

LEARNING DISABILITIES



Commonly Asked Questions About Learning Disabilities

What is a Learning Disability?

A learning disability is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations.

The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia.

The term DOES NOT include persons who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

Joe Torgensen, Professor of Psychology at Florida State University, writes, “The core of learning disabilities is a biologically-based problem that occurs across cultural and socio-economic groups. If you’re an adult with a learning disability, you’ve had it your whole life. It has nothing to do with levels of general intelligence. It only affects a small group of things, but sometimes that range of things can be devastating, like reading problems.”

How may learning disabilities manifest themselves in the classroom?

Adults with learning disabilities may:

- have had restricted educational/training opportunities in the past
- have experienced limited vocation options
- feel isolated at work and in the community
- exhibit a poor self-concept
- experience an inferior quality of life
- be caught in a cycle of failure, lack of motivation, frustration and fear of risk-taking.

On the other hand, adults with learning disabilities may have:

- **Superior problem-solving skills.** Since successful adults with learning disabilities must often seek creative solutions that are “outside the box,” they develop skills to construct imaginative answers to difficult problems.
- **An out-going personality.** As a result of their history of failure, many adults with learning disabilities develop gregarious personalities to help hide their learning problems.
- **Strong compensatory skills.** Individuals with learning disabilities often compensate for literacy deficits by developing strong skills in other areas.
- **Empathy.** Because they can relate to the pain of failure, adults with learning disabilities can often provide strong emotional support to others going through crisis.
- **Persistence.** Persistence is the hallmark of many adults with learning disabilities who have refused to give up despite their difficulties and frustrations. If channeled appropriately, this experience can contribute to an active sense of dedication and purpose.

What makes adults with learning disabilities successful?

Research indicates that the factors that increase the likelihood of success focus on the following conditions:

- Being informed that they have the disability
- Accepting the disability
- Developing approaches to education and employment that acknowledge the disability and do not attempt to avoid the problems or label them as “learning differences ” or “learning difficulties ”
- Desire to succeed
- Goal orientation
- Reframing past learning disability experiences in more positive and productive manners

How do I decide if one of my students has a learning disability?

The National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center recommends that all adults who suspect they may have a learning disability should have an assessment by a qualified professional. An adult is assessed because of problems in employment, education and/or life situations. It is important for the adult to be fully involved in the assessment process.

The first stage of an evaluation is a screening. Screening tools use abbreviated, informal methods to determine if an individual is “at risk ” for a learning disability. When conducting the evaluation, a qualified professional may first refer to the results of the screening in order to plan which tests to administer. Teachers may screen their own students. A screening tool and instructions are included on pages 190-204 in this Resource Guide.

Teachers should consult their principals to locate professionals qualified to administer and interpret assessments for learning disabilities.

What should I know about assessment to share with my student?

Teachers of students waiting to be assessed may want to ask the professional the following questions about the process:

Have you tested many adults with learning disabilities?

How long will the assessment take?

What will the assessment cover?

Will there be a written and an oral report of the assessment?

Will the results help this student understand both why he/she is having trouble and give instruction on how to compensate for the disability?

Is there a fee? Who is responsible for paying the fee? (Student, insurance, county, etc.)

What should I look for before screening a student for learning needs?

Consult the “Characteristics of Adults with Learning Disabilities” that follows on page 183. It lists specific behaviors and attitudes in regards to reading, writing, listening, speaking, mathematics and thinking that suggest an adult student may have a learning disability.

How confidential is information about learning disabilities?

Disability-related information should be treated as medical information and held in strict confidence.

Disability-related information includes any documentation that a person with a disability must provide to establish the existence of a disability and needed accommodations.

Disability-related information should be collected and stored in locked files with limited access.

Such information should only be shared when the need to know directly relates to some specific aspect of this confidential information and the person with the disability has signed a statement of release for that specific request for information.

Learning Disability Terminology

Dyslexia – a language processing disability that is manifest through difficulty with reading, writing and spelling. For example, letters and words may be written backwards and words may be pronounced backwards.

Dyscalculia – a math skills disability that is manifest through difficulty with computation, remembering math facts and using concepts of time and money. For example, a student may have difficulty counting by 2s, 3s, or 4s or may not be able to tell if it is a.m. or p.m.

Dysgraphia – a written expression disability that is manifest in problem handwriting, incorrect spelling and disorganized composition. For example, a student may not be able to write standard letters or create transition ideas between ideas.

Dyspraxia – a fine motor skills disability that is manifest in difficulty with coordination and manual dexterity. For example, buttons, scissors or keyboards may be difficult for the student to use.

Auditory Processing Disorder – an interpreting auditory information disability that manifests itself in difficulty with language development and reading. For example, a student may have difficulty predicting how a sentence will end or interpreting connections in a speech.

Visual Processing Disorder – a visual interpretation disability that is manifest through difficulty with reading, writing and mathematics. For example, the student may have trouble distinguishing visually between “h” and “n” or may misread the symbols in mathematics.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder – a concentration and focusing disability that is manifest in over activity, distractibility and impulsivity. For example, a student will have difficulty sitting still and will want to begin another task before one is finished.

Source: National Center for Learning Disabilities online at http://www.ld.org/LDInfoZone/pdf/FactSheet_LD_Quick.pdf

Signs of Learning Disabilities

The National Center for Learning Disabilities recommends testing for a student showing some of the characteristics below. Remember that the testing should be done by a qualified professional trained in the assessment of learning disabilities.

Often spelling the same word differently in a single document

Reluctance to take on reading or writing tasks

Trouble with open-ended questions on tests

Weak memory skills

Difficulty in adapting skills from one setting to another

Slow work pace

Poor grasp of abstract concepts

Inattention to details or excessive focus on them

Frequent misreading of information

Trouble filling out applications or forms

Easily confused by instructions

Poor organizational skills

“Many people experience some of these signs from time to time and do not have learning disabilities. The time for concern is when a person repeatedly has these troubles that result in a negative effect on everyday life.”

Source: National Center for Learning Disabilities online at http://www.ld.org/livingwithld/doihaveld_home.cfm

Auditory Processing Disorders

Teenagers & Adults

Common difficulties:

- Talks louder than necessary
- Has trouble remembering a list or sequence
- Often needs words or sentences repeated
- Poor ability to memorize information learned by listening
- Interprets words too literally
- Hearing clearly in noisy environments.

Accommodation & modification strategies:

- Find or request a quiet work space away from others.
- Request written material when you attend oral presentations.
- Ask for directions to be given one at a time, as you go through each step.
- Take notes or use a tape recorder when getting any new information, even little things.

Source: National Center for Learning Disabilities online at http://www.ld.org/LDInfoZone/InfoZone_FactSheet_AuditoryPD.cfm

Visual Processing Disorders

Teenagers & Adults

Common difficulties:

- Accurately identifying information from pictures, charts, graphs, maps, etc.
- Organizing information from different sources into one cohesive document
- Finding specific information on a printed page (example: getting a number out of the phone book)
- Remembering directions to a location

Accommodation & modification strategies:

- Color code important information.
- Have a proof-reading buddy for all written materials.
- Use a tape recorder when getting important information.
- Before writing letters or essays, create an outline to simplify and organize ideas.

Source: National Center for Learning Disabilities online at http://nclld.org/LDInfoZone/InfoZone_FactSheet_VisualPD.cfm

Characteristics of Adults with Learning Disabilities

Reading Characteristics	What it Looks Like in an Adult
Does not read for pleasure.	Engages in leisure activities other than reading magazines or books; prefers more active pursuits. Doesn't read stories to his/her children.
Does not use reading to gather information.	Cannot easily use materials like newspapers and classified ads to obtain information.
Has problems identifying individual sounds in spoken words.	Does not attempt to sound out words in reading or does so incorrectly.
Often needs many repetitions to learn to recognize a new or unused word.	May encounter a newly learned word in a text and not recognize it when it appears later in that text.
Oral reading contains many errors, repetitions and pauses.	Reads slowly and laboriously, if attempts at all. May refuse to read orally.
Efforts in reading are so focused on word recognition that it detracts from reading comprehension.	Loses the meaning of text, but understands the same material when it is read aloud.
Has problems with comprehension that go beyond word recognition. May have limited language skills that affect comprehension.	Does not understand the text when it is read to him/her.
Has limited use of reading strategies. Is an inactive reader; not previewing text, monitoring comprehension or summarizing what is read.	When prompted to do so, does not describe strategies used to assist with decoding and comprehension of text.
Rarely practices reading, which may compound reading difficulties. Lacks complex language and word knowledge.	Recognizes and uses fewer words, expressions and sentence structures than peers.

Writing Characteristics	What it Looks Like in an Adult
Has difficulty communicating through writing.	Rarely writes letters or notes. Needs help completing forms such as job applications.
Written output is severely limited.	Struggles to produce a written product. Produces short sentences and text with limited vocabulary.
Writing is disorganized.	Omits critical parts or puts information in the wrong place. Writing lacks transition words.
Lacks a clear purpose for writing.	Does not communicate a clear message. Expresses thoughts that don't contribute to the main idea.
Does not use the appropriate text structures.	Uses sentences that contain errors in syntax or word choice. Fails to clearly indicate the referent of a pronoun.
Shows persistent problems in spelling.	Spells phonetically. Leaves out letters. Refrains from writing words that are difficult to spell.
Has difficulties with mechanics of written expression.	Omits or misuses sentence markers such as capitals and end punctuation, making it difficult for the reader to understand the text.
Handwriting is sloppy and difficult to read.	Has awkward writing grip or position. Letters, words and lines are misaligned or not spaced appropriately.
Demonstrates difficulties in revising.	Is reluctant to proofread or does not catch errors. Focuses primarily on the mechanics of writing, not on style and content.

Listening Characteristics	What it Looks Like in an Adult
Has problems perceiving slight distinctions in words.	Misunderstands a message with a word mistaken for a similar word. Might say, "Pick up the grass," instead of, "Pick up the glass."
Has a limited vocabulary.	Recognizes and uses fewer words than peers when engaged in conversation or when gathering information by listening.
Finds abstract words or concepts difficult to understand.	Requests repetitions or more concrete explanations of ideas. Frequently asks for examples.
Has difficulty with nonliteral or figurative language such as metaphors, idioms and sarcasm.	Does not understand jokes or comic strips.
Confuses the message in complex sentences.	Will eat lunch first if given the direction, "Eat lunch after you take this to the mail room."
Has difficulty with verbal memory.	Doesn't remember directions, phone numbers, jokes, stories, etc.
Has difficulty processing large amounts of spoken language.	Gets lost listening in classroom or large group presentations, complaining that people talk too fast.

Speaking Characteristics	What it Looks Like in an Adult
Mispronounces words.	Adds, substitutes or rearranges sounds in words, as in <i>phemomenon</i> for <i>phenomenon</i> or <i>Pacific</i> for <i>specific</i> .
Uses wrong word, usually with similar sounds.	Uses a similar-sounding word, like <i>generic</i> instead of <i>genetic</i> .
Confuses the morphology, or structure, of words.	Uses the wrong form of a word, such as calling the <i>Declaration of Independence</i> the <i>Declaring of Independence</i> .
Has a limited vocabulary.	Uses the same words over and over in giving information and explaining ideas. Has difficulty conveying ideas.
Makes grammatical errors.	Omits or uses grammatical markers incorrectly, such as tense, number, possession and negation.
Speaks with a limited repertoire of phrase and sentence structure.	Uses mostly simple sentence construction. Overuses <i>and</i> to connect thoughts.
Has difficulty organizing what to say.	Has problems giving directions or explaining a recipe; talks around the topic (circumlocutes), but doesn't get to point.
Has trouble maintaining a topic.	Interjects irrelevant information into story. Starts out discussing one thing and then goes off in another direction without making the connection.
Has difficulty with word retrieval.	Can't call forth a known word when it is needed and may use fillers, such as "ummm," and "You know." May substitute a word related in meaning or sound, as in <i>boat</i> for <i>submarine</i> or <i>selfish</i> for <i>bashful</i> . May use an "empty word," such as <i>stuff</i> . May describe rather than name, as in <i>a boat that goes underwater</i> .
Has trouble with the pragmatic or social use of language.	Does not follow rules of conversation like turn-taking. Does not switch styles of speaking when addressing different people.

Mathematics Characteristics	What it Looks Like in an Adult
Doesn't remember and/or retrieve math facts.	Uses a calculator or counts on fingers for answers to simple problems; <i>e.g.</i> , 2 X 5.
Doesn't use visual imagery effectively.	Can't do math in his/her head and writes down even simple problems. Has difficulty making change.
Has visual-spatial deficits.	Confuses math symbols. Misreads numbers. Doesn't interpret graphs or tables accurately. Has trouble maintaining a checkbook.
Becomes confused with math operations, especially multi-step processes.	Leaves out steps in math problem-solving or does them in the wrong order. Can't do long division except with a calculator. Has trouble budgeting.
Has difficulties in language processing that affect the ability to do math problem-solving.	Doesn't translate real-life problems into the appropriate mathematical processes. Avoids employment situations that involve this set of skills.

Thinking Characteristics	What it Looks Like in an Adult
Has problems with abstract reasoning.	Asks to see ideas on paper. Prefers hands-on ways of learning new ideas.
Shows marked rigidity in thinking.	Resists new ideas or ways of doing things and may have difficulty adjusting to changes on the job.
Thinking is random as opposed to orderly, either in logic or chronology.	May have good ideas that seem disjointed, unrelated or out of sequence.
Has difficulty synthesizing ideas.	Pays too much attention to detail and misses the big picture or idea when encountering specific situations at home or at work.
Makes impulsive decisions and judgments.	“Shoots from the hip” when arriving at conclusions or decisions. Doesn’t use a structured approach to weigh options.
Has difficulty generating strategies to acquire/use information and solve problems.	Approaches situations without a game plan, acting without a guiding set of principles.

“Other Difficulties” Characteristics	What it Looks Like in an Adult
Has problems with attention, which may be accompanied by hyperactivity, distractibility or passivity.	Doesn't focus on a task for an appropriate length of time. Can't seem to get things done. Does better with short tasks.
Displays poor organizational skills.	Doesn't know where to begin tasks or how to proceed. Doesn't work within time limits, failing to meet deadlines. Work space and personal space are messy.
Has eye-hand coordination problems. Demonstrates poor fine motor control, usually accompanied by poor handwriting.	Omits or substitutes elements when copying information from one place to another, as in invoices or schedules. Avoids jobs requiring manipulation of small items. Becomes frustrated when putting together toys for children.
Lacks social perception.	Stands too close to people when conversing. Doesn't perceive situations accurately. May laugh when something serious is happening or slap an unreceptive boss on the back in an attempt to be friendly.
Has problems establishing social relationships. Problems may be related to spoken language disorders.	Does not seem to know how to act and what to say to people in specific social situations and may withdraw from socializing.
Lacks “executive functions,” including self-motivation, self-reliance, self-advocacy and goal-setting.	Demonstrates over reliance on others for assistance or fails to ask for help when appropriate. Blames external factors on lack of success. Doesn't set personal goals and work deliberately to achieve them. Expresses helplessness.

Instructions for Assessing Learning Disabilities

Source: “The Assessment Process” from *Keys to Effective LD Teaching Practice*, published on the Center for Literacy Studies website at <http://cls.coe.utk.edu/>. The Center for Literacy Studies website is compiled and updated by the Center for Literacy Studies and The University of Tennessee, and is hosted by Southern LINCS with funding from the National Institute for Literacy LINCS project.

The following is a brief summary of “The Assessment Process.” For the complete text which includes numerous classroom examples, visit the text online at http://cls.coe.utk.edu/curriculum/keys_ld.html. The entire text of *Keys to Effective LD Teaching Practice* is available here as well for free downloading.

First, it is important to remember that **LD Diagnostic testing must be done by a licensed psychologist**; LD Screening can be done by the teacher. The tool provided in this Resource Guide is a *Screening* tool for teacher use and it will only tell you if your student needs to be referred for diagnosis of a learning disability. Testing by a licensed psychologist is required for all kinds of funding and academic support opportunities your student will need throughout his life. A teacher’s claim of LD supported only by a screening will not get the student access to any special support services in college, the armed services, or on the GED exam, etc. So please, use this screening tool to BEGIN the process of determining LD.

The screening process should include four components: Teacher Observation Screening; Learner Input; Teacher-Learner Conference; and Interpretation of Checklists.

1. Teacher Observation Screening

This observation is done over a period of several weeks. It involves the teacher making note of vision/hearing or auditory/visual process problems; academic performance in reading, writing and math; and behavior concerning attention, organization and social interactions. Ideas for what to observe may be garnered from the student self-assessment “Analyzing My Learning.” The Florida’s Bridges to Practice Web-based Training suggests the kinds of things to look for in adults with possible LD.

2. Learner Input

Adults know a lot about how they learn best and what stands in their way. “Analyzing My Learning: Strengths and Struggles” parallels the *Screening for Adults With Learning Disabilities* that teachers use to observe behavior. Students should answer these first-person questions about themselves.

3. Teacher-Learner Conference

This conference allows the teacher and student to compare notes. Possible questions include: “You checked (or wrote about) _____. Tell me more about that.” And “I noticed _____. Have you ever noticed that? What do you think about that?” Remember, this is

simply an information gathering discussion to get as complete a picture of this learner as possible.

4. Interpretation of Checklists

Health/Medical/Family Factors that Might Affect My Learning

Items checked in this area are not necessarily indicators of learning disabilities, nor do they rule them out. They do point to other possible reasons for struggles in learning that may need to be addressed. If no items are checked here and the student is struggling with learning, this lends weight to the possibility of a learning disability. Because learning disabilities are often genetic, a checkmark under the family factors section may be significant. If a student marks this one, ask her to tell you more. For example, “What kind of problems did your dad, brother, sister, mother have with reading, math, spelling?”

Vision/Hearing

Items noted in this section may be due to physical causes or they may be processing problems. Arrange hearing and vision screenings if at all possible. If physical problems are ruled out, problems in this area may indicate learning disabilities.

Reading, Writing and Spelling, and Math

Several check marks in any of these areas are red flags that indicate a possible learning disability. Pay particular attention if one or more areas received a number of check marks, while another area received none. This inconsistent picture is, itself, a red flag of possible LD.

Note regarding oral language: This particular screening checklist does not include oral language irregularities, but you may observe them. While many are simply learned language patterns, some may indicate learning disabilities. If you observe the following, please make a note on your check list as they *can* indicate learning disabilities:

Difficulty pronouncing multisyllabic words: leaving out a syllable, mixing up the order of syllables (e.g., vin-ge-nar for vinegar, cat-l-pal for capital).

Difficulty getting a thought into spoken language. Frustration and a few key phrases may be a tip off: “Oh, you know – I mean. – Oh, I can’t explain it!”

Note regarding students whose native language is not English: It is especially difficult to determine if an ESOL student also has learning disabilities. Consider discussing your screening with an ESOL specialist in order to determine if further testing is needed.

Other Factors that Can Affect Learning

As behaviors in attention, organization, or social interactions are observed over a period of time, you may see indicators of learning disabilities or related conditions. As a teacher, you are making observations that can support a referral for diagnostic evaluation. If an adult learner makes the decision to do that, this kind of documentation can provide helpful information. It also opens a discussion between you and your student about helpful and harmful behaviors.

Analyzing My Learning Strengths and Struggles

Strengths / Abilities

What am I good at doing or enjoy 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
 - _____ Coordination problems
 - _____ Trouble sitting still or sticking with 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 close to see print.

_____ I 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

Pages 2-7 were 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

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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. Fir day 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

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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 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

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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.

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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.

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LEARNING NEEDS SCREENING

INTERVIEWER NAME: _____

INTERVIEW DATE: _____

CLIENT NAME: _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____ GENDER: MALE FEMALE

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER _____

HOW MANY YEARS OF SCHOOL HAVE YOU HAD? _____

- CHECK ALL EARNED:
- HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA
 - GED
 - TECHNICAL/VOCATIONAL CERTIFICATE
 - AA DEGREE
 - OTHER (SPECIFY): _____

WHAT KIND OF JOB WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET? _____

DO YOU HAVE EXPERIENCE IN THIS AREA? YES NO

WHAT MAKES IT HARD FOR YOU TO GET OR KEEP THIS KIND OF JOB?

WHAT WOULD HELP? _____

BEFORE PROCEEDING TO THE QUESTIONS, READ THIS STATEMENT ALOUD TO THE CLIENT:

The following questions are about your school and life experiences.

We're trying to find out how it was for you (or your family members) when you were in school or how some of these issues might affect your life now. Your responses to these questions will help identify resources and services you might need to be successful securing employment.

See final page for directions and scoring.

The Learning Needs Screening is not a diagnostic tool and should not be used to determine the existence of a disability.

SECTION A _____

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Did you have any problems learning in middle/junior high school? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 2. Do any family members have learning problems? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 3. Do you have difficulty working with numbers in columns? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 4. Do you have trouble judging distances? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 5. Do you have problems working from a test booklet to an answer sheet? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |

Count the number of "Yeses" for Section A ____ x 1 =

SECTION B _____

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 6. Do you have difficulty or experience problems mixing arithmetic sign (+/x)? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 7. Did you have any problems learning in elementary school? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |

Count the number of "Yeses" for Section B ____ x 2 =

SECTION C _____

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 8. Do you have difficulty remembering how to spell simple words you know? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 9. Do you have difficulty filling out forms? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 10. Did you (do you) experience difficulty memorizing numbers? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |

Count the number of "Yeses" for Section C ____ x 3 =

SECTION D _____

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 11. Do you have trouble adding and subtracting small numbers in your head? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 12. Do you have difficulty or experience problems taking notes? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 13. Were you ever in a special program or given extra help in school? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO |

Count the number of "Yeses" for Section D ____ x 4 =

TOTAL YESES MULTIPLIED BY FACTOR INDICATED FOR SECTIONS A, B, C, D

--

See final page for directions and scoring.

The Learning Needs Screening is not a diagnostic tool and should not be used to determine the existence of a disability.

14. Check to see if the client has ever been diagnosed or told he/she has a learning disability. If so,

By whom?

When?

Notes: _____

LEARNING NEEDS SCREENING DIRECTIONS

1. Ask the client each question in each section (A, B, C, D) and question #14.
2. Record the client's responses, checking "Yes" or "No."
3. Count the number of "Yes" answers in each section.
4. Multiply the number of "Yes" responses in each section by the number shown in the section subtotal. For example, multiply the number of "Yeses" obtained in Section C by 3.
5. Record the number obtained for each section of the "=" sign in the section subtotal.
6. To obtain a Total, add the subtotals from sections A, B, C and D. If the Total from sections A, B, C and D is 12 or more, refer for further assessment.

Note: It is recommended interviewers ask an additional set of medical/health-based questions to gather more complete background information.

The Learning Needs Screening was developed for the Washington State Division of Employment and Social Services Learning Disabilities Initiative (November 1994 to June 1997) under contract with Nancie Payne, Senior Consultant, Payne & Associated, Olympia, Washington.

The Learning Needs Screening is not a diagnostic tool and should not be used to determine the existence of a disability.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS WHICH MAY BE ASKED:

GLASSES:

- Does the client need or wear glasses? YES NO
- Last examination was within two years? YES NO

HEARING:

- Does the client need or wear a hearing aid? YES NO

MEDICAL/PHYSICAL:

Has the client experienced any of the following:

- multiple, chronic ear infections YES NO
- multiple, chronic sinus problems YES NO
- serious accidents resulting in head trauma YES NO
- prolonged, high fevers YES NO
- diabetes YES NO
- severe allergies YES NO
- frequent headaches YES NO
- concussion or head injury YES NO
- convulsions or seizures YES NO
- long-term substance abuse problems YES NO
- serious health problems YES NO

Is the client taking any medications that would affect the way he/she is functioning? YES NO

If yes, what is the client taking? _____

How often? _____

Does the client need medical or follow-up services? YES NO

Referrals needed/made: _____

LEARNING NEEDS SCREENING CLIENT COPY

How many years or schooling have you had?

Check all earned:

- High School Diploma
- GED
- Technical/Vocational Certificate
- Other (specify): _____

What kind of job would you like to get? _____

Do you have any experience in this area? _____

What makes it hard for you to get or keep this kind of job? _____

What would help? _____

The following questions are about your school and life experiences.

We're trying to find out how it was for you (or your family members) when you were in school or how some of these issues might affect your life now. Your responses to these questions will help identify resources and services you might need to be successful securing employment.

1. Did you have any problems learning in middle school or junior high school?

2. Do any family members have learning problems?

3. Do you have difficulty working with numbers in columns?

4. Do you have trouble judging distances?

5. Do you have problems working from a test booklet to an answer sheet?

6. Do you have difficulty or experience problems mixing arithmetic signs (+/x)?

7. Did you have any problems learning in elementary school?

8. Do you have any difficulty remembering how to spell simple words you know?

9. Do you have difficulty filling out forms?

10. Did you (do you) experience difficulty memorizing numbers?

11. Do you have trouble adding and subtracting small numbers in your head?

12. Do you have difficulty or experience problems taking notes?

13. Were you ever in a special program or given extra help in school?

Teaching Suggestions for Adults with Suspected Learning Disabilities/Differences

Dr. Susan A. Vogel prepared the following list of pointers as a contribution to Literacy Volunteers of America's training guide for tutors

Some adults with severe learning disabilities (LD) or learning differences may need specialized and intensive instruction in order to learn how to read and write; but most will be able to make slow, steady progress. The following are some general teaching suggestions based on principles of learning. They are not unique to the field of learning disabilities. All learners will benefit when you use them, but especially adults with LD.

1. Break tasks down into a logical sequence of discrete steps.
2. Pre-test, teach, test, reteach, as needed, and review.
3. Provide multiple opportunities to respond, interact with the teacher and classmates, and participate. The more active the learner, the more learning is taking place.
4. Be sure mastery has been achieved before moving on to the next step in the sequence of learning tasks.
5. Provide frequent feedback that describes what was done well and how it might be improved.
6. Encourage students to tell you how they learn best, and use this information to design future lessons.
7. Use color, highlighter, enlargement of print, and underlining to strengthen the visual input and enhance visual memory.
8. De-emphasize oral reading as this may interfere with comprehension and also embarrass the student. Use oral reading only for select purposes and in private. When instruction takes place in small groups, call on students with LD only if they volunteer to participate. Preparing passages for oral reading in advance of the group instruction may help prevent failure and embarrassment. Choral reading may be helpful.
9. De-emphasize closely timed tests and tasks.
10. Slow down the rate of your speech (assuming it is usually rapid) emphasizing important points. Maintain eye contact in order to assess level of comprehension, encourage participation, give and get feedback, and maintain attention.
11. Maximize success and enhance self-esteem by providing opportunities for the student to be successful.

12. Encourage the use of compensatory strategies (e.g., tape recording sessions, directions, assignments, and discussions) as aids for those with memory deficits.
13. Teach word processing skills, use of spelling and grammar checkers, and other software.
14. Use multi-media approaches such as audio cassette with text or video tape to preview story line of novel to supplement information from print.
15. Teach memory enhancement strategies that will aid recall, such as listing, rewriting, categorizing, alphabetizing, visualizing, and use of associations and acronyms.

The specific strategies of choice should be individualized based on the individual's profile and the effectiveness of each strategy. This segment of the adult education population is one of the most challenging to work with, and you may also want to reach out for assistance and refer the adult with a suspected learning disability to specialists for a full assessment, career counseling, and further literacy training.

Published in the National Institute for Literacy Newsletter, Volume 3, Number 4, Spring 1996. Found online at <http://novel.nifl.gov/newsletters/nspr96.htm> and available through subscriptions.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

GENERAL TECHNIQUES

- Present information in small manageable steps
- Rephrase questions both during discussions and on exams
- Teach new materials in concrete ways (give examples)
- Teach organizational skills such as color coding and filing
- Relate new material to student's everyday life
- Discuss and study new vocabulary words before they appear in the instructional material
- Prepare handouts in typewritten form
- Provide frequent feedback
- Experiment with the use of large print
- Provide outlines for lessons on new material
- Prepare students for changes in routines
- Teach students to proofread for each other
- Make frequent eye contact
- Encourage student questions
- Structure activities
- Use graph paper to help with letter spacing in writing
- Set up instructional space away from distractions (away from the door, windows, or heating/air-conditioning units)
- Restate information on test questions in a variety of ways
- Use a sheet of colored transparency to change the contrast between ink and paper on duplicated materials

TO CAPITALIZE ON VISUAL STRENGTHS:

- Use graphics to reinforce learning
- In math, encourage the use of a number line
- Use color coding
- Write directions for assignments
- Use a highlighter to call attention to key words or phrases, especially during testing
- Teach the use of alternative notetaking systems such as outlining, graphing, flow-charting, and diagramming
- Form a mental picture of words or facts to be memorized

TO CAPITALIZE ON AUDITORY STRENGTHS:

- Use Books on Tape from Recordings for the Blind and/or Talking Books from state libraries for the blind
- Encourage students to read along with taped texts
- Use interactive activities during class time
- Use oral testing
- Use oral as well as written directions
- Let students read together aloud
- Ask students to repeat directions orally

- Have students read aloud or subvocalize (form the words without saying them out loud)
- Speak in even, measured tones
- Use music and rhythms to reinforce learning
- Encourage students to read first drafts of written work aloud
- Encourage students to tape “write” first drafts and/or tape test answers

TO CAPITALIZE ON KINESTHETIC (relating to movement) AND TACTILE (relating to touch) STRENGTHS:

- Use hands-on activities
- Use simulation and board games
- Pair students to work together on assignments
- Allow for frequent breaks from studying
- Change activities frequently
- Touch students on the arm or shoulder to re-focus attention
- Trace letters and words to learn spelling
- Use the computer (i.e., word processing spell checks)
- Memorize and drill for rote learning while walking or exercising
- Provide opportunities for touching and handling instructional materials (manipulatives)
- Use a calculator or abacus in math
- Use index cards rather than notebooks for notetaking

Source: “A Learning Disabilities Digest for Literacy Providers,” published by the Learning Disabilities Association of America.

Recommended Resources for Dealing with Learning Disabilities

Florida Bridges to Practice - www.floridatechnet.org/bridges

The National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center

Academy for Educational Development
1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009-1202
Phone: 202-884-8185; 800-953-2553
Fax: 202-884-8422
Info@nalldc.aed.org

National Institute for Literacy

1775 I Street, NW, Suite 730
Washington DC 20006-2401
Phone: 202-233-2025
Fax: 202-233-2050
NIFL Hotline: 800-228-8813
<http://www.nifl.gov>

National Center for Learning Disabilities

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

This site provides free information on LD and resources to parents, professionals and adults with LD in the community.

LD Online: Learning Disabilities Resources

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

This site includes weekly links to current articles about LD and monthly topics.

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) Hotline: 800-949-4232

Equal Employment Opportunity Administration: 800-669-3362

Job Accommodations Network (JAN): 800-562-7234 (TTY)

GED National 24-Hour Hotline: 800-626-9433

Provides information on local GED classes, testing services and accommodations for Learning Disabilities

National Library of Education: 800-424-1616