Section 3

Meeting the Needs of Adult Learners
The West Virginia Adult Education (WVAdultEd) Program is funded by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, enacted August 7, 1998 as Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998.

WVAdultEd is administered through the West Virginia Department of Education Office of Adult Education and Workforce Development, Building 6, Room 230, 1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East, Charleston, West Virginia 25305-0330.

The WVAdultEd Instructor Handbook is produced by the WVAdultEd Professional Development Program, whose fiscal agent is the Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) 3, 501 22nd Street, Dunbar, West Virginia 25064-1711.

For questions or concerns related to the content of the WVAdultEd Instructor Handbook, contact Cathy Shank at the WV Adult Education Hotline, 1-800-642-2670, or via email at cshank@k12.wv.us.

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# Meeting the Needs of Adult Learners

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## Facts about Aging Adult Learners and Instructional Strategies

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- National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) Definition of Learning Disabilities
- Characteristics of Adults with Learning Disabilities
- Techniques: Working With Adults With Learning Disabilities
CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDEREDUCATED ADULT LEARNERS

Adult Learners are Diverse

- They vary widely among ages, races, socioeconomic levels, abilities, skills, job experiences, and personal goals.
- They come from varying religious, cultural, and language backgrounds.
- They have a wide range of educational backgrounds including those with little or no formal education, those with a history of special education, those who dropped out at an early age, and those who completed high school.
- They have well-developed identities, values, and beliefs.
- They have a wealth of life experiences, which can become learning resources.

Many Adult Learners Choose to Attend School Voluntarily

- They believe that education will help to increase their technical competence, employability, and sense of self-worth.
- They expect that education will enable them to respond to competition and change in the job market.
- They hope that education will help them solve problems in their daily lives.
- They see education as a means to maintain and enhance their social worth and success in other social settings such as the workplace, home, church, or community.

Adult Learners Tend to Be Pragmatic

- They expect education to be practical and satisfy their personal goals.
- They see instructional quality and relevance of the learning as important factors in educational experiences.
- They have personal, family, and work-related commitments that take precedence over school-related responsibilities.

Some Adult Learners Have Special Learning Needs

- They may have special physical concerns or disabilities related to vision or hearing problems, mobility impairments, health conditions, or simple aches and pains.
- They may have learning disabilities that affect visual and auditory processing and that cause difficulties in reading, expressive language, math, attention, memory, organization, social interaction, or a variety of other difficulties.
- They may have problems meeting basic needs because of poverty, unemployment, homelessness, alcohol/drug abuse, or psychological impairments.
Adult Learners Often Perceive Many Barriers to School Attendance

- They may see inconvenient class schedules, inaccessible locations, unclear registration procedures, etc. (institutional barriers) as interfering with their ability to enroll in educational programs.
- They may allow the opinions of friends and family members (fear of social disapproval) to influence their decision to enroll in classes.
- They sometimes have low self-esteem, memories of prior academic failure, or negative feelings about past school experiences, (dispositional barriers) which impact on their retention during the first few weeks of class.
- They may have problems with family health care, transportation, child care; lack of free time; changes in work schedules; etc. (situational barriers) which often interfere with regular school attendance.
- They may lack the organizational, motivational, and problem-solving skills (sometimes due to learning disabilities) necessary for consistent participation in educational programs.

For further study:

**Adult Learning Styles (Adult Learning Strategies, p. 2)**
This article, which is part of a publication by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, gives a synopsis on best practices for serving adult learners.

**Family First Adult Basic Education Advice to New Teachers**
http://slincs.coe.utk.edu/lpm/video-transcripts/famfirst.htm
This article, produced by the University of Tennessee Center for Literacy Studies, gives advice to new teachers on issues such as creating a positive learning environment, supporting adult learners, fostering teamwork, empowering students, etc. so that adult learners want to return to the ABE classroom.
### FACTS ABOUT AGING ADULT LEARNERS AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

#### Hearing Issues

- Maximum auditory acuity is attained between 10 and 15 years of age. After age 15, there is a gradual but consistent decline in hearing until about 65 years of age.
- Hearing loss due to aging is a very slow onset hearing loss and can vary in degree from a mild loss to a severe loss. Word discrimination (understanding) is often worse than would be expected from the degree of loss.
- There is a somewhat greater tendency for men to show impaired hearing than for women.
- In the aging process, there is a loss of auditory acuity on the high tones.
- As aging occurs, reaction to auditory stimuli slows down.
- Many older adults find it difficult to follow rapid speech in spite of little or no hearing loss.
- Loss of hearing reduces the ability to recall long sentences.
- Older learners do not retain as much information from oral presentations as younger students.
- The inability to hear can produce emotional disturbances such as depression, anxiety, or frustration.

#### Instructional Strategies

- Speak more slowly and distinctly as the age of the group increases.
- Use simple, well-chosen words that are clear and meaningful.
- Avoid the use of words that are lengthy and difficult to understand.
- Enunciate unusual words, unfamiliar names, numbers, etc.
- Write all important information down as you speak; vision will supplement a hearing loss.
- Print key words and phrases on the board, overhead, or flipchart when working with a group.
- Use a PowerPoint presentation to deliver key points.
- Try to eliminate or reduce inside or outside background noises that may interfere with hearing.
- Before answering a question directed to you by a member of the group, repeat or rephrase the question so that everyone can hear.
- Provide preferential seating to hard-of-hearing students.
- For hearing-impaired students, a sign language interpreter may need to be provided by the program for part of the time (e.g., during intake, group lessons, or when the teacher is asking/answering questions at a scheduled time).
**Vision Issues**

- For normal learning tasks, an adult by age 30 requires 120 watts of illumination; 180 watts are required by age 50.
- Visual acuity attains its maximum at about 18 years of age.
- With advancing age, the lens loses its elasticity and cannot focus readily.
- A major change in visual acuity occurs between age 45 and 55.
- About 85% of all learning is visual.
- Approximately 25% of students in adult literacy programs have severe Visual Stress Syndrome (VSS).
- VSS causes problems with reading information that is presented on white paper, particularly under fluorescent lighting.

**Instructional Strategies**

- Use good illumination. Older adults need better light and more light.
- Use large charts, diagrams, and pictures.
- Use large, legible letters when writing or printing on boards, flipcharts, or overheads.
- Write using simple words and phrases; avoid the use of abbreviations.
- Use neutral backgrounds and choose colors which will create the greatest contrast.
- Use a large font for materials you plan to reproduce or when preparing PowerPoint presentations.
- Have magnifying devices readily available.
- Offer preferential seating to those with vision issues.
- Make photocopies from originals; photocopies of copies become muddy, distorted, and unreadable.
- For students with VSS, use the appropriate colored overlays. Copy information on colored paper rather than white paper.
- Provide alternatives to fluorescent lighting.
- Students with VSS may prefer low light versus bright light.
- Large print assessments may need to be provided.
- Materials in Braille or in audio versions may need to be provided for legally blind students.
- Computers may need to be adjusted for larger print or to provide audio input for those with vision impairments.
**Speed and Motor Issues**

- Compared to adolescents, adults usually require a longer time to perform learning tasks.
- Older adults take longer to complete handwriting and copying activities.
- Decline in timed motor tasks begins between the ages of 18 and 40, and is marked after 40.
- Reaction time also slows with age.
- Scores on tests measuring perception and dexterity decline with age.
- There are observable increases in response time by middle age in tasks requiring sharp perception and/or complex decision-making.
- Students with learning disabilities tend to work more slowly.

**Instructional Strategies**

- Remove time restrictions whenever possible in order to reduce stress.
- Allow adult learners to choose self-paced activities.
- Offer practice in taking timed examinations.
- Provide extended time to finish assignments and in testing to those with documented disabilities.

**Cognitive/Emotional/Social Issues**

- The natural course of aging does NOT include cognitive decline.
- Scores on tests such as vocabulary show increases with age.
- Age itself does little to affect an adult’s power to learn or think.
- For adults, motivation is a major factor in performance.
- Most adults have higher standards of performance than adolescents.
- Adults, even more than children, are sensitive to failure in their learning situation.
- Adults may feel inhibited from active participation in discussion by a lack of confidence in their own abilities.
- Adult learning ability is influenced by the amount of formal education received.

**Instructional Strategies**

- Provide a variety of learning options appropriate to an adult’s learning style, way of thinking, and preference for individual versus group work.
- Provide opportunities for adults to analyze and expand their modes of learning.
- Provide the learner with continuous progress reports so that motivation will be sustained.
- Acknowledge completion of goals, objectives or tasks, particularly those identified by the learner.
- Offer team-building activities that encourage classmates to become acquainted, discuss learning experiences, and share successes with each other.
Cognitive/Emotional/Social Issues

- Negative experiences from the past may interfere with new learning.
- Emotional association with words or events may affect the adult’s ability to gain new knowledge.
- Once the adult has formed a perception of a stimulus, it is difficult for him or her to change his or her mind.
- Higher dogmatism, rigidity, and cautiousness are associated with aging.
- Adults are often problem-centered versus subject-centered.
- It is difficult for an adult to do a familiar task in an unfamiliar way.
- How recently an adult participated in an educational activity affects his or her ability to learn.

Instructional Strategies

- Provide opportunities to learn from peers as well as from an instructor.
- Help learners to feel comfortable with the learning environment.
- Allow learners to associate new learning with previous positive experiences.
- Provide meaningful learning experiences which give learners an opportunity to apply new information and ideas to practical situations in their own lives.
- Allow learners to provide input into the planning of their own learning goals and processes.
- Provide tasks that allow learners to succeed within the contexts of their limited time and demanding lives.
SERVING YOUTH IN ADULT PROGRAMS

Those who have worked with youth (young adults, ages 16 to 25) in adult education know that there are particular challenges faced by this special population. To ensure that these students excel in WVAdultEd programs, instructors need to understand the differences between youth and other adults, and use approaches that are appropriate for each.

Comparison of Adult and Adolescent Learners

Below is a chart comparing the learning characteristics of adult learners and adolescent learners. The following information was obtained from the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT)\(^1\) and is reprinted here with permission.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult Learners</th>
<th>Adolescent Learners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problem-centered; seek educational solutions to where they are compared to where they want to be in life.</td>
<td>Subject-oriented; seek to successfully complete each course, regardless of how course relates to their own goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results-oriented; have specific results in mind for education - will drop out if education does not lead to those results because their participation is usually voluntary.</td>
<td>Future-oriented; youth education is often a mandatory or an expected activity in a youth's life and designed for the youth's future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-directed; typically not dependent on others for direction.</td>
<td>Often depend on adults for direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often skeptical about new information; prefer to try it out before accepting it.</td>
<td>Likely to accept new information without trying it out or seriously questioning it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek education that relates or applies directly to their perceived needs, that is timely and appropriate for their current lives.</td>
<td>Seek education that prepares them for an often unclear future; accept postponed application of what is being learned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept responsibility for their own learning if learning is perceived as timely and appropriate.</td>
<td>Depend on others to design their learning; reluctant to accept responsibility for their own learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Characteristics of Adult Learners, Rochester Institute of Technology

[https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/tls/course-design/instructional-design/adult-learners](https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/tls/course-design/instructional-design/adult-learners)
Serving Students Who are Digital Natives

According to Marc Prensky in his article entitled *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*, our young adult students “...represent the first generations to grow up with digital technology. They have spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age. Today’s average college grads have spent less than 5,000 hours of their lives reading, but over 10,000 hours playing video games (not to mention 20,000 hours watching TV). Computer games, email, the Internet, cell phones and instant messaging are integral parts of their lives.”

Prensky calls this group, *Digital Natives*, and says these students are, “…native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet.” He calls older generations that are trying to adapt to the new world of technology *Digital Immigrants*. Prensky goes on to say, “The single biggest problem facing education today is that our *Digital Immigrant* instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language.”

Ian Jukes and Anita Dosaj, in *Understanding Digital Kids: Teaching and Learning in the New Digital Landscape*, explain this in more detail:

1. Native learners prefer receiving info quickly from multiple multimedia sources while many teachers prefer slow and controlled release of info from limited sources.

2. Native learners prefer parallel processing and multi-tasking while many teachers prefer singular processing and single/limited-tasking.

3. Native learners prefer processing pictures, sounds and video before text while many teachers prefer to provide text before pictures, sounds and video.

4. Native learners prefer random access to hyperlinked, interactive, multimedia information while many teachers prefer to provide information linearly, logically and sequentially.

5. Native learners prefer to interact/network simultaneously with many others.

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2 Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants

3 Understanding Digital Kids: Teaching and Learning in the New Digital Landscape
6. Native learners move seamlessly between real and virtual spaces instantaneously—virtual space is any location where people can meet using networked digital services—chat rooms, blogs, wikis, podcasts, email, discussion threads that come and go—synchronous and asynchronous and with multitasking, can inhabit more than virtual space at a time—while many teachers prefer to operate in real spaces.

7. Many teachers prefer students to work independently rather than network and interact.

8. Native learners prefer to learn “just-in-time” while many teachers prefer to teach “just-in-case” (it’s on the exam).

9. Native learners want instant access to friends, services, and responses to questions, instant gratification and instant rewards while many teachers prefer deferred gratification and deferred rewards.

10. Native learners prefer learning that is relevant, instantly useful and fun while many teachers prefer to teach to the curriculum guide and standardized tests.

Jukes and Dosaj believe that instructors must learn to communicate with digital natives by changing their instructional styles. A few of their suggestions include:

- Make learning fun and more relevant.
- Go faster so information is received quickly.
- Offer more random access, hyperlinked, just-in-time learning experiences.
- Use less text and more pictures, sounds, and video.
- Provide chances for multi-tasking, networking, and interactivity.

**Youth in WVAdultEd Programs**

The number of youth in adult education programs nationwide is continuing to grow. According to a 2005 report, about one-third of high school students drop out of school without a diploma. This could be due to a combination of three factors:

- Socioeconomic characteristics
- Number of parents living in the home
- History of changing schools frequently

These drop-outs are the young adult students we see in our adult education classrooms.

There are many reasons why students drop out of school. In a report commissioned by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation entitled *The Silent Epidemic*, 467 ethnically and racially diverse pupils...
students were interviewed who were age 16 to 25 year olds and had dropped out of school in Philadelphia and Baltimore in 2005. The following chart displays the research findings.

**Top Five Reasons Dropouts Identify As Major Factors for Leaving School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classes were not interesting</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missed too many days and could not catch up</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spent time with people who were not interested in school</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had too much freedom and not enough rules in my life</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was failing in school</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While older adult learners will often thrive in our classrooms with minimal restraints, these findings suggest that this population may have had too much freedom and may require very specific enforced rules of conduct, and need to commit to very specific plan of study and to regular attendance schedules in order to be successful in the program. Instructors working with programs that have young adult students should see *Orientation for Young Adult Students* (*Section 4*) and consider using *Student Commitment Contract B* (*Section 4 Appendix*) to clarify rules and expectations for students in the program.

Making the education relevant is also vital to keeping youth in our classrooms. Some students may want more work-oriented instruction, while others may require college preparatory classes. While this can be challenging, it can be done with appropriate planning procedures.

Students should be asked to participate in deciding the structure of the class. Their input into the design and topics of interest will give them “buy in” and promote retention. Retention is of particular concern with young adults. Please review the strategies on retention in *Section 10*.

Incentives are great for all students, but they are critical with young students. Getting students engaged in a variety of ways is very important. Create a student publication for your class. Nominate a student from your classroom as *Student of the Year* through the West Virginia Adult Education Association, Inc. website, [www.wvaea.org](http://www.wvaea.org). It is important to hold an annual celebration to acknowledge your students’ accomplishments. Invite family and friends whenever possible to emphasize the importance of the event.

In *The Silent Epidemic* report, the students who participated in the survey said that instruction needed to improve in order to keep students motivated. “More than half felt that more needed to be done to help students who had problems learning, and 70 percent believed tutoring...and
extra time with teachers would have improved their chances of graduating.” So, students may benefit with additional one-on-one instruction.

Some students may have learning disabilities and require one-on-one assistance. See Learning Disabilities and Other Special Needs (Section 3) and also Techniques: Working with Adults with Learning Disabilities (Section 3 Appendix), for suggestions on serving these students. This might be the time to partner with your local literacy program to get the student additional tutoring. Across the state of West Virginia, many adult education programs have volunteers working with students on a variety of skills including math, reading, and writing. For a list of local literacy tutoring programs, check online at http://www.literacywv.org/located-in-west-virginia-counties-a-through-l.html

For further study:

All About Adolescent Literacy
http://www.adlit.org/
This site features resources for parents and educators of adolescents. On this site, you will find information about how to help struggling readers, how to improve literacy skills, as well as information about fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and motivation of adolescents. There is also a section on current topics relating to adolescent literacy. Classroom strategies are also given to help teachers integrate literacy into their curriculum.

Marc Prensky’s Essays
http://marcprensky.com/marcs-essays/
ADDRESSING BASIC HUMAN NEEDS

A.H. Maslow has supplied a theory of human motivation. According to this theory, all individuals share certain fundamental needs. These needs can be placed in hierarchical order. Maslow's *Hierarchy of Human Needs* can be visualized as a pyramid.

At the top of the pyramid is the need for *Self-Actualization*—achieving our full potential given our individual strengths and weaknesses. This is the goal of adult education.

At the base are *Physiological or Survival Needs* such as food and shelter. Basic needs must be met before an individual can respond to higher needs. In other words, a person cannot satisfy any of the higher levels unless the needs at the lower levels are reasonably satisfied.

Some adults in your classroom may have so many unmet basic *Survival* and *Safety* needs that they will be unable to focus on their studies. Before they can effectively learn, they may need assistance from community service agencies. Part of their learning may need to include information sessions on how to access appropriate community service programs (food, housing, clothing, domestic violence shelters, medical and emotional services, etc.) in their area.

To locate assistance in your community, there are several resources that may be useful:

- Family Resource Networks (FRNs) in each county maintain lists of community resources. For a listing of West Virginia FRN locations and contact information, see [http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/bcf/Services/Documents/Family%20Resource%20Networks%20Directory.pdf](http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/bcf/Services/Documents/Family%20Resource%20Networks%20Directory.pdf). Contact your local FRN to obtain your local directory.
• Resources are now online at the WVAdultEd LiveBinder (http://www.tinyurl.com/wvabe), under the Special Learning Needs category at http://www.livebinders.com/play/play/816321.

Institutional educators in correctional facilities need to identify the transition specialist for their facility. This individual is responsible for locating services to assist the inmates. In some institutions, the principal serves this role.

When new students enter the program, it is important to ask questions that will identify barriers to program participation and special needs, as well as identify the students’ learning strengths. New learners should be assured at the outset that perceived barriers or learning problems need not prohibit them from setting and reaching learning goals. A process needs to be in place to address these barriers and revisit these issues periodically.

Many of your students will also need a great deal of your attention before they can satisfy their need for Belongingness in your program or can improve their Self-Esteem. Establishing rapport with the student can sometimes be accomplished at the outset by spending private time with each new student to discuss problems and solutions as well as how to use strengths to compensate for weak areas. Often students are not aware of their strengths and how these can positively impact their learning capacity. By identifying their preferred learning styles, you will know what type of input needs to be provided in your classroom so that they can be successful learners.

Your initial contact with new learners can be decisive in determining individuals’ attitudes toward the program and whether they will remain in the program long enough to complete their goals and reach Self-Actualization. More information on this topic can be found in Retention/Persistence (Section 10).

For further study:
Abraham Maslow
http://webspace.ship.edu/cgboer/maslow.html
This article discusses Maslow’s theory of personality, focusing on his now famous hierarchy of human needs.

I’ve Come a Long Way: Learner-Identified Outcomes of Participation in Adult Literacy Programs
This Learner Identified Outcomes study brings learners’ perspectives to the ongoing research conversation on outcomes of participation in adult literacy education. The study used a life history methodology to build an understanding of these outcomes on the lives of adult learners.
LEARNING DISABILITIES AND OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS

Adult educators need to be aware of students with special needs (learning disabilities and attention disorders, physical and psychological disabilities, and mental impairments). WVAdultEd programs may not turn away students with disabilities or other special needs who meet all the other eligibility criteria see Section 4, Eligibility for WVAdultEd Program Enrollment. Programs must provide information regarding the rights of individuals with disabilities. A public non-discrimination notice should be posted in the classroom and included in publications (see Section 4 Appendix for a Sample Non-Discrimination Notice).

To provide effective instruction to these individuals, you need to understand the nature of disabilities, screening instruments, referral systems, as well as teaching strategies and accommodations that can assist learners with their special needs.

- **Learning Disabilities (LD)** can impact academic performance in listening, speaking, reading, writing, mathematics, etc. Specific LD (such as Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia), is a permanent lifelong condition which interferes with learning and academic performance. Although individuals with LD have average or even above average intelligence, without reasonable accommodations (extra time, spell-checking devices, calculators, readers or scribes, etc.) to level the playing field, these individuals are presented with innumerable barriers.

- **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders (ADHD)** (Originally there were two disorders Attentional Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders. In May of 2013 the American Psychiatric Association did away with ADD as a classification separate from ADHD. ADHD is a lifelong condition that can cause problems in academic performance due to the individual’s inattentiveness, restlessness, lack of organization and inability to concentrate and complete assignments. Adults with ADHD may require frequent breaks and private settings.

- **Physical Disabilities** may also hinder some adult learners in reaching their fullest potential. While some individuals were born with impaired vision, hearing, or mobility, many other adults have acquired physical disabilities as a result of accidents, injuries, or the effects of aging. These disabilities may include systemic conditions such as AIDS, asthma, cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, etc.; brain impairments due to head injuries, drug abuse, strokes, etc.; or orthopedic problems affecting the bones and joints. Adults with physical disabilities may be dealing with mobility problems, pain, discomfort, fatigue, and effects of medication such as drowsiness, nausea, and memory loss. They may require special attention or equipment in order to succeed.

- **Psychological or Emotional Disabilities** are DSM-IV defined conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression, etc. These conditions, or the medication used to treat them, may create learning problems for the individual involving concentration, restlessness, anxiety, memory loss, etc.
• **Mental Impairments, Developmental Disabilities, or Intellectual Disabilities** may limit the ability of individuals to achieve higher academic levels. While these individuals may be unable to attain high school equivalency, many are able to achieve a sufficient level of basic skills to enable them to enter the workforce or go on for specific vocational training. These learners may not qualify for testing accommodations but require classroom and learning modifications such as constant reinforcement and concrete application of their learning in order to progress.

**Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities in the Classroom**

As an adult education instructor, you should familiarize yourself with the *Definition of Learning Disabilities* (Section 3 Appendix) and its application to adult learners and also examine the *Characteristics of Adults with Learning Disabilities* (Section 3 Appendix). By becoming familiar with these problem areas, you may be able to spot students with undiagnosed disabilities.

Remember— instructors are not professional diagnosticians. Many times we can recognize symptoms that *may* indicate disabilities, but it is not our role to label students. Some adults have documentation which identifies their disability and are thus legally entitled to instructional and testing accommodations. Other students who are undiagnosed can benefit from good teaching strategies.

Whether or not a learner has a diagnosis, instructors may begin to address the needs of students using some of the information and ideas found in an important article, *Techniques: Working with Adults with Learning Disabilities* (Section 3 Appendix), which provides strategies for students you suspect have learning disabilities.

**For further study:**

**Learning Disabilities Association of America: Support and Resources for Educators**
http://www.ldanatl.org/aboutld/teachers/index.asp
This site outlines specific strategies that apply to specific learning disabilities. It also contains tips for working with students who have been diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

**Learning Disabilities of America for Adults**
http://www.ldanatl.org/aboutld/adults/index.asp
This site has information for adults with learning disabilities on assessment, civil rights, workplace issues, post-secondary options, and social/emotional issues, etc.

**Learning to Achieve: Research-Based Resources and Professional Development to Increase Achievement of Students with Learning Disabilities**
*Learning to Achieve*, initially launched by the National Institute for Literacy, is designed to build state capacity to increase the achievement of students with learning disabilities. It includes an integrated set of research-based resources, professional development materials and a Train-the-Trainer Institute, based on the latest rigorous research. These tools are designed to increase teacher effectiveness in providing services to adults with learning disabilities.
Literacy and Learning Disabilities Special Collection: Understanding Learning Disabilities (LD)
http://ldlink.coe.utk.edu/understanding_ld.htm
This site provides information on learning disabilities including definitions, characteristics, legal issues associated with LD, as well as resources that provide information on how to cope with LD.

Classroom and Testing Accommodations for Students with Documented Disabilities
Students who present documentation of their disability have a right under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to request reasonable accommodations. Depending on the type of disability, the accommodations may include (but are not limited to):

- Extended time for learning and testing
- Private settings free of interruptions and distractions for learning and testing
- Frequent breaks or change of activity
- Calculators
- Spell checkers
- Word processors
- Audiotapes of presentations, texts, and tests
- Enlarged print
- Braille texts
- Readers
- Note-takers or scribes for learning and testing
- Sign language interpreters
- Assistive listening devices
- Furniture or room modifications to accommodate wheelchairs, etc.

TASC Test Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
Many adult learners state that getting a high school equivalency diploma is their primary reason for entering adult education programs. However, some adults who seem intelligent and study diligently may still fail in test-taking situations. Some individuals simply cannot perform under standard test-taking conditions (i.e., hours of sitting still to take a series of tests; a room full of people; a clock ticking off the time; a test which must be read silently). These adults may know the information perfectly well and yet be unable to demonstrate what they know because learning disabilities or attention disorders interfere with their performance under certain conditions.

Individuals with learning disabilities, ADHD, or physical or psychological disabilities may take the TASC test with specific accommodations at no additional charge.

If you are working with a learner that you believe may have a learning disability, it is important to access as much information about the individual as possible, while maintaining strict confidentiality. If the student has a record of special education, he or she may have been
diagnosed as a child. Another individual may have been through psychological testing for some other reason. These records may be accessed and used to document the condition for the purpose of obtaining accommodations.

In addition, it is important that instructors who work with the student provide information about the types of classroom accommodations that have been used successfully with the individual (extra time, frequent breaks, a quiet area for study, successful use of A/V materials in teaching, dramatic differences when using a calculator versus none, etc.) in the past.

Some students with physical disabilities (vision, hearing, physical, or emotional impairments) may also be able to request certain accommodations.

For more information on applying for TASC accommodations, see Section 12. To obtain the appropriate request for accommodation form(s), contact your local TASC Examiner.

The same accommodations that are available for the TASC Readiness Assessment (TRA) may be requested for the official TASC test. If a student has been approved for disability accommodations on the full-length TASC test, your program MUST use the same accommodations when administering the TASC Readiness Assessment. If you have worked with a student and believe that student may need accommodations and could pass the TASC test if they had accommodations, you may wish to administer a readiness assessment so the student can practice using those accommodations in order to make a case for the use of accommodations. This type of “practice” cannot be used to sign the TASC Voucher form unless the student has received formal approval for accommodations from the TASC Administrator.
SECTION 3 BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX

Section 3
Meeting the Needs of Adult Learners
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SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES (SLD) INITIATIVE'S DEFINITION OF LEARNING DISABILITIES

In 1999, the Office of Special Education Programs, which is under the U.S. Department of Education, began what was known as the Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) Initiative. As part of the SLD Initiative, a group of 10 organizations consisting of parents, state and local practitioners, researchers and policy developers, was assembled to work on developing a consensus statement about the nature of LD. This initiative involved a series of meetings, papers, and the development of a research-to-practice document.

The consensus definition of LD that came out of this initiative is as follows:

*Strong converging evidence supports the validity of the concept of SLD (specific learning disabilities). This evidence is particularly impressive because it converges across different indicators and methodologies. The central concept of SLD involves disorders of learning and cognition that are intrinsic to the individual. SLD are specific in the sense that these disorders each significantly affect a relatively narrow range of academic and performance outcomes. SLD may occur in combination with other disabling conditions, but they are not due primarily to other conditions, such as mental retardation, behavioral disturbance, lack of opportunities to learn, or primary sensory deficits.*
# NATIONAL JOINT COMMITTEE ON LEARNING DISABILITIES (NJCLD)
## DEFINITION OF LEARNING DISABILITIES

The following information is from *Bridges to Practice Guidebook 1: Preparing to Serve Adults with Learning Disabilities*, published by the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities (ALLD) Center. This information may help you recognize problems associated with learning disabilities.

The NJCLD definition is presented below in an annotated format to help you interpret its meaning as applied to adults.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NJCLD Definition</th>
<th>Application to Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders</td>
<td>There is neither one type of learning disability nor one profile for adults with learning disabilities. There are many different patterns of difficulties. For example, one adult may have a serious reading disability, while another may be able to read adequately, but not be able to communicate thoughts in writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manifested by significant difficulties</td>
<td>All individuals have strengths and weaknesses. Adults with learning disabilities have serious problems which affect one of life’s major functions in the home and the workplace. For example, an adult may not be able to work at a preferred job due to lack of literacy skills related to learning disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities.</td>
<td>Learning disabilities are specific in nature. Learning problems encompass one or more ability areas (e.g., reading or math), but do not necessarily include all ability areas. They do not represent simply a delay in development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These disorders are intrinsic to the individual,</td>
<td>Learning disabilities are part of a person’s neurological make-up. They are not eliminated by changes in the environment such as increased exposure to literacy events. Although a person can learn to deal effectively with a learning disability, it doesn’t go away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NJCLD Definition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Application to Adults</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction,</td>
<td>Although most adults with learning disabilities will not have a medical diagnosis of neurological disorder, the assumption is that there is some sort of difference or difficulty in how the brain works. Current research is shedding greater light on this area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and may occur across the life span.</td>
<td>Learning disabilities may be uncovered at different stages of a person’s life, depending on many factors. Some factors include severity of the disorder; academic, vocational, and social setting demands; and educators’ knowledge of learning disabilities. The symptoms change over time so that a learning disability in a 7-year-old child looks different from one in an adult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities</td>
<td>Some adults will have difficulty in self-control, perceiving social situations appropriately, and getting along with other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability,</td>
<td>The problems described in self-regulation, social perception, and interaction—while often present in adults with learning disabilities—also occur in people with other disabilities as well. There are many reasons for these types of problems other than underlying learning disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example, sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance)</td>
<td>A learning disability may be present with other disorders, but these conditions are not the cause of the learning disability. For example, an adult may have a hearing loss along with a learning disability, but the hearing loss is not causing the learning disability. Also, learning disabilities are not related to low intelligence. In fact, most people with learning disabilities are average or above average in intelligence, but the impact of the disability may impair their ability to function well in school, at home, or in the workplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NJCLD Definition</td>
<td>Application to Adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction).</em></td>
<td>Although learning disabilities are not the result of inadequate schooling or opportunity to learn, they are often exacerbated by these factors. For example, individuals with learning disabilities frequently have fewer opportunities to learn in their area of disability; they tend to be challenged less by their teachers and parents. Therefore, by the time individuals with learning disabilities become adults, they are further behind than the learning disability would predict.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

There is no single cause of learning disabilities and, therefore, no single set of characteristics. When considering adults with learning disabilities, it is important to recognize that a wide range of learning, social, and behavioral characteristics exist. Although these characteristics are not directly related to a lack of training or experience, a learning disability may have prevented an individual from profiting from these sources of information. The following characteristics are organized by deficit area: reading, writing, listening, speaking, mathematics, thinking, and “other.”

Listening Difficulties

Individuals with LD also may have problems with the processing of oral language. An individual with LD may demonstrate some or all of the following characteristics in listening:

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

The most prominent characteristic associated with LD is difficulty in learning to read. The term 'dyslexia' is often used to denote a reading problem, although in reality it is a disorder that interferes with the acquisition and processing of language and affects a variety of performance areas. In addition to the characteristics associated with dyslexia, an individual with LD may demonstrate some or most of the following reading characteristics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Characteristics</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Does not read for pleasure | • Engages in leisure activities other than reading magazines or books; prefers more active pursuits.  
  • Does not 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 Difficulties**

Many individuals with LD have difficulties with written expression. These problems often are found in combination with reading and spoken language difficulties. Writing difficulties often continue after other learning problems have been resolved. “Dysgraphia” is a term sometimes used to refer to writing problems. An individual with LD may demonstrate some or all of the following characteristics in writing:

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

An individual with LD may have problems producing oral language. These may include one or more of the following characteristics:

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

In some instances, individuals with LD have normal or above-normal mathematic skills. For others, mathematics is the primary area of disability or an area of disability in addition to other problems, such as reading disabilities. “Dyscalculia” is a term occasionally used to refer to problems in mathematics. An individual with LD may have one or more of the following characteristics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Math Characteristics</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t remember and/or retrieve math facts</td>
<td>• Uses a calculator or counts on fingers for answers to simple problems; e.g., 2 X 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn’t use visual imagery effectively</td>
<td>• Can’t do math in his/her head and writes down even simple problems. Has difficulty making change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 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 which involve this set of skills. |

### Thinking Difficulties

Although adults with LD do not have global difficulties in thinking, they may have specific problems in cognitive processing. These may include one or more of the following characteristics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thinking Characteristics</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 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 which seem disjointed, unrelated, or out of sequence. |
### Thinking Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has difficulty synthesizing ideas</td>
<td>• Pays too much attention to detail and misses the big picture or idea when encountering specific situations at home or at work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes impulsive decisions and judgments</td>
<td>• “Shoots from the hip” when arriving at conclusions or decisions. Doesn’t use a structured approach to weigh options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has difficulty generating strategies to acquire/use information and solve problems</td>
<td>• Approaches situations without a game plan, acting without a guiding set of principles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Other Difficulties
An individual with LD may have problems in addition to those listed above. These may include one or more of the following characteristics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 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                                              | • Omits or substitutes elements when copying information from one place to another, as in invoices or schedules. |
| Demonstrates poor fine-motor control, usually accompanied by poor handwriting  | • 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 unresponsive boss on the back in an attempt to be friendly. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has problems establishing social relationships. Problems may be related to spoken language disorders</td>
<td>• Does not seem to know how to act and what to say to people in specific social situations and may withdraw from socializing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacks “executive functions,” including self-motivation, self-reliance, self-advocacy, and goal-setting</td>
<td>• Demonstrates over reliance on others for assistance or fails to ask for help when appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Blames external factors on lack of success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Doesn’t set personal goals and work deliberately to achieve them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Expresses helplessness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TECHNIQUES: WORKING WITH ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Prepared by the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities (ALLD) Center

Research on teaching techniques for adults with learning disabilities is limited. The majority of research on learning disabilities instruction has focused on children, and these techniques do not necessarily work well with adults. The following is a list of teaching techniques that have been suggested as effective with adults who have suspected or diagnosed learning disabilities. This list is not all-inclusive, but it does provide suggestions for techniques and methods that may be useful in teaching adult learners.

Instructors and students should agree on the expected outcome of a program. They both should be involved in developing work plans on how they expect to reach the student’s goals. The following techniques may help to improve student involvement:

- Help set realistic goals.
- Set short-term goals so the student can experience immediate success.
- Consider meeting in a variety of ways. Be creative and flexible.
- Involve the student in determining how to evaluate specific goals.
- Involve students in the evaluation of their progress.
- Get adult students tested for hearing and vision problems, if necessary.
- Talk with students about what techniques work best for them.
- Develop a written work plan with learners and make sure they fully understand it.
- Discover what truly interests the learner through listening, discussions, and observations.
- Respect the uniqueness of each individual.
- Encourage risk-taking.
- Help students identify techniques that might be helpful in accommodating their learning disabilities.

Before students can begin assignments, they have to understand the instructions. The following techniques may help instructors introduce lessons effectively:

- Make an audio or video recording of the instructions.
- Make announcements in both oral and written forms—especially changes in the schedule, directions, assignments, or exams.
- Have a model of the finished product available for review.
- Show by example.
- Make directions specific, concrete, and understandable.
- Give a number of options for completing assignments.
- Tell your student what the whole lesson will concern, and explain what will be done first, second, and so on.
- Review major points of previous sessions. Preview main points to be covered. Outline both in several ways: written on the board, presented orally, and outlined in a handout.
- Make clear transitions from one task to another.
The key to effective teaching is to identify and employ techniques and methods that work with students. It is easier for instructors to adjust their teaching methods than it is for students to change the way they learn. The following suggestions may help instructors reach adult learners:

- Build on strengths rather than repeating weaknesses.
- Make eye contact frequently; this helps in maintaining attention and encouraging participation.
- Teach new concepts by relating them to practical applications.
- Be sure reading material is at the right level for the learner.
- Be sure print type is large enough.
- Relate material to everyday situations.
- Use language experience approaches and reading materials from the home and work environment to stimulate interest.
- Build on what the student already knows, making learning developmental, not remedial.
- Probe “incorrect” responses to discover thought processes.
- Teach students to correct their own mistakes.
- Do not assume that the learner knows something until you ask or teach it.
- Be creative and attempt to vary your teaching style.
- Encourage students to sit in the front of the classroom where they can hear well and have a clear view of the chalkboard.
- Keep the learning environment free of visual and auditory distraction.
- Establish a routine; this promotes organization and consistency.
- Use multi-sensory strategies to present materials: many learners must see, say, hear, and touch before they can develop full mental images that stick and make sense.
- Provide short-term tasks with short breaks between tasks.
- Repeat the activity until learning is accomplished, and provide opportunities to review.
- Respect different learning styles.
- Use materials that relate to an individual’s experiences.
- Change an activity when it is not working.
- De-emphasize timed tests.
- Incorporate keyboards (word processors or typewriters) into the lesson as much as possible. Studies show that some learners can produce 15 times more writing with a word processor than they can with a pen or pencil.
- Use formulas or rhymes to assist the memory.
- Encourage the use of learning aids and tools (e.g., calculators, highlighter pens, extra worksheets, computerized learning programs, records, tape recorders, films, demonstrations, maps, charts, experiences, fingers, and rulers).
- Use color whenever possible for visual impact.
- Provide the student opportunities to repeat verbally what has been taught as a check for accuracy.
- Work with other teachers and professionals and ask for ideas or opinions.
- Encourage the learner to find a mentor in addition to the tutor. The mentor can help the learner review information and apply classroom skills to practical situations.
- Talk with students about their learning process. Ask them what does and does not work for them.
• Be flexible with time schedules: work quotas should be adjusted to fit the work speed of each learner.
• Vary your lessons, re-teaching and reviewing in varieties of ways.
• Suggest reinforcement activities to be used at home (e.g. posting new words on the refrigerator door, repeated listening to a tape of vocabulary words, watching recommended educational television programs).

The better students feel about their learning experience, the harder they try. A positive environment will foster self-esteem in students, encouraging them to return. Consider the following when working with adult students:

• Pay attention to self-concept enhancement when working with disabled students.
• Do not embarrass, or insinuate laziness, or discourage an individual publicly or privately.
• Reduce emphasis on competition and perfection.
• Praise the learner’s accomplishments at the end of every session.
• Incorporate a sense of humor into the learning process.
• Communicate to students that you value them through smiling, listening, and eye contact.
• Praise what you might consider small or minor successes.
• Emphasize students’ strengths and encourage them to exercise them.
• Reinforce the effort and progress of the student.
• Teach to each student’s strengths and make each student a “star” as often as possible.

References:
