



Volume 1, Issue 1

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"One out of every ten Americans struggles everyday because he or she can't read. We now know many persons can't read because they have a learning disability. The only thing between them and the success they want is whether we're willing to change the ways we help them."

National Institute for Literacy

Practitioners' Points

Welcome to the first issue of Practitioners' Points, a newsletter designed to assist literacy providers in identifying, teaching and supporting adults with learning disabilities through the "Bridges to Practice" project.

Background of Project

In 1993, the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities (NALLD) Center received funding through the National Institute for Literacy to develop the Bridges to Practice series. This five-year effort consisted of a three-phase research and development plan to:

- 1) organize focus groups and evaluate current screening practices and instructional materials,
- 2) develop Bridges training program and guidebooks, and
- 3) review and continuously refine the guidebook materials to provide the most up-to-date resources. By utilizing research-based information, the NALLD Center envisioned making literacy programs more responsive to needs of adults with learning disabilities.



Florida's Focus on
Adults with Learning Disabilities

A Call to Action

The Bridges to Practice project will serve as a **call to action** to adult literacy programs to initiate reform so that adults with learning disabilities will experience greater success in meeting their educational and life goals. To accomplish this goal, nationally certified trainers will travel throughout the State of Florida addressing these key issues:

- ❖ Awareness on Adults with Learning Disabilities
- ❖ Screening and Diagnosis
- ❖ Service Delivery
- ❖ Legal Requirements
- ❖ Instructional Modifications
- ❖ Accommodations

"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."

Joe Torgensen, Professor of Psychology, Florida State University

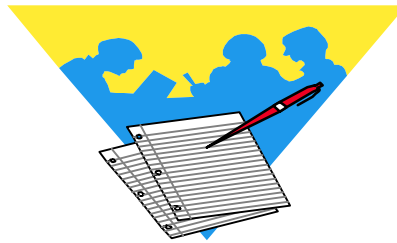
Did You Know?

Data from the National Adult Literacy Survey indicates that:

- 43% of Learning Disabled adults live at or below the poverty level as compared to 18% of the general population.
- 12.1% of Learning Disabled adults are on TANF (Welfare) as compared to 5.8% of the general population.
- 17.5% of Learning Disabled adults are entering post-secondary education as compared to 43% of the general population.
- 48% of Learning Disabled adults are out of the workforce or unemployed as compared to 26% of the general population.
- Less than 16% of adults with Learning Disabilities report receiving special services for learning disabilities.

The U.S. Department of Labor's report on "The Learning Disabled in Employment and Training Programs" indicates that:

- 50-80% of adults with low reading skills below 5-7th grade level probably have a learning disability.
- 15-23% of the total population in federally funded job training programs may have a learning disability.
- 25-40% of people on welfare may have learning disabilities, although they have never been identified or made aware of their problems.



Rights & Responsibilities of Adults with Learning Disabilities

- ◆**Right** to participate in educational programs without discrimination
- ◆**Right** to provide reasonable accommodations in courses and exams
- ◆**Responsibility** to identify themselves as having a disability and to request specific accommodations in a timely fashion
- ◆**Responsibility** to provide documentation concerning their disability and the need for specific accommodations

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.



(Material excerpted from *Interacting with People with Disabilities-An Etiquette Handbook*, Region VI Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program, P.O. Box 1358, Hot Springs AR 71902; and *University Services Guide*, Office for Campus Access, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR)

Rights & Responsibilities of Literacy Programs

- ◆**Responsibility** for ensuring that the courses and exams are accessible
- ◆**Responsibility** for providing reasonable accommodations in the delivery of course materials and in examinations
- ◆**Right** to identify and establish the abilities, skills and competencies in academic programs and evaluate performance on this basis

(Source: *Bridges to Practice*, Guidebook 1)



What are the Legal Issues for Serving Adults with Disabilities?

There are two major pieces of legislation that affect adults with disabilities in adult education centers.

- **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973** was the first civil rights legislation written to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities. This act guarantees that a person with a disability will not be discriminated against because of that disability in any program receiving federal funds.
- **The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** expands the scope of 504 and covers more programs and services, especially by including the private sector. This act concerns the availability of accommodations or auxiliary devices, as well as physical access to services.

What are Reasonable Accommodations?

Literacy providers must provide "reasonable accommodations" to qualified persons with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations, as described in *Bridges to Practice*, are accommodations that make the program accessible to the

individual with the disability. Accommodations must be afforded to a qualified person with a disability unless the service provider can demonstrate that the accommodation would impose undue hardship on the literacy program or substantially alter the nature of the program. It may mean using different learning materials, such as books on tape, large-print materials, specific testing modifications and special services such as sign language interpreters or note-takers.

RESOURCES

TOLL-FREE NUMBERS



TO CALL

- **Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Hotline** **with Act**
800-949-4232
- **Equal Employment Opportunity Administration**
800-669-3362
- **Social Security Administration**
800-772-1213
- **Job Accommodations Network (JAN)**
800-526-7234 (TTY)
<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/>
- **GED National 24-Hour Hotline providing information on local GED classes, testing services and accommodations for Learning Disabilities.**
800-626-9433
- **National Library of Education**
800-424-1616
- **ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocational Education**
800-848-4815
<http://ericacve.org>

WEBLIOGRAPHY

Alliance for Technology Access

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

This site provides a network of forty-two nationwide community-based resource centers and information on assistive devices and vendors.

National Center for Learning Disabilities

<http://www.ncld.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.

Needs Assessment

Florida's Bridges to Practice was introduced at the ACE of Florida conference held in Miami in late September. Many participants had the opportunity to complete the Needs Assessment that will provide valuable feedback to our trainers when planning regional workshops to meet practitioners' needs. If you haven't already done so, please complete the enclosed Needs Assessment and return to *Rochelle Kenyon, 690 NE 30 Place, Boca Raton, FL 33431*

Bridges to Practice Training Dates

November 15-17, 2000
Southeastern Literacy Conference, Hampton Inn, Pensacola Beach, Florida
For more information contact Dr. Tom Rezek at (850) 469-5516

GUEST COLUMNIST
Veronica Sehrt
Leon County Schools



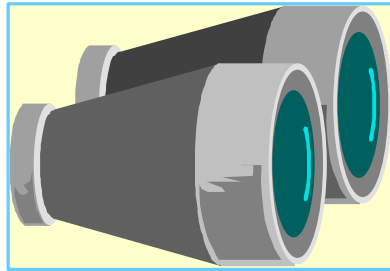
**Bridges to
Practice**

**Train the
Trainer Workshop**

In May 1999, Rochelle Kenyon from Broward County and I were invited by Leatrice Williams, Program Director, Division of Workforce Development, Department of Education, to accompany her and represent Florida at the Learning Disabilities Training and Dissemination Southern States Train-the-Trainer Workshop in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

This five-day workshop included a cross-section of professionals from thirteen southern states including administrators and teachers, rehabilitation counselors, adult education university staff, Department of Education administrators and their staff, literacy organizations, as well as human service agencies. The trainers for the sessions were exceptionally talented individuals who provided participants with five intensive days and nights of training.

We look forward to bringing *Bridges to Practice* to literacy providers throughout Florida. We welcome your participation and interest.



View from the Bridge

By Meryl Eisenberg, Editor

I am thrilled to be part of Bridges to Practice. As an educator in the field of adults with disabilities, I have always advocated for the needs of the disabled and vigorously worked with my peers to ensure that our students would receive appropriate instruction and services.

We have known that there is a high incidence of individuals with learning disabilities in our Adult General Education classrooms. Many have gone unidentified or have self-identified and left school because the programs they attended were not responsive to their needs. Adults with learning disabilities have few allies to support them. Literacy practitioners are among the professionals they can turn to for help. Our ability to interact can affect their ability to learn, their self-perception, hopes, fears and accomplishments. We must accept this "call to action" to make program changes that will help adults with learning disabilities reach their potential and lead more fulfilling and self-sufficient lives. We can make a difference!

Practitioners' Points

Using Feedback with Adults with Learning Disabilities

Research clearly shows that feedback, used effectively, is a powerful educational tool. Adrienne Riviere, in the NAALD Center's Summer 1997 issue of *Linkages*, defines feedback as "the mechanism through which the instructor relates to the learner how things are going in the learning process." She emphasizes two types: (1) knowledge of results feedback or (2) elaborated feedback. Simply knowing which items are correct, which items are incorrect and which items the learner is expected to redo, without elaboration, is not sufficient information to result in learner improvement.

Riviere cites ten principles for effective feedback. They are: 1) Establish clear criteria, 2) Compare students' responses to the criteria, 3) Use frequent feedback, 4) Provide immediate feedback, 5) Provide individual feedback, 6) Help students feel that they are in control of success, 7) Strive for self-evaluation and self-correction, 8) Provide positive feedback, 9) Provide specific feedback and correction and 10) Establish goals for improvement.

Next Issue will Include

Characteristics Associated with Learning Disabilities

On the Horizon

Florida Bridges Website will provide access to future issues of Practitioners' Points

Future Training Dates: TBA

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