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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.

Upcoming Training
"Demystifying Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD/ADHD)"
Register online: <http://www.maepd.org>
Trainers: Rochelle Kenyon & Patti White

Dates and Locations:
May 3, 2005—Muskegon
Muskegon Public Schools M-TEC

May 4, 2005—Flint
M-TEC Mott Community College

May 5, 2005—Dearborn
M-TEC Henry Ford Comm. College

Welcome to the first 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



MICHIGAN'S BRIDGES TO PRACTICE: LEARNING DISABILITY REFLECTIONS IS AN MAEPD PROJECT PUBLICATION OF NATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT, INC. IT IS FUNDED IN COOPERATION WITH THE MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH A GRANT UNDER SECTION 222(A)(2) STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES OF THE ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT, TITLE II OF THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT OF 1998, AMENDED.
DIANNE DUTHIE,
DIRECTOR OF ADULT EDUCATION AND SPANISH SPEAKING AFFAIRS
FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
[HTTP://WWW.MAEPD.ORG](http://www.maepd.org)

Michigan's Bridges to Practice: Learning Disability Reflections

February 2005, Issue 1

MICHIGAN'S LEARNING DISABILITIES POLICY FORUM

A PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE OF ADULT EDUCATION
AND MICHIGAN REHABILITATION SERVICES,
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR & ECONOMIC GROWTH
BY

LINDA COLAGROSS, DLEG AND
ROSANNE RENAUER, MRS

"With few exceptions, policy to consistently identify and address learning disabilities in the adult population does not currently exist in the United States and its territories." The Division of Adult Education and Literacy Regional Meetings:

*Adults and Learning Disabilities
Final Report - December 2003*



Learning disabilities impact just about everyone. Whether you are a person with a learning disability, a relative, a helping professional or an employer, learning disabilities affect your life.

For a number of years, practitioners in Michigan have recognized the need for more information, education and practical strategies to address the topic of learning disabilities. Professionals who work with and teach people struggling with learning disabilities can and do have a huge impact on their lives. In response to the need for trained practitioners, Michigan's Office of Adult Education sponsored a *Bridges to Practice Train-the-Trainer* event in 2002. Thirteen participants were trained, representing a variety of programs, agencies and disciplines. The five-day curriculum addressed definitions, awareness, screening tools, strategies and community supports. The participants, newly certified as trainers, were asked to maintain their skills and educate others on the Bridges to Practice concepts.



In October of 2003 and again in 2004, the Learning Disabilities Association of Michigan supported this effort by hosting a pre-symposium as part of its annual conference. The pre-symposium focused on strategies for accommodating learning disabilities in the classroom and at work and was funded, in part, by adult education professional development leadership funds.

This group of interested trainers and others confer every two months via teleconferencing. The calls keep the group informed of professional development activities to which they are invited, and are a great communication tool. The calls offer a chance to share related information on state, federal and local issues as well as keep the practitioners motivated and enthusiastic.

Because of the initial training, and in response to encouragement from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE), a statewide learning disabilities policy initiative, commonly referred to as "the LD Policy Forum," began in 2004. The Office of Adult Education, along with Michigan Rehabilitation Services, has taken the lead on this initiative. The initiative currently has representation from Michigan Works!, the state's One-Stop Services association, Family Independence Agency, Department of Corrections, Michigan's Learning Disabilities Association, and National Human Resources Development, Inc.



After a strategic planning session, the policy group agreed to the following goals:

1. Identify learning disabilities assessment and screening tools and disseminate for program and agency use.
2. Research programs and techniques to support adults with learning disabilities.
3. Develop and distribute a Learning Disabilities Resource Directory for either agency or consumer use.
4. Make available continuous professional development opportunities related to serving people with learning disabilities.

Progress has been steady on goal #1 as the Northwest Michigan Council of Government Works! Office is working closely with a consultant (funded through Michigan Rehab. Services) to identify employment service agency needs related to job seekers who seem to have learning-related barriers. Installing procedures and policies to help a job seeker discover whether more support is needed requires education, understanding and training of practitioners. Hopefully, this pilot office will be the proverbial guinea pig and work out any concerns before going statewide with the screening tools.

The directory is also under development as there is a strong desire to make available information that supports job seekers and adult learners, public assistance families, recipients and incarcerated persons in transition to community life.

Working together across systems in Michigan is beginning to be a way of life as dedicated professionals recognize, and as budget constraints dictate, the need for cooperation to meet the needs of Michiganians who need supports to address learning disabilities.

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Michigan Rehabilitation Services, at renauerr@michigan.gov or (517) 373-4056 or TTY accessible 888-6056722. Note: Both writers are Michigan Bridges to Practice trainers.

COMPREHENSION IS A COLOR

By Iris Strunc, NHRD Trainer

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

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



Color is the Key

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

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

The Strategy

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

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



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



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

When the students are finished, we discuss main idea and how to find it in a paragraph. Next, I ask them to "write a title for the first paragraph." After some brief discussion, I break the students into small groups of three to four and challenge them to come up with the main idea of the first paragraph in fourteen words or less. The sentence must be complete and accurate. After an appropriate main idea is agreed upon, I lead a brief discussion on how to find the topic sentence in a factual or nonfiction type of passage. Next, I instruct the students to use the same strategy on paragraph two. When they are finished highlighting the paragraph, we again discuss the main idea for paragraph two using the same technique as for paragraph one. This time the main idea must be stated in twelve words or less.

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



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

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

But They Can't Mark in Their Textbooks!

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

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

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

Concluding Thoughts

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

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

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

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

Iris Strunc

**A PARTNERSHIP:
LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION
OF MICHIGAN AND THE MICHIGAN
ADULT EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT (MAEPD) PROJECT**

By Amy Winans,
Michigan Bridges to Practice Trainer



On Sunday, October 2, 2004, the Learning Disabilities Association of Michigan (LDA of MI) began its annual conference with a pre-conference symposium, "Transitions to Adulthood: Making the Difference for Teens & Young Adults with LD." The symposium and conference program strand on adult issues were part of a collaborative effort between the Michigan Adult Education Professional Development Project, National Human Resources Development, Inc., and LDA of MI.* They were developed to enhance the skills and knowledge of Bridges to Practice trainers and others who work with teens and adults, such as adult and high school educators, transition coordinators, and rehabilitation counselors.



After introductory comments from Amy Winans with LDA of MI and Linda Colagross with the Michigan Dept of Labor & Economic Growth, Christopher Lee, shared his story, 'Christopher is Stupid.' He provided insight into how the brain works from the perspective of a dyslexic learner and shared his experiences tackling his inability to speak, read, write, and memorize effectively. June Crawford with the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) was next on the program. She shared information about NIFL programs and services, highlighting the adult literacy Bridges to Practice initiative. Rochelle Kenyon discussed what the research tells us about characteristics and behaviors that lead to successful adult outcomes. Dr. Kenyon concluded the program by facilitating a panel discussion of adults with learning disabilities that shared their experiences growing up with a learning disability.

The teen/adult conference programs included sessions on a wide array of topics including: Universal Design in Learning, The Dyslexic Writer, Instructional Strategies for the Adult with LD, Learning Disabilities and the Juvenile Justice System, All You Ever Wanted to Know About Adults with LD, Challenges For Adults with LD and ADHD, and The College Transition: Choice & Success Strategies.

The highlight on day two was the keynote presentation by Jim "Basketball" Jones, Putting a Spin on Learning Disabilities. In the audience were over 300 adults, educators, college students, service providers, consumers, parents, and over 50 high schools students with LD. The audience represented the complete age-span of issues for individuals

with LD and the life continuum - from pre-school to K-12 to adult education, college, and employment. While Jim shared his life experiences, those of us in the audience were drawn together around our shared human experience. We left better informed and uniquely connected.

*The Michigan Pre-Conference Symposium for Bridges to Practice Trainers is modeled after the Annual Symposium conducted by National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) at the LDA of America Conference in Chicago, 2003. LDA of Michigan won a Proud Project Award in recognition of the 2003 Pre-Conference Symposium for Bridges Trainers.

*Amy Winans is Past President of
LDA of Michigan.*

"One out of every ten Americans struggles everyday because he or she can't read. We now know many persons can't read because they have a learning disability. The only thing between them and the success they want is whether we're willing to change the ways we help them."

National Institute for Literacy

**BRIDGES TO PRACTICE:
AN INITIATIVE OF THE NATIONAL
INSTITUTE FOR LITERACY (NIFL)**

Background of Project

In 1993, the National Adult Literacy & Learning Disabilities (NALLD) Center received funding through the National Institute for Literacy to develop the Bridges to Practice series. This five-year effort consisted of a three-phase research/development plan to:

- 1) organize focus groups and evaluate current screening practices and instructional materials,
- 2) develop Bridges training program and guidebooks, and
- 3) review and continuously refine the guidebook materials to provide the most up-to-date resources. By utilizing research-based information, the NALLD Center envisioned making literacy programs more responsive to needs of adults with learning disabilities.

~ NEWS ~



A team of three Michigan Adult Education professionals just successfully completed week 1 of a 2-week Bridges to Practice Train-the-Trainer workshop in Phoenix, Arizona. Congratulations to Dianne Duthie and Erica Nakfor from DLEG, and Elaine High from Michigan State University.

"Learning disabled adults receive inaccurate information through their senses and/or have trouble processing that information. Like static on the radio or a bad TV picture, the information becomes garbled as it travels from the eye, ear or skin to the brain."
Dale Brown, Counseling and Accommodating the Student with Learning Disabilities
Abstract, Washington, D.C. 20210

**HOW TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT
INSTRUCTION FOR ADULTS WITH
SPECIAL LEARNING NEEDS IN THE
"IMPERFECT" ADULT EDUCATION SETTING**

By Neil Sturomski, Sturomski & Associates

Let's be honest, most adults who enter adult education programs have some type of special learning need. They may have a learning disability, a mental disorder, difficulty reading, or had a poor education. Needless to say, most adult education students have difficulty in learning, which equates to difficulty in obtaining life's goals and dreams.



Having enough time to fully screen and intensively interview all adults that enter adult education and literacy programs would be ideal. A number of screening instruments can help to determine the likelihood of learning disabilities. Other tools, called inventories or questionnaires, often provide excellent insights and help plan instruction. However, screening instruments, inventories, and questionnaires may take more time to administer than adult educators or literacy providers have available when students enter their programs. After initial placement tests, it is therefore vital to ask a brief set of key questions that will allow the best possible instruction to be initiated. Following up with additional questions as instruction proceeds, watching how students attempt to learn new information, observing, scrutinizing, and analyzing student efforts and errors, and modifying instruction to better meet the individual student's needs are all key components of what has been termed—*diagnostic-prescriptive teaching*.

An information-gathering and diagnostic-prescriptive approach can improve instruction for all students in adult education and literacy programs. Adult education and literacy providers can make a great impact on student learning and student success by systematically determining students' needs, setting and evaluating individual goals and objectives, flexibly determining instructional techniques and strategies, continually monitoring the adult student's performance, and providing immediate feedback.

If learning is at a standstill after an initial diagnostic-prescriptive approach, adult educators and literacy instructors should meet with individual students to discuss options. Screening for the likelihood of a learning disability may be one such option. Screening can lead to a diagnostic evaluation of a learning disability, which can prove important when requesting accommodations on the GED Tests, in other testing situations, in employment settings, and in post-secondary environments.

However, screening is not the only option. Another is to use a more extensive inventory

(Continued on page 4)

or questionnaire leading to further improvements in instruction and greater use of effective instructional practices. An inventory continues the diagnostic-prescriptive process. And while it may help to specifically zero in on learning needs, it does not lead to labeling an individual as learning disabled. However, it can lead to a referral for a diagnostic evaluation.

When students enroll in adult education or literacy programs, they complete a placement test that provides program administrators and instructors with information on the student's basic skill levels in reading, math, and writing. These scores serve as a guide for placing students in specific classrooms as well as providing instructors with a starting point for instruction.

The next step in designing an appropriate educational program is to gather and interpret as much other information as possible about the individual's learning abilities and learning needs. This information gathering can be accomplished through a review of school, medical, or employment records and, if available, previous testing. Because this information may not be readily available within a reasonable time frame, additional, crucial information can be obtained by asking key questions, and by observing the student during instruction. Adult education or literacy instructors should ask questions related to student health, basic academic skills, learning modalities or learning channels, spatial relationships, attention, time orientation, sequencing, and/or memory.

Adult students must understand that they are partners in their education. Therefore, the first step in working with adults is gaining their confidence and making sure they realize that you're a team. The more information they can share about themselves, the likelihood is that you can help in improving their reading, writing, and/or math skills.

In a 5-10 minute structured interview, instructors can find out much information about a student. In a one-to-one tutoring session, this interview can be longer and doesn't take time away from other students. In a classroom setting, individual student/teacher time is valuable; structuring interviews and interview questions keeps students on task and provides teachers with important information. Classroom teachers should first organize the interviews by letting all students know why they'll be meeting with them individually, what they'll be asking and why, and how long each meeting will take. While conducting individual interviews, other students can provide additional information.

Having a volunteer in an adult education program can be extremely helpful to the classroom teacher. Volunteers can assist students who are working on diagnostic seatwork while interviews take place.

Placement test information, interview questions, observations, and diagnostic-prescriptive information should serve one main purpose—to provide the basis for determining appropriate and effective instruction, remediation, and, if a disability is documented, appropriate accommodations. Following placement testing, and an initial student/teacher interview, an adult educator or literacy provider should have enough information to begin an individual student-centered instructional program. By helping students set individual, realistic goals and by determining specific objectives, instructors should be able to plan a program that meets the needs of each student.

Continual monitoring of student progress provides valuable information on how a student individually inputs and outputs information, the rate and amount of input that's appropriate, and how information is organized and presented. These observations can be used to adjust learning tasks for each student. First, an instructor must determine the best ways in which an adult student takes in information (input) and is able to demonstrate mastery (output). Second, determining the rate of input for each task and each learner is essential - some learners can acquire knowledge and skills faster than others. By going too fast, instructors can produce anxiety and frustration in learners. Instructors must adjust the rate of input in order to maximize a student's potential. Repeating and reviewing information frequently is important. Third, instructors must control, and adjust the amount of information provided. Too much information can cause students to become overloaded and overwhelmed retaining little if any, new material. Fourth, by initially presenting information through a student's strongest learning channel, then through other processing channels, students may use both their strengths and strengthen weaker areas. For example, if an individual has auditory processing problems, an instructor might first present new information visually and then combine auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic learning to associatively relate instruction. Finally, teaching information that adults can understand, generalize, and use in many different settings will also play to the students' strengths.



Scenario

You are working with a student on reading. Through placement testing, you have noted that he is reading at a fourth grade level. In a brief interview you've learned that the student has had difficulty with sight words and feels that he learns best when he hears information. In addition, he feels that he often guesses at words. He has shared that he does not like to read, although he needs to improve reading in his present job in order to keep it. Finally, he enjoys sports, especially baseball.

What is Your Plan?

Start him out on a third grade level to gain his confidence. Use baseball stories, books, or magazine articles—which you might need to rewrite at his appropriate level. Simultaneously, begin building on phonological awareness using an auditory approach and pairing it with visual cues. In addition, add tactile input whenever possible. Then work on individual letter sounds and combine those sounds into words. Create word cards and have the student draw a picture on the back to assist with recall, number each card and record them on audiotape. Begin with baseball or work-related words. Eventually, the student will be reading work-related material and/or baseball stories at his level.

In order to work successfully with adults who have not made it in our education system, one must think "out of the box," put in extra time, and above all, individualize instruction. It's all doable and what teaching in adult ed is all about.

*Neil Sturomski -
Sturomski & Associates is dedicated to supporting
educators and literacy providers in improving the
lives of their students.*



For Your Information Bridges to Practice Guidebook 1

"Learning Disabilities is an umbrella term that describes a wide variety of disorders, including disorders in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in the understanding or using spoken or written language. Adults who have difficulties with listening, thinking, speaking, reading, or writing are likely to experience problems that significantly affect their academic achievement and their lives."

"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 LD is likely to be found among the population of adults with low-level literacy skills...Estimates range from 30 to 80 percent."

"Literacy programs should be designed with a positive view toward the success of adults with learning disabilities. By widely recognizing and accepting their disabilities and their impact, providers can strive to create a program that forges a partnership with adults with learning disabilities."