

FOREWARD BY JONATHAN MOONEY

Our public discourse on LD/ADHD and the like is dominated by a lot of big voices that talk about people with cognitive differences. The pharmaceutical companies mint money by medicating people with LD/ADHD. Professors earn tenure studying these so-called deficits. And there are thousands of products to fix kids with learning and attention differences. But in this professional and commercial din, the voices of people who live this experience are often silenced.

This silence is elegantly broken in *Read This When You Can*. This book is a must read for anyone who cares about or for young people with LD/ADHD. But more importantly, it is an essential book for anyone who has ever been labeled stupid, crazy or lazy. Written by a group of LD/ADHD students, this book immerses the reader in the day to day experiences of living a life with learning and attention differences. It offers concrete strategies and solutions to the daily challenges of navigating a world and school system hostile to cognitive diversity. This group of brave young people deal honestly with the scars of learning outside the lines. They write about hiding in the bathroom to escape reading out loud. They write about struggling to sit still and spending much of the day in the hallway. They write about daydreaming and doodling and being told to focus. In short, they write with heartbreaking detail about the way young people with cognitive differences are demeaned on a daily basis. In having the courage to do this, they bear witness to the struggles of millions of students across America.

But perhaps most importantly, the voices in *Read This When You Can* represent the second wave of LD/ADHD public discourse. For the past 20 years most professionals have focused on what is wrong with students who learn differently. This book challenges that trend and demands that we as an educational community start talking about what is right with kids who learn outside the lines. Each of these young writers and activists ground their

experience of LD/ADHD within a non-deficit strength-based model. Their gifts and the gifts of LD/ADHD fly off the page. Their stories are the stories of inventive, creative, and deep thinkers. Their stories demonstrate that often strengths, gifts, and talents can come not in spite of LD/ADHD, but because of these differences.

This book forces us to look at the paradox of the LD/ADHD anew; these so-called deficits can in reality be assets. This new paradigm challenges the dominant medical model that conceptualizes LD/ADHD only as a deficit, a disorder, a problem to be cured. The National Institute of Health and McGill University recently demonstrated in brain scans that ADHD is not a flaw but a cognitive difference. Work at Yale University's Child Study Center is exploring the gifts that come from dyslexia.

The challenge facing all of us who care about cognitive diversity is to create a new framework that conceptualizes LD/ADHD not as a deficit to be cured but as a cognitive difference to be celebrated. *Read This When You Can* plays an important part in this paradigm shift and will help thousands of young people to celebrate, not pathologize, themselves.

This book will change lives. Don't read this book when you can—read this book now!