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Visit MAEPD's website at <http://www.maepd.org> for an E-Library section on LD, a Training Calendar, Workshop Registration, and other important resources.
Coming Soon - 2005-06 Training Calendar

Welcome to the second issue of *Learning Disability Reflections*, the Michigan Adult Education Professional Development (MAEPD) project newsletter, designed to assist adult education and literacy providers in identifying, teaching, and supporting adults with learning disabilities through the "Michigan Bridges to Practice" project. You are encouraged to photocopy _____ and widely

MAEPD

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Michigan's Bridges to Practice: Learning Disability Reflections

June 2005, Issue 2



Bridges to Practice: A Research-Based Guide for Literacy Practitioners Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities

"Varying estimates of the number of American adults with learning disabilities range from 3 to 15 percent of the general population. An even greater incidence of learning disabilities is likely to be found among the population of adults with low-level literacy skills. Research has yet to determine just what that proportion is; estimates range from 30 to 80 percent.

Bridges to Practice: A Research-based Guide for Literacy Practitioners Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities was developed through funding from the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), which was created by the National Literacy Act of 1991. The NIFL's mission is to maximize the effectiveness of local literacy services nationwide. One of NIFL's goals is to enhance the capacity of literacy service providers to identify, teach, and support adults with LD.



A Call to Action



Adults come to literacy programs for a variety of reasons: they want to get a job or a better job; they want to help their children with their schoolwork; or they want to be able to read a newspaper or write a letter. In essence, they want to improve their lives. Many of these adults may only consider approaching a literacy program for help when faced with serious personal embarrassment, struggles with friends and family, or the imminent loss of employment. It takes great courage to face these fears and take those first steps to walk through the doors of a literacy program.

Literacy programs may view the provision of services for adults with learning disabilities as a problem or an impossible challenge, especially when faced with limited financial resources, limited or poorly designed professional development experiences, and a shortage of personnel. However, there is no shortage of caring or commitment on the part of literacy practitioners. They know first-hand the joys and rewards felt by learners who have met their goals. Most literacy programs and practitioners will welcome and seize the opportunity to improve services for learners, provided they can identify the necessary resources and tools.

One challenge for literacy programs and practitioners is to change their views about learning disabilities and the impact of learning disabilities on the provision of services to learners. Literacy programs cannot overlook the fact that

their learners' real-life responsibilities and obligations, combined with a real history of failure, embarrassment, and fear, shape a set of conditions that require a significant amount of staff planning and creativity. They must thoroughly understand the circumstances which shape their actions to develop high-impact programs.

Bridges to Practice is organized around five guidebooks designed to document and reflect "best practices" in working with persons with learning disabilities. What distinguishes these guidebooks from similar products is that the content is based on research. The purpose of these guidebooks is to influence the decision-making process of literacy practitioners in evaluating and selecting screening tools, curricular materials, and instructional strategies that are effective for adults with learning disabilities. Ultimately, by making changes in the provision of services for adults with learning disabilities, literacy programs can help countless adults reach their potential and lead more fulfilling and self-sufficient lives.



The primary purpose of these guidebooks is to help literacy programs and practitioners provide services which are effective and appropriate to the needs of adults with LD. The use of *Bridges to Practice* should increase practitioners' understanding of adults with learning disabilities—their strengths and challenges—and directly help literacy practitioners to:

- empower learners with an understanding of their learning disabilities and civil rights;
- collaborate with learners to select curriculum goals related to life needs (including how to advocate for civil rights);
- construct learning partnerships with adults that result in the use of more successful instructional approaches, effective instructional adaptations, and appropriate accommodations;
- develop and use community linkages to create and tap needed resources to enhance needed literacy services; and
- develop an understanding of the need for reforming the system of private and public services for learners in our communities and developing plans for achieving change.

These guidebooks can be used to expand a literacy program's vision of what to do immediately and in the future. When used in conjunction with approved professional development, these guidebooks can provide the stimulus for literacy programs to begin to address overall systems change, and thereby enhance the quality of services provided to adults with learning disabilities. (*Bridges to Practice Guidebooks* can be accessed at: <http://www.nifl.gov>)

BRIDGES TO PRACTICE TRAIN-THE-TRAINER

To derive maximum benefit from these *Bridges to Practice Guidebooks*, literacy program leaders are encouraged to participate in the companion training/professional development program. When used in conjunction with this training and the accompanying video, *Bridges to Systemic Reform*, these guidebooks can provide the stimulus for literacy programs to begin to address overall system change and, thereby, to enhance the quality of services provided to adults with learning disabilities. The service, research, and development agenda is designed to assist literacy practitioners in enhancing services to adults with LD. This agenda was developed in recognition of the:

- link between low-level literacy in adults and the apparent prevalence of learning disabilities;
- high student attrition rate nationwide in adult literacy programs;
- paucity of research studies on adult literacy students with learning disabilities; and
- need to improve the outcomes of adult literacy programs.

By the end of the Bridges to Practice training, a participant will have:

- a broader awareness of learning disabilities and their impact on the provision of literacy services;
- a repertoire of skills and practical tools for tapping the creativity and experience of those you work with;
- a vision of the changes you would like your program to initiate in providing services which are more responsive to the needs of persons with learning disabilities; and
- an action plan for how you intend to achieve those changes.

By setting forth guidelines for best practices and by stimulating discussions among program staff, these guidebooks can be the catalyst that causes some literacy programs to rethink and restructure their delivery systems to be more effective in serving adults with learning disabilities. Programs that are responsive to the needs of adult learners ultimately will assist greater numbers of students in achieving their goals.

During 2005, four Michigan educators were selected by the National Institute for Literacy to participate in a two-week Bridges to Practice national training team. This was not just a book-learning experience, but a practical, hands-on, experiential training program that sought to make a real difference in the lives of adults who need our assistance. As a final training experience on the last day, prospec-

tive Bridges to Practice trainers modeled the behaviors and teaching techniques that are appropriate for the population of adults with learning disabilities. After successful completion of the two weeks of training activities, each attendee returned to their state to fulfill a commitment of presenting certain aspects of the national training to audiences of literacy practitioners and partner agencies.



Congratulations

to the following **Michigan** adult education team members for their commitment and dedication:



Dianne Duthie
Erica Nakfoor
Elaine High
Mary Kay Doran



Impressions:
A Troll's Eye View of the Bridge
Mary Kay Doran
Livonia Public Schools
Bridges to Practice Trainer

Michigan's ubiquitous hand/mitten map was employed full force while I attended the two-week national *Bridges to Practice* Train-the-Trainer workshops in Kansas City this spring. I introduced myself by pointing out Livonia/Detroit's geographical place at the "base of the thumb." Since my national training group was mainly attended by wonderful practitioners from Southern states, the District of Columbia, and Oregon it helped them to see the location from which I came while utilizing tactile cues.

I was familiar with the ideals, thrust, and values of the NIFL Bridges-to-Practice initiative, but had been viewing it from a bottom up perspective, much like the Michigan troll. Yes, that's the affectionate name those in the Upper Peninsula (Yoopers) use for us living below the Mackinaw Bridge. This changed as I came into the Kansas City scene and was totally immersed into the meaning and desire for the systemic change that Bridges to Practice exemplifies.



Until 1957 in Michigan, ferry boats sculled people like pieces of educational information over the depths of the educational gulf of learning disabilities that seemed to flow like the Straits of Mackinac, never a constant. Then the Bridge was built, spanning the divide, just as *Bridges to Practice* is linking the areas of research, practice, and results to empower citizens with learning disabilities with their rightful accommodations.

The first training sessions laid the foundation pillars of definition, identification, and awareness of learning disabilities. It was not a spectator sport as groups were at work collaborating to demonstrate understanding. Master Trainers, Mary Lou Belisle and Dr. Rochelle Kenyon, made it clear that nothing would be accomplished without our commitment and dedication. Theirs was a constant model of mastery.

Discussion, activities, small group bonding and a wealth of materials and homework, were clearly delineated in each day's agenda. This troll found collegiality and warmth of communal vision as we shared meals, most of which turned out to be working meals.

Systems change is the bedrock upon which *Bridges to Practice* is built and we labored together to determine, collaborate, present, critique, and applaud each other as planning for follow-up state training took shape. The printed resources are invaluable for individual growth, but the presentations by "really fantastic ladies with their exceptionally fabulous prizes" made building a framework go smoothly. Mary Lou and Rochelle knew just when to guide, direct, inspire, correct, and sometimes just laugh with the group, which by now was establishing friendships and sharing ideas, beautifully hammered out as graphic organizers.

No concepts came trippingly across the bridge as the fairy tale expands because this deals with real lives and conditions we are attempting to change for the better. Lack of funding, misunderstanding, misinformation, and insufficient teacher preparation are the areas the troll needs to attack and *Bridges to Practice* provides the pathways to the means, as well as the support from NIFL as exemplified by June Crawford's congratulations at "graduation." Perhaps now this troll, and fellow practitioners, can dance in the sunlight, echoing that fairy tales really can come true.



It's The Law

Specific learning disabilities are examples of mental impairments as stated in the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990). Major life activities include functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. Thus, an individual who has a learning disability may be entitled to certain rights and responsibilities. Legal protections exist for individuals with disabilities to ensure equal opportunity. Because rights and responsibilities are mandated, equal opportunity is guaran-

teed and not just expected.” DEMYSTIFYING ATTENTION DEFICIT/ HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

By Patti White, M.Ed.
Bridges to Practice Master Trainer

**Intelligent. Creative. Visionary.
Humorous. Passionate. Resourceful.
Flexible. Open-minded.**



Every teachers' dream student? Every employers' dream employee? Dangle those attributes and then add the term "AD/HD" to the mix. Any change in that dream? There shouldn't be. All of those positive qualities and more are characteristics associated with people who have Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD). Unfortunately, there has been too much focus on more negative characteristics, such as impulsivity, hyperactivity, and distractibility—not to mention the highly controversial subject of medication.

To complicate the issues, consider this: AD/HD is not just for kids anymore.

In an effort both to dispel some myths and address the facts about adults with AD/HD, Michigan Adult Education Professional Development and National Human Resources Development, Inc. recently hosted a series of one-day workshops in Michigan. The workshops, "Demystifying Attention Deficit Disorders: What Do I Need to Know" were conducted by Rochelle Kenyon, Ed.D., and Patti White, M.Ed. in three locations: Muskegon, Flint, and Dearborn. Dr. Stuart S. Segal joined the participants in Dearborn to present medical information and answer questions from his experience as a psychologist who both diagnoses and treats patients with AD/HD.

The workshops included a comprehensive overview into the latest research on AD/HD with a focus on immediate application for educators and students in alternative and adult education classrooms. Participants were treated to an interactive, multi-sensory combination of lecture, discussion, simulation activities, and hands-on applications. There was also a short video clip from "60 Minutes" featuring David Neeleman, CEO, Jet Blue, who says many of his out-of-the-box ideas are thanks to his AD/HD. "In the midst of all the chaos in your mind, and all of the disorganization, and all the trouble getting started, and procrastination, your brain just thinks a little bit differently," he says. "And you can come up with things."



"Thinking differently" to "come up with things" could easily have been the workshop's theme. Topics included the definition of AD/HD, characteristics in adults, positive aspects, DSM-IV criteria,

co-morbidity aspects, medication and treatment, resources, and specific classroom and workplace coping strategies for adults who have AD/HD. These strategies help students learn coping skills for focusing, controlling hyperactivity and impulsivity, anxiety, organization, and memory. It was a lot to cover in only 6 hours each day, but the growing prevalence of the disorder provided plenty of motivation to learn new ways of helping adult students who have AD/HD reach their educational and career goals.

Demystifying AD/HD is critical for service providers and educators striving to provide effective services and guidance for their students and clients with AD/HD. As Paul Orfalea, the founder of Kinko's observed, being dyslexic and "ADD to the max," did not stop him from becoming an entrepreneurial success. The growing wealth of research and knowledge about AD/HD can only assist in the growing success of students who have yet to learn just how much potential they have.

For more information about the "Demystifying Attention Deficit Disorders" workshop, please contact Rochelle Kenyon at RKenyon721@aol.com.



The Survey Says.....

"Eight million adult Americans are estimated to struggle with the inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity of AD/HD....Our survey shows that AD/HD is a highly disabling disorder with a significant effect on a broad range of areas of functioning, including education and employment...These preliminary results underscore the importance of recognizing and understanding the problems faced by adults with AD/HD. It is striking that it appears only about a third of those in the survey who have been diagnosed with AD/HD are being treated appropriately. Better identification and treatment of adults with AD/HD can improve lives and save Americans billions of dollars every year." (Dr. Joseph Biederman at 2004 American Medical Association media briefing on AD/HD).



AD/HD FACTS

- AD/HD is a neurobiological disability with environmental factors. Persons with AD/HD learn ways to deal with their symptoms (inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity).
- AD/HD is the most common behavioral disorder in children; it adversely affects performance in school and emotional development.
- AD/HD is estimated to affect approximately 3-7% of all school-age children in the U.S.
- AD/HD is not caused by bad parenting,

however, parenting techniques can often improve or worsen some symptoms.

- AD/HD has nothing to do with a person's intellectual ability. Some highly intelligent people have AD/HD.
- Persons without AD/HD respond to psychostimulants similarly to children with AD/HD. A trial of medication is not used to diagnose the condition.
- Properly adjusted medication for AD/HD sharpens a person's focus and increases ability to control behavior.
- Teens and adults with AD/HD continue to benefit from medication treatment.
- About 70% to 80% of children with AD/HD continue to have symptoms during their teen years and about 50% have symptoms into adulthood.

KEY ELEMENTS IN THE TEACHING/LEARNING PROCESS

There are several **key elements** in the teaching and learning process that help contribute to the success of teaching adults with learning disabilities. These include the:

- practitioner's complete understanding of the curriculum options that have been targeted during goal-setting activities; e.g., Basic Skills, Learning Strategies, Critical Content, Social Skills, and Self-Advocacy;
- creation of an instructional environment that builds on strategies to promote learner independence;
- provision of instructional adaptations and legal accommodations that correspond to how the learner takes in and processes information;
- professional development of teachers, tutors, volunteers, and program administrators to ensure the recognition of the principles of LD-appropriate instruction; and the implementation of models for LD-appropriate instruction.

CREATING AN APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Learning disabled adults may be susceptible to environmental distractions or uncomfortable practicing certain basic skills in view of others. Modifying the instructional setting can be critical to the success of the learner with LD. Consider features of the **physical setting**, such as:

- Seating arrangements
- Location of resources
- Noise and lighting levels
- Adaptable spaces
- Decorations
- General atmosphere

"People with learning disabilities must always be on the lookout for ways to work around their difficulties and solve their problems." (Scheiber &



CREATING A STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

In addition to the physical space, practitioners will want to involve the student with learning disabilities in creating a “strategic” environment that promotes and supports the learner’s independence. Create a strategic environment by doing the following:

- Guide the learner to be active and independent. Ask questions such as, “So how would you do that?” - “How would you find that information?” or “How would you remember that?”
- Recognize the factors that increase learner motivation. Learners need to understand the instructional process, be involved in making decisions, and experience the success that comes from directly applying the knowledge and skills learned to real-life situations.
- Realize that instruction revolves around everyday needs of the learner. Focus instruction on teaching adults to be independent and on helping them to succeed in their lives.
- Regard learners as equal partners in the learning process. Adult learners come with valuable information about how they have learned and how they have compensated for things they cannot do. Designing instruction around the learner’s strengths, needs, and interests has the greatest potential for success.
- Encourage learners to keep track of their progress. Motivation increases when learners are taught to visually keep track of their own accomplishments using charts or graphs.
- Involve those significant persons in the learner’s life in promoting learning. The learner’s family, friends, and coworkers can encourage him to apply new skills at home and at work.
- Individualize instruction. The more a learner is able to practice and use skills, the greater the possibility of it being applied to other situations. The learning environment must allow for individualized goal-setting and direct instruction, as much as possible.

INSTRUCTIONAL ADAPTATIONS AND LEGAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Accommodations are changes that are legally required to allow the adult to access and profit from the basic or essential services provided by a program. Most cost little or nothing and can be easily provided, e.g., preferential seating or rearranging of equipment; allowance of extra time to complete tasks; and use of tape recorders, headphones, color coding, highlighting, large-print materials, index and cue cards.

Accommodations are often considered as the removal of barriers. If a learner with a motor control problem has difficulty writing a report, providing him with wide-ruled paper or allowing him to do the report orally would remove the barrier of the writing task.

Instructional adaptations are those routine changes that can be made during instruction to increase learning when an individual (with or without documentation of disability) has difficulty acquiring, storing, or remembering information. Such adaptations are logical choices that (1) make tasks more manageable (e.g., use of a tape recorder for memory and auditory processing problems; use of a calculator for solving math problems) and (2) enable individual to have greater control (e.g., the opportunity to work in a room free of distraction; allowance of frequent breaks).



You can alter existing material, provide more intense and enhanced instruction for the learner, or find alternate materials if:

- (1) the text is too fast-paced abstract, or complex,
- (2) the learner has difficulty organizing the material,
- (3) the learner lacks the experiences and background knowledge needed to make the new information meaningful, or
- (4) the learner needs the information broken down into smaller chunks and simplified.

“Once adults learn strategies, they are better able to profit from accommodations that allow for independent learning and performance. However, these types of accommodations are not sufficient if the individual still processes information in a manner that does not help him or her meet the program’s academic

Systemic Change Bridges to Practice Guidebooks

To the practitioner, the notion of systemic change can be overwhelming. Therefore, the opportunity to create change must begin with those systems, or those aspects of an individual system, over which practitioners have direct control. Most certainly, practitioners have direct control over their own actions and their interactions with adults who have learning disabilities. From this perspective, personal growth through professional development is an important factor in systemic change. It is essential that practitioners commit to developing actions based on (1) understanding learning disabilities in adults, (2) valuing each learner, (3) creating partnerships with learners, and (4) creating a best-practices approach to assessment and instruction.

Practitioners are also in the position to influence the people with whom they work and to begin to shape the policies and procedures that define their programs. For this kind of program change to occur, dialogue among program staff is critical. Practitioners must use a shared knowledge base and work toward a shared vision. For this reason, staff development opportunities must be designed to foster interaction among practitioners.

Gradually, practitioners can begin to move out of their own programs and begin the work of shaping other parts of the system that affect adults with learning disabilities. If all practitioners (whether they are working in a national agency or in a local literacy program) begin to work together to create change at the level at which they have control, then systemic change can occur.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

SCREENING FOR LD

Screening is a time to listen and gather information regarding educational, family and medical history. Some students may not require further diagnosis. Screening may lead to helpful interventions and get a sense of possible causes. Screenings can be administered any time during the instructional cycle if the practitioner identifies the need. Screenings are either done during the intake process for every adult who enters the program or as the need arises. Individual screenings require obtaining informed consent. *Bridges to Practice* identifies a well-received screening tool—*Payne Learning Needs Inventory*. It includes two screening questionnaires:

- 1) a 13-question State of Washington validated LD screening tool; and
- 2) a 22-question Learning Needs Inventory. It assists instructors in ABE, GED, and ESL to identify individuals with special learning needs. No accommodations are provided. Testing: 30 min. to 1 hr. No