



Academic Excellence
Student Development
Community Involvement



The Center for Learning Disabilities at Tel Hai Academic College

The Center for Learning Disabilities (CLD) at Tel Hai is the country's leading resource of its kind, providing a wide range of services to a large and steadily growing number of learning disabled college students. In the face of sweeping governmental budget cuts on the one hand, and a growing demand for services on the other, **the CLD is seeking adequate financial support which will enable it to carry out its life-transforming work in a consistent, professional and dignified manner.**

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Introduction

For over 10 years, the Center for Learning Disabilities at Tel Hai Academic College has been a pioneer in meeting the needs of the learning disabled in pursuing an academic education. Today, the CLD continues to **lead the nation in research, innovation and level of services** provided to students with learning disabilities.

In academic colleges and universities in Israel, only 3-5% of the student body receives professional assistance for learning disabilities. At Tel Hai, some **15% of the academic student population is served by the CLD** – the highest level by far among any academic institution in Israel.

Without the special environment and learning and life skills acquired at the CLD, individuals with learning disabilities would be unable to access and contend with academic studies, and their chances of realizing their potential would be vastly diminished. At Tel Hai, virtually all learning disabled students succeed in completing their studies – in fact, **many of the highest ranking students are learning disabled**. And all of them credit their success to the CLD.

The Center for Learning Disabilities offers a full range of services to students with a wide range of learning disorders, such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, ADD/ADHD, difficulties in organizing and processing written materials, in writing (dysgraphia), in expressing themselves in writing, in learning a foreign language, and many others. Sophisticated diagnostic tests are used to pinpoint areas of difficulty, so that maximal time and energy can be spent on learning how to overcome them.

Throughout the academic year, Tel Hai students with learning disabilities receive an entire spectrum of services through the CLD that include:

- Individual and group training sessions in Hebrew literacy and language skills, effective learning strategies, time management, support and tutoring in science and technology, English literacy and language skills, individual coaching, emotional support and career counseling.
- Student Mentoring by students specially trained at the CLD provide dedicated individual assistance to students with learning disabilities.
- Alternative therapies such as shiatsu and meditation, to improve concentration skills (recently discontinued for lack of funds)
- Sophisticated neuropsychological testing to evaluate cognitive abilities, carried out in collaboration with researchers at UCLA.
- An assistive technology center which supplies laptop computers, reading software, mentoring services, etc.



Furthermore, students with learning disabilities are offered a special four-year academic track (instead of the standard three-years), even though the government funding the College receives for each student does not cover this fourth year.

The CLD also provides the College's academic departments with guidance on how to effectively teach students with learning disabilities.

In 2004, the CLD entered its newly refurbished quarters, with a fully equipped computer laboratory, biofeedback room and videotaping and editing facilities.

Special Programs at the Center for Learning Disabilities

Summer Pre-Academic Preparatory Course

This intensive two-month course is designed to teach students with learning disabilities who are entering college the skills and strategies to succeed in a rigorous academic setting. It is the only program of its kind in Israel, and one of the few existing in the world. Participants are introduced to a broad range of advanced pedagogical and technological systems that will assist them in their academic studies.

Neurofeedback

The CLD is participating in a collaborative study with scientists at UCLA, using neurofeedback techniques to assist students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). With extremely promising initial results, the CLD hopes to continue this project over a three year period.

Computer-based tools

A wide array of software programs is available at the CLD to assist students in reading and processing texts. A new software program has been developed which effectively detects students' English proficiency levels.

Special Education Study Track

In collaboration with the CLD, Tel Hai's Education Department has opened a new Special Education study track. Designed to create a new cadre of professionals in the special education field, the program will exploit the expertise and rich collection of resources on the subject which are available at the CLD.



Research and Follow up

The long-term success of the CLD is measured by the progress of its graduates. For this, follow up studies and research must constantly be carried out in a time- and resource-intensive process. Research programs in the area of learning disabilities intervention, such as the Neurofeedback program, are evaluated and introduced based on their potential contribution to the CLD population.

Services for CLD Graduates

A new program would provide counseling and guidance to graduates entering the workforce, covering subjects such as self advocacy, preparing a CV, and how to discover and present your capabilities.

Orit, a student with dyslexia, was the only student to graduate with honors in the humanities during the 2003-2004 academic year.

"With my school record, no other school would accept me. At Tel Hai, they recognized the potential within me, and helped me to realize it as well. "

Future Projects

A number of projects have been defined by the CLD and their execution is currently pending for lack of funds. These include:

- Establishment of a Career Counseling and Guidance Service for learning disabled students.
- Establishment of a Diagnostic Center using standardized, computerized testing to identify learning disabilities.
- Establishment of a Research Center to compile and analyze statistics on CLD students and graduates.
- Establishment of a Scholarship Fund for promising but economically disadvantaged students.
- Providing ongoing treatment using biofeedback and neurofeedback, with accompanying research on these treatments.
- Establishment of a site and program for treatment using different types of therapies, including music, art, drama, shiatsu, medicinal plants, etc., in collaboration with the Department of Nutrition.
- Assisting in the establishment of a regional center for treatment of learning disabilities, from nursery school through academic studies



The Need

In spite of its numerous and remarkable achievements, the CLD operates under a cloud of fiscal insecurity that threatens not only the continuity of its programs but the very existence of the center! Under these conditions, the CLD has been unable to expand its minimal staff, and carry out some of the many development plans which are ready and awaiting funding.

As an independent entity within Tel Hai Academic College, the CLD depends entirely upon government and private funding. In recent years, the demand for placement (always higher than availability) has increased, while government funding has been drastically cut. **Adequate financial resources will enable the CLD to continue providing the highest level of support services for learning disabled students, now and into the future.**