

**NEW!**  
**ESOL & LD**



**Accommodations Naturally Occur  
In the ESOL Classroom**

**By Dr. Maria Koonce  
Curriculum Facilitator  
Broward County Public Schools**

By definition, a learning disability refers to a person's difficulties in the acquisition of one or more of the following skills: listening comprehension, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or performing mathematical operations. The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program, by definition, serves students who are limited in the four language skills in English. If such students show an unexplained delay in progressing at a "normal" pace, it may be suspected that their non-English proficiency could be compounded by LD. With the growing diversity of languages and cultures represented in our schools, the ability to diagnosis learning disabilities in our K-12 students for the purpose of obtaining accommodations and services, as prescribed through Federal law, becomes a daunting challenge. That challenge is even stronger for adult students. Few instruments exist that have been validated for adults, much less instruments validated in the many languages of our student population.

In April 2000, a conference was held in San Antonio, TX to address the issues of identifying LD among ESOL adults. The report entitled, "Learning Disabilities and Spanish-Speaking Adult Populations, The Beginning of a Process," is indeed the beginning of a very complex process. The US Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) and the Division of Adult Education Literacy (DAEL) agreed to begin studying the protocols for Spanish-speaking populations. Hispanics are the largest group of limited English adults in ESOL programs, and there is some work in this area from which to build.

Some recommendations generated from this meeting include:

- 1) An initial assessment of language ability normed on Spanish-speaking adults, called the Woodcock Munoz Language Survey of the Woodcock Language Proficiency Test,
- 2) A highly recommended screening called Neuropsi developed in Mexico,
- 3) A key diagnostic test, the only one available in Spanish, called the Woodcock Munoz Psycho-Educational Battery,

4) A full-scale IQ test must be administered in order to meet the requirements for accommodations on the General Education Diploma (GED), and

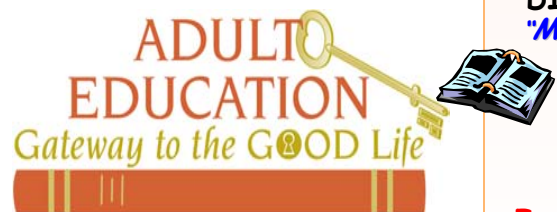
5) A bilingual and bicultural diagnostician, preferably someone from the same country of origin as the student to be responsible for the assessment.

The estimated time for this process was calculated to be between eleven and eighteen hours, and the cost somewhere between \$600-\$900. The difficulty in staffing "ideal assessors" was also noted.

In light of this, program managers should carefully consider the needs and reality of the individual student. Just as with children, there could be a stigma attached to being labeled learning disabled. What exactly is there to be accomplished by such a lengthy and costly assessment, if at all available? The availability of instruments even for Spanish speakers is extremely limited, and the diversity of cultures among Hispanics is another unresolved issue as it might relate to bias. Finally, instruments for speakers of other languages have not yet been investigated.

Adult ESOL learners take placement tests using approved instruments. Interviews and surveys are conducted regularly in the intake process to identify the educational background and individual needs of the learner. Reasons for slow progress include the pressure of adjustment, caring for family members; immediate survival needs that cause poor attendance and lack of opportunity for practice.

A multi-sensory approach to teaching ESOL includes using visuals, games, graphic organizers, maintaining a slow pace, repetition, rhythmical use of language, varied kinesthetic activities, project-based learning and achieving consistency in the classroom structure. *These accommodations that naturally occur in the Adult ESOL classroom would be beneficial for the LD learner.*



This newsletter was developed through an Adult Education State Leadership Grant from the Florida Department of Education, Division of Workforce Development.

**VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE**

**By Meryl Eisenberg, Editor**

In the previous article, Dr. Maria Koonce points out that many of the techniques used for ESOL populations are effective methods for teaching adults with LD. Well, this may be true to a large extent, but the bigger issue when it comes to LD, is if teaching is the answer, part of the answer or a very limited part of the answer. Since the difference between those with LD and those who are not reading due to lack of access, previous training or whatever, is that those with LD are not reading or reading well, due to a disability issue - as the definition states - a presumed disorder of the central nervous system. Depending on the severity of the disability, despite teaching, even teaching with the right approaches, persons with LD may not learn to read or read well - that is the manifestation of the learning disability. "Perhaps, the real issue is how do we work with persons with LD, in light of the disability, so that they can gain and use information to be functional?"

The use of accommodations - books on tape, oral instruction, reading machines etc, becomes the best means of gaining information, rather than relying on reading alone. Disability agencies, such as Vocational Rehabilitation, must be partners to help a person become functional. "The role of adult literacy programs for persons with LD is not really one of teaching reading alone - but of taking the lead in a partnership to help the person with LD gain all the means necessary to become functional." (Glenn Young@nifl.gov in Q & A)

*"Now that I know what my learning problems are, I can let others know how to help me."*

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!**

**FLORIDA'S 2002  
DISABILITIES SYMPOSIUM  
"Meeting Today's Challenges -  
Finding Solutions"**

**April 17-April 19, 2002  
Radisson Ponce de Leon,  
St. Augustine, FL**

**For more information, contact:**

**Christalee Burkett @  
aimcsb@aol.com**

**Next Issue: Instructional Practices**



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
CHARLIE CRIST, COMMISSIONER  
www.firn.edu/doe

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For more information, contact  
**Dr. Rochelle Kenyon,**  
Project Director  
6315 Capstan Court  
Rockledge, FL 32955-5765  
Telephone: (321) 637-1319  
Fax: (321) 637-1920  
Email: [RKenyon721@aol.com](mailto:RKenyon721@aol.com)

or  
To contribute an article or  
information to Practitioners' Points,  
send to:  
**Meryl Eisenberg, Editor**  
Fax: (954) 533-1480  
Email: [meryl@mediaone.net](mailto:meryl@mediaone.net)

Visit our Bridges website:  
[www.floridatechnet.org/bridges](http://www.floridatechnet.org/bridges)  
for previous issues of Practitioners'  
Points. A new Bridges Training  
Schedule will be added after dates  
and locations have been finalized.

Learning is a journey. Planning for that journey starts with a vision of the broader routes and destinations and the means for reaching them. The journey begins with the formulation of program goals and objectives, and then moves on with how instruction is organized into units and lessons to promote strategic learning and performance. (Source: Bridges to Practice, Guidebook 3)

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**Practitioners' Points**

Volume 2, Issue 1



Florida's Focus on  
Adults with Learning Disabilities

Much was accomplished during Year 1 of the Bridges to Practice project including the following:

- 21 workshops delivered
- 426 individuals trained
- Analysis of statewide needs assessment completed
- Bridges Training Component, Agenda and Handbook - Part 1, developed
- Bridges website designed and developed

<http://www.floridatechnet.org/bridges>

- 4 issues of Practitioners' Points newsletter disseminated statewide

In addition, the overall project objective of furthering LD awareness and understanding was accomplished with an additional intense focus on the problems associated with adult education students who are learning disabled.

With this newsletter, we welcome you to Year 2 of Bridges to Practice. Activities designed for this project year include:

- Develop Bridges Training Component, Agenda and Handbook - Part 2
- Maintain and enhance Bridges website
- Develop new webpage, "Q & A"
- Develop new webpage, "Resources for Adults with Learning Disabilities"
- Disseminate 4 new issues of Practitioners' Points newsletters
- Develop 5-hour web-based training component based on Year 1 content
- Present a 2-day symposium focusing on the topic of adults with LD
- Conduct Bridges training in each of the 5 DOE regions
- Conduct Bridges trainings at 3 of the regional or state conferences

A new focus for this year will be on adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students who may exhibit some characteristics of learning disabilities.

*"I overcame my particular problem because of really wonderful people, most of them teachers, who cared very, very much. Gradually, with a tremendous amount of hard work and patience that I still can't believe, they convinced me somehow that I could do it. They helped me to compensate for whatever my problems were. They found a way around some of my difficulties and enabled me to gain for myself some self-confidence and some relief that I could do it." (Thomas Kean, Two-term Governor of New Jersey, 10<sup>th</sup> President of Drew University.) (Shapiro, J. and Rich, R. 1999. Facing Learning Disabilities in the Adult Years)*

Dealing with LD is a very complex issue even with adult native speakers, but for immigrants and refugees the problem is magnified. Linguistic, psychological, social, cultural and educational factors make attempts to identify and assist learners a real challenge. Finding an instrument to identify and screen adult ESOL students for the possibility of LD is also difficult to impossible, thus making instructional accommodations even harder to accomplish. Estimates of the incidence of learning disabilities among adult ESOL students range from a low of 3% to a high of 80%, again, highlighting the significance of the problem for us as educators. To this end, the following project activities related to ESOL have been identified:

- Develop statewide needs assessment related to LD in non-native speakers
- Develop Bridges Training Component on ESOL to add to Handbook and include in training held throughout the state
- Enhance Bridges website by adding new webpage on ESOL and LD
- Add a new column feature to each issue of the Practitioners' Points newsletter entitled "ESOL and LD"
- Include sessions on ESOL and LD at the Bridges-sponsored symposium

To all the participants of Bridges trainings, and to the readers of Practitioners Points, we thank you for your interest and participation and look forward to another productive, challenging year.  
*Rochelle Kenyon, Project Director*



## CREATING A LEARNER PROFILE

Our last issue explored assessments and learning style inventories. The Payne Learning Needs Inventory was identified as an instrument to obtain information that may help in screening for potential learning difficulties.

Remember that test scores alone do not indicate what needs to be learned. You need to talk with the learner about his or her goals, learning abilities, and learning history and provide an opportunity for the learner to volunteer information about any relevant disability. Together, these findings, along with test scores become a part of the information used to plan specific outcomes to share with the learner.

### What is a Learner Profile?

A Learner Profile is a summary report of the current assessment situation including demographic, educational and work information, as well as specific assessment data and what the learner thinks are his or her strengths and literacy challenges.

### What should be done when planning for instruction?

When planning with the adult who has learning disabilities, there are **five** major curriculum options to choose from. They are:

>**Basic Skills:** Is the person having trouble with the fundamental skills of word decoding, syllabication or math calculation functions?

>**Learning Strategies:** Does the person need to acquire learning strategies for completing tasks efficiently and effectively?

>**Critical Content:** Does the adult need specific information, such as required for a job, to gain citizenship or specific science or social studies content to pass the GED Tests?

>**Social Skills:** Does the learner need instruction in social skills in order to interact effectively with others?



>**Self-Advocacy:** Does the individual need strategies for communicating his or her interests, needs and rights?

## BASIC SKILLS CURRICULA

Includes remediation or reteaching of skills that correspond to the learner's ability levels in the content areas.

Reading content should include:

explicit instruction in phonological awareness for recognition of speech sounds and blending into meaningful units;

decoding & word-recognition activities;

oral reading fluency development; and

reading comprehension strategies to help the learner remember and understand what has been read.

Mathematics content should include:

the language of math to help learn the symbols and words;

concepts central to math to help with organized thinking; and

math problem-solving strategies.

Written communication should include:

the means of writing - holding a pencil, directionality, spatial orientation, handwriting and word processing;

the mechanics of writing - spelling, capitalization, grammar & punctuation; and

the composition process - planning and organizing, semantics, crafting sentences and paragraphs, editing and revising.

## LEARNING STRATEGIES CURRICULA

Focuses on how the learner acquires, stores and expresses information or demonstrates competence. Learning strategies may be helpful for adults who are functioning at or above a 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level and wish to become more effective and efficient readers and writers. Strategies address common problems such as:

what to do when you come to an unknown word (Use a Decoding Strategy);

how to be sure that information is remembered and understood (Use a Self-Directed Questioning Strategy);

how to integrate visual and text information (Use a Strategy for Repeatedly Viewing the Graphic);

how to write complete and interesting sentences (Use a Paragraph Composition Strategy); and

how to take a test (Use a Strategy for Tracking Testing Time Remaining).

## DEVELOPING STRATEGIES



A learning strategy should contain as many of the following elements as possible:

Why, when and where it could be used.

The entry rules, such as understanding capitalization and punctuation in order to write sentences, need to be spelled out before they are taught as a strategy.

A step-oriented approach that 1) has seven or fewer steps, 2) contains appropriate, easily understood words beginning with a verb that relates to the action to be taken (e.g., underline, ask, decide, mark), 3) prescribes observable action, 4) is short and to the point (mnemonic devices help promote recall), and 5) relates to the overall process, such as "CONVERT," which could relate to the steps in converting fractions to decimals, rather than some arbitrary word like "RADIO."

Information-processing strategies such as organizing, interpreting, selecting, storing and retrieving information.

Learner feedback with cues to self-evaluate, self-monitor and review.

Capable of being performed in a short period of time.



**NOTE:** The more often that learners use the strategy, the more likely they see its relevance and use it. It would be most helpful if the strategy had application to problems encountered across many situations.

*"It is distressing to spend hours and even days reading and rereading assignments and realize that nothing has stuck or that pieces of information are scattered and disorganized." (Scheiber & Talpers, UnLocking Potential, 1987.)*

## CRITICAL CONTENT CURRICULA

Involves specific knowledge about the world that adults need immediately and should:

relate to a life need (e.g., driving, passing the GED Tests);

address knowledge that is immediately useful to adults;

be taught directly; and

contain sufficient practice to ensure intensity.

## When is it appropriate to use Critical Content Curricula?

Many adults with learning disabilities need to learn large amounts of content. They have not yet learned the strategies necessary to independently acquire the knowledge needed for daily life experiences. This option is appropriate for the adult who presents a specific need for information. For example, a young man purchasing a car for the first time will need to learn about insurance. It is then appropriate to teach him about insurance if he has not learned that information and does not have the necessary reading skills.



Instruction in critical content requires that you should sort through the conceptual information, select the most important concepts and supporting information and then help the adult acquire the information. However, it is advisable to incorporate a learning strategies approach to learn new information so that the learner will be able to function independently.

## SOCIAL SKILLS CURRICULA

Although social skills instruction is not typically considered part of academic instruction, it is an area in which many adults with learning disabilities need assistance, especially with regard to employment. The top five skills that Fortune 500 companies have listed as desirable in employees involve social skills including: **Teamwork, Problem-solving, Interpersonal Skills, Oral Communication and Listening.** Social skills curricula should teach the learner how to: 1) interpret a social situation, 2) select appropriate social skills and apply skills fluently, 3) adapt to changes in social situations, and 4) integrate a variety of social skills to meet the demands of a variety of life situations.

## What characteristics are reflected in a self-advocacy curriculum?

In order to effectively teach an adult with learning disabilities to self-advocate, one should combine strategies, social skills and knowledge that reflect:



learning how to detect situations where one's disability may cause a learning or performance problem;

becoming informed of one's legal rights and responsibilities;

using social skills to seek help and gain cooperation, such as the information one may need for accommodations;

knowing how to request, seek and use accommodations; and

accepting responsibility to learn and take actions necessary in specific situations in order to function independently.



A self-advocacy curricula should be considered when situations in an adult's life demand change.

## SELF-ADVOCACY CURRICULA

Involves teaching information that will enable adults with disabilities to: 1) make informed decisions; 2) set goals; 3) communicate interests, needs and rights to achieve goals; 4) take responsibility for decisions and advocacy; 5) apply self-advocacy information, skills & strategies across a variety of situations; and 6) link with support resources or agencies in the community that will provide the adult with opportunities to develop self-advocacy skills over time.

## INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING

Many adults with learning disabilities lack the skills for goal attainment. It is helpful to identify what is expected from your literacy program by assisting the learner in identifying problems that a) have been encountered frequently, b) have had a significant impact on his or her life and c) have occurred across a wide variety of settings. Make recommendations to target realistic and attainable goals, based on your knowledge and experience. Analyze goals into specific, sequential objectives; such as if the goal is "I will understand what I read at work," a specific objective may be "I will know what to do when I come to a word that I don't know."

*"It is so important for learning disabled adults to have an emotional support base - someone who can listen to the hopes and frustrations, and who can say, 'I know you can do it and can get it together. I have faith in you.'" (Schreiber & Talpers, UnLocking Potential, 1987)*

## MAKING AN INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN LD-SMART

The **\*SMART** planning steps are helpful for teaching all adults to make decisions at all levels of planning to the completion of instruction. (\*Lenz, Bulgren, Deshler and Schumaker, 1994)

Shape the Critical Questions - It is helpful to turn the goals and objectives into questions that you and the learner can use during instruction. For example, if the goal is to improve reading comprehension, the question might be, "How do I make sure that I am comprehending when I am reading?" You and the learner can use open-ended critical questions as basis for conversation, monitoring progress and mastering information.

Map the Critical Content - Keeping the critical questions in mind, use a graphic mapping strategy to organize the information you wish to cover. For example, a concept map on self-questioning would paraphrase the major points in a few words. Lines are connected where relationships form. Maps that are simple enable learners to organize their ideas.

Analyze Critical Content for Learning Difficulties - Once you have structured the critical components of the curriculum, you need to review the map and question the potential difficulty of the information to be learned. Based on previous teaching experiences and characteristics of the learner, evaluate new material for potential areas of learning difficulty relative to abstractness (connecting the ideas), organization (structure the important ideas), relevance (derive personal benefit), background knowledge (ability to make sense of the information learned), complexity (ability to explain/relate information to what is already understood), quantity (ability to frame self-questions and recall the critical content), relationships (understand the relationship of content to assignments) and language (making sure that the information doesn't make demands on the learner beyond his or her ability to acquire, store and express information).

Reach Instructional Decisions- This step is important for planning. Prepare rules for practice and select instructional devices and materials. Review the list of potential learning difficulties and decide how to guide learning. Give mnemonic devices to help learners remember chunks of information. Use concrete examples for teaching concepts or analogies. Make decisions on how information will be learned. Determine rules (conditions or agreements) and how they'll be put into practice. Select and prepare any materials.

Teach Effectively (See next issue)