



**Learning Disabilities  
& ADHD Network**  
CALGARY REGION

# Find Your Path: *Strategies For Success*

Genesis Centre  
October 26, 2024

## Topics & Presenters

### **1A Strategies to Work With Your Brain - Angie Jones, Tracie Czerkawski & Dani Taylor**

This session is designed specifically for adults to provide strategies and tools to enhance executive functioning skills. Understanding and improving these skills can lead to better management of daily tasks, increased productivity, and improved quality of life. The session will focus on practical techniques tailored to address common challenges faced by adults experiencing challenges with executive functioning.



**Angie Jones** holds a Master of Education in Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies and has been working with people with disabilities, across the lifespan, for over 25 years. She has been involved in post-secondary education for approximately 7 years as an instructor and Accessibility Advisor and is currently the Student Support Coordinator in the Lamb Learner Success Centre at SAIT and oversees Accessibility Services and Testing Services. Angie's personal experience with neurodiversity has driven her passion to support students at SAIT and she is currently a co-chair for the SAIT Neurodiversity Alliance.



**Tracie Czerkawski** is an Academic Strategist at Mount Royal University. She has a BA in Women and Gender Studies, focusing on critical disability studies, from the University of Manitoba, and has completed coursework towards an MA in Educational Research from the University of Calgary. Tracie is diagnosed with ADHD and brings her lived experience to her work supporting students.

**Dani Taylor** holds a degree in Psychology and a degree in Education. She was a teacher with the Calgary Board of Education for 7 years before pursuing her dream of working with students with disabilities. She has been an accessibility advisor at SAIT for the past year and co-chairs the Neurodiversity Alliance. Dani is moving into a new role this fall as SAIT's first Neurodiversity Specialist.

### **1B What are EF Skills and How Can We Support Them in children? - Lauren Thompson**

Executive functioning skills are life skills that help people manage time, organize themselves and their belongings and navigate social interactions. Often, these skills are impacted in students with learning disabilities and ADHD. These students can be labeled as "bad" because of their inability to self-regulate and plan and organize. This session will present information on what EF skills are and how they look in real life, as well as practical skills and strategies to help teachers and parents support the children in their lives to have success in school and at home.



**Lauren Thompson** is a Calgary-born educator at Rundle Academy, a school specializing in students with learning disabilities from Grade 4-12. She has been an educator for 12 years, and recently obtained her Masters in Educational Neuroscience and Learning Disabilities from the University of Calgary. She currently teaches Grade 6, and is the Head of Literacy at her school. She is passionate about supporting the needs of diverse students and dedicated to empowering them in helping them reach their full potential.

**2A Navigating Relationships as an Adult with ADHD/Learning Disorders - Dr. Heather Baker, R.Psych., Director of Clinical Services at CanLearn Society**

Each day we are faced with navigating the nuances of different relationships. Our experiences as children can impact the way that we interact with others in our lives as adults. Adults with ADHD and/or Learning Disorders may experience unique strengths and challenges when it comes to building and maintaining relationships. This presentation explores these unique aspects of relationship navigation with a specific focus on self-advocacy, emotion regulation, and diagnosis disclosure. Presented strategies aim to help adults with ADHD and/or Learning Disorders feel more confident in their role as a partner, friend, and co-worker.



**Dr. Heather Baker** is a Registered Psychologist and Adjunct Clinical Associate Professor through Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary. She holds a doctorate in School Psychology and a master's in Clinical Psychology (both through the University of British Columbia). Dr. Baker specializes in assessment and program planning for individuals with anxiety, learning, attention, and behavioural challenges across the lifespan. She enjoys providing supervision to practicum and internship students and participating in research partnerships in the community.

**2B Parent Advocacy as Part of the School Learning Team – Terra Xavier, BA, BEd, MEd**

Navigating the IPP process in being an active member of the school learning team can be a daunting undertaking for parents. This session will prepare parents for collaborating with the school to ensure that their child's needs according to their ADHD and/or Learning Disability diagnosis are being fully addressed and supported. This will include IPP essentials, resources, and look-fors that would assist in promoting productive and reciprocal relationship between home and school with the child at the centre for both.



**Terra Xavier** has been teaching with the Calgary Board of Education for nearly two decades (K-9) and has taught in various educational environments including community schools, specialized classes, and unique settings. She has taken on various leadership roles to support student reading development as classroom teacher, learning leader, and system Inclusive Education Specialist. Terra has a wealth of experience, knowledge, and passion around research-based literacy instruction and finds joy in supporting teachers and school leaders with transforming their practice.

### 3A Designing to the Edges of Your Math Classroom - Sheryl Walters & Liz Thompson

Instructional design is a powerful tool for crafting lessons that are both accessible and captivating in mathematics classrooms. By applying intentional, universal design principles, educators can integrate high-impact strategies and activities that offer a broad range of entry points and opportunities for advanced exploration. In this session, we'll explore the significance of purposeful instructional design in mathematics and the impact that accessible tasks can have on student engagement and comprehension. Participants will gain valuable insights into designing for diverse learning needs and will leave equipped with practical resources and strategies to immediately enhance their lessons.



**Sheryl Walters** is an Assistant Principal at Calgary Academy and a Doctoral Student at the University of Calgary. With 13 years of experience in education, she has excelled as an instructional designer and administrator within special education. Sheryl's expertise lies in mathematics instruction and inclusive design, and she is dedicated to coaching educators and engaging learners through innovative numeracy strategies and effective discourse.



**Liz Thompson** is an Assistant Principal and former Foundational Numeracy Lead at Calgary Academy, where she has spent the past twelve years working with exceptional learners. Her expertise is in building teacher capacity to integrate foundational numeracy skills and address the diverse needs of math learners. Liz is also pursuing a Master of Education in Sustainability, Creativity, and Innovation from Cape Breton University, further enriching her approach to educational practice and innovation.

### 3B Beyond the Diagnosis: Understanding the Benefits and Challenges of ADHD Medications - Dr. Sterling Sparshu

In this session, Dr. Sparshu will discuss ADHD medications including the options available and how they fit into a broader treatment plan. How to choose and trial medications will also be discussed, along with some strategies for handling side effects and keeping your progress going, plus tips on how to advocate to get the best care possible.



**Dr. Sterling Sparshu** is a psychiatrist practicing in Calgary, Alberta. He has worked with children, adolescents and young adults in multiple settings including mental health clinics, residential care, and hospital-based programs. He is a Clinical Assistant Professor with the Cumming School of Medicine and enjoys teaching at all levels of medical education. He is passionate about collaboration, education and early intervention, including empowering those impacted by mental health conditions to become partners in their care.

#### 4A Strategies for Supporting Mental Health in Neurodiverse Students - Dr. Gabrielle Wilcox

In this talk I define mental health including what we know about how students are doing broadly and how students with learning disabilities and ADHD are doing in the area of mental health. I will spend a great deal of time focusing on what we can do to support mental health especially positively and preventatively. Finally, I will cover extra supports for students with learning disabilities and ADHD might need to support their mental health.



In January 2013, Dr. Wilcox moved to Alberta from Pennsylvania, where she spent most of her life. She is married with two teenaged sons. She earned a BSE in English Education and an MS in School Psychology at Millersville University. She practiced as a school psychologist for eight years, primarily serving students with intellectual disabilities or severe emotional/ behavioral problems, before completing her PsyD in School Psychology at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM) in 2009. She completed post-doctoral training in clinical neuropsychology and practiced as a licensed psychologist in Pennsylvania, primarily working in pediatric neuropsychology, until joining the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary. Dr. Wilcox is a Registered Psychologist in Alberta and a Nationally Certified School Psychologist.

#### 4B ADHD in Girls & Women: Strategies for Success - Navdeep Vining & Uma Pepin-Robbins

This presentation highlights how ADHD often shows up differently in girls and women, leading to delayed diagnoses. We will explore how girls and women tend to mask their symptoms to fit in, which can make their struggles less noticeable. We will address how ADHD in girls is linked to unique mental health challenges such as higher rates of self-harm, eating disorders, and risky behaviours. Hormonal changes, including the menstrual cycle, can also impact symptoms and medication effectiveness. We will also discuss ways to better support girls and women with ADHD, from early identification to addressing their specific needs.



**Navdeep Vining** is a Registered Provisional Psychologist who completed her Bachelor's in Psychology from the University of Calgary and Masters of Counselling Psychology from Yorkville University. She has been a part of the Counselling Psychology team at Foothills Academy under the supervision of Dr. Karen MacMillan. Navdeep has worked with children and their families from ages 3-18 for the past 7 years with various disabilities in early intervention, respite, residential programs and summer programs. She has extensive experience with a diverse age range and diverse mental health concerns and challenges. Navdeep was born and raised in Calgary, especially in northeast Calgary, and feels passionate about giving back to her own community. She

looks forward to being involved in creating accessible mental health and disabilities education and services within the growing South East Asian community in Calgary in the future.



**Uma Pepin-Robbins**, is a Registered Provisional Psychologist and works with youth with Learning Disabilities and ADHD at Foothills Academy and has a passion for helping youth navigate the complexities of their emotional and mental well-being. Uma also co-facilitated a process group for young girls and adolescents with ADHD to help understanding of their diagnosis(es), while also helping them to gain greater awareness of their individual strengths.