoBind Family	Neil Jensen	Angus Reid	Abnousi Family
Rick and Kelly Eng	Christine Bergeron	Christopher Thomson	Else and Greg Sullivan	Joel Nitikman and Liny Chan
	Mark Brown	Bernie Hensel	The Geyer Family	Earl Haig Society
				West Shore Holdings

Community Collaborators

BC Housing	Lord Nelson Elementary School	Pathways to Education SEAC – VSB (Special Education Advisory Committee)
Covenant House	Strathcona Elementary School	Sea to Sky Gondola
Compass Clinic	North Shore Neighbourhood House	Tekworks
Dr. Candace Murray	Presentation House Theatre	
Dr. Sharon Arnold and Associates	UBC Faculty of Education	
Jewish Community Centre	SFU Department of Education	
Le Blanc Studios		
Kenneth Gordon Maplewood School		

Our Sponsors



Learning Disabilities
Society

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