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Coming March 24-26, 2004
Florida's Adults with Disabilities Symposium,
Palm Coast Golf Resort

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and updates on Florida's
2004 Adults with Disabilities Symposium.

"Any approach to reading must incorporate what we now know about the role of phonemic awareness. Because a lack of phonemic awareness appears to be a major obstacle to learning to read, individuals with a reading disability must be provided highly structured programs that directly teach phonologic rules to print. The most powerful interventions that have been identified for reading disabilities to date consist of a combination of explicit instructions in phonemic awareness, explicit instruction in sound-symbol relationships (phonics), and direct and integrated instruction in text reading and comprehension."

(Bridges to Practice Guidebook 4)

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Practitioners' Points

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MULTISENSORY STRUCTURED LANGUAGE TEACHING FOR THE LD ADULT

BY

CHERYL A. KOKI, MA, Ed.M.



*"I don't care about getting my GED.
All I want to do is to be able to
read a bedtime story to my two-
year old son."*

These emotionally charged words were from Olga, a new ABE student whose situation touched my heart. What mother doesn't want to have the bonding experience of reading to her child?

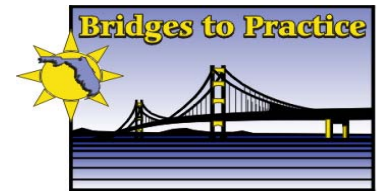
"Oh, and I also have a learning disability," she added. As a relatively new ABE/GED teacher, I started to panic. Nothing in my repertoire of teaching skills had prepared me to work with this type of student. I knew her program needed to concentrate on decoding, but I had never learned how to actually teach someone to read the words even though I was a certified teacher. I didn't know where to begin or how to teach her.

My search for a way to teach Olga and other learning disabled adults led me to the Speech and Language Disorders Clinic at Massachusetts General Hospital. As I trained and became certified as an Orton-Gillingham (O-G) therapist, I had a professional epiphany: multisensory structured language (MSL) teaching, a highly effective way of teaching language skills to learning disabled students of any age.

According to the International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council, MSL teaching encompasses five principles of instruction and six content areas.

THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF MSL INSTRUCTION

1. SIMULTANEOUS, MULTISENSORY (VAKT) - All teaching must use visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile methods. In this manner, all learning styles are addressed, and more than one neurological pathway in the brain is activated. This helps to strengthen memory and understanding.



Florida's Focus on
Adults with Learning Disabilities

2. SYSTEMATIC AND CUMULATIVE - Information to be taught should begin with the easiest concepts and follow a logical progression to the more difficult. Concepts and skills must be highly organized and methodically taught. Information previously learned should always be reviewed and serve as the springboard for teaching the next concept. This process helps students with long and short term memory.

3. DIRECT INSTRUCTION - It should not be assumed that students already know something or would be able to intuit the information merely from exposure. Anything students must know needs to be directly taught to them by the teacher.

4. DIAGNOSTIC/PRESCRIPTIVE TEACHING - The teacher must continually assess what the student has learned and what still needs to be learned, and then adjust instruction accordingly. The pace and content of instruction is based on the student's individual needs and accomplishments. Assessment, both formal and informal, must be a continuous and driving part of instruction. Students must work each skill and concept to mastery before moving on.

5. SYNTHETIC/ANALYTIC INSTRUCTION - Concepts need to be taught from part to whole (synthetically) - and whole to part (analytically). For example, when given a whole word, students must be able to break the word into its parts (sounds, syllables, root, base, and/or affixes), and when given the parts, students must be able to blend them together to make a whole word. It does not necessarily follow that if students can do one of these tasks, they can do the other.

(Continued on page 2)

We have to be taken back to the very beginning of our language education and start over with a new or different program than we've ever had before. For reading and spelling, we have to be taught the sounds of all letters, and also the sounds of groups of letters, all the little bits and pieces of sound that make up language. If these things aren't done quickly, and automatically, we never build what we call, fluency. We also need multisensory, phonetic-type programming that is repeated until we achieve fluency. Although most research has been done on children; the same techniques work for adults. It is harder to teach adults. We learn language the easiest when we are very young." (LEGACY OF THE BLUE HERON, Living with Learning Disabilities, Harry Sylvester, 2002.)

MULTISENSORY STRUCTURED LANGUAGE
TEACHING FOR THE LD ADULT
(continued)

THE SIX CONTENT AREAS OF MSL PROGRAMS

1. PHONOLOGY AND PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS - Phonology is the study of a language's sound system. **Phonological awareness** is the ability to attend to the speech sounds of a language. **Phonemic awareness**, a subset of phonological awareness, is the ability to attend to individual speech sounds and has been identified as a **crucial deficit** in individuals diagnosed with dyslexia. The teaching of phonological awareness concentrates primarily on the spoken word.



2. SOUND-SYMBOL ASSOCIATION - English is based on the alphabetic principle—sounds can be represented by letters and letters can represent sounds. Students need to be taught the associations between both sound and symbol and sound. It cannot be assumed that if students can associate a sound with a letter, they can also associate a letter with a sound. Students also need to be taught how to combine the sounds to decode words and how to segment the sounds to spell.

3. SYLLABLE INSTRUCTION - English is also based on six syllable types. Students need to be taught these different syllable types and how to combine the syllables into words. This must be done with both oral and written language. Along with teaching syllable types, teachers need to teach rules of syllable division.

4. MORPHOLOGY - A **morpheme** is the smallest unit of meaning. **Morphology** is the study of these units of meaning or word parts—prefixes, suffixes, roots, and base words. Students need to learn about word parts to help develop vocabulary, decoding, and spelling skills.

5. SYNTAX - The order in which words are strung together to make sense is syntax. English syntax varies from that of other languages. **Which** often times causes difficulty for ESOL students. The teaching of syntax needs to include instruction in **punctuation and grammar**.



6. SEMANTICS - This area of instruction focuses on comprehension and creating meaning from what was read.

Each of the above six content areas **must be taught** using the five principles of instruction.

My initial training in an MSL program was extremely valuable. Because MSL programs follow the same content and principles, it was easy to use other programs once I was trained in one. There are differences in programs, however, regarding materials, sequence of concepts taught, and instructional setting (individually, small groups, or classrooms).

MSL teaching has provided me a way to deal with the diversity of adult learners in my classroom. Approximately one-third are learning disabled (including ESOL students) and are on accommodation plans. Another third are either not formally identified as learning disabled or have chosen not to reveal that information about themselves. Because of the VAKT principle of instruction, I am able to meet a variety of learning styles. And with the range of abilities in my classes, I have found incorporating the content of MSL instruction a way to address different individual student needs. Even though my students may need to learn different skills and concepts, by including all MSL content areas, I am insuring that no skill or concepts are overlooked.



In my basic reading classroom, I utilize the Wilson Reading System extensively. This program is O-G based, as are many other MSL programs. Both Wilson and O-G incorporate MSL principles and content; however, the sequence of skills taught in each program varies. The Wilson program has a highly structured lesson format and abundance of user-friendly materials. In my basic writing classroom, I employ *Project Read—Framing Your Thoughts* which focuses on syntax and paragraph writing. Both Wilson and Project Read have manipulatives, extremely important in MSL teaching, for both students and teachers and incorporate all principles of instruction. Both programs also offer workshops and training for practitioners.



It has been 23 years since I met Olga and began to learn about MSL teaching. In that time, many of my students have asked, "Why didn't anybody ever teach me like this before? Why didn't anybody ever tell me this stuff before?" I believe my LD students have found that the principles of MSL instruction are a good fit for their learning needs. As one of my students remarked, "Thank you for organizing my brain!"

And Olga? After three years of individual instruction in the Wilson Reading System, not only was she able to reach her goal of reading to her son, she eventually reached another goal of passing the state licensing exam to become a hairdresser. What began as my goal of helping one student has evolved into a goal of educating other teachers about the benefits of MSL teaching.



For training information on Wilson Language System, go to www.wilsonlanguage.com or contact info@wilsonlanguage.com. Framing Your Thoughts is published by Language Circle Enterprises, MN. For more information go to www.projectread.com or contact projread@qwest.net.

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Developing Policy to Better Serve
Adults with Learning Disabilities

The Division of Adult Education and Literacy
Regional Meetings:
Adults and Learning Disabilities
Final Report - December 2003

With few exceptions, policy to consistently identify and address learning disabilities in the adult population does not currently exist in the United States and its territories. The Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL)/coordinated with the U.S. Department of Education/Office of Special Education & Rehabilitative Services, the U.S. Department of Labor/Office of Disability & Employment Policy, and the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) to sponsor a series of regional forums on the topic of developing policy to better serve adults with learning disabilities. The forums had the following objectives:

1. To provide participants with an understanding of the USDOE's goals and objectives related to adults with learning disabilities.
2. To promote an understanding of Federal laws related to adults with LD and the impact of these efforts on state policy.
3. To improve the literacy and employment skills of adults with LD through the development of coordinated state policies.
4. To facilitate the creation of new and innovative partnerships between adult education providers and other state partners to make literacy services more widely available and promote smooth transitions to employment.
5. To facilitate the development of adult learning disability policy based on high quality research-based models that equip adults with tools to succeed in the next steps of their education and employment.

Regional forums were held during October 2003. All states and territories were invited to bring team members. Florida's team consisted of *Bob Wofford*, from the DOE's Office of Workforce Education in Tallahassee and *Rochelle Kenyon*, Bridges to Practice. Sessions were professionally facilitated with topical experts for presentations and technical assistance. Issues covered discussion of policy development steps, clarification of federal expectations, and interpretation of disability laws and rules. Content experts focused primarily on strategies and concerns for meeting the needs of adults with LD. Participants brought copies of their state legislation, policy manuals, and procedures related to serving adults with learning disabilities.

DAEL regional teams will be providing technical assistance to help state and territorial teams develop cross-agency policy to better serve adults with LD. States will also be provided with a list of possible screening and assessment tools for review. A draft policy that distinguishes between policies, procedures, and their directives will be distributed as a sample for states to review and consider. As this initiative moves forward in Florida, more information will be forthcoming.

Comprehension is a Color

By

Iris Strunc

Okaloosa-Walton Community College

According to statistics revealed at Florida's Bridges to Practice training, 50-80% of students in ABE and literacy programs with low reading skills (below a 5th to 7th grade) may have either a suspected or diagnosed learning disability. Furthermore, 85% of all individuals with LD have reading difficulties. That's a tremendous number of people with learning problems passing through our classroom doors!

Since my background is reading, I am constantly looking for new approaches to help the reading disabled. I would like to share a technique that students in my reading classes have been experimenting with that uses color as a focusing technique.

Color is the Key



Do you remember how great it was to discover the highlighter? Most of the students in my reading classes use a highlighter, but they use it as a tool for taking notes in their books. They usually end up coloring the entire passage so the value of the procedure is somewhat questionable. The strategy I have developed also uses highlighters but for an entirely different purpose. The focusing technique I devised is a tool for instructors to use to help students read difficult passages with complex concepts. Since it is a focusing strategy, the reading rate for students will usually drop between 50-200 words per minute. That is a slow rate or a study rate used for learning new vocabulary, analyzing complex concepts, reading technical material, and examining legal documents.

The focusing strategy using color considerably slows down the student's reading rate, but what the student sacrifices in rate, he/she gains in focus and understanding. Since many reading disabled students already have difficulty focusing, this technique gives LD students another tool to add to their coping skills' arsenal. However, just as there is no one type of student, there is also no one type of strategy that works well for every student. Teachers understand this. Instructors also know that not all students have the same learning styles and any method that touches the different modalities should give positive results.

The Strategy

The students will need three different color highlighters to use on a difficult passage. I use the passage on the Constitution Amendments process. It is a typical type of passage that most disabled readers will skip. The first step is for students to choose one color of highlighter. Tell the students to start with the first paragraph of the passage and instruct the adult readers as follows:

Choose **one color** and use only that **color** until I tell you to switch. Read only the first and last sentences of the first paragraph. Next, **highlight** any word that starts with a **Capital letter**, any **number**--written out or in numerical form--any **date**, and any **unfamiliar word**. (Typically, a student will ask if the first word of a sentence should be highlighted since it is a capital letter. I answer in the affirmative because again, I know the entire reason for doing this technique is to get the students to focus on the passage). Again, the students are only to **highlight** the **first** paragraph.

When they are finished, I instruct the students to choose a **different color** highlighter. We, then, briefly discuss verbs. I explain to them that some of the typical verb endings are -ed and -ing. I also remind them to **highlight** any of the **verbs of being** (be, am are, is and been) and also to **highlight have, has, and had**. I explain to the students that we are not doing a strict grammar exercise and if it looks like a verb, highlight it. Again, the purpose is to focus the students on the difficult passage. Then, I call out the first few verbs to get them started.

After they finish, I instruct the students to choose a **third color highlighter**. I ask them to find the first highlighted verb and **look in front of the verb** to answer the question "**Who** or **what** plus the verb?" Next, I tell them again to find the same verb and **look behind it** to answer the question "**Who** or **what**?" In a very loose sense, we are looking at the subject, verb, object pattern. I tell the students to finish **highlighting** the passage in the same manner.

When the students are finished, we discuss main idea and how to find it in a paragraph. Next, I ask them to write a title for the first paragraph. After some brief discussion, I break the students into small groups of three to four and challenge them to come up with the main idea of the first paragraph in fourteen words or less. The sentence must be complete and accurate. After an appropriate main idea is agreed upon, I lead a brief discussion on how to find the topic sentence in a factual or nonfiction type of passage.

Next, I instruct the students to use the same strategy on paragraph two. When they are finished highlighting the paragraph, we again discuss the main idea for paragraph two using the same technique as for paragraph one. This time the main idea must be stated in twelve words or less.

Finally, I instruct the students to finish the remaining paragraphs. We again find the main ideas for the last two paragraphs in ten words or less.

After a brief discussion on central point, I ask the students to write down the central point of the entire passage in ten words or less.

After the students have been taught this strategy, they should be given time to practice it. Remember that the purpose of this technique is to focus the students on the difficult passage in front of them. This technique is not a note-taking strategy.

But They Can't Mark in Their Textbooks!

Some of you may be wondering how you can use this technique if the students are not allowed to write in their textbooks. This is a fair observation. It is true, however, that

- The students read more than their textbooks.
- Second, using newspapers, especially the editorial page will work in teaching the strategy to the students.
- Third, if photocopying is allowed, copy a page or two out of a public domain article and distribute it to the students. Use the passage to guide the students in using this focusing strategy.
- Finally, buy a box of transparencies, and paper-clips. Let the students practice directly on their textbooks by highlighting directly on the transparencies.

(Reference: <http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/readquest/>)

Concluding Thoughts

After modeling several sessions of the highlighting technique, encourage the students to do their own highlighting. Marking up the passage helps the students to be actively engaged in reading the passage. This strategy helps students for a variety of reasons:

- This strategy forces the student to read a passage more than once.
- It presents important words and phrases in their original context.
- The strategy helps the student to highlight key concepts in sequence.
- Finally, this technique teaches selective comprehension.

I have used this strategy many times to help the poor readers in my classrooms focus on the passage in front of them. I believe that many educators in Adult Education classrooms who are overwhelmed by the task of teaching adults with reading disabilities will find this technique to be beneficial. Finally, I believe better readers become stronger thinkers and it is our job as educators to help them move toward this goal.

Iris Strunc has taught in the Families of Educators program at Okaloosa Walton Community College. She has also taught GED/ABE classes at night and continues to teach College Success and College Prep Reading for the Communications Department. She currently serves as the Advisor/Trainer for the Fort Walton Beach campus.

"I believe most teachers in Adult Education have considerable autonomy with regard to how we teach students. It is therefore vital for us to continue to learn better strategies in order to serve our adult learners."

Iris Strunc

Programming for Success in ESOL

By
Robin L. Schwarz, Lesley University



Can you imagine it? A classroom where every learner experiences success every day? This philosophy—**"MAKE EVERY LEARNER A STAR EVERY DAY!"**—was the

guiding principle of the director of my Peace Corps language program and I have used it as my own guide ever since. I have learned that success is a powerful motivator for learners of any age in any classroom.

Why should we care about learners having success *every day* if they seem to be making general progress over the year? One of the biggest headaches of adult education is rampant absenteeism—or dropping out and coming back. The second has to be lateness. Facing these problems, the adult ESOL programs in one region of one large state decided to implement a 6-week class designed to "hook" learners into staying by having them experience guess what?? **Success!** What learners will want to miss class if they know they will feel terrific every time they are there? Who wouldn't want to come to class knowing they will be able to leave each time with something useful for their lives outside the classroom?

And what learner, having experienced success, possibly for the first time in their lives, wouldn't want to try just a bit harder to make that happen again? Adult programs are under terrific pressure these days to show their effectiveness by way of reporting numbers of learners completing their program. Anything we can do to encourage learners to stay and to keep trying can only benefit us all.

But how can we program for success when learning is so hard for so many learners? Having LD has slowed progress for more than half of adult learners. Because so many other factors complicate the picture besides possible LD for ESOL learners, they are likely to experience success even more rarely than their English-speaking counterparts.

Programming for success seems like a simple idea. All of the wonderful techniques for teaching learners with LD—multisensory instruction and learning, breaking down tasks into small increments, plenty of review, lots of structure with tools such as notebooks and graphic organizers—are intended to increase teacher effectiveness and through that, learner success. Nevertheless, some learners still struggle to learn in spite of these good teaching methods. I have sat through many an observation where an interesting, motivated teacher taught a fine lesson but it was obvious that several learners were barely touched by learning, even though they



had participated in the activities willingly. Clearly, something else is needed.

Commitment to the idea is essential. Programming for success means **NOT** programming for failure. It means being conscious all the time of what each learner's needs are and then monitoring materials and activities to make sure each learner has the skills and knowledge and necessary metacognitive skills—learning strategies—to be successful in each activity. When I



saw that my adult ESOL learners were having a lot of trouble sorting short vowel pictures, I soon realized that the problem was not that they could not discriminate sounds, but that they didn't know the names of the pictures! I was programming for failure. A quick change of goals made the activity into a vocabulary lesson and vowels were not practiced with those pictures until the learners knew them perfectly and could say them comprehensibly.

Learning from learners' problems and mistakes by asking, "Why are they having trouble? What skills or knowledge do they need to complete this task successfully?" is *diagnostic- or analytical- teaching*. Learners' mistakes help us know that whatever we are doing hasn't worked. We will need to try some other way or look at the task to find out what was causing problems. When one ESOL learner kept losing interest and being absent for lessons in the reader his class was using, the teacher wondered what was happening. On asking the learner, she found out that he was very confused by topics about which he had previously learned little about in Spanish. The teacher realized two things were going on: the textbook she was using assumed a great deal of background knowledge yet her floundering learner was lacking that fundamental knowledge and vocabulary in his first language. For the next lessons, she not only spent time finding out in depth what her learners actually knew about each topic, but she also brought in a variety of materials on the topic to help learners broaden their knowledge and vocabulary before they were asked to read and complete questions about a text.



Diagnostic teaching happens in and during classes, but an even better way to provide success is knowing as much about learners as possible at the beginning of a term. This can happen through assessment, interviews, and quick observations in classes as the year or term gets underway. But, it isn't enough to just find out. We must **ACT** on that knowledge. If we find out a learner has weak phonological skills in English, whose fault is it if that learner is put into a basic reading class where no phonological skills (rhyming, word segmentation) are taught and she flounders for the rest of the year? Or, what about the learner who had a profound hearing

loss but was put into a regular phonics class and blamed for not being able to hear differences between /f/ and /v/ or /e/ and /o/? If we are forearmed with knowledge about our learners, we can avoid these mistakes and program for success instead.

The most powerful weapon of all in the teaching arsenal, however, is **belief** that the learner **WILL** learn. Simple as this sounds, many teachers secretly do not believe some of their learners will learn—and the learners know it.

When I recently told a group of teachers that I **NEVER** give up on a learner, I was met with considerable skepticism and even derision, but by my learners' own report, it was my belief in them that gave them the courage to keep on trying.



I ask you for your New Year's resolution to work fervently at believing in the success of each and every learner and then making it happen.

LET'S "TAKE A COURSE OF ACTION!"

On behalf of Bridges to Practice: Florida's Focus on Adults with Learning Disabilities, I invite you to **"Take a Course of Action!"** and attend **Florida's 2004 Adults with Disabilities Symposium, to be held on March 24–26, 2004 at the Palm Coast Golf Resort in Palm Coast, Florida.**



Attend this symposium and you will have the opportunity to maximize your learning experiences throughout the three-day event by participating in an incredible agenda of educational and networking experiences. Speakers will present 'Targeted Training' in all disabilities areas while focusing on education, rehabilitation, social skills training, advocacy, federal law/legal rights, testing accommodations, assistive technology, needs of the TANF population, and success attributes—just to name a very few!

In addition to all of the educational opportunities, plan to relax by strolling on paved hiking trails among the oak, pine, and palm forests along the shore of the Intracoastal Waterway. Or, play a game of tennis or a round of golf on one of five championship courses. Located between historic St. Augustine and the sun, sand, and surf of action packed Daytona Beach, the resort is just a few scenic miles from Interstate 95 and 30 minutes from the Daytona Beach International Airport.

Register by February 23, 2004 to receive the **special symposium room rate of \$79 (plus tax) per night. The full symposium pre-registration fee is \$75.00** if made by March 1, 2004. Please visit the Bridges to Practice website to access additional information at:



www.floridatechnet.org/bridges

Let's "Take a Course of Action!" Together
Dr. Rochelle Kenyon, Chairperson
Florida's 2004
Adults with Disabilities Symposium