



LEARN - DEVELOP - SUCCEED

Empowering Every Learner

By Patricia Barnes

Children with learning differences face barriers that can erode their confidence and limit their potential, but at LDS - Learn. Develop. Succeed, a team of dedicated educators and specialists, helps students rediscover what success looks like and, more importantly, how it feels.

Through dynamic one-on-one learning programs, wraparound support services, and innovative outreach models, LDS is changing lives by empowering unique learners to thrive both in and beyond the classroom.

MEETING STUDENTS WHERE THEY ARE

LDS is founded on the belief that everyone deserves access to the tools they need to succeed. They serve children, youth, and adults with diagnosed or suspected learning differences, including dyslexia, ADHD, ASD, and other brain-based challenges that impact reading, writing, math, communication, and executive function.

“Our mission is to serve all children and youth with learning differences by providing evidence-based, individualized support that meets them where they are,” says Executive Director Rachel Forbes. “We’ve built a model that’s designed to be as accessible and inclusive as possible, financially, geographically, and educationally.”

This begins with a thoughtful intake process and continues with customized, one-on-one instruction and support tailored to each student's unique strengths and challenges. LDS serves children as young as age three through to adulthood, with programming in their East Vancouver and North Vancouver learning centres, live online, and, uniquely, through their fully equipped mobile classroom.

A WHOLE-CHILD APPROACH

The cornerstone of LDS's offerings is the RISE (Research-informed Individualized Student Education) One-to-One program. Unlike traditional tutoring, RISE provides students with customized academic interventions from highly trained specialists backed by a whole team of professionals. Students receive consistent, individualized instruction in areas such as foundational literacy and numeracy, executive functioning, and self-regulation for learning.

The support doesn't stop at academics. LDS also offers specialized speech-language assessments and therapy, family coaching, and social communication groups, all grounded in a neuroaffirming approach that celebrates diversity in how children learn, connect, and communicate.



"For many of our students, a lot of their energy goes into trying to 'fit in' at school," explains Forbes. "We provide safe spaces where it's okay to be different, and where kids can focus on building skills and relationships on their terms."

INNOVATION ON WHEELS

One of LDS's most innovative solutions to the accessibility gap is its mobile classroom, the first of its kind in Canada. This electric minibus brings the full LDS learning experience directly to underserved neighbourhoods. Inside, students have access to one-to-one instruction, assistive technology, and the same expert support they would receive at one of LDS's learning centres.

CONFIDENCE AND COMPETENCE

LDS students catch up to their peers by as much as half a grade level per year - a significant gain for learners who may have struggled for years. But beyond academics, families often report powerful changes in their child's self-esteem, independence, and sense of possibility.

The society's growing list of programs includes Early RISers (an early childhood education and intervention program for children and parents), teen mentorship with paid workplace experience, and customized workshops for schools, organizations, and families navigating complex educational paths.

NO FINANCIAL BARRIERS

LDS is breaking cycles and making equity the reality in neurodiverse service provision.

A lack of financial support for families with neurodiverse children, out-of-pocket medical and support costs not covered by MSP or other programs, and the difficulty in finding employment flexible enough to allow for their child's needs mean that a disproportionate percentage of unique learners live close to or below the poverty line.

Over 73% of the families LDS serves need significant financial assistance, and a sliding scale of fees ensures that nobody is turned away because of an inability to afford their support.

Which brings us to RISE to the Top!

CLIMB FOR A CAUSE

On Sunday, June 15, LDS invites you to **RISE to the Top**. With elements of family-friendly fun, physical challenge, and inspiring programming, this inaugural event aims to raise both funds and awareness for LDS's life-changing programs that support neurodivergent children across the Lower Mainland and BC.

RISE to the Top is accessible, engaging, and meaningful. The day begins at the base of Grouse Mountain, where you have the option to enjoy a guided warmup, visualization meditation, or a motivational coaching session. Hikers and runners begin the climb in staggered groups starting at 9:30 am.

Not a fan of nature's stairmaster? No problem. Ride the gondola to the summit, where the celebration continues with a buffet reception, awards, and an exciting Neurodivergent Wellness Fair. This unique celebration will showcase local services, artists, and organizations committed to supporting diverse learners. You'll find everything from information about services like speech therapy and inclusive fitness to art created by neurodiverse artists and items made by and for the neurodiverse community.

The day will also include a welcome from members of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), as well as an acknowledgment of the land and culture that are deeply connected to Grouse Mountain.

"It's about more than reaching the top," says Forbes. "It's about making a meaningful impact for learners who face daily challenges and deserve every opportunity to succeed."

All proceeds from RISE to the Top will benefit LDS's **Bright Futures Bursary Fund**, which helps ensure that no child is left behind due to cost or circumstance. You can find out more or register at ldsociety.ca/rise-to-the-top.

"*RISE to the Top* is about showcasing the strength and creativity of our neurodivergent community," says Forbes. "There's no 'one size fits all,' and this event celebrates that beautifully."

