

# Brain-changing courses offered in schools this fall

BY DAVE GORDON  
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"David" dreads waking up in the morning. His mother yells at him for always being late for school. His teacher yells at him for not doing his schoolwork. The principal punishes him for misbehaving. His classmates don't want him in on their games. He's always disorganized, distracted, restless and impulsive. And unhappy. He doesn't follow instructions and he hates to read.

David has a learning disability.

This is life for 300,000 Canadian children who suffer from learning disabilities, according to Statistics Canada.

What happens to these kids later in life? According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, at least half of drug rehab patients have learning disabilities. According to the Journal of Criminal Justice, at least half of convicted criminals also have learning disabilities. And according to the Journal of Learning Disabilities, death by suicide is three times more likely among the learning disabled.

"Obviously we have to be proactive and nip learning disabilities in the bud before they evolve into the life-wrecking social issues that all too often await our alienated youth," says educator Dr. Arnie Gotfryd.

Frequently, to address these issues, children are given medication such as Ritalin, are offered after-school tutors, or get counselling.

After spending thousands of dollars on medications, tutors and counselling, what if there are no results?

Dr. Gotfryd noted when people look up "learning disabilities" on Wikipedia or another information source and they will usually read that: "a learning disability cannot be cured or fixed."



Dr. Arnie Gotfryd has unique methods to teach those with learning disabilities. Above, are some of the "neuro-educational" tools he utilizes.

## REWRITE THE PLAYBOOK

But the Thornhill resident wants to change that. "I want to rewrite the playbook on learning disabilities," he says.

He holds a PhD in science, has 30 years as an educator under his belt and taught an award-winning course in the University of Toronto's Faculty of Arts and Science.

For more than 15 years, he has hosted regular educational classes and seminars out of his centre, engaging hundreds of young people — dozens of them in need of major, intense learning — to overcome their learning disabilities.

His educational centre, Maxi Mind Learning, hires, trains and certifies Special Educational assistants who are then deployed in clinical and school settings to train children, adults and seniors to stay focused, think clearly, and remember better through brain-stimulating games and activities.

"A lot of those who slip into the margins of society start off with learning problems," he said. "When a kid can't learn well they lose status with their peers and disappoint their parents and then they wind up in all kinds of trouble. I've worked with some of them successfully."

His project "aims to take the dis out of learning disabilities."

The results, he says, are life-changing. "After a few months of training, I've watched students evolve from wandering the halls aimlessly all day in a lousy mood, to sitting for hours in class, taking tests, getting high marks, and feeling pretty good about themselves."

Students will be coached on a specially-designed set of "fun physical exercises" that stimulate the brain and he says have been proven in schools to help students read, concentrate and remain focused.

Dr. Gotfryd uses what he calls neuro-educational tools such as balance boards, pendulum balls, biofeedback games, and specially engineered music and headphones.

A leading Attention Deficit Disorder doctor in the US and a New York Times best-selling author, Ned Hallowell endorses the system and routinely prescribes it in his clinics.

## PROGRAM WON GRANT

Last month, Dr. Gotfryd's program won a grant from the charity Izivos Hashem, which found the instruction so valuable as to bankroll 90 per cent of the tuition for the first 60 students.

The first two elementary schools to reserve space in the project are Cheder Chabad, a boys school in Thornhill, and the Bnos Chaya Mushka girls school in Toronto.

Dr. Gotfryd asserts that schools need to integrate principles of neuroeducation into

their methodology.

"Special education kids need it more than anybody. If there is evidence that a 12-week program of specific activities and exercises can make life-changing improvements in a child's ability to learn, we can't afford not to do it," he said.

"A huge proportion of the youth on the street today are only there because the system failed them. I believe we have the tools to change all that."

Due to popular demand, Dr. Gotfryd has increased the fall class size and has extended the enrolment deadline from July 25 to Aug. 19.

The business office of Maxi Mind Learning Centres is located at 396 York Hill Blvd., Thornhill.

For information visit: [www.maximind.ca](http://www.maximind.ca)



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