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Specialized online program for B.C. students with learning differences is

Learning Disabilities Society's one-to-one instruction improves academics, confidence

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In the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, educators had to learn how to teach online, and students had to absorb this new way to learn. Remote school was difficult for most, but even more challenging for parents whose children had learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, autism, ADHD, or other, and required expert support.

Fortunately, Learning Disabilities Society (LDS) has programs that turned this challenge around for students, and provided parents peace of mind knowing their child was receiving comprehensive and expert learning support.

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"We've had very few people who've had any issue with online learning with us," says Rachel Forbes, executive director, with LDS.

"Some of the students that we work with actually have more success online than they do in person, and it certainly keeps things accessible both geographically and timewise."

LDS is a nonprofit charity that provides a Research-informed Individualized Student Education (RISE) at Home program, remote one-to-one instruction for students aged five through 18 in communities across B.C., with a suspected or diagnosed learning difference. LDS instructors are specially trained in providing dynamic effective online instruction to help children succeed academically, and build their skills and confidence in and outside of school. All of LDS' services are on a sliding scale based on household income.

"One of the unique things about LDS, which also makes us more accessible than other service providers, is you don't have to know what supports you need," explains Forbes.

"A family, a parent, or guardian can come to us at any stage of being concerned, or potentially being years into discovering their child's learning challenges, and we can meet them where they're at."

"One thing that sets us apart is that all our services operate on a sliding scale," adds Forbes. "This removes barriers for families and allows us to provide expert services that are accessible to families across BC, regardless of location or economic status."

LDS conducts assessments during the intake process to determine learning needs and scheduling, which is typically one hour per session, twice a week.

"We work with every individual student and family that comes to us on a schedule that works for them, and we pair them up with an instructor that meets their child's learning needs," reveals Forbes.

"We instruct outside of school times, unless the children are in distributed learning or home learning, and if so, we'll schedule during the daytime, and on Saturdays as well."

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RISE at Home program, and instructors

The program's goal is to improve a student's independence, confidence, and academic success by addressing identified skill gaps and learning challenges.

Regardless of a family's geographical location or their financial situation, they can access qualified and experienced instructors in phonics, reading comprehension and intervention, mathematics foundations and writing foundations.

"We have a huge depth and breadth of professionals, ranging from people who are from all parts of the world and have 25 and more years of teaching experience," notes Forbes.

Forbes says their team consists of a lot of B.C. certified teachers, as well as people with their masters in neuropsychology and behavioral interventionists, for example.

"We take a lot of care to ensure each student is paired with an instructor that will best meet their learning and development needs for that time."

"The earlier we can start working with and supporting a child, gives us a better chance of intercepting things, making certain that child is on track," says Forbes, "not just for academic support, but also for confidence and self-esteem, too."

"I encourage families to reach out because we've got people on our team who can help answer questions, make referrals, or even provide family coaching," explains Forbes.

"We recognize there are a lot of people who know they need help, but don't know where to start, and we would love to help provide some resources and context."

For more information on RISE at Home, visit ldsociety.ca.

LDS
Learn. Develop. Succeed.

Learning Disabilities Society is a nonprofit charity to empower all children, youth, and adults with learning differences to recognize their unique strengths and develop tools to achieve lifelong independence, confidence, and success. Their Research-informed Individualized Student Education (RISE) program combines online learning with personalized instruction through dynamic and interactive software.

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- Not really, unless the neighbours support it
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- Not sure
- Mostly of the time, as long as the patients don't have a violent history

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