

Learning Disabilities Training: Phase II

Screening Tools, Strategies, and Employment



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Chapter One

Differentiating Learning Disabilities from Intellectual Disabilities

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this chapter is to provide literacy practitioners with more in-depth and targeted information about working with adults with learning disabilities and intellectual disabilities. We already know that there is a significant difference between the learning needs of these individuals. This tool hopes to educate practitioners further about learning needs of individuals with learning disabilities and intellectual disabilities. We hope to provide practitioners with the tools to effectively screen, identify and provide learning strategies for both of these groups.

Literacy Bill of Rights

As an introduction to this topic, we felt it was important to include the following Bill of Rights: “All persons, regardless of the extent or severity of their disabilities, have a basic right to use print.” Beyond this general right, there are certain literacy rights that should be assured for all persons. These basic rights are:

1. The right to an opportunity to learn to read and write. Opportunity involves engagement and active participation in tasks performed with high success.
2. The right to have accessible, clear, meaningful, culturally and linguistically appropriate texts at all times. Texts, broadly defined, range from picture books to newspapers to novels, cereal boxes, and electronic documents.

3. The right to interact with others while reading, writing, or listening to a text. Interaction involves questions, comments, discussions, and other communications about or related to the text.
4. The right to life choices made available through reading and writing competencies. Life choices include, but are not limited to, employment and employment changes, independence, community participation, and self-advocacy.
5. The right to lifelong educational opportunities incorporating literacy instruction and use. Literacy educational opportunities, regardless of when they are provided, have potential to provide power that cannot be taken away.
6. The right to have teachers and other service providers who are knowledgeable about literacy instruction methods and principles. Methods include, but are not limited to, instruction, assessment, and the technologies required to make literacy accessible to individuals with disabilities. Principles include, but are not limited to, the beliefs that literacy is learned across places and time, and no person is too disabled to benefit from literacy learning opportunities.
7. The right to live and learn in environments that provide varied models of print use. Models are demonstrations of purposeful print use such as reading a recipe, paying bills, sharing a joke, or writing a letter.
8. The right to live and learn in environments that maintain the expectations and attitudes that all individuals are literacy learners.¹

This Bill of Rights can be accessed at <http://www.gac.edu/~dkoppenh/rights.html>

Many Kinds of Learners

For many individuals who work in education, it is challenging to distinguish between the learning barriers of an individual with a learning disability and the learning barriers of an individual with an intellectual disability. This is particularly true in the field of literacy where practitioners work with so many different types of people who may have been out of education for a long time. In this chapter, we will try to provide more clarity to the differences between a learning disability and an intellectual disability so that practitioners can better help the individuals that use services in their organizations.

¹ Yoder, D. E., Erickson, K.A., & Koppenhaver, D.A. (1996). Center for Literacy and Disability Studies

One of the main reasons that it is very important to distinguish between these two groups is because learning is such a unique process. What might work for one learner does not always work for another. There is no one size that fits all when it comes to learning. Many professionals who work in the field of learning disabilities stress how vital it is for a learning disability to be looked at as a specific disability and not be grouped with other disabilities. Some would go as far to say that individuals with learning disabilities should be treated with complete autonomy from other individuals with disabilities.

Terminology

In fact, the definitions of “learning disabilities” and “intellectual disabilities” may be very different for many people. For the purpose of clarity, we would like to use the term intellectual disability where many literacy practitioners may use the term developmental disability. The two terms are often used interchangeably but we believe that intellectual disability describes the population that we wanted to refer to in this tool because we are focusing on comparing cognitive abilities.

In this next section, we would like to make clear the definitions of learning disability and intellectual disability as referred to by well-known organizations in their respective fields, particularly as they are defined here in Canada.

Defining Learning Disabilities

In this section we are going to spend some time talking about the prevailing definitions of Learning Disabilities and Intellectual Disabilities. This is to help practitioners potentially **identify** learners in LBS programs and provide appropriate teaching strategies for them. This workshop is **not** designed to diagnose LBS learners with intellectual disabilities or learning disabilities. In fact, we caution participants about using these terms while interacting with learners. It is probably sufficient to talk to learners about their strengths and weaknesses and not about whether they are learning disabled or intellectually disabled.

The following are two formal definitions of learning disabilities:

According to the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, “Learning Disabilities refers to a number of disorders, which may affect acquisition, organization, retention, understanding and use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning

in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global deficiency.”²

“Learning disabilities refers to a variety of disorders that affect the acquisition, retention, understanding, organization or use of verbal and/or non-verbal information. These disorders result from impairments in one or more psychological processes related to learning, in combination with otherwise average abilities essential for thinking and reasoning. Learning disabilities are **specific, not global** impairments and as such are distinct from intellectual disabilities.”³

Learning disabilities may range in severity and interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following important skills:

- oral language (eg. listening, speaking, understanding)
- reading (eg. decoding, comprehension)
- written language (eg. spelling, written expression)
- mathematics (eg. computation, problem solving)

In more informal terms, learning disabilities are lifelong and, depending upon their severity, can greatly impact individuals throughout their lives potentially including friendships, school, work, self-esteem and daily life.

Learning disabilities affect the way an individual takes in, understands and expresses information and impacts people with average to above average intelligence. This means that these individuals do not have global impairments like individuals with intellectual disability. Global impairments are those that impact an individual in every aspect of their life, specifically with cognitive functioning. Adults with learning disabilities have impairments that are very specific. An individual with a learning disability might struggle with spelling and reading but function well in a job that does not rely strongly on these skills for success.

Two excellent websites that give valuable information on learning disabilities are the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada <http://www.ldac-taac.ca/> and the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario <http://www.ldao.on.ca>

² *Official Definition of Learning Disability*, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, January, 2002.

³ *Learning Disabilities: A New Definition*, Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, 2001.

Common Learning Disabilities

The three most common learning disabilities are:

- visual processing deficits
- auditory processing deficits
- organizational processing deficits

The following describes each of these learning disabilities and specific areas of difficulty.

Visual Processing Deficits

The National Center for Learning Disabilities identifies a visual processing deficit as a hindered ability to make sense of information taken in through the eyes. This is different from problems involving sight or sharpness of vision. Difficulties with visual processing affect how visual information is interpreted or processed by the brain.

Individuals with visual processing deficits have difficulty following text when reading. Sometimes words or letters appear to be moving on the page and tracking information is a challenge.

There are some common areas of difficulty for individuals with visual processing problems:

i) **Spatial relations:**

This refers to the ability to accurately perceive objects in space and objects in relation to other objects. Reading and math both rely on symbols. In order to be successful in these areas, learners need to be able to see symbols (letters or numbers) both as separate units and in relation to others.

ii) **Visual discrimination:**

This refers to the ability to differentiate objects based on individual characteristics. This is again critical for success in reading and math.

iii) Visual closure:

This refers to the ability to recognize an object or a symbol when the entire object or symbol is not visible.

iv) Object recognition:

Some individuals have difficulty recognizing objects that are familiar to them.

v) Whole/part relationships:

Some people have difficulty integrating the relationship between an object in its entirety and the different parts that make it up. Some learners see only the pieces while others see only the whole (can see all the letters but not the word or see the word but not the letters).⁴

Auditory Processing Deficits

The National Center for Learning Disabilities describes an auditory processing deficit as something that interferes with an individual's ability to analyze or make sense of information taken in through the ears. This is different from problems involving hearing such as deafness or being hard of hearing. Difficulties with auditory processing do not affect what is heard by the ear, but do affect how this information is interpreted, or processed by the brain.

An auditory processing deficit can interfere directly with speech and language, but can affect all areas of learning, especially reading and spelling. When instruction in school relies primarily on spoken language, the individual with an auditory processing deficit may have serious difficulty understanding the lesson or the directions.

Some of the common areas of difficulty for learners with auditory problems are:

i) Phonological awareness:

Individuals will often be unable to recognize and/or isolate individual sounds in a word, recognize rhyming words, or identify the syllables in a word.

⁴ *Visual and Auditory Processing Disorders* The National Center for Learning Disabilities

ii) Auditory discrimination:

Auditory discrimination is the ability to recognize differences in phonemes (sounds). This includes the ability to identify words and sounds that are similar and those that are different. For example, individuals may have difficulty distinguishing between words like “single” and “signal”.

iii) Auditory memory:

Auditory memory is the ability to store and recall information that was given verbally. For example, individuals may have trouble recalling information that has been read aloud.

iv) Auditory sequencing:

Auditory sequencing is the ability to remember and reconstruct the order of items in a list or the order of sounds in a word or syllable. Individuals may say “ephelant” instead of “elephant”.

v) Auditory blending:

Auditory blending is the process of putting together phonemes to form words. For example, the individual phonemes “c”, “a”, and “t” are blended to form the word, “cat.”⁵

Organizational Processing Deficits

The National Center for Learning Disabilities indicates that learners with organizational processing deficits have difficulty managing time and space and generally ordering the day-to-day tasks of daily living. Individuals may have difficulty receiving, integrating, remembering and expressing information.

⁵ *Visual and Auditory Processing Disorders*. The National Center for Learning Disabilities

Some of the common areas of difficulty for learners with organizational problems include:

- Takes longer to understand and respond to questions, but the quality of the answer is good
- Has difficulty giving clear, concise answers to simple questions
- Complains of having trouble focusing
- Needs rewording of questions
- Has trouble with attendance and follow through
- Difficulty completing assignments
- Difficulty organizing notebook
- Difficulty meeting deadlines
- Poor sense of elapsed time
- Either late or very early for appointments
- Difficulty knowing how much time is needed for tasks
- Difficulty organizing tasks – understanding the sequence of steps required to complete a task – may have difficulty cooking a meal, planning a party etc.
- Difficulty organizing space – closet, desk, cupboards
- Difficulty organizing, planning and managing in daily life and in the workplace.⁶

Defining Intellectual Disability

Now that we have defined learning disability, here are two definitions of an intellectual disability:

Definition #1:

“An intellectual disability (also known as a developmental disability) is a life-long condition, manifested at birth or shortly thereafter, where people grow and develop more slowly than others because of limitations in intellectual functioning. Individuals may have difficulty understanding abstract concepts or adapting to some of the demands of daily life. This disability varies greatly between individuals and may or may not be accompanied by other physical conditions.”⁷

⁶ *Visual and Auditory Processing Disorders* The National Center for Learning Disabilities

⁷ *What are Developmental Disabilities?* JusticeForAll.ca

Definition #2:

“Individuals with intellectual disabilities have limited intellectual potential that results in significantly reduced ability to transfer information, resulting in problems with problem solving. However, they also have strengths and interests that can be used to achieve goals that are important to them.”⁸

As practitioners who work directly with individuals with intellectual disabilities, we know how many challenges they face on the path to acquiring literacy skills. Some of these challenges include; short attention span, lack of retention, generally poorer language skills, and even transportation to the learning site.

Attention Span and Interest

Most learners with intellectual disabilities have an attention span of about 15 – 30 minutes, which is why we often see learners becoming easily bored and anticipating a change in activity. Also, many learners can have difficulty retaining information particularly if the information does not pertain to their personal goals. For example, when you teach an individual with an intellectual disability how to use computer software, it sometimes takes a lot of repetition of the steps needed to access the software before the learner can do it independently. If it is not a piece of software that they want to use for some personal goal, it is even more difficult for the learner to retain the instructions. Individuals with intellectual disabilities display challenges with language skills because they are not able to articulate their needs as well as other learners. And finally, transportation can be a key issue where learners may not have bus passes, family to rely on or other supports to drive them to and from literacy programs.

Practitioners who have worked with individuals with intellectual disabilities know how important it is to provide concrete material and material that is of high interest to the learner. In fact, it is essential that information be meaningful to the learners and link with their personal experiences. This is why it is vital that these learners plan their own learning goals. “As much as possible, adult literacy learners with intellectual disabilities should generate their own learning goals, based on their own interests and needs. Being in control of their own learning builds self-esteem and helps retain interest. Volunteer literacy tutors

⁸ Hatt, P. *Supporting and Sharing: Best Practices in Learning Disabilities Training*, March 2002

and learners' own networks play important roles in helping individuals overcome these barriers.”⁹

Global vs. “Peaks and Valleys”

The most significant difference between learning disabilities and intellectual disabilities is that intellectual disabilities are more global in nature. Individuals with intellectual disabilities seem to be impacted across the board, in many areas of their lives and when they undergo psycho-educational testing, their test results show that their ability is almost the same in all areas. This is different from individuals with learning disabilities who seem to show peaks and valleys in their profiles. For example, individuals with learning disabilities may really struggle with spelling and reading skills, but have an aptitude for math.

The Learning Disability Association of Ontario believes that “it is very important to differentiate specific learning disabilities from more global intellectual or developmental disabilities. The primary purpose of such differentiation is to ensure that individuals are provided with services, supports, and accommodations that are appropriate for them and that meet their specific needs. Mild to moderate intellectual disabilities is sometimes designated “general learning disabilities” within the education system, which results in confusion and the delivery of inappropriate special education services.”¹⁰ This is why we probably see so many individuals in literacy programs who have not been effectively accommodated in the education system.

Some great information about intellectual disabilities can be found at the following websites:

Canadian Association for Community Living <http://www.cacl.ca>

Community Living Ontario <http://www.acl.on.ca/>

The Roeher Institute <http://www.roeher.ca/default.htm>

⁹ Coombe, J. & Lockert, R. *Keys to Success: Literacy for Persons with Developmental Disabilities* Rehabilitation Review Vol. 11, No. 10, Oct. 2000.

¹⁰ *Learning Disabilities: A New Definition*, Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, 2001.

Characteristics of Learning Disabilities

People who utilize the services of literacy organizations may have certain characteristics that lead a practitioner to suspect a learning disability. Sometimes that information is disclosed during the intake process but, more frequently, learners may not have been officially diagnosed. Some may recollect being in special education classes and having various assessments and tests done in school, but were unaware of the reasons why or the outcomes of those testing procedures.

Through the years, individuals with learning disabilities may have developed various coping strategies, which have allowed them to function fairly well in society. According to the Learning Disabilities Association of Kitchener-Waterloo, adults with learning disabilities may demonstrate one or more of the following:

- The adult may learn well when shown, but cannot follow written directions and/or remember several verbal directions.
- He/she may express thoughts verbally, but cannot put them on paper.
- He/she may be good with mechanical things, but has difficulty with reading, writing and spelling. He/she may be unable to complete a job application form.
- He/she may feel anxious, depressed, or have a low self-esteem.

During the intake process, literacy organizations often see similar characteristics to the ones mentioned above in their clients. Although certified psychologists are the only individuals who can diagnose a learning disability, there are screening tools available to literacy practitioners that they can use in their intake process, if desired.

Some other characteristics of learning disabilities include:

- The learner reports that letters and words appear out of sequence or reversed.
- The learner appears to be able to hear but has difficulty discriminating similar sounding words or saying words correctly.
- The learner's hearing appears normal, but the learner frequently misunderstands questions -a language processing problem.

- The learner frequently asks to have questions repeated which may indicate a learning disability related to attention and/or auditory processing.¹¹

As described by the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, learning disabilities are demonstrated by:

- Impairments in one or more psychological processes related to learning, in combination with otherwise average abilities essential for thinking and reasoning, as well as;
- Unexpectedly low academic achievement, or
- Average or above average achievement attained only at the expense of unrealistically high levels of effort and/or educational support.

“Learning disabilities are not a unitary construct. An individual can have one specific problem or constellation of problems. Moreover, learning disabilities do not manifest themselves in individuals in exactly the same way. Some learning disabilities can be mild, while others can be quite severe.”¹²

It is difficult to provide specific characteristics of learning disabilities because of the diverse ways they manifest in each individual. However, there are some general characteristics that may reside in learners who are enrolled in literacy programs. Some of the individuals practitioners work with may show some of the characteristics listed, however individuals must have a significant number of these characteristics in order for a learning disability to be present. At this point, practitioners may decide to refer the learner to a professional psychologist for assessment.

A person with learning disabilities may...

- Perform similar tasks differently from day to day
- Read well but not write well, or write well but not read well
- Be able to learn information presented in one way but not in another
- Have a short attention span, be impulsive, and/or be easily distracted
- Have difficulty telling or understanding jokes

¹¹ *Screening Adults At Risk for Learning Disabilities: The Delta Screener*, Conestoga College Disability Services. 2002.

¹² Gerber, Paul J. *Characteristics of Adults with Specific Learning Disabilities*, 1998.

- Misinterpret language, have poor comprehension of what is said
- Have difficulty with social skills, may misinterpret social cues
- Find it difficult to memorize information
- Have difficulty following a schedule, being on time, or meeting deadlines
- Get lost easily, either driving and/or in large buildings
- Have trouble reading maps
- Often misread or miscopy
- Confuse similar letters or numbers, reverse them, or confuse their order
- Have difficulty reading the newspaper, following small print and/or following columns
- Be able to explain things orally, but not in writing
- Have difficulty writing ideas on paper
- Reverse or omit letters, words, or phrases when writing
- Have difficulty completing job applications correctly
- Have persistent problems with sentence structure, writing mechanics, and organizing written work
- Experience continuous problems with spelling the same word differently in one document
- Have trouble dialing phone numbers and reading addresses
- Have difficulty with math, math language, and math concepts
- Reverse numbers in a cheque-book and have difficulty balancing a cheque-book
- Confuse right and left, up and down
- Have difficulty following directions, especially multiple directions
- Be poorly coordinated
- Be unable to tell you what has just been said
- Hear sounds, words, or sentences imperfectly or incorrectly¹³

The Georgia Assistive Technology (Tools for Life) Project outlines some general characteristics of a learning disability. These include:

- Auditory and Visual Deficits
- Oral/Verbal Expressive Language
- Memory/Recall
- Reasoning/Processing
- Organization

¹³ *A Learning Disabilities Checklist* adapted from the National Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center Checklist, LD Adults of Georgia, <http://www.ldag.org/ldadults/ldinfo/chcklist.htm>

Auditory and Visual Deficits affect one's ability to develop and use language effectively; the effects are most apparent in reading, math, writing, and spelling skills. In both instances, the central nervous system is not processing symbols correctly. Depending upon the severity and nature of the learning disability, the individual:

- Demonstrates variable or unpredictable performance;
- Has difficulty staying on task or using a procedure past the point of its being appropriate;
- Is able to learn information presented in one way, but not in another;
- Experiences severe underachievement in one or more of the basic academic areas (reading, writing, spelling, math);
- Has generally poor work and organizational habits;
- Seems to lack resourcefulness.

Oral/Verbal Expressive Language

The individual:

- Omits or uses words inappropriately;
- Has problems explaining things logically;
- Has trouble expressing thoughts concisely (forgetting, confusing, or having difficulty articulating words);
- Has trouble with telephone conversations;
- Frequently misunderstands verbal communications (because of auditory discrimination problems, the person may process the sounds in words out of sequence, e.g., hears "aminal" instead of "animal");
- Has difficulty expressing herself in group settings;
- Substitutes words incorrectly;
- Has trouble retrieving known words;
- Has problems making generalizations;
- Is hesitant to speak out in class or at work;
- Has difficulty listening;
- Manifests slow verbal information processing;
- Has trouble understanding words or concepts;
- Has difficulty selecting relevant information;
- Has auditory sequencing problems;
- Has problems organizing ideas and expressing ideas in words;

- Misinterprets language subtleties (e.g., tone of voice, sarcasm);
- Has difficulty following complex directions.

Memory/Recall

The individual:

- Has difficulty with short-term memory (e.g., following simple and/or multi-step instructions, remembering material read and/or information presented orally);
- Cannot remember personal history or data (long-term memory);
- Has problems repeating information (says the same thing over and over without realizing);
- Has difficulty synthesizing discussion (time, place, events);
- Has difficulty retaining information without excessive rehearsal, practice, or other memory techniques;
- Has trouble remembering information read;
- Has trouble with multiple directions;
- Experiences difficulty retaining learned material;
- Has problems recalling simple instructions (e.g., how to deposit money in the bank).

Reasoning/Processing

The individual:

- Has difficulty absorbing major ideas from oral presentations (instructions, lectures, discussions);
- Makes frequent errors, both verbal and written;
- Demonstrates poor decision-making skills;
- Has poor abstract reasoning skills;
- Shows poor cause/effect reasoning;
- Has trouble recognizing and learning from mistakes;
- Cannot recognize mistakes;
- Has trouble moving from one idea to the next;
- Delays verbal responses;
- Takes longer on reasoning tasks;
- Has difficulty with abstractions; needs concrete demonstration;

- Has trouble following oral information;
- Has difficulty solving problems;
- Is unable to transfer or generalize skills and integrate information;
- Has difficulty drawing conclusions, making inferences, dealing with abstractions, seeing the whole.

Organization

The individual:

- Has problems managing the details of daily life; has trouble organizing;
- Experiences difficulty with prioritizing;
- Has problems identifying the next step;
- Manifests inconsistent performance;
- Jumps from topic/idea to topic/idea;
- Shows poor organization of concepts and tasks (including sequencing, prioritizing, grouping or categorizing, generalizing, grasping similarities between items, relating parts to the whole);
- Has difficulty with maps, graphs, and charts;
- Has trouble following multiple directions, especially in a prescribed sequence;
- Complains of getting lost or disoriented easily;
- Arrives very early or very late;
- Has difficulty spacing assignment on a page (e.g., crowds math problems on a page);
- Has difficulty telling time;
- Has problems adjusting to change.¹⁴

The Georgia Assistive Technology Project website has some excellent information and can be accessed at <http://www.gatfl.org/ldguide/default.htm>

Characteristics of Intellectual Disabilities

The Literacy and Basic Skills Section of the Ministry of Education and Training (now called the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities or MTCU) has worked toward providing opportunities for literacy practitioners to become more knowledgeable about

¹⁴ Georgia Assistive Technology Project (Tools for Life) , Increasing Access to Assistive Technology, LD Guide, <http://www.gatfl.org/ldguide/default.htm>

serving individuals with intellectual disabilities. In a report on “Best Practices in Literacy for Adults with Developmental Disabilities”, the following mandate helps to outline exactly how individuals with intellectual disabilities can be served in literacy programs.

“Through its adult literacy programs, Ontario has demonstrated its commitment to making literacy agencies and services accessible to learners with disabilities. Though barriers to progressive programming still exist, the government of Ontario has attempted to ensure that people with developmental disabilities have access to literacy services. The Literacy and Basic Skills Section has worked closely with the School Board Access Work Group to develop basic principles of access. These include:

- Measurable progress based on learner-centred assessment and goals;
- The ability to use expressive and receptive communication utilizing symbols;
- Literacy programs as a bridge to participating in the broader community;
- Literacy programs working in cooperation with other service providers and funders.

MTCU has established criteria for participation in LBS programs. Learners must be:

- i) without the literacy skills necessary to find and keep a job to meet everyday needs
- ii) at least 19 years old
- iii) out of school
- iv) able to progress

Agencies are allowed to make exceptions, not exceeding ten percent of learners enrolled in a fiscal year. Learners with intellectual disabilities may fall into this category of exception if they do not meet the above criteria.

There are some common traits that may be present in individuals with intellectual disabilities that may help practitioners differentiate them from other adults with disabilities in literacy programs. The following characteristics were taken from an article entitled, “What are Developmental Disabilities?” found at the website JusticeForAll.ca:

Communication:

- Difficulty answering questions or following commands
- Short attention span, easily distracted

- Difficulty describing facts or details
- Limited memory or impaired recall
- Limited vocabulary
- Use of mimicry and imitation in communication
- Says what he or she thinks others want to hear

History:

- Special education experience
- Support agency or person involved in their daily life
- Work history: employment in a supported work setting

Observations and Task Performance:

- Inappropriately dressed for weather
- Speech is difficult to understand
- Difficulty with reading and writing
- Appears to be eager to please
- Appears to be easily led
- Avoids answering questions about their disability¹⁵

The Famous “Grey Area”

There are some individuals that we may come across in literacy programs who seem to show characteristics of learning disabilities as well as intellectual disabilities. This is often referred to as “the grey area” mainly because most practitioners do not know the most effective teaching strategies for these individuals and they tend to be the most difficult population when it comes to writing training plans.

It is true for many literacy organizations that some learners may fall into a category that is often referred to as “the grey area.” Several of these adults have never been through formal assessment procedures so it is often difficult for practitioners to find ways to instruct these learners. The best way to interpret the literacy needs of these individuals would be through formal assessment; however, this might not be possible for financial reasons.

¹⁵ *What are Developmental Disabilities*, Justice For All, www.justiceforall.ca

The challenge with this group of individuals is that they show similar learning problems to individuals with learning disabilities. However, if you were to give these individuals the strategies that you might provide individuals with learning disabilities, you might be setting them up for failure. As literacy practitioners, we know that intellectual inability is not a barrier to reading. Individuals with intellectual disabilities can learn to read and we could probably teach them how to decode anything, however we would eventually see a breakdown in reading comprehension. Individuals who have characteristics that most resemble an individual with an intellectual impairment have difficulty comprehending abstract ideas, which is why reading comprehension and other higher level thinking skills can be difficult to attain.

It is important to keep in mind that we need to work with what we think the main disability is and use teaching strategies that would be effective for that individual. For instance, sometimes we encounter individuals who may show characteristics that are predominantly associated with intellectual impairments but at the same time show a few signs of having a potential learning disability. In this case, it would be better to focus on providing teaching strategies that are beneficial for adults with intellectual disabilities. It is essential to focus on what the main disability is in order to effectively help an individual in this situation. The reason this is important is because practitioners might be tempted to use strategies that work with individuals with learning disabilities. This could be very discouraging for learners whose main disability is an intellectual disability. It could set the learner up for failure.

The IQ Factor

And so dyslexia represents a paradox, particularly in our society where reading ability is often taken as a proxy for intelligence and it is assumed that if you are a good reader, you are also highly intelligent and if you struggle to read, you must not be so smart.¹⁶

The question of whether an individual with a learning disability is average to above average intelligence is one that has been disputed in the literacy field for many years. According to many professionals in the field of learning disabilities and many learning disability associations, individuals with learning disabilities are average to above average intelligence. The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada says “adults with learning disabilities have average, above-average, or even exceptional intelligence. They may be highly artistic, musical, or gifted in a specific academic area. Their general intellectual

¹⁶ Shaywitz, S. Schwab Learning <<http://www.schwablearning.org>>

functioning is not impaired and they are able to reason and make judgements at least within the average range. In other words, people with learning disabilities are not slow learners. They just learn in a different way. They learn inefficiently, due to inefficiencies in the functioning of the brain.”¹⁷

The term intellectual impairment often describes individuals who have significant sub-average general intellectual functioning as well as an IQ at or below 70. According to the Roeher Institute “People with an intellectual disability have an intellectual or perceptual impairment that means they master basic and social skills more slowly. Individuals with this impairment may require particular supports and resources in order to be included and participate fully in literacy programs.”¹⁸

This is where we see the key difference between these two groups of individuals; Individuals with intellectual disabilities have limited intellectual potential, whereas learners with learning disabilities have the ability to learn in spite of the difficulties they have processing information. When we work with individuals who have learning disabilities, it is important to consider the academic potential of the individual (there seems to be a significant gap between what would be expected, given the individual’s ability, and what is actually accomplished).¹⁹

It is well documented in many articles that learning disabilities are characterized by a significant discrepancy between cognitive functioning and academic achievement. As an example, T. H. Miles explains that “a person is dyslexic provided that there is a discrepancy between his intellectual level (potential) and his performance at reading and spelling (achievement) and this discrepancy is accompanied by some other supporting “signs,” like problems with left and right, poor sense of time, putting letters and figures the wrong way around, unusual difficulty in remembering mathematical tables, putting letters in the wrong order, et cetera.”²⁰

Pat Hatt once explained an important point about how to distinguish a learning disability from an intellectual disability: individuals tend to gravitate towards their potential. For instance, if you look at people with learning disabilities’ previous experiences in life, they

¹⁷ Destination Literacy, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, pg. 13

¹⁸ The Roeher Institute *Speaking of Equality: Making Literacy Programs Accessible to People with an Intellectual Disability – A Guide for Program Managers and Coordinators*. North York, ON., 1995, pp. 5 –7.

¹⁹ *Characteristics of Adults with Specific Learning Disabilities* by Dr. Paul J. Gerber excerpted from *Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities: Implications for Effective Practice*

²⁰ Miles, T. R., *Understanding Dyslexia* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978).

have held regular jobs and been responsible for families and somehow seemed to make it through, whereas a majority of individuals with intellectual disabilities tend to live and work in a supportive environment.²¹

It is important to remember that when working with either of these two groups, we must focus on what they “can do” as opposed to what they “cannot do”. We know that the limited intellectual potential of individuals with intellectual impairments makes it difficult for them to transfer information. This is why it is important to provide learners with appropriate teaching instruction and avoid setting individuals up for failure by giving them strategies they can’t use.

Causes of Learning Disabilities

“It is obvious that anything which affects the brain will affect learning. It is now well substantiated that factors within the brain itself, genetic influences as well as influences in the environment can all have an impact on learning and consequently on learning disabilities. In the area of reading disabilities, for example, careful research has estimated that about half of the individual differences in these conditions are related to genetic factors.”²²

Research tells us that learning disabilities can be caused by genetics, congenital factors (originating prior to birth) and acquired neurobiological factors (an illness or injury that affects the brain early in life). Studies that suggest learning disabilities are caused by genetic factors are greatly substantiated by the number of individuals in families who are identified with similar learning disabilities. These similarities can be seen particularly among siblings from the same family.

Congenital factors (originating prior to birth) are linked to being causes of learning disabilities. During pregnancy, it is well established that both prescription and non-prescription drugs (especially alcohol and nicotine) can contribute to disorders which may include learning disabilities. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Effects are the best-known syndromes in this group. Infections of the mother during pregnancy (such as rubella or measles) can also negatively affect the fetal brain, leading to different types of

²¹ Hatt, P. Workshop on *Supporting and Sharing Best Practices in Learning Disabilities Practitioner Training*, 2002.

²² *Congenital Versus Acquired Causes of Learning Disabilities*, Learning Disabilities Association Ontario Promoting Early Intervention Project. 1999

learning difficulties, depending on the nature of the infection and the gestational period during which it occurs.

There are also acquired neurobiological factors (an illness or injury that affects the brain early in life) that cause learning disabilities. This could include traumatic conditions during the birth process, particularly those resulting in lack of oxygen during birth (eg. cerebral palsy resulting from anoxia). This can cause brain damage and result in learning disabilities. At birth, both low birth weight (which is significantly more common for women who smoke during pregnancy) and prematurity (especially in combination with Respiratory Distress Syndrome) are associated with a variety of negative outcomes, which sometimes can include learning disabilities. Following birth, any source of acquired brain injury may result in a range of effects including learning disabilities. These include:

- traumatic events (“shaken baby syndrome”, falls, accidents);
- exposure to toxic chemicals (eg., to heavy metals such as mercury or lead from contaminated soil, through solvent inhalation or “gas sniffing”);
- hypoxia (loss of oxygen to the brain as a result of suffocation or choking);
- infections (especially meningitis and encephalitis);
- and inflammation of the brain (eg. Reyes Syndrome).²³

Causes of Intellectual Disability

There are many causes of intellectual disability with some being more predominant than others. Some of these causes include:

Before Birth

1. Inheritance

Intellectual disability may occur through heredity (i.e. genetic transmission of traits from parents to offspring).

2. Chromosomal Abnormality

There are 23 pairs of chromosomes in each human cell. Chromosomes are structures which contain the genetic material for the transmission of human traits. Certain syndromes (which encompass intellectual disability) arise when the chromosomes of an

²³ *Congenital versus acquired causes of learning disabilities*. Promoting Early Intervention Project, 1999.

individual have an abnormal arrangement or structure. Affected persons will have intellectual disability and characteristic physical features (i.e. Down's Syndrome).

3. Infections and Intoxication

Certain infections during pregnancy, such as rubella or syphilis, can lead to intellectual disability in the offspring. Exposure to toxins such as alcohol, drugs or tobacco by a pregnant mother can also affect the child.

4. Trauma

Physical trauma to the mother may result in brain injury to the fetus and can subsequently cause intellectual disability.

5. Malnutrition

Under-nourishment in the pregnant mother can affect the development of the fetus and lead to intellectual disability in the child.

6. Radiation

Intellectual disability in the child can be caused by the mother's exposure to nuclear or X-ray radiation.

7. Metabolic Disorders

Persons with PKU (Phenylketonuria) have a faulty metabolism of the protein phenylalanine resulting in the release of incomplete metabolites that harm the brain. Galactosemia is a defect in the body's ability to break down galactose (a milk by-product), the effects of which are detrimental to the brain.

During Birth

1. Asphyxia

Prolonged labour can result in a lack of oxygen supply to the baby's brain leading to intellectual disability.

2. Trauma

Physical injury to the brain during birth can also cause intellectual disability.

After Birth

1. Infections

Certain infections during infancy and childhood can cause diseases such as meningitis and encephalitis that can affect the brain and result in intellectual disability.

2. Injury

Physical injury such as blow to the head or a severe fall that results in brain damage may lead to intellectual disability.

3. Hormonal Deficiency

A deficiency in the thyroid hormone can result in intellectual disability.

4. Jaundice

Jaundice is a yellow tinge to the skin and sclera of the eyes caused by excess bilirubin (a substance produced by the breakdown of red blood cells) in the bloodstream that can cause brain damage and intellectual disability.

5. Malnutrition

Inadequate nutrition during early childhood resulting in under-development of the brain can lead to intellectual disability.

6. Cultural-Familial Factors

A lack of stimulation or a deprived environment during childhood may lead to intellectual disability.

7. No Known Causes

Apart from the above known causes, there are many cases of intellectual disability that have no known causes. This is a very important point!²⁴

²⁴ Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore

Assessment

The question of assessment is always one that arises for adults with learning disabilities. As many practitioners know, there are many pros and cons to assessment. First and foremost is whether or not the learner can deal with the results of the assessment if the results do not come out the way they expect. For some individuals, the results may not indicate that they have a learning disability and may point to an intellectual disability or some other limit to their cognitive ability. There are some learners who do not want to find this out and this information may significantly impact their self-worth.

The more pertinent questions that should be asked before a learner considers assessment are:

- Is the assessment even necessary?
- Why does the person want the piece of documentation that details the results of the assessment?

For some learners, an assessment might be necessary in order for them to seek further education and accommodations like tutors or adaptive technology through the special needs departments at post-secondary institutions. For other learners, it might be for reasons of employment equity. For example, to help them do their jobs better they could be provided with accommodations at work. Whatever the reason, it is important to consider both of these questions before an assessment is pursued to avoid disappointing news.

Skill Characteristics – Learning Disabilities

When we work with individuals who have learning disabilities, it is easy to focus on what they can't do as opposed to what they can do. For many years, educators have been interested in helping to remediate learners. It would be more beneficial for learners if we stopped focussing on remediation and started focussing on a learner's strengths. As Dr. Richard Lavoie points out: "it is important to emphasize and celebrate an individual's "islands of competence."²⁵ This means pushing aside the weaknesses and focusing on the strengths.

Dr. Paul Gerber used an excellent analogy of this "islands of competence" idea at a recent conference on learning disabilities. He talked about students with learning disabilities as

²⁵ Richard Lavoie *20 Tips to Promote Positive Self-Esteem* www.ricklavoie.com

never becoming the class valedictorian because they do not do well academically across the board. However, he pointed out that many students with learning disabilities have “islands of competence” in certain subject areas. For example, a very well known person by the name of Albert Einstein had a learning disability. He might not have been his class valedictorian but his strength was in science and he was able to focus on this “island of competence” to change the world in very meaningful ways.

Gerber also quoted a student that he had previously worked with who said the following about his learning disability: “It is celebrating strengths and knowing full well what your weaknesses are.” Dr. Paul Gerber has done a significant amount of research in the area of adults with learning disabilities. In an article on *Characteristics of Adults with Specific Learning Disabilities*, Gerber points out that “In many cases, the lives of individuals with LD are punctuated with successes and failures. Those who have been able to move forward undeterred by failure (and sometimes strengthened by it) have a greater sense of inner strength and self-confidence. In essence, in tough times, they know that there are good times ahead, if they are able to stick with it.”²⁶

Resilience is one of the key characteristics that help adults with learning disabilities reach their desired goals. “Resilience is a set of dynamics that affects different segments of the population of adults with LD in different ways. Whereas all individuals with LD have the capacity to be resilient in some cases (eg. those who typically attend literacy centres), resilience may be more of an exception than a rule.”²⁷ Which is why as literacy practitioners we find it so difficult to help this population of learners.

“Another positive characteristic is the unconventional way in which some adults with LD devise learning strategies or adaptive methods to master a task or learn a new routine. They have unique ways in which they approach tasks, and when given the time and opportunity, they are able to problem solve in their own style. This process has been termed “learned creativity” and is credited with adaptive techniques used in employment, daily living tasks and social situations.”²⁸

²⁶ *Characteristics of Adults with Specific Learning Disabilities* by Dr. Paul J. Gerber excerpted from *Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities: Implications for Effective Practice*

²⁷ *Characteristics of Adults with Specific Learning Disabilities* by Dr. Paul J. Gerber excerpted from *Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities: Implications for Effective Practice*

²⁸ *Characteristics of Adults with Specific Learning Disabilities* by Dr. Paul J. Gerber excerpted from *Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities: Implications for Effective Practice*

The ability to transfer skills is one of the key things that separate individuals with learning disabilities from individuals with intellectual disabilities. It is easier to teach learning strategies to people with learning disabilities because when you teach them a new strategy that they find effective, they are able to reuse it in order to help them solve another problem or deal with a new situation. This ability to take information and transpose it somewhere else shows that academic achievement can match potential when the learner is provided with effective strategies.

Skill Characteristics – Intellectual Disabilities

“Literacy is more than learning to read, write and spell proficiently. It is learning to enjoy words and stories when someone else is reading them. It is learning to love books and all the worlds that can be opened by books. It is a way of achieving social closeness through sharing literacy experiences with friends or classmates. It is finding out about the way things are in places we have never visited or in places that have never existed. If we understand that literacy is all of these things and more, we can also understand that everyone can achieve some degree of literacy if given opportunities and exposure... The notions that children (and adults) are too physically, too cognitively or too communicatively disabled to benefit from experiences with written language are not supported by current emergent literacy research!”²⁹

According to SARC (Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres), there are significant benefits to learners with intellectual disabilities when they are enrolled in literacy programs:

- Learners see the positive impact improving their literacy skills has made to their lives. They feel extremely positive about being in literacy programs.
- People with intellectual/developmental disabilities are more readily accepted by their peers when they are literate.
- Increased competency in literacy is linked with increased expectations and opportunities for people with intellectual/developmental disabilities.

²⁹ Pat Miranda, Ph.D. Quoted in: Peggy A. Locke and Roxanne Butterfield, *Promoting Literacy for Individuals with Severe to Moderate Disabilities* (CSUN 1999 Conference Proceedings)

- Critical thinking skills can be improved through building literacy skills. Adults with developmental disabilities are better able to become effective self-advocates and active citizens.
- Employment possibilities increase with improved literacy skills. However, obtaining employment may not be possible or easy for all with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Boosting literacy skills and self-esteem do make community living easier and potentially more successful.³⁰

As was mentioned when defining intellectual disability, this group tends to have more of what would be referred to as global impairments meaning that their disability affects them in all parts of their lives and in all academic areas in the same way. This is very different from the peaks and valleys that are observed when working with individuals with learning disabilities who might have difficulty reading and decoding text but have very strong skills in math. Individuals with intellectual disabilities have the same skills across the board. They would have the same difficulties with reading that they would with math.

Another main difference between the two is that individuals with intellectual disabilities have difficulty with transferring information. For instance, if you teach them some new information like using a computer program, you may teach them numerous times how to independently start up the program etc. However, in some cases, they may never be able to do it on their own. Also, you might find that once they do learn how to use the program, they can follow the steps that you have taught them to use that particular program but cannot transfer this skill to using a different piece of software. The key difference is that individuals with intellectual disabilities cannot take information and transpose it somewhere else. For example, you may be successful in teaching individuals with an intellectual disability how to decode text for reading but they will have difficulty with comprehension.

³⁰ Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres, Supplementary Tutor Handbook, Adapted from *Literacy Ontario, Best Practices in Literacy for Adults with Developmental Disabilities*

Learning Strategies for Learning Disabilities

Individuals with learning disabilities have skills that make it possible for them to learn how to use strategies and accommodations to help them pursue their goals. However, when teaching learners with learning disabilities, it is important to build on their strengths. It takes time to get to know what learners' strengths are and learners may or may not be able to articulate what their strengths are. The following are strategies that can be used based on what you do know about the learner, and has been taken from Pat Hatt's "Supporting and Sharing: Best Practices in Learning Disabilities Practitioner Training."

If the learner:

- Can remember words they know
- Guesses words that look like the word eg. attraction or attractive
- Has trouble with big words
- Has trouble with pronunciation
- Can't blend sounds well
- May know sounds but mixes them up when sounding out
- Doesn't respond to rhyming clues
- Spells based on known words ³¹

Use these strategies to help build on strengths:

- Use visual cues – pictures, diagrams, graphs to reinforce concepts
- Provide written instruction to look back on
- Talk at a slower pace
- Give one task at a time
- Repeat the instruction if needed

If the learner:

- Can sound out words
- Can blend sounds
- Can substitute letters
- Can work with word families/rhyming words

³¹ Hatt, P. *Supporting and Sharing Best Practices in Learning Disabilities Practitioner Training*

- Is very verbal and chatty
- Can't recognize words that he/she "knows"
- Has trouble with oral reading, stumbles, hesitates
- Gets lost and uses finger to find spot
- Spells based on the sounds
- Has problems with irregular sounds (ough, eigh)

Use these strategies to help build on strengths:

- Read directions aloud and provide oral instruction
- Use colour coding and colour transparencies
- Enlarge text
- Allow learner to use tape recorder to listen to text on tape
- Provide the learner with speech synthesis software like Kurzweil reader so he/she can scan and listen to text

If the learner:

- Takes longer to understand and respond to your questions, but the quality of the answer is good
- Has trouble giving clear, concise answers to simple questions
- Complains of trouble focussing
- Needs rewording of questions, but answers are good
- Has trouble with attendance and follow through

Use these strategies to help build on strengths:

- Provide more time for the learner to finish work
- Provide calendar with weekly plan
- Provide written detailed explanation for projects
- Help the learner develop task management skills – make expectations clear, break the task down into component parts
- Help the learner develop skills for organizing space – physically show them (model) how to organize their notes, binder, workspace etc.

For some excellent strategies for adults with learning disabilities, please refer to Mel Levine's website www.allkindsofminds.org This website has a section entitled "Learning Base" where you can find strategies in specific areas such as numeracy, expressive writing, time management, etc. To access the strategies you must first enter the Clinician's section, then go to the Library and on to the Learning Base.

Learning strategies for Intellectual Disabilities

"Building literacy skills can be a meaningful experience for any adult, but doing so can be even more significant for adults with intellectual disabilities. With improved reading ability comes higher expectations, improved self-esteem and more opportunities including employment possibilities. In many cases, community living becomes easier and more successful, and literacy allows adults with intellectual disabilities to become active citizens and more effective self-advocates."³²

Adult literacy learners with intellectual disabilities may be challenged by lack of retention, slow learning pace, short attention span, and generally poorer language skills than other learners attending literacy programs.³³ To assist these learners in achieving their goals, it is important to keep the information that is presented to them very **concrete** in nature so that they can relate it to their own experiences. Many individuals with intellectual disabilities are very self-aware and have particular goals in mind that might not be what would be considered a regular learning goal. It is essential that we support these learners because their goals towards entertainment or recreation are ones that are extremely important to them. It is very important that we help enhance the learners' lives in areas they want. When working with individuals with intellectual disabilities, the information provided during instruction must meet their needs and be something that they want to do.

From an article on the Keys to Success: Literacy for Persons with Developmental Disabilities, Rehabilitation Review, it is recommended when communicating with a person with an intellectual disability to:

- Make sure that you have the person's attention.
- Speak directly to the person (even when a support person is present).
- Speak slowly and clearly.

³² *Keys to Success: Literacy for Persons with Developmental Disabilities*, Rehabilitation Review, Volume 11, No. 10, October 2000

³³ *Keys to Success: Literacy for Persons with Developmental Disabilities*, Rehabilitation Review, Volume 1, No. 10 October 2000

- Use plain language.
- Take time in asking a question and waiting for an answer.
- Keep instructions simple and allow ample time for the person to comply.

In asking questions:

- Break down complex questions into several simple questions and ask them one at a time.
- Ask open-ended and free recall questions instead of "yes/no" questions (e.g. "What did you see?" instead of "Did you see the man break the window pane?")
- Ask the person if he/she wants the question to be repeated if no reply is forthcoming.
- Repeat the question or phrase it in a different way if you suspect that the person may not have understood it (asking the question repeatedly is better than interpreting the response inaccurately).
- Use points of reference when asking for information regarding time and sequence of events, and use landmarks when asking about locations.
- When in doubt, try asking the same question in a different way to confirm earlier responses (or seek validation from a different source).
- Use words of encouragement and, if the interview is not progressing very well, ask if the person needs a break.
- Bear in mind that it is possible that a person with intellectual disabilities may agree with something even if it's not the truth because he/she:
 - (1) feels that is what the interviewer wants to hear
 - (2) wants to hide his/her inability to read/understand/recall
 - (3) feels that such an answer would not require further elaboration
 - (4) believes that the interviewer can be trusted and knows best
 - (5) doesn't want to appear "stupid"
- Some persons may require the help of a support person or advocate when communicating, while others may require different communication aids like communication boards or pictures.³⁴

³⁴ *Keys to Success: Literacy for Persons with Developmental Disabilities*, Rehabilitation Review, Volume 11, No. 10 October 2000

Accommodations: How They Help Individuals with Learning Disabilities

Adults with learning disabilities face many obstacles in the learning environment. Most of all they face their pasts where they have achieved, in most cases, nothing but failure. As literacy practitioners, we must be aware of ways to bridge the gap and provide opportunities where an adult learner with learning disabilities can achieve success. The following has been taken from the website for the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario. It addresses why it is so important to provide accommodations to individuals with learning disabilities and, in this case, demonstrates how accommodations for the Ontario Grade 10 Literacy Test help students who might normally be held back from achieving success.

“Almost all (if not all) students with learning disabilities can acquire literacy skills, provided that they are taught appropriately and have access to accommodations when taking a test. Students with learning disabilities have average intelligence, which is an essential requirement for the comprehension component of such tests. Of course, students with learning disabilities also have specific psychological processing difficulties, which result in problems with information processing tasks such as reading or writing. That is what having a learning disability means. But with accommodations such as having the material provided on audiotape rather than just in print, being allowed to use a computer, audio taping responses or having answers scribed, most students with learning disabilities should be able to compensate for their difficulties.”³⁵

“There are many ways that learners can be accommodated to compensate for their difficulties. Accommodations can range from low to high tech. They are the strategies that individuals use that help them be independent.”³⁶

For learners who cannot read print, there is now computer software that will scan print and generate synthesized voice. For those unable to write, word processing software is available which will facilitate composing with appropriate spelling, capitalization and punctuation. Some learners might be unable to use a traditional keyboard. For them, software has been created which recognizes voice and prints a written copy of verbal text. With rapid development of computer technology, such assistive devices will become more

³⁵ Nichols, E. *On the Legislative Front: The Grade 10 Literacy Test* www.ldao.on.ca

³⁶ Hatt, P. *Workshop on Learning Disabilities and Developmental Disabilities*, October 2003

common and affordable.³⁷ Some examples of accommodations for individuals with learning disabilities include:

- reducing background noises that might be distracting
- permitting a learner extra time to complete a task
- providing tests/training materials to individuals with reading problems on audio tape, CD or video
- providing a written copy of instructions when needed
- allowing extra time for the person to process information
- providing the learner access to adaptive/assistive technology

Assistive technology is "any technology that enables an adult with learning disabilities to compensate for specific deficits."³⁸ Assistive technology ranges from low to high tech, the choice depending on the individual, the function to be performed, and the context.

Examples include the following:

- (1) for organization, memory, and time management problems - highlighters, beepers, digital watches, tape recorders, personal management software
- (2) for auditory processing - FM amplification devices, electronic notebooks, computer-aided real-time translation, voice synthesizers, videotapes with closed captioning, variable speech control tape recorders
- (3) for visual processing - software display controls, books on disk
- (4) for reading - scanners with speech synthesizers that read back text, books on tape and disk, CD-ROMs
- (5) for writing - word processing tools such as spelling and grammar checkers, abbreviation expanders, brainstorming/outlining software – for example, using Inspiration for writing.³⁹

Some adaptive technology that can be very beneficial to adults with learning disabilities include:

- Kurzweil 3000
- Wynn

³⁷ *Teaching Students with Learning and Behavioural Differences, A Resource Guide for Teachers*, BC Ministry of Education.

³⁸ Kerka, S. *Adults with Learning Disabilities*. Adapted from Gerber and Reiff 1994, p. 152 ERIC Digest No. 189, 1998.

³⁹ Kerka, S. *Adults with Learning Disabilities*. ERIC Digest No. 189, 1998.

- Word Q
- Co-Writer
- Inspiration
- Draft:Builder

Of course, the subject of using assistive/adaptive technology with individuals who have learning disabilities is so vast that we could not cover everything here. Please explore the following websites for information about assistive/adaptive technology:

The Georgia Assistive Technology Project (Tools for Life) Increasing Access to Assistive Technology, LD Guide. <http://www.gatfl.org/ldguide/default.htm>

The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LD in Depth) Adult Issues, Adaptive Technology. www.ldac-taac.ca/english/indepth.htm

LDOnLine Please see a comprehensive list in their TechGuide in the Technology section of this website. http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/technology/technology.html

Community Connections: A Key for Helping Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities Achieve Their Literacy Goals

There are many ways that we, as literacy practitioners, can better support individuals with intellectual disabilities in our programs. As was mentioned earlier, individuals with intellectual impairments must be able to use literacy skills for a specific task. As stated in an article by Lockert & Coombe from *Rehabilitation Review*, it is essential that all people involved with the individual are aware of what the student is learning and how they can help in the transfer of skills to other areas of the person's life. This may include communication and co-operation between support networks and learners in the home, teaching and work environments to maximize "learning in context" opportunities.⁴⁰

Learners with intellectual disabilities may live at home and attend literacy programs daily, live independently with some support from an agency or live in a group home and attend programs with a support worker. In all of these situations, it is important to know what the learners' goals are and how they can be served best by literacy programs. The individuals

⁴⁰ *Keys to Success: Literacy for Persons with Developmental Disabilities*, *Rehabilitation Review* Volume 11, No. 10, October 2000.

who are most involved in the learners' lives (parents, caregivers, spouses, support workers etc.) might be able to best help literacy practitioners learn more about the learner. This way, literacy practitioners can help individuals with intellectual disabilities to set their own literacy goals. This is why making connections and networking around the learners' needs is so helpful (literacy is important, not only for safety reasons, but being able to read or write ones own name gives the individual a tremendous sense of achievement, pride and self-esteem).⁴¹

Making connections with organizations that really influence a learner's life is a key element, whether through case conferencing with Community Living or some other organization that supports individuals with disabilities. By doing this we can start to really help these learners move towards independence. Work by Beck and Hatt (1998) indicates that such support networks can be crucial in helping learners in "early literacy stages" advance to the point where they are prepared for entry into more mainstream literacy programming.⁴²

There are many local Community Living agencies as well as other organizations that assist adults with disabilities in communities throughout Ontario. Literacy practitioners can connect with them in order to better help learners with intellectual disabilities. There is excellent information available through the following websites or by contacting the following organizations:

Association for Community Living

<http://www.acl.on.ca/>

Canadian Association for Community Living

<http://www.cacl.ca/>

The Roeher Institute

<http://www.roeher.ca/default.htm>

⁴¹ Beck, K. N., & Hatt, P. (1998). *Literacy Preparation Project for Adults with Developmental Disabilities: Training Manual*. Toronto: Toronto District School Board

⁴² Beck, K. N., & Hatt, P. (1998). *Literacy Preparation Project for Adults with Developmental Disabilities: Training Manual*. Toronto: Toronto District School Board

Conclusion

Individuals with learning disabilities are very different from those with intellectual disabilities and vice versa. It is important that literacy practitioners be aware of the differences so that they can better identify learners during the intake process and provide opportunities to support each learner's individual needs. As practitioners, we work with a very diverse group of learners and the better we know and understand their literacy goals, the more successful we will be in providing a supportive learning environment.

Websites

Learning Disabilities

National Organization - Movement for Canadian Literacy

www.literacy.ca

National Adult Literacy Database

www.nald.ca

LD Online – an excellent resource for in depth information on learning disabilities

www.ldonline.org

National Center for Learning Disabilities

www.nclld.org

National Institute For Literacy

<http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/ld/archive/definiti.htm>

Mel Levine is a well-known expert on learning disabilities in the U.S. and is the founder of this non-profit institute for the understanding of differences in learning. This site provides excellent strategies in the Learning Base section that can be accessed via the Library.

<http://www.allkindsofminds.org/>

Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

<http://www.ldao.on.ca>

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

<http://www.ldac-taac.ca/>

Intellectual Disabilities

Canadian Association for Community Living

<http://www.cacl.ca>

Community Living Ontario

<http://www.acl.on.ca/>

The Roeher Institute

<http://www.roeher.ca>

Helpful Resources

Adults with LD. Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario. www.ldao.on.ca

Beck, K. N., & Hatt, P. (1998). *Literacy Preparation Project for Adults with Developmental Disabilities: Training Manual*. Toronto: Toronto District School Board

Destination Literacy. Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, 1999.

Gerber, Paul. J. *Characteristics of Adults with Specific Learning Disabilities* excerpted from *Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities: Implications for Effective Practice*, 1998.

Hatt, Pat. *Supporting and Sharing "Best Practices in Learning Disabilities Practitioner Training*, March 2002.

Hatt, Pat. Workshop on Learning Disabilities and Developmental Disabilities, October 2003.

Keys to Success: Literacy for Persons with Developmental Disabilities. Rehabilitation Review, Vol. 11, No. 10, Oct. 2000.

<<http://www.vrri.org/rhb10b00.htm>>

Kerka, S. *Adults with Learning Disabilities*, Adapted from Gerber and Reiff 1994, p. 152
ERIC Digest No. 189, 1998

Lavoie, Richard. *20 Tips to Promote Positive Self-Esteem*

< www.ricklavoie.com >

Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore

<<http://www.minds.org.sg/>>

Miranda, Pat. Ph.D. Quoted in: Peggy A. Locke and Roxanne Butterfield, *Promoting Literacy for Individuals with Severe to Moderate Disabilities* (CSUN 1999 Conference Proceedings)

Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres, Supplementary Tutor Handbook, Adapted from Literacy Ontario, Best Practices in Literacy for Adults with Developmental Disabilities < <http://www.nald.ca/Fulltext/sarc2/page13.htm>>

Shaywitz, S. *Conversation with Sally Shaywitz, M.D., author of Overcoming Dyslexia*, SchwabLearning.org. <http://www.schwablearning.org>

Teaching Students with Learning and Behavioural Differences: A Resource Guide for Teachers. BC Ministry of Education. < <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/>>

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<<http://www.justiceforall.ca>>

Chapter One Appendix A

Differentiating Learning Disabilities from Intellectual Disabilities

	Learning Disabilities	Intellectual Disabilities
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - average to above average intelligence - significant discrepancy between what would be expected, given the individual’s ability, and what is actually accomplished 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - global impairments - IQ at or below 70
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - difficulty processing information - manifest as auditory/visual deficits, memory/recall, reasoning/processing and organization problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limited intellectual potential - may have limited memory, short attention span or be easily distracted
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - life and jobs are “average” - limited literacy skills are unexplained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supported employment or none - relatively limited responsibility
Literacy Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - seeking literacy skills for further education or for career opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - want to be able to use literacy skills for a specific task
Barriers to Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - processing problems impact learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limited cognitive ability
Teaching Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strategies and accommodations for problem-solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - concrete and interest-related - goals must be meaningful
Accommodations/ Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adaptive/assistive technology - increased time/provision of materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - case conferencing among support networks - linking with community support organizations

Input from Online Delivery of Chapter One

Differentiating Learning Disabilities from Intellectual Disabilities



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

At the beginning of our online workshop, we talked about a “Literacy Bill of Rights” that can be found at <http://www.gac.edu/~dkoppenh/rights.html>. The key statement in this Bill of Rights is that “All persons, regardless of the extent or severity of their disabilities, have a basic right to use print.”

We asked how this Bill of Rights applies to learners with learning disabilities and/or intellectual disabilities. Here’s what online participants told us:

- Access to literacy programs should be universal, i.e. everyone has the right to attend.
- Everyone should have access to medical and other services.
- Even if a learner’s progress is slow or minimal, he/she still has a right to gain/enhance literacy skills.
- All adults are lifelong learners; learning is a continuum.
- Although the rights exist, it can be difficult for learners with LD/ID to fully access their rights.
- Gaining literacy skills can help a learner better advocate for him/herself.
- It gives learners a chance to more fully participate in life in the 21st century, e.g. e-mail.
- Programs need to be flexible to meet learners’ needs.
- Adaptive technology can help learners gain these basic rights.
- Sadly, in some areas, programs aren’t able to meet learners’ needs (for a variety of reasons) so in that case, those learners don’t have these rights.



Activity 2

We defined learning disabilities (see the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario at <http://www.ldao.ca> and the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada at <http://www.ldac-taac.ca>) and described the three main types of processing deficits, i.e. visual, auditory and organizational.

We asked you to share examples of learners you suspected had learning disabilities and the strategies you used when working with them. Here's what you told us:

- Use strategies that use as many ways of learning as possible; pay attention to what works and what doesn't.
- Break tasks into small chunks; don't overwhelm the learner.
- Computers are useful ways of introducing the concept of sequencing because you often need to do tasks in a certain order.
- Keeping journals can be helpful.
- Agendas / schedules are also helpful.
- Palm pilots are helpful (if learner can afford one).
- Any type of reminder can be helpful – verbal, written, visual.
- Encourage learners to tell you what worked and what didn't; give them control over their own learning and encourage them to self-identify.
- The Dollar Store is a great place to buy things like address books that learners can use to keep track of new words.
- Shelley Olivier recommends Zero Spelling; she says it is both effective and free! You can find it at http://www.sofotex.com/ZERO-Spelling-download_L6562.html; it works on all Windows systems.



Activity 3

We talked about intellectual disabilities, starting with a definition (see <http://justiceforall.ca>) and moving on to characteristics.

Then we asked you to describe any other characteristics of intellectual disabilities. Here's what you told us:

- Some learners have difficulties getting past a crisis – they never seem to get over it and can't move past it.
- They may have difficulty with the concept of time – what happened fifteen years ago might seem like yesterday.
- Structure, routine and habit are important; they can help provide a sense of stability and comfort.
- On the other hand, life is full of change so if we focus too much on routine, etc. we aren't supporting learners with adapting to real-life situations.
- Learners may have difficulty making decisions; it can help to provide two or three choices and let them pick.
- Learners may be unable to discriminate between their private and public lives; they may share more than is appropriate.
- Some learners with ID may “look” different, causing people to treat them differently, perhaps even like children instead of like adults.
- Life skills / social skills are often an issue. For example, some learners may speak too loudly and disrupt other learners.
- There may be physical accessibility issues.

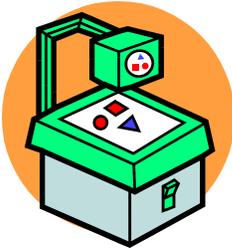


Activity 4

Sometimes, it may be difficult to distinguish between learning disabilities and intellectual disabilities. Some learners may present with characteristics of both. We talked about this potential “grey area”.

We asked you how you distinguish between learning disabilities and intellectual disabilities. Here is what you told us:

- Sometimes it’s hard to identify a “slow learner” vs. someone with an intellectual disability.
- Learners with ID tend to have difficulties across the spectrum; learners with LD have more defined areas of strength/weakness.
- When there is a hearing or vision impairment, it may make it difficult to assess if there is also a learning or intellectual disability.
- None of us are one thing or the other; overlaps are the norm rather than the exception.
- Check with the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada; you may be able to access their “Destination Employment” assessment.
- In general, advocate for formal assessments.
- Are we supposed to work with ID learners in literacy programs? Talk to your field consultant – there are regional differences.
- Focus on strengths, not weaknesses.



Activity 5

We talked about skills characteristics and effective strategies for working with adults with LD.

We asked you to share effective strategies for working with adults with LD. Here's what you told us:

- Coloured transparencies can help learners with visual processing deficits – apparently, blue is the best colour but sometimes you have to try a few before finding a colour that works.
- Similarly, some learners find it easier to read using coloured paper (rather than the traditional white).
- Use lots of white space.
- Use large print.
- Use symbols to help the learner with the print; you can reduce/eliminate the symbols over time.
- Work out an agenda as a group; also helps develop team-building skills.
- Colour, graphics, etc. can be helpful but can also overwhelm.
- Some learners work better listening to music; for others, you may need to reduce or eliminate distractions.
- Try to isolate words; reduce the distraction of the rest of the print on the page.
- Use a schedule/agenda.



Activity 6

We talked about characteristics and strategies related to intellectual disabilities.

We asked you to share effective strategies you have used with adults with ID. You told us:

- Get to know the learner and what works for him/her.
- Repetition helps.
- Ask the learner to repeat things back to you to make sure he/she understood what you have asked.
- Agendas are helpful.
- Let the learner see that instructors make mistakes too.
- Humour is helpful.

Chapter Two

Screening tools for potential learning disabilities: What, how and when to use them during the assessment process

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Learning objectives

- Understand the role of screening tools
- Describe the screening process
- Learn effective interview techniques
- Understand the various types and usages of screening tools
- Identify potential learning barriers
- Learn how to map out barriers to create a base for further assessment
- Understand what criteria to use for selecting screening tools for learners

The screening process

Just the facts!

- Screening tests should be quick to administer, require little if any training, and be inexpensive.
- Screening tools cannot provide a diagnosis of learning disabilities.
 - Screening tools are designed to detect indicators of learning disabilities
 - No screening system is 100% accurate - A certain level of error is inevitable
 - Most tools may only have a maximum of 75% validity classification (75% of the time the screening tool is correct in identifying a potential learning disability)
 - Screening tools can result in a false negative (a person is identified as “at risk” when, in fact, this is not the case)

- Screening tools can also result in a false positive (a person is not identified as “at risk” when, in fact, they may have a learning disability)
 - Screening tools do not always serve the same purpose. Tools can:
 - Determine eligibility for learning disability testing
 - Confirm practitioner suspicions of potential learning disabilities
 - Identify learning strengths and weaknesses
- Some tools may be a cross between screening and informal assessment
- Screening tools can range from a five-minute checklist to more in-depth assessments that can range from one to two hours. It is difficult to state which type is better since the tool that is chosen should depend on the reason for accessing the tool and the needs of the learner.
 - Results from screening tools will not provide sufficient information to guide the selection of instructional or learning activities.
 - Screening tool results should be used in conjunction with other assessment tools to develop a clear understanding of the learner’s training needs and strengths

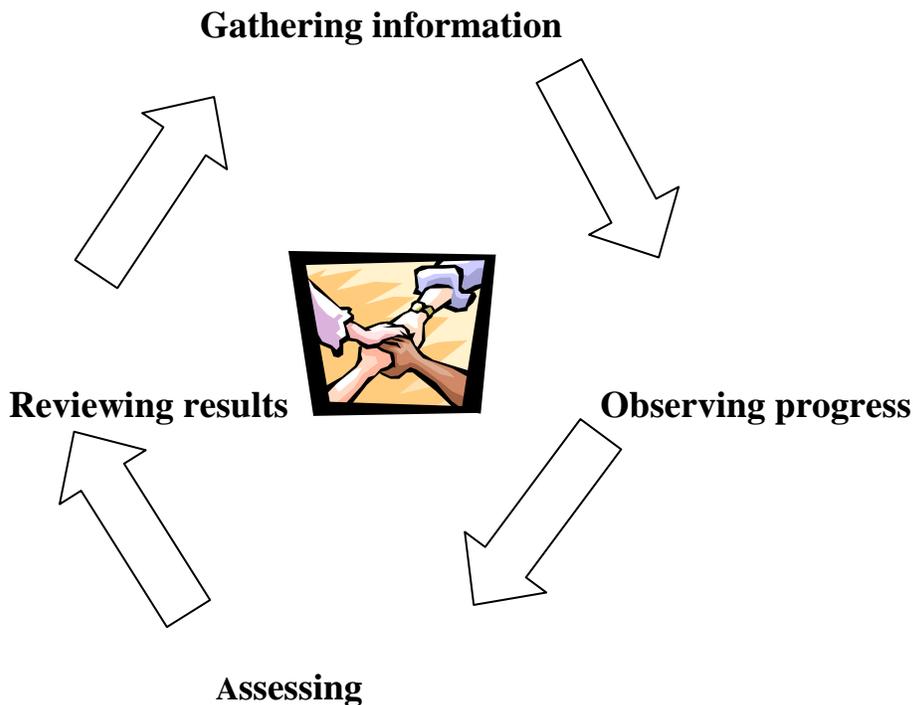
Screening: only one part of the assessment process

Screening is only part of the assessment process. It is a starting point that helps to determine the need for further assessment, either formal or informal. Screening does not identify or label people with a learning disability but it does provide a general indication of whether they might have **potential** learning disabilities. The screening tool identifies areas that need further exploration. When adult learners and practitioners explore these areas together, they can identify the tools, strategies and accommodations that best meet learners’ needs.

The main reasons for conducting learner assessments are to:

- Understand a learner's strengths and weaknesses
- Understand why learners are experiencing learning difficulties (i.e., it may be for reasons other than a learning disability)
- Develop a training plan that includes strategies to overcome, get around or cope with learning difficulties

The assessment process is ongoing while the learner remains active in your program. When the learner faces barriers, the assessment cycle should continue to help both the practitioner and the learner determine how to get around or remove the learning barriers.

**Benefits of using screening tools**

The following information was taken from the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center – “Screening for Adults with Learning Disabilities” written by Adrienne Riviere:

- Screening helps practitioners to help the learners understand their strengths and weaknesses and the possible reasons behind their difficulties
- The informal nature of the screening process enables practitioners to include learners in determining tools, instructional preferences, materials and strategies
- Screening may help practitioners to determine which strategies or interventions have been previously tried by the learners (if any)
- Screening can lead to discussion between the practitioner and the learner about realistic goals and short-term outcomes.

The National Institute for Literacy – The Southern Lincs (<http://ldlink.coe.utk.edu/>) is a website which provides some excellent information on screening tools under the section entitled “Assessment.” Here you can find further information on The Role of Screening, Screening versus Diagnostic Testing, Determining When to Screen, The Screening Process and Screening Tools and Instruments.

Screening Toolbox



Practitioners can access a number of screening tools to help identify potential learning disabilities, gain further insight into challenge areas, and gather an understanding of learners’ strengths and weaknesses to build an effective training plan.

Screening tools may include:

- Additional questions to integrate into current intake process
- Checklists to help guide practitioner observations
- Learner self-assessment inventories
- Tools to help determine if a formal assessment should be pursued and/or tools to help determine challenge areas
- Checklists to help guide practitioner assessment of learner work samples

The use of a screening tool cannot alone be used to understand a learner’s situation. It is a process of gathering information from a number of sources.

The screening tools selected will depend on:

- Learner input
- Learner goals
- Program resources
- Practitioner skills and knowledge
- Ongoing assessment results of learner progress

“They must understand that you do not know everything about how they learn. The more information they can share about themselves, the greater likelihood that you can improve their individual instruction, and that their reading, writing, and/or math will improve.”¹

Information to gather

Screening tools can be used to gather information on:

- Learner’s work habits and learning strategies (ability to organize, plan, prioritize, initiate action, self-monitoring)
- Basic academic skills including writing, reading and math
- Learner’s attention span (ability to listen to questions, stay on track with conversations, level of concentration)
- Time orientation (punctual with day and time of appointments; ability to handle time limits, tell time, and judge time requirements)
- Auditory and or visual sequencing (ability to hear sounds in correct order, rephrase short stories in proper order, organize instructions into an appropriate order, and see and distinguish the order of symbols, words or images)
- Spatial relationships (ability to understand distance, get from one place to another; space numbers, letters and or words on paper, and perceive distance of objects to prevent collisions)
- Learner’s short-term visual and auditory memory (ability to recall information that is read, repeat and synthesize information that is heard, and sequence events such as employment history)
- Medical and family history (presence of learning disabilities in family, use of medication to control behaviours, illness during birth)

¹ Sturomski & Associates (1997). *Information Gathering and Diagnostic- Prescriptive Teaching: The Keys to Effective Adult Education*. <http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/adult/information_gathering.html>.

- Previous school history
- Verbal communication skills²



Remember: Screening is only one piece of the puzzle – the results should not diagnose or assign a learning disability label

Discussion question

Many adults in literacy programs have difficulty with reading and writing skills and they often have low self-esteem. How do we determine when these learning difficulties represent a normal stage of learning a new skill and when they suggest the presence of a potential learning disability?

Possible discussion responses

Janet Johnston, the author of “The Road to Success,” suggests that practitioners consider the following information when inquiring about potential learning disabilities:

- Valuable insight can be gained from viewing learners’ educational histories
 - Did they experience similar challenges when they were younger?
 - Did they have any assessments?

If yes, then a potential learning disability may be part of the picture.

- Did they leave school early due to personal or family reasons?
- Did they move a lot, resulting in a frequent change of schools?

If yes, then maybe a lack of exposure to learning in general has resulted in their weak skill areas.

² National Adult Literacy & Learning Disabilities Center (1999). *Bridges to Practice: Guidebook 2*. National Institute for Literacy. <http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/ld/reports/bridges_pt2.pdf>. & Payne, Nancy. *Learning Disabilities & Special Needs Training: Where Do We Go From Here?* <http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/adult/ld_and_special_learning_needs.html>.

- Does the learner appear intellectually capable in other respects but show little progress in one particular area that seems incongruent with what you might expect?

If yes, then a possible learning disability may be present.

What about questions that seem too invasive?

Some of the questions that are part of screening tools might seem too invasive to practitioners and learners. However, it is important to note that these questions are significant to the screening process because they may help to point towards a possible learning disability. Practitioners should be advised that they should pay attention to the learner – if he or she finds these questions too invasive, then simply move on to something else.

Also, it is by no means necessary to require formal documents to support any of the information you ask about. Consider this example from Jennifer Hunt:

“ I once had a learner disclose that he had ADHD. The next day he brought in a copy of a psych assessment for our files. I told him that it wasn’t necessary for us to have this information and I also spoke to him about privacy issues because this assessment also included information about criminal activities and other very personal information that I did not need to know.”

However, it is important to ask some of the questions used in screening tools even though they may at first appear to be somewhat invasive – even if they are not indicators of learning disabilities, they can point to other possible reasons why the learner struggles with learning. If screening moves on to diagnostic assessment, this information can help in that evaluation.

For instance, learning disabilities are sometimes genetic, so if a learner indicates that there is a family history of learning disabilities, this is significant information. If a learner tells you this, you may want to seek out more information. You could ask them, for example, what kind of problems the family member had with reading, writing or math. Individuals who indicate a family history of learning disabilities or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are more likely to have learning disabilities themselves. In fact, research shows that adult learners who have learning disabilities often report that their children have been identified by the school system as requiring additional support services.

Some medical questions that are used in screening tools can reveal other important information. For instance, individuals who have a history of difficulty in developing early language skills may indicate a possible learning disability. Also, some screening tools may ask questions related to premature birth, low birth weight or respiratory distress. It is important to note that each of these instances could be a high risk factor for the development of learning disabilities.

How will you know, as practitioners, which screening tools will be effective?

We suggest you look for screening tools that include additional questions that you can integrate into existing intake processes. Screening tools may also include checklists that can help guide practitioner observations. Practitioners may also want to use checklists to help them assess learner work samples. Learner self-assessment inventories can also be valuable tools, especially for learners with higher literacy skills. Finally, screening tools can also be used as a means to an end. That is, they can be used to determine if a formal diagnosis is required.

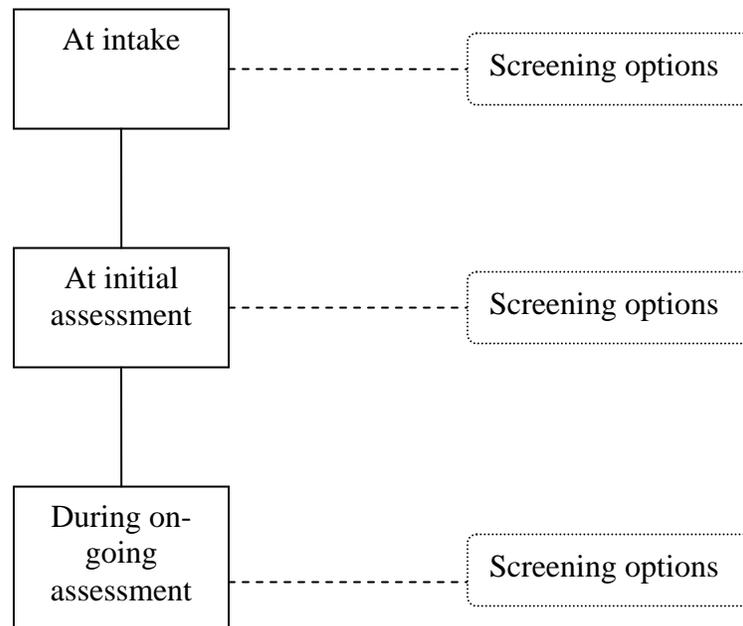
It's all well and fine to have a variety of tools to choose from when it comes to identifying potential learning disabilities. As practitioners, we are accustomed to high volumes of information. But sometimes it's difficult to know which tool to use given a particular situation. We suggest that the screening tools to be used will depend on learners' input and goals, the resources of the individual literacy program, the skills and knowledge of the practitioner and the ongoing assessment results of the learner.

When should screening tools be used?

There is no one right answer to the above question!

Several variables can affect this decision including learner goals, the existing intake process and the resources of the organization. Some programs develop a standard time when all learners are screened whereas some programs make a judgment call based on each individual learner's situation. The diagram below shows the assessment process with option points when screening might take place. Dashed lines indicate optional paths. Pros and cons for using the screening tool at intake, at initial assessment and during on-

going assessment are detailed later in the chapter. Depending on the learners your program serves and the resources at hand, you may identify additional pros and cons for using the screening tools at various points during service delivery. Making the right decision that meets your learners' needs may require some trial and error but the effort is worthwhile if, at the end, the screening tool policy serves the learners best. Programs are encouraged to get feedback from the learners, tutors and staff when making this decision. (Table adapted from Bridges to Practice: Guidebook 2, National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center)



Pros and cons of using learning disability screening tools

Some pros and cons of using screening tools during intake

Pros:

- By screening all persons who enter the program, you reduce the likelihood of overlooking someone.
- Some of the questions found on the screening tools are already asked during intake and you can easily integrate additional questions.
- It adds to the rationale for asking about a learner's background.

Cons:

- Additional questions and checklists may deter a person if they are apprehensive about coming in the first place.

- It may be more suitable to build trust before too much inquiry.
- Not everyone has a learning disability and may be insulted by the questions.

Some pros and cons of using screening tools during initial assessment:

Pros:

- The learner is less apprehensive and has begun to become more comfortable with the program surroundings.
- Learners may be less fearful of the added checklist and questions since they are expecting to be asked about their skills and interest in learning as part of the initial assessment. The learner may be more open to questions about their background.
- There is more opportunity to observe learner's characteristics through writing samples and overall conversation.
- Potentially difficult areas can be identified during assessment so that potential strategies can be incorporated into the learner's training plan.

Cons:

- The initial assessment can already be lengthy. Some practitioners worry that they may lose the learner's focus if they add any additional screening options.
- If not conducted with sensitivity to a potential learning disability, the assessment may further agitate the learner's previous negative experiences with the education system.

Some pros and cons of using screening tools during ongoing assessment:

Pros:

- It could help practitioners to understand why the learner is struggling in certain areas.
- By this point, the practitioner has had more opportunity to observe the learner and the practitioner's observations may be more valid.
- The learner most likely has developed a comfort level with learning and may be more honest and/or have a better understanding of personal learning strengths and weaknesses.

Cons:

- Learner and/or practitioner frustration levels may be higher than they would have been if they had gained a better understanding of the potential learning disabilities prior to the development of the training plan.
- The practitioner may be using ineffective teaching strategies because potential learning disabilities were not detected during initial assessment.

It's all well and fine to have a variety of tools to choose from when it comes to identifying potential learning disabilities. As practitioners, we are accustomed to high volumes of information. But sometimes it's difficult to know which tool to use given a particular situation. We suggest that the screening tools to be used will depend on learners' input and goals, the resources of the individual literacy program, the skills and knowledge of the practitioner and the ongoing assessment results of the learner.

Discussion questions

- If you are presently using screening tools to identify potential learning disabilities, when do you use them and why?
- If you do not use a screening tool, explain when you would use a screening tool and why.

For some excellent information on screening tools, see <http://ldlink.coe.utk.edu> under "Assessment"

A journey of discovery

Both the practitioner and learner need to be open to venturing together on a journey of discovery. The word "discovery" was chosen to shed a more positive light on the understanding of potential learning barriers. Many practitioners have stated that learners experience a sense of relief and enlightenment when they discover that their learning difficulties are not due to a lack of intelligence but due to other factors such as a different learning style, a general lack of exposure to learning opportunities, personal factors that interfere with their ability to learn, or cognitive processing difficulties.

Numerous quotes from successful adults with learning disabilities all share a similar message: “the key to my success has been to understand and accept my learning challenges”. Two valuable lessons can be learned from their experiences. These lessons are applicable to all learners regardless of the presence of a learning disability:

- 1) A learner cannot understand and accept their learning barriers unless they are an active part of the discovery process.
- 2) Without a strong understanding of what is blocking our learning, we cannot develop effective learning and teaching strategies.

Tips for a successful journey

Ask the learner for their interpretation

Is the information accurate? What do you think this information means? Why do you think (skill) is difficult for you?

- Create an equal relationship right from the start
- Help learners to understand their potential learning disabilities
- Encourage learners to explore their own profile of strengths and challenges
- Help learners understand why they were having difficulties in the past
- Create an environment where making mistakes is a normal and essential part of learning
- Use a flexible approach
- Ask a variety of questions about the learner’s work and/or learning strategies
- Encourage learners to be self-directed learners by encouraging independence right from the start³
- Encourage students to self-assess the way they learn and think

What are we looking for when we assess?

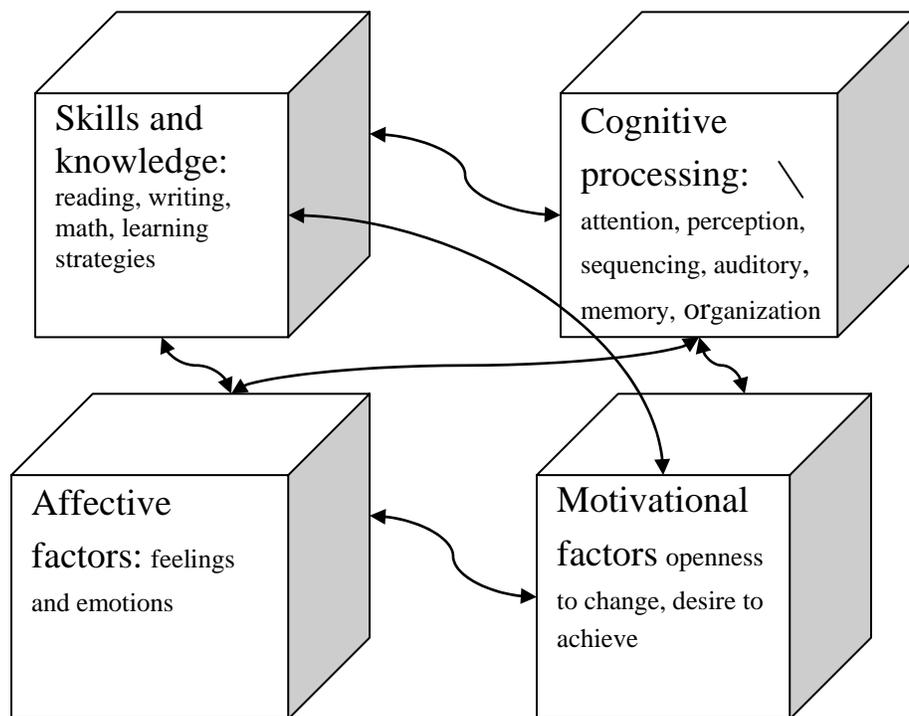
Potential learning disabilities are only one piece of the learning puzzle. The use of a screening tool can be a valuable aid in the discovery process but the results should not be considered in isolation. Although it is possible to assess for each of these barriers to learning separately, it is important to understand that they are all interconnected. Practitioners need to discover how adults learn information and where possible breakdowns occur. “Because learning is multi-dimensional, it is important to understand

³ Dyslexic Institute UK (2002). *Best Practice for Adults*. <<http://www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk/pdf/files/adltprac.pdf>>.

the relationships between these areas and how they function with each other to enable the adult student to learn a given task.”⁴

The following diagram and process for assessment was taken from the document “Asking the Right Questions” developed by The Learning Centre, Calgary and the Alberta Vocational College, Calgary, 1992. There are four common areas which can present barriers to learning. These can be described as follows:

Barriers to Learning



Each barrier to learning can influence the others. This sometimes makes it difficult to determine the primary cause for the learning barriers. For example, a person may have a potential learning disability and struggle with his or her inability to organize information.

⁴ Sturomski & Associates (1997).

This can lead to affective factors such as frustration and low self-esteem. If the learning barriers continue, the learner's motivational factors could be impacted.

The impact of the different barriers to learning will vary from one learner to the next.



The screening process helps to identify potential barriers to learning. As further information is gained through informal discussion, work samples and observation, a clearer understanding of barriers can be achieved. Together, the practitioner and learner can identify clues to investigate the legitimacy of barriers and how these barriers may impact the learning process. Identifying and investigating clues is an ongoing process. As the practitioner and learner relationship develops and the opportunities to observe the learning process become more frequent, the investigation becomes more intense. Together, the practitioner and learner can solve the mystery of learning.

Skill and Knowledge: you need to determine if the learner has the requisite knowledge and skills to perform a task. Be careful not to assume that a person has the required knowledge and skills.

Example: A learner's reading is slow which interferes with comprehension. He appears to read each word as a separate unit. The practitioner suggests that he look at a group of words instead of each one. This is a real eye opener for the learner since he always thought that he was to read each word as a separate unit. As he begins to use the reading strategy, his comprehension improves immensely. His barrier was due to a lack of knowledge, not a potential learning disability. This lack of knowledge can result if a learner has a history of frequently changing schools, has experienced long absences from school, or for many other reasons. Often, blocks to learning can result from a lack of knowledge of basic spelling rules or the steps required to organize and write a paragraph, to name just a few examples. If these gaps in skills and knowledge are addressed and there is no evidence of a learning disability, then progress should occur.

Areas to observe:

- General knowledge (gained from everyday interactions in the community)
- Social knowledge (customs, personal interactions)
- Information knowledge (concepts, vocabulary, skills and strategies)

We all have strengths and weaknesses but it is a large discrepancy in ability that is a strong indicator of possible learning disability

- Metacognition (how one learns)

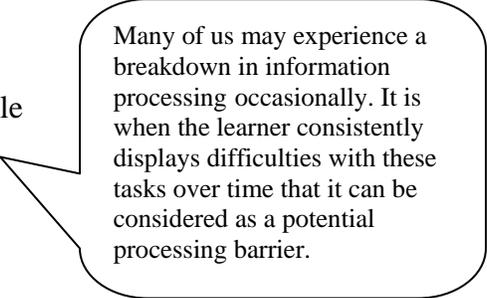
Cognitive processing (potential learning disabilities)

This is **the** critical factor in learning. A breakdown in how information is processed can be a critical barrier to learning.

The cognitive process involves a number of steps. First, information is gathered through various forms of input (auditory, visual, tactile). Next, an individual synthesizes and makes sense of the information that has been gathered. Lastly, the information evolves in the form of output. Output may occur through speaking, writing, choosing, or acting on the synthesis of the information gathered. It becomes obvious how barriers to learning can occur when people experience a deficiency in their ability to effectively use the information the senses have gathered.

Cognitive processing barriers are often experienced by adults who may have potential learning disabilities.

They can often help explain why a person is having trouble with learning and performance.



Many of us may experience a breakdown in information processing occasionally. It is when the learner consistently displays difficulties with these tasks over time that it can be considered as a potential processing barrier.

Areas to observe for common difficulties:

Auditory processing challenges affect how people interpret the information they hear and speak. Individuals with auditory processing challenges:

- Talk louder than necessary
- Have difficulty remembering a list or sequence
- Request that words or sentences be repeated
- Have limited ability to memorize information learned by listening
- Interpret words too literally
- Have difficulty hearing clearly in noisy environments.

Visual processing challenges affect how people interpret the information that they see. **Individuals with visual processing challenges:**

- Have difficulty accurately identifying information from pictures, charts, graphs, maps, etc.

- Lack the ability to organize information from different sources into one cohesive document
- Struggle to find specific information on a printed page (getting a number out of the phone book)
- Have difficulty remembering directions to a location.

Information/organizational processing challenges affect how people manage information. Individuals with information/organizational processing challenges:

- Lack problem solving strategies
- Tend to give wrong or partial answers because the time is not taken to consider all the information - a systematic approach to analyzing the information may not be used
- Have difficulty understanding cause and effect or problems with sequencing
- Have difficulty considering more than one source of information at a time
- Have difficulty comparing information that they already know with new information that is presented
- Lack the ability to realize when and why it is important to be precise and accurate in problem solving or presenting information
- Are challenged when following directions
- Find it difficult to finish tasks because they may not understand what is expected
- Lack ability to plan and organize materials
- Have difficulty remembering - this can be attributed to both short- and long-term memory difficulties
- May know the information but have difficulty saying or finding the right words.⁵

Affective Factors:

Emotions that learners experience can have a negative or positive impact on their ability to learn. Unfortunately many of the learners who enter LBS programs express negative emotions such as low self-esteem or feelings of inferiority often resulting from previous learning experiences. These emotions can limit a person's willingness to attempt learning

⁵ Samuels, Marilyn (1992). *Asking the Right Questions*. Calgary, Alberta: The Learning Centre & Alberta Vocational College., Florida's Focus on Learning Disabilities. *Bridges to Practice Online Module*. <<http://www.floridatechnet.org/in-service/bridges/comp3c.html>> and National Adult Literacy & Learning Disabilities Center (1999). *Bridges to Practice: Guidebook 2*. National Institute for Literacy. <http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/ld/reports/bridges_pt2.pdf>

activities and result in an inability to articulate and build upon any strengths he or she may have. Time and time again practitioners have shared their experience of how a person's increase in self-esteem has had a major impact on learners' ability to learn new skills and willingness to risk attempting new tasks. This highlights how important it is for learners to understand their challenge areas and explore different ways to learn.

The following chart was taken from the document "Asking the Right Questions" developed by The Learning Centre, Calgary and the Alberta Vocational College, Calgary, 1992. **The following are emotions, which arise from beliefs and thoughts:**

Emotions	Belief	Thoughts
Anxiety (worry, fear)	Believe that you are in danger because something will happen to you.	What if I don't understand the instructions?
Feelings of inferiority	Compare yourself to others and conclude that you are not at their level (intelligence, ability etc.).	They can read much faster than me.
Frustration	You feel things should be different, life falls short of your expectations.	I should not have made that mistake. The teacher expects us to know that.
Hopelessness (discouragement)	The problem will never go away and things will never improve.	I will never be good at writing. I will never be able to remember this.
Depression	Feelings of loss: failure to achieve an important personal goal.	I will never get a job like the one I had. What's the point? No one cares what I do anyway.

Remember, these emotions have been ingrained in a person for many years so it will take time to combat the effects of these emotions. However, by helping the learner discover **why** they are experiencing barriers to learning and understand **how** they can learn will help to reduce the impact of the negative emotions. Celebrating success and helping learners to understand their strengths and challenges can help foster positive emotions that support a successful learning environment. Building upon learner strengths can also help to foster positive emotions.

Motivational factors

Understanding what motivates a person to learn is a key factor in effective instruction. Practitioners need to understand what brings learners to the program every day and what encourages learners to continue to improve their skills and knowledge. Is it their belief in their abilities, their desire to achieve competence or their willingness to change? Practitioners often identify that learners have low levels of motivation. What motivates us is unique to each individual. However, some of the variables that affect people's motivation to learn are:

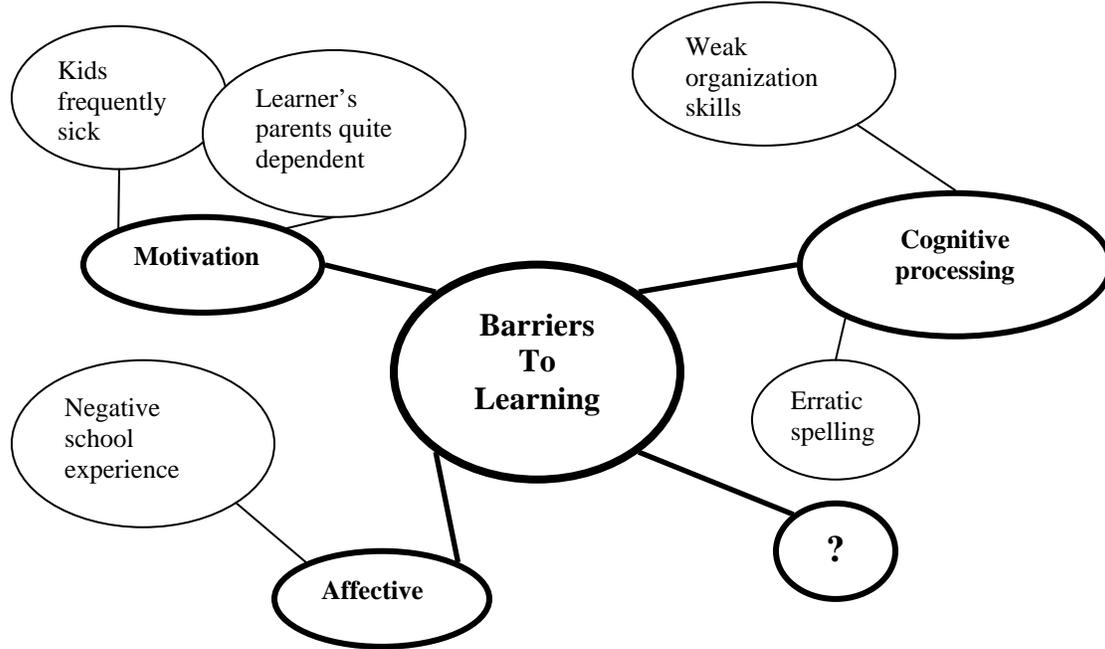
- Attitudes toward learning based on previous individual, family and peer experiences
- Beliefs about oneself
- Active involvement in establishing goals
- Ownership of goals
- Level of involvement in learning and relevancy of learning to goals
- Supports within the learning environment
- Supports within the home environment
- Personal attributes

As learners begin to gain a better understanding of their challenges and strengths and begin to internalize that they can learn, they are more likely to be internally motivated to engage in learning for its own sake.⁶

Adult learners constantly weigh the pros and cons that affect their motivation to learn. The more positive benefits learners perceive, the more motivated they become. Thus motivation can be influenced! The practitioner's role is to set the stage for a positive and motivational learning experience.

⁶ Exploring Adult Literacy (1999). *Goal Orientations of Low-Literacy Learners in Adult Basic Education: Some Issues for Adult Literacy Instruction*. <http://literacy.kent.edu/cra/2001/goal_orient/link2.html>.

Mapping out your discoveries



Throughout the learning journey, both the learner and practitioner can begin to discover barriers to learning and understand what is affecting their learning. Discovery is an ongoing process that should continue throughout the learner's training experience.

In the diagram above the "?" indicates that the practitioner has a hunch there is another barrier that may impact on the learner's ability to learn. As the practitioner continues to work with the learner, they will be able to determine if their hunch is valid, identify additional barriers and explore strategies to help resolve or overcome the barriers. The map also illustrates that potential learning disabilities may be just one area that creates barriers to learning and that other factors can create barriers as well.

Potential learning disabilities are just one of the barriers to learning. All other factors need to be considered to capture a holistic picture of the learner's needs.

Case study exercise – Mike

The following case study was taken from one of the programs that participated in piloting the learning disability screening tools to support the development of the online sessions.

Background of the learner

Mike has worked at Imperial, a tobacco factory, for 20 years. The company has closed down and he is now on a severance package and needs to retrain. Mike has been successful in doing many day-to-day tasks but he cannot read. His wife says that he is highly skilled in many areas. She is convinced that his only problem is that he cannot read. Mike attended the local college, but could not participate in the classes because he had no reading skills.

Learner's reason for participating in the LBS program and a brief history of participation in the program to date.

Mike needs to retrain because his old job no longer exists. He came to Agency X because he found college too difficult and needed to have more individual attention. Mike hopes to get a truck driver's license and needs to be able to read and write for this job.

Why this learner was approached for potential learning disability screening

There seemed to be a discrepancy between the skills Mike's wife spoke of him having and his level of reading ability. She spoke highly of his skills in other areas. Mike seemed to be able to do most day-to-day tasks that do not require reading and have at least an average level of functioning in all other areas. Mike states that reading just did not click with him. He would make some progress and then lose it again. When Mike speaks, he has some challenges putting his thoughts into words and often has difficulty finding a particular word. He says he is a pretty good organizer and has a good attention span. Mike finds doing math calculations and recalling math facts fairly manageable but struggles with math word problems.

Previous school and family history

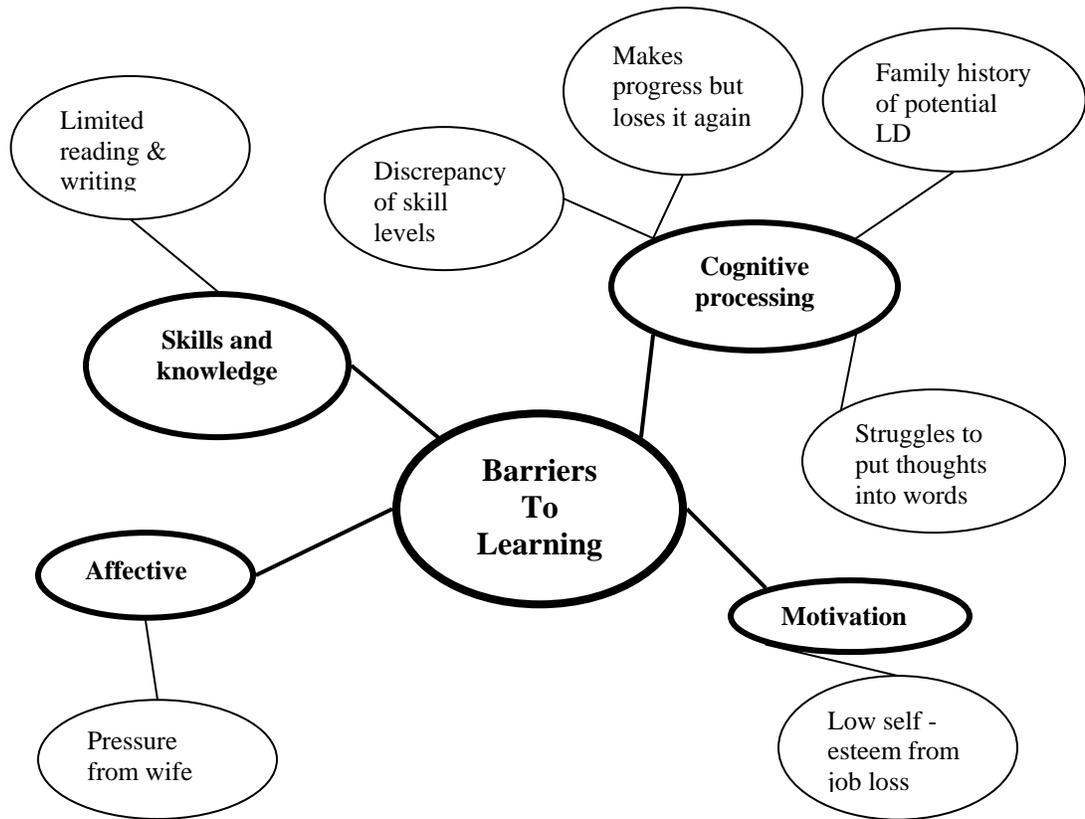
- Completed Grade 8
- Repeated Grade 1
- Left high school at age 15 to go to work
- No frequent absences from school
- Favourite subject was math
- Does not recall receiving any special assistance during school nor any special testing
- Father could not read - Mother could only read in German

Goal path of the learner

Mike was not clear on his goals. He is getting a lot of pressure from his wife to take on a job that will provide the kind of income the family is accustomed to, but he does not seem to feel confident about his ability to do a job like truck driving.

Case study task

Based on the information contained in the case study, use the mapping process to identify the potential barriers that are facing Mike (cognitive, motivational, affective and skills/knowledge)



Case study discussion:

What additional information would you like to gain and how would you gather this information? Would you suggest using a learning disability screening tool and, if so, how would you approach Mike about this?

Screening questions to enhance your current intake process

Some screening instruments include a structured interview. The following questions are some of the more pertinent questions you will find in the structured interview. Some programs find it easier to incorporate some specific questions designed to elicit information concerning adults' learning histories in their current intake process.

Key questions to include:

- Did you ever repeat any grades in school?
- Why did you leave school (if appropriate)?
- Were you ever given any special education assistance in the past? If so, what kind?
- How would you describe your reading abilities?
 - Are you able to sound out words that you don't know?
 - If you can read the words, are you able to understand and remember what you read?
 - Are you a fast reader?
- Can you usually understand verbal directions, or what other people say?
 - Are you able to explain yourself when speaking so that other people understand you?
- How would you describe your writing abilities?
 - Can you organize your ideas to write?
 - Do you usually put periods and commas, etc. in the right place?
 - How would you describe your spelling?
- How would you describe your ability to do math or science?
- How would you describe your social skills? Do you have difficulty making and/or keeping friends?

- Have you ever been formally assessed (one-on-one) before for any learning difficulties?
- What do you feel gives you the most difficulty when doing school or work tasks?
 - What do you find easiest to do?

This information will help determine where adults' learning strengths and weaknesses might lie. Their responses will help form a foundation on which strategies can be built.

Discussion questions

- ⇒ When you review the above questions, do you already have similar questions incorporated into your intake process?
- ⇒ Have you included other questions that you find beneficial in gaining an understanding of the learners' strengths and weaknesses?
- ⇒ Could you share them with the group?



Most adult learners in a literacy program will relate to at least one of the key questions noted above. This will not necessarily mean that the learner has a potential learning disability. Therefore, practitioners should not suspect the presence of learning disabilities if adults display only one or two of these characteristics. Practitioners need to seek information in different ways through consulting with other staff, observing characteristics under a number of circumstances, and assessing further the learners' skill areas. This will help not only to confirm (or deny) their suspicions, but it will also help in planning the next steps.

Helpful interview techniques

Learners should understand that practitioners do not know everything about how adults learn. The more information learners can share, the more likely it is that practitioners can improve the opportunities for learning.



Practitioners can also:

Create a comfortable, supportive environment

- Welcome learners
- Give learners a tour of the program
- Offer coffee
- Initiate social chat – if appropriate, the practitioner could share some personal information on commonalities with the learner
- Maintain positive body language

Be clear on the purpose of the discussion

- Explain the purpose of the screening process
- Explain the materials that will be used
- Emphasize the importance of the learner's role
- Discuss the importance of the team approach
- Explain how the results will be used

Ensure that the questions and answers are clear

- Make sure learners understand the questions by providing examples or by asking if they understand the questions and have them paraphrase
- Use clear language
- Use open-ended questions when inquiring (how or why)
- Allow sufficient time for responses
- Provide alternative answers if the person is having difficulty providing an answer (for example, the practitioner could ask: *“You mentioned you hated school, could you explain why?”* If the learner responds with *“I don't know”* or with silence, the practitioner could then ask: *“What part of school did you hate – the students, the teachers, the tests, or the homework?”*)

Sum up the process

- Explain the next steps
- Go over the results if appropriate
- Emphasize how this is a positive step⁷

Deciding what tools to pack

Ah the joys of packing! For many of us packing for a trip can be a challenge. What will the weather be like? Where will we go? Will we need casual or formal clothes?



Deciding what screening tools to use during a journey of discovery with a learner can be a lot like packing for a trip. There are many variables that can affect what tools you choose to include in your toolbox (suitcase). Each variable will be weighted differently depending on the learners you serve, your agency resources, the purpose for using the tool, the availability of formal assessment services and your experiences as a practitioner – just to name a few!

When Literacy Link South Central decided to develop a rating process for the learning disability screening tools, we first researched what tools had been evaluated already and examined what criteria were used during their research. The criteria were modified to reflect the LBS program environment and then vetted by a working group to ensure relevancy and comprehensiveness. We then asked practitioners from the LBS community to review several screening tools and share what factors (criteria) they used when they evaluated the tools. Interestingly however, LBS practitioners and external researchers shared very similar views as to what criteria should be used to evaluate screening tools.

⁷ Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (2001). *Screening for Success*, Marilyn Samuels (1992).

Rating criteria for the screening tools

The following is a list of criteria that were used by Literacy Link South Central. For each screening tool that was rated, we documented whether evidence was present or not to support each criterion. We did not assign a weight to each criterion because we felt that learners and programs have varying needs for the tools and it would therefore be impossible to determine the priorities for the literacy field.

Keep in mind that every organization may have different priorities for each of the criteria. What is important is determining why you are accessing the learning disability screening tool, whether it will serve the desired purpose and whether the learner will benefit from the information obtained.

- The screening tool should yield reliable information. The screening material should reliably measure indicators of potential learning disabilities and yield consistent results. (E.g. if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). Note: a low standard of error should be evident. Remember most tools may only have a maximum of 75% accuracy (75% of the time, the screening tool is correct in identifying a potential learning disability).
- The screening tool should be valid. The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look at what areas the screening questions cover or refer to the technical manual, if applicable, for a description of what areas are assessed with the instrument).
- The screening tool should be cost-effective. This should include the initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.
- The time required to conduct the screening procedures should be reasonable. It should be quick to administer, score, and interpret.
- The requirements for learning to use the screening tool should be reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions or user manual to participating in a training session.

- The screening tool should minimize bias. The screening material must accurately highlight potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.
- Instructions should provide information on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.
- The screening tool should be compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if an organization serves only adults, the screening tool used should be developed for use with adults only. Similarly, if an organization serves an ESL clientele, then the screening tool should be geared to the needs of that client group.
- The format and written text of the screening tool should follow clear language guidelines.
- The screening tool should include information to help select **possible** learning materials and/or instructional practices and strategies.

Discussion questions:

- ⇒ What criteria would be most important to you if you were reviewing or selecting existing or potential screening tools?
- ⇒ Are there other factors that would affect your decision on what tools to select?

Screening tools evaluated by Literacy Link South Central

Both commercial and non-commercial (accessible online or have minimal cost) screening tools were included in the rating process. The identification of the tools was accomplished by conducting an extensive Internet search, accessing AlphaPlus and Learning Disability Association of Ontario (LDAO) resources, posting an information request on the Literacy Forum discussion and by consulting with external evaluators. To access an evaluation for each tool, refer to Chapter Two Appendix A.

Non-commercial tools

- **Adult Learning Disabilities Screening (ALDS)** <http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/research/ldnquiry.htm#tools>
- **Adult Dyslexia Checklist** The British Dyslexia Association <http://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk/main/information/adults/a03check.asp>
- **Characteristics of possible LD** – adapted from materials provided by Payne & Associates Inc. Department of Social Services California <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/getinfo/acl01/pdf/01-70.pdf> - exhibit A page 29 of 41.
- **Cooper Screening of Information Processing**
www.learningdifferences.com
- **Delta Screener** - refer to Chapter Two Appendix B
- **Destination Literacy** <http://www.ldac-taac.ca/english/indepth/adults/destinat.htm>
- **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>
- **Santa Barbara guidelines** for screening the student with a learning disability
<http://www.west.net/~ger/screening.html>
- **Screening Inventory** Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario - refer to Chapter Two Appendix C
- **Simple Screening Checklist** developed by the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts, Boston
http://www.onestops.info/print.php?article_id=28
- **Washington State Screening Tool**
<http://www.seakingwdc.org/LD/WaScreenTool.htm>
The technical report is available in a pdf format at
<http://www.seakingwdc.org/LD/LDRept-WA.pdf>

Commercial screening 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

Throughout the online training sessions, we highlighted various screening tools including learner responses and case studies. Each tool was piloted by LBS practitioners and learners. Practitioners and learners offered good insight into the various types of screening tools from the quick screen to more in-depth processes.

The following tools are described in further detail throughout this manual:

- ⇒ The Washington Screening Test
- ⇒ The Delta Screening Tool (which is a modified version of the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada “Destination Literacy” developed by Pat Hatt)
- ⇒ The Adult Learning Disability Screening (ALDS) Tool
- ⇒ The Cooper Screening Tool.

The above tools were selected for three reasons:

First, they all had sufficient evidence that supported the rating criteria.

Second, together they represent a good cross section of varying types of screening tools for potential learning disabilities.

Third, the pilot participants (including both practitioners and learners) indicated that each tool would be acceptable to use.

If you would like to access the ratings for all tools that were part of the evaluation process, refer to Chapter Two Appendix A.

Summary of Key Points

- Screening tools and checklists are used to help identify **potential** learning disabilities. Screening tools are **not** designed to provide a diagnosis.
- **Potential** learning disability characteristics should be observed over a number of times and under various circumstances.
- Screening is part of the assessment process – it involves gathering, observing, informally assessing and reviewing to identify, understand and plan for learning barriers. Both the practitioner and learner should work as a team through the process of discovery.
- **Potential** learning disabilities may only be one barrier to learning. Other factors such as affective, motivation and skills and knowledge provide the complete picture. Each one can influence the others and it may be difficult to determine the primary cause for the learning blocks.
- Regardless of the screening tools that are used or the time when the screening may take place, the following areas should be explored to get a full understanding of the learner’s barriers and strengths:
 - Learner’s work habits and learning strategies
 - Learner’s writing, reading and math samples
 - Learner’s short term visual and auditory memory
 - Learner’s medical and family history (if relevant)
 - Learner’s previous school history
- There are many variables that can affect what tools you choose to include in your screening toolbox. Each variable will be weighted differently depending on the learners you serve, your agency resources, the purpose for using the tool, the availability of formal assessment services and your experiences as a practitioner – just to name a few!
- Anything you know about or observe in the learner may offer clues

Chapter Two Appendix A

LD Screening Tool Rating Procedure

Purpose of screening and informal initial assessment

- Determine if signs of potential LD are present
- Identify potential difficult areas for further investigation
- Identify the learner's strengths and weaknesses to help plan for instruction

Criteria for rating screening tools

- **Reliable** - the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident).
Note: a low standard of error should be evident.
- **Valid** - the screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).
- **Cost-effective** - including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.
- **Time** - the time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable. The tool is quick to administer, score, and interpret.
- **Requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable** - requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.

- Minimize bias - the screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.
- Instructions - instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.
- Compatible with the goals of the organization - if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?
- Format and written text follows clear language guidelines.
- Informs selection of possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.

Source: National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities (1999). *Bridges to Practice, Guidebook 2* and <http://www.seekingwdc.org/ld/screening.htm>

Rating procedure and rationale:

The consultant will review each tool and provide the following information:

- A brief description of the tool
- A brief summary of evidence that is found based on each screening tool criteria
- The top 5 tools that contained the most evidence in meeting the rating criteria (in particular, reliability and validity)
- Recruitment of 5 – 7 practitioners from the London area to participate in a focus group

Role of focus group

- To volunteer 1 hour to review the tools prior to the focus group
- To actively participate in the focus group (2 hour time commitment)
- To review the top 5 tools and select the top 3
- To participate in piloting one or two learning disability screening tools

EVALUATION OF SCREENING TOOLS**Description:**

Development of the Adult Learning Disabilities Screening (ALDS) started in 1996 and was completed recently. It is very affordable and easy to administer. No training is needed and the instrument takes about 15 to 20 minutes to administer. The ALDS consists of three parts: Self-Rating Scale, Inventory, and a brief Interview. All three taken together have been shown to be a very effective tool in finding indications of LD (other than a teacher's experience with the student), which could serve as a basis for a referral to a psychologist for a formal diagnosis. <http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/research/ldnquiry.htm#tools>

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
Adult Learning Disabilities Screening (ALDS)	Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.	89% of people who took the test and were tested again later had the same results. A full technical report is available.	

	<p>Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas, such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).</p>	<p>Part of test validation is how well the screening battery differentiates between persons with and without learning disabilities. For both the rating scales and inventory, the results were very accurate, with 85% and 90% correct classifications, respectively. A validity check is part of the screening process. The examiner completes 11 questions before the rating scales and inventory are scored. They focus on one critical decision by the examiner – Does the examiner have any reason to believe that the scores from the battery should be interpreted any differently for this person than for any other person? If the answer is “yes” then the scores are suspect and possibly invalid. Yes – the rating scale covers self-attributions, spelling, reading, organization, and social skills, one’s work efficiency and sense of direction. The inventory item clusters cover learning influences and problems, arithmetic skills, educational history and mental health issues. A full technical report is available.</p>	
	<p>The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.</p>	<p>The technical report = \$7.00 US funds. ALDS directions for administration, scoring and interpretation = \$5.00 US funds. Each individual ALDS record booklet = \$3.00 US funds. Shipping ranges from free to \$16.75 US funds depending on the volume of test books purchased. It is comparatively inexpensive in terms of time and money.</p>	
	<p>The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.</p>	<p>It takes about 15 to 20 minutes to administer. Most adults are finished in 15 minutes. No specific time is stated but experience shows it takes approximately 10 minutes to score and interpret the tool.</p>	
	<p>The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.</p>	<p>Staff training is easy and requires less than 2 hours. In fact, the training options can vary depending on the practitioner’s skills. Persons who are skilled in assessment can likely read through the manual and figure out the administration and scoring.</p>	

	Minimize bias. The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.	During the development of the test from 1996 to 1999, over 360 test questions were written, reviewed and administered to adults ages 16 to 65. Extensive item analyses were completed to eliminate any test questions difficult to read or answer, irrelevant to the lives of the persons taking the tests, or considered biased due to offensive or stereotypic content. In 1999, during a standardization and validation study, over 488 adults were tested with subtests from the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale – III, the Woodcock-Johnson and the ALDS. The characteristics of the participants included a range of male and female, ethnic groups, age, and client groups (prison, SRS, LD, AE etc). Scores from all of the tests were combined in selecting the test questions for ALDS.	
	Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.	Examiner validity check is built into the process through 11 questions. Two numeric scores are calculated to determine if a referral is recommended for a possible learning disability. Comprehensive instructions are provided on how to administer the test. The instructions are presented in a “mock interview” format.	
	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?	Used for adults (16 to 65), literacy needs are acknowledged since the examiner can read the questions to the learner if necessary. Adult educators, social welfare caseworkers, and special education staff were among the group of developers. ALDS was developed based on the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities center review of 80 existing screening tools.	
	The format and written text follows clear language guidelines.	Lots of white space, questions in clear language and easy to read. All questions on the tool can be completed independently or read to the person.	
	The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.	The ALDS was designed to aid in decisions about which persons should be referred as possibly having a learning disability. A cutoff score is provided for both the rating scale and inventory. The ALDS does give the practitioner and learner an indication of areas that appear to present challenges for them. The rating scale covers: self-attribution, spelling skills, reading skills, social skills, efficiency, sense of direction, and organization skills. The inventory covers: learning influences, learning problems, educational experiences, mental health, fraction skills and math operations.	The challenge areas are highlighted. Further assessment would be required to determine strategies for each of the identified challenge areas.

Description: The screening tool is found in the Manitoba Education, Training and Youth Adult Learning and Literacy, Level II Certification Course: Learning Differently training manual. The manual also includes an overview of learning disabilities and Attention Deficit Disorder, informal screening tools, general strategies for teaching and learning, and specific techniques for reading, writing and spelling. The manual is available in a pdf format and can be accessed at <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aet/all/publications.html#Practitioner>

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
Learning Differently – Adult Learning and Literacy Manitoba Education, Training and Youth 310 - 800 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3G 0N4 2000	Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.		No evidence of research or statistical evidence.
	Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).	The screening form covers the following areas: previous diagnosis, education, language, and physical/emotional problems. The checklist covers indicators of LD in social, organizational, communication and memory. Project Bridges was a key source for the material found in the online sessions.	No indicators of math disabilities.
	The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.	Available online. Programs would need to cover photocopying costs.	
	The time required to conduct the screening procedure is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.	Appears it would take 15 to 20 minutes to conduct, administer and interpret the LD screening tool.	

	The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.	Practitioners should have a basic understanding of the indicators of LD. If they have this foundation, the practitioner would only need to review the tool prior to using it with a learner.	No instructions are provided on how to use the tool. However, if you require assistance, clarification or have questions or comments about the materials, please telephone ALL at: (204) 945-3556 in Winnipeg or 1-800-282-8069 ext. 3556 Toll free (204) 726-6027 in Brandon or 1-800-262-3930 Toll-free
	Minimize bias. The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.		No statistical testing or information on any sample group used during the development of the tool. No research available that includes adults with similar characteristics to persons that are served in LBS programs.
	Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.	On the screening form, a statement is included to be sensitive to possible emotional problems and respect confidentiality. In addition, it is to be remembered that the tool should not be used to diagnose or counsel but to only provide indicators of learning disabilities. The checklist states that 10 or more responses may indicate the presence of a learning disability.	
	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?	The government department that developed the tool focused on adult literacy. The resources used to develop the online sessions were from an adult literacy organization in the US.	

	The format and written text follow clear language guidelines.	Simple language, good use of white space, good font size.	The checklist is in a table format but should have a space between each indicator to make it clearer to read.
	The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.	The tool helps to identify indicators that may reflect a possible learning disability. Further assessment would be required to understand the challenge areas in order to build an effective learning plan.	No information is available with the tool but there is a module on teaching strategies. It would require the practitioner to make the links based on reading the material.

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
Screening Checklist: ADD Adapted from Driven to Distraction by E.M. Hallowell and J.J. Ratey (1994) found in the appendix of Learning Differently – Adult Learning and Literacy Manitoba Education, Training and Youth 310 - 800 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3G 0N4 2000	Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.		No evidence of research or statistical evidence – will need to consult the original tool. The tool only addresses ADD.

	Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas, such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).	The screening checklist covers common indicators of ADD such as: organization, achievement, social skills, attention, and internal emotions.	No statistical information. It does not address ADHD.
	The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.	Available online. Programs would need to cover photocopying costs.	
	The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.	Appears it would take 5 to 10 minutes for the learner and about 3 minutes to interpret.	
	The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.		No requirements stated.
	Minimize bias. The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.		No statistical testing or information on any sample group used during the development of the tool. No research available that includes adults with similar characteristics to persons that are served in LBS programs.
	Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.	At the end of the tool, practitioners are asked to add up the responses – fifteen or more “often” responses may indicate that the individual has ADD and should investigate having a more formal assessment done.	
	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?	Designed for adults.	No further information available.
	The format and written text follows clear language guidelines.	Overall simple language, good use of white space, good font size.	Some words may require practitioners to expand or provide a definition. For example: conversing, intuitive, hyperfocus.

	<p>The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.</p>		<p>No information is available with the tool but the tool is included in a document developed by the Manitoba government that includes teacher strategies. It would require the practitioner to make the links based on their reading of the material.</p>
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Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
<p>ADD Screening Checklist adapted from Amen 1999 found in the appendix of Learning Differently – Adult Learning and Literacy Manitoba Education, Training and Youth 310 - 800 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3G 0N4 2000</p>	<p>Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.</p>		<p>No evidence of research or statistical evidence – need to check original source. The tool only addresses ADD.</p>
	<p>Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).</p>	<p>The checklist covers: past history, attention span, restlessness, impulsivity, organization, follow through, negative internal feelings, relational difficulties, energy, sensitivities, sleep patterns, writing, and stimulation activity.</p>	<p>No mention of ADHD and the differences.</p>
	<p>The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.</p>	<p>Available online. Programs would need to cover photocopying costs.</p>	

	The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.	Appears it would take 15 to 20 minutes to conduct and administer. It would take about 5 minutes to interpret.	
	The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.		
	Minimize bias: The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.		No statistical testing or information on any sample group used during the development of the tool. No research available that includes adults with similar characteristics to persons that are served in LBS programs.
	Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.	On the screening form, it states that it cannot and should not replace a diagnosis by a trained specialist. At the end of the checklist, it states the practitioner needs to total the number of items with a score of three (3) or more. If there are more than 20 items with a score of three or more, a strong tendency toward ADD is indicated.	
	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?		No information.
	The format and written text follow clear language guidelines.	In chart format and organized under sub-headings.	Font is small and requires more space in between the items in the checklist.
	The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.		No information is available with the tool but the tool is included in a document developed by the Manitoba government that includes teacher strategies. It would require the practitioner to make the links based on their reading of the material.

Description: The Cooper Screening of Information Processing (C-SIP) was developed by Dr. Richard Cooper to provide teachers and other professionals with a way to determine if a person manifests any common characteristics of learning problems. The screening can be thought of as a diagnostic teaching tool. A teacher, over time, would obtain much of the same information as he or she got to know the student and observed the way the student learned and the errors which the student commonly made. This manual is divided into two parts 1) the quick start and 2) the in-depth explanation. The Quick Start section is for those who prefer to try something and read about it later. The in-depth explanation is for those who like to read about something before trying it. Individuals who have observed the administration of the Screening report that it flows more like a conversation than an assessment. This is because the administrator can add more questions to obtain clarification or more information about the topic being asked. www.learningdifferences.com

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
Cooper Screening of Information Processing	Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.	At present, they are using the screening state wide and currently collecting data to establish norms. (Pennsylvania)	At present, no statistical data available. However, they are in the process of establishing norms by using the tool state wide.
	Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).	The tool covers a large scope of indicators of learning disabilities. The tool covers the following areas: educational history, attention, motor skills, auditory processing, right/left discrimination, organization, employment, emotional, social and family, oral communication, writing, handwriting, basic math skills, math skills, math vocabulary, reading, reading comprehension, vocabulary, avoidance and goals.	
	The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.	Available on line for free – practitioners are only required to cover photocopying costs.	
	The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.	It takes approximately 50 minutes to administer for most individuals. There is also a short form of the screening test. The time to score and interpret is not stated but based on practice, it can take over an hour, especially for first time users.	

	<p>The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.</p>	<p>The practitioner needs to review the manual and can access a video tape of Dr. Cooper administering the C-SIP to a student followed by a explanation of the process (110 minutes). The directions for administering and scoring provide helpful suggestions for interview techniques and how the test should be administered for each section. In addition, the administrator's manual provides the following information for each section of the tool: what is the purpose, what to look for and special considerations. Dr. Cooper also recommends that the practitioner practice using the tool to develop a comfortable knowledge of the questions and rationale behind them.</p> <p>To register for an online training module using the tool, go to www.paadulthood.org</p>	
	<p>Minimize bias. The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.</p>	<p>At present no statistical data available However, they are in the process of establishing norms by using the tool state wide.</p>	<p>No research available that includes adults with similar characteristics to persons that are served in LBS programs.</p> <p>It states that the best results are obtained from students who have a good and honest knowledge of themselves. If a learner does not understand the severity of this/her own difficulties, then it is left up to the administrator to make a judgment rather than simply record the student's response.</p>

	Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.	Results are included on how to score and interpret the results and findings. Dr. Cooper states that the tool is not a standardized test but rather a diagnostic teaching instrument. It is not designed to enable teachers to diagnose learning disabilities, but it may be the first stage of an evaluation process.	
	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?	Developed for adults and practitioners who may not have the expertise or access to professional standardized learning disability assessment tools.	
	The format and written text follow clear language guidelines.	Large font, good use of white space, and simple language used. Easy format to follow.	
	The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.	Part of the initial screening tool includes actual assessment tasks including numeracy, writing and reading samples. A 6 page manual has just been developed to help interpret the results including teaching and learning strategies.	

Description: This document was developed by the Learning Disability Special Interest Group of the College 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. 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.

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
The Delta Screener	Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.		No statistical data reported.
	Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).	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: <i>Destination Literacy</i> , Learning Disability Association of Canada; Carol Herriot at the University of Guelph; and the University of Minnesota. A series of questions are directed to the adult student. 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. The checklist also covers challenges, strengths and daily living activities.	No statistical data reported.
	The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.	Material is free – only photocopy costs.	
	The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.	It should take you approximately one hour to administer the Delta Screener and At-Risk Summary Checklist.	No information on actual time required to interpret the results is indicated.
	The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.	Practitioner would need to review the test and manual. The manual includes interview guidelines along with the purpose for the interview questions, including indicators of potential learning disabilities for each section.	

	Minimize bias: The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person’s age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.	Clear indicators for both potential learning disabilities and non learning disabilities are highlighted. The developers of the test clearly state that the tool does not provide an official diagnosis of learning disabilities.	No statistical data available.
	Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.	The Administration Guidelines provide a framework to guide the interviewer through the process of gathering information relating to factors that could contribute to learning difficulties. The At-Risk Summary Checklist assists the interviewer in summarizing identified at-risk factors.	
	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?	The tool is designed for adults who are entering post secondary education but could be used for adult literacy programs as well.	
	The format and written text follow clear language guidelines.	Easy to read and follow format. Guidelines are clear.	
	The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.	The purpose of the screening tool is to identify potential indicators of a learning disability to make appropriate referrals.	None.

Description: As an introduction to the screening tool itself, the manual provides interview tips and techniques to aid the adult education practitioner. In addition, there are sample interviews based on real case studies which offer insight into the variety of individuals who may have learning disabilities. The manual also offers informal assessment tools in reading, writing, spelling and math. These tools can be used to help identify the strengths and areas of need for each learner.

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
Screening for Success LDAC (screening questionnaire and at-risk summary checklist)	Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.		No information available. However, the developer of the material has had extensive experience within the field and the reference group consisted of a number of LD specialists.
	Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).	The screening questionnaire covers personal and family situation, health, language, education history, and employment. The checklist covers academic, social, cognitive, memory and life skills. The guidelines give indicators of possible learning disabilities and suggested questions to keep in mind when reviewing the data to try to determine if there is evidence of a potential learning disability.	No statistical data or information available on validity. However, the developer of the material has had extensive experience within the field and the reference group consisted of a number of LD specialists.
	The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.	\$50.00 to purchase the manual which includes a blank copy of the screening tool.	
	The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.	The manual states it will take approximately one hour to administer the screening questionnaire and the At-Risk Summary Checklist.	No indication of how long it will take to score and interpret the tools.
	The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.	It is suggested that before a practitioner uses the tool they should read the information on interviewing as well as the questionnaire and checklist and become familiar with the items in the At-Risk Summary Checklist.	
	Minimize bias: The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.		No statistical data available.

	Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.	For each section covered in the interview, the purpose and signs for potential learning disabilities are included. An At-Risk Summary Checklist is a tool to summarize the findings.	There is no information on how many “yes” responses would indicate a potential learning disability.
	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?	The tool is designed to offer adult education practitioners the tools and expertise needed to screen adults at risk for learning disabilities.	
	The format and written text follow clear language guidelines.	Good use of white space, clear language and font size is easy to read.	The screening checklist has small boxes to check off the responses – it may be difficult to ensure you stay on the corresponding line for the item in questions.
	The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.	Based on the challenge areas identified on the tool, the practitioner would need to access the informal assessment tools included in the manual to provide further information on possible learning materials and instructional practices.	The tool only provides an indication of challenge areas.

Description: A 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 current project uses two screening tool questionnaires: (1) a 13-question State of Washington validated LD screening tool. The tool is administered to participants who manifest a special learning need. . <http://www.seakingwdc.org/LD/WaScreenTool.htm>

The technical report is available in a pdf format at <http://www.seakingwdc.org/LD/LDRept-WA.pdf>

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
Washington State screening tool	Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.	In phase one of the development of a screening tool, the Payne Learning Needs Inventory was tested to identify the critical items on the inventory that distinguished individuals diagnosed with LD from those without a diagnosis. Based on the testing, a total of 13 items were identified and incorporated into the screening tool.	

	Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).	Covers the following areas: education, hearing, vision, speech, medical/physical and brief questions on memory, spelling and math. Based on statistical testing, the screen resulted in a 74% correct classification rate overall.	
	The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.	Available on line – practitioners are required to cover printing costs.	
	The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.	After reviewing the screening tool questionnaire, it would take approx 10 mins to administer and about 5 minutes to interpret.	No time requirements stated.
	The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.	If a person had a general understanding of learning disabilities, they could use the tools once they had reviewed them.	No requirement stated.
	Minimize bias. The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.	The sample size was a total of 672 adults who were welfare recipients. Not all referrals for the sample were random. The participant's age ranged from 16 to 58 years. The average age was 26. On average, the participants had completed 10.3 years of school.	The project participants were predominantly Caucasian (67%) and African American (19%). In some aspects, the project sampling differed from the overall statewide welfare population.
	Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.	For the 13 questions the test administrator is required to count the number of "yes" responses and if there are more than 12, then they are required to refer for further evaluation.	
	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?	Geared to adults.	Was developed for social service case managers.
	The format and written text follow clear language guidelines.		Copy available on Internet is not user friendly. It would require reformatting.
	The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.		No information available.

Description: The list describes some of the problems that might be indications of a learning disability based on an initial assessment of a learner’s skills in a number of areas. The tool provides suggested areas for the practitioner to observe during the assessment process. <http://www.west.net/~ger/screening.html>

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
Santa Barbara guidelines for screening the student with a learning disability	Yields reliable information; the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.		No statistical data available.
	Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).	Covers questions pertaining to the student’s reading, writing, math, receptive language and listening skills, verbal expression, memory and organizational skills.	No statistical data available.
	The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.	Free – available on the Internet. Photocopying costs would need to be covered.	
	The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.	The checklist would be used when doing an initial assessment of a learner’s skill. Therefore, the depth of the assessment would correlate to the time required.	No information stated.
	The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.		No information stated.
	Minimize bias: The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person’s age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.		No information available.

	Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.	Checkmarks within a section or scattered checkmarks in a few sections may suggest that testing would be beneficial.	Very limited.
	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?	Geared to adults and the guidelines cover areas that are commonly assessed in a LBS program.	
	The format and written text follows clear language guidelines.	Good use of white space and level of text appropriate for a practitioner to understand.	
	The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.	Only challenge areas are identified through the use of the tool. Further assessment would be required in these areas to develop learning materials and/or instructional practices.	Only challenge areas are identified. No other information included.

Description:

The characteristics for possible learning disabilities are contained in the Department of Social Services Policy manual. The actual screening tool that is used by caseworkers is the Seattle Washington tool that is described above. The list of characteristics covers: attention, memory, oral communication, processing, reading, writing, math, self-concept and social abilities.

<http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/getinfo/acl01/pdf/01-70.pdf> - exhibit A page 29 of 41.

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
Characteristics of possible LD – adapted from materials provided by Payne & Associates Inc. Department of Social Services California	Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.		

	Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).	The characteristic lists covers the following areas: attention, reasoning and processing, memory, oral communication, reading, writing and spelling, coordination, social competence and self-concept.	
	The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.	Available on line – cover photocopying costs only.	
	The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.	It would be advisable to observe the characteristics over a number of meetings. Therefore time will vary based on practitioner’s judgment. The more frequent the observations, the more likely that a potential learning disability exists.	No official time stated.
	The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.	Good observation skills would be required.	No requirements stated with this tool.
	Minimize bias. The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person’s age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.		Based on practitioner’s observations.
	Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.	Six key questions are provided to determine whether a possible learning disability exists. If the answer to each question is “yes”, then the participant should be referred for a LD evaluation.	
	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?	Geared for adults.	
	The format and written text follow clear language guidelines.	Good use of white space, format clear, good font size and language easy to understand.	
	The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.	Only challenge areas are identified through the use of the tool. Further assessment would be required in these areas to develop learning materials and/or instructional practices.	Only challenge areas are identified.

Description: a 34 question screening inventory that requires the learner to answer “never, sometimes or often.” The more statements that the learner answers “often” to – the more likely a potential learning disability is present. The screening inventory was designed to be used by the LDOA chapters as part of the process of deciding if an adult had possible learning disabilities and should be referred for assessment. As a screening tool, it is meant to be answered by the learner. It would be appropriate for literacy practitioners to use before referring a learner for a more in-depth interview.

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
Screening Inventory Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario	Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.		It is not research-based. No statistical data provided.
	Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).		No statistical data provided. However, the tool has been developed by professionals who have extensive experience within the learning disabilities field.
	The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.	No costs – just photocopying.	

	The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.	34 questions that require a response – should take approximately 5 minutes to administer and 2 minutes to score and interpret	No official time stated.
	The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.	Practitioner would need to read through the statements to become familiar with them.	No requirements stated.
	Minimize bias: The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person’s age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.		No data available
	Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.	It states that everyone has problems with these areas some of the time, but if there are many items to which you answer “often”, it may be useful to look into the possibility of learning disabilities.	
	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?	Provides an indication of learning disabilities – a quick screen that could be used in the intake process. It appears to be developed for adults based on the statements.	
	The format and written text follows clear language guidelines.	Good use of white space> Simple language is used and good font size.	
	The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.	Provides an indication of learning disabilities. The practitioner would need to conduct further informal assessment in the challenge areas to develop learning materials and/or instructional practices.	Only indicators are identified.

Description: It is a checklist for the possible presence of a learning disability. A practitioner would use this guide as they observe the learner and evaluate learner work samples/demonstrations.

http://www.onestops.info/print.php?article_id=28

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
Simple Screening Tool developed by the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts, Boston	Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.		No statistical data provided.

	Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).	Screening tool was adapted from a number of lists developed by the following organizations: Learning Disabilities Association of America, For Employers... A Look at Learning Disabilities, 1990; ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education, Examples of Learning Disability Characteristics, 1991; The Orton Dyslexia Society's Annals of Dyslexia, Volume XLIII, 1993; and the Council for Learning Disabilities, Infosheet, October 1993.	No statistical data provided.
	The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.	No costs – just photocopying.	
	The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.	There are 29 questions for the practitioner to consider while observing the learner. The answers to the questions would require several observation sessions. Therefore the time will vary depending on the program structure and individual characteristics.	No official time stated.
	The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.	Practitioner would need to read through the statements to become familiar with them. Practitioner should also have knowledge of and experience with observation.	No requirements stated.
	Minimize bias: The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.		No data available.

	<p>Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.</p>	<p>Keep in mind: a checklist is a guide—a list of characteristics. It is difficult to provide a checklist of typical characteristics of adults with learning disabilities because the most common characteristic is their unique differences. In addition, most adults exhibit or have exhibited some of these characteristics. In other words, saying “yes” to any one item – or several items – on this checklist does not mean that an individual has a learning disability. However, if the customer answers “yes” to most of the items, and experiences these difficulties to such a degree that they have problems in employment, education, and/or daily living, it might be a sign that they could benefit from further specialized assessment from a qualified professional.</p>	
	<p>The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?</p>		
	<p>The format and written text follows clear language guidelines.</p>		<p>Would require reformatting since the checklist is included in an article and available via the web.</p>
	<p>The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.</p>	<p>Provides an indication of learning disabilities. The practitioner would need to conduct further informal assessment in the challenge areas to develop learning materials and/or instructional practices.</p>	<p>Only indicators are identified.</p>

Description: The British Dyslexia Association is the voice of dyslexic people. They aim to influence government and other institutions to promote a dyslexia-friendly society. The BDA promotes early identification and support in schools to ensure opportunity to learn for dyslexic learners. They want to represent the needs of dyslexic people on leaving school, in higher education and in work. They have developed a screening tool which is a 20 item checklist that requires a “yes” or “no” response to each question. <http://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk/main/information/adults/a03check.asp>

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
Adult Dyslexia Checklist The British Dyslexia Association	Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.	A statistical procedure involving discriminate function analysis, a factor analysis and a series of t-tests was carried out. The objective was to identify the items on the questionnaire that best discriminated between dyslexic and non—dyslexic individuals.	
	Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).	A statistical procedure involving discriminate function analysis, a factor analysis and a series of t-tests was carried out. The objective was to identify the items on the questionnaire that best discriminated between dyslexic and non—dyslexic individuals.	
	The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.	Available on line. Costs would only include photocopying.	
	The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.	It would take about 5 minutes to administer and about 3 to 5 minutes to score and interpret.	

	<p>The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.</p>	<p>Practitioners would only need to read over the checklist along with the brief instructions prior to usage.</p>	<p>No manual or requirements stated.</p>
	<p>Minimize bias: The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.</p>	<p>This questionnaire was completed by 679 adults divided into the following groups:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students enrolled in BA & BSc degree courses. 57% Students enrolled in Certificate and Access courses. 7% A-Level students. 15% Non-student adults. 21% <p>The age range was 18 to 68 and the proportion of men and women was approximately equal.</p> <p>The sample contained 32 known dyslexic individuals.</p>	

	Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.	<p>If the majority of these items are ticked, this is a strong indication of dyslexia.</p> <p>On the questionnaire as a whole (ie. all 20 items):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60% of people gave no more than four YES response. • 90% of people gave no more than eight YES responses <p>The 20 items are rated in a table format listing the most powerful indicator first. Nine or more YES responses on the questionnaire, as a whole, is therefore a powerful indicator of a difficulty. The items ticked should be compared with the “best twelve” shown in the table format.</p>	
	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?	Geared to adults, including adults who are non-students.	
	The format and written text follows clear language guidelines.	Good use of white space, font size easy to read, table format clear and easy to read language.	
	The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.	Provides an indication of learning disabilities. The practitioner would need to conduct further informal assessment on the challenge areas to develop learning materials and/or instructional practices.	None available – only indicators are identified.

Commercial Screening/Assessment Tools (only tools that are geared to adults have been included)

Please note that attempts have been made to provide comments on evidence for each criterion, however some areas may have minimal or no information due to limited access to technical and/or administrative manuals.

Description: Before teaching reading skills, instructors can discover how each student learns, or fails to learn, by using 11 screening tests that identify specific reasons why individuals struggle with reading skills. With this information, both students and instructors understand why previous encounters with literacy skills were ineffective. Understanding why learning has been difficult replaces old dread and fear of learning with hope. Knowing how to learn to read makes it possible to approach reading safely without fear of failure... PRO-ED online Store <http://www.proedinc.com> US based or MD Angus & Associates Limited www.psychtest.com Canadian based

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
Jordan Dyslexia Assessment/Reading Program	Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.		No mention of reliability.
	Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).	“In the instructors manual (pp.11 – 48) it does include research regarding dyslexia and examples of each severity level” ⁸	Screens only those with dyslexia. No mention of percentages or validity.
	The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.	Complete Kit = \$132.00 Instructor’s manual \$110.00 and student workbook \$25.00	

⁸ National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities (1999). *Bridges to Practice Guidebook 2: Screening Tools Report Card*.

	The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.		“There is no indication of how long the tests take to administer and no indication of time required to score the results.” ⁹ There are many tests so one can assume it would take some time.
	The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.	“p.3 of the instructors manual states that persons administering the test need not be highly trained specialists.” ¹⁰	
	Minimize bias: The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person’s age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.	Case studies are included which involved students of all ages and gender but no mention of race, ethnicity or primary language.	
	Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.		
	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?	Designed for students of any age who show signs of dyslexia.	
	The format and written text follows clear language guidelines.		No material to review.
	The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.	Each of the 75 lessons includes structured review of previous skills, introduction of a new literacy skill and follow up practice to build permanent memory of that skill. The reading program guides students step by step through structured lessons that integrate four learning modalities: sight, speech, hearing and touch.	

⁹ NALLD (1999).

¹⁰ NALLD (1999).

Description: The *Diagnostic Assessments of Reading with Trial Teaching Strategies* (DARTTS) program is comprised of individually administered tests and related diagnostic lessons. The testing component of the program is the *Diagnostic Assessments of Reading*; the teaching component is designed to be used in conjunction with the testing component to discover the teaching methods and instructional materials that will be most effective with individual students.

Riverside Publishing Company (p) 800-323-9540 <http://www.riverpub.com>

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
Diagnostic Assessment of Reading with Trail Strategies (DARTTS)	Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.		No reliability measures included ¹¹
	Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).	The diagnostic assessment includes Six Tests of Reading and Language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Word Recognition ○ Word Analysis ○ Oral Reading ○ Silent Reading Comprehension ○ Spelling ○ Word Meaning Reveals strengths and weaknesses.	No research provided on which learning disabilities characteristics may be assessed with the instrument. However, research included item tryouts with 1664 students and norm-referenced after. ¹²
	The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.	The complete kit = \$232.00 US which includes (15) student booklets. To purchase 15 additional booklets = \$23.00 US	
	The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.		

¹¹ NALLD (1999).

¹² NALLD (1999).

	The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.	No special training is required except the review of the manual. The testing component is administered and scored simultaneously and takes 20-30 minutes. The trial teaching strategies are brief lessons tailored to stages of reading development. They take approximately 30 minutes.	
	Minimize bias: The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person’s age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.		
	Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.		
	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?	Individualized approach to reading instruction. Special materials are provided geared to adult needs and interests. The teaching strategies reinforce positive student attitudes and can be used with individuals or groups.	
	The format and written text follow clear language guidelines.		
	The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.		Although teaching strategies are included there is no research to support the link between the assessment and the teaching strategies ¹³

¹³ NALLD (1999).

Description *PowerPath* is a screening and intervention system based on 25 years of research. With software, the system produces an Individual Report for the participant. The report offers personalized diagnostic information and prescriptive strategies.

PowerPath includes:

- A standardized intake interview
- Three easy-to-use screenings for learning difficulties: Information Processing, Attention Difficulties, Scotopic Sensitivity

www.powerpath.com

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
PowerPath to Adult Basic Learning	Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.	<p>Promotional material states <i>PowerPath's</i> Screening Process is standardized, validated, and reliable.</p> <p>Although the PowerPath was built upon the ABE screening procedure known as the London Procedure developed by Dr. Weisel, the research on the validity and reliability of PowerPath itself are still in progress.</p>	
	Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).	<p>Promotional material states <i>PowerPath's</i> Screening Process is standardized, validated, and reliable.</p> <p>Although PowerPath was built upon the ABE screening procedure known as the London Procedure developed by Dr. Weisel, the research on the validity and reliability of PowerPath itself are still in progress.¹⁴</p> <p>The following areas are screened: information processing, attention difficulties and scotopic sensitivity.</p>	
	The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.		<p>PowerPath Kit = \$2995.00 US</p> <p>To reorder the forms/consumables costs \$465.00 US for 100 units.</p>

¹⁴ NALLD (1999).

	<p>The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.</p>	<p>In the promotional material it states it will take approximately one hour to administer the three screening tools. Scoring requires data entry into the software program which will then generate individual reports. The promotional material states that the data can be entered in a matter of minutes.</p>	
	<p>The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.</p>	<p>It is designed for adult basic instructors and literacy volunteers. Users are not required to attend PowerPath Certification Training to use PowerPath, but it is recommended that PowerPath sites have at least one PowerPath certified user. Self-instruction takes approximately 8 – 15 hours and familiarity with the User's guide and test plates.¹⁵</p> <p>To become certified as a PowerPath user, an individual must attend PowerPath's Level I Certification Training -- including completion of the course prerequisites, 20 contact hours of training, AND submission of a complete case study*.</p> <p>PowerPath trainings are hosted by a state or a group of PowerPath sites within a specific region. A \$125.00/person registration and materials fee is charged to attend the 3 day Certification Training. Travel expenses and meals are assumed by either the training host or the individual PowerPath site.</p>	
	<p>Minimize bias: The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.</p>		<p>PowerPath was developed based on a pilot study of the London Procedure which does not include basic demographics of age, gender, race, ethnicity or primary language. Further studies are in progress to address this.</p>

¹⁵ NALLD (1999).

	<p>Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.</p>	<p>Software to analyze screening results and prescribe accommodations. The results provide the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Personal Profile -- A recap of the information collected during the intake interview • Diagnostic Screening Analysis -- An explanation of assessment results • Degree of Learning Difficulty Score -- A weighted score used to predict required service accommodations and levels of learning difficulty • Service Accommodations -- The emotional, social, and structural supports needed for the client to build self-esteem and to develop the independent learning skills required for acquiring basic skills • Learning Accommodations -- Recommended strategies that build on strengths, compensate for weaknesses, and target the development of basic skills • Workplace Accommodations - A series of recommended strategies for maximizing job training or on-the-job success • Attention Difficulties Screening - Analysis and Accommodations • Scotopic Sensitivity Screening - Analysis and Accommodations • Partnership Contract -- A guide for setting mutual expectations for a successful learning experience • Referral Forms -- Forms to use when it is necessary to follow up on any vision and/or hearing weaknesses uncovered in the screening 	
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	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?	Programs similar to LBS use the tool. It is intended for adult literacy learners. It uses a holistic approach incorporating theory and practice from fields of adult learning.	
	The format and written text follows clear language guidelines.		
	The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.	A structured intervention process to build 'learning how to learn' skills, Personal Learning Plans and Personal Employment Plans. Provides both learning and workplace accommodations.	

Description: The CIP is a standardized behavioural rating scale that evaluates information processing characteristics. The CIP has been developed over the past twelve years to assist in the process of non-biased differential diagnosis of learning disabled students. It is based upon a thorough review of current neuropsychological research in addition to formal cognitive assessment of over 1200 students, hundreds of parent and student interviews, and direct behavioural observation of the learning disabled population. The CIP scores in the processing areas of: Auditory processing, visual processing, sequential/rational processing, conceptual/holistic processing, processing speed and attention. The CIP has been designed for adults as a self-rating tool. It includes a 40 item rating scale along with questions inquiring about a person's educational background, health, family history and previous testing. www.ldinfo.com
Developed by Dr. Scott Crouse.

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
Cognitive Information Processing (CIP)	Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.	Test-Retest Stability - An evaluation of test-retest reliability was performed. Of the 150 follow-up sets of ratings, 92% were found to show a pattern of processing which identified identical areas of relatively significant strength and weakness as were noted on the initial rating. This suggests an overall stability correlation of approximately .92. Internal Consistency - In order to assess the internal consistency and overall reliability of the CIP a split-half method was employed. Correlations across processing areas range from .80 to .91 with overall Global Processing Index (GPI) correlations ranging from .92 to .95. This data verifies that the CIP has very strong internal consistency.	

	<p>Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).</p>	<p>As stated on the website “provides an internal measure of each rating's validity” – see technical manual for more details.</p>	
	<p>The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.</p>	<p>You can download the complete demo package from the website for a free 30 day trial. If you want to continue using it, the cost is \$49.00 for one year term, \$79 for a 2 yr term and \$99 for a 3 yr term - all in US funds.</p>	
	<p>The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.</p>	<p>The time required for the adult to complete the self-rating scale would be 10 to 15 minutes. The software interprets the answers and provides a rating that can be interpreted in a matter of minutes.</p>	
	<p>The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.</p>	<p>It is suggested that the practitioner try out the self-rating screening tool and be comfortable with the interpretation – it takes approximately 15 minutes. Depending on the reading level of the adult, a practitioner may need to assist.</p>	
	<p>Minimize bias: The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.</p>	<p>Stated on the website: “provides a non-biased, culture fair screening/assessment,” The sample had representatives of adults, both genders and ethnic groups. The statistical comparisons found no significant differences across any of the six processing domains or in the Global Processing Index as a function of ethnicity. This suggests that the CIP is able to provide a non-biased assessment of cognitive processing skills.</p>	

Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.

Instructions are provided on how to interpret the results of the adult's self-rating scale. Two types of scores are provided at the CIP On-Line Entry and Scoring Site - a **Global Processing Index (GPI)** score and **Standard Deviation of the Difference (SDD)** scores in each of 6 information processing areas.

The **Global Processing Index (GPI)** provides a standardized comparison between a specific person's rating and the "norms" of the standardization sample who have already been rated. The GPI is intended to provide a general measure of overall information processing skill which can then be used to determine relative processing strengths and weaknesses in specific areas (see below).

Standard Deviation of Difference (SDD) scores are considerably more valuable than the **GPI** from a diagnostic standpoint. The **SDD** scores provide a measure of the significance of differences found between an individual's GPI and their rating in each specific processing area. As with the GPI, the SDD scores represent the differences found within the standardization group. SDD scores within the -1 to +1 range represent the average or "normal." From a diagnostic perspective, a processing SDD score below -1 could be significant enough to negatively impact learning.

SDDs from GPI	Interpretation
2 +	Significant Relative Strength
1 to 2	Moderate Relative Strength
1 to -1	Average Range
-1 to -2	Moderate Relative Weakness
-2 +	Significant Relative Weakness

In addition to these specific SDD scores, it is also important to look for relative differences between "paired" processing areas (visual vs auditory and sequential vs conceptual). Although these differences are not provided in the on-line SDD scores, they are taken into consideration by the computer program during scoring and are reflected in the "interpretation" field.

	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?	Geared for adults and will help determine if cognitive processing may interfere with an adult's learning.	
	The format and written text follow clear language guidelines.	yes	
	The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.		It only provides a rating. No suggestions for strategies.

Description: The purpose of the test is to screen for dyslexia and other learning difficulties. It provides a profile of strengths and weaknesses that can be used to guide the intervention training strategies for the individual learner. The DAST sees the culmination of several years of research and testing by Dr Angela Fawcett and Professor Rod Nicolson, authors of the established Dyslexia Screening Test (DST) and Dyslexia Early Screening Test (DEST), now widely used for screening younger aged candidates. You can order the product online through the Psychological Corporation at <http://www.tpc-international.com>

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
Dyslexia Adult Screening Test (DAST)	Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.		No access to technical manual – therefore cannot comment.
	Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).	The DAST is comprised of a total of 11 subtests which emphasize fluency as well as accuracy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rapid naming - one minute reading - postural stability - phonetic segmentation - two minute spelling - backwards digit span - nonsense passage reading - non verbal reasoning - one minute writing - verbal fluency - segmentic fluency 	No access to technical manual – therefore cannot comment.

	The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.	Complete kit: Includes examiner's manual, 50 record forms, balance tester, blindfold, cassette tape and envelope (containing score keys, rapid naming cards, one minute reading cards, nonsense passage cards, one minute writing passage cards) contained in carrying case = \$282.00 Cdn. And a pack of 50 record forms = \$80.00 Cdn.	
	The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.	Administration requires 30 minutes.	
	The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.	No restrictions as to who can use the tool. No training is required except for the practitioner to review the manual and the screening tool.	
	Minimize bias. The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.	Standardized norms on an adult UK sample.	
	Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.		No access to administration manual – cannot comment.
	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?	Geared for learners 16 years and up.	
	The format and written text follow clear language guidelines.		
	The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.	Provides a profile of strengths and weaknesses that can be used to guide the intervention training strategies for the individual.	Does not provide teaching strategies or instructional practices.

Description: LADS is a computerized test designed to screen for dyslexia in persons 16 years and older. LADS is **not** a diagnostic test and does not purport to provide a definitive assessment of dyslexia. Nor does it assess reading and spelling abilities per se. Rather, LADS is designed to provide a quick screen of unselected or selected adults in order to indicate which of them is most likely to have dyslexia. Lucid’s development team worked very closely with psychologists at the University of Hull, as well as with educational consultants, to ensure that its assessment systems conform to the highest psychometric and educational standards. Lucid’s products conform to the Guidelines for the Development and Use of Computer-Based Assessments (1999) published by the Professional Affairs Board of the British Psychological Society. Lucid is an independent, UK-based company specializing in the research and development of computerized assessment systems for use in schools, colleges and other institutions worldwide. Go to www.lucid-research.com

Name of tool	Criteria	Evidence	Limited evidence
Lucid Adult Dyslexia Screening (LADS)	Yields reliable information: the screening material reliably measures indicators of potential learning disabilities and yields consistent results (if the screening tool was given to the same person again, similar indicators of potential learning disabilities would be evident). A low standard of error should be evident.	Lucid’s products have been subjected to rigorous statistical standardization procedures, carried out according to scientifically accepted psychometric principles, which provide reliable norms.	
	Is valid: The screening material adequately represents the full range of characteristics associated with learning disabilities. The screening material is consistent with what is currently known about learning disabilities. It covers a scope sufficient to provide an initial assessment in several areas, such as language, motor, organization and social skills (look for a description of which learning disability indicators may be assessed with the instrument).	The software incorporates four assessment modules, three of which are designed to measure phonological processing and working memory skills which are typically weak in dyslexic adults despite educational intervention. These tests will provide a swift but effective screening for dyslexic individuals in a wide variety of settings, including those in further and higher education. The Reasoning test has been included in order to calibrate the Word recognition and Word construction tests to increase the accuracy of detection of dyslexia in bright, well-compensated adults. It also enables the administrator to reach a rough estimate of the person’s intellectual ability, which may be important when making decisions about further action after screening. LADS was validated against established assessment systems.	

	The tool is cost-effective including initial purchase and ongoing purchases of related materials such as question booklets, score sheets etc.	Stand alone CD- the license fees are as follows: 1 year = 365 Cdn \$ 2 yrs = 730.00 Cdn. \$ 3 yrs = 1096 Cdn. \$ For network licenses fees range based on the number of users Go to http://www.lucid-research.com/Prices%20Standard.htm for details.	
	The time required to conduct the screening procedures is reasonable: it is quick to administer, score, and interpret.	Each of the four modules in LADS takes about five minutes, so the whole screening can usually be completed in about 20 minutes. Results can be viewed on screen or printed out immediately.	
	The requirements for learning to use the screening tool are reasonable. Requirements may range from reviewing the instructions and user manual to participating in a training session.	The test is accompanied by a comprehensive Administrator's Manual which explains how to use the program and how to interpret results. No training is required – only review of the instructor manual and familiarity of the assessment tool is required.	
	Minimize bias: The screening material accurately highlights potential indicators of learning disabilities regardless of a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, or primary language.	Product development involves extensive field-testing with large samples of appropriate participants. These participants include students in colleges and universities, and adults in various centres throughout UK.	
	Instructions are provided on how to interpret the screening tool results/findings.		
	The tool is compatible with the goals of the organization. For example, if you serve only adults, was the test developed for adults only or if you serve a number of ESL learners, was this the intended audience for the screening tool?	The tests in LADS are adaptive; that is, the program varies the items given according to the performance of the individual taking the test. This means that the assessment is swift and efficient. (Please note that progressively harder items will be delivered to those individuals who get many items correct; and easier items delivered to those who make incorrect responses)	
	The format and written text follows clear language guidelines.		

	<p>The tool includes information to help select possible learning materials and/or instructional practices.</p>	<p>The final section of the Manual (which has been written by E.A. Draffan of <i>Sussex University's Assistive Technology Unit</i>) covers a range of strategies for supporting adults with dyslexia, particularly using computer technology.</p>	
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Chapter Two Appendix B

**SCREENING ADULTS
AT RISK FOR
LEARNING DISABILITIES**

The Delta Screener



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Foreword

This document was developed by the Learning Disability Special Interest Group of the College 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.

Special thanks to all those individuals who participated in the development and piloting of this screening tool.

Screening Adult Students At Risk For Learning Disabilities

This manual includes **Administration Guidelines**, the **Delta Screener**, as well as an **At-Risk Summary Checklist**.

The Administration Guidelines provide a framework to guide the interviewer through the process of gathering information relating to factors that could contribute to learning difficulties. There are many reasons why an adult student struggles academically; many of which are not related to specific learning disabilities. 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 student. 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. **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**.

Administration Guidelines

Suggested Procedures

- Explain to the student/client the purpose of the Delta Screener;
- Tell the student that his/her answers will help you to understand his/her needs;
- Make sure that the student knows the results are confidential and that the privacy of the information will be respected;
- Encourage the student to feel free to add comments or explanations to any of his/her answers;
- Explain to the student that you will have to take notes during the interview;
- Make sure the student understands the questions;
- Provide ample time for responses;
- When the student answers "yes", ask for the specific information;
- Use "tell me more" statements as needed.

Guidelines for Completing the Delta Screener

We suggest that the Delta Screener be used as part of an interview process rather than the student working on their own as the interview format provides an opportunity for a more complete investigation of areas of concern.

Post Secondary Academic Status

The purpose of this area is to discuss the adult student's current learning problems. Often the student's explanation of their difficulties can give some indication of a possible source of their learning problems. You may be able to identify some learning strengths and weaknesses from the pattern of grades earned within the student's academic record.

Adult students 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 occurrence of difficulties at the post-secondary secondary level may be a result of such factors as: motivation, maturity, changing expectations, difficulty managing workload, inappropriate program choice, etc.

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

Previous Academic History

The goal here is to develop a clear picture from the adult's point of view as to his 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 student to give details in his answers, especially to those answers that indicate some problem or difficulty. If discussing high school, try to determine if he was in an academic program, leading to college or university, one leading to further technical training, or 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 student 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 student 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 learning and levels of achievement. You will see the evidence of this in uneven student performance and school marks.

Indicators of a *POSSIBLE* Learning Disability:

- If the student 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 student's academic history shows **grade and/or course failure(s)**, this may indicate either a learning disability **OR** low intellectual ability.
- If the student reports that at one time he **worked hard but was not achieving**, this may indicate either low ability **OR** a learning disability. The same is true if the student left school because of frustration and low achievement.
- The student'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 student 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 student 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 your student, 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 have more to do with generalized low intellectual functioning.

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 their availability for learning and may indicate an alternative reason for school difficulties.

Language and Developmental 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.

Indicators of a *POSSIBLE* Learning Disability:

ESL Issues:

- If the student 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. Students 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.

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.

Indicators of a *POSSIBLE* Learning Disability:

- If the student 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 student 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 student'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 student 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 student 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...)
- Students with ongoing problems with anxiety or depression may have difficulty coping with academic learning situations, especially the testing process.
- If the student 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 student 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.

Checklists

Challenges

If the adult student 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.

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.

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.

Guidelines for Interpreting the Delta Screener and At-Risk Summary Checklist

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

Keep in mind:

- A slow learner or a person with low intellectual ability will report difficulties in many areas on the Screener.
- An adult with learning disabilities will report that they have experienced problems from a very young age.

- An adult with learning disabilities will display a pattern of strengths **and areas of need**: 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 student appear to be "average" in ability, yet report school failures?
- Does the student speak well but report reading difficulties?
- Does the student speak well but is unable to put thoughts into written form?
- Does the student appear to be capable but yet reports difficulty in organization and/or memory?
- Does the student 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.

Delta Screener

Today's date: _____

Revised: May, 2003

Name _____ Age _____ Birth date _____
Year /month /day

Completed together with _____

Post Secondary Academic Status

Full-time student

Part-time student

Special Studies

Program _____ Semester/Level _____

1. How many courses are you taking this semester? _____

Please list each of your courses below:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. What difficulties are you having now?

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

attendance

test taking

note taking

not handing in assignments

disorganization

procrastination

time management

over-extended with work/activities

study skills

memory problems

anxiety: test ____, speaking ____,
performance ____

4. Have you failed or dropped any courses in your program?

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

(attach transcripts where available)

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

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

9. What was the highest grade that you completed? _____

10. What grades, if any, did you repeat? _____

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

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

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

(please attach high school transcripts)

13. How old were you when you left secondary school? _____

14. Why did you leave school? _____

15. What further courses or training have you had since you left school and where did they take place?

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

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

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

19. What were your least favourite or most difficult subjects? (explain why)

20. What format of exams is difficult for you?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> multiple choice | <input type="checkbox"/> math/technical word problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> short answer | <input type="checkbox"/> written computer theory tests |
| <input type="checkbox"/> essay | <input type="checkbox"/> written math calculations |

21. Did you have difficulty completing exams within the allotted time?

22. 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)

23. What did you find helpful (or not helpful) about this extra help?

24. Who in your family helped you with your homework? _____

25. Approximately how many hours per night did you receive help with your homework? _____

26. Do you find it easier to learn by

listening or hearing?

reading?

writing?

saying things out loud?

working with your hands?

27. 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

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

29. 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.)

30. Have you ever been prescribed medication for an attention-deficit disorder (e.g. Ritalin)? Yes No

31. Were you ever considered a behavioural problem in school? Yes No

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

33. 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

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

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

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?

Language and Developmental History

37. What language is spoken at home? 1st _____ 2nd _____

38. What language were you schooled in? _____

39. If other than English, did you have trouble learning to read and write in your first language? Yes No Not applicable

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 No

Low birth weight (< 3 lbs.) Yes No

Respiratory Distress Yes No

44. Did you receive an Occupational Therapy Assessment or Training for difficulty with fine motor skills? Yes No

If yes, please describe: _____

Family History

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

If yes, please explain: _____

46. What was the highest grade achieved by your parents? Father: _____ Mother: _____

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

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 type="checkbox"/>	Allergies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Drug Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Head Injury	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Alcohol Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emotional Trauma	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ear Infections	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Headaches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Migraines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If yes, please describe _____

53. Have you had a history of depression, anxiety or other emotional or psychological difficulties (for example: OCD, school phobia, suicide attempts?)

Yes No

Have you ever taken medication for this condition?

Yes No

If yes, please give details: _____

Employment

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

55. 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.

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

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

58. How committed are you to this career goal? Somewhat____ Quite____ Extremely____

59. Have you ever quit a job? _____ Why? _____

60. Have you ever been fired? _____ Why? _____

61. How many jobs have you had in the last two years? _____

62. What is the longest you have worked at a job? _____

63. What type of supervisor do you prefer? _____

64. Do you prefer to work: alone _____ as a team _____

65. How well do you get along with co-workers? _____

Checklists

Challenges

Please indicate if these items have been a problem to 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			
Putting your thoughts into words when speaking			
Finding a particular word(s) when speaking			
Taking part in conversations			
With reading speed			
Understanding what you read			
Sounding out words			
With math calculations			
With math reasoning/word problems			
Quickly recalling math facts			
With handwriting			
With spelling			
Writing your thoughts on paper			
Understanding jokes			
Remembering what you hear			
Organizing, planning or keeping track of time			
Paying attention or concentrating			
Knowing right from left			
Following oral or printed directions			
Listening to lectures and taking notes at the same time			

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			
Handling money and banking			
Using public transportation			
Telling time			
Housekeeping			
Being organized			
Programming electronic equipment			
Using an automated banking machine			
Looking after yourself			
Driving			
Using the telephone			
Cooking			
Making or keeping friends (or both)			
Solving problems			
Using automated telephones			

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			
Music			
Sports			
Drama			
Dancing			
Writing poems, plays, songs			
Woodworking			
Building or repairing mechanical objects			
Using a computer			
Driving a car			
Public speaking			
Listening skills			
Telling jokes			

Are there other things you like to do we have not mentioned? _____

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

Learning Disabilities:
At-Risk Summary Checklist

Expect to see NO to these questions:

- | | | | |
|---|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | VISION problems may have interfered with learning. | <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 |

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. | <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. | <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. | <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no |

Future directions:

Link items with specific items from questionnaires

Additional items:

15 Speech and language difficulties

yes

no

Add section on Referrals:

Action Plan:

Refer for further assessment

Refer for academic supports, career counseling, tutoring

Chapter Two Appendix C

Screening Inventory LDAO (Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario)

I am going to read some statements and I want you to tell me whether they describe you. You can answer: **Never, Sometimes, or Often**

1. I have trouble remembering people's names
2. I learn best when someone shows me what to do
3. I have trouble remembering the order that must be followed when given instructions
4. I have trouble understanding what people are saying to me, especially when they speak quickly
5. I have trouble thinking of the right word to say or write, even when I know the word
6. I get confused when I'm trying to explain things to people
7. I have trouble pronouncing long words, and get the order mixed up
8. When I read, the words and letters seem to jump around on the page
9. I lose my place easily when I am reading
10. I have trouble sounding out new words
11. I can sound out words, but I don't remember what words look like
12. I misspell small words as much as big words
13. I can spell the same word several ways in the same essay
14. I understand a story better if someone reads it to me
15. I have to read things several times before I understand them
16. I lose my place when copying from the blackboard or an overhead
17. My handwriting is hard for other people to read

18. I express myself better when speaking than when writing
19. I have trouble getting my ideas down on paper
20. Other people don't understand what I am trying to say in my writing
21. I sometimes reverse letters or numbers, or get them in the wrong order
22. I have trouble remembering multiplication tables
23. I have trouble figuring out what they're asking in math word problems
24. I make mistakes when working through math problems that have several steps
25. I can't figure out what formulas to use in math questions
26. I know what to do in math questions, but I get the calculations wrong if I don't use a calculator
27. It takes me a while to find my way around a new place
28. I have trouble judging distances
29. I confuse left and right
30. I have trouble judging how long things are going to take to do
31. I am often late getting places
32. I have trouble finding things on a cluttered desk
33. Jigsaw puzzles are something I've always avoided
34. I get confused when I'm trying to do too many things at once

Everyone has problems with these areas some of the time, but if there are many items to which you answer "often", it may be useful to look into the possibility of learning disabilities.

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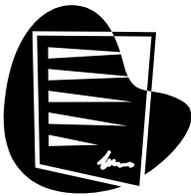
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Input from Online Delivery of Chapter Two

Learning disability screening tools: What, How and When to use them during the assessment process



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

At the beginning of the workshop, we reviewed some basic points about screening tools (e.g. check for validity, remember that they are not 100% accurate). Then we asked, “What are the advantages and disadvantages of using screening tools?”

Here’s what you told us:

Disadvantages

- They can take a lot of time to administer.
- We don’t always know what to do with the results.
- Not always effective with second language speakers because they may not have the language tools to answer the questions; we must be careful with interpreting results for ESL learners.
- The results can be devastating to some learners.
- The results may show the possibility of an intellectual disability rather than a learning disability; not always an easy thing to convey to a learner.
- Learners may not understand that this is not a formal diagnosis.
- It is difficult to find “good” or appropriate screening tools.

Advantages

- Using the same screening tool over time allows you to compare results and contributes to the validity of the results.
- Using screening tools builds regularly builds up your confidence and expertise.
- Can help you and the learner explore the possibilities that there is (or isn't) a learning disability.
- Formal testing is expensive so screening can help a learner discover why he or she might be having trouble learning.
- The results can be very helpful to both the learner and the instructor/tutor to understand why the learner is experiencing difficulties.
- Screening can help you get to know the learner better.
- Volunteer tutors can get discouraged if the learner doesn't seem to be making progress; screening results can help him or her understand why learning may take longer than expected.



Activity 2

We explored the benefits of screening tools and talked about what to look for when using them. We asked you what strengths and weakness you observe in learners that may make you think they have a learning disability. Here's what you told us:

- Learners may use avoidance techniques or use lots of excuses for not doing things.
- Despite presenting the material using a variety of methods and formats, the learner doesn't grasp the concept.
- Although the learner might read a passage well, he or she may not understand what they read.
- Learner demonstrates outstanding skills in his/her personal life (e.g. running a business, managing a home) but they struggle with reading.
- Inconsistencies in skill levels (peaks and valleys).
- Clear differences between potential and performance.
- Cannot sounds out words but recognizes familiar words.
- Learner works hard but continues to struggle with certain skills.
- Difficulties with verbal instructions.
- Social-behavioural issues – learner may demonstrate lots of creativity or be very verbal.
- Lack of knowledge re: personal space.
- Lack of focus



Activity 3

We talked about the assessment process/cycle and where screening tools might best fit, i.e. intake, initial assessment, ongoing assessment. We asked you to think about your own experience to help identify the best time to use a screening tool for learning disabilities and why. Here's what you told us:

- Intake because then one person does the complete assessment. The information gathered at intake can then be passed on to the tutor along with specific strategies.
- Many programs combine intake with initial assessment; others do this as separate activities.
- People may be nervous at intake so it is preferable to wait until later on.
- You may not suspect a learning disability until you have worked with the learner for a while.
- It depends on the program structure and available staffing.
- You need to decide based on the learner's readiness.
- If you wait too long, you run the risk that the learner will become frustrated. But if you screen too early, the learner might not be ready. It is a fine line.
- You can do minimal screening at intake then do a more in-depth screening later on when the learner is more comfortable with the program.



Activity 4

We looked at some of the questions that might be included when screening for learning disabilities. We asked you to identify other questions that could be included to help you screen for possible learning disabilities. Here is what you told us:

- Asking about the employment history is key, e.g. how many jobs they've had, how long they stayed in the job, why they left the job, what helped them succeed in a particular job.
- Did they arrive on time? How do you organize your day?
- Why are you here?
- Ask about hobbies, talents, what they watch on television.
- Ask about medications they are taking.
- Ask about their home environment.
- What subjects did they enjoy in school? What subjects did they have trouble with? Were they involved in any extra-curricular activities?
- Ask about relationships with peers, teachers, etc.
- Do other family members have learning difficulties?
- Use the responses to questions to lead to other, pertinent questions.
- Ask them to complete statements such as, "I know I am good at being on time because ..."
- Observe the learner as part of the screening process.
- What would you like to be able to do that you have problems doing now?

Vicki offered to include a "student data sheet" that she has found helpful. While it isn't a learning disabilities screening tool, many of these questions are included on it, and it has proven itself to be a useful initial assessment tool. You'll find this "data sheet" on the next two pages.

Student Data Sheet**Part 1**

- 1) My name is _____
 - 2) I am a _____ (male / female).
 - 3) I am _____ years old, and I live with my _____ (father, mother, husband or wife, family, alone).
 - 4) My favourite day of the week is _____
 - 5) The TV program I like the most is _____
 - 6) My favourite course in school was _____
 - 7) I liked it because _____

 - 8) The one course in school I didn't like was _____

 - 9) I disliked it because _____

 - 10) In my free time I really enjoy _____

 - 11) When I get a job I'd like to be a _____
- OR: My job now is _____

Part 2

Write 3 or more sentences about yourself in the next 5 minutes

Part 3

If you would like to, please write a few sentences about the person you would most like to meet and why you would like to meet him or her.



Activity 5

We provided a brief overview of how Literacy Link South Central carried out the research project and decided which screening tools to review.

We asked you to tell us which criteria are most important when choosing screening tools and why. Here's what you told us:

- Writing samples are helpful.
- They must be non-threatening.
- They must be simple and short – for both the learner and the practitioner.
- There must be clear indications of “next steps”.
- They should identify whether the potential learning disability is visual, auditory, organizational, etc.
- Knowing what the learner's goal is can be helpful when deciding what tool to use.
- They need to address the special needs of the learner (e.g. deaf community).
- They must be culturally appropriate (e.g. Native content)
- The organization should be able to provide strategies to respond to the disabilities they are trying to identify.



Activity 6

We looked at some of the screening tools that are available.

We asked you what tools you use and why. You told us:

- Screening tools can be formal or informal.
- CABS
- True Colours
- Screening for Success
- Tool included in “Unscrambling Spelling” (a brief dictation with a chart that analyses errors)
- Canadian Adult Reading Assessment (Pat Campbell)
- Laubach Patterns in Spelling
- Destination Literacy
- Teaching Some to Read
- Learning styles assessment

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 step! 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
- listening or hearing?
 - reading?
 - writing?
 - saying things out loud? (2)
 - 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

Responses for George are **bold**

1. Expect to see NO to these questions:

- 1 **VISION** problems may have interfered with learning yes **no**
(**glasses correct any vision problem**).
- 2 **HEARING** problems may have interfered with learning. yes **no**
- 3 **HEALTH** problems or **PHYSICAL DISABILITIES** may have interfered with learning. yes **no**
- 4 Irregular attendance may have interfered with learning. yes **no**
- 5 Lack of motivation, personal concerns and poor application to studies may have interfered with learning. yes **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. **yes** no
- 7 There is variability in abilities with many strengths and some or many problem areas. **yes** no
- 8 There is difficulty in learning (listening / speaking / reading / writing / math / organization / problem-solving / memory/ concentration / basic life skills). **yes** no
- 9 There is a history of difficulties in learning from a young age. **yes** no
- 10 There is a previous diagnosis of learning disabilities. yes **no**
- 11 There is a history of special help in school. **yes** no
Extra help in Grade 1
- 12 There is a discrepancy between the highest grade completed and the number of years to complete studies, despite regular attendance at school. yes **no**
- 13 There is a family history of specific learning disabilities. yes **no**
(**but sister received help with math and English in Grade 6 & 8**)
- 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:

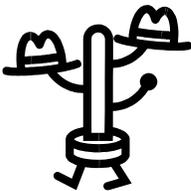
- In the interview, you indicated that someone in your family has a learning problem; which family member(s) has the problem (e.g. mother, father, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles)? What kind of problem was it?
- On the inventory you marked that you have failed classes in school. What was the main reason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

Chapter Four

When screening and assessment merge!



Chapter outline

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Learning objectives

- Identify whether an adult's learning barriers are due to a lack of knowledge and skills or a potential learning disability
- Understand the importance of practitioner and learner observations during the learning approach and process
- Identify components of the observation process and learn how to integrate them into current screening/assessment procedures
- Increase knowledge of tools that provide a more in-depth picture of potential learning disabilities
- Learn how to apply the Cooper Screening Tool and how to interpret the results
- Understand and apply the tools to gain a better understanding of a learner's strengths and weaknesses in communication, math and organization skills

Welcome to Chapter Four

Although this is the final look into the “*World of Screening Tools*”, it is not the final journey with our learners. In fact, the title of this chapter best captures the goal of this chapter; screening is really the beginning of the assessment journey. Learners are encouraged to be active travelers on this journey of discovery.

Chapter Four addresses ways to make more in-depth discoveries during the journey. The clues, hunches and initial insights that were gathered through the initial screening and informal conversations with learners will be investigated further to achieve clarity and a greater depth of knowledge of potential learning barriers. The tools highlighted in this chapter represent the ‘bridge’ that practitioners and learners cross to go from the initial screening to a more in-depth investigation of the assessment process. Crossing the ‘bridge’ facilitates the merging of screening and assessment.

Helpful tips as we continue our journey



Keep in the mind the following tips to determine the difference between potential learning disabilities, general lack of knowledge and/or intellectual challenges:

- Has the adult’s problem persisted over time? If the adult is learning or improving language skills (for example an ESL student), errors in his/her oral language skills will improve over a period of time. If the adult has a potential learning disability, his/her skills will not improve without appropriate strategies.
- Has the problem resisted normal instruction? If the adult has received explicit instruction in the problem area and still does not improve, a learning disability is the likely cause.
- Does the problem interfere with the adult’s learning progress? Can he/she write sentences, but has difficulty organizing his or her thoughts into a paragraph? The process of producing a product is often the biggest challenge. In this case, a learning disability is the likely cause.
- Does the adult show a clear pattern of strengths and weaknesses? Does the adult have good oral skills but poor written skills? If there is a discrepancy between skill areas, a learning disability is most likely evident.

- Is there an irregular pattern of success? Does the adult seem to “get it” one day and not the next? If yes, a short-term memory disability may be present. In most cases, with the integration of various mnemonic strategies, the adult can help manage his or her learning disability.

If you have found that you are answering YES to the above questions, then the adult’s learning challenges are most likely a result of a learning disability.

Assessment

The practitioner’s role is to understand the learner’s strengths and weaknesses to build an effective training plan, not to diagnose or label a learning disability

Enhancing our journey through the merging of screening and assessment

The information gathered through the screening process is the foundation for both the practitioner and learner to build upon during the assessment process. Based on the findings gathered through the screening tool, you may both make decisions about what areas require further assessment and which types of assessment tools to use. In Chapter Two, we pointed out that the screening process should not be treated in isolation, as it is really the beginning stage of the assessment process. It helps the practitioner to determine what areas need to be addressed further.



With the help of informal assessment tools, our journey of discovery can become more in-depth, allowing us to investigate clues that may lead us to the eventual destination: “the training plan.” Together, through this information gathering process, the practitioner and learner can feel confident that the training plan truly reflects the learner’s strengths and addresses the appropriate learning barriers. Asking the learner to join you on the journey and be active in the process of discovery helps to foster the learner’s personal accountability for his/her learning success. This discovery process also helps learners to understand themselves and build self-esteem and pride.

The observation screening process

The screening process alone cannot be used to understand the learner's situation. Gathering relevant information can be accomplished by using a variety of approaches such as observation, interviews, self-reports, and screening tools.

Heading the list of the Tennessee Literacy Resource Center's recommendations for screening incoming literacy participants is "Informal Observation and Work Samples." The research group comprised of Tennessee practitioners found that careful observation was so valuable to the assessment process that it recommended training to sharpen the practitioner's observation skills."¹



Role of the practitioner

Informally observing an adult's learning process, work samples and overall behaviour is an ongoing process. The practitioner is in a position to contribute valuable input. Practitioner observations provide further insights into the areas identified through the screening tools. Practitioners can observe any identified areas under a variety of circumstances to see if consistencies or differences exist. This helps to confirm or question potential learning disability indicators that may have been flagged during an intake interview and / or during the screening process.

Through observation, the practitioner can talk with the learner and gain further knowledge of his or her:

- Way of learning
- Learning strategies (what they have tried or what they would like to try)
- Preferences for materials, strategies and learning approaches

¹ National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center (1995). *Screening for Adults with Learning Disabilities; the Role of the Practitioner in the Assessment Process*. Washington, DC. Obtained from the OTAN Database, reference ID: 1620.

Observing how the adult interacts with practitioners, his or her work and other learners in the program can help the practitioner to determine the individual learner's pattern of strengths and weaknesses. Observing patterns may help us to confirm our suspicions about possible barriers to learning. In particular, observations are helpful in "noticing discrepant abilities and behaviours, an important signal of learning problems."²

Four components of observational screening

The University of Tennessee, Center for Literacy Studies (2002) *Keys to Effective LD Teaching Practice* identified the following four components of observational screening:

1. **Practitioner observations** (over a two week period as the practitioner and learner begin to work together)
2. **Learner input** (learner gives input on his or her own learning strengths and struggles)
3. **Practitioner-learner conference** (both compare observations and begin planning the learner's instruction and adaptations)
4. **Interpretation of Checklists**

There is really no right or wrong way to do observational screening. But remember: the more information gathered, the more reliable it is. It is also key for the learner to be an active contributor to the observation process.

There are a number of approaches to observational screening. Many variations can be used. Some practitioners may use checklists as part of the initial screening and then use this information as a reference point for the observations (refer to Chapter Two). The learners may also use a checklist (refer to Chapter Four Appendix A) as a guide for their observations of themselves. Learner input can also be gathered at an initial meeting. The practitioner may comment on the learner's input after observing his or her learning over a period of time.

Discussion question



How would you incorporate the four components of observational screening?
What variables impacted your decision?

² State of Tennessee for the State Literacy Resource Center (1997). *Assessment: Seeds of Innovation*. Tennessee, US: Center for Literacy Studies.

A closer look at the different components of observational screening

Practitioner observations

As you and your learner move through the journey of discovery, together you will begin to gain insight into potential learning barriers (emotional, cognitive, affective and skills and knowledge) and ways of learning that work best for the learner. As you review your documentation, observations and screening results, look for areas that both of you have noted on several occasions. Generally you want to observe academic performance, attention, organization, social and emotional strengths and weaknesses.

The following checklist is an excellent tool to help guide the observation process. The checklist was taken from *Screening for Adults with Learning Disabilities: The Role of the Practitioner in the Assessment Process* (1995), produced by the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center accessed at the OTAN Data Bank at (OTAN Doc. Code: DP0024 | OTAN Ref. ID: 1620)

Practitioner observations and academic performance

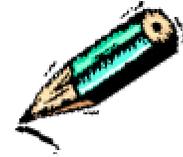
Reading



The learner:

- Shows marked difficulty in oral and silent reading
- Has slow and deliberate reading patterns
- Appears to be re-reading or reading very slowly when reading silently (skips words, re-reads lines in oral reading)
- May substitute, delete, add or transpose letters and syllables
- Cannot use basic phonics to sound out words
- Loses place on page
- Reads with an overdependence on guessing and, as such, comprehension is compromised, evidenced in errors in answering questions related to the text
- Avoids reading out loud
- Reads words or syllables backwards; e.g., *was* for *saw*, *net* for *ten*
- Has a halting and jerky reading style

Expressive Language (writing, spelling, including handwriting skills)



The learner:

- Experiences problems with grammar and syntax
- Reverses letters in spelling, e.g., *Friday* becomes *Firday*, *girl* becomes *gril*
- Writes letters or numbers backwards or upside down, e.g., *b* for *d*, *p* for *q*, *u* for *n*, *m* for *w*
- Mixes capital and lower case letters inappropriately, e.g., *SunDay*, *MoNey*
- Spells words differently in the same document
- Has poor handwriting and inconsistent letter formation
- Has weak visual memory for spelling
- Commonly makes punctuation errors
- Spells phonetically, cannot remember spelling patterns, e.g., *Munday*, *Toosday*, *Winsday*, *Thirsday*
- Continuously whispers to self while writing
- Has inconsistent memory for sentence mechanics
- Has poorly organized writing

Math:



The learner:

- Has trouble remembering math facts and procedures
- Cannot remember in which direction to work in carrying out simple math
- Demonstrates inconsistent mastery of math facts (addition/subtraction, multiplication/division) due to problems with long-term memory
- Confuses similar numbers or transposes numbers
- Reads numbers backwards, e.g., 18 for 81, 21 for 12
- Has difficulty copying numbers and working with numbers in columns
- Has trouble following sequential procedures and directions with multiple steps
- Has trouble with left/right orientation



The pattern of errors is the key to determining the difference between a person who has potential learning disabilities and a person whose low achievement is a result of other factors.

Practitioner observations and self-management skills and behaviours

Only when the **behaviour is consistent and observed over a considerable period of time** should you acknowledge that the behaviour(s) may indicate the possibility of a learning disability.



Attention

The learner:

- Has difficulty concentrating/focusing (needs to be brought back to task)
- Is easily distracted, has difficulty sitting still and is restless
- Displays off-task behavior
- Lacks productivity and seems confused at times
- Fidgets and is impatient
- Talks excessively
- Acts impulsive (for example, acts without thinking and without seeming concern for the consequences, says one thing and means another, blurts out answers and interrupts)
- Appears not to listen to what is being said
- Displays memory problems

Organization:

The learner:

- Has poor organizational skills for his or her physical environment, time and tasks
- Experiences difficulty sequencing, prioritizing, grouping or categorizing
- Experiences difficulty grasping similarities between items and relating parts to the whole
- Experiences orientation problems and difficulty with directionality: left/right, up/down, and north/south/east/west

Social:

The learner:

- May find social situations difficult

- May be noticeably out of place in a group setting
- Can misinterpret what others say, tones of voice, facial expressions and the subtleties in social situations
- Lacks awareness of one's personal space
- Has difficulty establishing friendships

Other general behaviors :

The learner:

- Has variable or unpredictable performance
- Experiences difficulty absorbing major ideas from oral presentations (instructions, lectures, discussions)
- Needs information to be repeated and reviewed before understanding is achieved
- Has problems with following directions
- Has difficulty retaining information without excessive rehearsal and practice
- Cannot recall familiar facts on command, yet can do so at other times
- Has poor decision-making skills
- Has difficulty drawing conclusions, making inferences, dealing with abstractions
- Has poor motivation and/or extreme drive to complete a task
- Gives up easily or is afraid to make mistakes in answering
- Is most comfortable with familiar, unchanging settings
- Can exhibit rigid behaviour and may insist on using a strategy despite its ineffectiveness

Discussion question



What observations are indicative of auditory processing and memory? Of visual processing and memory?

Helpful hints!

Visual processing refers to the learner's ability to make sense of information taken in through the eyes.

Visual memory is concerned with the individual's ability to retain a full mental image of what s/he has seen.



In both instances, the central nervous system is not processing symbols correctly.

Auditory processing involves the ability to analyze and make sense of information taken in through the ears.

Auditory memory refers to the learner's ability to store, process and recall what has been heard. One example of the result of an auditory deficit is that the individual fails to hear vowel or soft consonant sounds in spoken words.

Learner input

For many learners, being asked to participate in the screening/assessment process may be very new for him or her and most likely is the first time that anyone has asked how he/she learns. Although a learner may be very foreign to this type of involvement, most learners have plenty to offer when asked the right questions to help them become more self-reflective. The role of the practitioner is to provide an encouraging, non-threatening environment and the tools to help the learner to provide input. When a learner can recognize a change in his or her skills, then he or she is doing self-assessment.

Encouraging learner input not only provides additional information to help build an effective training plan but it also encourages the learner to persist with learning and increases his/her ownership of the learning process.

We know from adult learning theory that adults learn when:

- They are involved
- They are asked about their preference in the form of learning (learning style)
- They connect new information with existing information
- They contrast information with their own experiences

There are a multitude of benefits to be gained from ongoing learner input throughout the journey of discovery. Because this may be a very new experience for some learners, providing them with a list of questions or a statement checklist may help facilitate this process. Although there are many self-assessment tools/checklists available and programs may already be using some, we have included the “Analyzing My Learning: Strengths and Struggles” in Chapter Four Appendix A because it focuses on learning disability characteristics, is written in the first person and is fairly simplified. This tool is an information checklist for learners to assess their strengths and challenges. The “Analyzing my Learning: Strengths and Struggles” is an 'adapted-for-learner-use' version of the Adult Learning Disability Screening Tool (ALDS) that we addressed in Chapter

Three. Its primary purpose is to build self-understanding and advocacy on the learner's part.

To access this checklist, go to http://ldlink.coe.utk.edu/text_only/screening.html and click on “Tools and Instruments” to access “The Screening Process”. Then scroll down a bit further to find “*Analyzing My Learning; Strengths and Struggles*” and / or refer to Chapter Four Appendix A (at the end of this chapter).

Screening tools that merge with informal assessment

The Cooper Screening Tool

Available on line at <http://www.learningdifferences.com/>
<http://www.learningdifferences.com/Main%20Page/C-SIP/C-SIP-Index.htm>



Introduction

The Cooper Screening of Information Processing (C-SIP) was developed by Dr. Richard Cooper in 1992. It was field tested in two states by a total of 353 programs. It is not meant to be a standardized test but rather a diagnostic teaching instrument. The screening tool is not designed to enable teachers to diagnose learning disabilities. It provides practitioners and other professionals with a way to determine if a person manifests any of the common characteristics of learning disabilities. A practitioner over time would obtain much of the same information if he or she got to know the learner and observed the way that the adult learned and the errors that he or she commonly made.

The Cooper Screening Tool is designed so that it can be used without extensive training. Some information about the learner will be obtained when the practitioner administers the screening for the first time, but much more information will be obtained after the practitioner has administered the screening tool to many different learners. Each time the practitioner administers the screening tool, the similarities and differences among learners will become clearer.

Ideally, the Cooper Screening Tool is administered individually, but parts of it can be administered to a group. However, the amount of information gained from group administration will be less than when completed individually.

The Cooper Screening Tool usually takes about 45 to 50 minutes to administer, but the time may vary depending on the individual and his or her comfort level with providing detailed responses. In response to many requests for a short form of the screening tool, Dr. Cooper has restructured it to provide a short form within the original Cooper Screening Tool. When you access the tool online, the short form is highlighted in red.

Areas covered in the Cooper Screening Tool

On the website, each of these headings is a hyperlink that leads to further details.

[Introduction](#)

[Personal Information](#)

[Educational History](#)

[Attention](#)

[Motor Skills](#)

[Auditory](#)

[Right/Left Discrimination](#)

[Employment](#)

[Emotional](#)

[Social and Family](#)

[Oral Communication](#)

[Writing](#)

[Handwriting](#)

[Basic Math](#)

[Math Skills](#)

[Math Vocabulary](#)

[Reading](#)

[Reading Comprehension](#)

[Vocabulary](#)

[Avoidance](#)

[Goals](#)

[Progressive Reading List](#)

[Handwriting Sample Page](#)

[Observations, Notes](#)

[Screening Summary](#)

[Educational/Employment Plan](#)

[Adaptations / Modifications / Assistive Devices](#)

In the administration manual for the Cooper Screening Tool, you will find for each section covered in the tool:

- the purpose for each area of questioning
- what to look for in the learners' responses (how they respond, verbal and non verbal communication)
- special considerations (adaptations that can be made and/or responses you will expect to see regarding particular questions that provide significant evidence for potential learning disabilities)

There is no training required to use the Cooper Screening Tool, however since it is quite comprehensive it may take some practice before a practitioner is fully comfortable with administering the tool.

<http://www.learningdifferences.com/Main%20Page/C-SIP/C-SIP-ManualIndex.htm>

A closer look at some of the areas covered in the Cooper Screening Tool



Case Study – Brian

22 years old

Completed a modified Grade 12; best subject was computers

Was tested for LD and ADD

Auditory:

The purpose of the Auditory Section is to determine if the person has difficulty with auditory perception and racing thoughts that limit auditory perception.

What to look for?

First pay attention to any words that the person might miss or misinterpret. Individuals with auditory cognitive disabilities have difficulty processing language sounds. The

difficulties can impact how he or she “takes in,” retains, recalls, and/or expresses information. This can lead to incorrect interpretations of what they hear. Dr. Cooper refers to this as individuals with a racing mind. He states they will often exhibit triggering when rhyming e.g. *slow -- fast, quick -- fix*. Triggering is the term used to describe the phenomenon of a person’s thoughts jumping past the correct response to the next logical response or to the opposite response. The triggering may be the result of a breakdown of the auditory processing and/or attention deficits.

Special considerations :

The first question is usually answered with a definite “yes” or a questioning look. Those individuals who have this problem know it because it usually has caused the person difficulty in social situations. The person who does not have this problem wonders why you would ask such a question.

Auditory – Brian’s responses are bold

- Do you find yourself listening to more than one conversation at a time? **Yes**
- *Rhyme the word:*
CAT _____ MAT
SLOW _____ FAST
QUICK _____ SLOW
 Person has difficulty rhyming? **Yes**
- Do you often mishear words that are said to you?
- Do you misinterpret what is said to you?
- Do you take things that are said too literally or miss double meaning or jokes?
- Do you have difficulty paying attention to long conversations or lectures? **Yes**
- Do you have difficulty hearing what one person is saying when there are a lot of people talking?
- Does your mind race ahead thinking about the first thing that was said to you so you do not hear or pay attention to the rest of what was said?
- Do you have difficulty with spelling? **Yes**
- Do you have difficulty reading (decoding or sounding out) unfamiliar words? **Yes**

Summary of Auditory Problems Yes Total # **5**

Impaired auditory perception means that the person will not hear everything said or will hear it incorrectly. For example, they may have difficulty with syllables that are not accented: “seven” and “seventy” may sound the same. Similarly, they cannot distinguish between words that sound somewhat alike: for example, “how” and “who”.

Poor auditory memory results in a person having difficulty remembering what has been said. Short term and/or long term memory may be affected, they may remember things said in the past, but not recall their own words from just a moment ago. Or they may have no long term memory for things they have heard.

Poor auditory sequencing skills interfere with a person's ability to follow instructions. This is an extreme form of poor auditory memory. It can cause significant difficulties on the job or in social situations.

Poor listening skills mean that the person has difficulty selecting the sounds to listen to. He may hear a confusing jumble of unsorted sounds, rather like having the television, radio and vacuum cleaner all running at the same time.

Basic Math Skills

What is the purpose of this section?

The Basic Math Skills Section is designed to determine how a person processes math facts and to gain a sample of their skill level. Rather than a paper and pencil test, this assessment of basic math skills is oral so that the administrator can observe and question the person about how he or she arrives at the answers.

What to look for?

Watch for counting and guessing. Any hesitation indicates that the person does not know the number facts by automatic recall. Having persistent trouble "memorizing" basic number facts in all four operations despite adequate understanding and instruction is a common challenge for individuals with learning disabilities.³

Special considerations:

If the person responds without hesitation, mark the A ___ for Automatic Recall. Otherwise ask the person how he or she arrived at the answer and mark the appropriate category:

³ Garnett, Kate Ph.D. (1988). Math Learning Disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Journal*. LD Online. <http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/math_skills/garnett.html> and Geary, David. *Mathematics Disability: What we know and Don't Know*. LD Online. <http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/math_skills/geary_math_dis.html>

- D__ Delay in Automatic Recall
- LD__ Long Delay
- NR__ Number Relationship
- G__ Guessing
- CF__ Counting on Fingers
- CH__ Counting in Head.

For those individuals who are suspected of not knowing the number facts listed in this section, young children or individuals with significant disabilities, ask a different set of number facts. For example, instead of $9 + 7$, ask $5 + 5$ and instead of 8×7 , ask 2×8 . If the person knows these number facts, ask others which are more difficult.

Basic Math Skills - Brian's responses are **bold** and the letter indicates how he arrived at his answer

(**A** Automatic Recall, **D** Delay in Automatic Recall, **LD** Long Delay, **NR** Number Relationship, **G** Guessing, **CF** Counting on Fingers, **CH** Counting in Head)

Do you often count on your fingers or in your head? **Yes**

Does the person have difficulty with the addition facts? **Yes (although one answer is correct he counted using his fingers)**

Check: $9 + 7$ **15** **CF**
 $8 + 6$ **14** **CF**

Does the person have difficulty with subtraction facts? **Yes (although answer is correct he counted using his fingers)**

Check: $17 - 9$ **8** **CF**
 $12 - 5$ **7** **CF**

Did you have difficulty learning the multiplication tables? **Yes**

Does the person have difficulty with multiplication facts? **Yes (Brian did use automatic recall but 2 out of 3 answers were incorrect)**

Check: 8×7 **64** **A**
 7×6 **42** **A**
 9×6 **62** **A**

Summary of Basic Math Skills Yes Total # **5**

Math Skills

What is the purpose of this section?

This section is designed to assess the person's knowledge of arithmetic and higher math skills. Like the Basic Math Skills, this section is done orally rather than in writing. Keep in mind that research on how learning disabilities impact a person's math ability is limited. Many adults may not have practiced certain math applications for some time and with a quick review they are able to complete the questions successfully. Although this section involves oral questions, Dr. Cooper encourages further investigation and actual practice if the practitioner suspects the person is unable to do a math application despite the fact they have responded otherwise.

What to look for?

Watch for the person stating that he or she does not have difficulty with various math operations. For example, if you suspect that the person does not know how to complete fraction operations, but he or she has stated that fractions are no problem, you can write an addition problem with mixed denominators and ask the person to complete the problem. This will show whether the person indeed knows how to complete such operations or just did not know what was meant by that math skill.

Special considerations:

If the person has difficulty with basic math skills, you can skip this section and mark the questions "yes". If the person has not taken algebra and other higher level math, mark these questions with "yes".

Math Skills - Brian's responses are bold

Was it difficult for you to learn long division? **Yes**
 Is it still difficult for you? **Yes**
 Was it difficult for you to learn fractions? **Yes**
 Is it still difficult for you? **Yes**
 Was it difficult for you to learn decimals? **Yes**
 Is it still difficult for you? **Yes**
 Was it difficult for you to learn percentages? **Yes**
 Is it still difficult for you? **Yes**
 Was it difficult for you to learn positive and negative numbers? **Yes**
 Is it still difficult for you? **Yes**
 Were word problems difficult? **Yes**
 Have you taken algebra? If yes, did you have difficulty with algebra? **Yes**
 Have you taken geometry? If yes, did you have difficulty with geometry? **Yes**
 Have you taken other math? _____ If yes, did you have difficulty with it? **Yes**
 Summary of Math Skills Yes Total # **9**

Vocabulary

What is the purpose of this section?

The Vocabulary Section is designed to determine a learner's understanding of the meaning of words and his/her ability to explain or define the words.

What to look for?

Watch for the learner who appears to know the meaning of the word but is not able to give a definition. Ask the individual to use the word in a sentence or give an example of the concept. This will help determine if the person understands the meaning but has difficulty expressing it. Mark "S" if the learner can use the word in a sentence but is not able to define it. If the learner is able to give an example of the concept associated with the word, make a note of it.

Special considerations:

When administering the Vocabulary Section, the practitioner makes an educated guess, based on the information gathered so far, about which level of words to ask the person being screened. The Cooper Screening Tool divides the vocabulary section into three levels of difficulty. Although the screening summary is designed for assessing only one of the three levels, more than one level can be administered to a person for various reasons. The most common reason for doing this would be when assessing a person with an unexpectedly weak vocabulary (for example, a college student who is unable to define many of the words in Level III). To understand his problem with vocabulary, the administrator might also ask the learner about the definitions in Level II and maybe Level I as well. If the person had difficulty with words in the other levels, the practitioner would place a mark in the right hand column on the Screening Summary.

Vocabulary – Responses for Brian are bold**Does the person have difficulty defining the following words?**

(There are three sets of words. They are for different age or ability groups or to provide the administrator with many words to check a person who evidences particular difficulty with vocabulary. If the person cannot define the word but can use it in a sentence, mark "S" instead of Yes.)

Level I

LAKE	<u>water</u>	S	Yes
SLOW	<u>fast</u>	S	Yes
CAPTURE	<u>prison</u>	S	Yes
SMOKE	<u>smoking</u>	S	Yes
REVERSE	<u>forward</u>	S	Yes
BEAUTIFUL	<u>lovely</u>	S	Yes
DEVELOP	<u>learning</u>	S	Yes

BIOLOGY	__ lab testing	S	Yes
CAUTION	__ danger	S	Yes
NECESSARY	__ helping	S	Yes
LEVEL II			
SECTION	__ ?	S	Yes
PASSIVE	__ fast	S	Yes
DEDICATE	__ learning	S	Yes
MOTIVE	__ moving	S	Yes
FOREIGN	__ exchange	S	Yes
ARTIFICIAL	__ fake	S	Yes
DEVISE	__ continue	S	Yes
PHILOSOPHY	__ physical	S	Yes
INNOVATION	__ strengthening	S	Yes
PRECISE	__ correct	S	Yes
LEVEL III			
THEORY	__ thinking	S	Yes
RELUCTANT	__ ?	S	Yes
TRANQUILIZE	__ drug	S	Yes
DILEMMA	__ excited	S	Yes
UNANIMOUS	__ uniting	S	Yes
EXTENSIVE	__ late	S	Yes
CONTEMPLATE	__ sorry	S	Yes
ANTHROPOLOGY	__ ?	S	Yes
RENAISSANCE	__ explore	S	Yes
COLLECTIVE	__ collecting	S	Yes
Is the person's vocabulary underdeveloped? Yes			
Is the person's vocabulary ambiguous?			
Does the person define with another part of speech? (e.g. tranquilize - pill) Yes			
Summary of Vocabulary Yes Total # 25			

How to understand the results of the areas that we reviewed

Once the learner has completed the Cooper Screening Tool, the summary of the results should be recorded in the Screening Summary. The purpose of this page is to obtain a profile of the person's thoughts and basic skills. The summary does not provide a numerical score but rather a visual profile of the number of marks in the columns.

To score the Cooper Screening of Information Processing, add up the 'yes' answers in each section and place a mark in the appropriate column (see below). **Individuals with severe or significant learning problems will have many marks in the right hand column. Individuals with less significant problems or learning disabilities will have more marks in the left hand or middle column. Individuals who have few marks on**

the screening summary probably do not have a learning difference, problem or disability.

Since the screening is not a diagnostic instrument for learning disabilities but rather a first step in a process that may lead to a diagnosis of a disability, individuals who have many marks in the third column should be considered for further testing.

Brian’s results of the areas that we viewed:

	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
Auditory	2 - 3 _____	4 - 6 <u> X </u>	7 - 10 _____
Basic Math Skills		1 - 2 _____	3 - 5 <u> X </u>
Math Skills	1 - 2 _____	3 - 6 _____	7 - 14 <u> X </u>
Vocabulary	2 - 3 _____	4 - 6 _____	7 - 13 <u> X </u> (25)

Note: Our intention with this case study is not to do a full interpretation of his results but to highlight sections of the tool.

How to interpret the Cooper Screening Tool results



Case study – Tina

- 24 years old, Grade 12 education; worst subject: math
- was in a special education class

Tina was screened using the complete Cooper Screening Tool. The results are summarized in the following table.

Tina’s screening summary			
	Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
Educational History	3 - 4 _____	5 - 6 _____	7 - 9 _____
Attention	2 - 3 _____	4 - 6 _____	7 - 10 <u> X </u>
Motor Skills	2 - 3 _____	4 - 6 _____	7 - 8 _____
Auditory	2 - 3 _____	4 - 6 <u> X </u>	7 - 10 _____
Right/Left Discrimination	3 - 5 _____	6 - 8 <u> X </u>	9 - 13 _____
Organizational Skills	1 - 2 _____	3 - 4 _____	5 - 8 <u> X </u>

Employment	1 _____	2 - 3 <u> X </u>	4 - 5 _____
Emotional	2 - 3 _____	4 - 5 _____	6 - 10 _____
Social and Family	3 - 4 _____	5 - 6 _____	7 - 9 _____
Oral Communication	1 - 2 _____	3 - 4 <u> X </u>	5 - 6 _____
Writing Skills	2 - 4 _____	5 - 7 <u> X </u>	8 - 12 _____
Handwriting	2 - 3 <u> X </u>	4 - 6 _____	7 - 10 _____
Basic Math Skills		1 - 2 _____	3 - 5 <u> X </u>
Math Skills	1 - 2 _____	3 - 6 _____	7 - 14 <u> X </u>
Math Vocabulary	1 <u> X </u>	2 - 3 _____	4 - 5 _____
Reading Skills	3 - 7 <u> X </u>	8 - 12 _____	13 - 20 _____
Reading Comprehension	3 - 4 _____	5 - 6 _____	7 - 10 _____
Vocabulary	2 - 3 _____	5 - 6 _____	7 - 13 <u> X </u>
Avoidance of tasks/subjects	2 - 3 _____	4 - 6 <u> X </u>	7 - 9 _____
Reading List	100 - 126 _____	21 - 99 _____	1 - 20 <u> X </u>

(Number correct or with little hesitation)

Based on the above screening summary, the following appear to be Tina's learning needs (since these items appear in column three of the above chart):

- Attention
- Organizational skills
- Basic math skills (+, -, /, x,)
- Math skills (% , fractions, decimals)
- Potential auditory processing disability (memory and ability to distinguish between sounds)
- Weak writing skills (spelling, punctuation and ability to put thoughts on paper)
- Limited vocabulary
- Reading list

Now what do we do?

Dr. Cooper responds to this question by providing the following guidance. He has included possible strategies for each learning area that is covered in the screening tool.

<http://www.learningdifferences.com/Main%20Page/C-SIP/InterpretationAUG2002a.htm>

Based on above potential learning needs, Dr. Cooper provides the following strategies and guidance to consider:

Auditory

Blurred hearing: The student does not hear words clearly. This limits oral communication, vocabulary development, spelling, reading comprehension and critical thinking skills. Helping a person to understand that he or she does not hear words clearly is the first step. Teaching the student phonic awareness and/or the structure of language can provide alternatives. Learners should practice the correct pronunciation of words.

Attention

Help the person to become aware of how his or her racing mind is both an asset and a deficit. It can be helpful for brainstorming and creative thinking but when the learner needs to listen to or watch for specific details, he or she needs to learn how to slow his or her thoughts and attend to the task. For example, if the learner is also disorganized, employ structured learning techniques.

Get to know what causes a person to become distracted. Help the learner to be aware of the causes and learn how to monitor or check for mistakes caused by identified distraction.

Teach checking techniques especially for common errors caused by the racing mind: triggering, omissions, and tangential thinking (the ability to generate ideas).

Teach the person to become an active reader(encourage them to highlight words they don't understand, to look for the *who*, *what*, *why*, *when* and *where* throughout the reading process).

Organization

The person who reports poor organizational skills needs structure. This structure should be taught and practiced. This can be accomplished with organization exercises and structured approaches to learning. For example: daily "to do" lists, steps to write a paragraph or report preparation.

When the learner has difficulty with managing time, they may not meet deadlines and may have a poor (or virtually absent) sense of elapsed time. Such people may be late or very early for appointments. This may be because they do not know how much time to allocate for tasks.

A learner that has difficulty organizing tasks may not understand the logical sequence of steps required to carry out a specific task. There may be difficulty with simple tasks like getting dressed, or cooking a meal so that the meat, vegetable and potatoes are all ready

at the same time. There may also be difficulty with complex tasks such as planning a party or a move or dealing with the demands of the workplace.

A learner with difficulty organizing space – e.g., closets, desks, kitchen cabinets -- may live and function in a state of disorder or may never be able to find things quickly and efficiently.

Writing

If the person exhibits poor sentence structure, Dr. Cooper suggests trying: the five three-word sentences; word part exploration; and expanding drafts.

Five three-word sentences: (refer to Chapter Four Appendix B)

- helps adults with low literacy skills
- teaches simple sentence structure and parts of speech
- allows the person who writes only a little to write in a manageable and measurable way while enabling him/her to learn the structure of simple sentences

Word part exploration: (refer to Chapter Four Appendix B)

- helps adults who are working on expanding their vocabularies
- teaches prefixes, suffixes and parts of speech
- enables the person to explore using the same root word with different prefixes and suffixes, noting changes in the words' functions

Expanding drafts: (refer to Chapter Four Appendix B)

- helps adults who only write short sentences
- teaches how to write sentences with more details
- provides adults with a technique for increasing details in their writing

Another suggestion is to teach learners to systematically question themselves regarding capitalization, appearance, punctuation, and spelling errors in their written products, as well as correct them, before completing the product. Each basic subskill should be taught independently and practiced a great deal prior to expecting students to use and incorporate it within their writing.

Mnemonics can be very useful in helping learners remember the steps they need to focus on during the editing process. Use of an acronym will also remind the students to check for each step independently. A common example is COPS: Capitals, Organization, Punctuation and Spelling.

When the person exhibits spelling problems, it is best to determine what types of problems are the most challenging to understand what strategies to use and to increase the learners self-awareness. Encourage the learner to write every day and use mnemonic clues, letter stacking, and word part patterns.

Basic Math Skills

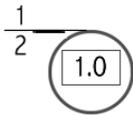
If the person struggles with his or her multiplication tables, incorporate a number of techniques that the learner may find helpful such as the use of counting exercises, Tic Tac Toe Math (<http://www.teach-nology.com/worksheets/math/tictac/>) and mnemonic clues.

If the learner knows the multiplication tables but counts or guesses addition and subtraction facts, Dr. Cooper suggests that you remediate the addition facts by identifying the facts that the person knows and have the person study the others until mastered.

Math Skills

If fractions are a challenge, incorporate pattern of the halves, pattern of the eighths and sixteenths and the mnemonic of the swimming pool.

The swimming pool: By visualizing or actually drawing a swimming pool next to a fraction, the person can easily remember which number to divide into which.



The number on the diving board dives into the pool that becomes a division problem. This simple mnemonic eliminates the confusion.

http://www.learningdifferences.com/weekly_mnemonics/2002%20Tips/MnemonicOct13-02.htm

Vocabulary

Assist the student in establishing a systematic and regular study of words.

Use mnemonic clues and associations to help students remember the meanings of words.

For example, pair pictures with words you need to learn. Studies have shown that this is an effective and efficient way to memorize vocabulary. Or, instead of using real pictures, visualize a word you need to remember. This is much more effective than merely repeating the word. Another method often used is Semantic mapping. Arrange the words into a diagram with the key word at the top and related words as branches linked to the key word and to each other. You can practice this technique in a group.



Evaluation of the Cooper Screening Tool

Practitioner perspective:

- The tool was easy to score and interpret, the results gave me a better understanding of learner needs
- It was not easy to administer with the learners due to the length
- I plan to use the whole tool as part of the initial assessment and may use parts of the tool for ongoing assessment (reading list, math skills and vocabulary)

Learners' perspective:

- Many of the questions were difficult to understand and the time to complete the screening tool was too long
- The results my instructor shared with me were easy to understand and they will help me understand how to learn better

Writing and reading samples: what they can tell us

Writing Samples

Involvement of the learner

Reviewing writing samples to help understand a learner's strengths and weaknesses and patterns of errors **must** be a joint process involving both the learner and practitioner. In addition, a number of writing samples in different contexts should be assessed to identify any patterns and consistency of strengths and weaknesses.

Stephen L. Isaacson in "*Simple Ways to Assess the Writing Skills of Students with Learning Disabilities*" (1996) states that having learners assess their own writing is important for two reasons:

1. Self-assessment allows learners an opportunity to observe and reflect on their own approach to writing, drawing attention to important steps that may be overlooked.

2. Self-assessment can follow learning strategy models such as using acronyms to remember the steps for organizing and editing (i.e. POWER; plan, organize, write, edit and revise & COPS; edit capitalization, overall organization, punctuation and spelling). This helps the learner to internalize the strategy, allowing opportunities for the learner to mentally rehearse the strategy steps for more effective writing.

Areas to explore: process and product

To make the most effective use of writing samples, both process and product should be assessed. How did the learner go about writing the sample (process) and what does the actual writing sample show us (product)? Involving the learner in the assessment process gives the opportunity for the learner and practitioner to discuss how the learner thinks through the act of writing and planning as well as organization and strategies to use.

The following are some **helpful interview questions** that have been taken from *Screening for Success* (2001) produced by the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada:

- When you are asked to write a paragraph on a topic of interest, how do you start?
- Now that you have some ideas on the topic, how do you know you have enough information? How do you know what to include and how do you arrange the ideas?
- What do you do once you have written and organized your sentences?
- Let's look over your writing sample; after reading it, what suggestions would you make?
- How did you know what changes to make?
- How do you know when you are finished?

Keep in mind, each learner's knowledge of the process will vary and will determine how many questions you can cover. By using the above inquiry questions you can gain a better understanding of the process or lack of process that the learner uses when composing a writing piece.

Together you want to determine:

- If the learner is able to balance the mechanics of the text with the meaning of the text
- If the learner understands the relevance and importance of the stages in the process of writing; in particular the planning, organizing and editing phases
- If the learner has or is aware of his or her use of strategies for monitoring the writing process

The actual writing sample should be assessed in the areas of content, conventions, syntax and vocabulary.

- **Content:** is there a beginning, middle and end, and is the content connected to the topic?
- **Conventions:** spelling, punctuation, grammar, use of capitals
- **Syntax:** sentence formats
- **Vocabulary:** is it written at the appropriate level? Is it varied and unique?

Indicators of potential learning disabilities

Overall you are observing for any discrepancy in skills and/or patterns of errors. For example, a person who has potential visual processing challenges may often show a difference between his/her oral and writing communication, with the former being stronger.

**What to look for in writing samples:**

- Letter reversals
- Spelling a word in several different ways on the same page
- Persistent problems with spelling, even with easy and common words
- Good days and bad days with spelling
- Difficulty getting ideas down on paper despite strong verbal communication and ability to spell
- Persistent problems with sentence structure (run on sentences and incomplete sentences), punctuation and/or organization of written work, not due to a lack of instruction or previous experiences
- Writes slowly, letter sizes vary, limited space between words
- Difficulty in seeing his/her own errors

Remember: you want to see a pattern of these errors inherent in several writing samples and make sure they are not a result of a lack of knowledge of general spelling rules

Possible reasons behind the spelling errors

The following list was taken from *Screening for Success* (2001) produced by the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada.

Auditory processing challenges

- Mispronunciations
- Omission of sounded letters
- Wrong, extra or missing syllables, prefixes or suffixes
- Inverted words

Visual memory challenges

- Reversals
- Omission of silent letters
- Phonetic substitutions
- Homonym confusions
- Errors may be related to lack of memory for spelling rules

Visual-spatial abilities

- Difficulty discriminating visually similar letters/words
- Difficulty discriminating correct spelling and misspellings
- Can spell orally but not in writing
- Poor letter formation
- Poor letter spacing
- Poor word spacing
- Slow speed of writing

Sample spelling list results

It is helpful to conduct an analysis of a learner's spelling to see if there is a consistent pattern in the types of errors. This helps the learner to become more conscious of the kinds of errors they tend to make and helps to focus energy on developing spelling strategies to help manage the difficulties.

Correct word	Learner' spelling	Analysis of errors
favorite	favorit	add letter
ride	rid	lack of silent "e"
book	bok	phonetic spelling
dinner	dinr	phonetic spelling

doctor	doktr	phonetic spelling
funny	funee	phonetic spelling
bed	bedt	add letter
company	cumpnee	missed syllable
rake	rak	lack of silent "e"
kite	kit	lack of silent "e"
forgetful	getfull	missed syllable & prefix

Writing sample

What did you do on the weekend?

Dave was asked to write a paragraph that described what he did on the weekend.

Remember to use a variety of writing samples to determine if there is a consistency in the learner's errors and strengths.

me and mi sun watcet fot boll supr boll on sunda on the wekend. he want to haf sno ball fihts. And we ~~go~~ wentd shoping instead. And he ~~astet~~ assted to rod his bik I sed no cuse ~~th~~ the sno plough dint cum yet so he got madt at me and I got mad to so he throu a sno ball at me and i lafted and he laufted to.

Discussion Question



Your turn to assess: Do you see any consistent patterns in errors?

Here is some initial analysis of Dave's writing sample:

- Improper use of capitals and punctuation
- Phonetic spelling only (i.e. sno instead of snow); but Dave is recognizing that words don't appear to be spelled correctly
- Inconsistent spelling of the common words (the, thu)
- Dave did search through to find the correct spelling when he thought a mistake was being made (i.e. the word "the")

- Inappropriate use of past, present and future tense (rode instead of ride)
- Adding an extra letter because he hears it (i.e. wentd, madt)
- The learner is using conjunction words such as “and” but needs help to use them appropriately to avoid run on sentences and inappropriate capitalization

What does this mean?

By reviewing writing samples we hope to determine two things:

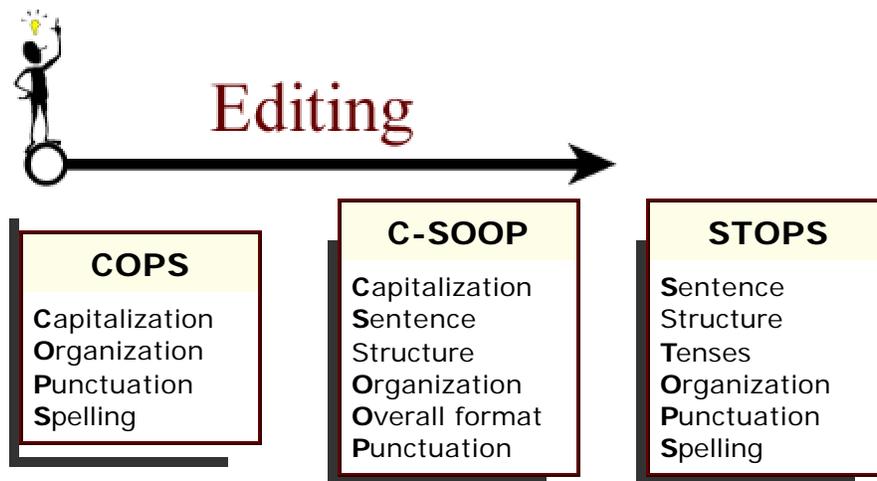
- Are errors consistent? This will help develop focus for instruction.
- Are the areas a result of a potential learning disability or a general lack of knowledge of the actual skill?

In order to effectively answer the two questions posed above, we need to review a variety of writing samples and integrate teaching of the related skills. If you find that after integrating the teaching strategies, Dave’s writing samples still exhibit some consistent errors, then it is more likely that a learning disability is present. The first step towards increasing Dave’s self-awareness of his writing difficulties and strengths has occurred through the practice of reviewing his various writing samples. Together, Dave and the practitioner need to begin exploring various teaching and learning strategies to help him manage his errors and improve his writing skills.

Possible strategies that may help Dave:

The following ideas were taken from “Strategies for the Reluctant Writer”

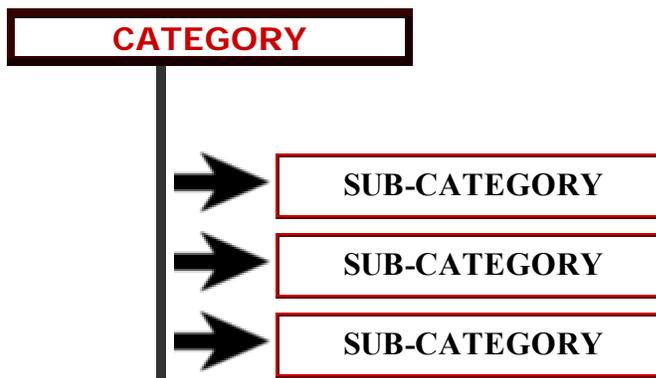
By Regina G. Richards, MA Educational Therapist, Riverside CA February 2002
http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/writing/reluctant_writer.html. **Remember** that at each level, learners need substantial explicit instruction and modeling, followed by a great deal of practice before the step will become automatic. For some students, it is helpful to divide the preplanning and organizing step into two different activities.



Use an acronym for remembering the writing process

- P** - plan the paper
- O** - organize the ideas and elaborations
- W** - write the draft
- E** - edit the draft and look for errors
- R** - revise the paper and enhance

Visual organizer for preplanning and organizing



Managing the writing process using a mapping process



Reading samples

For some adults, reading can sometimes be compared to experiencing a bad storm during a journey. Just like a bad storm can cause turbulence for airplanes, it can cause turbulence for the learner. To help ease his or her fears, explain to the learner that it is okay to make mistakes. In fact, observing what the learner does with the words that he or she does not know will help give a better understanding of the potential blocks to their reading success. Observing the errors will help us understand the reading challenges the learner faces.

Watch for frustration and try to reduce it by assuring the person that you need to observe the reading errors in order to understand the reading problem.

Observing reading

Together during your journey you are looking at the learner's:

- Speed

- Comprehension
- Vocabulary
- Word attack skills (decoding, predicting, blending and breaking words into components)

(You may want to review the reading checklist under Practitioner Observations on page 240/290 of this document.)

During casual conversation with the learner you may want to integrate the following questions developed by Dr. Cooper's Information Processing Screening Tool. The questions help to gain a better understanding of the learner's perspective and approach to his or her reading:

- ⇒ Do you have difficulty paraphrasing, or summarizing in your own words, what you read?
- ⇒ Do you find yourself reading whole pages without knowing what you read? Are you distracted by some of the words on the page (words move, certain fonts bother you)
- ⇒ Do you have difficulty identifying the main idea when you read?
- ⇒ Do you have difficulty finding details when you read?
- ⇒ Do you have difficulty going back and finding something that you read?
- ⇒ Are you easily distracted when you read?
- ⇒ Do you find reading textbooks difficult?
- ⇒ Do you find that there are many words you don't know the meaning of when you read?
- ⇒ Do you need to read things more than once?

If you find that the learner has responded "yes" to most of the questions you have discussed, then a potential learning disability may be present. At this point it would be advisable to encourage the learner to read a variety of reading samples so that you both can investigate further what specific challenges are impacting the learner.

Indicators of potential learning disabilities



As the learner reads a variety of materials, you may want to use this list to record your observations. Depending on the learner, you may want to record his or her reading and use the checklist together to record the indicators that are observed.

- Do they exhibit any pre-reading activities such as looking at the title, viewing pictures, and skimming the page?
- Is there any hesitation to begin?
- What is the level of comfort/frustration?
- Do they have difficulty tracking or do they use a pencil or finger to track (skip lines)?
- Do they ignore punctuation?
- Do they have poor word attack skills (sight vocabulary, decoding skills)?
- Do they often leave off endings or add endings, leave off or change prefixes (handling of endings, prefixes, suffixes)?
- How do they deal with syllabication (add or leave out syllables)?
- How do they deal with unknown words? Substitute? Skip them? Sound them out?
- Do they leave out or change words?
- Do they read for meaning? (i.e. if they substitute a word, does it make sense or does it look similar but have a different meaning?)
- Do they demonstrate self-correcting without prompting?⁴

⁴ Burrows, Iris, Scholten, Teeya & Theunissen, Denise (1992). *Asking the Right Questions; Assessment and Program Planning for Adults with Learning Disabilities*. Calgary, Alberta: The Learning Centre & Alberta Vocational College and Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (2001). *Screening for Success*.

Initial journey of discovery comes to an end



What did we see and learn during our journey?

Let us recap our journey:

- Both the learner and the practitioner have a better understanding of potential learning barriers.
- They both have a better understanding of the impact the identified learning barriers have on the learner's ability to learn.
- Together the practitioner and learner can develop a training plan based on the discoveries made during the journey. They can address the areas of need, build on the learner's strengths and implement existing or new learning/teaching strategies tailored to the individual learner.

Where do we go from here?



Together, we have gathered sufficient information on the learner's strengths and weaknesses. We have a good perspective on the potential barriers that can impinge on the learner's ability to learn. Based on our initial journey, we are ready to develop the learner's training plan. We recognize we will continue to venture on our journey of discovery as the learner progresses in his or her training.

Our new focus: Day trips

- During the training process, you will test any assumptions and identified needs. If barriers persist, it may require the learner and practitioner to venture on a day trip to gain a clearer understanding of the learning barriers and /or to discover new barriers.

Learners will bring a unique set of learning barriers; in particular, different types of cognitive processing barriers. They could have a number of combinations of cognitive processing challenges as visual, auditory, memory and/or organizational.

- Assessment is an ongoing process that ends when learners reach their goals. As the training progresses, together the learner and practitioner will go through a trial and error process as they try out new learning strategies.
- Each learner will determine which combination of teaching and learning strategies work best for him or her.

Summary of key points

- The main goal for the practitioner is to understand as much as possible about the learner's potential learning barriers and not to diagnose or label the learner with a learning disability.
- Through the journey of discovery, the initial hunches, clues and potential indicators are substantiated and expanded upon by using methods and tools that merge screening with more in-depth assessment. This in-depth approach helps both the learner and practitioner to verify the learning difficulties and discover why the barriers to learning remain.
- The merging of screening and assessment is facilitated through the use of observational screening, the review of numerous work samples and incorporation of more in-depth screening tools such as the Cooper Screening Tool.
- Observational screening can include a number of combinations of the following components:
 - Practitioner observations
 - Learner observations
 - Practitioner and learner conferences
 - Checklists (use as a guide for observing or verifying the observations)
- When a number of samples are reviewed under a variety of contexts, work samples can provide valuable insights into the adult's learning barriers and

strengths. When the process of reviewing a number of samples is followed, a greater confidence in the reliability of the strengths and barriers will result. In addition, a stronger pattern of errors will emerge.

- What are we looking for when we look at samples of work?
 - The “process”: how the learner approaches reading, writing and math tasks
 - The product: patterns of errors and strengths to build upon

- The journey should result in an understanding of the learner’s strengths and weaknesses that is sufficient to form a foundation for the training plan. By exploring the world of screening tools, the final destination: “the development of the training plan” can be reached. Although the initial journey draws to a close, the practitioner and learner will continue to take “day trips” to gain a better understanding of the types of teaching, learning and management strategies that best suit the learner. As the training plan is developed and the training progresses, the learner and practitioner will continue to venture down roads of discovery as they come across new or unidentified barriers, strengths and strategies.

Chapter Four Appendix A

Analyzing My Learning Strengths and Struggles

Strengths / Abilities

What am I good at doing?

Relating to people	Relating to animals
Organizing	Budgeting
Music	Reading and writing
Art / Drawing	Sports / gymnastics
Cooking	Math
Science / Nature	Understanding myself
Building or repairing things	Woodworking
Solving problems	Sewing / Crafts / Decorating
Teaching someone to do something	Using a computer
Dancing	Other ?

Health / Medical / Family Factors that might affect how I learn:

I have had

- Hearing problems / ear infections
- Vision problems
- Speech or language difficulties
- Allergies
- Coordinating problems
- Trouble sitting still or sticking to a task
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Drug or alcohol problems
- Other serious health problems _____
- Others in my family have difficulties reading or doing math

Vision / Hearing

- My eyes water and / or become red after a short time of work.
- My eyes get tired easily. I rub my eyes a lot.
- I put my head on the desk or table to read.
- When I read out loud, I skip or repeat words. I leave off endings.
- I lose my place when I read.
- I get headaches after just a short time reading.
- I squint and have to look up from the page often when I read.
- I close one eye when I read or write.
- People say I talk loudly.
- I have to ask people to repeat what they said.
- Sometimes I misunderstand or miss what people say.
- I turn one ear toward the person speaking so I hear better.

I also notice

This exercise is adapted by Margaret Lindop, the Center for Literacy Studies, The University of Tennessee, 1999, from *Screening for Adults with Learning Disabilities: the Role of the Practitioner in the Assessment Process*, National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities (ALLD) Center, Summer, 1998.

Reading

- ___ I read slowly.
- ___ When I read aloud, I skip words and/or re-read lines.
- ___ I substitute, leave out, add, or mix up letters or parts of words.
- ___ I lose my place on a page.
- ___ I avoid reading out loud if I can.
- ___ I read words or parts of words backwards, e.g., *was* for *saw*, *net* for *ten*.
- ___ When I read silently, I re-read or read very slowly.
- ___ I have a hard time “sounding out” words.
- ___ I guess a lot when I read.
- ___ I read in a kind of jerky, uneven way.
- ___ I find it hard to draw conclusions or “read between the lines.”

I also notice

This exercise is adapted by Margaret Lindop, the Center for Literacy Studies, The University of Tennessee, 1999, from *Screening for Adults with Learning Disabilities: the Role of the Practitioner in the Assessment Process*, National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities (ALLD) Center, Summer, 1998.

Writing and Spelling

___ I have problems with grammar.

___ I write numbers or letters backwards or upside down,
e.g., b for d, p for q, u for n, M for W.

___ I spell words different ways in the same piece of writing.

___ It's hard to spell because I can't remember how words look.

___ I spell words the way they sound.

___ Sometimes I remember to put a capital letter at the beginning of a sentence
and a period or question at the end. Sometimes I don't.

___ I reverse letters in spelling, e.g., Firday for Friday, gril for girl.

___ I write capital and lower case letters in the same word, e.g., SunDay, MoNey.

___ Handwriting is hard. When I'm writing, it's hard to make my letters all the
same size or control the way I write them.

___ I make a lot of mistakes with punctuation: periods, commas.

___ I whisper to myself when I write.

___ It's hard for me to organize my thoughts when I write.

___ It's hard for me to organize my thoughts enough to take notes when I'm
listening to a speaker.

I also notice

This exercise is adapted by Margaret Lindop, the Center for Literacy Studies, The University of Tennessee, 1999, from *Screening for Adults with Learning Disabilities: the Role of the Practitioner in the Assessment Process*, National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities (ALLD) Center, Summer, 1998.

Math

- ___ I have trouble remembering math facts and procedures.
- ___ I can remember math facts (adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing) one day, but I may not remember them the next day.
- ___ I find it hard to copy numbers and work with numbers in columns.
- ___ I get left and right mixed up.
- ___ When I'm working on a math problem, I can't remember which direction to go.
- ___ I confuse similar numbers, e.g., 6 and 9, 2 and 5,
or
I turn numbers around when I write them, e.g. 691-8512 for 961-8215
- ___ I read numbers backwards, e.g., 18 for 81, 21 for 12
- ___ It's hard to remember the steps in math problems: e.g., in renaming (carrying and borrowing) or in long division.

I also notice

This exercise is adapted by Margaret Lindop, the Center for Literacy Studies, The University of Tennessee, 1999, from *Screening for Adults with Learning Disabilities: the Role of the Practitioner in the Assessment Process*, National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities (ALLD) Center, Summer, 1998.

Other factors that can affect learning

Attention

- I have trouble concentrating / focusing.
- I'm easily distracted.
- I'm restless. It's hard to sit still.
- I'm impulsive. I don't think before I act or say something.

Organization

- I have trouble organizing my time.
- I have trouble organizing things, e.g., house / car / business papers.
- I have trouble judging how long it will take to do something.
- When I have many things to do, I have trouble deciding which is most important to do.

Social

- I tend to feel out of place in a group.
- It's hard for me to make friends.
- I often feel that I misunderstand other people's words or actions or that they misunderstand mine.

This exercise is adapted by Margaret Lindop, the Center for Literacy Studies, The University of Tennessee, 1999, from *Screening for Adults with Learning Disabilities: the Role of the Practitioner in the Assessment Process*, National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities (ALLD) Center, Summer, 1998.

General

___ **It's hard for me to judge distances.**

___ **I have trouble finishing a project or a program.**

___ **I find it hard to change from one activity to another.**

___ **I have problems remembering.**

___ **I have trouble with directions: right-left, east-west, north-south.**

___ **I find it hard to motivate myself.**

This exercise is adapted by Margaret Lindop, the Center for Literacy Studies, The University of Tennessee, 1999, from *Screening for Adults with Learning Disabilities: the Role of the Practitioner in the Assessment Process*, National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities (ALLD) Center, Summer, 1998.

Chapter Four Appendix B

With permission, the following three strategies were taken from *Improving Writing Skills for Individuals Who Learn Differently* by Richard Cooper, Ph.D.

Write Three Five-Word Sentences

This is a simple writing exercise which helps students in a number of ways. Writing three five-word sentences emphasizes the structure of language rather than imitating speech. It is a manageable and measurable task. Manageable because the sentences are small and the exercise can be modified for students with different levels of writing skills. The task is measurable because the number of words is easily counted. Students with low skills can be asked to write three sentences with at least five words. Pronouns are allowed. The sentences do not have to be related. A student with higher level writing skills is asked to write three sentences with exactly five words, including articles and without pronouns. Another level of difficulty is added when the person is asked to make the three, five word sentences related to one idea, making a small paragraph. Requiring no pronouns makes it more difficult.

These sentences can be used in the next exercise: expanding drafts.

Sample: Unrelated, at least five words with pronouns

The boy hit the ball.
He went to the store.
The girls played with their dolls.

Sample: three, five word sentences unrelated without pronouns

The cat eats the food.
The man went to work.
John saw a good movie.

Sample: Related, at least five words with pronouns

The man saw the dog.
It wagged its silky tail.
The man petted the dog.

Sample: Related, at least five words without pronouns

The bank approved the loan.
The carpenter constructed the house.
The new owners were happy.

Expanding Drafts

Expanding Drafts can be used by students at any level. For writers with low level skills, it can involve adding a few simple words while individuals with higher level skills can add many modifiers, phrases and clauses.

Many individuals with learning differences struggle with writing. Problems with handwriting are called dysgraphia, the inability to write legibly caused by fine motor control problems. This is different than the difficulty that many have with written expression. Of course individuals who have dysgraphia can and often do have difficulty with written expression. But there are many children and adults who have significant difficulty expressing their ideas in writing even when using a computer or word processor. Some individuals who have difficulty with written expression have good oral skills. They can speak well and express their thoughts clearly. However, they cannot express the same thoughts clearly when writing, and the sentence structure is often grammatically incorrect. Others who struggle with writing have problems expressing themselves with both oral and written language. The thoughts they express are disconnected, disorganized, unclear and often grammatically incorrect.

The people who have racing minds often find their thoughts race much faster than their hands are able to write them down. They often skip words and, sometimes, whole thoughts as they try to write. Their ideas often run together so the written product is disorganized.

Individuals who have good oral communication skills often find that they are unable to write well because they cannot use the same level of vocabulary or sentence structure as they do when they speak. Since spoken language is different from written language, those who can speak well, but not write well, avoid writing because it is frustrating and embarrassing. Those individuals who have difficulties with sequencing evidence sentence structure that is awkward and grammatically incorrect.

Individuals who have difficulty with written language need to practice writing skills. Free writing, just trying to express ideas in writing, can actually reinforce poor sentence structure and bad habits because the person often tries to write as he/she speaks. Expanded drafts is a technique which I have used with students and find helpful in developing writing skills. This technique emphasizes using written language rather than oral expression.

The technique of expanding drafts involves the writing of short simple sentences and expanding them with modifiers, phrases and clauses with each subsequent draft. This writing technique can be introduced to individuals with very weak writing skills by first working on single sentences before introducing the use of the technique for paragraphs. For example the student writes a simple sentence.

John walked home.

The student then rewrites the sentence adding an adverb to modify the verb, a prepositional phrase to add detail, and a possessive pronoun to modify the noun.

John walked slowly down the street to his home.

Next the student rewrites the sentence again, this time adding another adverb and adjectives to modify the nouns.

John walked slowly and cautiously down the dark street to his brightly lit home.

The person with very weak writing skills may need to practice writing single sentences for a while before moving on to writing paragraphs. Other students can begin this exercise by writing a few simple sentences about a topic. I use the following exercise to introduce expanding drafts to students who are working on improving writing paragraphs. Directions: write three sentences of five words each. Rewrite these sentences adding one adjective for each noun, one adverb for the verb and one prepositional phrase.

Joan saw a boy playing. She called to the boy. He walked over to her.

Here is an example of the first rewrite.

Joan saw a little boy playing quietly in the park. She softly called to the boy. He walked joyfully over to her.

The second rewrite adds other modifiers and clauses.

As she walked down the long tree-lined lane, Joan saw a little blond boy playing quietly in the city park. She softly called to the little boy who was deeply involved in his toys. When he saw her, the boy walked joyfully over to her and kissed her on her cheek.

The expanding draft exercise helps the person to organize their ideas, add details and keep sentences grammatically correct. This technique can be more than an exercise to improve writing skills, it can be used whenever a person needs to express thoughts in writing. A few small paragraphs can be expanded into a letter, an essay or any other writing assignment a person might have. Students attempting to pass the GED exam can use expanding drafts to keep their thoughts organized and grammatically correct. As individuals who use expanding drafts improve their writing skills, they may not need to begin with very simple sentences. Because of the practice they receive using this techniques as an exercise, they can rewrite adding details and descriptors to anything they write.

Word Part Exploration

Many students will need help with exploring how words are used. This exercise allows them to write using the structure of language rather than just writing one's ideas or thoughts.

Sense

<u>noun</u>	The professor made sense.
<u>adjective</u>	Mary is very sensitive to noise.
<u>adjective</u>	The fall knocked him senseless.
<u>noun</u>	What he said was pure nonsense.

Act

<u>verb</u>	Please act your age.
<u>noun</u>	The play has three acts.
<u>adjective</u>	The little boy is very active.
<u>noun</u>	The activity was planned weeks in advance.
<u>verb</u>	Press the button to activate the program.
<u>noun</u>	The reactor is about to blow.

verb He reacted differently than I expected.

For a complete copy of the manual **Improving Writing Skills for Individuals Who Learn Differently** Richard Cooper, Ph.D. 1999

Contact :

Learning disAbilities Resources

P.O. Box 716

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610-446-6126 Fax 610-446-6129 (\$16.95 US funds – includes cost of shipping)

Copying of the worksheets is permitted and encouraged.

Input from Online Delivery of Chapter Four



When screening and assessment merge!

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

At the beginning of the workshop, we talked about your experiences trying out the Delta Screener (presented in Chapter 3) in your program. The results definitely varied! Here's what you told us:

- It was easy to use and learner-friendly; the questions were gentle and not invasive. It gave me some great information.
- The learner seemed resentful the further we got into it; I don't think it gave truthful results.
- There were good questions but the overall level was too high for my group of learners. The questions about educational level focused on college and weren't relevant for my group. I would need to paraphrase / rework the tool to make it more useful for my program.
- Gave good insight into the learner's history.
- I used it in a small group setting. The learners were very keen although some found it difficult to complete. They found it helpful.
- It doesn't lend itself to learners with ID.
- It was a bit long; it would have better if we had administered it in chunks.
- It helped the learners understand things about their LD.
- It got the staff and volunteers talking more openly about LD.
- We're going to incorporate it into our intake form.



Activity 2

We looked at the Cooper Screening Tool (which you can find at <http://www.learningdifferences.com>) and asked you if you could think of a particular learner that you would use this tool with and why. Here's what you told us:

- I like the section on left/right discrimination
- The organizational section clarifies a lot for me.
- I would use it with someone who wants to further explore his/her LD
- I liked the self-awareness tool, especially for those learners who have been in the program for a while.
- Although the Cooper is longer than the Delta, learners who used it in one program preferred it because it was easier to understand. It also made them think about their learning, about what works and what doesn't. They didn't find it invasive.
- It could be useful as a teaching/learner tool as well as a screener.



Activity 3

After taking a look at the Cooper Screening Tool, we looked at the Adult Learning Disability Screening test. We asked if you could think of a particular learner that you would use this test with and why. Here's what you told us.

- It rules out hearing problems right away, which is great.
- It would be good with higher-level learners.
- The test is American and should be modified to be "more Canadian". It does have some rather invasive questions but this could be changed.
- It's well set up to administer orally.
- We already ask a lot of these questions at intake but the screener makes the process more formal.
- A good initial assessment tool that could be followed up by the Cooper or Delta.



Activity 4

Throughout this series of modules, it became apparent that the various screening tools ask very similar questions (because they are important questions to ask!). We asked you what you think should be the key questions to ask when screening for LD. Here's what you told us.

- How many schools did you attend?
- When did you go to school?
- What language did you speak at home?
- Did you like school? What did you like? What didn't you like?
- Is there a family history of LD or learning difficulties?
- Do you find it easier to express yourself verbally or in writing?
- What happens when you look at a page of print?
- Were you ever tested for LD or spend time with a special ed or remedial teacher?
- Have you had your vision and/or hearing tested?
- How many jobs have you had in the past year?
- Do you like to work in a quiet place or in groups?
- Do you read a lot? Do you like to read?
- Are you taking any medication that might impact your learning?



Activity 5

We provided a brief overview of how Literacy Link South Central carried out the research project and decided which screening tools to review.

We asked you to tell us which criteria are most important when choosing screening tools and why. Here's what you told us:

- Writing samples are helpful.
- They must be non-threatening.
- They must be simple and short – for both the learner and the practitioner.
- There must be clear indications of “next steps”.
- They should identify whether the potential learning disability is visual, auditory, organizational, etc.
- Knowing what the learner's goal is can be helpful when deciding what tool to use.
- They need to address the special needs of the learner (e.g. deaf community).
- They must be culturally appropriate (e.g. Native content)
- The organization should be able to provide strategies to respond to the disabilities they are trying to identify.



Activity 6

After looking at a writing sample, we asked you to share strategies that you have found effective in encouraging learners to self-assess. Here's what you told us.

- Have learners list the things they enjoy doing and are good at.
- Look into multiple intelligences and learning styles. True Colours is also good. Take a look at <http://www.cgcanada.com/cgcanada/truecolors.html>.
- Get some resources from the internet.
- Set up individual goal tracking sheets. Include information on what helped the learner achieve his/her goal.
- Work on building self-esteem and trust.
- Read aloud.
- Work on group skills.
- Provide editing checklists so that the learner can self-assess before handing in his/her work.
- Encourage learners to problem solve before going to the instructor.
- Model learning and coping strategies.
- Keep a file – every time you use a strategy, add it to the file!
- Refer to Literacy Link South Central's manual from the first phase of this project.
- Mel Levine has some good information; check out his website. Destination Literacy is another great resource.

Chapter Five

An Employment Tool

For learners who may have a learning disability

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“Learning disabilities do not preclude individuals from becoming successful, from being leaders in their organizations or, even better, in their fields. There are countless examples of adults with LD across the country who have made it in professions, in business and industry, in politics and the arts, and some who have become well-known entrepreneurs” (Gerber, et al., 1992; Reiff, et al., 1997).¹

¹ Retrieved from: http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/adult/characteristics.html Gerber, P. “Characteristics of Adults with LD”

As literacy practitioners, we are aware of the many lifelong obstacles that trouble individuals with learning disabilities. Although some people think that learning disabilities only affect individuals in an educational construct, we know how much it can impact work, friendship, learning, self-esteem and daily life. Employment problems can cause considerable stress for adults with learning disabilities. Some learners often reveal gruelling stories of chronic unemployment and especially underemployment. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of information available in order to help these learners because the problems these individuals have with employment are not widely publicized.

The following is a summary of research studies that have been administered with high school and college students with LD. They show the following:

- Many lacked clear understanding of their disability and its impact on career choices and ability to perform a job (Hitchings and Retish 2000).
- Restricted early opportunities, dependence on family, and experiences of academic failure may lead to low self-esteem and limited self-knowledge (Michaels 1997).
- Type and severity of disability, amount of time spent on remediation, parental overprotectiveness, and low expectations may limit opportunities for career exploration (Hitchings and Retish 2000).
- Adolescents with LD were more likely to limit their educational and occupational aspirations; aspirations for postsecondary education "did not necessarily translate into comparable occupational aspirations" (Rojewski 1996, p. 474).
- Many youth with LD had unrealistic career ambitions or no ambitions. Those with realistic ambitions seldom acquired the education or training that would prepare them for those jobs (Kortering and Braziel 2000).
- Not all who were eligible were involved in comprehensive transition planning in high school, sometimes because of the timing of onset or identification of their disability (Hitchings and Retish 2000).
- About one in three dropped out of high school, but those who took occupationally oriented courses were significantly less likely to drop out (Blackorby and Wagner 1997).
- A large number were not actively engaged in career development and believed they had little control over career decision making (ibid.)²

² Kerka, S. Learning Disabilities and Career Development. 2003.

So, you can see that individuals with learning disabilities are impacted greatly in their career aspirations before they even leave high school. This brings us to discuss the general barriers that individuals with learning disabilities face with employment.

Employment Barriers for Adults with Learning Disabilities

”The key to success is hard work. Tenacity is more valuable than knowledge and skills. The difference between success and failure is that when you fall down a million times you fail, and when you get up a million and one times, you succeed. All you need is one. (as cited in Reiff, Gerber, & Ginsberg, 1994 p. 33)”³

There are several barriers that adults with learning disabilities face surrounding employment issues. First and foremost is the fact that there is a definite lack of awareness by employers when it comes to learning disabilities. Many employers don’t even realize that learning disabilities impact a person beyond cognitive factors. Also, employees may display as being lazy, disorganized or incompetent to their employers. Often individuals with learning disabilities are not even aware of how their learning disability impacts them in the workplace and therefore are not able to explain their learning disability to employers.

One of the most prevalent barriers to employment for adults with learning disabilities are social skill deficits. In fact, some studies have shown that up to 70% of individuals with learning disabilities are at risk for exhibiting problems with social skills. Although, difficulty socializing and forming relationships, and depression are associated with those who have learning disabilities, these problems do not necessarily **always** coexist.

Some of the social skill deficits that affect adults with learning disabilities include; lack of judgment, deficient perception regarding the feelings of others, difficulty in making and keeping friends, difficulty with socializing and interpreting social cues, non-assertiveness, problematic family relationships and poor self concept. These social skill deficits may manifest in individuals in many different ways, however, the impact they

³ Reiff, Gerber, & Ginsberg, 1994 p. 33

have on employment is always significant. For instance, some individuals might have difficulty picking up the phone to inquire about a job, some may present themselves awkwardly in an interview and others may simply have difficulty getting along with co-workers on the job.

Among reasons for job termination, social skills problems rank second only to incompetence (White, 1992). Adults who struggle with social skills often have difficulty reading the nonverbal signals of others and adjusting their own body language. Nancie describes her difficulties with controlling her own voice tone:

“I don’t hear the tone of voice. I don’t hear it when it comes out - people have to tell me. I can recognize it in other people, but I can’t recognize it in my own tone of voice. Sometimes I think I’ve been screaming. I’ll say to somebody, “Was I kind of loud in that last section?” because I was really animated or something. I’ll make some kind of excuse and people will say, “No, I don’t think so at all,” but at that point it sounds like screaming in my head.”⁴

Regardless of how the social skill problems present themselves, they can have a significant impact on an individual’s career path.

Previous negative school experiences are another issue that can have an impact on a learners’ vocational career. Some individuals do not even consider certain career paths because of their negative school experiences. Just because an individual does not perform well in learning situations does not always determine their potential to have a successful career. While some individuals only focus on their academic problems, others do what they can to make it through high school and follow some sort of passion that leads them to a successful career. Individuals who focus on their academic problems may have limited career goals because they might not be able to recognize their strengths or be able to market their abilities.

Untapped potential can be another reason why individuals with learning disabilities struggle with employment issues. Many individuals with learning disabilities feel frustrated in jobs where they are underemployed and are not utilizing their potential. They are all too aware of the opportunities that are out there to become trained and skilled in various designations. However, because they don’t always perform well in

⁴ Roffman, Arlyn J. Meeting the Challenge of Learning Disabilities in Adulthood. 2000.

learning situations their potential often remains unrecognized and untapped. Many adults with LD feel misunderstood and unappreciated in the workplace.

Emotional overlay is something that many individuals with learning disabilities are plagued with throughout their lives. This is a result of years of frustration, chronic stress, loss of self-esteem and self-confidence, anger and isolation. Many individuals struggle to cope with these emotional problems and they find it difficult to focus on anything else.

Finally, discrimination is by far the most difficult of all the barriers that individuals with learning disabilities face when it comes to employment. The fallout of discrimination includes individuals being fired because of things that are a result of their learning disability eg. social skill deficits, consistent lateness or failure to follow instructions. Although the employer is not aware of it because they do not know about the person's learning disability, they are committing an act of discrimination by letting the person go. This is why learning disability awareness is so important for employers.

Summary

Individuals with learning disabilities are impacted in the workplace by many barriers. These barriers include lack of awareness by employers, social skill deficits, negative school experiences, untapped potential, emotional overlay and discrimination. Social skill deficits may include lack of judgement, deficient perception of other's feelings, difficulty maintaining friendships and challenges associated with socializing and interpreting social cues. Such deficits rank second only to incompetence among reasons for job termination. Although, lack of social skills can be a huge barrier for individuals with learning disabilities, discrimination is by far the most difficult barrier to overcome.

Specific Challenges Associated with Learning Disabilities in the Workplace

There are very specific challenges adults with learning disabilities face when it comes to employment. For instance, individuals who have auditory processing deficits find that the ability to remember more than one step of complex instructions is extremely difficult for them. Unfortunately, the subsequent lack of follow-through is often misinterpreted as

disinterest or laziness. According to Hoffman et al. 1987 “ ‘problems following directions’ is the number one problem identified by employers in getting and keeping a job.”⁵

Workers with auditory processing problems also have difficulty functioning in open, cubicle-like surroundings where noise is able to filter in from many directions. This can also happen in factories where loud machinery and conversations compete. These scenarios make it particularly challenging for individuals to focus and filter out background noises. During meetings, some adults find it difficult to focus on one key speaker, especially if other attendees are having side conversations, circulating or getting up to get coffee.

Individuals with visual processing deficits struggle in the workplace with specific challenges as well. For example, individuals with visual memory problems tend to forget where they have filed important memos and may not remember the face of a new customer they have recently met. Individuals with visual processing deficits often have difficulty with written language. This can impact them greatly in an employment setting because of the amount of text that they are often required to work with.

Individuals who have organizational processing deficits may have trouble prioritizing their work responsibilities. The job interview itself can be troublesome as they may be late, inappropriately dressed or unprepared. Organizational problems may manifest as inefficiency because the employee may have a disorganized or chaotic workspace. This type of disorganization can cause employees to misplace important documents, miss appointments or deadlines, and mismanage their time; co-workers or clientele may question their credibility. “Disorganization is linked to inaccuracy and inefficiency, causing workers to require longer periods of time to complete assigned tasks.”⁶

The most common of challenges that impact individuals in the workplace involve skill deficits in reading, writing and math. Reading impacts so many aspects of work. There are memos, notices, e-mails and many other ways that individuals with reading deficits are bombarded by print.

Writing is another skill that troubles individuals with skill deficits. In some cases, individuals are tested for certain skills during the application process. Writing deficits may severely limit an individual’s potential for job advancement.

⁵ Roffman, Arlyn J. Meeting the Challenge of Learning Disabilities in Adulthood. 2000.

⁶ Roffman, Arlyn J. Meeting the Challenge of Learning Disabilities in Adulthood. 2000.

Individuals who struggle with math and numbers may find jobs very difficult if they are required to handle cash or balance finances. Some individuals may transpose phone numbers, addresses or account numbers. Since math and numbers are a part of so many jobs from retail to truck driving, this type of processing disability can be particularly challenging for those in the workforce.

Individuals with learning disabilities can sometimes be easily distracted when completing various tasks. This can be very detrimental in the workplace because employment is usually “results driven”; an individual who is easily distracted by background noises, another task or room lighting may be seen as inefficient.

When adults with learning disabilities have a pattern of non-assertive behaviour, it may hinder success in the workplace at many points of getting and keeping a job. It may be difficult for them to articulate their strengths and “sell” their skills and abilities during a job interview. On the job, they may not come across as a team player because they are afraid to ask co-workers for help when they need it. They may also agree to do too many tasks within a certain timeframe.

The hallmark of learning disabilities is difficulty with processing information. Unfortunately, success in the workplace is often directly tied to the ability to take in all types of information and respond appropriately. According to researchers, employers cite “problems following directions” as the number one reason why they discharge an employee.

Summary

For an individual with visual, auditory or organizational processing deficits, there may be specific issues like the inability to filter out background noises or general issues like non-assertiveness. In the workplace, employers may misinterpret the individual’s actions and make assumptions about them as an employee; this could lead to the loss of employment.

Keys to Success

"Dyslexics are overrepresented in the top ranks of people who are unusually insightful, who bring a new perspective, who think out of the box,"

- Sally Shaywitz, author of *Overcoming Dyslexia*

There have been several research studies looking at keys to successful employment for individuals with learning disabilities. Many studies focused on individuals with learning disabilities who have had notable career success; the studies sought to identify the common factors that may have led to their success. Ginsberg, Gerber and Reiff in 1998 compared highly successful and moderately successful adults with LD with respect to income level, job classification, educational level, prominence in the field and job satisfaction. From this study, they developed a model for career success of individuals with disabilities. The main component of the model is the degree to which the individual is able to take control of their life.

"Taking control" has particular import for people with LD. First, the experience of growing up with LD often leads to a loss of control ... The autonomy of people with LD is undermined, especially as they find they have great difficulty with tasks that others take in stride... In the worst instances, people with LD may learn to be helpless. They feel that they do not control their own destinies; rather they are simply adrift." (Reiff 1998, p. 320)⁷

Retrieved from: <http://www.calpro-online.org/ERIC/docgen.asp?tbl=pab&ID=110>

The following is from the National Center for Learning Disabilities. Take note of the questionnaire that would be really effective to use with learners who are having difficulty identifying and understanding their strengths. The section following also helps learners determine their marketable skills.

Understanding Your Strengths

"I urge kids and young adults who have LD or AD/HD to view their struggles as an opportunity to learn about themselves. When being tested and

⁷ Kerka, Sandra. Learning Disabilities and Career Development. 2002.
An Employment Tool

evaluated for learning problems, it helps to view the process as a chance to learn about one’s strengths and weaknesses.”

Jonathan Mooney, Co-Author of “Learning Outside the Lines”

To succeed in the workplace in spite of having LD, it's important that you work at a job that is a good fit for you. You can determine if a job is a good fit by looking at the responsibilities of the job and making sure they match your strengths. For example, if you are good at working with people but not good at writing reports, you may enjoy being a tour guide, a physical therapist, or a receptionist. If you have artistic talents but have trouble counting money and making change, you might consider a career in graphic arts.

Over time, successful adults made three internal decisions that helped them take control, and they transformed these decisions into four behaviours or external manifestations. These seven factors comprise the model:

Internal Decisions

1. A powerful desire to succeed
2. A clear sense of goal orientation
3. Reframing of the LD experience: accepting the disability, understanding their strengths/weaknesses, and taking action toward goals

External Manifestations

1. Persistence
2. Goodness of fit—finding work that maximizes their strengths and minimizes weaknesses
3. Learned creativity—unique individual ways to accomplish tasks and compensatory strategies for weaknesses
4. A social network that provides support rather than encouraging dependence

Other essential factors include positive self-esteem, emotional intelligence, knowledge of one's civil rights regarding disability, awareness of accommodations, and skills for self-advocacy and disclosure. Several of these factors build upon the experience of disability and reinforce each other. For example, effective self-advocacy requires positive self-esteem. "Simply enduring in the face of the many obstacles that learning disabilities present may be a building block of emotional intelligence" (Reiff 1998, p. 323).⁸ These success factors and the career-related research cited in the previous section suggest practices that should be the focus of career development for persons with LD. Retrieved from: <http://www.calpro-online.org/ERIC/docgen.asp?tbl=pab&ID=110>

Strengths are based upon interests. Individuals will spend more time doing things that interest them, and, as a result will strengthen their skills in those areas. To gain a better understanding of strengths, one can think about things they enjoy doing. To help learners with learning disabilities get a better picture of their interests, practitioners can use the following questionnaire.

Interests & Strengths Questionnaire

My Interests & Strengths:

1. What did you do when you were young that was fun?
2. What do you do now that's fun for you?
3. What did you do when you were young that you were proud of?
4. What do you do now that you are proud of?
5. What did your parents and teachers always praise you for?
6. What do you do now that makes your family members and friends proud of you?
7. What are you good at now?
8. What have you achieved?

⁸ Reiff 1998, p. 323

9. What kinds of jobs have you had so far that you have enjoyed?
10. What volunteer work did you do that was successful?
11. What skills are you currently trying to develop?

After a learner has completed the questionnaire, they may want to show it to family members or friends who may be able to point out additional skills that the learner didn't include.

The following will help individuals determine their marketable skills. Similar to the interests and strengths questionnaire, this chart can be used with learners to help them better understand themselves and their strengths.

Determining Your Marketable Skills

Many of your strengths and abilities are "marketable." This means that they are of value to employers. Your marketable skills can be translated to specific jobs. Employers will want you to have both job-specific skills and general employability skills. Job-specific skills depend on the job. For example, carpentry, sewing, electrical wiring and bookkeeping are all job-specific skills. General skills include the ability to get along with others, be a team player, manage time, respect diversity, organize work and solve problems. The following is a sample of the marketable skills you may have to offer:

Marketable Skills Chart

When you do the following:	You build marketable skills in:
Participate in sports, clubs and other group activities	Leadership and team work
Participate in group presentations in class or at club or community meetings	Listening, organization, public speaking and processing information
Attend class, club, or community meetings on assignment; meet deadlines for turning in work	Time management, organization, follow-through, dependability and responsibility
Cooperate with others on team efforts and respect the different cultures and opinions of those with whom you work	Adaptability, flexibility, and teamwork
Write letters and reports; solve everyday problems at home, in school or at work	Critical thinking, writing and problem solving.

All of the above skills are valuable to employers, but these represent only a sample. There are many other marketable skills that learners may possess. They can complete the following chart to get a picture of the skills they have and would like to improve.

My Skills

1. Writing

Do well Don't have Need to improve

2. Public speaking

Do well Don't have Need to improve

3. Planning

Do well Don't have Need to improve

4. Computer skills

Do well Don't have Need to improve

5. Budgeting

Do well Don't have Need to improve

6. Managing people

Do well Don't have Need to improve

7. Organizing projects

Do well Don't have Need to improve

8. Researching

Do well Don't have Need to improve

9. Training others

Do well Don't have Need to improve

10. Decision-making

Do well Don't have Need to improve

11. Negotiating

Do well Don't have Need to improve

12. Problem-solving

Do well Don't have Need to improve

13. Leading

Do well Don't have Need to improve

Predictors of Success

The following information comes from a longitudinal study that Dr. Marshall Raskind of the Frostig Center called, "Patterns of Change and Predictors of Success in Individuals with LD." According to this study individuals with learning disabilities who found success possessed the following attributes:

- 1) Self-Awareness
- 2) Proactivity
- 3) Perseverance
- 4) Goal-setting
- 5) Presence and use of effective support systems
- 6) Emotional stability

1) **Self awareness**

The successful individuals often referred to themselves as "learning disabled." They were very open about their difficulties and described life events in terms of their LD. At the same time however, they were not overly defined by their difficulties. These individuals were able to "compartmentalize" their disability- seeing their difficulties as only one aspect of themselves. They also accepted their LD and utilized appropriate services to overcome difficulties whenever possible. Many of the "successfulls" also had a clear picture of their individual strengths and weaknesses, recognizing and accepting their talents along with their limitations.

2) **Proactivity**

Successful individuals with LD were actively engaged in the world around them. They tended to socialize, participate in community activities, and take an active role in their families, neighborhoods, and friendship groups. They believed they had the power to control their own destiny and affect the outcome of their lives. The ability to make decisions and act upon those decisions to control their lives was also evident. Furthermore, these individuals displayed an internal locus of control. After making decisions and acting upon them, they faced the consequences- taking responsibility for both positive and negative outcomes.

3) Perseverance

Successful individuals kept pursuing their goals despite adversity. They maintained the attitude that difficult situations were necessary learning experiences and that in the end, their struggles would help them improve their character, and ultimately, reach their goals. Many described themselves in perseverant terms such as "I am not a quitter," and "I never give up."

4) Goal setting

Adults in the successful group made reference to past and current goals in their lives. Many individuals indicated that goals had been identified early on, and that they had provided direction and meaning to their lives. They also showed evidence and awareness of the step-by-step process to reach their goals. Additionally, goals set by these individuals appeared realistic and attainable.

5) Presence and use of effective support systems

Persons in the successful group frequently spoke about the support, guidance, and encouragement they received from "significant others." These "others" included friends, mentors, teachers, therapists, co-workers, or family members. Individuals in this group actively sought support and were able to attract or draw support to them. Furthermore, they were willing to accept support when offered. In many instances, these individuals actively maintained contact with "significant others" over the course of their lives. Also of note is the finding that these "significant others" appeared to hold clear and realistic expectations for the individual.

6) Emotional stability

Successful participants did not often report being diagnosed with identifiable psychological difficulties. This is not to suggest that they had not been diagnosed, nor never experienced psychological distress, but rather that they appeared to have developed effective means of coping with stress, frustration, and ambiguity. Additionally,

individuals in this group were able to maintain a positive, optimistic, and hopeful outlook in the face of difficulties. They were also able to maintain positive peer relationships and draw upon social support systems in times of need.⁹

Summary

Many research studies have looked at the keys to successful employment for individuals with learning disabilities. According to the studies, factors that contribute to notable career success include persistence, goodness of fit, learned creativity and a strong social network. It's important for individuals with learning disabilities to understand that their strengths will most likely be based on their interests. Determining strengths will help them with career choices and can also help them identify marketable skills.

Good Employment “Fit” or “Match”

We may often we meet learners who come into our programs with very unrealistic goals, particularly around employment. They may seem adrift, moving from job to job and feeling reduced self-worth from losing multiple jobs or from not being hired for the job they want. For some learners there may be complex reasons for this pattern, but other learners may simply not realize their strengths or weaknesses. Some individuals find jobs but never seem to be happy in them. According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities, one can determine whether a job is a good fit by looking at the responsibilities of the job and ensuring that they match his or her strengths.

Dr. Paul Gerber is a specialist in the field of learning disabilities and has authored many books including *Learning Disabilities and Employment* and *Exceeding Expectations of Highly Successful Adults with Learning Disabilities*. One study analyzed the degree of vocational success in individuals with learning disabilities; they included income level, job classification, educational level, prominence in one's field, and job satisfaction.

From this study the following characteristics were considered precursors to success:

1) Desire

One of the requisite characteristics for success is desire. The reasons that the adults in the study had acquired such high levels of desire are varied. Many were plainly angry, often

⁹ Retrieved from: <http://www.schwablearning.org/articles.asp?r=742> Raskind, M. “Specific Success Attributes Among Individuals with Learning Disabilities” 2002.

at the school system, and set out to prove that they were capable people. Others, however, developed their desire from more positive experiences such as encountering success in a particular endeavor, receiving strong support from family or significant others, or realizing that basic academic survival simply requires more determination for a person with learning disabilities.

2) Goal Orientation

The successful adults in the study were extremely goal oriented and viewed having a focus or direction as crucial to their success. However, goals cannot be frivolous or fanciful; realistic aspirations must guide the decision-making. As with desire, goals become more apparent and attainable through experiences of success. When one achieves at a particular endeavor, one often begins to consider pursuing it. For persons with learning disabilities, that focus may also derive from a realization that many aspirations are not realistically attainable. Some adults even saw learning disabilities as playing a proactive role in the goal setting process. They didn't waste time aimlessly exploring a multitude of possibilities but concentrated on areas in which they were more likely to be successful.

Goal-oriented people must be willing to take risks. Achieving most goals usually requires venturing into uncharted territory, and sometimes new directions and strategies become necessary. Willingness to change and grow must accompany the decision to pursue a goal. Additionally, few people achieve their intentions without enduring setbacks along the way. Part of risk-taking involves coping with temporary failure and not losing sight of the goal.

3) Reframing

Perhaps the key component and certainly the most complex of the internal decision making lies in the process of reframing. In order to cope successfully with the demands of the adult world, all the subjects, to some degree, had reframed or reinterpreted the learning disabilities experience. In this process, they transitioned from focusing on disability to an emphasis on their abilities to confront and overcome challenges imposed by their learning styles. They moved from reacting to learning disabilities to a proactive stance where learning disabilities became merely one piece of the total picture of the self.

Four stages characterize the reframing process: recognition, acceptance, understanding, and formulating a plan of action. The first stage of dealing effectively with learning disabilities is to recognize that it exists. Recognition does not automatically lead to acceptance, but recognizing that one is different is a prerequisite for accepting that

condition. Once the individual accepts the fact of having a learning disability, an understanding of how to work with it can develop. This understanding encompasses realization that one has strengths as well as weaknesses, and that within this combination lies a uniqueness or a special gift. From this level of understanding emerge the special coping skills and strategies that individuals with learning disabilities find necessary to succeed. The last stage of reframing involves applying these decisions and knowledge to chart a course of action for coping with demands proactively. In reaching this point, the individual achieves a totality that supercedes the specific condition of having learning disabilities. The individual does not deny or run away from the learning disabilities but rather learns to take the disabilities into account without losing sight of a larger identity.

4) External manifestations

Decisions are essential for finding the path to success but are relatively meaningless unless complemented by action. The internal decisions made by successful adults with learning disabilities lay a foundation for adaptive behavior. These adults found ways to choose the best work environment by adapting themselves to the demands of the environment and adapting the environment to meet their own needs. Four specific behaviors underpin this adaptation.

5) Persistence

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the successful adults with learning disabilities was an unusually high level of persistence. The individuals in the study discovered that they would have to work longer and harder than others simply to keep pace. The unanticipated benefits came as they realized that the ability to work hard is not necessarily developed by most people. The idea of working hard and long was not something to be applied occasionally but was simply a way of life. Additionally, persistence was emblematic of a powerful resiliency, the ability to deal with failure by not giving up and trying again. One subject offered a theory of why persistence leads to success: "I want to work hard because most people in the world do not want to work at all."

6) Goodness of Fit

In order to be successful, the subjects chose work environments that allowed them to maximize their strengths and to compensate for their weaknesses. This match, or goodness of fit, between individual characteristics and job demands plays a significant role for any individual; it is absolutely essential for a person who deals with learning

problems that have the potential to undermine routine activities. People with learning disabilities need a highly developed sense of adaptability--their own and that of the workplace--in order to determine a true goodness of fit. In addition, goodness of fit relies on a subjective yet crucial quality, the enjoyment or enthusiasm found in the particular job or endeavor. For many subjects, strengths that became useful in particular endeavors had been previously labelled as weaknesses. The transformation occurred because of careful and fortuitous planning and decision-making. Without such forethought, disaster could have struck. In other interviews (Gerber & Reiff, 1991), adults who had experienced little vocational success demonstrated less concern with goodness of fit.

7) Learned Creativity

Successful adults with learning disabilities have learned and devised various strategies, techniques, and compensatory methods to enhance their ability to perform well. Learned creativity involves divergent approaches to problem solving. Because many individuals with learning disabilities have great difficulty meeting demands through "normal" methods, they invent new approaches that capitalize on their strengths and are not jeopardized by their weaknesses. Learned creativity takes on numerous manifestations. Some adults learned to manipulate events in order not to expose learning difficulties; others were forthright about having learning disabilities and learned to utilize devices and technological adaptations that allowed them to meet task demands. Many subjects found unique ways to study and prepare for demands at school. If the person was a poor reader, learned creativity did not negate the reading difficulty, but it did offer a way for the person to accomplish the same task as an able reader (e.g., taking courses with less reading demands; using books on tape; devising personalized "SQ3R" approaches; forming discussion groups with more able readers). Variations of learned creativity are boundless. The unifying concept of learned creativity assumes that persons with learning disabilities can learn specialized and individual methods for coping and succeeding with the very circumstances previously deemed overtaxing.

8) Social Ecologies

The final behavioural component of the success process highlights the tendency for successful adults with learning disabilities to seek and utilize assistance through supportive and helpful people. This network of support, or positive social ecologies,

comes in many forms encompassing parents, siblings, spouses, friends, mentors, colleagues, staff, and so on. Almost all the subjects cited the importance of having moral and psychological support in childhood. In adulthood, they sought help and guidance for specific situations, yet they resisted becoming overly dependent on their support systems. They knew what they could do and when not to call on help. They often developed interdependent relationships where they returned support by offering their own unique talents. They learned to accept help when it was necessary with the realization that a degree of dependency was essential to achieving maximum control and autonomy.

Self-designing apprenticeship types of programs, modeling careers on those of mentors, and consciously seeking others who could provide specific services to fill in the gaps created by learning disabilities represent diverse ways that subjects developed favourable social ecologies. In some cases, subjects had to negotiate for specific accommodations; in this instance, they exerted control over their psychosocial environment to enhance their adaptability. In other cases, they combined a measure of learned creativity to establish innovative types of support systems.¹

¹⁰ Retrieved from: <http://www.ahead.org/publications/JPED/jped10-1-b.html> Gerber, P., Ginsberg, R., Reiff, H. Learning to Achieve: Suggestions from Adults with Learning Disabilities

Examples of Goodness of Fit

Type of Learning Disability	Poor Fit	Good Fit
<p><i>Auditory Processing Deficit</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty processing information taken in through the ears • Understanding oral instructions • Differentiating similar sounds • Hearing one sound over a background noise 	<p><i>Auditory Processing Deficit</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anything where verbal information is relied upon • Job examples that might be a poor fit: call centre operator, telephone operator, dispatcher 	<p><i>Auditory Processing Deficit</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs where strengths can be utilized eg. visual ability • Job examples that might be a good fit: graphic artist, welder, tool & die maker, accounting clerk
<p><i>Visual Processing Deficit</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty receiving or processing accurate information from their sense of sight • Have difficulty picking out an object from a background of other objects • Problems seeing things in correct order 	<p><i>Visual Processing Deficit</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anything where lots of attention to visual information has to take place. eg. administrative assistant, shipper/receiver, technical writer 	<p><i>Visual Processing Deficit</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs where oral memory or verbal abilities might be strengths eg. public relations, child care worker, cook or chef, auto repair, welder, front desk clerk, recreational director, roofer, flight attendant, tour guide or personal support worker
<p><i>Organizational Processing Deficit</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty with time management • Problems with focussing (easily distracted) • Difficulty organizing tasks and activities or physical items eg. desk, space 	<p><i>Organizational Processing Deficit</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs that require a lot of organization and attention to detail eg. accounting clerk, dispatcher or teaching 	<p><i>Organizational Processing Deficit</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs where risk taking or employment that require creativity eg. sales, marketing or an artist

The following chart produced by the New York State Education Department gives some excellent strategies that can help individuals with learning disabilities achieve a good employment fit.

Good Employment Fit Chart

LD & Employment		
LD Behaviour	Vocational Impact	Compensations/ accommodations/ modifications/ strategies
Difficulty following through on instructions from others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty completing job applications • Miss job promotions • Loss of job • Low self-esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify learning/working styles • Provide instructions in preferred learning style mode (auditory/visual/tactile) • Provide feedback/supervision • Provide special assistive aids, accommodations, etc. prescribed to meet individualized needs
Difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty following multi-step instructions • Increased risk for accidents for certain jobs • Increased risk for mistakes on-the-job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break tasks into short segments • Gradually extend activities into longer units • Schedule breaks between tasks • Arrange environment to block visual/auditory distractions • Use earphones to block sound
Difficulty working independently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems in jobs where you need to be a self-starter (e.g., sales) • Problems in “helping” professions • Problems in jobs requiring travel from supervised work setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a structured and clearly defined task • Work close to peer or supervisor • Identify and practice preferred learning/work style

Takes longer to do job than others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules out production jobs • Rules out assembly jobs • Irritates other co-workers who work faster • Problems with jobs having deadlines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow extra lead time • Gradually decrease practice time while maintaining or increasing job demands • Use a timer to set pace and cue consumers
Has difficulty following oral instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to complete work assignments • Problems with attendance/punctuality • Aggravates supervisor • Safety may be a factor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a list of written instructions • Provide diagrammatic instructions • Provide hands on task demonstrations

Cognitive Challenge	Possible Intervention
Orientation	Keep a calendar for appointments, to-do lists, checklist, phone numbers, etc.
Attention/Concentration	Ask for clarification and step-by-step instructions when necessary. Present new information slowly.
Visual/Perceptual Process	Provide orientation to written documents or screens/fields on a computer screen.
Organization	Follow an established, set process, organized checklist or schedule for completing certain tasks. Do one thing at a time.
Memory	Use a tape recorder to remember information provided in presentations or meetings. Take notes. Summarize information. Organize notes.
Problem-Solving	Depending on the task, use a decision table or chart to solve recurring problems.
Self-Monitoring	Keep a schedule or checklist of work tasks necessary to complete. Check-off completed items.

The following are tips taken from interviews with hundreds of persons with learning disabilities who have been successful with employment.

Understand Your Learning Disability:

- know how to describe your LDs to teachers and to employers without relying on professional jargon
- determine how and when you learn most effectively
- identify accommodations that help you operate more efficiently at school and on the job
- learn about when, where, and how to seek appropriate support
- think about the strengths and assets you may have developed because of your LDs (perseverance, creative problem solving, determination)

Develop Helpful Life Skills:

- practise creative and assertive ways to advocate for yourself
- learn how to use computers and other helpful technological assists
- write down specific goals to help keep you on track
- develop the best time and stress management systems
- learn to accept constructive criticism and don't permit negative feedback to deter you
- remain flexible in exploring alternative learning strategies
- nurture relationships with friends, family, or professionals to exchange support, encouragement, and important feedback

Plan Your Career:

- don't let other people put a ceiling on your career goals
- learn about how your skills, interests, and personality relate to career options
- seek out opportunities for work shadowing, cooperative work terms, and volunteer experiences

¹¹ Retrieved from: Learning disabilities and vocational rehabilitation implications
<http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/publications/briefs/ld/home.html#Significance%20of%20Disability>
An Employment Tool

- participate in extracurricular activities and summer jobs that foster skills, confidence, career knowledge, and important contacts
- research appropriate career information to make informed and timely choices
- develop creative and effective job search skills
- be informed about employment equity and human rights legislation
- contact employment equity officers to discuss equity goals, policies, and procedures of specific companies

Remember:

- maintain optimism and hope
- work hard to achieve goals and persevere over obstacles
- don't be deterred if it takes longer to reach objectives
- many people don't understand learning differences and jump to the wrong conclusions
- people with LDs are entitled to educational and job equity¹²

Summary

Some individuals with learning disabilities can have very unrealistic goals about employment. This can impact a learner's self worth because it could cause them to go from one job to another without having much success. Goodness of fit is an extremely important part of the puzzle. It represents work environments that allow individuals with learning disabilities to maximize their strengths and compensate for their weaknesses. For example, an individual with an auditory processing deficit who has difficulty hearing distinctive sounds over background noises may be frustrated in a job that where verbal information is relied upon eg. a telephone operator, dispatcher. A better fit may be where the individual can rely on other strengths such as visual abilities eg. graphic artist, accountant.

¹² Retrieved from: http://www.ldao.on.ca/about_ld/adults/adtips.html

Advocacy

Barriers to Self-advocacy

Adults with learning disabilities may not self-advocate effectively for many reasons, including the following:

- They may lack knowledge of themselves as learners, and be unable to clearly describe their abilities, needs and the conditions that best promote their learning.
- They may not know who to contact to obtain the necessary assistance or accommodations, what to ask for or how to best utilize supports.
- They may lack the ability to articulate personal strengths and needs clearly and appropriately. This may be a result of expressive language difficulties, weak social skills or lack of practice in describing their needs.
- They may not have been directly taught appropriate self-advocacy skills and/or do not have someone to coach them through situations where they might need to self-advocate.
- They may have limited confidence in their abilities and low self-esteem. As a result, they may be reluctant to ask questions in class or request extra assistance.
- They are often passive in their approach to their education, feeling that their educational future is beyond their control. This includes relying on their parents and teachers to advocate for them.
- They often encounter people who do not understand learning disabilities and why accommodations or assistance may be appropriate.¹³

¹³ http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/k_12/specialneeds/unlocking/unlock_8.pdf

The following information is from the Aldercentre in Toronto and provides excellent ways that adults with learning disabilities can self advocate.

How to Effectively Self-Advocate

Adults with learning disabilities can learn how to self-advocate when curriculum shows how to: (a) make informed decisions; (b) set goals; (c) communicate interests, needs, and rights to achieve goals; (d) take responsibility for decisions and advocacy; (e) apply self advocacy information, skills, and strategies across a variety of situations; and (f) link with support resources or agencies in the community that will provide the adult with opportunities to develop self-advocacy skills over time.

To many people, literacy is more than being able to read. Being literate means being able to perform a variety of functions independently and to fully participate in and enjoy life. Teaching an adult to be a self-advocate involves a combination of strategies, social skills, and knowledge. Self-advocacy curricula should include the following characteristics.

Understanding of the Individual's Learning Disability

Adults need to know the characteristics of their learning disability and how these characteristics affect their learning. They should learn how to detect situations in which their learning disabilities may cause a learning or performance problem.

Learner's Legal Rights and Responsibilities

Adults should be fully informed of their rights under the law, the responsibilities of employers and agencies related to providing equal access to services for adults with learning disabilities, and the mechanisms that are in place to obtain these rights. Advocating for these rights should include instruction in self-understanding and self-assertion.

Social Skills for Seeking Help and Cooperation

Adults should be taught social skills for situations such as requesting the information they need about testing or other situations in which they may need accommodations. They also need to be taught the appropriate ways to share specific and relevant information with professionals and employers.

Ways to Request Accommodations

Learning about accommodations puts emphasis on discovering useful ways of coping with and getting around the functional limitations of an individual's learning skills.

Adults need to know:

- The types of accommodations that are appropriate for their specific disabilities
- How accommodations should be provided
- The conditions under which accommodations should be used and will be helpful
- How to request accommodations
- How to seek and use accommodations independently.

The challenge of requesting accommodations also may require instruction in specific social skills.

Emphasis on Meeting Individual Responsibilities

Self-advocacy involves accepting the responsibility for one's own success. Adults need to learn the actions necessary in specific situations to function independently and responsibly.

Appropriate Use of Self-Advocacy Curricula

Adults with learning disabilities often face situations or conditions in their lives that they feel helpless to improve. For example, they may not have been given equal access to a desired employment opportunity because reasonable accommodations were not provided. When conditions in an adult's life demand change, a self-advocacy curriculum should be considered. In most instances, this approach simply enhances other options selected.¹⁴

The following is a questionnaire that could be used with learners in order to determine if they have adequate self-advocacy skills.

¹⁴ Retrieved from: http://ldlink.coe.utk.edu/cur_self.html , National Institute for Literacy special collection Southern Lincs

Self-advocacy Questionnaire

Can you answer these questions?

- 1) What exactly is your LD?
- 2) What does LD mean?
- 3) Isn't LD the same as intellectual disability?
- 4) What kinds of modifications do you need in the workplace?
- 5) How can you be effective and efficient in the workplace?
- 6) Will your LD interfere with productivity?
- 7) When we train you, can you tell the trainers how you learn best?
- 8) Can you work well with people? Can you work in a team?
- 9) Can you be given the lead role in a work group?
- 10) Are you an organized person?
- 11) Can you do your work as well as a person who is non-disabled?¹⁵

¹⁵ Gerber, P. Network to Learning Conference (London, ON.) 2003.

Disclosure

Disclosure in the workplace is a very sensitive subject because many individuals who have learning disabilities are afraid to admit it to others because they are afraid of being stigmatized.

How to Disclose

If you decide to disclose your learning disability, be prepared to discuss the following:

- Your specific learning disability
- How your LD affects your performance
- The accommodations or modifications you need to be successful on the job
- Examples of successes you have had in the past when you have used these accommodations.

Be straightforward in your statements. Discuss your disability briefly and positively. A sample statement might be the following: "I have a learning disability that affects my ability to understand multi-step instructions that are given verbally. That means that I need your support, as my supervisor, to help me be a high-performance employee for (name of) Company. When you have instructions for me that involve several steps, please either write the instructions down, or permit me to either write them down or tape record them. In my last job, my supervisor always sent me email messages with her instructions, and it worked out fine. In fact, I received an outstanding evaluation in my last performance review."

At this point, you should be prepared to answer questions about learning disabilities. There is a common misunderstanding that learning disabilities are somehow related to intellectual disability (some may even still refer to it as "mental retardation"). Your responses about learning disabilities can help dispel that myth. You may wish to give the employer a simple fact sheet on learning disabilities.

After you have come to an agreement with your employer on your specific job accommodations, ask your employer to give you a memo or letter stating the specific accommodations that you are permitted to use. This is for your protection, should you ever need documentation that you requested and were granted permission to use specific

accommodations.

A word of caution: never use your learning disability as an excuse for failure in a job.

Individuals with learning disabilities should consider the advantages and disadvantages to disclosing their disability and when the right time to do it if they decide to go ahead with disclosure.

When to disclose?

Disclosure on a job application

Advantages: Peace of mind; allows the employer decide if the disability is an issue; easy to do

Disadvantages: You may be disqualified with no opportunity to present yourself or your qualifications; you will never know if screening took you out of the competition

Disclosure during an interview

Advantages: Peace of mind; can speak for yourself about your specific disability issues; discrimination is less likely to happen in a face-to-face situation

Disadvantages: Have to handle disability issues right up front; if there is too much emphasis on disability issue, it could indicate a possible problem; you may not be evaluated on abilities

Disclosure after the interview (when the job is offered and before you begin work)

Advantages: Peace of mind; if the disclosure information changes the hiring decision and you are sure that your disability will not interfere with your ability to perform the job, the Human Rights Code will apply

After you start work

Advantages: Opportunity to prove oneself on the job before the disclosure; allow you to respond to disability questions with peers at work; if disclosure affects employment status and the condition doesn't affect ability to perform job or job safety, you may be protected by law

Disadvantages: Nervousness on the job; employer may accuse you of falsifying your application; problems on the job may begin; could change interaction with other employees

After a problem on the job

Advantages: Opportunity to prove oneself on job before disclosure

Disadvantages: Employer may accuse you of falsifying your application; Can perpetuate disability myths and misunderstandings

Never

Advantages: Employer and coworkers will not automatically assume that any work performance issues are disability related; you will not be asked to explain your disability.

Disadvantages: If disability is discovered, you run the risk of being fired.

Summary

Self-advocacy is vitally important for individuals with learning disabilities. There are many barriers that could prevent effective self-advocating: poor self-awareness as a learner; not knowing who to contact to obtain necessary job accommodations; not being able to articulate personal strengths and needs.

We can teach self-advocacy by encouraging the learner to:

- Understand his/her specific learning disability
- Know their legal rights and responsibilities
- Use specific social skills
- Know a few ways to request accommodations
- Be clear about their individual responsibilities

Disclosure is also an important issue that impacts employment for individuals with learning disabilities. Learners can be taught how to disclose and the pros and cons of when to disclose.

Accommodations

Accommodations can be described in many ways. Some would say that accommodations give individuals with learning disabilities the opportunity to compete on a more level playing field with their non-disabled peers. According to the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada:

- An accommodation is a different way to do a task. It uses a learners' strengths to work around the learner's areas of need
- Accommodations allow a person to work better and more efficiently
- An accommodation can be as simple as using your fingers in math or, with the help of assistive technology, as complex as working a voice-activated computer that types what you say

In order to assist people with learning disabilities to reach their potential, there are two key requirements. These are:

1. **Help the learner acquire coping skills**

The learner must be aware of his/her strengths and weaknesses, individual learning style and level of ability in the best conditions.

2. **Determine the appropriate accommodations**

The best accommodations are those that are available, and those that match the learner's coping skills.

The issue of accommodation usually arises in two specific areas: educational settings and the workplace.

It is usually not too difficult to deal with the issue of accommodation if the concerns of the employer or educational institutions are identified. These concerns tend to focus in the following areas:

- Safety
- Cost
- Effects on co-workers or fellow students
- Industrial relations or union implications
- Impact upon the integrity of the institution

For example, in an educational setting, lowering the pass mark for a course by 10% clearly interferes with the integrity of the course. On the other hand, allowing the student

to tape lectures is a minor modification that is unlikely to be considered "unfair" by others.

It is often very helpful if the individual with a learning disability is able to identify the required accommodation and put it forward before any problems arise.

Factors to consider when requesting job accommodations:

- What are your job duties?
- Analyze the aspect of your disability that is causing the difficulty.
- What job tasks are difficult for you to perform?
- What is the layout of your workplace?
- Are there visual or auditory distractions that may affect your performance?
- What assistive devices could you use which would help you perform your job tasks?¹⁶

These accommodations could be used in an employment setting based on the particular deficits of some individuals with learning disabilities:

Deficits in Reading

- Recording for the Blind-books on tape (Persons with LD qualify for this service)
- Tape-recorded directives, messages, materials
Reading machines
- Screen reading software for computer use
- Colored transparencies or mylar sheets for reading and scanning
- Color-coded manuals, outlines, maps
- Scanners that allow the user to enter hard copies into the computer system

¹⁶ Retrieved from: Retrieved from: The Job Accommodation Network
<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/media/LD.html>

Deficits in Writing

- Personal computers/laptop computers
- Voice output software that highlights and reads (via a speech synthesizer) what has been keyed into the computer
- Voice input software that recognizes the user's voice and changes it to text on the computer screen.
- Locator dots for identification of letters/numbers on the keyboard
- Word processing software
- Spell checking software/electronic spell checkers
- Software with highlighting capabilities
- Grammar checking software
- Word prediction software
- Form producing software that computerizes order forms, claim forms, applications, credit histories, equation and formula fields.
- Carbonless note-taking systems

Deficits in Mathematics

- Fractional, decimal, statistical, scientific calculators
- Talking calculators
- Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) software for arithmetic/ mathematics
- Computer Assisted Design (CAD) software for architecture/engineering
- Large display screens for calculators, adding machines
- Colored transparencies or mylar sheets
- Color-coding for maintaining ledger columns

Deficits in Organizational Skills, Memory, and Time Management

- Day Planners
- Electronic organizers/schedulers
- Software organizers with/without highlighting capabilities
- LCD Watches, data bank watches, timers, counters, alarms
- Personal Information Managers (P.I.M.S.) (e.g. “palm pilot”)
- Electronic mail (E-mail) for memory deficits

Managing the Physical Environment

- Room enclosures/cubicles to reduce auditory and visual distractions
- Private office space
- Use of "white noise" by using a sound soother/environmental sound machine
- Use of colored files, folders
- Mapping the workspace/office

Accommodation Examples For Learning Disabilities

A **custodian** was assigned several duties and had trouble remembering. As an accommodation, she was assigned only one task at a time. She also had difficulty reading the job postings. As an accommodation, when a position was open, it was brought to her attention rather than relying on her to read the written job postings. These accommodations were no cost to the employer.

A **police officer** had a learning disability and was diagnosed with an expressive writing disorder. As an accommodation, the police officer was allowed extra time to take examinations. He was also provided with a dictionary to use while taking the examination. These accommodations were at no cost to the employer.

A **college student** with dyslexia, dyscalcula, and memory loss had difficulty reading textbooks and completing assignments. To accommodate him, a loaned computer with Arkenstone Reading software was provided to the student. This computer had voice output and scanned printed materials. The computer, software programs, and printer are available to use until the student completes schooling, then it must be returned. The cost of the accommodations was \$6,245.

A **saw operator** with a learning disability had difficulty measuring to the fraction of an inch. A small card that could fit into a wallet was developed with the fractions listed on an enlarged picture of an inch. The employee could then compare the fraction listed on the reference card with the location on the ruler to identify the correct fraction. The cost for this accommodation was \$5.

A **computer programmer** had a learning disability and deficiencies in reading, mathematics, and spelling. A schematic chart summarizing procedures was provided to assist the programmer with tasks. Also provided were tutorial readers and "talking back" tapes because the programmer was an "auditory learner" and had difficulty with visual discrimination. The cost of the accommodations was \$30.

A **clerk** with a learning disability maintained files and had difficulty categorizing and sorting paperwork. The office was rearranged to eliminate visual distractions. Task sequencing was used in the office. Also provided were reading templates, colored marker tabs, and incandescent lighting. Total cost for these accommodations was \$20 for the reading templates.

A **student** with a learning disability had difficulty taking notes. A tape recorder was provided during lectures, with the tape transcribed at home at the student's own pace. The cost of the accommodation was \$60 for the tape recorder.

A **clerk/receptionist** with a learning disability had difficulty typing from the printed original. To avoid skipping lines, an automatic "line guide" was provided. Total cost of the accommodation was \$256 for the copyholder/line guide, and also for a lamp and magnified cursor.

An **electronics repair student** with a learning disability had difficulty reading. A tape recorder was provided to the student for lectures. Books on tape were provided to the student, as was access/enrollment to a "survival reading skills" class offered at a local school. Total cost of the accommodations was \$127 for a hand-held cassette recorder.

A **typist** with dyslexia was transposing telephone numbers. The accommodation included verbal verification of the phone numbers and extra time to proofread letters. The accommodations were at minimal cost to the employer (staff time).

A **juvenile officer** with dyslexia had difficulty with follow-up casework. The employee was provided with a dictation machine, weekly meetings with supervisors, and casework forms. Total cost of the accommodations was \$200 for a dictation machine.

A **child-care assistant** with a learning disability had low reading skills. A video was provided to the employee to teach a children's story and the hand motions that accompanied the story. The employee viewed the video to prepare for lessons. Total cost of the accommodation was \$50 for the videotape.

A **clerk** needed extra reinforcement when answering the phone, distributing pamphlets, entering "leads" into the computer, and answering questions. A job coach was assigned for two weeks and was then utilized as needed for reinforcement. This accommodation was at no cost to the employer.

A **dishwasher** with a learning disability had many tasks to complete. Using a list of job duties, especially at closing time, with words and/or pictures, helped the person stay on task. The list also helped with organization and efficiency. There was no cost for this accommodation.

A **cutter** with a learning disability with a deficiency in mathematics and difficulties with sequencing was responsible for cutting parts from foam sheets. A pocket-sized card with mathematical calibrations was provided to the employee to help him cut the foam sheets. Total cost of the accommodation was \$25 for the pocket cards.

A **record maintenance clerk** with a learning disability and epilepsy was responsible for filing claims, searching for materials, and classifying material. The employee was provided a job trainer, and was re-trained on many aspects of the job. There was no cost to the employer for this accommodation.

Sample Accommodation Examples For Attention Deficit Disorder

A **journalist** with Attention Deficit Disorder was hyperactive and very sensitive to visual and/or auditory distractions. The employee was provided a cubicle to eliminate distractions. Flextime was also provided, as was additional time to prepare questions in advance. Ear plugs and the use of a tape recorder were also provided. There was no cost for these accommodations.

An **employee** with Attention Deficit Disorder and learning disabilities was provided with a personal computer, a personal information manager (P.I.M.), and an environmental sound machine with headphones. In addition, the employee used colored markers and orange sticky dots for color coding along with yellow mylar sheets for reading and scanning purposes. Cost for these accommodations was \$2,350.

An **attorney** with Attention Deficit Disorder provided himself with the following accommodations: exercising on a regular basis to alleviate some of his restless energy, using a software organizer and P.I.M., using colored folders and color-coding. In addition, he listened to music when agitated. He purchased a color monitor for his computer and chose a color palette on the screen that is personally effective. He used a word processing program that allowed him to work on more than one task at a time on his screen. Cost for the color monitor and software organizers was \$490.

A **school teacher** with Attention Deficit Disorder has accommodated himself by purchasing a computer for classroom use. He used a software scheduler/planner with a timer. He has made the software timer quite large on the screen and makes it flash. This alerts him to time changes during the class period. Finally, he used a large file box with colored file folders with written lists of things to do inside of each folder. He purchased a color monitor and used blues and greens on the monitor, which is effective for him. Total cost for these accommodations was \$2500.

A **manager** with Attention Deficit Disorder used a software scheduler/organizer and a dictation machine for letter writing. Total cost for these accommodations was \$230.

A **worker** with Attention Deficit Disorder who worked shift work received a modified work schedule and is now working day shifts with two days off in a row. This accommodation was at no cost to the employer.

A **landscaper** with ADD was having difficulty remembering the route, and the various obligations along it. He now uses a daily organizer with great success. This accommodation costs \$10 per year.

A **guidance counselor** in a high school with ADD was having difficulty concentrating due to the school noise. His school provided him with a phone light, sound proofing, and a floor fan for white noise. The accommodations were very successful and cost was under \$600.

A **technical analyst** with ADD was having difficulty keeping track of his various responsibilities. He started using a paper daily organizer. Total cost was under \$10.

A worker in **retail sales** with ADD was increasingly frustrated by day-to-day responsibilities on the floor. She broke her day into highly structured chunks. The cost was nothing.

An **account clerk** with ADD working at a bank was having difficulty concentrating on her work. Her office was soundproofed and she self-implemented an accommodation of a personal stereo with nature sounds as white noise. Accommodation cost was under \$1000.

A **marketing consultant** with ADD was having difficulty keeping track of all of her accounts. As an accommodation she self-implemented a variety of daily planners, including one in her date book, another on a digital watch and a third on her computer. She considered the accommodations very successful with a cost of under \$200.

Questions To Consider When Determining Accommodation Solutions

Issues Related to the Individual

1. What are the individual's job duties?
2. What job duties are problematic?
3. Exactly what does the person have trouble doing within the problematic area? (One must be very specific here.)
4. Examples of pinpointing:
 - spelling problems?--(this may be an indicator of LD) is it due to reversals?
 - visual or auditory deficits?
 - reading problems?--is it due to a visual or auditory discrimination difficulty?
 - memory deficits?--is this due to lack of attention, the inability to focus, or the inability to screen out extraneous stimuli, or short-term/long -term memory deficits?
5. What are the neurological deficits? (One may have to do some educated guessing here.)
6. How can the deficit be compensated? (This is where an accommodation(s) will be considered.)

Issues Related to the Workplace

1. What is the physical layout of the workplace?
2. What specific equipment is utilized in the work setting?
3. What kind of lighting is used and what is the noise level in the workplace?
4. Is the workplace visually distracting, auditorially distracting?

5. How can the physical environment of the workplace be changed so that the worker will be able to perform his/her job duties?
6. Can the job duties be restructured so that the worker can perform the duties that are easier for them?
7. What assistive devices could be used that will help the individual perform his/her job duties?¹⁷

Summary

Accommodations are important because they can give individuals with learning disabilities the opportunity to compete on a more level playing field with their non-disabled peers. However, when requesting job accommodations, there are certain factors that need to be considered including:

- specific job duties
- specific disability and area of difficulty
- specific tasks that are difficult to perform
- the layout of the workplace -- visual or auditory distractions

Resources for Practitioners

AlderCentre

The ALDERCentre is located in Toronto and offers assertiveness training through self-advocacy. Counsellors work with clients to develop competency statements that focus on individual strengths and weaknesses. Clients' understanding of how their learning disabilities affect them in the workplace and what tools are needed to assist them could lead to greater success in the mainstream workplace. If needed, a job coach can be arranged to act as a liaison between the client and the employer to arrange accommodations ranging from simple modifications (e.g., seating within the workplace, instruction on tape, typed assignments and time allocation to complete tasks) to more complex modifications such as adaptive devices like Dragon, WIN and Kurzweil.

¹⁷ Retrieved from: <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/media/LD.html> Job Accommodation Network
An Employment Tool

Destination Employment

This is a pre-employment program for learning disabled adults, initiated by our national office in Ottawa - the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada - and funded through the national component of the Opportunities Fund (OF), Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC).

This program is for: unemployed adults who are 18 or over who know or suspect they have a learning disability. The program includes a pre-assessment screening, followed by a complete formal assessment to determine strengths and weaknesses, individual and group work on communication, goal setting, learning preferences, problem areas, rewriting resumes, defining the type of work and environment most suitable to the individual's strengths and weaknesses, pursuing counselling, medication or medication changes, receiving and giving support, and self advocacy.

To find out about this program in your area please contact the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (<http://www.ldac-taac.ca/>)

The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (National Office)

323 Chapel St.

Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7Z2

Telephone:(613) 238-5721

Fax: (613) 235-5391

Email: information@ldac-taac.ca

Workink

<http://on.workink.com/default.asp>

Job Accommodation Service

<http://www.ccrw.org/en/mission.htm>

JAS can be used by anyone who wants general job accommodation advice, including:

- Employers
- People with disabilities
- Rehabilitation professionals
- Union representatives

- Educators
- Placement Specialists

Individuals can use their services when:

- An employee becomes disabled, or when someone with a disability is applying for a job.
- An employee encounters unforeseen difficulties on the job.
- An employee's work site changes.
- An employee is asked to take on new responsibilities or is promoted to a new job.
- You want to know that you are using the most current and effective job accommodation strategies.

Toll Free: 1-800-664-0925 ext. 224

Telephone: (416) 260-3060 ext. 224

Email: nfarah@ccrw.org

Great websites for Practitioners!

Georgian College – Getting & Keeping a Job

Check out this website which outlines some excellent employment strategies for adults with disabilities for getting and keeping employment. This presentation was facilitated by Stan Ryba and Jim Bryson of Georgian College's Centre for Access and Disability Services.

http://www.georcoll.on.ca/c4a/natcon_notes.htm

Profiles of Success

This website features profiles of adults with learning disabilities who are successful university graduates with learning disabilities (LDs) who were told that they didn't have the academic or career potential to obtain a technical, professional, or managerial career. Yet, all were able to overcome negative predictions to achieve academic and career success.

<http://www.yorku.ca/cdc/ldp/success/index.htm>

Interviews with adults who have learning disabilities about employment

The following website features interviews where individuals reveal their experiences in life and on the job, the decisions they made and why they made them.

<http://ld.org/newsltr/1002newsltr/1002real.cfm>

Mentor Program through York University

This website features a mentor program offered by the Learning Disabilities Program at York University. This program gives students and employers an opportunity to work together to develop the career goals of university students with learning disabilities.

<http://www.yorku.ca/cdc/ldp/careers/mentoring.htm>

Preparing adults with learning disabilities for post-secondary education

This website provides some great information about summer transition programs that are available to individuals with learning disabilities who would like to enter post-secondary programs. These programs are offered in the summer and help prepare incoming students with training in self-advocacy, adaptive technology, learning strategies and other important information that will help them transition into their program.

<http://www.ldrc.ca/projects/projects.php?id=51&>

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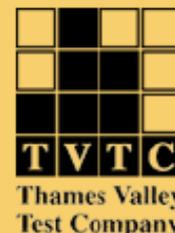
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