



## Holistic Learning Program Philosophy

Traditional educational systems focus on content, rather than process. We are **explicitly taught** skills like how to read, write and do math with a particular emphasis on memorization of data and details. These are **technical skills**, which are a major component of learning, but not learning itself. An educational system which focuses solely on technical skills benefits students who possess a particular kind of intelligence and disregards **other types of intelligence and aptitudes**. They are often taught as though there is one way to learn them, one timeline during which to learn them, and one way in which to demonstrate that learning. When students struggle, it is often not the technical skills or information that is difficult for them, but the process they are using which does not align with their **learning style and strengths**. For example, a student may be taught to write a bulleted outline to represent ideas which will become a research paper. However, if their thought process is not naturally linear, they will have some level of difficulty accurately expressing their ideas in that format.

*HLP seeks to help students understand their learning profile, strengths and challenges.*

**Developmental and adaptive skills** encompass the process of becoming familiar with one's self as a learner and using that self-knowledge as a means to identify appropriate strategies and tools to move from one academic challenge to the next. This individualized approach does not lend itself well to simple, efficient assessment, therefore standardized systems are often favored. The more a student's natural learning style and strengths vary from the standard, the more difficult excelling in that system can be. For example, by default much of learning is expected to be done using text, but a student who learns best by listening will greatly benefit from instruction and materials which facilitate auditory processing.

*HLP seeks to help students feel empowered to learn by exploring the developmental and adaptive skills they need to align their abilities and their strategies for learning.*

In moments of incongruence between content and process, students will experience a disconnect between their true ability and how they perform academically. In lieu of being explicitly taught relevant developmental and adaptive skills (or being aware there even are options to process information in different ways) students often infer incorrectly that the problem must lie within them. As a consequence, students develop **maladaptive skills**. With the goal of conforming to and meeting the expectations of the educational system, students shift from striving for success to avoiding failure.

*HLP seeks to support students to shift from **avoidant behaviors** to **advancing behaviors** by **unlearning** bad habits and negative self-concepts.*

Finally, this dynamic fosters isolation of 'a-typical' learners, when they are in fact in the majority. It's just a matter of how divergent their learning profile is from the standard and how difficult that makes it for them to develop their own true adaptive skills. As a result, many students feel stress and shame when it comes to education and learning. When a student is also designated as having a disability, this often further propagates the notion that the problem lies with them exclusively. In reality, all students would benefit from explicit coaching to discover and understand their learning profiles and to develop congruent adaptive skills to thrive in any context.

*HLP seeks to foster a sense of **self-advocacy** in students and foster a community of learners who value different types of abilities and **normalizes the struggle** we all experience.*

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