

LD: Breaking the Surface (Non-Fiction)

Est. Time: 2 Weeks Reading/45 Minutes Class Time

Objective

Gain a better understanding of the challenges students with a learning disability encounter in school and the importance of providing services and supports to address those challenges.

Overview

Hailed as one of the world's greatest divers, four-time Olympian Greg Louganis spent most of his childhood struggling in school. Challenges with stuttering and reading landed him in a "special class" that served only to intensify his feelings of inadequacy. Despite the fact that he was offered extra help and outside resources, Greg's teachers and parents never determined why he struggled so much; consequently, his dyslexia (a learning disability that impairs a student's ability to read) was not diagnosed until he entered college. There, the athletically gifted Greg immersed himself in the one activity that gained him acceptance—diving.

Activity

Read the following book and be prepared to discuss the questions below in class.

Title: *Breaking the Surface* (1996)

Author: Greg Louganis with Eric Marcus

Publisher: Random House • New York

For Your Information

To learn more about learning disabilities, visit:

- [Learning Disabilities \(LD\)](#) (Center for Parent Information and Resources)
- [What Are Learning Disabilities?](#) (Understood)
- [Defining Dyslexia](#) (Nation Center on Improving Literacy)

Questions/Discussion Topics

1. What kinds of challenges did Greg encounter in school?
2. Why did special education services do more harm than good for Greg?
3. What impact did Greg's parents have on his life?
4. Do you think early diagnosis and intervention would have helped Greg? Explain.
5. Greg notes that his learning disability became a "blessing in disguise." Why does he think this?