

# **Teachers' Resource Manual**

## **Accommodating Learning Disabilities in the Adult Education Classroom**

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## Introduction

The purpose of this *Teachers' Resource Manual* is to provide guidance to instructors on the topic of accommodations for adults with learning disabilities. It includes extensive information that can be the key to their success in adult education programs. The following major content are will be addressed:

- Introduction
- Terminology
- What is a Learning Disability?
- Definition of Accommodation
- The Legal Basis for Accommodations
- Equal Access
- Student Eligibility and the Accommodation Process
- Self-Identifying as a Person with a Learning Disability
- Documenting a Disability
- Responsibilities of Students and Service Providers
- Categories of Accommodation
- Instructional Accommodations
- Assessment Accommodations
- Planning Accommodations
- The Accommodation Process
- The Five-Step Accommodation Decision Making Procedure
- Confidentiality of Accommodations
- Implementing Accommodations
- Summary
- Resources
- Frequently Asked Questions

## Terminology

In order to understand and fully utilize this Teachers' Resource Manual, knowledge of the following terms and definitions is necessary.

**Accommodation** – A wide range of techniques and support systems that can change a classroom environment or task and can permit a qualified individual with a disability to work around limitations in order to:

- participate in the classroom process.
- perform the essential tasks of the class.
- enjoy benefits and privileges of classroom participation equal to those enjoyed by adult learners without disabilities.

The intent of providing an accommodation is to remove or lessen barriers to the student's performance that are a direct result of the disability. They are in no way intended to modify a program or give the student with a disability any advantage.

**Confidentiality** – The responsibility of an educational institution to maintain the confidentiality of a student’s diagnosis and evaluation. No part of documentation may be released without the student's informed and written consent.

**Diagnosis** - Confirmation using clear and specific evidence of the existence (or non existence) of a condition by someone qualified to reach such a conclusion. For example, a licensed psychologist can make a diagnosis of a learning disability.

**Diagnostic Interview** - May include a description of the presenting problem(s); developmental, medical, psychosocial, and educational history; family history (including primary language of the home and the student's current level of English fluency); and a discussion of dual diagnosis where indicated. The neuropsychological or psycho-educational evaluation for the diagnosis of a specific learning disability assessment, and any resulting diagnosis, should consist of a comprehensive assessment battery, which does not rely on any one test or subtest. Evidence of a substantial limitation to learning or other major life activity must be provided.

**Essential Functions** - These functions include the cognitive, physical, and behavioral abilities necessary for satisfactory completion of a course or program/curriculum with or without an accommodation.

**Equal Access** - Providing a fair opportunity for students with learning disabilities to enter, enroll, and benefit from programs in the same way as those without a learning disability. It does not assume ‘equal outcome.’

**Good Faith Effort** - Taking available steps to identify and remove barriers for persons with disabilities.

**Impairment** - A physiological disorder affecting one or more body systems or a mental or psychological disorder. It is not the name of the impairment or condition that determines whether a person is disabled, but rather the effect that the impairment has on the life functions of the particular person.

**Individual with a Disability** - As defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, an individual with a disability is any person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; has a record of such an impairment; or is regarded as having such an impairment.

**Learning Disability (LD)** - A permanent information processing disorder that affects the manner in which individuals with average to above average intelligence learn. LD causes deficits in areas such as reading, mathematics, and written language that are due to a central nervous system dysfunction. Learning disabilities occur regardless of gender, race, or ethnic origin and are not the result of poor academic background, mental retardation, or emotional disorders.

**Major Life Activities** - Activities including self-care, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working/employment.

**Qualified Individual with a Disability** - With respect to postsecondary adult and vocational/technical education services, a qualified individual with a disability is one who meets the academic and technical standards, with or without an accommodation, requisite to admission or participation in an education program or activity.

**Reasonable Accommodations** - Techniques and/or materials which legally must be allowed or be provided to a "qualified individual with a disability" to enable them to access educational programs and complete school or work assignments with greater ease and effectiveness. The accommodations are not meant to lower the academic standards of the program or give the individual an unfair advantage, but rather to allow the individual to participate on an equal basis.

**Section 504 Accommodation Plan** - An individualized plan ensures that equal access to instructional programs for a qualified individual that has a documented disability.

**Specific Learning Disability (SLD)** - The official term used in federal legislation to refer to difficulty in certain areas of learning, rather than in all areas of learning. It is synonymous with learning disabilities.

**Substantially Limiting Impairment** - Such an impairment prohibits or significantly restricts an individual's ability to perform a major life activity. The determination of whether an impairment substantially limits a major life activity depends on the nature and severity of the impairment, the duration or expected duration of the impairment, and the permanent or long-term impact of the impairment. Short-term, temporary restrictions are generally not substantially limiting, but an impairment does not have to be permanent to rise to the level of a disability. Temporary impairments that take significantly longer than normal to heal, long-term impairments, or potentially long-term impairments of indefinite duration may be disabilities if they are severe.

**Universal Design** - An approach to the design of all products and environments including education to be usable by everyone, to the greatest extent possible, regardless of age, ability, or situation. It serves people who are young or old, with excellent or limited abilities, in ideal or difficult circumstances. Universal design benefits everyone by accommodating limitations.

## What is a Learning Disability?

Learning disabilities refer to a group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in processing information – specifically in listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. A specific learning disability in most situations is a "hidden disability." There are no outward signs of a disability such as a hearing aid, white cane, or wheelchair. A learning disability is unique to the individual and impacts learning in a variety of ways.

There are a number of different definitions for the term Learning Disability, but they share some commonalities as shown in the following widely used definition:

*These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perceptions, and social integration may exist with learning disabilities but do not, by themselves, constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other disabilities, they are not the result of those conditions or influences.*

Generally speaking, someone may be diagnosed with a learning disability if:

- that person is of average or above-average intelligence
- there is a lack of achievement at age and ability level, and
- there is a severe discrepancy between achievement and intellectual ability.

Learning disabilities usually fall within four broad categories: spoken language, which affects listening and speaking; written language, which affects reading, writing and spelling; arithmetic which affects calculation and concepts; and reasoning which impacts organization and integration of ideas and thoughts. Students with specific learning disabilities may exhibit difficulties acquiring information and/or demonstrating knowledge due to processing deficits in receiving and/or transmitting information. They may be able to organize and communicate their thoughts one-to-one with a teacher, but not on a test.

A person with a learning disability may have discrepancies in one or all of these categories. The effects of a learning disability range from mild to severe. Learning disabilities may also be present along with other disabilities such as mobility, emotional disturbances, or sensory impairments.

There are various specific types of learning disabilities including:

- Dyscalculia – difficulty understanding and using math concepts and symbols
- Dysgraphia – difficulty with the following: performing the physical task of forming letters and words using a pen or pencil and paper, producing legible, age appropriate handwriting, and expressing thoughts in writing

- Dyslexia - a specific language-based learning disability that is neurological in origin and characterized by difficulties with fluent word recognition, decoding, and spelling, making it difficult to understand spoken and written language. Secondary consequences include reading comprehension problems and deficient vocabulary skills.
- Dyspraxia - difficulty in the area of motor skill development and completing intended fine motor tasks. Dyspraxia can affect different areas of functioning, varying from simple motor tasks such as waving goodbye to more complex tasks like brushing teeth, buttoning, and drawing.
- Nonverbal Learning Disabilities - below-average motor coordination, visual-spatial organization, and social skills

### **Definition of Accommodation**

The term "accommodation" refers to adjustments that are made, in either instruction or assessment, that are appropriate or necessary to enable adults with learning disabilities to fully participate in school. An accommodation is a different way to do a task. It uses a learner's strengths to work around the learner's areas of need.

An accommodation is a change that:

- is required by law;
- helps people with disabilities have a fair chance for success;
- gives an equal chance to work in, learn in, and enter a building;
- is chosen for the individual person's need; and
- is needed when you do similar tasks in other places.

An accommodation may include:

- using special equipment;
- doing work a different way;
- doing work in a different place; and
- changing how others think about disabilities.

Sometimes accommodations are the only way to complete a task. When learning a skill is not the goal, or when learning that skill is too stressful or difficult due to the effects of the disability, the use of accommodations may be appropriate.

Accommodations then are task-oriented and not learning-oriented. The key to appropriate use is to match accommodations to the circumstances, to the learner's needs and abilities, and to the specific learning disability.

In the literature, the terms "*modification*" and "*adaptation*" have been used interchangeably with "accommodation" referring to refer to adjustment of the facilities, curriculum, and instruction for the education of students with learning disabilities.

It is important to note that there are differences among these words. An accommodation does not fundamentally alter the nature of an academic program, reduce academic standards, or place an undue burden on the educational program. Modification connotes a change or reduction in the standards or criteria which accommodation does not. Adaptations are changes that make learning or work more manageable for someone, whether the person has a diagnosis of LD or not.

## **The Legal Basis for Accommodations**

Before the adoption of antidiscrimination laws related to disability, individuals with disabilities were excluded from nearly every aspect of life because of ignorance, indifference, prejudice, or environmental design. Since 1973 with the passage of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (applies to all entities that receive federal financial assistance), federal and state statutes have protected individuals with disabilities from discrimination. The language in Section 504 succinctly states that "*No qualified handicapped person shall, on the basis of handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity which receives or benefits from federal financial assistance.*" Fundamental to these protections is the integration of people with disabilities into the mainstream of society.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) strengthened the protections in Section 504 by prohibiting discrimination on the basis of a disability in employment, public services and transportation, public accommodations, and telecommunication.

Specifically, Section 504 and the ADA cover individuals believed to be disabled and individuals with a record of a disability. A student meeting either of these definitions, as well as a student with a current disability who may be eligible for an accommodation, is protected from intentional discrimination, such as a hostile environment on the basis of disability, and from exclusion from a program on the basis of stereotypes.

There is precedent based on a federal district court decision concerning an individual with a learning disability who was denied extra time on a high stakes examination. It directly faces the issue of fairness. The court wrote the following ... *the bias appears to arise from the assumption that giving extra time to applicants with learning disabilities gives them an unfair advantage over other applicants...this assumption is belied by research showing that extra time does not have a significant impact on the performance of individuals who do not have learning disabilities...Further, as [the Bar] concedes, the...examination is not a reading rate test. [The court is] convinced that extra time provided to learning disabled applicants merely levels the playing field and allows these individuals to be tested on their knowledge; it does not provide them with an unfair advantage.*

## Equal Access

Equal access is defined as providing a fair opportunity for students with learning disabilities to enter, enroll, and benefit from programs in the same way as those without a disability. Academic adjustments, modifications and the use of auxiliary aides and services are referred to as "*reasonable accommodations*." They are important tools for extending equal educational opportunity to adults with LD.

Section 504 and the ADA both require that students with LD have equal access to information and to the avenues of communication, including websites and distance education programs. Equal access to this communication means that it must be "as effective as" that which is provided to nondisabled students. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) specifies the three basic components of effective communication: timeliness of delivery, accuracy of the translation of information/communication, and provision in a manner and medium appropriate to the significance of the message and the abilities of the individual with the disability.

Students may not be charged for equal access to which they are entitled by law. Under certain circumstances, the failure to provide a reasonable accommodation to a student with a disability is a violation of law.

## **Student Eligibility and the Accommodation Process**

### Self-Identifying as a Person with a Learning Disability

The decision of whether or not to disclose a learning disability is granted as a federal right under law to the class of persons with disabilities. It is also a responsibility of adult students with learning disabilities. They may choose not to reveal their disability and elect to participate in a program without accommodations. However, if adult students choose to self-disclose their disability, then they must assume the responsibility for providing current documentation of the disability in order to be eligible for accommodations. Students should schedule a time as early as possible with the appropriate staff member in their school to discuss their needs.

### Documenting a Disability

The next step in the accommodation process is for the student to document that he or she has a disability in order to qualify. Every effort should be made to have documentation available at the time of review. Types and amounts of documentation may vary depending on requirements of the educational facility. Policies regarding acceptable recency of records vary widely.

For the purposes of obtaining an accommodation, the regulations implementing Section 504 and ADA contain the same definition of an individual with a disability. These laws provide that a "disability" is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity.

Various examples of documentation include:

- Clinical observations
- Psychoeducational histories
- A diagnostic assessment on an adult measure from a licensed, certified professional (school psychologist, neuro-psychologist, clinical psychologist, etc.) that has experience testing adults with learning disabilities
- Written medical or psychological verification by appropriate professionals
- Letters of certification (including diagnoses) from an agency such as Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), etc.
- A clearly stated and explained (not vague, non-specific, or inconclusive) diagnosis of the learning disability
- A report that specifies the degree of current functional loss and/or the functional limitations of the learning disability and the anticipated effects of the functional limitations within the academic/vocational setting

If the student does not have the documentation, then an Authorization to Release Information should be completed and sent to the appropriate school, agency, or professional to release already existing information. If the student has either outdated or insufficient documentation, (as determined by the institution's policy) or no documentation at all, a "*good faith effort*" should be made to assist the student in obtaining the needed documentation.

Obtaining documentation, the costs of which the student must almost always bear, can be expensive. Schools can help by providing students and their diagnosticians with reasonable notice of what documentation is expected (especially for the GED Tests that require specific tests to be administered). When the a school or testing agency rejects documentation, the student should be told why so that he or she can determine whether to seek further testing and additional documentation.

### Responsibilities of Students and Service Providers

Responsibilities of the Student:

- Self-identify in a timely manner that a learning disability exists.
- Examine all relevant records relating to decisions regarding one's personal accommodations.
- Provide documentation from a qualified source that verifies the nature of the disability, functional limitations, and the need for specific accommodations.
- Know accommodation needs.
- Request accommodations to take part in and receive benefits from programs, services, and activities without discrimination because of a disabling condition.
- Make timely arrangements for reasonable accommodations based on specific stated policies/procedures.
- Follow through with accommodations consistently.
- Self-advocate.
- Utilize available support systems and services.
- File a grievance if appropriate.

## Responsibilities of Providers of Educational Services:

- Advise students of their rights under federal law and provide them with a copy in the appropriate format.
- Make all students aware of the availability of services and the policies and procedures for accessing them in a timely manner.
- Review and revise policies as necessary to avoid discrimination.
- Determine if a student is eligible to receive reasonable accommodations/modifications and or other support services.
- Ensure that staff is knowledgeable of the student's needs and rights.
- Notify the instructor about the necessary accommodations and/or modifications in writing as soon as possible and discuss the implementation of accommodations as needed.
- Provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations in classroom and for test-taking to qualified individuals who self-disclose that they have a disability and provide the appropriate documentation. This ensures equal access to the instructional program.
- Assist students in obtaining access to specific support services, such as tutoring and counseling.
- Maintain the student's right to privacy concerning the disability and any accommodations.
- Maintain and respect confidentiality of records.
- Evaluate students on abilities, not disabilities.

## **Categories of Accommodation**

The term accommodation can be associated with changes/modifications in the student's environment, instruction, and performance expectations. Reasonable accommodations may be made in the arrangement of the classroom, types of activities, or the facility to improve equal opportunity. Examples of accommodations categorized into three major groupings including: 1) Adapting the task, 2) Adapting Instruction/Presentation of Information, and 3) Making Accommodations in Testing/Performance

- Adapting the Task  
Find ways to avoid/bypass the problem or devise strategies the adult can use to lessen the impact of the problem.
- Adjusting Instruction/Presentation of Information  
Alter the way you present information to the adult or adapt your instruction in response to individual needs and strengths.
- Making Accommodations in Testing/Performance  
Work around specific difficulties to devise a true measure of abilities. Do not allow disabilities to prevent an individual from showing what he/she can do. Allow an adult to respond and demonstrate competence on the job by using his/her strengths and abilities and, when possible, bypassing disabilities.

## Instructional Accommodations

Accommodations make it possible for students to learn, to participate in classroom instruction, and to demonstrate their learning. As seen in the listing below, changes can be made in the curriculum and materials or in the methods and strategies based on the nature of the learning area deficits. Accommodations should be made on an individual basis based on the student's diagnosis and their strengths and deficit areas.

Materials/ Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative ways of completing assignments (e.g., oral presentation versus written paper)</li> <li>• Taped material covered in class</li> <li>• Substitute materials with lower reading levels</li> <li>• Fewer assignments</li> <li>• Decrease length of assignments</li> <li>• Copy pages so students can mark on them</li> <li>• Provide examples of correctly completed work</li> <li>• Advance notice of assignments</li> <li>• Tape-recorded versions of printed materials</li> <li>• Captioned films or video materials</li> <li>• Class work given in alternative formats (large print, etc.)</li> <li>• Study skills strategies</li> <li>• Textbooks on tape</li> <li>• Course and lecture outlines</li> <li>• Enlarged visual aids, handouts</li> </ul>
Methods/ Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight key points to remember</li> <li>• Eliminate distractions by using a template to block out other items</li> <li>• Have student use a self monitoring sheet</li> <li>• Break task into smaller parts to do at different times</li> <li>• Use study partners whenever reading or writing is required</li> <li>• Secure papers to work area with tape or magnets</li> <li>• Present information in multiple formats</li> <li>• Auxiliary aids and services (lab or library assistants, etc.)</li> <li>• Use of a note taker</li> <li>• Extended time</li> <li>• Use of a scribe or readers</li> <li>• Visual, aural and tactile demonstrations incorporated into directions</li> <li>• Use of a spell checker and grammar checker</li> </ul>

Assistive Technology	<p>Assistive technology enables adults with learning disabilities to compensate for specific deficits. It encompasses a wide range of tools and techniques. Examples follow.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Word prediction software</li> <li>• Variable speech control tape recorder to play audio taped material</li> <li>• Talking calculator</li> <li>• Text-to-speech software</li> <li>• Speech-to-text software</li> <li>• Portable scanning devices</li> <li>• Portable word processors</li> <li>• Visual learning/graphic organizer tools</li> <li>• Use of a tape recorder for lectures and discussions</li> <li>• Textbook on tape or in e-text format</li> </ul>
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On the following pages, specific areas of academic difficulty for adults with learning disabilities are listed with possible adaptations and accommodations. Devising an effective accommodation strategy for an adult learner requires attention to that individual's unique strengths and needs. Decisions require collaboration with the learner and creative problem solving.

• **Reading**

- Underline or highlight important ideas for later review
- Read the chapter summary or end of chapter questions before starting the chapter
- Use notes or symbols within the text to identify key information and note areas needing clarification
- After reading two or three paragraphs, stop to check for understanding; re-read if necessary, paraphrase the information
- Read aloud and record on audiotape
- Books-on-Tape
- A card or frame focus on the words and to block out parts of the text
- Assistive devices that translate text to speech, screen readers, Kurzweil reader, scanner with optical character recognition software
- Videotapes or movies that present the same information
- Interactive CDs or computer-assisted training with auditory and visual cues rather than written descriptions
- Post-It notes or highlighter to mark key points in the textbook or manual
- List of important vocabulary with definitions
- Demonstration of tools and procedures
- Study guide to follow for independent reading
- Complex information divided into chunks or sections
- Hands-on activities, visual aids, pictures, or diagrams to provide alternate ways of learning abstract or complex information
- Large print versions of texts or magnifiers
- Class handouts and materials in an embossed format
- Special tilt-top desk or book stand to hold materials for easier reading

- **Writing**

- Word processing software to help with organizing, editing, and spell checking
- Electronic dictionary and thesaurus with speech capability
- Tape recorder to study spelling: read and spell the word onto the tape, write the word, and replay the tape to check spelling
- Adaptive devices such as pencil grips, special pen or pencil holders, erasable pens, or special paper with raised or color-coded line indicators
- Worksheets and tests with ample space for writing answers
- Two copies of worksheet or test - one to work on as a draft and one to use as a final copy
- Graph paper for writing to help align the numbers in computation problems or organize information
- A thesaurus to find words to write or say
- Word processing software that anticipates what student is trying to write
- Structured outline or graphic organizer to plan written assignments/presentations
- Permission to use demonstrations or video-recorded responses to classroom assignments
- A spelling dictionary or electronic spelling aid with speech capabilities
- Peer editing or teacher assistance in the revision process
- Content mechanics graded separately in assignments requiring written expression
- A chance to correct identified spelling and grammar errors

- **Math**

- Use of cue sheets with steps to follow, formulas, etc.
- Read word problems aloud and think out loud when solving
- Concrete materials and manipulatives or computer-based models to understand abstract math concepts
- Calculator for computation tasks (when applicable)
- Talking calculators or on-screen computer calculators
- Abacus
- Flowcharts to plan strategies for problem solving
- Assistance with specialized vocabulary and mathematical symbols
- Additional examples and explanations
- Use of graph paper or color coding to organize answers to math problems
- Special paper that does not move around the desk
- Review within a day or two of the initial learning of difficult skills and supervised practice to prevent misconceptions

- **Listening**

- Look at the speaker, take notes, ask questions
- Use a tape recorder to record class lectures, directions, and instructions
- New vocabulary introduced prior to lesson, a glossary of terms

- Material presented in a logical manner and with explicit cues to shift from one aspect to the next
- Information broken down into steps or key components
- Important ideas written on the board or overhead transparencies with different colors for emphasis or coding
- Active involvement with the content through discussion, small group interaction, or problem solving activities
- Repetition and summarization of important points, particularly at the conclusion of lecture or discussion
- Structured organizers for note taking, such as a copy of overheads, outline of lecture, or graphic organizer
- Copies of notes taken by other students in the class
- Time to meet with instructor after class for clarification
- Real-life examples and concrete materials
- Visual information (words, charts, graphics)

### • **Completing Assignments**

- An agenda or outline of the assignments for each day
- Oral directions combined with pictures, words, or diagrams
- A description or critical features when watching a demonstration
- Step-by-step instructions that are repeated or simplified with the steps outlined in writing or shown in picture sequences
- A description of expected behaviors or criteria to be used for evaluation
- Assignments divided into parts with corresponding due dates
- An individual responsibility checklist with checkpoints along the way
- A reward system to motivate assignment completion
- Access to learning resources and instructional materials outside of class
- Flexible scheduling practices
- Assignments given ahead of time so that students can get started early

### • **Taking Tests**

- Test items read aloud or on audiotape, except for tests of reading skills
- Repetition or paraphrasing of the directions during the test
- Important words in the directions underlined or highlighted
- Increased space allowed for test answers
- Permission to dictate or tape record answers on a test
- Word processor to write answers to the test items
- Permission to write on the test itself instead of an answer sheet
- Webs, diagrams, or charts and outlines to plan and respond to open-ended or essay questions
- Alternate evaluations of knowledge and skills using products or demonstrations
- Additional time to complete tests
- The test separated into small sections and taken over a period of days
- Breaks during the test period
- Administration of the test individually or in a small group

- An enclosed study carrel to take the test
- Extra examples for practice
- Elimination of one of the choices in multiple-choice items
- Fewer questions that measure all required content and skills
- Grading of the student's responses separately for content and mechanics
- Open book test unless memorization or content is required
- Spelling dictionary
- Calculator to recheck or complete computations
- Partial credit for answers that are partly correct
- Copies of the test on audiotape or in large print format
- Assistive technology for magnification and amplification

## **Assessment Accommodations**

Accommodations that are granted to a student should apply not only during classroom instruction and to work completed at home, but should also include those that are offered during testing. There should be a natural flow between the two. Appropriate accommodations should be viewed as part of the normal cycle of teaching and testing. Accommodations should never be used first in testing, but should have been proven successful through classroom usage.

Assessment accommodations make it possible for students to demonstrate what they have learned in ways that are not impacted by barriers due to their disabilities. Specifically with students that have learning disabilities, their ability to store, process, retrieve, and produce information may be impaired.

Accommodations in testing will modify the conditions of administering a test, or change the nature of the assessment instrument. These accommodations are made to allow test takers with disabilities access to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities under reasonable and appropriate test conditions more accurately than if none were made. Accommodations must meet the needs of examinees without changing what the test is designed to measure. They do not provide an unfair advantage and do not compromise the validity or reliability of any tests.

The following chart lists four categories for assessment accommodations including: 1) Changes in Test Environment, 2) Changes in Presentation, 3) Changes in Timing/Scheduling, and 4) Other Adaptations. The listings include important information available for making decisions regarding assessment accommodations. Each request for accommodation should be considered on an individual basis based on the specific needs of test-takers with documented learning disabilities.

## Category 1: Changes in Test Environment

- Setting/Place**
  - Preferential seating arrangements may help students concentrate or feel more comfortable (e.g., near the front or back of the room, near a window or a door)
  - Adaptive/special furniture (e.g., study carrel, table space for large print assessment materials)
  - Testing in a separate room to reduce and screen out distractions and disrupting environmental stimuli
  - Hospital/home testing to be allowed for students who are patients in a hospital setting, nursing home, rehabilitation center, or confined to their home during the testing period
- Grouping**
  - Small group testing with fewer students
  - One-on-one testing with proctor
- Lighting**
  - Improving lighting; halogen preferred, not fluorescent
- Acoustics**
  - Improved acoustics
  - Earplugs/hearing protectors as an aid to concentration
- Other**
  - Tinted glasses, color lens
  - Goggles
  - Gloves and allergy/dust/sensitivity masks

## Category 2: Changes in Presentation

- Alternative Testing Formats**
  - Enlarged-print materials
  - Audiocassette edition with large print reference copy
  - Oral exam instead of written exam (with permission) and the test is not a writing test
  - Essay exam instead of multiple choice in some cases
  - Multiple choice instead of essay in some cases
  - Fewer items on a page, more white space
- Auditory Presentation**
  - Repeat directions on multiple-choice questions
  - Can not define words, phrases, or passages in the questions.
  - Reading items and passages must be read by the student using visual or tactile means.
- Prompts or Visual Cues**
  - Arrows pointing to different places on the page
  - Highlighted text
  - Color stickers/flags
- Revised Answer Sheets Response**
  - Larger bubbles
  - Fewer items on a page
  - Large print
  - Word processed writing sample
  - Large-spaced paper to write answers and complete work
  - Student can dictate answers to the teacher, assistant or proctor who records it
  - Scribe to fill in bubbles on answer sheet if sense of space and direction is impaired
  - Scribe to write the essay dictated by the candidate
  - Answer questions orally instead of in writing

## Category 2: Changes in Presentation

- Student can point to answer choices with administrator recording responses
- Oral response or answers dictated into tape recorder
- Response marked/circled in test book
- Response using word processor
- Verbalized problem-solving
- Speech recognition system
- Directions may be read aloud
- Test directions and items may be given in simplified language.
- Students can be allowed to explain directions aloud to confirm understanding

### **Simplified Language**

## Category 3: Changes in Timing/Scheduling

### **Flexible Scheduling**

- Extended time to complete tasks
- Allowing for frequent breaks
- Changing the order of tasks
- Several brief testing sessions during a day
- Testing at a specific or different time of day
- Multiple days of testing
- Subtests in different order
- One test per day

### **Extended time**

- One and one-half times the allowed time
- Double the allowed time
- Three times the original time
- Four times the original time in case of severe and multiple disabilities

### **Breaks**

- Scheduled opportunities for students to move around the room and/or take breaks. Student is monitored during any break to ensure test security.
- Supervised, frequent rest breaks (frequency and duration should be determined in advance)

## Category 4: Other Adaptations

### **Calculator**

- Calculators with large keys
- Adaptive and/or voice output (talking calculator)
- Color-coded calculator

### **Assistive Listening Devices**

- Visual magnification devices
- Auditory amplification devices
- FM systems

### **Transparent Overlays**

- Tinted overhead transparencies for difficulty decoding written words and symbols
- Color transparent overlays
- Highlighters can be used with overlays over test pages

## Category 4: Other Adaptations

<b>Paper and Templates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Graph paper</li><li>• Large lined paper</li><li>• Widely spaced paper</li><li>• Templates (piece of paper with a window cut out to control what the student reads) or frames to help students read one sentence at a time</li></ul>
<b>Highlighters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scratch paper</li><li>• Color highlighters</li><li>• Place markers</li></ul>
<b>Adaptive Devices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pencil holder/grips</li><li>• Muscle/skeletal aids such as wrist braces</li><li>• Straightedge (plain, unmarked, made from any safe material as an aid in spatial orientation and reading)</li></ul>
<b>Temporary Adhesives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Post-it® Notes</li><li>• Post-it® Flags for spatial directions/orientation</li></ul>

## Planning Accommodations

Planning accommodations is a collaborative process. In order to begin the planning process, it is imperative that the student be involved in all aspects. It would be appropriate to begin by asking some pertinent questions to help determine what accommodations would best assist the learner. Some examples follow:

1. In what areas does the learner have difficulties or a lack of progress?
2. In what areas does the learner have problems? (Be very specific.)
  - reading
  - visual or auditory discrimination difficulty
  - spelling problems
  - visual or auditory deficits
  - reading comprehension
  - memory deficits
  - lack of attention
  - inability to focus
  - inability to screen out extraneous stimuli
  - short-term/long-term memory deficits?
3. Does the learner experience any problems with the physical layout of your room?
4. How can the physical environment be changed to better suit the student's needs?
5. What kind of lighting is used?
6. What is the noise level in the workplace?
7. Is the classroom visually distracting?
8. Is the classroom auditorily distracting?
9. What assistive technology devices or software has the student used in the past?
10. How can the learner's deficit be compensated? (Accommodations can be suggested here.)

Below is an example of a form that will be useful in helping you find the necessary information as you collaborate with your student.

### **Accommodations Planning Process Form**

<p>What is required to do the task/work?</p> <p>What is the student able to do?</p> <p>What is difficult for the student?</p> <p>What is the effect of the student's disability?</p> <p>What has been useful in the past for the student?</p>		
<b>Accommodations</b>		
Can the task be changed?	How can the classroom environment be changed?	Can these changes help others?

### **Accommodations for Reading Problems**

<http://www.aelweb.vcu.edu/publications/LDGuide/Sec6/Reading%20Overview.htm>  
 Learning Disabilities (LD) Adaptations/Accommodations Guide - Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center

Reading is a complex activity that requires the use and coordination of many skills simultaneously. Difficulty with any of these abilities may result in a reading problem. The lists below do not differentiate between different causes or types of reading problems. You should choose accommodations appropriate to individual learner's specific and unique characteristics. Remember to work with their strengths to bypass disabilities and/or develop abilities in weaker areas.

<b>Adjust Setting/ Environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Classroom</li> <li>▪ Workplace</li> </ul>	<b>Adapt Task to Bypass/ Reduce Impact of Problem</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Classroom/Workplace</li> <li>▪ Personal Strategies</li> </ul>	<b>Adapt Instruction/ Presentation of Information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Classroom</li> <li>▪ Workplace</li> </ul>	<b>Make Accommodations in Testing/Performance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Classroom</li> <li>▪ Workplace</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow learner to seek out different sources and intensities of light</li> <li>• Allow privacy for reading aloud</li> <li>• Provide a space with minimal distractions</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study carrel</li> <li>• Portable screen</li> <li>• Portable, adjustable desk lamp</li> <li>• Ear plugs</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reduce amount of reading, match learner with a peer for paired reading (taking turns)</li> <li>• Allow a peer to read material to the learner before the learner reads it</li> <li>• Use high-interest/low level reading materials as a substitute for texts</li> <li>• Make shorter assignments and/or allow more time for completion</li> <li>• Rewrite difficult written material required for a job task, using simpler language</li> <li>• Provide tape-recorded instructions, messages, materials (on the job)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Personal Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Listen to Books on Tape or on computer disk</li> <li>▪ Use scan and read software and other technology (see tools)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Books on Tape from Reading for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&amp;D) or <i>Talking Books</i> from the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS)</li> <li>• Variable-speech-control (VSC) tape recorders (used with books on tape)</li> <li>• Books on computer disk with voice synthesizer</li> <li>• Audiotaped texts and other readings (made by teacher/aide/volunteer)</li> <li>• Headphones for tape recorders</li> <li>• Simplified editions of literature classics, and/or simply written original books</li> <li>• Optical character recognition (OCR) with speech synthesis systems (stand-alone or PC-based) that scan and read text aloud</li> <li>• Screen magnification/enlargement software</li> <li>• Quicktionary Reading Pen</li> <li>• Talking dictionaries</li> <li>• Large-print books</li> <li>• Transparent colored overlays</li> <li>• Line-marker card or "Reading Ruler" with colored "window" to focus attention on line</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight or color code important information on handouts</li> <li>• Write clearly using large print subheadings to organize material, simple and direct language, and plenty of white space</li> <li>• Suggest stopping points in lengthy text, helping the learner to identify manageable "chunks" for reading and study</li> <li>• Review written directions orally</li> <li>• Allow &amp; encourage the learner to read aloud to both see and hear the material.</li> <li>• Minimize the need to read handwriting by providing typed directions</li> <li>• Use a consistent format in providing directions for activities or assignments</li> <li>• Provide feedback on learner's work in person or on tape</li> <li>• Provide needed background information via videotape or speakers</li> <li>• Use a variety of learning experiences: demonstrations, field trips, discussions, and group/cooperative projects</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manipulatives: letter/word cards, blocks</li> <li>• Transparent colored overlays, highlighters</li> <li>• Line-marker card (home-made) or "Reading Ruler" with colored "window" to focus attention on line</li> <li>• Quicktionary Reading Pen</li> <li>• Talking dictionaries</li> <li>• Books on tape</li> <li>• Variable-speech-control (VSC) tape recorders (used with books on tape)</li> <li>• Books on computer disk, voice synthesizer</li> <li>• Audiotaped texts and other readings (made by teacher/aide/volunteer)</li> <li>• Headphones for tape recorders</li> <li>• Simplified editions of literature classics, and/or simply written original books</li> <li>• OCR with speech synthesis (stand-alone or PC-based) that scan and read text aloud</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow additional time for testing or workplace performance</li> <li>• Allow test directions/test items to be read aloud to learner (when testing subject matter other than reading)</li> <li>• Allow testing in private, distraction-free area</li> <li>• Provide directions for required performance on audiotape or videotape</li> <li>• Allow use of transparent colored overlays and/or page magnifiers</li> <li>• Allow use of line markers to maintain focus on correct line of print</li> <li>• Allow marking of answers directly in test booklet (for standardized tests) to prevent tracking problems when moving from test to answer sheet.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colored overlays, line markers, magnifiers, Quicktionary Reading Pen, or other tools</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Thinking about test accommodations:</b> Identify the purpose of each test. You may consider accommodations to remove any obstacles to performance that are not directly related to your testing objective.</p>

## Checklist for Planning Accommodations

Decision making about accommodations is to be done on an individual basis considering the learner's strengths, specific needs, and goals. This explains why it is important to include the learner in the decision making and accommodation process.

When considering one or more accommodations for classroom, testing or everyday life use, you can consider using a checklist like the one below. It allows you to rate and compare accommodation characteristics. This form is adapted from one found in *Accommodating Adults with Disabilities in Adult Education*, developed by the University of Kansas Institute for Adult Studies in 1998.

**Learner** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Characteristics of an Accommodation	Accommodation	Accommodation	Accommodation
	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____
Easily available			
Inexpensive			
Likely to be effective with the learner			
Proven effective with the learner			
Easy to use			
Portable			
Compensates for or bypasses difficulty			
Remediates difficulty/increases abilities			
Allows more independent study/work			
Useful for a variety of tasks			
Approved by GED Testing Service			

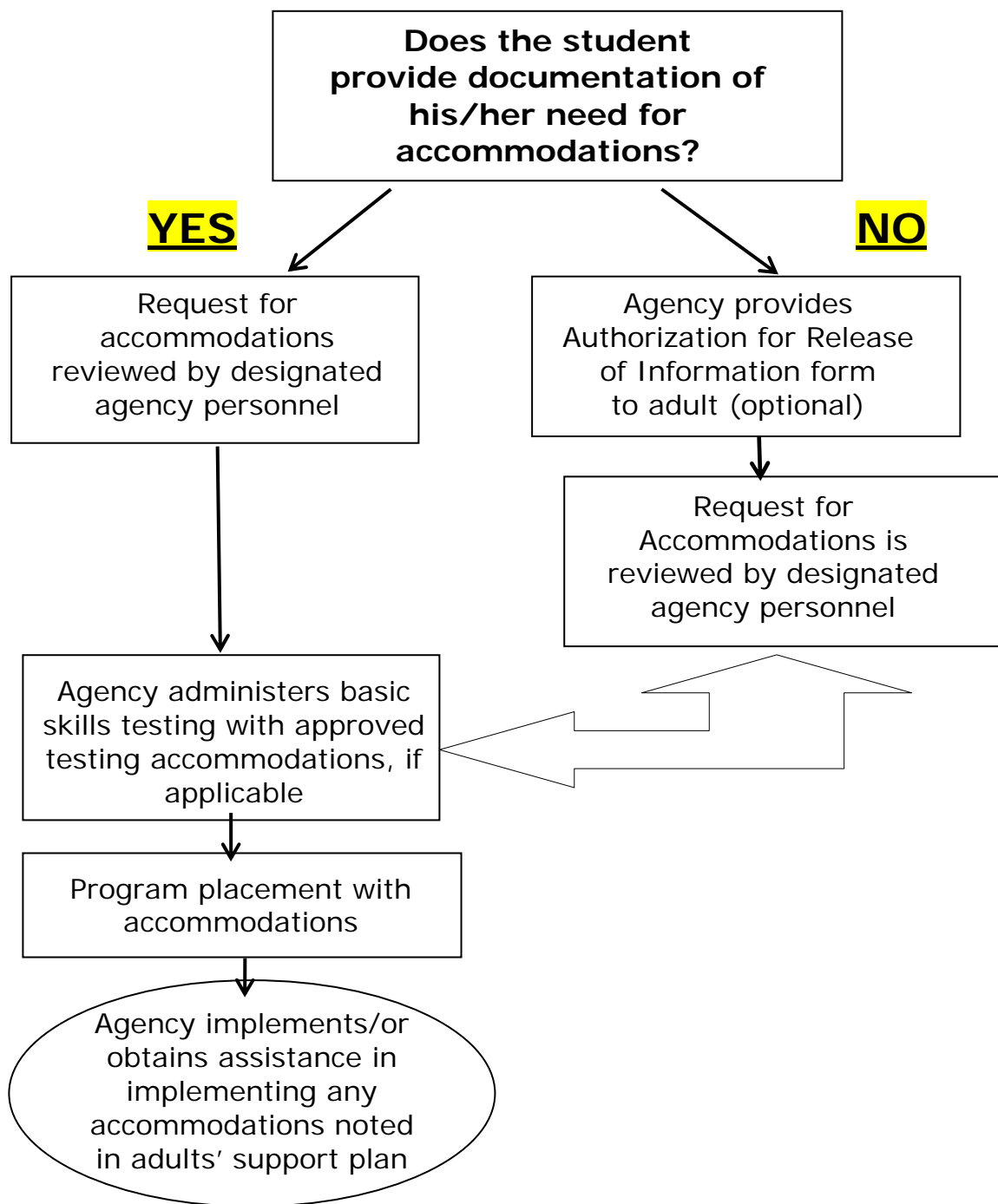
### The Accommodation Process

Accommodations involve a wide range of techniques and support systems that help individuals be successful in school, at home, and on the job despite the limitations that result from their learning disability.

According to the law, the accommodation process begins when a student self-identifies as an individual with a learning disability, provides the appropriate document, and asks for assistance. This could take place at intake, in the classroom, or not until a high stakes testing is about to take place. To put forth the 'good faith effort' that the law requires, schools should implement a policy that includes information on how to initiate the accommodation process and who to contact on

campus. This should require notices in alternative formats, brochures, flyers, and inclusion in student handbooks. It is important for students to know their rights and responsibilities since they must initiate the accommodation process. Staff and students should be informed that no student should be forced to self-disclose. They should also know that the failure to do so abnegates their rights to receive accommodations.

Below is a flowchart reflecting the accommodation process:



According to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, if identified and approved accommodations are **not** provided by the educational institution, the adult education student has the right to pursue further action through an established grievance procedure.

## **The Five-Step Accommodation Decision Making Procedure**

Adapted from: Chang, M., Richards, J., & Jackson, A. (1996). Accommodating students with disabilities: A practical guide for faculty. Project funded by the U.S. Department of Education, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research Number N133B30025-95A.

- **Identify Individual Needs:**

Before providing accommodations, teachers should know the specific needs of their students with learning disabilities and what options for accommodation are available to them. However, staff should collect additional data about the needs and types of accommodations provided:

- Faculty should have a general understanding about the specific learning disabilities that their students have.
- Faculty need to get specific information about their students with learning disabilities such as their individual needs. Students' own suggestions based on their experience are invaluable.
- Faculty need to know about a variety of ways and means of providing accommodations.

- **Matching Students' Needs with Ways and Means of Accommodations:**

Once information is collected about the student with a learning disability, the next step is to weigh the options.

- Make the best choice using stated policy and guidelines.
- Communicate to students with learning disabilities the options that are "doable" and available to them.
- Resolve disputes between certain requests and feasibility of accommodating request.

- **Implementing the Accommodation Plan:**

A "contract" or plan of action should be developed between the student and the teacher or appropriate staff person.

- Write up the accommodation plan that includes the following answers.
  - What types of accommodations will be provided?
  - How they will be executed?
  - Under what conditions will the accommodation be provided?
  - How will the accommodation plan be evaluated: Is it successful?

- **Evaluating Outcomes of Accommodations:**

It is important to evaluate the plan during and after implementation.

- Students and faculty should provide suggestions. The suggestions should be negotiated to make the plan more effective.
- Evaluation of outcomes is important to determine a future course of action.

- **Utilization of the Outcome:**

- If the plan was not effective, how could it be improved?
- What changes need to be made?

## **Confidentiality of Accommodations**

Some disabilities such as blindness will be obvious, but there are many more disabilities that are not so obvious. Learning disabilities are an example of hidden or invisible disabilities.

Having a disability revealed is often mentioned by students with disabilities as one of their greatest fears. People with learning disabilities are often uncomfortable disclosing their disability for fear of being stigmatized or being labeled as different. Unfortunately, this lack of disclosure may lead to them doing poorly or dropping out of school.

Confidentiality of disability and accommodation-related information is essential. If the student chooses to disclose the disability, educators have the opportunity and the legal obligation to help “level the playing field” by arranging and providing the proper accommodations. An instructor must not disclose or discuss information about a student’s disability or accommodations with other persons, unless the student has authorized the disclosure. If you reveal a student’s disability to other students, you have violated the trust that that student has placed in you and the educational institution and the results can have negative implications for the student.

## **Implementing Accommodations**

As the instructor, you will be responsible for providing input into the process. You may be asked to provide information about course requirements, instructional methods, assessment procedures, accountability, and required performance standards. The level of involvement you will have in the accommodation process will vary depending upon the following factors: the type of accommodation provided, the setting, the student’s disability, and your comfort level in working with students with LD.

The focus is on changing the learning environment or the academic requirements so that the students may learn in spite of their deficit areas. Schools are expected to adjust for differences of students with learning disabilities by changing factors in the environment that may not favor the students' progress. These accommodations do not require you to water down the course content, but instead, to minimize the effects of the disability without a change to the curriculum. A student can then demonstrate what he or she knows about the subject and learning is promoted.

While it may be true that some students with disabilities not only do as well or even exceed their peers in terms of achievement, many cannot. Reasonable accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis by evaluating obstacles or barriers interfering with the student's access to the facility, the classroom, instruction, or performance; and, determination of accommodations that can either remove or reduce the effects of obstacles or barriers. Most students who document their disability and need for an accommodation will receive one without difficulty.

## Universal Design

*"Universal design"* is an approach to the design of all products and environments to be usable by everyone, to the greatest extent possible, regardless of age, ability, or situation. It serves people who are young or old, with excellent or limited abilities, in ideal or difficult circumstances. It benefits everyone by accommodating limitations.

The term universal design signifies inclusive planning, structures, tools, and methods of teaching that take into account the range of physical and mental characteristics that spans human diversity. Because flexibility and provision of alternative approaches to the same objective are an inherent element of universal design, it gives all individuals, disabled or not, the freedom to choose the paths that best serve them without marginalizing them through special or segregated treatment.

In architecture, universal design yields ramps that help every person pushing a stroller or pulling a suitcase on wheels. Universal design has also fostered Web authoring tools that allow us simultaneously to communicate on the Internet through the visual, auditory, and tactile senses.

## **Summary**

Many students with learning disabilities are bright and motivated to learn while others are not. Others have great difficulty with academic and related skills and have had negative experiences throughout their education. Postsecondary education and training can be a very long and challenging road for those adult students with learning disabilities. Academic failures can lead to low self-esteem and reduced motivation. On the other hand, experiencing success can be empowering and life changing for these same students.

Appropriate accommodations, both in the classrooms and on tests, are a key component to students' success. Accommodations help remove or lessen barriers to their performance that are a direct result of their learning disabilities. Even very simple accommodations can mean the difference between success and failure for adult students with learning disabilities. As adult educators, it is our responsibility to be active members of these students' support systems. We need to reach out and provide the needed assistance in an effort to help them achieve their goals.

Research has shown that extended time is the most widely used accommodation for students with LD. Not every student needs, or will benefit from, extended time however. Accommodations must match the student's need. Research suggests that over accommodating a student is not helpful, and may actually depress their performance rather than improve it. More is not better when it comes to accommodations. Best practice is for students to use their accommodations until mastery so they are comfortable and know how to use them effectively.

In the end, the most successful students with LD can overcome barriers by disclosing their disability and advocating for themselves.

## Resources

### Publications

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- Riviere, A. (1996). Assistive technology: Meeting the needs of adults with learning disabilities. Academy for Educational Development and the National Institute for Literacy.
- Roffman, A.J. (2000). Day to day living. In meeting the challenge of learning disabilities in adulthood (pp. 163-199). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Roffman, A.J. (2000). Work. In meeting the challenge of learning disabilities in adulthood (pp. 243-280). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
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## **Organizations**

National Information Centers and Government and State Agencies

Division of Adult Education and Literacy  
Office of Vocational and Adult Education  
U.S. Department of Education - 4090 MES  
400 Maryland Avenue S.W.  
Washington, DC 20202-7240  
Phone: 202-205-5451  
Email: [ovae@ed.gov](mailto:ovae@ed.gov)

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/index.htm>

This division within the Office of Vocational and Adult Education at the Department of Education provides adult education providers with resources in adult education, including putting adults in contact with the Office of Adult Education within their state. Fact sheets, bibliographies, directories, and other publications are available for adults who have special learning needs.

HEATH Resource Center  
National Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities  
The George Washington University  
2121 K Street N.W., Suite 220  
Washington, DC 20037  
Phone: 202-973-0904; Toll free: 800-544-3284 (V/TTY)  
Email: [askheath@heath.gwu.edu](mailto:askheath@heath.gwu.edu)  
<http://www.heath.gwu.edu>  
HEATH is a national clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities. It offers information on how and where adults with learning disabilities can get training after high school.

The Center for Adult English Language Acquisition (CAELA)  
4646 40th Street N.W.  
Washington, DC 20016  
Phone: 202-362-0700, extension 200  
Email: [caela@cal.org](mailto:caela@cal.org)  
<http://www.cal.org/caela>  
CAELA is the only national information center focusing on the language and literacy education of adults and out-of-school youth learning English. A wide range of resources are available, including facts and statistics about adult ESL, FAQs, books and major publications, an ESL e-discussion list, and resource compilations, including Learning Disabilities and ESL.

National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS)  
Library of Congress  
1291 Taylor Street N.W.  
Washington, DC 20011  
Phone: 202-707-5100, TTY: 202-707-0744, Toll free: 800-424-8567  
Email: [nls@loc.gov](mailto:nls@loc.gov)  
<http://www.loc.gov/nls>  
Individuals with LD may be able to borrow "talking books" (books on tape) from NLS, but they must first establish their eligibility for the program. Call or write NLS and ask for an application form for reading disabilities and *Talking Books and Reading Disabilities*, a fact sheet outlining the eligibility requirements for persons with learning disabilities. Once eligibility is established, the person can borrow, on tape, many of the same books that public libraries make available in print.

## **National Learning Disabilities Organizations**

Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD)  
11184 Antioch Road, Box 405  
Overland Park, KS 66210  
Phone: 913-491-1011, Fax: 913-491-1012  
Email: [Inease@cldinternational.org](mailto:Inease@cldinternational.org)  
<http://www.cldinternational.org>

The Council for Learning Disabilities provides services to professionals who work with individuals with learning disabilities. Members include educators,  
Rochelle Kenyon, Michigan Adult Education Profession Development

diagnosticians, psychologists, physicians, optometrists, and speech, occupational, and physical therapists. All members receive the *Learning Disability Quarterly*, as well as the *LD Forum*.

#### Division for Learning Disabilities (DLD)

Council for Exceptional Children

1110 North Glebe Road, Suite 300

Arlington, VA 22201-5704

Phone: 703-620-3660, Fax: 703-264-9494, Toll free: 888-CEC-SPED

<http://www.dldcec.org/default.cfm>

The Division for Learning Disabilities is one of the many special organizations within the Council for Exceptional Children. DLD offers the TeachingLD website, which provides information and resources to those teaching students with LD. DLD also publishes its own journal, *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, and a newsletter, *The DLD Times*.

#### International Dyslexia Association (IDA)

40 York Rd., 4th Floor

Baltimore, MD 21204-5202

Phone: 410-296-0232, Fax: 410-321-5069

Email: [info@interdys.org](mailto:info@interdys.org)

<http://www.interdys.org>

The International Dyslexia Association (formerly known as the Orton Dyslexia Society) is the only national nonprofit organization solely concerned with dyslexia. Extensive information about dyslexia is available online at the web address above, including Spanish and audio versions.

#### Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA)

4156 Library Road

Pittsburgh, PA 15234

Phone: 412.341.1515

Email: [info@ldaamerica.org](mailto:info@ldaamerica.org)

<http://www.ldaamerica.org>

The national office has a resource center of hundreds of publications and many fact sheets about learning disabilities available online.

#### National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD)

381 Park Avenue South, Suite 1401

New York, NY 10016

Phone: 212-545-7510; Fax: 212-545-9665, Toll free: 888-575-7373

<http://www.ld.org>

The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) is a national, not-for-profit organization with online resources. InfoZone connects to resources in your state, online fact sheets, and other educational materials about learning disabilities.

"Living with LD," offers a section for adults who have LD. "LD Advocate" keeps up-to-date legislative information.

Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D)  
20 Roszel Road  
Princeton, NJ 08540  
Phone/Toll free: 866-732-3585, 800-221-4792  
Email: [custserv@rfbd.org](mailto:custserv@rfbd.org)  
<http://www.rfbd.org>

Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic is a nonprofit service organization that provides educational and professional books in accessible media to people with print disabilities. RFB&D's library contains more than 93,000 titles in a broad variety of subjects, from literature and history to math and the sciences, at all academic levels through post-graduate and professional. RFB&D's services are available to persons with a verified visual, physical, or specific learning disability that substantially limits reading. To become a member of RFB&D, complete an application for service (which contains a "disability verification" and "certification") and include a one-time nominal registration fee. An [application form](#) is available from RFB&D's Customer Services Department and on-line.

## **National Literacy Organizations**

National Institute for Literacy  
America's Literacy Directory and National Literacy Hotline  
1775 I Street, NW, Suite 730  
Washington, DC 20006-2401  
Phone: 202-233-2025; Toll free: 800-228-8813, TTY: 877-576-7734  
<http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/hotline.html>  
<http://www.literacydirectory.org>

America's Literacy Directory (ALD) is an online searchable database that refers potential learners and volunteers to literacy programs in their areas. To view a list of programs on the Internet, users simply enter a zip code at [www.literacydirectory.org](http://www.literacydirectory.org). The directory provides detailed information about types of services, class times, program fees, and directions to neighborhood programs.

ProLiteracy Worldwide  
1320 Jamesville Avenue  
Syracuse, NY 13210  
Phone: 315-422-9121; Fax: 315-422-6369, Toll free: 888-528-2224  
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ProLiteracy Worldwide represents the merger of the world's two largest adult volunteer literacy organizations—Laubach Literacy International and Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc. The publishing arm of ProLiteracy is New Readers Press (866-894-2100). It offers resources and reading materials for adults and basic literacy through GED levels, adults with learning disabilities, and ESL students.

## **Online Resources**

Florida Technet - <http://floridatechnet.org/bridges>

Schwab Learning - <http://www.schwablearning.org>

LD Online - <http://www.ldonline.org>

The Faculty Room - <http://www.washington.edu/doit/Faculty/Strategies/Disability/LD>

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

Question #1: How do I know if a student really has a specific learning disability?

Answer:

Learning disabilities are invisible or hidden disabilities. If a student chooses not to self-identify, and he exhibits specific characteristics associated with learning disabilities, then you can only suspect that he might have LD. A serious problem facing adult educators is the sheer number of students that have undiagnosed learning disabilities and have been unsuccessful throughout their education.

Question #2: Are students with learning disabilities required to self-identify?

Answer:

No. Students cannot be required to self-disclose. However, students with known disabilities who choose not to self-disclose must accept responsibility for the consequences of that action. The teacher should include both a print and oral access statement on the first day of class such as, "If you have some disability which may impede your full participation in this course, please see me privately to discuss how we may provide reasonable accommodation for your needs."

Question #3: Do accommodations give students with learning disabilities an unfair advantage?

Answer:

When accommodations are objectively based upon the documented evidence of functional limitations due to disability, they simply compensate for the limitation, and therefore do not give any advantage. If the disability and/or its functional manifestations were incorrectly or not truthfully identified, accommodations would not be warranted and likely would be unfair. Studies have shown that extended time was demonstrated to significantly enhance the grades of students with disabilities whereas it had little effect on those without a disability.

Question #4: Do academic accommodations lower the standards for students with learning disabilities?

Answer:

No. Academic accommodations are changes to a classroom environment or task that are necessary to provide equal opportunity to qualified students with learning disabilities. Accommodations are designed to assist students in overcoming functional limitations resulting from their disability. They are not used to lower the standards. Students with disabilities will still be responsible for meeting course and conduct requirements.

Question #5: Do I have to give students with learning disabilities for in my class any accommodation they ask for?

Answer:

No. Instructors are not required to provide accommodations, academic modifications or auxiliary aids which would fundamentally alter the program, or which would constitute an undue financial or administrative hardship. Accommodations should be planned as part of a deliberate process.

Question #6: How can I present information (e.g., written, oral, hands-on activities, demonstrations, and videotaped formats) adequately to teach students with learning disabilities in my class?

Answer:

Presenting content using a multisensory approach (e.g., written, oral, hands-on activities, demonstrations, and videotaped formats) benefits all students and may reduce the need for specific accommodations for students with many types of disabilities. However, some students with learning disabilities will still require specific accommodations. It is important to remember that no two students with learning disabilities are the same. Deficits and severity vary. Accommodations should be individualized and may change over time as a student's needs change or the course requires different types of work.

Question #7: How can I adapt testing or handout materials to make them more "user-friendly" for students with a range of learning disabilities?

Answer:

When constructing test items, use the same style that was used during lectures. Group related test questions together. This can help students retrieve information contained in their notes. Concise, well-organized, outlined handouts that highlight key points will reinforce content.

Question #8: What are some "low-tech" strategies that students with learning disabilities use to achieve academic success?

Answer: Some simple accommodations do not require computers. Low-tech solutions such as post-it notes, daily organizers, and highlighter pens may be helpful organizers and learning tools for students with learning disabilities.