Step 6: Strategy Development

MUST READ

In this section you will find:

Below is a comprehensive list of general strategies for people with processing challenges, as well as specific strategies/accommodations in the different categories of difficulties (visual, auditory, organizational, etc.).

To complete the Summary/Action Plan: Based on the challenge areas identified in the Summary/Action Plan, look in the specific challenge areas in this section to find strategies that might be useful in a classroom setting (for example, if the learner has visual processing challenges, look in that section for reading, writing, and math strategies and accommodations).

Remember, **you and the learner should work together to decide what might work best**. It is important to remember that not all the strategies will work in a particular category, and that strategies in other domains may work as well. This gives you a starting place. You can always come back to these strategies for more ideas.

If a certain strategy is not working for the learner, search for a new strategy with him/her (this is not an exact science and there will likely be some trial-and-error involved in finding appropriate strategies for each learner).

> **People with learning challenges can succeed when appropriate strategies and accommodations are put in place to help them.**

The strategies and accommodations listed in this section came mainly from the following resources:

Crux, S. C. (1991). *Learning strategies for adults: Compensations for learning disabilities*. Toronto: Wall & Emerson, Inc.

Fowler, J. A. (2003). *Learning disabilities training: A new approach.* London: Literacy Link South Central.

Fowler, J. A., & Hunt, J. (2004). *Learning disabilities training phase II: Screening tools, strategies and employment.* London: Literacy Link South Central.

Hatt, P. (2001). (Susan Toews, Ed.) *Learning disabilities: Best practice and innovations.* Toronto: Ontario Literacy Coalition.

Hatt, P., & Nichols, E. (1992). *Target literacy: A learning disability resource guide*. Toronto: Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario.

Johnston, J. (1996). *Adults with learning disabilities: The road to success.* St. Catharines: Sureen Publishing & Productions.

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. (1991). *Bringing literacy within reach: Identifying and teaching adults with learning disabilities.* Ottawa: LDAC.

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. (n.d.). *Destination literacy: Identifying and teaching adults with learning disabilities.* Ottawa: LDAC.

Lindop, M. H. (2002). *Keys to effective learning disability teaching practice.* Electronic Resource. Retrieved January 7, 2005. Available: http://cls.coe.utk.edu.pdf/LD_Teaching_Practices.pdf

Martineau, M., & Peall-Ward, J. (1995). *Classroom strategies for at-risk students in the transition years.* Hamilton: The Board of Education for the City of Hamilton.

McCormack, S., & David, G. (2002). *Strategies for successful learning: A resource guide.* Mississauga: Peel-Halton-Dufferin Adult Learning Network.

Sarna, S. (n.d.) *Classroom accommodations for teachers of students with learning difficulties.* Quebec: Direction de l'education et de la cooperation.

Time Saver: Only look at strategies in sections where the learner has goals (for example: do not look at the math sections if the learner wants to focus on reading and writing skills). Also, use the database to enter the appropriate strategies and accommodations for the learner.

Definitions

Learning Strategies are specific techniques that can be customized to fit a learner's strengths and learning style (e.g., written vs. oral directions).

Accommodations are considerations made for the learner that take nothing away from the skill being learned, but accommodate his/her special learning needs (e.g., allowing a learner to use an empty room to work).

Adaptive Technologies are accommodations that utilize technological resources (e.g., word prediction software or using a word processor for written work) in order to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of the learner. See "An Introduction to Assistive Technology" (p. 142 for more details).

Mnemonics are tricks that use association for recall as opposed to memorization or rote memory. Mnemonic techniques include (but are not limited to):
- Using rhymes or setting information to a tune
- Using poems
- Looking at the visual shape of a word (drawing lines around it)
- Using acrostics - using the first letter of each word in a sentence to remember (e.g., **E**very **G**ood **B**oy **D**eserves **F**udge for music notation)
- Playing word games (puns/riddles)
- Using tongue twisters
- Using acronyms
- Using abbreviations
- Using visualization techniques (picture a cat ON the table to remember a code word for the short sound of "o")
- Connecting personally to the word or concept (using an example from real life)

Direct Instruction is teaching a learner a strategy or accommodation overtly. Most of us use learning strategies automatically, but a learner with learning challenges needs specific instruction. This is done by: modeling, teaching the skill directly, providing opportunities for repetition, teaching the learner how to maintain the strategy, and ensuring generalization to other tasks. All of these components are necessary for the learning strategy to be used comfortably by the learner (see p. 117 for more information).

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

Instructor Approaches/Class Culture

Learning challenges should not prevent people from reaching their goals. Below you will find a list of some suggestions for instructors focusing on general teaching strategies to create the ideal learning environment.

In order to be successful, people with learning challenges require **specialized interventions** in the home, school, community, and the workplace that are geared toward the individual's strengths and needs.

To support success, adult learners need   (Shapiro & Rich, 1999)
- supportive family members or support networks
- functional identification (knowing their learning strengths and challenges)
- appropriate interventions (strategies and accommodations)

Factors that contribute to achievement:
- small class size
- individualized instruction
- a willingness and the ability of the instructor to use a range of innovative instructional techniques to accommodate diverse learning styles
- understanding of learning strengths
- learner self-determination
- the learner's ability to set and pursue realistic goals
- well developed metacognitive skills (i.e., knowledge and insight about themselves as learners)
- an acceptance and understanding of his/her learning challenges
- good communication skills

(Shapiro & Rich, 1999)
- A positive attitude towards learning
- And a positive belief in oneself

(Fowler & Hunt, 2004)

Note: it is important to not only provide appropriate strategies and accommodations, but also to **challenge the learner outside of specific academic skills**. It is crucial that the learner be provided with opportunities to problem-solve, form opinions and make decisions in increasingly complex situations. In this way, you are helping the learner develop critical thinking skills as well as literacy skills.

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

Instructor Approaches:

Continual Professional Development: Instructors are continually faced with new teaching challenges and to meet those needs, it is important to seek out professional development opportunities in order to learn more about specific issues. It is also an excellent way to model lifelong learning for your learners.

Active Listening: Listen carefully to what a learner says and value his/her views and opinions. The learner is the expert when it comes to his/her learning and can provide valuable insight into your instructional techniques.

Direct Instruction: Separate content from process. Teach strategies **explicitly** before lesson content. For example, introduce the pre-reading strategy (looking at headings/length/number of pages, etc.) before using it with a text. A caution: limit the number of new strategies introduced (preferably one at a time).

Steps in direct instruction:

1. **Explanation** – what is the intention of the strategy or accommodation?
2. **Modeling** – model how to use the strategy effectively (use practical, current work)
3. **Self-instruction** – have the learner explain the strategy and how he/she uses it
4. **Practice** – provide various opportunities to practice the strategy on different tasks
5. **Provide feedback** – provide affirmative, constructive feedback (Is the strategy working well? How is the learner using it?)
6. **Implementation** – encourage the learner to report independent and routine use of the strategy

> **Using direct instruction is critical in helping learners use strategies and accommodations that suit them and their needs.**

Training Plans Should Be:
- individualized
- participatory
- flexible
- balanced (focus on strengths and challenges)
- continuous

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

Create a Comfortable/Supportive Learning Environment:
- share information about yourself
- orient learners to the environment (e.g., tour the entire building)
- incorporate "social chats" during class

Learner-Centred Approach: The program needs to focus on the individual learner. Activities and lessons should be centred around learner interests, goals, and learning styles. All learning should be relevant and meaningful for the learner. This way, the learner may have more success transferring skills into his/her daily life. Real/authentic materials should be used as much as possible and skills should be practiced in practical contexts. Also, it is important to realize that learners also play many other roles in their lives. Therefore, learning needs to be understood in terms of the whole person (the learner's history, current context, interests, goals, etc.).

Variety of Activities: Try to ensure that the learner is challenged in a variety of activities within a lesson. This will keep interest and motivation high, and ward off boredom and inattention. The attention span of learners will differ, but it is recommended that silent activities be interspersed with group work, presentations, etc. if possible.

Create Opportunities for Success: Because learners with learning challenges often have low self-esteem and self-confidence and have typically had negative past educational experiences, it is important to show the learner that he/she can be successful. You can do this by starting the learner at a place where he/she will experience initial success (start with a strength area or lower level tasks). Then increase skill complexity. When learners succeed, attribute their success to their effort and hard work.

Goodness of Fit: Goodness of fit refers to the connection between an instructing style and a learning style. Having these two elements match is a very good predictor of success. Specifically for a learner with learning challenges, a goodness of fit is integral in developing appropriate coping strategies and building on personal strengths. Therefore, an instructor has to be willing to teach the way the learner needs to be taught.

Positive Reinforcement: People with learning challenges have, in all likelihood, experienced years of frustration and disappointment in the areas of education, employment, and personal relationships. As a result, they likely suffer from a very low self-esteem and lack self-confidence, particularly in situations where they perceive that their educational skills may come into play. Therefore, in the classroom setting, it is important to outline a learner's strengths as much as possible, and recognize all successes when it comes to learning. It is helpful to

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explain to the learner that he/she will have "on" and "off" days. This can be frustrating for both the instructor and the learner so it is important to be patient and stay positive by providing positive feedback on the "on" days and encouragement on the "off" days. It is also important to explain to the learner - who may have experienced learned helplessness in past educational situations - that success is based on effort, not luck.

Consistent Approach: Consistency is important with most learners to be able to understand what an instructor expects from them. However, for learners with learning challenges, consistency and clarity becomes much more important. The class should be overtly structured by times of day, days of week, etc. so the learner can prepare for what is coming.

Teach in Small Chunks: It is helpful to teach new information in small chunks and give short, simple directions with a lot of repetition and constant review (you may want to overteach).

Disclose Strategies: It is also important for the instructor to inform the learner which instructional strategies are being used. This gives the learner a place to provide the instructor with positive or negative feedback about that strategy and helps the learner identify which strategies and styles work best.

Clearly Outline Expectations: It is very important that an instructor explains very clearly what is expected from the learner (academically, in the area of self-management, socially, etc.), and keep those expectations consistent. Go over class and learner expectations and have this available to hand out as well. This will add to the consistency of the classroom environment and the learner will know exactly what is expected (implicit expectations and rules may not be understood).

Define Purpose: As mentioned in the adult learning principles (see Appendix A – All About Learning Disabilities, p. 165), adults want to know why they are learning what they are learning. Effort should be made to explain why learning certain skills are important to the learner for his/her short and long term goals.

Customize the Environment: A learner may need many distractions to be able to stay stimulated and interested, none at all to focus, or may be flexible. It is important to customize the learning environment to meet a learner's style or needs.

Create a Community in the Learning Environment: It is important to create a sense of community in the classroom. Consider putting artwork on the walls, arranging the chairs or desks in a way that encourages interaction, create space

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outside the classroom where learners can relax together, ensure that learners have access to staff (open door policy), create spaces that the learners can call their own, provide refreshments, etc. This will help learners develop a support network with the instructor as well as their classmates.

Multiple Learning Styles: When a learner has specific learning challenges in some areas, learning styles become learning needs (Janet Johnston, 1996). Therefore, it is very important to shape activities to fit a learner's learning style(s). It is also important to give information in multiple learning styles or use multi-sensory learning in order to develop other learning style areas. When a learner is able to take in the information using several senses, it is more likely that the learner will understand and retain that concept or skill.

Advocacy: An instructor should also work with the learner to help him/her explain his/her challenges and become a self-advocate. It is important for a learner to be able to identify his/her strengths, weaknesses, preferred learning strategies and understand which accommodations work best in order to increase success in all environments/situations.

Continual Development: This Strategy Development section should be used as the first step in developing strategies and accommodations that work for a learner. It is a continual process between the learner and the instructor. The instructor should be constantly working with the learner to develop appropriate strategies for successful outcomes.

Ongoing Assessment: Lastly, it is important that assessment of skills and preferred strategies is ongoing - with the learner's continual input. The instructor may want to teach self-monitoring strategies so that the learner has the tools to provide feedback on his/her learning experiences on an ongoing basis.

General Learning Strategies

Lesson Closure: Be sure to "debrief" at the end of a lesson. Leave time to review what was learned that day and try one more example. That way, it will be clear if the learner is having difficulties. Of course, further review will be needed to ensure retention and mastery.

Metacognition/Self-Reflection: Similar to self-awareness and self-direction, and also similar to learning styles is metacognition - or learning about how we learn. It is important to encourage the learner to think about, understand, and control how he/she learns. This can be done by asking the learner how he/she approached a task and breaking down the learning process in order to make any necessary changes.

> Self-reflection sessions:
> - discuss with the learner how he/she completed the exercise
> - consider how his/her methods worked or didn't work
> - discuss ideas around what strategies could have been used

Goal Setting:
- help the learner set clear, realistic goals
- break the goal into short term goals
- set clear timelines (show how much time is needed to complete each step)
- monitor progress frequently

Learned Creativity: Find alternative ways to accomplish tasks that are difficult to perform the conventional way (the normal way isn't always the only way that works).

Frequent Review: Learners with learning challenges frequently have difficulties with short-term memory or retaining concepts. Begin each section with a review of the last to determine whether to re-teach or introduce new concepts.

Association: Try to pair ideas with ideas already known to trigger an associative memory or linkage.

Chunking: Help the learner learn by grouping letters, words, numbers or concepts into small chunks.

Inner Language: Encourage the learner to "talk in his/her head". This can help the learner walk through a problem logically.

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

Patterning: Record patterns of errors and strengths so that the errors can be worked on, and the strengths can be built up.

Prerequisite Skills: Teach the skills needed outside of the lesson first in order to make the new material manageable (e.g., vocabulary, ideas, etc.).

Skill/Task Dissection: Break down a skill into parts or sequences to make the skill easier to learn.

Running Record: Keep a written or oral record of lessons where a learner records the main concepts learned for review.

Voice-Over Narration: Describe everything you are doing in a lesson so the learner can notice the process, organization, and priority when learning.

Adjunct Questions: When reading, ask questions about what came before or what might come after a passage of text. This reinforces comprehension.

Concept Structuring: Create a diagram to track the main concepts of a piece of text so the learner can see the planning and structure of writing, as well as read for meaning.

Clear Language: Use clear, concise language to teach and give directions.

Learning Log: Encourage the learner to take notes or comment on which strategies and accommodations are helpful and which are not.

Overlearning/Mastery: Allow for repetition and vary the material and methods for the same content for practice.

Pre-Reading: Go over a text to learn about the layout, format, vocabulary, etc. It is also helpful to teach new vocabulary before reading an unfamiliar text.

Reverse Highlighting: Use a black marker to cover insignificant sections of a passage so the learner can get the main points.

Margin Monitoring: Have the learner put symbols in the margins of their reading to track their understanding.
- ✓   If they understand
- !   For new information – read carefully
- ?   If they don't understand – reread or ask for clarification

Sequencing Maps: Help the learner work with sequencing by mapping things on a line (linear/time), a circle (cycles), or by using a Venn diagram (for compare and contrast).

Daily Free Writing: Encourage the learner to write daily to encourage free and routine expression.

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

Learning Strategies for Learning Styles

Information taken from:

Lee, J. F., & Strohmaier, R. (2000). *Common assessment of basic skills*. Kingston: Literacy Link Eastern Ontario.

Visual Learners

- use charts or diagrams to explain or present ideas
- enjoy subject-related puzzles and games
- like books with pictures to accompany text
- make use of films, videos, overheads, slides, etc. to assist in learning
- show learning through pictures, posters, collages, etc.
- use highlighters to assist learning
- learn best using concrete examples: maps, globes, models, photos, etc.
- benefit from using computer programs

Auditory Learners

- vocalize ideas as they are written down
- discuss to learn and retain concepts and ideas
- talk through ideas and solutions
- learn best using poetry, music, songs, etc.
- benefit from debates, word games, tutorials, seminars, and group assignments
- use audio/visual media – CD's, DVD's, etc.
- collect information through verbal strategies – interviews, questionnaires, surveys, etc.

Kinaesthetic Learners

- need to be an active participant in learning
- use concrete materials to assist learning (hands-on learning)
- learn best by using role-play, charades, group activities, demonstrations, and presentations
- benefit from field trips, interviews, questionnaires, etc. to enhance learning
- enjoy subject-related games and puzzles
- need opportunities to move around

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

Strategies/Accommodations for Learners with Visual Processing Challenges

Communication

These learners usually have very good auditory processing skills.

- Give specific verbal directions, step-by-step, and written directions (both with demonstrations)
    - written directions should be in clear printing and use point form where possible (see Clear Writing Tips, p. 247)
- Highlight directions or main points
- Encourage continual feedback from the learner (e.g., Am I going too fast?)
- If using visual aids, use verbal cues along with them
- Provide specific examples

Reading

- Decoding
    - **use a structured phonics program**
    - use phonological awareness training:
        - rhyming
        - blending – e.g., what word does "b" + "oo" make?
        - phoneme counting – e.g., how many sounds are in the word "cow"?
        - phoneme segmentation – e.g., what sounds are in "fox"?
        - phoneme deletion – e.g., what word would you have if you took the "t" from the word "cart"?
        - phoneme addition – e.g., what word do you have if you add "t" to the end of the word "sea"?
    - teach the 44 phonemes explicitly (see Appendix E – Phonemes of English, p. 233)
    - find matching sounds in different words
    - to teach the alphabet – put pictures to letters
        1. teach 1:1 letter to sound relationships first (e.g., m, b, etc.)
        2. vowel sounds
        3. complex letter to sound relationships (e.g., c, k, g, sh, tion, etc.)
        4. teach the spelling rules

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Strategies/Accommodations for Learners with Visual Processing Challenges Cont…

- Decoding Cont…
  - use word families
  - teach syllabication (for decoding)
  - teach structure rules for prefix, suffix, root word, plurals, etc.
  - teach phonetic words before non-phonetic words (memorize difficult words or try to use mnemonics to remember words)
  - emphasize the hard-to-hear parts of words
  - use cloze exercises (leave words out of a text and have the learner fill in the blanks)
- Vocabulary
  - use voice repetition (have the learner say the word several times and use it in context)
  - read poems and rhymes out loud
  - play games such as tongue twister
- Reading Comprehension
  - if using a textbook – teach the learner how to manoeuvre around the book (formatting, where the index and answers are, etc.)
  - tracking: encourage the learner to follow along with a ruler or finger to keep his/her place on the page
  - use the learner's own stories for learning skills first
  - use texts with a lot of dialogue (easier to understand content)
  - highlight critical areas of texts
  - teach reading skills (see Appendix E – Reading Comprehension Monitoring Checklist p. 235 for more information)
  - read once for vocabulary and another time for meaning
  - teach word-find skills to find answers quickly
  - teach skimming skills (getting the main point out of a paragraph)
  - teach scanning (looking for important information)
  - use cloze exercises (filling in the blanks in a story) - (to help with prediction)
  - teach meta-cognitive strategies (interacting on a personal level)
  - taking notes: discuss the plot and make notes from the discussion
    - paraphrasing: read the paragraph, identify the main point, put the main point in own words, and add details
  - explicitly teach graphic reading material (graphs, charts, etc.)
  - teach various written formats, styles, and purposes
  - rewrite texts using the Clear Writing Tips (p. 247) to make texts easier to read

Strategies/Accommodations for Learners with Visual Processing Challenges Cont…

Writing

- Spelling
    - **use a structured phonics program**
    - teach the history or origin of words to provide a context
    - break words into syllables so the learner can hear chunks of words (have the learner put his/her hand on his/her chin in order to feel the syllables – one syllable every time the jaw goes down)
    - use oral spelling drills
    - use spelling tricks (mnemonics)
    - use letter tiles to spell – this makes the learner attune to every letter
    - use exaggerated sounds to remember words for spelling and reading (e.g., "scissor" – "sKissor")
    - teach word families (emphasize the sounds)
    - explicitly teach irregular sound combinations (e.g., "tion")
    - teach vowel rules (e.g., "when two vowels go walking, the first one does the walking")
    - look/cover/write - look at the word and note the difficulties, cover the word and say the word aloud, then write it and check it
    - overwork a word – consistent review until mastery
    - spell words out loud
    - keep a personal word dictionary of trouble words
    - encourage the learner to spell words in rhythm
- Format/Style
    - give examples or templates of different writing styles and formats
- Editing: Teach explicitly (see Appendix E – The Writing Process p. 241 for more information)
    - use COPS - Capitals, Overall appearance, Punctuation, Spelling
    - check work in segments
    - examine words letter by letter
    - use a ruler to follow the lines of print
    - use a highlighter to detect errors
    - re-write the whole word or sentence when there is an error
    - read work aloud
    - underline words that he/she is unsure of (use dictionary)
    - edit work 1-3 days after writing
    - give the learner clues as to where the errors are (if needed)

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

Strategies/Accommodations for Learners with Visual Processing Challenges Cont…

Visual Discrimination

- Explicitly explain the distinctive features of letters in relation to others (e.g., curved – "O" - vs. straight – "N")
- Highlight distinctive features with a highlighter or a different colour (e.g., highlight the stick on an "R" in comparison with a "P")
- Help the learner pick the correct spelling or a certain word from a list
- Fill in the blanks (c_t)
- Ask questions about words while the learner is looking at them (how many vowels, consonants, etc.)

Math

- Direct instruction for math:
    - instructor works through the problem aloud
    - learner talks the teacher through some examples
    - both the instructor and the learner talk through examples that the learner tries
    - the learner tries on his/her own (with instructor help if needed)
- Teach math signs and terminology explicitly
- Read word problems out loud to pick out the important information
- Talk through problems out loud
- Put problems into the learner's context
- Provide a pattern for solving problems (talk through the steps of the problem)
    - colour code steps in examples to make the order clearer
    - teach learners to verbalize the steps before beginning
- Use mnemonics (e.g., acrostic - BEDMAS)
- Have the learner keep a math dictionary of terms, symbols, and examples
- Use graph paper to help with alignment (or put another lined piece of paper underneath – sideways - to assist the learner)
- Enlarge worksheets
- Space questions further apart
- Break tasks down into smaller parts
- Use concrete examples to manipulate materials (e.g., cards, chips, money, measuring cups, etc.)
- If using a textbook – teach the learner how to manoeuvre around the book (formatting, where the index and answers are, etc.)

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

Strategies/Accommodations for Learners with Visual Processing Challenges
Cont…

Math Cont…

- Record the steps to a problem or math facts and have the learner listen to it
- Promote a good math attitude by organizing math experiences for fun
- Group problems with the same process together
- Use short drills, math games, etc.
- Have the learner teach a new concept that he/she has mastered to someone else
- Reduce the amount of math work the learner is assigned at one time
- Provide a "cheat sheet" of formulas, examples, etc.
- Have the learner restate problems in his/her own words
- Change calculation problems to word problems to help the learner see the problem in context
- Questions for attacking math problems (see Appendix E, p. 239)
- Encourage learners to write down as many steps as they can remember, even if they are unable to find the answer
- Teach the learner how to use a calculator
- Integrate new skills with those already learned
- Review skills over time to promote generalization and fluency
- Have the learner develop a crib sheet of number words for cheques

Accommodations:

- More time to complete work
- Decrease distractions
- Check to make sure the lighting is appropriate (natural light is better than synthetic light – avoid fluorescent light if possible)
- Possibly work in discussion groups (encourage oral explanation)
- Have the learner work with a partner for assistance
- Provide the learner with various models of written work
- Limit the amount of direct copying
- Use coloured transparencies over reading or coloured paper (this may help the brain organize the information better – possibly sooth the eye and relax the brain to accept the information)
- Be sure that all materials given to the learner follow Clear Writing principles (see Clear Writing Tips for details, p. 247)

Strategies/Accommodations for Learners with Visual Processing Challenges Cont…

Accommodations Cont…

- Encourage the use of a dictionary and thesaurus
- Give the learner math tables/formulas or quick cards for reference

Strategies/Accommodations for Learners with Auditory Processing Challenges

Communication (Listening/Receptive)

This learner usually has very good visual processing skills.

- Get the learner's attention before giving directions
- Give visual directions (written/pictures) with a demonstration and with oral directions
- Give oral directions slowly and repeat them (use vocabulary that the learner is comfortable with)
    - use simple sentences (clear) – do not use unnecessarily complex sentence structure (e.g., embedded questions within a question)
    - avoid negatives
    - provide information in small chunks (1-2 directions at a time)
    - encourage the learner to ask for clarification if he/she does not understand and repeat the instructions in his/her own words
    - use gestures when giving directions
    - give examples
- Vary loudness to increase attention
- Encourage continual feedback from the learner (e.g., Am I going to fast?)
- If teaching lessons – limit to 10-15 minutes sections
- Speak to the learner face-to-face (maintain good eye contact)
- Teach non-verbal cues overtly
- Use kinaesthetic activities as much as possible to reinforce ideas or lessons
- Maintain eye contact, use appropriate touch, and use the name of the learner
- Give visual summaries of the material
- Vary speech patterns (tone, volume, etc.)
- Give information in small chunks (repeat often)
- Make lessons brief and concrete
- Have the learner paraphrase
- Encourage the learner to take notes
- Encourage the learner to develop his/her listening skills during everyday activities (e.g., listening to the radio, taking part in conversations, playing oral games, etc.)

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

Strategies/Accommodations for Learners with Auditory Processing Challenges Cont…

Communication (Expressive)

- Vocabulary
    - teach word rehearsal (repeat a word sub-vocally, visualize it, rhyme it, and/or make an association)
    - have the learner make up sentences with restrictions (e.g., only one vowel in all words, or start every word with the same letter, etc.)
    - provide explicit opportunities for the learner to talk (provide specific vocabulary for the exercise)
- Pronunciation
    - practice tongue-twisters
- Word retrieval
    - categorize lists of words
    - name as many things about a subject as possible in one minute
    - do sentence-completion tasks
    - when the learner can't think of a word – ask him/her to relax, focus on associations made when searching for the word (out loud), and go through the alphabet to find a cue
- Use a structured grammar program (for speech and for writing)
- Use role-playing

Reading

- Decoding
    - try using a structured phonics program (this may be somewhat helpful but likely the learner will need to rely on whole word identification)
    - use a whole word reading approach
        - have the learner read his/her **own stories** repeatedly or read them together – possibly have the learner copy it out (have the learner dictate stories and write them in his/her **own words**)
        - use the experience chart method (have the learner dictate stories and then chart the vocabulary used)
        - have the learner look for specific words in texts
        - have the learner put words in order to make sentences
        - use cloze exercises for word prediction
        - to teach new words – introduce and then read it in context (seeing words in context is critical for non-meaningful words such as "the" or "at")

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Strategies/Accommodations for Learners with Auditory Processing Challenges Cont…

Reading Cont…

- Decoding Cont…
    - use word families
    - teach syllabication (for decoding)
    - teach structure rules for prefix, suffix, root word, plurals, etc.
    - use flash cards with personalized, meaningful vocabulary
    - encourage visualization of words (mental pictures)
    - emphasize the hard-to-hear parts of words
- Reading Fluency
    - duet reading (read together)
    - repeated reading of the same passage (4+ times)
    - use speeded word training or rapid reading to increase reading fluency – have the learner read the same passage out loud over and over again as fast as he/she can
        - readers with an auditory processing difficulty require many more exposures to a printed word over a much longer period of time before the stored representations are clear
    - track decoding fluency – make a progress chart that has the date and how many words per minute the learner is reading (make goals every week or month)
- Reading Vocabulary
    - encourage the learner to read for pleasure
    - use a word builder or diary (write out cues for pronunciation)
    - use word searches and crossword puzzles
    - repetition, write out new words
    - use fill-in-the-blank exercises
    - use synonym and antonym exercises
- Reading Comprehension
    - use high-interest, low-vocabulary books and/or books on tape for oral comprehension
    - do not have the learner read aloud until he/she is comfortable with the vocabulary
    - use the learner's own stories to start, rather than prepared text
    - be sure that the material is relevant and meaningful
    - rewrite texts of interest (revise complex syntax and vocabulary)
    - teach new words and background knowledge before reading a passage
    - use explicit instruction for connecting or signal words (such as prepositions) and how they can change the meaning of the text

Strategies/Accommodations for Learners with Auditory Processing Challenges Cont…

Reading Cont…

- Reading Comprehension Cont…
    - discuss the purpose for the reading
    - read once for vocabulary and another time for meaning
    - use cloze exercises to help the learner see that he/she can predict unknown words through context clues
    - use context clues – understanding the meaning of unfamiliar words
        - go over the last sentence to see if there is a clue
        - skip the word and read ahead
        - look carefully at different parts of the word to find a clue (prefix, suffix, root word, etc.)
        - look for definitions in the sentence or surrounding sentences
        - look for an example of the word
        - look for comparisons or contrasts made to the word
        - inferences – look at the number of details and have the learner use his/her own experience to guess at the meaning
    - teach reading comprehension or comprehension monitoring strategies so the learner knows what to look for (see Appendix E – Reading Comprehension Monitoring Checklist, p. 235)
        - ask leading questions (e.g., What is happening? What will happen next? Was this action the right thing to do?)
        - connect with personal experiences (e.g., Have you ever been in this situation? How did it make you feel?)
        - help the learner monitor his/her comprehension by first correcting, then asking leading questions (e.g., Does what you read make sense? Did that word sound right?), then have the learner report when he/she thinks a word or phrase is not right until the learner can identify and correct his/her errors in reading and comprehension
    - teach note-taking skills
        - highlight important information for note taking
        - have the learner write out the headings in a piece of reading to write down the important points of each section
        - ask the learner to paraphrase the main points (orally if comfortable, or written)
    - have the learner visualize the story or events
    - make a drawing or a word web about the story to connect with it

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

Strategies/Accommodations for Learners with Auditory Processing Challenges Cont…

Reading Cont…

- o use reading comprehension questions:
    - o teach word search skills to find answers to reading comprehension questions
    - o use multiple-choice questions about the text (helps if the learner can see the answer on the page
- o teach various formats of writing and the purposes for each
- o read aloud to the learner above his/her own reading level – this way the learner will experience new and complex vocabulary and ideas or use books on tape

Writing

- Spelling
    - o try using a structured phonics program (this may be somewhat helpful but likely the learner will need to rely on whole word strategies)
    - o use a whole word approach (see reading strategies, p. 132)
    - o teach the spelling rules explicitly
        - o use charts for rules
    - o teach word patters (use word families)
    - o teach syllabication (word chunking)
    - o use written spelling drills
    - o help the learner develop a personal dictionary
    - o overwork words – consistently review until mastery
    - o play word and spelling games
    - o trace words in the air (combining visual and kinaesthetic learning styles)
    - o use the "look/cover/write" strategy – look at the word and note the difficult parts, cover the word and say it aloud, then write it and check it
    - o use spelling tricks (mnemonics)
        - o use pictures/visualization to remember words (e.g., scissors – the two "ss" are loops on scissors)
    - o note the shape of difficult-to-remember words

Strategies/Accommodations for Learners with Auditory Processing Challenges Cont…

Writing Cont…

- Format/Style
    - give examples or templates of different writing formats
    - use a structured grammar program (for speech and for writing)
    - have the learner write out words and stories (the act of writing helps imprint the words)
    - organize writing with a word map or drawing
    - use pictures as the base for writing
    - use the 5 "W's" as a base for writing (who, what, where, why, when and how)
- Editing
    - teach explicit editing techniques (give the learner a checklist to follow – see Appendix E – The Writing Process p. 241) - have the learner
        - check for COPS - Capitals, Overall appearance (neatness, margins, etc.), Punctuation, and Spelling
        - check work in segments
        - examine words letter by letter
        - use a ruler to follow the lines of print
        - use a highlighter to detect errors
        - re-write the whole word or sentence when there is an error
        - read work aloud (to hear errors – specifically grammar)
        - underline words that he/she is unsure of (use a dictionary)
        - edit work 1-3 days after writing
        - give the learner clues as to where the errors are (if needed)

Math (see Visual strategies section p. 128)

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

Strategies/Accommodations for Learners with Auditory Processing Challenges Cont…

Accommodations

- More time to complete work
- Decrease distractions (e.g., noise)
- Possibly have the learner listen to background music (without lyrics) to block out distractions
- Rely on visual aids (pictures, graphs, overheads, computers, etc.)
- Provide outlines of the lesson
- Use a highlighter to take notes
- Encourage the use of a dictionary or thesaurus
- Allow the learner access to dates, formulas, maps, etc.
- Write homework down daily and/or weekly
- Use small groups for discussions as opposed to class discussions (learners with auditory processing challenges find it hard to follow or contribute to large discussions)
- If teaching a lesson in a group:
  - have the learner sit close to you when teaching
  - encourage the learner to pair up with someone else to help during lessons

Strategies/Accommodations for Learners with Organizational Processing Challenges

Communication/Lesson Planning

- Give directions in a variety of formats: oral and written
    - encourage the learner to ask for repetition or clarification if needed
    - provide examples
- Make expectations very clear
- Define the specific requirements for an activity and instruct the learner to continue with that task until completion
- Provide specific positive reinforcement (reward effort and initiative, as well as achievement)
- Provide advanced notice for all lessons
- Use a timetable for lessons
- Provide guidelines for assignments
- Provide checklists for assignments to stay on track
- Help the learner understand why things happen and help him/her see that new information is like information already known (connect with the learner's own experience and knowledge)
- Encourage the use of an appointment book, address book, and calendar (refer frequently to the planner)
- Keep a numbered list of priorities
- Use message pads
- Encourage self-assessment and monitoring - identify time-wasters the learner has, identify strengths and weaknesses in time management and explore strategies that may increase his/her organization
- Break down tasks into small chunks or steps
- Provide time limits for activities
- Link all material to practical situations (preferably a personal situation for the learner)
- Choose activities of interest to the learner

Strategies/Accommodations for Learners with Organizational Processing
Challenges Cont…

Reading

- Decoding
    - help the learner decode using sounds, sight, and context clues
- Reading Comprehension
    - teach the patterns of writing (format)
    - use the learner's stories first
    - link information the learner reads to information that he/she already has and uses (make it meaningful)
    - teach different ways to read: for general information, for enjoyment, for specific information, etc.
    - play mental problem-solving games (so the learner has to re-order and analyze information quickly) – e.g., 20 questions, board games, etc.
    - use pre-reading questions (see Reading Comprehension Checklist p. 235)
    - look for who, what, where, why, when, and how
    - teach word search skills to find specific answers or information
    - explain that questions usually go in the same order as the text
    - use a glossary to find specific topics
    - use reverse highlighting - block out insignificant pieces of the text so the learner can see the main points more clearly
    - find the main idea – identify the topic and the ideas about the topic
        - categorize the details
        - identify main points for each paragraph
        - identify the main ideas for the whole text

Writing

- Penmanship
    - teach letter formation – give the learner letter charts
    - teach printing and cursive writing explicitly (or just use whichever the learner is most comfortable with) - encourage printing (it is easier and clearer)
    - try a variety of implements (possibly get a rubber grip) - find what is most comfortable for the learner
    - use paper with raised lines or use graph paper
    - use a computer or typewriter (teach keyboarding skills)

Strategies/Accommodations for Learners with Organizational Processing
Challenges Cont…

Writing Cont…

- Spelling
  - use mnemonics
  - select words that the learner wants or needs to learn
  - use games: Scrabble, word searches, crosswords, etc.
  - organize words into groups with the same meaning or association (categories)
  - teach the Latin meanings of prefixes and suffixes (provides a meaningful context)
- Format/Style
  - use graphic organizers
  - writing planning: (for more see "The Writing Process" in Appendix E, p. 241)
    1. Who is the writing for?
    2. Why are you writing?
    3. What do you know already about what you will be writing?
    4. How should you group your ideas?
    5. How should you organize your ideas?
  - use POWER: Planning, Organizing, Writing, Editing, Revising
  - teach explicit writing organization techniques
  - teach explicit editing techniques – (For more information see "The Writing Process in Appendix E, p. 241) - Have the learner:
    - use COPS - Capitals, Overall appearance, Punctuation, Spelling
    - check work in segments
    - examine words letter by letter
    - use a ruler to follow the lines of print
    - use a highlighter to detect errors
    - re-write the whole word or sentence when there is an error
    - read work aloud
    - underline words that the learner is unsure of (use dictionary)
    - edit work 1-3 days after writing
    - gives the learner clues as to where the errors are (if needed)

Strategies/Accommodations for Learners with Organizational Processing
Challenges Cont…

Math:

- Use practical situations
- Use the learner's own situations
- Practice writing columns efficiently
- Use peer tutoring or cooperative learning
- Teach different math problems (change, group, compare, etc.) and create schematic representations or diagrams to highlight missing elements

Accommodations:

- More time to complete work
- Decrease distractions (e.g., noise)
- Keep to a routine
- Perform regular performance checks to help the learner keep organized
- Help the learner maintain a calendar or schedule to help him/her remember appointments, assignments, etc.
    - possibly use a personal data manager (voice activated – see "An Introduction to Assistive Technology", p. 142)
- Use ring binders (colour coded) or filing boxes for organization
- Penmanship - try various types of writing instruments
- Use matrix paper for math work

An Introduction to Adaptive Technology

Below you will find a list of different types of assistive technologies that can be used to assist learners. This is not an exhaustive list, but will serve as an introduction.

This information was gathered from:

> Northwest Territories Literacy Council – A Guide to Assistive Technology to Support Literacy Learners with Disabilities
> www.nwt.literacy.ca/adultlit/assistec/cover.htm

An important factor to keep in mind with assistive technologies is the cost and the time it takes to learn how to use the technology effectively. This means that you, the instructor, will have to learn how to use and teach the learner how to use it - not only in the classroom, but also at home and work settings as well.

For Learners with Reading Difficulties

> **Optical Character Recognition** systems (OCR), combined with speech synthesis (where the computer reads the text for the learner), can be considered "reading machines". They allow the learner or the instructor to put a hard copy text in a scanner. The software then reads the text back to the learner. This way, the learner can hear as well as see the text.

> **Speech Synthesis** software can also function alone if the text is available digitally (computer disk, Internet, etc.).

> **Tape Recorders** can be used to play back audio taped text (e.g., books on audio tape).

> **Variable Speech Control (VSC) Tape Recorders** allow the learner to play back audio-taped text faster or slower than originally recorded.

For Learners with Writing Difficulties

> **Word Processors** are very helpful for written assignments to ease the challenges the learner may have in spelling (spell check), grammar (grammar check), penmanship, editing, etc. In this way the learner can focus on what he/she wants to express, not just on mechanics. The writer's confidence may increase because his/her work will be neat, clean, and presentable.

Proofreading Programs check for errors such as grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and word usage. The program gives the learner the opportunity to correct mistakes prior to printing. As with most technologies, this type of program is not perfect - the learner must be somewhat accurate in order for the program to offer appropriate suggestions for revision.

Speech Synthesizers (text-to-speech software) allow the learner to hear his/her material out loud. Hearing written text may assist the learner in identifying and correcting errors and to determine if his/her writing makes sense. This is especially helpful for learners who are more comfortable listening than reading.

Speech Recognition Systems (speech-to-text software) allow a learner to dictate his/her writing to the computer through a microphone. These systems require that the learner first "train" the software to recognize his/her voice. However, the more the system is used, the more accurate it becomes. This may be particularly helpful for learners who have strong oral language skills and need assistance with their writing skills.

Outlining Programs help the learner create outlines of his/her written work. These programs help the learner create major headings and subheadings. This type of program is helpful for learners who have great ideas but experience difficulty in getting them down on paper in an organized way.

Brain Storming/Mind Mapping Programs allow the learner to create a diagram of his/her ideas before writing an outline. The learner types in a main idea and then types in related ideas that appear as shapes surrounding the main idea. Ideas can be easily moved, rearranged, and categorized. After the diagram is completed, it can be changed into an outline.

Word Prediction Programs work with a word processor to predict the next word that a learner may use. The learner types the first letter and the program offers a list of words that begin with that letter than might make sense in the sentence. If the word appears that the learner wants, it can be chosen from a list. Word prediction may be helpful for learners who have difficulty with keyboarding, spelling, grammar, or have difficulty coming up with words to use in a sentence.

Alternate Keyboards allow the learner to individualize the keyboard by changing the layout and appearance of the keys. For example, the letters can be changed to be in the order of the alphabet, and the letters can be made bigger. This is a great resource for learners who have difficulty with keyboarding.

For Learners with Listening Difficulties

Personal FM Listening Systems allows the speaker to talk directly into a listener's ear by using a small transmitter unit (microphone) and a receiver unit (ear phones). This device makes the speaker's voice more prominent, which may be helpful for those learners who have difficulty focusing on what a speaker is saying. This may not be of benefit in the LBS classroom, but may be considered if the learner's goal involves further education/training.

Tape Recorders can be used to tape spoken information such as instructions or a lesson. This way, the learner can play the lesson back as needed in order to review the information.

For Learners with Organization or Memory Difficulties

Personal Data Managers (software packages or hand-held devices) can be very useful because they allow the learner to easily store and retrieve large amounts of personal information (telephone numbers, addresses, appointments, etc.). However, day-books or calendars can work here as well.

Free-Form Databases are software programs that allow the learner to type notes into the computer (much the same as a notepad). The note is displayed on the computer monitor and can be stored in the computer's memory. Specific notes can be retrieved by typing in any bit of information contained in the note.

For Learners with Mathematical Calculation Difficulties

Talking Calculators use a built-in speech synthesizer to say the number, symbol, or operation keys as they are typed in and also read back answers from completed calculations. Hearing the numbers or symbols may assist some learners to catch errors at the input level, such as pressing the wrong key.

Other General Adaptive Technologies

- Magnification software – enables the learner to change the background, font, etc. to suit his/her needs
- Talking or large print Internet browsers
- Books on tape or disk
- Directionality software: reading maps, legends, street signs, etc.
- And much, much more…

For more information on specific assistive technologies that can be purchased for your classroom visit:

Northwest Territories Literacy Council – A Guide to Assistive Technology to Support Literacy Learners with Disabilities
www.nwt.literacy.ca/adultlit/assistec/cover.htm

OR

NALD – Literacy and Adaptive Technology Project (see Appendix A – Software Summary)
www.nald.ca/fulltext/adaptech/cover.htm

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

Other Factors: Strategies/Accommodations that May be Helpful

Attention Strategies

- Explicitly teach and/or discuss individual attention strategies (most learners will have already developed a few "focusing" strategies – some learners may have to play with their pen or tap their foot, others may have to listen to music)
- Use structure in lessons (timetable) so the learner can see what is coming next)
- Have the learner do to-do lists
- Decrease distractions
- Take frequent breathing breaks (increase or decrease breaks to fit the learner's needs)
- Have the learner work in a comfortable, quiet place
- Maintain eye contact
- Encourage the learner to write down his/her questions before speaking
- Encourage the learner to stop and think before answering a question (at least 5 seconds)
- Monitor the learner's attention throughout the day to find high and low attention points (possibly have the learner self-monitor using a rating scale) – then schedule lessons when he/she is the most alert if possible
- Make sure the learner is not working when hungry
- Encourage movement
- Avoid repetitive drills - vary activities frequently
- Keep assignments short with immediate feedback
- Have the learner ask metacognitive questions – What has worked for me in the past? How can I remember that tomorrow? What strategies will help me?
- Focus on meaning – to help the learner attend to the material
- Play games (good way to stay focused)

Accommodation

- Have earphones tuned in to the instructor for listening

Memory Strategies

- Use mnemonics:
    - association - substitute words, exaggerate, use actions and visualizations, etc.
    - concreteness - connect to the tangible (easier to remember)
    - automaticity - repeat until automatic
- Rehearsal – repetition of what is to be remembered
- Break assignments into shorter tasks
- Organization – group objects or classify them in some way to make them more meaningful
- Use short sentences when explaining
- Relate information to the learner's world/context
- Give an overview of the lesson before beginning
- Cover one concept at a time
- Review previous concepts or lessons before moving on to new material
- Use learning lists (e.g., months of the year – review by asking position questions such as what comes after February?)
- Continually repeat (review information in different formats)
- Continually monitor the learner (discuss his/her understanding, difficulties, etc.)
- Have the learner take notes on verbal directions and ask for clarification if needed
- Have the learner highlight the important concepts
- Have the learner explain new concepts in his/her own words
- Use multi-sensory, multi-learning style activities and instructing styles
- Use games
- Encourage metacognitive and self-awareness strategies to monitor the learning or memory process - How do I remember?
- Encourage the learner to sub-vocalize to remember

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

Personal/Social Strategies

- Look for LD support groups in the community (or other support groups needed)
- Develop a support network for the learner (inside and outside the classroom if possible)
- Teach non-verbal cues explicitly
- Have the learner practice reading non-verbal cues in a safe environment
- Communicate very clear expectations of behaviour
- Provide choices (even if they are limited)
- Create a relaxed environment
- Include the learner in the planning process
- Encourage independence
- Scheduling: keep abrupt changes to a minimum
- Encourage "stop & think" behaviour
- Decision-making:
  - encourage the learner to explore his/her options
  - have the learner write down possible options (and write down the advantages and disadvantages to each option)
  - possibly do some role playing
- Goal setting:
  - work to set goals that are realistic but also allow the learner to reach his/her potential - have the learner keep a goal list
- Model positive self-talk when working through a problem (e.g., "this math problem has a lot of steps - I just need to do them one at a time and not give up")
- Encourage positive speaking and provide positive feedback
- Emphasize improvement, not perfection
- Encourage a strong work ethic
- Develop a trusting relationship with the learner
- Teach social skills explicitly
- Teach and/or encourage self-advocacy skills:
  - encourage the learner to find out more about his/her learning challenges and strength areas
  - help the learner look at the learning challenges in a positive way (focus on strengths and the strategies that the learner has developed)
  - help the learner understand the laws around learning disabilities (Canadian Charter of Rights – Section 15)
  - help the learner work around those who will not help him/her and seek out those who will

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

- o work with the learner to help him/her be independent after upgrading
- o help the learner to expect success with determination
- Help the learner find an area of excellence
- Encourage the learner to share his/her knowledge and gifts with others
- Teach learners about others who have overcome their challenges
- Share your own challenges and how you have handled them
- Encourage the learner to talk about his/her feelings
- Help the learner find constructive things to do to help him/her feel better
- Encourage the learner to keep a journal to record thoughts and feelings
- Teach stress-management techniques (visualization, deep muscle relaxation, etc.) – possibly look for stress-management seminars in your community

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

Self-Awareness/Self Direction Strategies

Self-Awareness/Self-Direction Skills: Teach these skills explicitly and involve the learner in the skills that are addressed. It is appropriate to address these skills in the context of practical work, but the instruction should be clearly focused on developing self-awareness and self-direction so it is clear to the learner. This might be done through specific workshops. Self-assessment and feedback is crucial for the ongoing development of these skills. Be patient, these skills take time to develop.

> For more on this topic see: (in reference list)
> *The Level Descriptions Manual*, pages 93-110
> *Supporting Learning, Supporting Change: A Research Project on Self-Management & Self-Direction*, Katrina Grieve
> *Supporting Learning, Supporting Change: Developing an Approach to Helping Learners Build Self-Awareness and Self-Direction*, Katrina Grieve
> *Supporting Learning, Supporting Change: Program Approaches to Building Self-Awareness and Self-Direction*, Katrina Grieve

The topic of self-awareness and self-direction is sometimes difficult to discuss with learners. A good way to approach the subject is through learning styles. Instructors could ask learners what supports them in their learning and what gets in the way and use this as a launching pad to discuss other issues such as: support networks, the learning environment, fears from previous learning experiences, messages we get from ourselves and others and the stresses of everyday life, etc. (Grieve, 2004). Once you have successfully integrated self-awareness and self-direction ideas into the classroom it is important to use a cycle of action and then reflection to strengthen learning, gain new insights, and draw on new resources (Grieve, 2004).

- **Self Reflection**
    - o   have learners **reflect** on the ideas they have about themselves and the messages they have received from others in order to challenge personal learning myths - in this way instructors can help learners see their past experiences in a different way in order to move forward with learning in a positive way
    - o   learners must also **analyze external forces** such as their barriers, supports and internal forces (i.e., their positive or negative attitudes about learning) - in this holistic way the learner can understand his/her learning context and work to make it more positive

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

- **Making Connections**
  - have learners relate to others in the class and in the community and work to **understand different perspectives**
  - develop and use strategies for dealing with interpersonal conflict
  - develop the ability to work as part of a team
- **Action/Reflection**
  - encourage learners to actively participate in the community and discuss their responsibility of their choices and actions
  - use a combination of assisted, independent and collaborative activities
  - work through problem-solving activities in real-life contexts (school, home, work, etc.)
  - encourage self-expression (through presentations, arts, etc.)
- **Practical Strategies**
  - work on how to find information (research skills, types of questions to ask, etc.)
  - work on learning to question (considering other perspectives, questioning ourselves and what we read, etc.)
  - work on learning to get help and communicating needs (different sources of help and the implications of communicating our needs or not)
  - develop decision-making skills (factors to consider)
  - develop problem-solving skills (help the learner to develop the ability to identify problems and generate solutions, use a variety of approaches to deal with problems, break down problems into manageable parts and develop the ability to transfer problem-solving skills to other situations)
  - use planning and organizing strategies in the classroom and encourage the learner to use those skills in other settings
  - self-assessment – help the learner assess how he/she is doing (getting feedback and constructive criticism, understanding the purpose of assessments, etc.)
  - goal setting skills – help the learner set short and long term goals based on interest and abilities, breaking down long term goals into short term goals and evaluating the progress towards those goals
  - concentration and memory – help the learner develop the ability to focus on a task, persevere and develop strategies to increase memory to improve retention
  - thinking skills – help the learner develop reasoning and logic skills through practice, transferring knowledge from previous learning to a new task, clearly explaining ideas and using a variety of approaches to deal with new information

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o time management and organization skills – see Strategies and Accommodations for Learners with Organization Processing Challenges, p. 138

To search for materials already created around this topic (e.g., workshops and resources) you may want to visit the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD). This site includes a searchable database of materials (please see the "Resources" section – p. 250 for more information).

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Strategies for Learners with Further Education/Training Goals

Test or Exam Tips and Strategies:

- Ask your teacher to discuss the different types of questions on a test and the best strategies to answer them (multiple-choice, true/false, short answer, essay, etc.)
- Study well in advance of the test (not just the night before)
- Get a good night's sleep the night before and eat a good breakfast in the morning
- Try to relax – there is nothing you can do but write down what you know and you will be able to get at that information easier if you are not overly stressed
- Bring all the necessary materials (pen, pencil, calculator, etc.)
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing
- Allow enough time to get to school and get organized before writing
- Before beginning the test, write down a few formulas, figures or facts that may help you during the test
- Read the instructions at the top carefully
- Skim over the whole test first to get a feel for what is on it
- Underline or highlight key words and concepts in each question
- Budget your time according to the marks allotted for each question or section (take a watch or sit where you can see a clock)
- Start with questions that you know the best – if you feel you are short on time, answer the questions that are worth the most marks
- Number all the questions carefully in the margin of your answer sheet (don't put any other information in the margin)
- Leave a lot of space between questions in case you want to add information that you think of later (if you can, start each new question on a new page)
- Jot down main points and then organize these points – then write out your answer (if there is time for all of these steps)
- Assume that your reader knows nothing – include as many details and examples in your answer as you can
- Follow the format directions exactly – does it ask for point form, short answer, or essay format?
- Use diagrams or charts to help illustrate or work out answers
- If there is not a request for the number of points to give, look at the marking scheme – if the question is worth 5 marks, you should give at

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least 5 points (check with the teacher before the exam to discuss which system is used on the test)
- Make sure your answers are legible and clear
- Leave time at the end to read over answers and make any necessary additions or revisions and be sure that you have answered all the questions

Taken from:
Martineau, M., & Peall-Ward, J. (1995). *Classroom strategies for at-risk students in the transition years.* Hamilton: The Board of Education for the City of Hamilton.

Accommodations:

- Most secondary and post-secondary institutions will offer specific accommodations if documentation of a learning disability is provided (the documentation required may differ based on the school so it is important to research this before applying
  - o you will need to know if they require a formal diagnosis from a psychologist or physician (a psycho-educational assessment) or just documentation from your last school (possibly an Individualized Education Plan from high school or the report from this assessment)
  - o before or while applying, make an appointment with an admissions counsellor to research what accommodations are available and other supports available
    - ▪ many post-secondary schools have a Disability Services Department where students can access note takers, workshops, etc.

Employment Considerations

In this section you will find:

Many employers are willing to accommodate employees with special needs in a supportive, confidential, and professional manner (LDAO, 1997). However, many adults with learning challenges or learning disabilities are unemployed or underemployed.

Adults with learning disabilities or learning challenges have an increased rate of unemployment, work in jobs of lower status, receive lower pay, and change jobs more frequently than non-LD adults (Shapiro & Rich, 1999). It is hard for many adults to find jobs that do not require advanced skills because the workforce is demanding many more literacy skills on the job.

Many adults with learning disabilities/challenges do not have a clear understanding of their difficulties and the potential impact on career choices and performance (Fowler & Hunt, 2004). Many youth with learning challenges have unrealistic career ambitions. In contrast, a large number of students with learning challenges feel that they have no control over career decision-making (Fowler & Hunt, 2004).

Employment barriers for adults with learning challenges
(Fowler & Hunt, 2004):

- Lack of self-awareness by the employer (unknown discrimination)
- Social skill deficits (lack of judgement, difficulty perceiving the feelings of others, difficulty making or keeping friends, difficulty interpreting social cues, poor self-concept, etc.)
- Negative school experiences – adults with learning challenges may not consider some potential career paths because they cannot recognize their strengths or market their abilities
- Untapped potential
- Emotional problems

It is important for the individual to be able to set realistic goals and self-advocate by explaining his/her specific learning challenges and to be able to describe specific accommodations needed (Eastham, n.d.; Fowler & Hunt, 2004). The key to job success is to match the job to the person.

Predictors of Success (Fowler & Hunt, 2004):

- Self-awareness
    - understanding his/her learning challenges and how it affects him/her
    - understanding that learning challenges are only one aspect of his/her life
    - knowing how to utilize appropriate services
- Proactive behaviour
    - being able to socialize
    - being involved in the community
    - believing that he/she has control over his/her own life
    - good decision-making skills
    - being able to take responsibility for his/her decisions or actions (whether they are positive or negative)
- Perseverance
    - being able to pursue goals despite adversity
- Goal setting
    - using goals to provide direction
    - using goals as a step-by-step process
    - setting realistic and attainable goals
- Support Systems
    - having encouragement and support from significant others
    - being able to actively seek support
    - being willing to accept support when it is offered
- Emotional stability
    - having effective means of coping with stress and frustration
    - having a positive, optimistic outlook
    - being able to maintain positive peer relationships and draw on a support system when needed

General Pre-Employment Strategies

Part of employment preparation for adults with learning challenges can be done in the LBS classroom or while upgrading.

Career Exploration

- Complete an employment interests inventory - the ABEA recommends the Holland Self-Directed Search:

  Holland, J. L. (1996*). Self-directed search – Form E* (4th Canadian ed.). Odessa: Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc.

  This questionnaire is clearly laid out and only requires yes and no answers. It asks questions related to activity interests and abilities, skill interests and abilities, job interests and asks the learner to rate him/herself in several areas. The questions are divided into six employment areas: Realistic (trades, labour), Investigative (scientific, technical), Artistic, Social (teaching, helping others), Enterprising (sales, supervisory) and Conventional (office, clerical). Once the questions are completed you and the learner count the scores to reveal a two-letter code (for example: SC would indicate that the learner is compatible with Social/Conventional jobs such as a receptionist). You and the learner then look through a job finder booklet to search out specific positions that the learner is interested in (education requirements and National Occupation Classification codes – NOC codes - included). This is an excellent way to realistically discuss career goals and examine what short-term goals are required.

- Employment goals must have a goodness of fit between the learners interests and skills, and the job requirements
    - for example, someone with auditory processing challenges might consider a job where his/her visual abilities can be utilized (e.g., a graphic artist or a welder)
- Referrals to employment centres may be helpful in order to work on specific employment-related skills and career search - many communities have centres that offer free workshops around employment issues such as the interview, resumes, etc.
- Attend information sessions about specific jobs or take part in on-site visits
- Seek out work shadowing, cooperative work terms, or volunteer experiences
- Research career information to make informed, timely choices
- Research employment equity and human rights legislation

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Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2004). *Guide to the human rights code*. Electronic Resource. Retrieved January 12, 2005. Available: http://www.ohrc.on.ca/english/publications/hr-code-guide.shtml

Goal Setting

- Help the learner set realistic goals and the path towards them (with short term goals and timelines)

Skills Development

- Identify the specific literacy tasks required for the specific job (use NOC codes, interviews with employers, etc.)
    - National Occupational Classification Codes available from: http://www23.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/2001/e/generic/welcome.shtml
- Work on specific vocabulary needed for that job or field
- Use authentic materials
- Explore assistive technology
    - Work with the learner to be comfortable with appropriate accommodations
- Encourage learned creativity
    - Divergent approaches to problem-solving
    - Maximizing strengths
    - Knowing and using accommodations and strategies that work
- Prepare the learner for further assessments (either formal academic or on the job) – work on study habits and test-taking strategies (see Strategies for Learners with Further Education/Training Goals, p. 153)

Employment Skills

- Work on focus-strategies (in order to be task-focused)
- Work on mock-interviews to be able to articulate strengths
- Work on following directions (oral, written, complex, multiple)
    - develop strategies to follow directions given in a challenge area (e.g., write oral directions down, ask for clarification, etc.)

Social/Interpersonal/Personal Skills

- Help the learner to recognize the learning challenges as part of his/her life
- Help the learner identify how to use his/her unique abilities and be able to articulate them

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- Explicitly teach interpersonal skills (Self-Awareness/Self-Direction) – this is what employers want
- Foster the learner's motivation to succeed and his/her willingness to work hard and persist
- Help the learner identify and build a social network of support
- Help the learner accept and use constructive criticism

Self-Advocacy – Learner

- Work on the learner's ability to articulate his/her strengths (marketing skills)
- Help the learner reframe the learning challenges so that he/she accepts it and is able to think positively about his/her strengths and not just about his/her weaknesses
- Work on the learner's knowledge of the specific characteristics of the learning challenge
- Have the learner practice explaining his/her challenges
- Have the learner discuss or detect situations where the learning challenges could cause a learning or performance problem
- Discuss which situations would maximize strengths and minimize weaknesses
- Have the learner practice explaining which accommodations he/she needs in different settings and why and how to get them

Advocacy – Instructor

- Advocate to employers that standardized tests may not be the best measure of skill level for new employees

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

Employment Strategies (for Learners)

- Request job descriptions
- Ask for written job expectations and timelines for tasks
- Either disclose the learning challenges or not (see chart below)
- If disclosing
    - explain the difficulty and how it might affect performance on the job
    - explain what accommodations are needed to increase performance

Issue – Disclosure

An employee with learning challenges must make the personal decision whether or not to disclose his/her accommodation needs to the employer. Below is a for-and-against list that may help learners make that decision.

For	Against
Without disclosure, there is no protection under the Human Rights Code	It may be better to work around the label if you don't need accommodations
Without disclosure, there is no guarantee of receiving the accommodations needed to perform the job	Accommodations may seem like a favour to be repaid
Disclosure is the best route to accommodations that cannot be obtained informally (e.g., if they need to be specifically ordered, etc.)	People who disclose may be more vulnerable to being accused of making excuses
There should be no reason to hide learning challenges – disclosure may help to educate employers	People who disclose may be pitied (or worse) by others who do not understand
Disclosure in a disability-friendly environment has fewer adverse consequences	People with learning disabilities are vulnerable to being treated differently if they disclose
Disclosure optimizes chances of success on the job	People that disclose may be more vulnerable to job discrimination

General Employment-Related Strategies (for Employers)

See "Employer Brochure" in the front of this package or on the CD for a general printable brochure.

A learning disability or learning challenge (undiagnosed) occurs when there are very large differences between a person's learning strengths and weaknesses so that the weaknesses seem to continually get in the way and prevent the individual from demonstrating his/her strengths. (Janet Johnston, 1996). A learning disability is not a measure of intelligence. In fact, adults with learning disabilities typically have average to above-average intelligence.

Many adults with learning disabilities or learning challenges have identified and are able to use appropriate strategies and accommodations to work around their challenges and succeed in meeting their goals and will be efficient, reliable employees. Because of this learned creativity they have unique abilities and strengths that can lend themselves to your organization or business.

You can Support Your Employees to be Efficient Employees

If an employee explains that they have a learning disability or have learning challenges, encourage him/her to explain exactly how the difficulty affects him/her and what supports need to be put in place to ensure success on the job.

- Encourage the employee to offer suggestions as to what type of working environment is best for him/her
- Encourage the employee to feel comfortable asking for clarification
- Be open to accommodations or different assistive technologies that might be available on the jobsite (e.g., computers)
  - if possible, make a computer accessible to the employee for written output
- Offer the employee more time to complete tasks or work with the employee to make deadlines that are appropriate for both the company and the employee
- Implement a "learning inventory" for all new employees to meet their training or learning needs
- Foster an accepting, learning environment in the company

Below you will find support that you can put in place for specific difficulty areas. Consult with your employee as to what supports he/she needs.

Learning Challenges Assessment Tool

Employment-Related Strategies for People with Visual Processing Challenges (for Employers)

Visual processing challenges hinder a person's ability to make sense of information taken in through the eyes (these difficulties are beyond medical problems). Difficulties can be seen in the person's ability to discriminate between different letters or words, follow text while reading, and with difficulty remembering the "look" of words. Visual processing challenges can affect a person's reading, writing, and mathematic performance.

Suggestions

- Give explicit oral instructions with written instructions
- Allow this employee to work in a group setting where he/she can discuss ideas and plans or work closely with a small group of employees (for discussion and reference)
- Use a closed circuit TV for staff meetings and training
- Help the employee set up a specific organization system that works for him/her (colour coded files, legends, etc.)
    - o some employees with visual processing challenges will have visual memory problems and may forget where they have filed things or put important documents

Employment-Related Strategies for People with Auditory Processing Challenges (for Employers)

Auditory processing challenges effect how oral information is interpreted or processed by the brain. This can interfere with speech and language acquisition, and can affect all areas of learning, especially reading and spelling. Auditory processing challenges are not hearing problems, but rather a difficulty in perceiving oral information. A person may be unable to recognize or isolate individual parts of speech, or remember spoken language.

Suggestions

- Give instructions in writing with oral directions as well
    - o give complex directions one step at a time
- Staff meetings or meetings in general should have a visual component (overheads, PowerPoint, handouts, etc.)
    - o encourage people in the meetings not to have side conversations
    - o record the meetings to be listened to later
- Assign the employee to a work space that is quiet

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Employment-Related Strategies for People with Organizational Processing Challenges (for Employers)

Organizational processing challenges exist when an individual has difficulty managing time and space, and organizing his/her day-to-day activities. The person may show difficulties when receiving, integrating, remembering, and expressing information. As well, the person may have gross or fine motor difficulties.

Suggestions

- Give instructions in a variety of ways and repeat them as much as possible (also check in with the employee to see how he/she is doing)
- Encourage the employee to keep a detailed day timer
- Encourage the employee to write out a list of priorities for the day, week, and month and help identify these priorities and check in with him/her periodically
- Explain workplace expectations specifically and in detail
- Provide structure in the workplace (e.g., time lines, etc.)
- Set specific due dates for projects or tasks
- Break tasks up into smaller tasks