

Chapter Three

Using the tools: Hands-on application of screening tools

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Learning objectives:

- Review various learning disability screening tools to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses and determine when and how to apply them with learners
- Administer screening tools when using a learner centred approach
- Identify indicators and non indicators of potential learning disabilities through the analysis of screening tool results
- Involve learners in reviewing the screening tool results



Welcome to Chapter Three – Using the tools: hands-on application of screening tools

This chapter builds on the foundational knowledge of screening tools that you gained from Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, we continue our journey into the ‘*Wide World of Screening Tools*’ by taking an in-depth look at - and a hands-on approach to - a number of screening tools. The objective is to understand what information is gathered through each tool and to learn about the varying purposes for each. To help apply this new information, we have integrated several case studies on actual Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) learners. Prior to the development of the chapters, several practitioners and learners participated in piloting the screening tools. We will present learners’ information gathered by the tools as well as the results and practitioner interpretations and share both the learners’ and practitioners’ perspectives of the tools they piloted.



A friendly reminder!

Some tools may be a cross between screening and informal assessment

Purpose of screening tools:

- To determine eligibility for a referral to learning disability testing
- To confirm practitioner suspicions of **potential** learning disabilities
- To identify learning strengths and weaknesses

There are pros and cons that support the use of screening tools at initial intake, at initial assessment and during ongoing assessment.



Theory to application: We are now entering the world of screening tools

First stop! Quick screens



Purpose of quick screens:

- To determine if a learner who is entering a program has a potential learning disability
- To determine if the learner should be referred for further learning disability testing (if funding and/or services are available)
- To determine if the learner would benefit from participating in more in-depth screening/assessment for potential learning disabilities administered by the program (if available - not all programs will have a more enhanced assessment)

Quick screen tools



The list of tools below was evaluated by Literacy Link South Central (LLSC). To access details of the evaluation, refer to Chapter Two Appendix A. You can also click on the links below to directly access further information about each tool.

- **Adult Dyslexia Checklist** -The British Dyslexia Association <http://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk/main/information/adults/a03check.asp>
- **Learning Differently** – Adult Learning and Literacy Manitoba Education, Training and Youth Adult Learning and Literacy p.16 of 61
<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aet/all/publications.html#Practitioner>
- **Simple Screening Checklist** developed by the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts, Boston – checklist
http://www.onestops.info/print.php?article_id=28

Using the Tools: Hands – On Application of Screening Tools

- **Screening Inventory** Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (Chapter Two Appendix C is a copy of the tool)

Involving the learner

The learner is an active partner in the screening process. To help ensure that accurate information is gathered from the learner, an open and positive approach is required. To create such an approach, incorporate the following tips:

- Be clear and upfront about the purpose of the screening tool. You could state:
 - “The screening tool may help us choose the best strategies for you to use in learning and becoming more successful.”
 - “The information from the screening tool may help us know the likelihood that you have a learning disability.”
 - “The tool may help us decide which other agencies may be helpful for you.”
- Welcome any questions or concerns that the learner may have about the tool, the process or how the information will be used
- Continually stress that the answers will be kept confidential
- Clarify that this is not a test; encourage the learner to take his or her time and ask any questions if he or she does not understand or wants to know why certain questions are being asked
- Encourage the learner to ask for assistance at any point during the screening process
- Ensure that distractions are kept to a minimum and that the learner is completely comfortable

A look at one of the tools: Adult Dyslexia Checklist



Introduction

This quick screen tool is from the British Dyslexia Association <http://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk/main/information/adults/a03check.asp>. It was designed by Michael Vinegrad (a revised Dyslexia Checklist. Educare, No 48 March 1994). The tool consists of 20 Yes-or-No questions (Is your spelling poor? Do you mix up bus numbers like 95 and 59?). The questionnaire was given to 679 adults aged 18-68, 79% of whom were students. 32 students in the group had been assessed as dyslexic, so there is comparison between dyslexic and non-dyslexic students. 90% of the total sample gave 8 or fewer “Yes” responses. Based on the statistical analysis, the following twelve questions were selected as significant indicators of dyslexia.

The 12 best items are listed with the strongest indicators first

Order	Item	Question
1.	Q17	When writing cheques, do you frequently find yourself making mistakes?
2.	Q13	When using the telephone, do you tend to get the numbers mixed up when you dial?
3.	Q7	Is your spelling poor?
4.	Q16	Do you mix up dates and times and miss appointments?
5.	Q18	Do you find forms difficult and confusing?
6.	Q10	Do you find it difficult to take messages on the telephone and pass them on correctly?
7.	Q19	Do you mix up bus numbers like 95 and 59?
8.	Q14	Do you find it difficult to say the months of the year forwards in a fluent manner?
9.	Q20	Did you find it hard to learn your multiplication tables at school?
10.	Q4	Do you take longer than you should to read a page of a book?
11.	Q1	Do you find difficulty telling left from right?
12.	Q11	When you say a long word, do you sometimes find it difficult to get all the sounds in the right order?

Guidelines for administering the tool:

1. Ask the learner to fill out the questionnaire as honestly as possible and without any limit of time. Ten minutes ought to suffice.

2. Collect the questionnaire, checking that names (and any other information requested, such as year or residence) are given.
3. Record the total number of Yes answers in the box provided at the foot of the page.
4. Nine or more Yes responses on the questionnaire is a strong indication of a difficulty. The items ticked should be compared with the 'best twelve' shown above.

Adult Dyslexia Checklist

Please tick **Yes** or **No** to each question. Don't miss any questions. If in doubt, tick the answer that you feel is true most often.

	Yes	No
1. Do you find it difficult telling left from right?		
2. Is map reading or finding your way to a strange place confusing?		
3. Do you dislike reading aloud?		
4. Do you take longer than you should to read a page of a book?		
5. Do you find it difficult to remember the sense of what you have read?		
6. Do you dislike reading long books?		
7. Is your spelling poor?		
8. Is your writing difficult to read?		
9. Do you get confused if you have to speak in public?		
10. Do you find it difficult to take messages on the telephone and pass them on correctly?		
11. When you say a long word, do you sometimes find it difficult to get all the sounds in the right order?		
12. Do you find it difficult to do sums in your head without using your fingers or paper?		
13. When using the telephone, do you tend to get the numbers mixed up when you dial?		
14. Do you find it difficult to say the months of the year forwards in a fluent manner?		
15. Do you find it difficult to say the months of the year backwards?		
16. Do you mix up dates and times and miss appointments?		
17. When writing cheques, do you frequently find yourself making mistakes?		
18. Do you find forms difficult and confusing?		
19. Do you mix up bus numbers like 95 and 59?		
20. Did you find it hard to learn your multiplication tables at school?		

Vinegrad, M. A Revised Adult Dyslexia Checklist. *Educare* no. 48, pp. 21-23, March 1994.



Discussion questions:

What are your initial thoughts on the tool?

Do you see using this tool in your program? How?

The Washington Learning Needs Screening Tool



We reviewed this tool and tested it with Literacy and Basic Skills practitioners and learners!

Brief description and background development:

This screening tool is used to indicate the need for formal learning disabilities diagnostic testing. It was designed to help identify possible learning needs that may impact an adult's employability. The tool was designed for caseworkers from the state of Washington Department of Social and Health Services, WorkFirst Division. The caseworkers administered this tool to participants who manifested a special learning need. For more information on this tool, please visit the following website:

<http://www.nifl.gov/nifl-ld/2000/0239.html>

In the development phase of the screening tool, the Payne Learning Needs Inventory was tested to identify the critical items on the inventory that distinguished individuals diagnosed with learning disabilities from those who have not been diagnosed. Based on the testing, a total of 13 items were identified and incorporated into the screening tool. The validity of these scales was tested in Phase II.

Learning Needs Screening

Before Proceeding To The Questions, Read This Statement Aloud To The Client:

“We are going to ask your questions about your school experiences and your health. Your answers will help us figure out what services you will need to be successfully employed and to help you and your caseworker develop your plan.

“It is very important that you answer these questions so that you can be placed in the right kind of activities and get the help and services you may need to succeed.”

SECTION I

1. Have you had any problems learning in middle school or junior high? YES NO
2. Do you have difficulty working from a test booklet to an answer sheet? YES NO
3. Do you have difficulty or experience problems working with numbers in a column? YES
NO
4. Do you have trouble judging distances? YES NO
5. Do any family members have learning problems? YES NO

Count the number of “YES” answers for Section I. _____ Multiply by 1 = _____

SECTION II

6. Have you had any problems learning in elementary school? YES NO
7. Do you have difficulty or experience problems mixing mathematical signs (+/x)? YES
NO

Count the number of “YES” answers for Section II. _____ Multiply by 2 = _____

SECTION III

8. Do you have difficulty or experience problems filling out forms? YES NO
9. Do you experience difficulty memorizing numbers? YES NO
10. Do you have difficulty remembering how to spell simple words you know? YES NO

Count the number of “YES” answers for Section III. _____ Multiply by 3 = _____

SECTION IV

11. Do you have difficulty or experience problems taking notes? YES NO
12. Do you have trouble adding or subtracting small numbers in your head? YES NO
13. Were you ever in a special program or given extra help in school? YES NO

Count the number of “YES” answers for Section IV. _____ Multiply by 4 = _____
OVERALL TOTAL _____ If 12 or more, refer for further evaluation

Case study: Angela

Angela is a 46 year old grandmother who was thinking about going back to upgrade her skills with the ultimate goal of becoming a personal support worker. She has her high school diploma and has a vocational certificate. She has never been officially diagnosed with a learning disability but recalls receiving some extra help in school. Angela wears glasses and also has a hearing aid. She comes from an unstable family environment which has been plagued by alcoholism for several generations.

SECTION I

1. Have you had any problems learning in middle school or junior high? **YES** NO
2. Do you have difficulty working from a test booklet to an answer sheet? YES NO
3. Do you have difficulty or experience problems working with numbers in a column? **YES** NO
4. Do you have trouble judging distances? YES NO
5. Do any family members have learning problems? **YES** NO

Count the number of "YES" answers for Section I. 3 Multiply by 1 = 3

SECTION II

6. Have you had any problems learning in elementary school? **YES** NO
7. Do you have difficulty or experience problems mixing mathematical signs (+/x)? YES
NO

Count the number of "YES" answers for Section II. 1 Multiply by 2 = 2

SECTION III

8. Do you have difficulty or experience problems filling out forms? **YES** NO
9. Do you experience difficulty memorizing numbers? **YES** NO
10. Do you have difficulty remembering how to spell simple words you know? **YES** NO

Count the number of "YES" answers for Section III. 3 Multiply by 3 = 9

SECTION IV

11. Do you have difficulty or experience problems taking notes? YES NO
12. Do you have trouble adding or subtracting small numbers in your head? **YES** NO
13. Were you ever in a special program or given extra help in school? **YES** NO

Count the number of "YES" answers for Section IV. 2 Multiply by 4 = 8

OVERALL TOTAL 22 If 12 or more, refer for further evaluation

For discussion of Angela's results, please see Activity 1 from "Input from Online Delivery" at the end of this chapter.



Learner and practitioner experiences using the tool

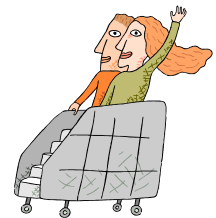
Practitioner experiences using the tool:

- I used the tool as a quick screen during initial assessments. It was fast, gave immediate results, and I felt it did identify disabilities.
- It did not give a lot of insight into the learner's particular problems and I don't think it would be great for ongoing assessments.
- It was a good tool for identifying a student who should go on for further testing. The tool is good for determining a referral, but not very helpful in sorting out how to help a learner who has a disability. I found that, in the interview, I was able to ask the student to expand on the items and I could get more detail and a better understanding of the problems.

Learners' comments

- The questions were easy to understand
- The results that my instructor shared with me were easy to understand
- The results will help me understand how to learn better
- I would tell other learners to use the tool with their instructor

Next stop! In-depth Tools



Purpose

- To understand a learner's strengths and weaknesses
- To understand why a learner is experiencing learning difficulties
- To develop a training plan that includes strategies to overcome, get around or cope with learning difficulties

Screening tools



The lists of tools below were evaluated by Literacy Link South Central (LLSC). To access details of the evaluation, refer to Chapter Two Appendix A. You can also click on the links below to directly access further information about the tool.

Non-commercial

- **Adult Learning Disabilities Screening (ALDS)** <http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/research/ldnquiry.htm#tools>
- **Delta Screener** (refer to Chapter Two Appendix B for a copy)
- **Destination Literacy** <http://www.ldac-taac.ca/english/indepth/adults/destinat.htm>
- **The Cooper Screening Tool** <http://www.learningdifferences.com/Main%20Page/C-SIP/C-SIP-Index.htm>

Commercial tools

- **Cognitive Information Processing (CIP)** www.ldinfo.com
- **Diagnostic Assessment of Reading with Trail Strategies (DARTTS)** Riverside Publishing Company (p) 800-323-9540
<http://www.riverpub.com/products/group/dartts/home.html>
- **Dyslexia Adult Screening Test (DAST)** You can order the product online through the Psychological Corporation at <http://www.tpc-international.com/resources/title.cfm?id=1052>
- **Jordan Dyslexia Assessment/Reading Program** MD Angus & Associates Limited www.psychtest.com Canadian based (click on the “About this site” button on the left, then click on “Testing Materials Resource Book: Online Edition.” Scroll and click on Canadian dollars, then scroll and click on “Learning Disability materials” which will take you to the Jordan Program order material.
- **Lucid Adult Dyslexia Screening (LADS)** Go to www.lucid-research.com

- **PowerPath** to Adult Basic Learning www.powerpath.com

The Delta Screening Tool



Introduction to the Delta Screening Tool

Background

This tool was developed by the Learning Disability Special Interest Group of the College Sector Committee on Disability Issues (CCDI) as a screening tool for adults at risk for learning disabilities. It was developed for use by a variety of post-secondary practitioners, including counsellors, disability advisors, learning disability specialists, as well as professionals working with adults experiencing learning problems. Items in the screening questionnaire are based on the expertise of many professionals working in the post-secondary system. Some information was adapted from screening questionnaires developed by: *Destination Literacy*, Learning Disability Association of Canada; Carol Herriot at the University of Guelph; and the University of Minnesota.

Purpose

The purpose of the Delta Screener is to identify adults who may have learning disabilities and to investigate their need for support strategies and accommodations. The Delta Screener is designed to be comprehensive so that it can be used as an intake and/or referral questionnaire. The At-Risk Summary Checklist assists the interviewer in summarizing identified at-risk factors.

The format of the Delta Screener is a series of questions you ask the adult learner. These questions cover the following areas: post-secondary academic status, previous academic history, language and developmental history, family history, health and medical history, and employment. These areas are considered important in determining the possibility of learning disabilities.

The information gathered by the Delta Screener will assist the interviewer in making decisions about appropriate referrals and support strategies. If there is evidence that suggests a possible learning disability, the adult will need to be referred for a diagnostic assessment (if applicable). A definitive diagnosis would require a more extensive assessment by a qualified practitioner.

It should take you approximately one hour to administer the Delta Screener and At-Risk Summary Checklist.

Suggested Procedures

- Explain to the learner the purpose of the Delta Screener;
- Tell the learner that his/her answers will help you to understand his or her needs;
- Make sure that the learner knows the results are confidential and that the privacy of the information will be respected;
- Encourage the learner to feel free to add comments or explanations to any of his/her answers;
- Explain to the learner that you will have to take notes during the interview;
- Make sure the learner understands the questions;
- Provide ample time for responses;
- When the learner answers "yes", ask for the specific information (i.e. if a student responds 'Yes' to having participated in a Special Education class, you should inquire further. For how long? What help did you receive? Was it effective? etc.)
- Use "tell me more" statements as needed.

Guidelines for completing the Delta Screener

It is suggested that the Delta Screener be used as part of an interview process rather than the learner completing it on their own as the interview format provides an opportunity for a more complete investigation of areas of concern.

Case Study - George

Learner Profile

George was a self-referral to the counselling department of a local college program. George brought a list of concerns pertaining to his learning strategies and possible indicators of a learning disability. George came with a “shopping list” describing both the problems that affected his academic performance and also the help that he wished to receive. His goal path is to become a television film editor. The Delta Screener was used to see if there were indicators of a potential learning disability and to gain a better understanding of George’s strengths and weaknesses. The Delta screener was administered in an afternoon over a one-hour period. All the questions were read to George, who had no problem understanding the questions but had some difficulty verbalizing his answers.

The following are George’s responses that were collected using the Delta Screening Tool. At the beginning of each subheading in the screening tool, you will find a text box that describes the purpose for each subsection of data collection. After each section we will review George’s responses and discuss which are the indicators and non-indicators of possible learning disabilities.

Delta Screener

Today’s date: **November 18/03**

Revised: May, 2003

Name **George Jones**

Age **19**

Birth date **1984 July 19**

Year /month /day

Completed together with ___Doug – college counsellor

Post-Secondary academic status

The purpose of this area is to discuss the learner’s current learning problems. Often the learner’s explanation of his/her difficulties can give some indication of a possible source of learning problems. You may be able to identify some learning strengths and weaknesses from the pattern of grades earned within the learner’s academic record. Adult learners who have no history of school difficulty previous to post-secondary settings may be experiencing some transition problems that are not the result of a learning disability. The unexpected challenges at the post-secondary secondary level may be a result of issues related to motivation, maturity, changing expectations, difficulty managing workload, inappropriate program choice, etc.

Alternatively, learners who previously experienced academic success may have been provided with extensive home support, which is no longer available.

Although George has not failed any of his first year courses, he is struggling with the following areas and is concerned that if he doesn't get help soon he may fail some of his current courses.

George states he has difficulty reading and comprehending the material in his textbooks and he finds it difficult to take notes. George feels his memory skills are weak and needs help to organize and manage his workload.

Post-Secondary Academic Status

☒ Full-time student ☐ Part-time student ☐ Special Studies

Subject: **Program Broadcasting Television** Semester/Level: **second year**

1. How many courses are you taking this semester? **6**

Please list each of your courses below:

Film 202	Film 204
Film 203	Film 205
Film 207	Film 209

2. What difficulties are you having now?

Summarizing and describing, reading textbooks and understanding what is said, limited vocabulary of text material, keeping up notes in a lecture format, time management.

3. Please indicate any of the following problems currently affecting your learning:

<input type="checkbox"/> attendance	<input type="checkbox"/> test taking
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> note taking	<input type="checkbox"/> not handing in assignments
<input type="checkbox"/> disorganization	<input type="checkbox"/> procrastination
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> time management	<input type="checkbox"/> over-extended with work/activities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> study skills	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> memory problems
<input type="checkbox"/> anxiety: test ____, speaking ____, performance ____	

4. Have you failed or dropped any courses in your program? **NO**
If so, please list:
5. Have you attended any other post-secondary institutions prior to coming to this college?
Yes ☐ No ☒
If yes, please give details:
6. Were you registered with the Special Needs Office at that institution?
Yes ☐ No ☒
7. If yes, did you receive any accommodations (e.g. extra time for exams)?
Yes ☐ No ☒
If yes, please specify:

Previous Academic History

The goal here is to develop a clear picture from the adult's point of view as to his or her school experience: likes and dislikes about school, plus strengths and weaknesses in subjects. Are the strengths or weaknesses in language-based subjects or in the practical subjects such as auto mechanics, woodworking, or welding?

Encourage the learner to give details in his or her answers, especially to those answers that indicate some problem or difficulty. If discussing high school, try to determine if he or she was in an academic program, leading to college or university, one leading to further technical training, or one leading to the workforce. Often the program gives some indication of the student's abilities, at least as seen by the school system.

It is helpful to know if the learner was previously diagnosed with some type of learning disability and if the school system made any accommodations for it. It is also helpful to know if the adult has developed any strategies to deal with difficulties in his learning. Does the adult feel that the problems have kept him from doing well in school, or in the workplace?

When considering difficulties the learner had in school, you must differentiate between those caused by low intellectual ability and those caused by a learning disability. Generally, an adult with low ability will report a wide variety of problems in terms of schooling. On the other hand, an adult with learning disabilities will usually report strengths AND areas of need in his or her learning and levels of achievement. You will see the evidence of this in uneven learner performance and school marks.

George did obtain his Grade 12 general, however he indicated that he always found English and math word problems a struggle. He enjoyed and did well in courses where he was able to work with his hands and which allowed him to demonstrate his knowledge verbally. George reported that he did get some special help with his schooling through Grades 1-3 but no support anytime after.

Previous Academic History*(attach transcripts where available)*

8. Please list the schools you have attended: (Elementary, Secondary, Specialized, Adult Ed.)

Central PS		
Eastern District SS		

9. What was the highest grade that you completed? **Grade 12**

10. What grades, if any, did you repeat? **None**

11. Did you receive a Secondary School Diploma? Yes ☒ No ☐

12. What type of courses did you take at secondary school? **General**

(Advanced/General/Basic, University/College/Mixed/Workplace)

(please attach high school transcripts)

13. How old were you when you left secondary school? **18**

14. Why did you leave school? **Graduated**

*** Special Note**

If the adult has poor basic skills and has attended a number of different schools, or has had gaps in education due to illness or other reasons, this may indicate inadequate learning opportunities, not a learning disability.

15. What further courses or training have you had since you left school and where did they take place? **None**

16. Did you have frequent or extended absences from school? Yes ☐ No ☒

If you were, was it due to illness or for some other reason?

17. What were your favourite or best subjects? (explain why)

Automotive – hands on and interest Communication – hands on, video production

*** Special Note**

The learner's likes and dislikes of certain subjects may be an indication of a learning disability. For example, is the student's success in language-based subjects, such as history, geography and English? Does the learner avoid or have low marks in these subjects because of the reading/writing emphasis but is successful in mechanical and/or activity-based subjects such as shops, physical education and art?

18. What were your least favourite or most difficult subjects? (explain why)
English- trouble reading and little interest Math – didn't study well
19. What format of exams is difficult for you?
- | | |
|--|---|
| multiple choice | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>math/technical word problems</u> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> short answer | written computer theory tests |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> essay - worst | written math calculations |
20. Did you have difficulty completing exams within the allotted time?
Only in essay format – lack of preparation, subject knowledge
21. Did you receive any special education/remedial/resource assistance/specialized tutoring in elementary or secondary school? Yes ☒ No ☐
- If yes, what kind of help was it and in which grades did this help take place? (be specific)
Grade 1 – 3 with English and math - taken out of classroom a few times for extra help
22. What did you find helpful (or not helpful) about this extra help?
Can't remember
23. Who in your family helped you with your homework?
Mother, father, and sister -more in elementary school
24. Approximately how many hours per night did you receive help with your homework?
One hour on average when homework was assigned
25. Do you find it easier to learn by
- | |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> listening or hearing? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> reading? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> writing? |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> saying things out loud? (2) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> working with your hands? (1) |

26. Did you have any special testing for your school problems? (This refers to psycho-educational assessment; not to regular class tests and exams.)

Yes ☐ No ☒

27. What did you understand about your assessment? (*please attach reports if available*)

N/A

28. Were you ever told that you had a learning disability or an attention-deficit disorder? (Other terms such as perceptual handicap or dyslexia may have been used.)

NO

29. Have you ever been prescribed medication for an attention-deficit disorder (e.g. Ritalin)?

Yes ☐ No ☒

*** Special Note**

The learner may have been **previously diagnosed** as having a learning disability. It may have been termed dyslexia, a perceptual handicap, minimal brain dysfunction, language disabilities or attention-deficit disorder but is likely an indication of some kind of learning disability.

30. Were you ever considered to have a behavioural problem in school?

Yes ☐ No ☒

31. How would your parents or teachers have described you as a child (e.g. nicknames, frequent comments,...)?

Elementary – sort of shy but always smiling

Secondary – more outgoing and involved

32. Have you ever been identified as an exceptional student:

(*please attach documents if available*)

i) by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)? Yes ☐ No ☒

ii) supported by an Individual Education Plan (IEP)? Yes ☐ No ☒

iii) did you have any transition planning? Yes ☐ No ☒

33. Have you received any training in assistive technology or learning strategies?

NO

34. What learning strategies or assistive technology is most helpful to you? (e.g. mind mapping, flashcards, colour coding, tape recorder, voice synthesis computer...)?

Memory techniques, study skills for multiple choice tests and note taking

35. Do you have access to computer technology at home?

Yes ☒ No ☐

36. What other comments would you like to make regarding your schooling or any of the problems that you face when you are learning?

Wished I was encouraged more to improve my learning habits at an earlier grade.

Indicators of a POSSIBLE learning disability

- If the learner received **special assistance** in school, especially in reading, writing, spelling and/or math, this may indicate a learning disability **OR** low intellectual abilities.
- If the learner's academic history shows **grade and/or course failure(s)**, this may indicate either a learning disability **OR** low intellectual ability.
- If the learner reports that at one time he or she **worked hard but was not achieving**, this may indicate either low ability **OR** a learning disability. The same is true if the learner left school because of frustration and low achievement.
- The learner's likes **and dislikes** of certain subjects may be an indication of a learning disability. For example, is the student's success in language-based subjects, such as history, geography and English? Does the learner avoid or have low marks in these subjects because of the reading/writing emphasis but is successful in mechanical and/or activity-based subjects such as shops, physical education and art?
- The learner may have been **previously diagnosed** as having a learning disability. It may have been termed dyslexia, a perceptual handicap, minimal brain dysfunction, language disabilities or attention-deficit disorder but is likely an indication of some kind of learning disability.
- Sometimes, adults with learning disabilities have been wrongly designated as "slow learners" and "delayed learners". If this is the case with learners you encounter, you should ignore the label and continue to check for evidence of a learning disability.
- Conversely, some adults may have been designated as having a learning disability when in fact, the actual problem may be a more generalized intellectual disability

Not likely indicators of a learning disability

- If the adult has poor basic skills and has attended a number of **different schools**, or has had gaps in education due to **illness** or other reasons, this may indicate **inadequate learning opportunities**, not a learning disability.
- If the adult reports **lack of interest and effort** during his schooling, resulting in poor achievement, this probably does not indicate a learning disability.
- If the adult indicates significant **abuse of drugs or alcohol** during his schooling, this probably interfered with his availability for learning and may indicate an alternative reason for school difficulties.

Language and development history

When considering difficulty in language skills, you must differentiate between English-as-a Second-Language (ESL) problems and learning disabilities. When English is not the adult's first language, he/she may experience difficulties in speaking, reading and writing English. This is **not a learning disability** but rather an ESL issue. These difficulties, in fact, may persist for some time as the student develops skills in the English language.

Language and Developmental History

37. What language is spoken at home? **1st English 2nd None**
38. What language were you schooled in? **English**
39. If other than English, did you have trouble learning to read and write in your first language? Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable **×**

* Special Note

If the learner can speak his own first language but cannot read or write well in it, even after years of adequate instruction, this may be an indication of a learning disability.

- If the adult has learned a first language plus English, and has difficulty in similar aspects of both languages, this may be a stronger indication of a learning disability.

40. Do you need to translate back and forth between English and your native language while doing schoolwork? Yes ☐ No ☐ Not applicable **×**
41. Did you have any difficulty learning to talk? Yes ☐ No **×**
42. Did you receive any Speech and Language Assessment or Therapy? Yes ☐ No **×**
- If yes: please describe:
43. Did your birth history include any of the following complications?
- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|--------------------------|----|----------|
| Premature birth | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | × |
| Low birth weight (< 3 lbs.) | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | × |
| Respiratory Distress | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | × |
44. Did you receive an Occupational Therapy Assessment or Training for difficulty with fine motor skills? Yes ☐ No **×**
- If yes: please describe:

Indicators of POSSIBLE learning disabilities

Although this does not apply for George, many LBS programs do have learners whose first language was not English.

ESL issues

- If the learner can speak his own first language but cannot read or write well in it, even after years of adequate instruction, this may be an indication of a learning disability.
- If the adult has learned a first language plus English, and has difficulty in similar aspects of both languages, this may be a stronger indication of a learning disability.

Developmental Issues

- For adults whose first language is English, any history of difficulty in developing early language skills is an indicator of a possible learning disability.
- A history of prematurity, low birth weight, or respiratory distress could be a high risk factor for the development of learning disabilities.

Family history

Learning disabilities appear to have a strong genetic component. Learners who report a family history of learning disabilities or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are more likely to have learning disabilities themselves.

Mature adult students with learning disabilities often report that their children have been identified by the school system as requiring additional support services.

George reported that his younger sister receives help with her math and English. Both his parents obtained their high school credits. Most often limited information is known or available in this section. If the learner has no children, you may want to ask if his or her parents experience similar strengths and weaknesses as he or she has reported.

Family History

45. Has anyone in your family (children, parents, siblings, etc.) had problems with learning? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, please explain:

Younger sister gets help with math and English in Grade 6 and 8

46. What was the highest grade achieved by your parents?

Father: Gr. 13 Mother: Gr.13

47. Does anyone in your family have difficulties with an attention-deficit disorder, substance abuse, and/or mental health problem?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, please explain:

Health and medical history

Health and medical history

Some adults may not associate learning problems with physical conditions or side effects related to taking medication. These questions will alert you to health conditions or problems that may affect the student's learning.

Health problems and physical disabilities are not necessarily signs of a learning disability. More likely, they are the reasons why the student had difficulty in learning. The same is true for medication that has affected learning. **Vision and hearing** problems, especially in early childhood, will also make learning difficult but do not necessarily indicate a learning disability.

George has reported no information that would indicate any other physical or medical conditions that may be impeding his learning ability. Although his eyesight is weak he has corrected this with wearing glasses since he was eight years old.

Health and Medical History

48. Do you have any recurrent or chronic health problems or conditions?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, please specify:

49. Have you ever had a serious accident or illness?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, please specify:

50. Have you ever been unconscious?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, provide details:

51. Do you take any medications on a regular basis?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, please list type of medication and purpose:

52. Do you have, or have you had in the past problems with any of the following?:

	Yes	No		Yes	No
Hearing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Allergies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Vision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Drug Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Head Injury	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alcohol Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Emotional Trauma	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ear Infections	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Headaches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Migraines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If yes, please describe: glasses since Grade 8 and childhood ear infections

53. Have you had a history of depression, anxiety or other emotional or psychological difficulties (for example: Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, school phobia, suicide attempts)?
- Yes ☐ No ☒

54. Have you ever taken medication for this condition?
- Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, please give details:

Indicators of a POSSIBLE learning disability:

- If the learner reports that letters and words appear out of sequence or reversed, these could be signs of a learning disability and should be investigated further.
- If the learner appears to be able to hear but has difficulty discriminating similar sounding words or saying words correctly (this does not apply to an English-as-a-Second-Language student), these problems should also be investigated further as signs of a learning disability. These problems often occur more frequently when there is a history of ear infections.
- If the learner's hearing appears normal, but the student frequently misunderstands questions, there may be a learning disability—a language processing problem.
- If the student frequently asks to have questions repeated, there could be learning disabilities related to attention and/or auditory processing.

Not likely indicators of a learning disability:

- If the learner frequently has problems in situations requiring listening skills, the possibility of a hearing problem should be ruled out by a hearing test with an audiologist.
- If the learner is taking any medication regularly, you should investigate the possible side effects of the medication and how it may impact on learning (fatigue, memory, attention...)
- Learners with ongoing problems with anxiety or depression may have difficulty coping with academic learning situations, especially the testing process.
- If the learner experiences eye strain when reading or copying notes from a distance, the possibility of vision difficulties should be further explored.

Employment

An adult's work history may indicate his interests, skill level, abilities, motivation, consistency of effort, planning and goal setting.

As you ask these questions, look for a pattern in types of jobs the learner has had, the demands of each job and the length of time spent at each job. For example, did the jobs require skill in reading/writing/ communication, or did they involve manual skills? Were the jobs repetitive or were they broad in their scope? Possible explanations for breaks in an adult's work history are: accidents, illness, retraining, moving, loss of job, lack of needed skills, lack of motivation, etc.

It is difficult to determine the existence of a learning disability based on an adult's employment history.

The employment record may give you a clustering of the types of work that the adult has done and from that you may see if there is an avoidance of jobs that require good reading and writing skills, or if there is a preference for jobs that are manual or mechanical in nature.

The adult may perform well in a job that requires high skills, even though he has poor academic achievement. This may mean that the adult has good general abilities and has learned to compensate for learning disabilities.

George's employment history is limited due to his age but it is interesting to note that he did get fired from one job because he did not follow proper procedure. This may have been a result of George not comprehending the job procedures properly.

Employment

55. Of all the jobs (both paid and unpaid) you have worked at, what type of work did you enjoy the most?

Video production

56. Explain any problems that you have that affect the type of jobs that you get, or that keep you from getting jobs that you would like to have.

Lack of education

57. If you are currently working, how many hours are you working per week?

6

58. What kind of work would you like to do in the future?

Video production

59. How committed are you to this career goal? Somewhat__ Quite__ Extremely **X**

60. Have you ever quit a job? **Yes** Why? **To go to another job**
61. Have you ever been fired? **Yes** Why? **Not following proper procedure**
62. How many jobs have you had in the last two years? **2**
63. What is the longest you have worked at a job? **2 years**
64. What type of supervisor do you prefer?
One that works with me and communicates at my level; one that gives me responsibility
65. Do you prefer to work: Alone _____ As a team **X**
66. How well do you get along with co-workers? **Excellent**

Checklists (Delta Screening Tool)

Challenges

If the adult learner appears to have average ability, with no vision or hearing problems, then having trouble with more than one of these items may indicate a learning disability. It is helpful to compare what the learner self-identifies versus what you have observed thus far. The checklists can also be used as a baseline to manage both your observations and the learner's as you begin to assess more in-depth and begin learning activities.

Challenges

Please indicate if these items have been a problem for you. For each question, please answer “*Almost Never*”, “*Sometimes*” or “*Often*”.

Do you have trouble...	Almost Never	Sometimes	Often
Understanding what is said to you		X	
Putting your thoughts into words when speaking			X
Finding a particular word(s) when speaking			X
Taking part in conversations		X	
With reading speed			X
Understanding what you read			X
Sounding out words		X	
With math calculations		X	
With math reasoning/word problems			X
Quickly recalling math facts		X	
With handwriting	X		
With spelling			X
Writing your thoughts on paper		X	
Understanding jokes			X
Remembering what you hear		X	
Organizing, planning or keeping track of time		X	

Do you have trouble...	Almost Never	Sometimes	Often
Paying attention or concentrating		X	
Knowing right from left		X	
Following oral or printed directions		X	
Listening to lectures and taking notes at the same time			X

Daily Activities

This section deals with life skills that we would expect adults with average ability to have mastered. Adults with learning disabilities may experience problems with tasks involving money, time, organization and relationships.

Daily Activities

This final section asks questions about daily living. For each question, please answer, “*Almost Never*”, “*Sometimes*” or “*Often*”.

Do you have problems with...	Almost Never	Sometimes	Often
Shopping	X		
Handling money and banking	X		
Using public transportation	X		
Telling time		X	
Housekeeping		X	
Being organized			X
Programming electronic equipment	X		
Using an automated banking machine	X		
Looking after yourself	X		
Driving	X		
Using the telephone	X		
Cooking	X		
Making or keeping friends (or both)	X		
Solving problems		X	
Using automated telephones	X		

Strengths

Adults with learning disabilities often avoid activities that involve reading, writing and math. They may report strength in areas such as playing music, participating in sports, or working with their hands. The absence of any significant strengths may suggest the presence of low intellectual functioning rather than a specific learning disability.

Strengths

Which of the following activities are you good at? Answer each question with “*Not at all*”, “*Sometimes*” or “*Often*”.

Are you good at...	Not at all	Sometimes	Often
Art			X
Music	X		
Sports			X
Drama	X		
Dancing	X		
Writing poems, plays, songs	X		
Woodworking		X	
Building or repairing mechanical objects			X
Using a computer			X
Driving a car			X
Public speaking		X	
Listening skills		X	
Telling jokes	X		
Are there other things you like to do we have not mentioned? No			

Adapted from screening questionnaires developed by the Learning Disability Association of Canada, Carol Herriot at the University of Guelph, and the University of Minnesota

Use the “At-Risk Summary Checklist” to interpret the results

After completing the Delta Screener with the adult learner, you will have gathered a great deal of information. You may also have made notes during the session. Now you will need to review this data to see if there are indicators of a possible learning disability.

Let's take a look at the following points and relate them to George's responses to help us assess his learning situation...

Keep in mind:

- Slow learners or people with an intellectual disability will report difficulties in many areas on the Screener.
- Adults with learning disabilities will report that they have experienced problems from a very young age.
- Adults with learning disabilities will display a pattern of strengths **and areas of need**. They will be good in some things and not in others. They may also reveal a pattern of discrepancies between expected outcomes and achievements.

The following are examples of risk indicators you should look for as you go through the data to try to determine if there is evidence of a learning disability.

- Does the learner appear to be "average" in ability, yet report school failures?
- Does the learner speak well but report reading difficulties?
- Does the learner speak well but is unable to put thoughts into written form?
- Does the learner appear to be capable but yet reports difficulty in organization and/or memory?
- Does the learner have adequate or good communication skills but reports having difficulty in math?

As you review the results from the Delta Screener, you may find it helpful to use the **Learning Disabilities At-Risk Summary Checklist** to help you summarize the results and make a decision regarding whether the adult should be referred for an assessment to formally diagnose the existence of a specific learning disability.

Learning Disabilities: At-Risk Summary Checklist

1. Expect to see NO to these questions:

Responses for
George are **bold**

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | VISION problems may have interfered with learning
(glasses correct any vision problem). | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 2 | HEARING problems may have interfered with learning. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 3 | HEALTH problems or PHYSICAL DISABILITIES may
have interfered with learning. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 4 | Irregular attendance may have interfered with learning. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 5 | Lack of motivation, personal concerns and poor application
to studies may have interfered with learning. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |

2. YES responses to the following questions may suggest a Learning Disability:

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 6 | Student seems competent in a number of areas and
seems to be of at least average intellectual ability. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 7 | There is variability in abilities with many strengths and
some or many problem areas. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 8 | There is difficulty in learning (listening / speaking /
reading / writing / math / organization / problem-solving /
memory/ concentration / basic life skills). | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 9 | There is a history of difficulties in learning from a
young age. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 10 | There is a previous diagnosis of learning disabilities. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 11 | There is a history of special help in school.
Extra help in Grade 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 12 | There is a discrepancy between the highest grade
completed and the number of years to complete
studies, despite regular attendance at school. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 13 | There is a family history of specific learning disabilities.
(but sister received help with math and English in Grade 6 & 8) | <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no |
| 14 | For ESL adults, there is difficulty learning English | |

literacy skills as well as literacy skills in native language
or difficulties learning literacy skills in native language. ☐ yes ☐ no

- 15 Speech and language difficulties ☐ yes ☐ no
(has difficulty expressing his verbal thoughts and summarizing information)

Summary of George's strengths and weaknesses

Strengths:

- Motivated
- Clear goal path
- Good understanding of his strengths and weaknesses
- Has experienced success – healthy self-esteem
- Demonstrates strong technical skills and abstract reasoning
- Good life skills

REMEMBER to ask the learner: Do you think this information is accurate? What do you think this information means? Why do you think this skill or activity is difficult for you?

Weaknesses:

- Verbal reasoning
- Organizational time management skills
- Auditory processing which appears to impact on his spelling and ability to take notes
- Poor memory
- Reading comprehension which impacts on writing skills-in particular, short answer and essay formats
- Understanding math word problems



Discussion question

Have you used the Delta Screening Tool before? If so, how effective was it? If not, would you consider using it? How would you use it in your program?



Learner and practitioner experiences using the tool

Practitioner perspectives

Overall, a decent vehicle for the results that developed. It is definitely more beneficial when you go through the tool with the learner instead of having him or her respond to the questions on their own. The practitioners who used the tool found the time required to administer, score and interpret the tool was manageable and they both plan to continue to use the tool in the future. Some of the students' perceptions of their problems were not very realistic so that although they reported having no difficulty with some tasks, I would think they would, according to my experiences with them in my class. I'm not sure the screener accounted for this subjectivity.

One practitioner plans to use the tool when a learner appears to be running into barriers so that both the learner and practitioner can try to understand the potential barriers. The other practitioner, who is a learning strategy instructor, will use the Delta as a screening tool after conducting a few learning strategy sessions with the student.

Learner perspectives

Five learners participated in using the tool. Based on their feedback, it appears it was a positive experience for the learners. They felt it was easy to understand and the time to complete the questions was good. The majority of the learners found the results that the practitioner shared with them were easy to understand and will help them learn better. Most of the learners would tell other learners to use the tool with their instructor.

Review observations with the learner

Always use caution when interpreting the screening tool results or scores. Refer to the test manual to help understand the level of reliability of the test scores.



Information from the screening test results might include:

- The likelihood that a person has a learning disability (e.g., persons with this score 70% of the time have a learning disability);

- How a person's score compares to the scores of persons with a learning disability (e.g., this score is like that of 65% of the persons who have been identified as having a learning disability);
- How the person's score ranks in comparison to the general population (e.g., this score is like 40% of the people the same age who took this test in the normative group) or
- Whether such a score should lead to a referral (e.g., experience suggests that persons with similar scores should be referred).

The first three examples would have the greater values because the information is more specific. In addition, such statements indicate that the test development was likely more rigorous, and that we can have more confidence in the findings”¹



Always emphasize with the learner that there is no right or wrong answer but that the information gained will help to understand his or her strengths and weaknesses. Explain what the results mean and continually ask the learner whether these results are consistent with the learner's view of him or herself.

Be supportive throughout the discussion and set the pace of the discussion based on each individual learner. Take a team approach and learn together to set the next steps.

If one of the steps is to consider a formal learning disability diagnosis, the key role for the practitioner is to guide the learner through the referral process and ensure the learner understands what is involved. There still is a great debate as to the merits of the formal assessment and whether it is beneficial for adult learners. It is not the role for practitioners to enter the debate, but instead, to recognize the pros and cons of both sides. Practitioners should ensure that learners understand all points of view and leave the decision to the learner to decide whether testing is desired. However, there are times when accessing an official diagnosis should be encouraged. For example:

- if a learner wants to obtain a GED or requires an official diagnosis to obtain certain compensations at work;

¹ Meilard, Daryl. F. (1998). *Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities: Implications for Effective Practice*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy. Obtained from the OTAN Resource Library at www.otan.us

- if a learning disability is suspected and after an informal assessment is conducted both the practitioner and the learner have no clear understanding of the learners challenges and;
- if financial supports may be impacted.

When formal diagnoses are pursued, it is important that both learners and practitioners understand what is involved in the process. This knowledge helps to increase the benefits gained from the experience. Learners can prepare questions and both practitioners and learners will be in better positions to understand the results.

The Adult Learning Disability Screening Tool (ALDS)



Background

Development of the ALDS started in 1996 and was completed in 1999. The ALDS was developed by the University of Kansas, Center for research on Learning, Division of Adult Studies. The lack of an agreed upon definition, differences of assessment strategies and tests, and the misuse of tests are three difficulties associated with determining learning disabilities. In developing the ALDS tool, these difficulties were confronted and addressed. In addition, the ALDS test was developed to address the multiple manifestations of learning disabilities and the multiple characteristics as revealed across adults from ages 16 to 60.

Although there is cost associated with this tool, we have listed it under the non-commercial section since the cost is so minor and is required to cover the printing costs. The technical report = \$7.00 US funds; the ALDS directions for administration, scoring and interpretation = \$5.00 US funds; and each individual ALDS record booklet = \$3.00 US funds.

Purpose:

The ALDS was designed to aid in decisions about which persons should be referred as possibly having a learning disability. If the criterion is met, a referral for further evaluation and/or more in-depth assessment with the practitioner may be considered and discussed with the learner. The ALDS consists of three parts:

1. Self-Rating Scale
2. Self-Administered Inventory

3. Interview

All three taken together have been shown to be a very effective tool in finding indications of learning disabilities. Parts 1 and 2 are designed for the participants to complete independently. They give clinical information about the ability of learners to work independently and comprehend meaningful connected prose, follow directions and provide written responses. Part 3 includes interview questions which are asked of the participant by the practitioner. No training is needed and the instrument takes about 15 to 20 minutes to administer.

An in-depth look at the tool

Part 1 – Self-Rating Scale:

Assess learners' perception of their behaviours, preferences and abilities in a variety of domains including:

- Reading
- Peer relations
- Applied academics
- Time management
- Goal setting/organization
- Written expression
- Vocational applications

The items have no right or wrong answers. Items lend themselves to a reply on a continuum of “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” or to choices involving frequency from “almost always” to “almost never.”

Sample questions:

“When I write, I have trouble putting my ideas in order”

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	-------------------

“I carefully organize my time and plans”

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	-------------------

“I often feel frustrated”

Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	-------------------

“I often have trouble reading household bills”

Strongly agree

Agree

Undecided

Strongly Disagree

“I can do more than one thing at a time”

Never

Almost never

Rarely

Occasionally

Frequently

Almost always

Always

“I feel like I have control over things”

Never

Almost never

Rarely

Occasionally

Frequently

Almost always

Always

“I have trouble spelling common words”

Never

Almost never

Rarely

Occasionally

Frequently

Almost always

Always

The 25 items on the rating scales are organized into seven clusters: self-acknowledgment (e.g., “I wish I could change a lot about myself, I feel good about myself”), organization skills, spelling skills, sense of direction, social skills, reading skills and efficiency.

Part 2 – Self-Administered Inventory

This inventory elicits information about health, home and education histories. The questions are presented in a questionnaire format so that the person can complete them independently. These items are answered with “Yes” and “No.” Based on the person’s responses, additional questions may be asked in an interview format (Part 3).

The inventory items are organized into six clusters for scoring: math operations, learning problems, educational experience, fraction skills, mental health and learning influences. There are a total of 19 questions included on the inventory.

Sample questions

Have you ever had difficulties with attention or concentration?	Yes	No
Did you attend more than two elementary schools (K-6)?	Yes	No
Did you fail any classes in school?	Yes	No
Do you have problems adding numbers?	Yes	No

Part 3 - Interview

The interview is used as a follow-up instrument to the Self-Administered Inventory. Learners are asked additional questions to help clarify and seek further details to the questions they completed independently. To help save time, the interviewer only asks these follow-up questions for inventory items for which the participant gave “yes”

answers. There are a total of 13 potential interview follow-up questions. The questions seek to gain additional information and or clarification on family history, personal health and educational experiences.

Sample questions:

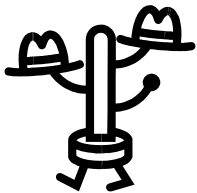
- In the interview, you indicated that someone in your family has a learning problem; which family member(s) has the problem (e.g. mother, father, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles)? What kind of problem was it?
- On the inventory you marked that you have failed classes in school. What was the main reason you failed?

A good follow up question is whether the results are consistent with the learner's view of him or herself.

Key points about the ALDS tool:

- It can be administered in a group setting.
- The higher the reading levels, the more participants that can be included in the group setting (up to a maximum of 7).
- ALDS is not a reading test so the administrator can assist persons with reading the items or helping them to understand the items.
- The directions are standardized for all persons completing the ALDS.
- Parts 1 and 2 should be given first, with Part 3 used as a follow-up.
- Like any test, the results have a margin of error. Scores within three points of the cut-offs are especially prone to error.

Case studies using the ALDS Screening Tool



Time to put on our thinking caps!

For both case studies, you will find a summary of the ALDS results along with the learner profile and practitioner interpretations. You are encouraged to make your own interpretation of the results and identify areas that you would explore further to gain a better perspective of the learner's strengths and weaknesses. The purpose for presenting this information is to understand how different variables can affect the interpretation of

the criterion cut-off scores. This information also illustrates that screening tools cannot be used as absolutes but must be incorporated with further assessment results to gain a full understanding of the learner's strengths and weaknesses.

Jessica

Learner profile:

Age: 19 – single mom without custody

Working towards having the child live with her

From a split family – frequent violence at home

Moved nine times before entering high school

Has eight high school credits

Has very low numeracy skills which brought her to the program for upgrading

Wants to finish high school

Wears glasses

No hearing problems or medication that impacts her judgment/concentration

Primary and only language is English

Very motivated and bright individual who gets along with others

Summary of ALDS application

The screening tool was administered in a quiet room with two other students. An explanation of the tool and the process to complete the tool was given. The practitioner stayed in the room to be available for assistance if needed. The interview questions were asked individually in a private room.

Part 1: Self rating scale - highlights

- Is a good speller and likes to read
- Enjoys being with people
- Is confident with her verbal skills
- Has some difficulty reading medicine bottles and household bills
- Has some difficulty with putting ideas in order when writing
- Indicated a low rating of her organizational skills, such as getting things done on time and having control over things

Jessica's rating scale score was 349. If the sum is smaller than 338, then a learning disability is possible and further testing is recommended.

Part 2: Self- administered inventory – highlights

- Has family with learning problems
- Has difficulty with concentration and attention

- Has difficulties with hyperactivity
- Had learning difficulties in school
- Attended more than two elementary schools
- Tested for eligibility in special education
- Failed classes in school
- Indicated lack of understanding of all numeracy functions (+, -, x, /)

Jessica's rating scale score was 321. If the sum is larger than 309, then a learning disability is possible and further testing is recommended.

Part 3: Interview – highlights

- Father was diagnosed with ADD
- Jessica is presently participating in child rearing, anger management and partnership building classes
- Started to have learning difficulties in Grade 7
- Was tested for special education in Grade 8
- Jessica's Individual Education Plan (IEP) indicated ADD

Practitioner's analysis based on the ALDS results and overall knowledge of Jessica

The results of the ALDS were interpreted with Jessica. The self-administered inventory section (Part 2) did indicate a possible learning disability score. However, the self-rating scale (Part 1) did not indicate a learning disability. The practitioner was not aware of a diagnosed learning disability previous to the screening. Jessica told the practitioner that she was reviewed by the Individual Planning and Review Committee (IPRC) in Grade 9 for ADD and spent a period a day in a special class. The practitioner indicated that Jessica does not display any ADD symptoms in the classroom setting. The practitioner indicated that this may be due to Jessica's change in life circumstances, the small classroom size and Jessica's maturity. The practitioner reported that Jessica is a very articulate, bright and motivated learner. The practitioner did not advise her to access further testing.



Discussion questions

What is your interpretation of the results?

What other factors may be contributing to Jessica's learning challenges in numeracy?

What information would you like to gather to gain a better understanding of Jessica's learning profile?

Pierre**Learner profile:**

Male – 19 years old

Learned French before English yet reports he knows English best

Pierre is a fully bilingual (speaking) learner in a credit program

He attended French public school until Grade 8 and attained some basic high school credits

Goal path is to achieve his Grade 12

Part 1: Self-rating scale – highlights

Pierre responses were inconsistent. For example he responded “*undecided*” to “I am a good speller” and then responded “*rarely*” to “I have trouble spelling common words”. He responded “*never/almost never*” to “I make lists of what I have to do” but responded “*always/almost always*” to “I keep a list of jobs to do”.

The only real consistent response was related to his social skills and verbal skills. Pierre responded consistently that both of these areas are areas of strength. Pierre’s rating score was 346. If the score is smaller than 338, then a learning disability is possible.

Part 2: Self-administered inventory - highlights

- Family member has a learning problem
- Has difficulty with attention or concentration
- Had learning difficulties in school
- Was not held back in school
- Has received special education services
- Did fail some high school classes
- Has difficulty multiplying and dividing numbers

Pierre’s inventory score was 273. If the score is larger than 309, then a learning disability is possible.

Part 3: Interview - highlights

- Pierre indicated that his sister is intellectually impaired
- He first started having learning problems in Grade 2
- He doesn’t recall when he was tested for special education

Practitioner’s analysis based on the ALDS results and overall knowledge of Pierre

Pierre’s oral language is strong but on many occasions throughout the screening tool process in both Part 1 and Part 2, the practitioner had to read many of the questions

because of Pierre's low level of reading in English. From her initial introduction to Pierre, the practitioner suspected Pierre may have a learning disability. The practitioner talked about the way Pierre answered some of the questions on the self-inventory and discovered that they were not an actual reflection of his skills. After the discussion, Pierre wanted to do the test over again. Pierre's lack of comprehension and weak self-assessment appears to have influenced the results. His actual reading and spelling skills are extremely weak. Although the ALDS interpretation indicates no learning disability, based on the practitioner's verbal discussion and further inquiry into Pierre's skills and comprehension, the practitioner made a referral to a local agency for further assessments.

**Discussion questions:**

How would you handle this situation?

What other factors may be impacting Pierre's learning?

**Practitioner's impressions of the ALDS tool:**

The practitioner who administered the ALDS tool to both Jessica and Pierre indicated that she would continue to use the ALDS tool but in combination with other assessment tools. The practitioner reported that the time to administer, score and interpret the tool was manageable. She further noted that it was easy to administer with the learners and agreed that it gave her a better understanding of the learner's needs.

Summary of key points

- There are pros and cons that support the use of screening tools at initial intake, at initial assessment and during ongoing assessment.
- The overall purpose for using a quick screen is to determine if further assessment (formal or informal) is required to screen for potential learning disabilities.
- A screening tool usually offers a more in-depth analysis of potential learning disabilities. It helps to not only identify potential learning disabilities but usually gives a better insight into a learner's strengths and weaknesses.
- The following areas should be explored to determine if potential learning disabilities are evident and to gain a better understanding of the learner's strengths and weaknesses:
 - previous academic history (learning difficulties, number of schools attended, absenteeism, special assistance, testing)
 - family's education history
 - medical background (vision, hearing problems, head injuries, behavioural drugs)
 - organizational skills, memory, communication (reading, writing, spelling, comprehension), math skills, verbal reasoning, general life skills
- Practitioners need to be aware that certain challenges are not a result of possible learning disabilities but can impact a learner's ability to learn. The following can negatively impact learning but are not indicators of learning disabilities:
 - frequent changes in school and absenteeism
 - head injury, vision or hearing problems
 - emotional or behavioural issues that appear to interfere with learning
 - previous and/or present evidence of alcohol or drug abuse
 - low skills in all areas
- A holistic approach should be taken when interpreting or analyzing screening tool results. In addition to reviewing a learner's cognitive processing (learning disabilities), a learner's personal situation and motivation need to be factored into the analysis of the results.

Input from Online Delivery of Chapter Three



Using the tools: Hands-on application of screening tools

Literacy Link South Central wanted to give readers of this manual a valuable component of the online workshop: participant input. The following bullet points are compiled from participant responses, and may or may not include information or opinions in keeping with our evaluative constructs. We encourage you to filter the comments as you would in any classroom setting.



Activity 1

We began the workshop by looking at a quick screen tool called the Washington Screening Tool. This tool is part of a more in-depth screening process used by caseworkers in the Washington State Department of Social & Health Services. According to the research done for Literacy Link South Central's project, this tool measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results. You can find the tool at <http://www.usoe.k12.ut.us/adulted/GED/accommodation/screening.pdf>

After looking at the Washington Screening Tool, we presented you with a case study about Angela and then asked you to discuss Angela's results. Here's what you told us:

- The age of onset of Angela's hearing loss could account for some of her difficulties in school; we need more information about her hearing and vision problems. They may be causing learning difficulties.
- Past personal/family history may also account for early learning difficulties; this could be explored further.
- How can we determine if responses are accurate? The learner may not deliberately provide misleading information but he/she may misunderstand a question or not be comfortable responding.
- Some of the responses could indicate ID as well as LD.
- It's important to use your own knowledge and judgment when using these tools; they don't provide all the answers. They don't provide a diagnosis nor are they infallible. If they indicate a possibility of LD, further testing should be done to confirm it.
- The tool wouldn't work well with ESL or ASL learners.
- The amount of information this tool provides is limited because it is so short.



Activity 2

We asked how and when you might use the Washington Learning Needs quick screen in your program. Here's what you told us:

- Use at initial intake to provide a quick snapshot.
- Administer it orally for most learners but could give it to a higher level learner to complete independently
- Could be administered over the telephone



Activity 3

We looked at a more in-depth screening tool, the Delta Screener. You can find this screener at

<http://www.loyalistc.on.ca/services/ccdi/documents/Delta%20Intro.Client.doc>

We ask you if you thought the Delta Screener could provide you with the type of information you need to work with the learners in your program. Here's what you told us:

- In one program, learners were very open to using it.
- Time is the problem – would prefer to administer it in “chunks” rather than all at once. This is a good solution and may be easier for the learner.
- The guidelines provided with the screener are very helpful.
- It's great that it's free and that it's Canadian.
- It isn't designed for special needs, although individual colleges may have tailored it through their special needs departments – check with your local college.
- It might be too detailed for some programs.
- It can help both you and the learner understand why they are having problems learning.



Activity 4

Then we asked you how and when you might use the Delta Screener in your program. Here's what you told us:

- Some participants preferred initial assessment, others thought it would be better to wait to get to know the learner better. Still others would wait until they suspected LD.
- It's important to present the Screener in a non-threatening way. We aren't prying.
- It's a good tool to determine if a learner might benefit from more in-depth assessment which can be very expensive.