



Learning Disabilities Policy and Planning Guide

Introduction

It is required for all Ohio Department of Higher Education Aspire programs to have a plan in place to address serving the needs of students with learning disabilities (LD). This Policy & Planning Guide provides policies and procedures which address how the program will offer services to students with learning disabilities. All Ohio Aspire programs will be held to the policy statements in this planning guide.

Statement of Purpose

The development of this Guide was prompted by a variety of issues in the field of adult basic and literacy education related to students with significant learning challenges and research indicating a large incidence of students with learning disabilities.

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Learning Disabilities Policy

This policy replaces all previous Learning Disabilities policies.

Introduction

It is important for all Ohio Department of Higher Education Aspire programs to address serving the needs of students with special needs, including learning disabilities (LD). All Ohio Aspire programs will be held to the policy statements below.

General Requirements

Laws and Legal Implications

Policy 1.0 Aspire programs will not discriminate against individuals with disabilities and will ensure that all services are accessible. Federal law requires that Aspire programs meet the administrative requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Considerations:

Does the program have an ADA coordinator, public EEOC statement, and grievance policy; does the program review annually LD policies and practices; does the program identify and remedy challenges for serving students with learning disabilities?

[*Laws and Legal Implications - LD Policy and Planning Guide*](#)

Screening

Policy 2.0 Aspire programs will have a documented learning disabilities screening process in place.

Considerations:

What screening instrument will the program use (Washington 13, PowerPath, Adult Learning Disabilities Screening); who is offered a screening; when is the screening offered; how are results shared with the student; how will results be used to modify and adapt instruction; which staff will be appropriately trained to administer the screening?

Policy 3.0 Aspire programs will maintain a signed waiver if a student declines a learning disabilities screening.

Considerations:

What is the program's procedure for obtaining a waiver and properly storing waiver information?

Policy 4.0 Aspire programs will keep confidential all information related to students' disclosure and documentation of disability and/or screening information. In the case of the latter, a program will obtain a signed and dated Release of Information from the student in order to share screening information.

Considerations:

What is the program's procedure for obtaining a release of information and properly maintaining confidentiality of student records?

[*Screening - LD Policy and Planning Guide*](#)

Referral and Diagnosis

Policy 5.0 Aspire programs will maintain current information about professional diagnosis, vision screening, and hearing screening and make it accessible to students with suspected, disclosed or diagnosed learning disabilities and/or vision or hearing difficulties.

Considerations:

Does the program have local professionals identified? What procedures are in place for providing students with the referral information?

[*Referrals and Diagnosis - LD Policy and Planning Guide*](#)

Instructional Adaptations

Policy 6.0 Aspire programs will provide instructional adaptations to assist students with suspected or documented learning disabilities success.

Considerations:

What adaptations are provided in the classroom; how is the student introduced to the adaptation; what procedure is in place for determining if the adaptations are helpful or need to be modified?

[*Universal Design for Learning in the Aspire Classroom - LD Policy and Planning Guide*](#)

Accommodations

Policy 7.0 Aspire programs will provide accommodations to students with diagnosed learning disabilities to help ensure they have equal access to services.

Considerations:

Has the student received instruction needed to benefit fully from the accommodation; Does the program avoid providing accommodations that may not be available on standardized testing or in the workplace; Does the program take inventory of the accommodations it can provide based on diagnostic testing; Is there a procedure for documenting the use of the accommodation and its effectiveness in instructional and testing situations?

[*Accommodations in the Aspire Classroom - LD Policy and Planning Guide*](#)

Professional Development

Policy 8.0 Aspire programs will have sufficient number of staff members adequately trained to understand the legal requirements surrounding

service to students with learning disabilities, to administer LD screenings and to plan and implement instructional adaptations and accommodations.

Considerations:

What procedures are in place to ensure all staff have completed the required LD trainings (i.e. Learning to Achieve); what other staff activities are conducted regarding LD?

[Professional Development - LD Policy and Planning Guide](#) and the [Professional Development policy](#)

Data Tracking

Policy 9.0 Programs will collect data for input into ABLElink per DHE and ODE requirements.

Considerations:

What procedures are in place to ensure that required information (screening, referral, and accommodation) from the special needs or student registration form are recorded in ABLELink?

Compliance

Policy 10.0 Aspire programs will annually review the Learning Disabilities policy with staff.

Considerations:

Does the program have procedures for reviewing the policy at least annually at staff meetings; Does the program have an employee LD policy sign-off form that indicates staff members have read and understand the LD policy?

AREAS OF SPECIAL NEEDS

While all learners arguably have special learning needs, for the purposes of this *Learning*

Disabilities (LD) Policy and Planning Guide, the term "special needs" refers to adult students or clients with significant learning challenges or disabilities who may need modified or varied services in order to achieve educational, personal, or work-related goals. This is not to say that those with special needs receive an unfair advantage over those without special needs, but rather that they may need varied learning approaches to make progress toward reaching their potential or be permitted to use accommodations for equal access to services.

The following is a list of special needs areas, which may overlap or affect learning to varying degrees. For more information, click the appropriate link or go to **APPENDIX A: Special Needs Areas**.

- [Learning Differences, Learning Styles, and Learning Difficulties](#)
- [Learning Disability](#)
- Specific areas of special needs:
 - [Aging](#)
 - [Autism](#)
 - [Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder \(AD/HD\)](#)
 - [Head Injury](#)
 - [Developmental Disability](#)
 - [Mental Illness](#)
 - [Cognitive Disability](#)
 - [Physical Disability](#)
 - [Temporary Special Learning Needs](#)

As long as students entering an Aspire program meet general eligibility criteria, including setting an academic goal and making progress toward achieving that goal, they have a right to receive services. In fact, people with disabilities have legal rights that guarantee them equal access to Aspire services. In other words, being affected by any of these special needs should not, in itself, exclude anyone from participating in a state-sponsored Aspire program. All programs should have policies and procedures in place to address individuals with specific documented disabilities.

Please be aware not all students with special needs will have been diagnosed by a qualified professional. It is not appropriate, in most cases, to attach a label to an individual, even if he or she has hidden disabilities, without appropriate documentation. Some disabilities are visible and apparent, such as a person who uses a wheelchair, and usually do not warrant documentation. However, others are not as transparent. For example, the adult learner who claims to have difficulty focusing and tells you that he or she is often impulsive should not be labeled as ADHD without an appropriate diagnosis by a licensed professional.

Overall, the primary goal of Aspire services is to help students achieve their academic goals. This is done best through high quality instruction. Research is suggesting that a high percentage of our students have some type of special learning need, but many of them will not obtain the appropriate documentation to ever know for sure. It makes sense, then, that we implement instructional practices that are most appropriate for students with special learning needs as a general rule, whether students have documentation or not.

A RATIONALE FOR FOCUSING ON LEARNING DISABILITIES

There are three primary reasons for the focus on learning disabilities: prevalence, legislation and laws, and quality services. The Ohio Department of Higher Education State Aspire Program requires Aspire programs to develop a written plan to address serving this population because:

- A large percentage of Aspire students may have learning disabilities.
- Programs are legally required to provide equal access to services for students with disabilities.
- Aspire is committed to providing for the needs of its learners to help them achieve their goals.

Prevalence

In reviewing the literature on LD in adults, Corely and Taymans (2002) noted that no single study has yet determined a generally accepted rate of learning disabilities in adult populations. While the literature on adults estimates rates of LD to be anywhere between 5% and 80% (Mellard, 1998; Ross & Smith, 1990; White & Polson, 1999), one unpublished survey of adult literacy programs in Kansas estimates a 29% incidence of LD in the Adult Basic Education (ABE) population (Patterson, 2008). Given the paucity of hard data on the prevalence of LD in ABE programs, studies have suggested that adult basic learners are likely unidentified (Gregg, 2009) or under-identified (Reynolds, Johnson, & Salzman, 2012). Therefore, Ohio Aspire students will benefit from program staff being sensitive to and proactively addressing policies and practices that seek to mitigate learning challenges in their classrooms

Legislation and Laws

Ohio Aspire's efforts in the area of learning disabilities have been guided by state and national legislation. Furthermore, students with disabilities, including students with learning disabilities, are protected under key civil rights laws. For example, Title II of the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) "provides states with funding for a variety of services to help adults develop basic skills such as reading, writing, math, English language competency, and problem solving." States distribute these funds to assist adults in their efforts to become literate for the purpose of gaining skills necessary to be gainfully employed, to help parents support their children's education, and to help adults complete a high school education. Other important federal legislation that supports adults with disabilities, including learning disabilities, include the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; these will be discussed more fully later in this guide.

Quality Services

To provide the best possible services, Aspire programs should identify the learning differences the individual has through appropriate screening and assessment, then find and implement the

appropriate adaptations, accommodations and instructional strategies to help students progress through the Student Experience Model. For a more detailed description of the Student Experience Model, check the [Aspire eGuide Desktop Interactive Format](#).

The instructional strategies used for learning disabled students are generally accepted as "best practices" and will assist all students to learn and progress. The process of developing a written plan for serving students with learning disabilities will help programs consistently provide quality services so that students can be more successful in their family, community, and work roles.

Additional Resources for Consideration

- Ohio Aspire State Plan: Ohio's approved State Plan, which includes the Indicators of Program Quality, guides the implementation of WIA Title II and sets standards for providing quality services in Aspire programs. The complete state plan is available from the Ohio Department of Higher Education Aspire Programs website.
- Indicators of Program Quality: The Ohio Aspire [Indicators of Program Quality](#) document is available from the Ohio Department of Higher Education Aspire Programs website. Indicators 3.0 and 6.0 are especially important for students with special needs.

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CHARACTERISTICS AND TYPES OF LEARNING DISABILITIES

Characteristics of LD

The question, "What do learning disabilities look like?" is a difficult one. No individual will likely demonstrate all the characteristics associated with specific learning disabilities and it is possible that individuals without learning disabilities may demonstrate some of these characteristics as well.

The characteristics that are associated with students with LD

- can affect individuals differently and to varying degrees.
- can be seen in individuals without LD or with other special needs.

When considering adults with learning disabilities, or any other special learning need, it is important to recognize that a wide range of learning, social, emotional, and behavioral characteristics exist which can significantly affect learning. Although these characteristics are not directly related to a lack of intelligence, education, training or experience, a learning disability may have prevented an individual from benefiting from these important sources of learning.

It is a common mistake to emphasize the weaknesses of a person with learning disabilities. Although it is important to recognize and validate the areas of challenge, it is much more important to focus and build on the person's strengths to increase the likelihood of success, not

only in your program but also in daily life. So, what might learning disabilities look like in your classroom? Learning disabilities can affect a person's ability in the following areas. For more information, click the appropriate link or go to **APPENDIX B: Characteristics of Adults with Learning Disabilities**.

- [Listening](#)
- [Speaking](#)
- [Reading](#)
- [Writing](#)
- [Mathematics](#)
- [Thinking](#)
- [Other](#)

Characteristics of Successful Adults with Learning Disabilities

The Frostig Center in Pasadena, California conducted longitudinal research that identified factors that contribute to success for individuals with learning disabilities. Results from these projects point to the importance of a set of personal characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors that can help lead persons with learning disabilities to successful life outcomes. By tracing the lives of individuals with learning disabilities throughout the lifespan, these studies have revealed a number of "success attributes" that guide an individual to either positive or negative adult outcomes. This 20-year study, in particular, highlighted the importance of six success attributes for individuals with learning disabilities. These success attributes included:

- Self-awareness,
- Proactivity,
- Perseverance,
- Goal-setting,
- The presence and use of effective support systems, and
- Emotional coping strategies

For more information, visit [The Frostig Center](#).

Conditions Associated with LD

The table below contains information regarding common types of learning disabilities, with associated characteristics and examples. Please note that while Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) is not considered a learning disability, its characteristics may be exhibited by individuals with learning disabilities.

Disability	Area of Difficulty	Symptoms include trouble with:	Examples
Dyslexia	Processing language	Reading, writing, and spelling	Letters and words may be written or pronounced backwards
Dyscalculia	Math skills	Computation, remembering math facts, concepts of time and money	Difficulty learning to count by 2s, 3s, 4s
Dysgraphia	Written expression	Handwriting, spelling, and composition	Illegible handwriting, difficulty organizing ideas
Dyspraxia	Fine motor skills	Coordination, manual dexterity	Trouble with scissors, buttons, drawing
Auditory processing disorder	Interpreting auditory information	Language development, reading	Difficulty anticipating how a speaker will end a sentence
Visual processing disorder	Interpreting visual information	Reading, writing, and math	Difficulty distinguishing letters like “h” and “n,” copying and completing bubble sheets
Other Related Disorders			
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)	Concentration and focus	Over-activity, distractibility, and impulsivity	Can’t sit still, loses interest quickly

[This material is adapted from the National Center for Learning Disabilities.](#)

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LAWS AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Much of the progress made in assuring civil rights protection for adults with learning disabilities has been achieved by guarantees provided in federal law. The legal rights concerning learning disabilities are primarily found in three important laws: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (PL 93-112), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Below are brief descriptions of each of these laws. To read the complete text of the legislation, click on the hyperlinked title.

- [Rehabilitation Act of 1973 – Section 504](#)

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination based upon disability. Section 504 is an anti-discrimination, civil rights statute that requires the needs of students with disabilities to be met as adequately as the needs of the nondisabled.

Section 504 states that, “No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (29 U.S.C. 794(a), 34 C.F.R. 104.4(a)).

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- [Americans with Disabilities Act \(1990\)](#)

The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, state and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications. It also applies to the United States Congress. To be protected by the ADA, one must have a disability or have a relationship or association with an individual who has a disability. An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. The ADA does not specifically name all of the impairments that are covered.

Adults with disabilities also have a right to choose whether to disclose their disability status. If adults expect disability-related accommodations, they have the responsibility to make their disabilities known, to provide appropriate documentation, and to request specific accommodations.

Under the ADA, when providing services, programs must offer reasonable accommodations that will assist adults with learning disabilities to have an equal opportunity to participate in the program. Reasonable accommodations (sometimes called auxiliary aids and services) are accommodations that make the program accessible to the individual with a disability (i.e., equal access). Such accommodations must be afforded to a qualified individual with a disability unless the service provider can demonstrate that the accommodation would impose undue

hardship on the programs, or constitute a substantial alteration in the nature of the program.

- [ADA Amendments Act \(2008\)](#)

In 2008, the ADA was amended and signed into law as the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA). This revised legislation offers increased eligibility. Below are some of the new provisions of the ADAAA.

- A limitation in one major life activity need not impact other major life activities to trigger ADA protection.
- The phrase “limitation in one major life activity” should be broadly, rather than narrowly, interpreted.
- Conditions that are episodic or in remission are covered when they are active. (This may be helpful for individuals with ADHD that are affected by their symptoms differently at different times and under different conditions.)
- The definition of “major bodily functions” has been expanded to include neurological and brain functions. This directly addresses LD and ADHD, as both of these conditions involve impairment of these functions.
- The definition of “major life activities” has been expanded to include learning, reading, concentrating, and thinking. This expansion makes it easier for students with LD and ADA to qualify for protection under ADA and 504.
- The use of “mitigating measures” in evaluating people for disabilities is prohibited, except in the case of glasses that fully correct the vision problem. Mitigating measures includes medication, assistive technology, hearing aids, books on tape, extra time, and preferential seating. This expands the potential eligibility for students applying for accommodations on college entrance tests and in coursework.
- Individuals seeking employment or enrolling in postsecondary must still show that they are “otherwise qualified” with or without accommodations.

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

- [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(1997\)](#)

Aspire students who have not achieved a high school diploma and who are under the age of 22 are protected under IDEA, meaning they are entitled to services related to identification and accommodation of learning disabilities. IDEA requires more than accommodation and non-discrimination. It requires that special education and related services be provided free of charge in accordance with state educational agencies and in conformity to individualized education programs. Federal funding defrays part of these expenses, which makes the IDEA unique among civil rights legislation.

In 2010, 6,481,400 students were being served under IDEA in the United States. Nearly 40 percent of these students had a specific learning disability and 20 percent

had speech or language impairments. For more data on the number of people aged 3 to 21 years who are served by federal programs for the disabled, visit the [National Center for Education Statistics](#).

- o [Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act \(2004\)](#)

In 2004, IDEA was reauthorized. An amended version became known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). Among the changes made were provisions that aligned IDEA with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and revised requirements for screening children with learning disabilities. The core principles of IDEA—that students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education—remain intact.

Adult Students

- Have the right to participate in educational programs without discrimination.
- Have the right to reasonable accommodations in courses and examinations.
- Have the responsibility to identify themselves as having a disability and request specific accommodations.
- Have the responsibility to provide documentation concerning their disabilities and the need for accommodation.

Aspire Programs

- Are responsible for ensuring all services are accessible to persons with disabilities and for providing reasonable accommodations in the delivery of services.
- Have the right to identify and establish the abilities, skills, and competencies fundamental to its academic programs, and to evaluate each learner's performance on this basis.

Programs need to understand the legal rights of students with disabilities and share this information with students so that together they can make informed decisions that will facilitate individual student's learning and help learners meet with success. This knowledge can provide the basis for setting realistic expectations on the part of the learners so that they can make appropriate requests for assistance. It can also help program providers deliver the types of services necessary to enhance opportunities for the success of adults with learning disabilities.

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SCREENING, REFERRAL, AND DIAGNOSIS

The Role of Learning Disabilities Screening Instruments

The purpose of screening is two-fold. The results from the screening can be used by program staff and the learner to decide whether the learner should be referred for further testing. Screening instruments cannot diagnose a disability. Diagnostic testing, which is often costly, must be conducted by a qualified professional, such as a psychologist, clinician, or educational diagnostician. This professional must be someone who is licensed to administer

psycho-educational batteries that determine the presence of a learning disability. This diagnosis allows the individual to obtain certain accommodations for GED testing, in higher education settings, and in the workplace. While few adult learners will choose to pursue diagnostic testing, all adults with specific learning disabilities can benefit from instructional adaptations that allow them to achieve their goals.

The most important purpose of screening within Aspire programs is to identify the instructional adaptations and accommodations that the student will need to be most successful at attaining his or her goals. Screening will help the instructor know how to create the most conducive learning environment for the student to succeed. Most of the accommodations that Aspire students may need for altering administration of standardized tests, classroom instruction, or the workplace do not require a diagnosis.

Screening Instrument Options

Screening can be administered at any time during the instructional cycle if the practitioner or the learner identifies the need. See the section below on When and Who to Screen. There are seven learning disabilities screening instruments that can be used in Ohio Aspire Programs.

These are:

- **Adult Learning Disabilities Screening (ALDS)**
 - This screening instrument is completed by the student, who reads and answers questions independently. The instrument has three parts: 1) self-rating scales, where the student rates his or her ability in seven areas, including spelling and reading skills, social skills, and efficiency; 2) an inventory, where the student indicates “yes” or “no” in response to questions about his or her learning influences, learning problems, and educational experience; and 3) an interview, during which the administrator asks for additional information based on the students’ responses to the previous two sections. This screening instrument requires at least a sixth-grade reading level.
- **Cooper Screening of Information Processing (C-SIP)**
 - Developed by Dr. Richard Cooper in 1992, the C-SIP is meant to be used as a diagnostic teaching instrument. It may administered as a full screening or in a shortened form. The instrument is formatted similar to a survey, with a series of yes/no questions that are to be asked to the student by the person administering the screening. Questions ask about information related to a variety of skills and abilities, including oral communication, reading, writing, listening, and vocabulary, amongst others.
- **Destination Literacy**
 - Developed by the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC), Destination Literacy is a comprehensive screening, assessment, and teaching tool. The screening may be used alone and is intended to be completed as an interview with the student. The assessment is completed in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. The full kit is relatively inexpensive and includes accommodation suggestions as well as strategies to use in the classroom with all types of learning disabilities.

- Payne Learning Needs Inventory (PLNI)
 - The PLNI, according to the website of Payne & Associates, INC, the developers, “a field-developed, customer-centered questionnaire built on the premise that individuals know and can provide enough information about themselves, to allow the interviewer to informally assess how they might learn best in education, training or work situations, as well as recreation and personal activities. Using a series of integrated questions about education, employment, life-based activities, family and health, the PLNI identifies strengths and attributes, providing a progressive approach to learning and training.”
- [PowerPath to Basic Learning](#)
 - Developed by adult literacy professionals for adult students, the PowerPath system is an in-depth-screening and intervention tool that takes approximately 1.5 hours to administer. Its five-step process moves from engaging the student as an agent of his or her learning to developing intervention strategies in a way that is dignified and respectful. Extensive training is required to be able to utilize the materials.
- Screening Test for Adults with Learning Difficulties (STALD)
 - The Screening Test for Adults with Learning Difficulties, or STALD, is designed to be given by supervisors, teachers, or tutors. The screening is relatively short with an estimated completion time of 35-45 minutes. The STALD was designed around a model focused on students at or below a fourth grade reading level and aims to prescribe materials and strategies to help students who may have a learning disability.
- Washington 13
 - The Washington 13, or Learning Needs Screening Tool, is intended as a brief, oral interview. The objective of the instrument is to collect information about the students’ school experiences in order to determine if some of the issues they experienced while in school may affect their learning now. The survey contains thirteen yes/no questions. If a student scores 12 or higher, then they may have some special learning needs.

Choosing Screening Instruments

There are many things to consider when choosing one or more screening instruments for your program. The ranking or prioritizing of the areas listed below will depend on your program need and guidelines. Your individual program may determine additional criteria.

Ease of administration

- How long is the screening?
- Can it be administered to all incoming learners or will a set of criteria be established to determine to whom it should be given?
- Are there special materials needed to administer the screening instrument?

Audience

- For whom is the screening instrument designed?
- Does the screening instrument require any predetermined education level?

Staff Training

- How much training is required to administer the screening instrument?
- How will staff turnover affect program usage of the instrument?
- How many staff members should be trained to administer the instrument?

Cost

- What are the set-up costs?
- What are the consumable costs (if any)?

Results

- What does this screening instrument tell our program about the learner?
- How are the results interpreted?
- How are the results to be shared?

Reliability

- How accurate are the results?

Screening Instruments and ESOL Populations

Most of the LD screening instruments are not appropriate for the non-native English speaking population, and therefore, should not be administered to ESOL students. The Ohio Department of Higher Education State Aspire Program is not requiring or recommending that LD screenings be used with ESOL students at this time.

There are some Spanish versions available for a few of the screening instruments listed above, for example, the ALDS, the C-SIP and PowerPath to Basic Learning, but because of meaning variations between languages, the validity of these have yet to be determined.

Whom to Screen and When

You can choose to screen all of your students for learning disabilities. Some programs accomplish this during orientation by using a short screening instrument like the Washington 13. It may be appropriate to choose more than one screening instrument based on program needs. Furthermore, some programs use a more in-depth screening instrument (such as PowerPath to Education and Work) at a later point, as follow-up to the quick screening done during orientation.

If your program elects not to uniformly screen all learners for learning disabilities, then you need a process for selecting learners for screening. **Learners cannot be randomly selected.**

The criteria that your program decides upon for selecting learners for screening must be applied consistently to all participants in the program. For example, your program may choose to screen

all students who fall below a 3rd grade level on TABE or all students who fail to progress after one month of instruction (with consistent attendance).

Implementing screening for learning disabilities is a process that involves the following steps.

1. Gather information about the learner.
2. Review the observations with the learner.
3. Determine how the learner feels about additional screening.
4. Select a screening instrument.
5. Obtain informed consent.
6. Summarize the results of the screening with the learner and discuss "next steps." If screening results indicate possible LD, a learner may or may not decide to be referred for Diagnostic Testing; that is the learner's decision.

Using a Secondary or Follow-Up Screening

Some Aspire programs want to use a secondary screening instrument. They have found that a more extensive or in-depth screening such as the C-SIP or the STALD can provide more information for teachers who are trying to adapt instruction to meet the needs of their struggling learners. The STALD, for example, is a reading inventory. It can provide you with basic information on appropriate reading levels for your student, as well as information on basic phonetic knowledge, visual memory and auditory discrimination. The STALD also provides suggestions for teaching techniques to address each of the areas tested.

Destination Literacy is a more in-depth screening that includes a unique informal math assessment. This part of the screening assesses number/word/sign recognition and identification, math vocabulary, memory for rules and procedures, comprehension of rules and procedures, application of the procedures, and calculation speed. There is a manual and other support material that goes with Destination Literacy. You can purchase it or check it out from the Professional Development Network [Library](#).

The process of taking some students, who continue to struggle, through an additional screening can provide the instructor with many clues as to the strengths and weaknesses of the student. Aspire teachers can share this insight with their students. The door to self-advocacy begins with awareness.

Informed Consent

If your program provides screening, you must obtain informed consent from the learner. Informed consent means that the learner knows what is going to happen, who will do the screening, and how the results will be used. If you conduct screening during the intake process for every adult who enters the program, you do not need to obtain the learners' informed consent. It is only when a procedure such as screening is used selectively that you must obtain informed consent before you can legally proceed. Individual administrations of the screening require a signed consent form. The consent form should contain the following information:

- The name of the screening test(s)
- The interval of time for screening

- The purpose of screening
- Who will see the results
- How will the results be used
- Where the protocol forms will be stored and for how long
- The learner's signature and the date
- The program representative's signature

The learner should be given a copy of the informed consent form and the program should keep the original on file.

A student can refuse a screening for learning disabilities at any point. Have the student sign a waiver form indicating understanding that he or she is declining the learning disabilities screening and may choose to undergo the screening at a later point in time. The signed waiver form should be filed with the student's other confidential information and a copy should be given to the student.

Confidentiality

The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to public schools and state or local education agencies that receive federal education funds.

FERPA gives students the right to have access to their educational records, consent to release a record to a third party, challenge information in those records, and be notified of their privacy rights. FERPA rights belong to the student regardless of age (and to the parents of a dependent student-as defined by the Internal Revenue Service). A "student" is a person who attends college or university and/or for whom the institution maintains educational records (former students and alumni, for example) but not applicants to the institution or those denied admission. The institution must inform students of their FERPA rights, procedures to allow a student access to his or her record, and procedures to consent to release a record to a third party. Publishing this information in a bulletin satisfies this requirement.

Disability related information should be kept in separate files with access limited to appropriate personnel. Documentation of disability should be held by a single source within the institution in order to protect the confidentiality of persons with disabilities by assuring such limited access.

Referrals

Often, adults with learning disabilities have difficulties finding services they need. All Aspire programs are required to maintain a list of local agencies that can provide services to students. Programs should provide referrals for:

Vision and Hearing

Many adults have vision and hearing problems that may be severe enough to significantly impair their ability to learn. Many participants in literacy programs may have

vision or hearing impairments that may have gone undetected. Adults who struggle to see printed material, frequently ask for statements to be repeated, or seem unable to engage in meaningful dialogue may actually have vision or hearing impairment. A first step in the assessment process for adults who are experiencing difficulty learning should be some type of referral for vision and/or hearing screening. Literacy programs can network with community agencies such as Lions' Clubs and the Red Cross to ensure that adequate vision and hearing screenings are available to their learners free or at reduced cost.

Having a referral process in place for ESOL students also is highly recommended.

Other services for which programs may want to provide referral information are:

Childcare

Reliable childcare is often difficult to obtain and maintain and can be costly. Some parents may not know that many communities have a childcare network or referral service. Problems with childcare often impede adult students' ability to attend class consistently. If you are able to assist your students in securing adequate and reliable childcare, then you are removing a barrier to educational progress for your students.

Transportation

Transportation can easily become a problem for students with learning disabilities, especially when they rely on public transportation for the first time. Deciphering bus or train schedules, and planning a trip that may require changing trains, etc., is challenging for everyone. This frustration is often compounded for those with learning disabilities or other special needs.

Mental Health

Feeling safe, relaxed, and in a trusting environment is important for learning and supports good mental health. Issues of anxiety, depression, and substance abuse can interfere with learning. Information on local resources to help Aspire student address mental health and substance abuse issues should be available to all students. Providers of mental health and recovery services make excellent guest speakers and should be considered for presenting to both staff and students.

Diagnosis for LD

The primary advantage of an official LD diagnosis is that the learner can obtain accommodations and protections necessary for success in instructional, work, and testing settings (e.g., entrance tests to postsecondary institutions, certification or licensure testing, or GED testing). Persons with diagnosed disabilities are entitled to protections against discrimination. In addition, they are eligible for special services and accommodations.

These protections are established under federal laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (PL 93-112) and accompanying regulations.

To find out more about the common elements of Psychological or Neuropsychological Evaluation Reports, consult [Appendix C: Psychological and Neuropsychological Evaluation Reports](#).

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UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING IN THE ASPIRE CLASSROOM

Instruction in the Aspire classroom should incorporate the following principles:

- Be designed to meet the needs of the individual student based on the student's learning style and results of screening
- Be based on the students' strengths
- Be flexible
- Include real-life experiences in the classroom
- Be jointly agreed to between student and instructor prior to implementation
- Be reviewed with the student at regular, appropriate intervals of instruction (10-20 instructional hours) to discuss impact on learning and progress. (Adapted from Arkansas Adult Education and Literacy - Policy and Procedure Manual for Serving Students with Learning Disabilities and/or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)

To this end, the instructional aspects of this *LD Policy and Planning Guide*, as well as the professional development offered in Ohio on instructional strategies related to serving students with LD, have shifted in focus from adapting instruction to fit the needs of some students with potential learning disabilities to providing instruction that meets the needs of all learners. This new framework, called Universal Design for Learning, is supported by the National Institute for Literacy's [Learning to Achieve](#) training program, has been provided by Ohio Aspire since 2010, and is included in the Higher Education Act of 2008 (PL-110-315).

A New Framework: Universal Design for Learning

According to the Higher Education Opportunity Act (Public Law 110-315, Section 103), the term “universal design for learning” means “a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that (A) provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and (B) reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient.”

Universal Design (UD) originated in the field of architecture, with a movement to make buildings accessible to all people, including those with physical disabilities (Orkwis & McLane, 1998; Rose & Meyer, 2002). Elements of universally designed buildings might include levered door handles, widened bathroom stalls that can accommodate wheelchairs or other assistive devices, and

tables and countertops at a variety of heights. Changes made under the UD initiative can benefit all people.

Seeing the connection to making education more accessible to all learners, education professionals refer to Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which is a proactive framework for classroom management and curriculum design. Rather than working from the perspective of, “We have students with learning disabilities, we need to accommodate them,” the UDL philosophy proposes the creation of learning opportunities in which all students can participate. A universally-designed curriculum includes goals, methods, materials, and assessments, and supports all learners by simultaneously reducing barriers to the curriculum and providing rich support for learning (Rose & Meyer, 2002). UDL takes the focus off of traditional transmittal models of teaching and places it on ways of learning. Learning Styles Inventories invite individuals to explore how they best learn. UDL invites students to understand how they learn and to use that knowledge inside and outside of the classroom.

UDL is included in the *LD Policy and Planning Guide* because of its proactive framework. Ideally, the Aspire/GED classroom is set up from the beginning to present a broad array of participation choices. The “traditional classroom” is no longer relevant. Principles of adult learning inform room arrangement and learning atmosphere. Group learning takes precedence over individual instruction. Lesson plans using Explicit Instruction provide the structured learning environment necessary for student success.

In a classroom using a universally designed curriculum, one might find books on tape, interactive software, magnifiers, or highlighted materials as necessary to make learning accessible to all students.

Guiding Principles

UDL is a framework with three guiding principles that parallel three distinct learning networks in the brain: recognition, strategy, and affect (Rose & Meyer, 2002). This framework is important because it reflects the ways in which students take in and process information. Using this framework, educators can improve outcomes for diverse learners by applying the principles below to the development of goals, instructional methods, classroom materials, and assessments. Use of these principles leads to improved outcomes for students because they provide all individuals with fair opportunities for learning by improving access to content.

- Provide multiple and flexible methods of presentation to give students various ways of acquiring information and knowledge. Technically sophisticated (hi-tech) examples of this include using digital books, specialized software, and Web sites. Low-technology (low-tech) examples include highlighted handouts, overheads with highlighted text, and cards with tactile or color-coded ink. (For more information, see the Benefits of Assistive Technology section in this document.)
- Provide multiple and flexible means of expression to empower diverse students with alternatives for demonstrating what they have learned. Hi-tech examples of this include online concept mapping software, which provides students with a graphic map to

demonstrate learning, speech-to-text programs, and graphing to a computer, which collects data regarding students' learning progress. Low-tech examples include cooperative learning (asking the student to demonstrate his/her learning in small groups), think alouds (encouraging the student to talk about what s/he is learning), and oral tests.

- Provide multiple and flexible means of engagement to tap into diverse learners' interests, challenge them appropriately, and motivate them to learn. Hi-tech examples include interactive software, recorded readings or books, and visual graphics. Low-tech examples include, games or songs, performance-based assessment, and peer tutoring.

This information was adapted from the [Tool Kit on Universal Design for Learning](#) from the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs.

Methods of Presentation

There are multiple methods of presenting information to adult learners. The following methods represent some of the research-based best practices:

- Teach Using Explicit Instruction
- Multi-Sensory Instruction - Use Multiple Modalities
Typically, instruction can be presented using visual, auditory, tactile, or kinesthetic input. For most individuals, and especially individuals with learning disabilities, the more modalities that are used, the better the chance that the input will be remembered. Thus, many programs for individuals with learning disabilities encourage the use of multiple input channels.
- Multi-Sensory Structured Reading Programs
 - [The Orton-Gillingham Approach](#)
 - [The Stevenson Program](#)
 - [The Wilson Reading System](#)
 - [Lindamood - Bell Reading Program](#)

Regardless of the mode of instruction, often teachers will need to adapt their lessons; instructional adaptations are accommodations that are made for any learner (with or without documentation of a learning disability) who exhibits difficulties acquiring, storing, or remembering information for later use.

Such adaptations are simply logical choices of tools or approaches 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 the individual to have greater control of a situation (e.g., the opportunity to work in a room free of distractions; the allowance of frequent breaks).

You may make material adaptations 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 necessary to make the new information meaningful, or (4) the learner

needs information broken down into smaller chunks and simplified. In such cases, you can alter existing materials, provide more intense and enhanced instruction for the learner, or find alternative materials.

Accommodations in the Aspire Classroom

Accommodations are changes made to “level the playing field” for individuals with diagnosed learning disabilities.

Accommodations are sometimes considered modifications, and in other instances are considered as the removal of barriers. Both conceptualizations are correct. For example, if a learner with motor control difficulties is required to provide a written report, you may be able to modify the requirement and allow the learner to write on wide-lined paper. If the reason for the report is to demonstrate the learner's knowledge of a topic (as opposed to the learner's writing skills), you might accommodate the learner by allowing him or her to do the report orally, thus removing the barrier of the writing task.

An appropriately selected instructional accommodation not only provides equal access to learning opportunities but also minimizes the learner's likelihood of failure. Appropriate educational accommodations are determined by taking into account the adult's unique learning needs. Within the teaching/learning environment; accommodations are legally required adaptations that ensure adults with learning disabilities an equal chance for success in learning. A literacy program's obligation to provide accommodations to learners is a form of nondiscrimination. Most accommodations cost little or nothing and are easily provided, for example:

- Simple seating or equipment rearrangements
- Allowance of extra time to complete task
- Use of tape recorders headphones
- Color coding
- Highlighters
- Large-print materials
- Index and cue cards
- Use of computers
- Seating in a quiet area
- Allowing movement/standing
- Colored overlays
- Textured materials
- Use of magnifiers
- Use of slotted cards

Many accommodations provided to individuals with learning disabilities in academic, vocational, and employment settings involve altering place, time, or performance conditions. Such accommodations allow the individual to process information in his or her own way while the learning situation is adjusted. These types of accommodations are not sufficient, however, if the individual still processes information in a manner that does not help him or her meet core academic, vocational, or employment demands. For example, providing for oral administration of tests may not benefit an individual if the oral administration negatively affects the use of good test taking strategies, or if the test taker does not know good test-taking strategies. Likewise, note-takers may not lead to improved test performance if, as a consequence of someone else's

taking the notes, the learner does not comprehend the information, has difficulty organizing it, or struggles with studying.

Goal Setting: A First Step for All Struggling Learners

The SMARTER routine has been adapted from Lenz and Scanlon (1998). When implemented, SMARTER provides a framework for goal-setting and selecting accommodations that can address information-processing differences for adults with learning disabilities. The acronym stands for:

- **S**hape the Question
- **M**ap the Skills and Subskills
- **A**daptations and Accommodations
- **R**esources
- **T**asks and Timelines
- **E**valuate
- **R**evise and Revise

Shape the Question

In the first step of the SMARTER process you sit with your student and ask what he/she needs to work on. The discussion may start out very general (e.g., "I want to get my GED."). Through further questions (e.g., "What subjects are most difficult for you?"), try to get the students to form more specific questions. Some specific questions are: "How can I improve my word recognition skills?" and "What do I need to do to get my driver's license?"

Map the Skills and Subskills

Next you take the question formed in the previous step and create a map or graphic organizer of the skills to meet that objective. Discuss how it fits with related topics. See Figure 1 on page 22 for an example of a SMARTER Map.

Adaptations and Accommodations

In this step, you and the student discuss the strategies that he or she will need to be successful. Ask students to describe an instance in which they were able to learn something they considered difficult. Discuss with the students the factors involved that led to them successfully learning the topic. Then discuss what strategies would be most beneficial to each student in your classroom. Some ideas might be learning through flashcards, small group instruction, or computer-based work. Also, ask your student what types of adaptations, such as colored overlays, or math manipulatives such as fraction tiles, they may have used in the classroom that have helped them learn.

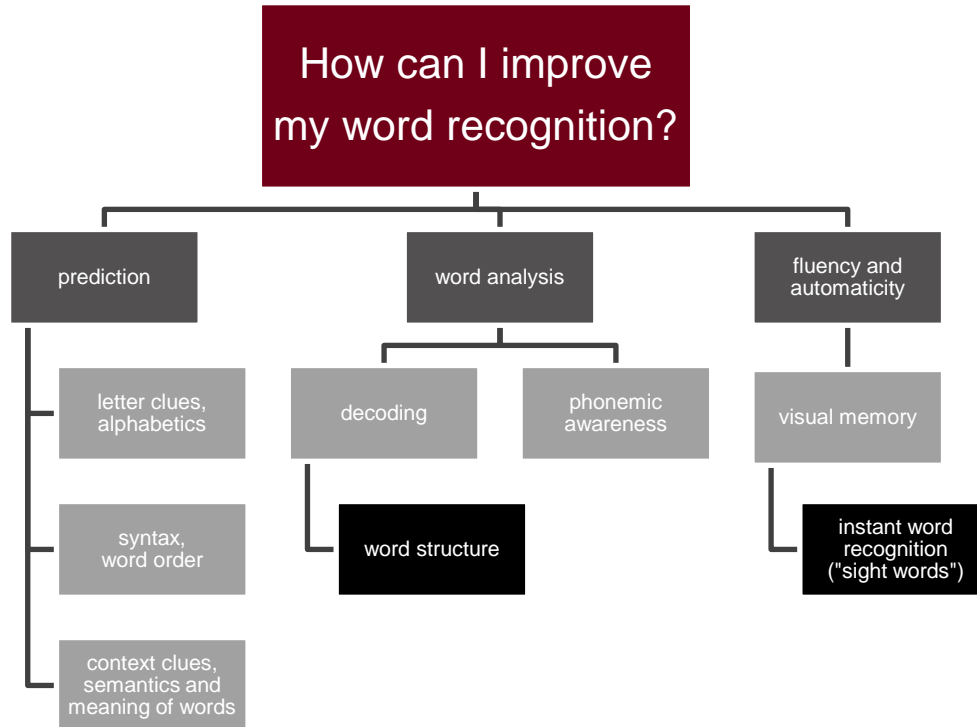


Figure 1: Example of a completed SMARTER map for word recognition

Resources

Next, use your judgment as a professional to choose several resources that you think are appropriate to the skill and level you are teaching. Share these with your student and let him or her choose which resource he or she prefers. Encourage feedback on the resources and do not be afraid to change the resource if your student decides it is not working for him or her. This is when you begin to reach instructional decisions and plan lessons.

Tasks and Timelines

At this step list the steps you and your student will take to achieve the goal. Decide how long each step will take. Create deadlines. Then work the plan and conduct the lesson.

Evaluate

This is the time for reflection. Look back on the lesson and ask, "How did we do? What did we learn?"

Review and Revise

After reflecting generally, ask for more specific reflections from your student. Have him or her reflect on questions such as, "How could we do this differently next time?" and "What could I do next time to improve my participation?"

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BENEFITS OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines assistive technology (AT) as both a device and a service: “An assistive technology device is any item, piece of equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. An assistive technology service means any service that helps an individual with a disability select, acquire, or use an assistive technology device” (Assistive Technology Act of 2004).

As mentioned in previously, different kinds of assistance can be provided depending on the type of learning disability and its severity, as well as the person's age. If your student has a diagnosed learning disability (or other diagnosed disability), he or she may be able to get accommodations in the classroom or workplace based on protections guaranteed by the Americans with Disabilities Act. One must “disclose” their disability to be protected by these laws.

How AT Can Benefit People with Disabilities

Assistive technology may be considered appropriate when it does any or all of the following things:

- Enables an individual to perform functions that can be achieved by no other means.
- Enables an individual to approximate normal fluency, rate, or standards - a level of accomplishment that could not be achieved by any other means.
- Provides access for participation in programs or activities which otherwise would be closed to the individual.
- Increases endurance or ability to persevere and complete tasks that otherwise are too laborious to be attempted on a routine basis.
- Enables an individual to concentrate on learning or employment tasks, rather than mechanical tasks.
- Provides greater access to information.
- Supports normal social interactions with peers and adults.
- Supports participation in the least restrictive educational environment.

Assistive technology may be appropriate for individuals diagnosed with:

- Learning and Other Cognitive Disabilities: dyslexia, dyscalculia, receptive aphasia, written language disorder
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity
- Emotional/Mental Health: schizophrenia, depression, bipolar disorder
- Physical/Chronic Health Disability: blindness, low vision, deaf, hard of hearing, HIV, diabetes, mobility impaired

Assistive technology solutions may range from low/no-tech to high-tech:

- Low-tech solutions may include:
 - strategies such as requesting information in an alternative format
 - requesting additional time/training/assistance to complete tasks
 - modifying the job tasks
 - colored overlays
 - large-print or full-page magnifiers
- High-tech solutions may include:
 - equipment such as a digital recorder, digital reading device (for reading books and other scanned/digital media)
 - personal digital assistant (PDA), or talking dictionary
 - talking or large-button calculator
 - adaptive computer software programs such as: word prediction to increase typing speed and accuracy; optical character recognition (OCR) for scanning and reading textual information electronically; voice recognition for voice input into a computer; screen reading software for audible feedback of information on a computer screen; visual thinking software tools designed to assist with planning, organizing, research, comprehension, and communication; and, software designed to assist with mathematical/scientific calculator tasks

Barriers to Obtaining Assistive Technology

While assistive technology may be helpful, there are barriers that students and programs may need to consider:

- Lack of information and knowledge about appropriate AT
- Lack of funding
- Lack of professionals to perform AT evaluations
- Wading through red tape of public programs and insurance companies
- Lack of maintenance and support
- Lack of involvement of vocational rehabilitation counselors
- Restrictions placed on school districts regarding the disposition of equipment
- Absence of an established “buy-out” program to allow vocational rehabilitation agencies to purchase assistive technology from school districts
- No strong relationship between educational facilities and adult services programs

For additional information and resources, please visit the following websites:

- [Aspire Data](#) provides objective information about assistive technology products and rehabilitation equipment available from domestic and international sources.
- [The Alliance for Technology Access \(ATA\)](#) has a network of community-based technology resource centers that provide information and support services to children and adults with disabilities.
- [The Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs \(ATAP\)](#) supports state AT programs in implementing the Assistive Technology Act. States may operate a state

finance program or a device loan program for assistive technology devices. For the technology program in Ohio, visit the [AT Ohio](#) website.

- [The Beach Center on Disability](#), University of Kansas, has technology resources on its web site.
- [The Coleman Institute for Cognitive Disabilities](#) is another source of assistive technology information.
- [Closing the Gap](#) is an organization that focuses on assistive technology for people with special needs through its bimonthly magazine, annual international conference and extensive Web site.
- [Job Accommodation Network](#) is a service provided by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). JAN's mission is to facilitate the employment and retention of workers with disabilities by providing employers, employment providers, people with disabilities, their family members and other interested parties with information on job accommodations, entrepreneurship, and related subjects.
- [USA Tech Guide](#) provides information on assistive technology with links to over 1900 sources.

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EXAMPLES OF CLASSROOM RESOURCES

Below are some classroom resources that can be used to accommodate the learning needs of all students.

Manipulatives

Sometimes having a three-dimensional object that represents the problem you are trying to solve, can make the solution so much easier to see. For math manipulatives try: beaded bracelets, dice, checkers, colored candy pieces, chess pawns, number lines, Base -10 rods, dry erase boards, playing cards. There are even manipulatives for algebra. For reading and writing, try letter or word tiles, sentence strips, etc. For some people, being able to manipulate something with their hands helps to focus their attention, such as foam balls, Silly Putty™, or Koosh Balls™.

Colored Overlays

These are colored transparent sheets that a student can place over reading material or even a computer screen. Some students with Visual Stress Syndrome see remarkable differences when using this simple accommodation.

Magnifying strips

Magnifying lenses come in all shapes and sizes. They can be placed over reading material. You can find page size magnifying sheets, book marks size magnifying strips, and credit card size magnifying sheet for carrying in your wallet.

Large print materials

Most public and university libraries carry large print materials. Also check with the PDN [Library](#) to see if the materials you are using in your class are available in large print. A quick trick: use the copy machine to easily enlarge the handout you use in class.

Large button calculators

Large button calculators are readily available at office supply or even discount stores. Put these out for students to use. With prior approval, students with learning disabilities may be able to use large button calculators on the GED. You can also try talking calculators.

Audio books

Most public or university libraries have books on tape. Check with the PDN [Library](#) to see if the materials you need are available in audio version. Audiobooks may be obtained through the Clearinghouse for the Blind.

Computer software

There are many different types of computer software available from programs that will convert text to voice or will convert voice to text. Magnification software also exists.

Temporary Adhesive Notes

These notes can be used as place markers, or a location to jot down thoughts, new words, or questions while reading. The variety of sizes and colors of these notes makes them useful in many different ways.

Highlighters

Some students remember colored text better. The act of physically moving over the text with a highlighter can help focus attention.

Colored paper

Black text on white background is not easily seen by everyone. Some students, especially those with scotopic sensitivity or other visual processing disorders, may be better able to read words printed on colored paper. Consider using colored paper for your handouts. Experiment to see which colors work best for your students.

Earplugs

When working independently, students with auditory processing disorders may benefit from using earplugs, which shut out distracting background noise.

Graph paper

Students who have difficulty lining up numbers can benefit from using graph paper when working on math problems.

Straight edge

You may want to have a straight edge available for your students who lose their place when reading.

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GED® TEST ACCOMMODATIONS

Depending on the type of learning disability and its severity, as well as the person's age, different kinds of assistance can be provided. There are three main laws that protect people with learning disabilities from discrimination and, in some cases, provide guidance for determining and requesting appropriate accommodations. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 provides for special education and related services for children and young people with disabilities up until their 22nd birthday. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination against children and adults with disabilities. It guarantees that people with disabilities have equal access to programs and services that receive federal funds, including public and private colleges. Finally, and most importantly for the purpose of obtaining accommodations on the 2014 GED®, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) expands the interpretation of disability under the original Americans with Disabilities Act and protects school-age children and adults with disabilities from discrimination in employment, public, and privately-operated settings. The law applies to all public and most private schools and colleges, testing agencies, and licensing authorities. For more information on the laws protecting individuals with learning disabilities, please visit the [National Center for Learning Disabilities](#).

With appropriate documentation from a clinician and prior approval from GED Testing Service®, an applicant with a qualifying learning disability, ADD or ADHD, and/or a temporary or permanent mental or physical disability can qualify for special accommodations when taking the GED®.

The process for obtaining accommodations for the 2014 GED® is as follows:

1. Testing candidates will create an account for computer-based testing by visiting <https://ged.com/>.
2. Once an account is created, candidates will receive an email instructing them to create a username and password to begin their registration process by clicking on an active link in the email.
3. Candidates will complete the GED Testing Service® registration form online and indicate that they are applying for accommodations on the exam by clicking the associated check-box.
4. GED Testing Service® will email the candidate and provide guidance on downloading the appropriate forms for requesting accommodations and submitting adequate documentation. Documentation guidelines are available [HERE](#).
5. [Accommodations request forms](#) and supporting documentation are sent from testing candidate, test center, or adult education program directly to GED Testing Service® via fax or mail.

6. GED Testing Service® will email the candidate within 30 days once a decision regarding accommodations has been reached.
7. The candidate will be instructed to call GED Testing Service's® Accommodations Coordinator to discuss the decision and review options for test-taking. If a candidate is denied accommodations, he or she may [appeal the decision](#) by submitting additional supporting documentation.
8. The candidate will proceed with scheduling the GED® exam through the Pearson VUE® Accommodated Scheduling Team. Candidates may not schedule their exam if their accommodations request is pending.
9. GED Testing Service® and Pearson VUE® ensure that appropriate accommodations are in place at testing center.

Accommodations are available for people with the following conditions (click the link to access the associated request form).

- [Physical Disorders and Chronic Health Conditions](#)
- [Learning and Other Cognitive Disabilities](#)
- [Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder](#)
- [Psychological and Psychiatric Disorders](#)
- [Intellectual Disabilities](#)

Additionally, clinicians (doctors/psychologists) should complete the following documentation upon evaluation of the test-taker:

- [Physical Disorders and Chronic Health Conditions](#)
- [Learning and Other Cognitive Disabilities](#)
- [Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder](#)
- [Psychological and Psychiatric Disorders](#)
- [Intellectual Disabilities](#)

If a testing-candidate has been evaluated by a clinician, the documentation they submit to GED Testing Service® must be current. GED Testing Service® has established the following requirements for documentation supporting accommodations requests:

- Learning and Cognitive Disabilities – Documentation must be less than five years old
- Intellectual Disability – Documentation must be less than five years old
- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder – Documentation must be less than three years old
- Emotional/Psychiatric/Psychological Disorder – Documentation must be less than one year old
- Physical/Chronic Health Disabilities – Documentation must be less than one year old

If candidates are unsure if documentation is outdated, they are encouraged to send in the information for a formal review by GED Testing Service®. Once the accommodations request has been approved by GED Testing Service®, the accommodations are approved for one year from the decision date. [Extensions are possible after a year if the documentation is still current.](#)

The table below indicates the types of accommodations that may be available to test-takers following approval from the GED Testing Service.

Accommodations for test-takers with approval from GED Testing Service may include:
Extended time (25%, 50%, 100%)
Extra breaks
Separate room
Human reader and/or scribe
Calculator
Talking calculator
Braille
Screen reader (JAWS)
Enlarged print on-screen (up to 20 point font)*
Color/contrast options*
Special equipment (basic screen magnifier, ergonomic keyboard/mouse, etc.)**

* - These adaptations are available to all test-takers; accommodations do not need to be approved by GED Testing Service®.

** - Arrangements for special accommodations/adaptations should be made with GED Testing Service® Accommodations Managers and Pearson VUE® Testing Centers.

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TRANSITIONS TO POSTSECONDARY LEARNING

Students with learning disabilities can be very successful in postsecondary institutions. Aspire students with learning disabilities who are considering going to college should be encouraged to pursue this goal. Being informed as to the rights and responsibilities of students with disabilities, and understanding the process for receiving accommodations at the college level will help you to help your Aspire students make a smooth transition.

Legislation (IDEA) requires transition planning for students with disabilities in elementary and secondary schools. Recently there has been a focus on helping adults make the transition to college, such as the [National College Transition Network](#). However, there are not many resources available on helping adult or non-traditional students with disabilities make the transition to college.

The following information was written to help you help your students with diagnosed or undiagnosed learning disabilities make the transition to college.

Developing Self-Awareness

Successful college students with learning disabilities, college advisors, as well as campus disability support services staff, agree that developing knowledge about one's self—the nature of one's learning disabilities as well as one's personal and academic strengths and weaknesses—is vital in getting ready for college.

Learning new information in a new setting, such as a college classroom or dormitory, can be frustrating. Setbacks are an inevitable part of the learning process, but can impair self-esteem. Self-esteem is built and rebuilt one day at a time. Students need explicit strategies to monitor and restore their self-esteem.

Some students have difficulty understanding or making themselves understood by their peers, families, and instructors. For example, some learning disabilities may affect timing in conversations, or decisions about when to study and when to socialize.

It is important for students to become familiar with their learning disability. Students may want to ask questions such as:

- What is the extent of my disability?
- What are my strengths?
- How do I learn best?
- Are there strategies that I can use to learn despite these disabilities?

Self-Advocacy

Self-advocates can speak up in clear and positive language to communicate about their needs. Self-advocates take responsibility for themselves. To be a self-advocate, each student must learn to understand his or her particular type of learning disability, and the resulting academic strengths and weaknesses. They must be aware of their own learning styles. Most importantly, students with learning disabilities need to become comfortable with describing to others both their disability and their academic-related needs. At the college level, the student will hold the responsibility for self-identification and advocacy.

Understanding Students Rights and Responsibilities

Colleges and universities do not offer "special" education. Unlike elementary and secondary schools, postsecondary institutions are not required to design special academic programs for students with disabilities. Section 504 and the ADA do not require postsecondary institutions to alter their requirements for either admissions or for graduation.

However, under Section 504 and the ADA, colleges and universities are prohibited from discriminating against a person because of his or her disability. Institutions must provide reasonable modifications, accommodations, or auxiliary aids which will enable qualified students to have access to, participate in, and benefit from the full range of the educational programs and activities that are offered to all students on campus. Examples of accommodations include, but

are not limited to, the use of readers, note takers, extra time to complete exams, and/or alternate test formats.

Decisions regarding the exact accommodations to be provided are made on an individualized basis, and the college or university has the flexibility to select the specific aid or service it provides, as long as it is effective. Colleges and universities are not required by law to provide aides, services, or devices for personal use or study.

In order to be effective self-advocates, students need to be informed about existing legislation that protects the rights of people with disabilities. It is especially important to know about the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (especially Section 504), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and how they differ from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990. In addition, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 protects the confidentiality of student records, which is very important for students with learning disabilities and their families to understand.

The college or university will not provide any accommodation until a student takes the following two steps.

- **Step 1.** The enrolled student who needs accommodative services must "self-identify." That means he or she must go to the Office of Disability Support Services, or the office (or person) on campus responsible for providing services to students with disabilities, and request services.
- **Step 2.** He or she must provide documentation of his or her disability. For the student with a learning disability, such documentation is often a copy of his or her diagnostic report. The report must be no more than three years old. There are several points for a student planning to go to college to keep in mind concerning the documentation of a learning disability:
 - IDEA requires reevaluations to be conducted at least every three years. Therefore, students with learning disabilities may be wise to have a comprehensive reevaluation conducted close to high school graduation time. This will ensure, for students who are going directly into postsecondary education, that the documentation that they take with them will be timely.
 - If the student is unable to be evaluated, students should ask about campus-based possibilities before going to a private diagnostician.
 - Students should study and discuss the documentation in order to fully understand what it conveys about the student's strengths, weaknesses, and recommended accommodative services. If the report is not clear, discuss it with the school psychologist or whoever has prepared it.
 - Many high schools routinely destroy copies of student records after a predetermined number of years. As students with learning disabilities will need copies of select items in their records to show to the college or university as documentation of their disability, students should make sure that they have complete copies of all of their records upon leaving high school.

For information about disabilities and students' rights to privacy at the post-secondary level, consult the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA).

College Options for Adult Students with Learning Disabilities

Services for students with disabilities exist on a continuum. Some colleges have minimal services while others have comprehensive programs for students with various types of disabilities. Students with learning disabilities who are planning to go to college should make themselves aware of the general categories of postsecondary educational institutions. Knowing the type of college one will attend affects the student's course selections while still in high school. There are more than 3,000 colleges and universities in the United States. In addition to varying size, scope or program offered, setting (urban, suburban, or rural), residential or commuter, and cost of attendance, there are several factors of special importance for students with learning disabilities.

- **Course selection and accommodative services**

Students seeking admission to selective institutions must meet the criteria set by the college. Successful college students with learning disabilities report that keyboard skills and word processing are especially important. It is essential for students to begin to master these skills while in the Aspire program.

Students interested in any of the emerging technical careers should explore the tech-prep programs available in many areas. Such tech-prep programs involve a partnership between secondary vocational-technical schools and postsecondary institutions -- most often community colleges. These tech-prep programs help people prepare for careers in areas such as engineering technology; applied science; mechanical, industrial, and practical art; agriculture; health; or business. They offer both classroom instruction and practical work-based experiences.

Accommodative services are essential to the success of most students with learning disabilities. Under direction from an Aspire instructor, students should try out various accommodations in the Aspire classroom that they may be able to get in a post-secondary classroom. In addition, students with learning disabilities may benefit from mini-courses in study skills, assertiveness training, and time management.

- **Application and disclosure**

College application forms cover basic information about the prospective student. The form may not, however, require the student to disclose whether or not he or she has a disability. Should a student decide to disclose his or her disability, this information in and of itself cannot be used as a basis for denying admission. On the other hand, colleges and universities are also under no obligation to alter their admissions requirements or standards. This means that having a learning disability, or any disability, does not entitle a student to admission at any college or university. Students with disabilities must meet the admissions criteria established by the college or university.

College level admissions committees do often maintain a degree of flexibility with regard to the particular qualifications that they look for in prospective students. It is suggested that students with learning disabilities consider the option of disclosing their disability during the application process (either through a required essay and/or during the personal interview, if there is one). By disclosing the disability the student may explain possible discrepancies within various pieces of admissions documents.

Adapted from [Getting Ready for College: Advising High School Students with Learning Disabilities](#) (Barr, Harttnan, & Spillane, 1995).

- **Making a college choice**

After understanding his or her particular academic strengths and weaknesses, narrowing down the short list, visiting campuses, taking standardized college admissions tests if necessary, and completing the applications, students will be faced with making a choice among those colleges that have offered admission. Students who have worked hard at getting ready for college will be able to identify the school that seems "right" for them.

Adapted from [Getting Ready for College: Advising High School Students with Learning Disabilities](#) (Barr, Harttnan, & Spillane, 1995).

The Final Step: Office of Disability Services

The transition process does not end when a student arrives on the college campus. There are very important steps students need to take in order to assure that they are provided with the accommodations to which they are entitled. Talk to your students about these steps:

- **Register at Office of Disability Services**

After being accepted to the college, the student should seek out and talk with the office of disability services at the college two-to-three weeks before classes are set to start. It is up to the student to seek them out, provide documentation of their learning disability, and seek assistance. Encourage students to begin making friends with these professionals. They have a lot of good information and are willing to share it if asked.

Staff in the Office of Disability Services will review the documentation to see if a student is eligible for accommodations and, if so, what they might be able to provide. To receive accommodations, the student must be able to document that he/she has a disability with current, comprehensive documentation or demonstrate a functional impact that would require accommodations. An IEP or 504 plan from high school does not in itself entitle the student to services. Once the disability has been verified by the college, the IEP will help the college serve you better, but it is by no means any document that will compel them to provide students with accommodations.

- **Give all professors accommodations documentation**

When students starts taking college classes, they will need to give all of their professors the accommodation sheet made for them by the Office of Disability Services. Each college

has different requirements and procedures for informing professors/instructors. Some provide the information to them for students while others may provide students with a tool to give to their professors themselves. Each student will need to ask the office of disability services about how to best get this information to the professors. Even if the office of disability services gives the information to the professor, it is a good idea for the student to introduce him/herself and make sure the professor has the information and can put a face with the name.

Encourage students to sit near the front of the room in their college classes to hear better and be less distracted by other students. Remind students that they should always attend class because every class missed must be made up. Tell students to know the procedures the professor has in place to get missed work. Some may want students to go to the professor immediately to get missed work or get the work ahead of time if they know they will miss a class; others may want students to find out the work from a classmate before asking for clarification from the professor.

From [The Student Transitional Guide to College](#) (Cunningham, 2007).

- **Time management and study tips**

Even before classes start, encourage students to:

- Practice setting the alarm and getting up early at home.
- Spend some time reading and writing each day.
- If they have purchased technology for college, open it, plug it in, and get used to it before the first day of classes.
- Register with Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D) If they plan to tape a class lecture, make sure they simultaneously take as many of their own notes as possible - use the tape to fill-in what they didn't get in class - do this daily; if they don't the tapes will pile up quickly and the student will be overwhelmed.
- Get the book list for freshman year AS SOON AS POSSIBLE and contact RFB&D to see if they have it on tape - many students forget to match edition and copyrights - doing so will avoid the confusion of mismatched text, pages, and chapters.
- If the college offers a "students with LD support/discussion group" once a week, encourage your students to go. This is an activity that will allow the student to build a support system, and to learn new compensatory strategies and which faculty are supportive.

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ohio Professional Development Network

The Professional Development Network (PDN) offers professional development opportunities in the field of Learning Disabilities and other Special Needs. There are both online offerings as well as face-to-face workshops. Both of these types of opportunities can be found, and registered for, by accessing the [PDN calendar](#). Please note that you will need to log into the website in order to access available professional development opportunities.

Other Agencies

Ohio Special Education Regional Resource Centers

There are 16 State Support Teams (SST) in Ohio which serve as the organizational structure for offering multi-district special education services. Each SST is designed to initiate, expand, and improve the delivery of educational services to children with disabilities ages three through 21. A major focus is on supporting services to children in the Least Restrictive Environment. A large variety of workshops and trainings are offered. They also maintain a resource library of materials related to special needs.

National/International Organizations

[Learning Disabilities Association of America \(LDA\)](#)

The Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA) is the largest non-profit volunteer organization advocating for individuals with learning disabilities. LDA strives to advance the education and general welfare of children and adults with learning disabilities. LDA provides information, support, education, and resources through its network of nearly 300 state and local affiliates in 50 states and Puerto Rico. They hold an annual conference.

[International Dyslexia Association \(IDA\)](#)

The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping individuals with dyslexia, their families and the communities that support them. IDA is the oldest learning disabilities organization in the nation -- founded in 1949 in memory of Dr. Samuel T. Orton, a distinguished neurologist. Throughout their rich history, their goal has been to provide the most comprehensive forum for parents, educators, and researchers to share their experiences, methods, and knowledge.

[ProLiteracy WorldWide](#)

The merger of the world's two largest adult volunteer literacy organizations is complete and Laubach Literacy International and Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc. have become ProLiteracy Worldwide. Its purpose is to sponsor educational programs and services to empower adults and their families by assisting them to acquire the literacy practices and skills they need to function more effectively in their daily lives and participate in the transformation of their societies. Its publishing division, New Readers Press, produces and distributes approximately 500 titles of adult educational books and materials to literacy organizations, schools, libraries, and other institutions nationwide. New Readers Press also publishes *News*

for You, a weekly newspaper for adult new readers, that is read by 90,000 adult learners. They also host an annual conference.

National Association for Adults with Special Learning Needs (NAASLN)

NAASLN is an association for those who serve adults with special learning needs. NAASLN members include educators, trainers, employers, and human service providers. NAASLN advocates for adults with special learning needs in national policy, legislation, and funding. They also provide professional development opportunities and technical assistance. They disseminate relevant information and research in order to increase awareness of the holistic nature and best practices for serving adults with special learning needs. Finally, they promote best practices for effective services.

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Appendix A:

Special Needs Areas

Learning Differences, Learning Styles, and Learning Difficulties

All of us learn in different ways. Some of us are visual learners and need to see things to understand them. Others of us are kinesthetic/tactile learners and need to touch or manipulate things in order to understand them. Still others are auditory learners and need to hear information to gain full understanding of it. There are many ways to categorize styles of learning. For example, Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences describes eight separate learning modalities: musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. Everyone has one or several learning style strengths, and most of us, if necessary, can adapt to learning "outside of" our preferred learning strength. Some of us, however, struggle to learn new information and skills presented in a format other than our preferred learning style.

Learning, however, can pose a bigger challenge. There are times we all have difficulty learning or doing something in life, such as learning to parallel park, learning a new language, or learning to play a sport such as tennis. These difficulties, most often, can be overcome or avoided altogether. It is part of human nature to avoid things that are difficult for us. But when these learning difficulties impact our daily functioning, our ability to achieve goals and be successful in life, they are significant learning difficulties or, if they are very severe, could be learning disabilities.

When learning substantially affects one's ability to perform essential life activities, like acquiring basic academic skills, it is probable that a learning disability exists.

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Learning Disability

"A learning disability is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the lifespan. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities, but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example, sensory impairment, mental retardation, and serious emotional disturbance) or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences." (National Joint Commission on Learning Disabilities, 1994)

A learning disability may be severe or mild in terms of its effect on learning, and those Aspire students with learning disabilities may be at any functioning level within your program. Learning

disabilities are purported to be a significant factor affecting the Aspire student population and could involve a significant number of your students. Remember, however, only qualified psychologists and clinicians can diagnose learning disabilities. For liability purposes it is important to understand that Aspire practitioners, unless they are a licensed diagnostician, cannot tell a student they have a learning disability without documentation from a qualified professional.

Based on a person's specific learning disability, that individual may have difficulty correctly interpreting information from one or more of the sensory input channels. For example, a person with an auditory processing disability may misperceive what is said to him or her. The statement "she was very bad" could be misperceived as "she was very mad." An individual with a visual perceptual disability may read slowly due to difficulty perceiving the difference between "b" and "d." This disability makes words with those letters challenging to quickly recognize.

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Other Special Needs Areas

Aging

Aging can affect learning. For example, vision, hearing, and memory loss; decreased agility; decreased muscle tone; and increased use of medication are common factors among an aging population. However, the more serious conditions related to aging that may affect learning more significantly are physical or mental disorders such as Alzheimer's or arthritis.

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Autism

Autism is a complex neurobiological disorder that typically lasts throughout a person's lifetime. It is part of a group of disorders known as autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Today, 1 in 150 individuals is diagnosed with autism, making it more common than pediatric cancer, diabetes, and AIDS combined. It occurs in all racial, ethnic, and social groups and is four times more likely to strike boys than girls. Autism impairs a person's ability to communicate and relate to others. It is also associated with rigid routines and repetitive behaviors, such as obsessively arranging objects or following very specific routines. Symptoms can range from very mild to quite severe.

Autism was first identified in 1943 by Dr. Leo Kanner of Johns Hopkins Hospital. At the same time, a German scientist, Dr. Hans Asperger, described a milder form of the disorder that is now known as Asperger Syndrome. These two disorders are listed in the DSM IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) as two of the five developmental disorders that fall under the autism spectrum disorders. The others are Rett Syndrome, PDD NOS (Pervasive Developmental Disorder), and Childhood Disintegrative Disorder. All of these disorders are characterized by varying

degrees of impairment in communication skills and social abilities, and also by repetitive behaviors.

Some adults with ASD, especially those with high-functioning autism or with Asperger syndrome, are able to work successfully in mainstream jobs. Nevertheless, communication and social problems often cause difficulties in many areas of life. They will continue to need encouragement and moral support in their struggle for an independent life.

Many others with ASD are capable of employment in sheltered workshops under the supervision of managers trained in working with persons with disabilities. A nurturing environment at home, at school, and later in job training and at work, helps persons with ASD continue to learn and to develop throughout their lives.

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Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) is a neurobehavioral disorder that affects an estimated 4 - 12% of the school age population. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV (DSM-IV), published by the American Psychiatric Association, describes three subtypes of AD/HD:

- Inattentive: can't seem to get focused or stay focused on a task or activity
- Hyperactive - impulsive: very active and often acts without thinking
- Combined: inattentive, impulsive, and too active

Some sources have reported that ADHD affects to varying degrees upwards of 30-40% of the general population. This can interfere with an individual's ability to focus for extended periods of time, or to break from focus in order to move forward. For some individuals with ADHD, it is often difficult to filter key information from the distraction of sensory overload. Others may be described as having a "racing-mind," which suggests information is processed so fast that key information for understanding is missed. ADHD may adversely impact social interactions, personal relationships, time management, organization, anxiety levels, patience, and much more.

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Head Injury

Head Injury is a temporary or long-term interruption in brain functioning caused by trauma such as stroke, concussion, or accident.

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Developmental Disability

Developmental Disability is a severe, chronic disability attributable to mental or physical impairment(s), other than an impairment caused solely by mental illness, such as Down's syndrome, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, autism, spina bifida, etc.

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Mental Illness

Mental Illness refers to a variety of brain-based diseases that appear as emotional, behavioral, and social disabilities. Like any group of individuals who have lived with many life stresses, Aspire students may experience depression, high anxiety, and other emotional challenges. These stresses can be compounded by a history of poverty and significant learning challenges. For more information on how to support Aspire students with mental illness contact your local community mental health center or local chapter of NAMI – the National Alliance on Mental Illness – which is a family information and support network.

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Cognitive Disability

Cognitive Disability is a cognitive impairment that interferes with major life activities and may affect an individual's capacity for independent living and self-sufficiency and may be mild to severe. It is important for Aspire staff to know that many individuals with cognitive disabilities have the ability to learn, set academic goals, make progress toward achieving those goals, and, thus, have the right to be served in Aspire programs.

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Physical Disability

A physical disability refers to a physical, functional limitation that interferes with a person's ability to walk, see, move, lift, or hear. Physical disabilities include blindness, deafness and the inability to use one's limbs.

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Temporary Special Learning Needs

Temporary disabilities, which may entitle a person to accommodations, include injuries such as broken bones as well as non-permanent conditions such as pregnancy or the effects of certain medications or treatments.

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Appendix B:

Characteristics of Adults with Learning Disabilities

The information in this Appendix is taken from [Guidebook 1: Preparing to Serve Adults with Learning Disabilities](#), the first in the five-part series, *Bridges to Practice: A Research-Based Guide for Literacy Practitioners Serving Adults with Learning Disabilities*.

LISTENING DIFFICULTIES

Individuals with learning disabilities may also have difficulty with the processing of oral language.

Characteristics of Listening Difficulty	Examples
Has problems perceiving slight distinctions in words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misunderstands a message with a word mistaken for a similar word (i.e., “grass” and “glass”)
Has a limited vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes and uses fewer words than peers when engaged in conversation or when gathering information by listening
Finds abstract words or concepts difficult to understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests repetitions or more concrete explanations of ideas • Frequently asks for examples
Has difficulty with nonliteral or figurative language, such as metaphors, idioms, and sarcasm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not understand jokes or comic strips
Confuses the message in complex sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May eat lunch first if given the direction, “Eat lunch after you take this to the mailroom.”
Has difficulty with verbal memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not remember directions, phone numbers, jokes, stories, etc.
Has difficulty processing large amounts of spoken language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gets lost listening in group presentations, complaining that people talk too fast

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SPEAKING DIFFICULTIES

Individuals with learning disabilities may have difficulty producing oral language.

Characteristics of Speaking Difficulty	Examples
Mispronounces words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds, substitutes or rearranges sounds in words, as in “Pacific” for “specific”
Uses the wrong word, usually with similar sounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a similar-sounding word, like “generic” instead of “genetic”
Confuses the morphology, or structure of words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses the wrong form of a word, such as calling the “Declaration of Independence” the “Declaring of Independence”
Has a limited vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses the same words over and over in giving information and explaining ideas • Has difficulty conveying ideas
Makes grammatical errors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Omits or uses grammatical markers incorrectly, such as tense, number, possession, and negation
Speaks with a limited repertoire of phrase and sentence structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses mostly simple sentence construction • Overuses “and” to connect thoughts
Has difficulty organizing what to say	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has problems giving directions or explaining a recipe; talks around the topic but doesn’t get to the point
Has trouble maintaining a topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interjects irrelevant information into a story • Starts discussing one thing then goes off in another direction without making the connection
Has difficulty with word retrieval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot call forth a known word—uses “um” and “you know” • May substitute a word relating in meaning • May use empty words—thing or stuff • May describe rather than name
Has trouble with the pragmatic or social use of language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not follow rules of conversation • Does not switch styles of speaking when addressing different people

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READING DIFFICULTIES

The most prominent characteristic associated with learning disabilities is difficulty in learning to read.

Characteristics of Reading Difficulty	Examples
Does not read for pleasure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engages in leisure activities other than reading magazines or books, claiming to prefer pursuits that are more active Does not read stories to his or her children
Does not use reading to gather information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot easily use materials like newspapers and classified ads to obtain information
Has problems identifying individual sounds in spoken words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not attempt to sound out words in reading or does so incorrectly
Often needs many repetitions to learn to recognize a new or unused word	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May encounter a newly learned word in a text and not recognize it when it appears later in that text
Relies heavily on context to read new or unused words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When attempting to decode a word, says a word that may make sense but may not be related phonologically (ex: coat—jacket)
Oral reading contains many errors, repetitions, and pauses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reads slowly and laboriously, if attempts to read at all May refuse to read orally
Efforts in reading are so focused on word recognition that they detract from reading comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loses the meaning of text but understands the same material when it is read aloud
Has problems with comprehension that go beyond word recognition; may have limited language skills that affect comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not understand the text when it is read to him/her
Has limited use of reading strategies; in an inactive reader, not previewing text, monitoring comprehension, or summarizing what is read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When prompted to do so, does not describe strategies used to assist with decoding and comprehension of text
Practices reading rarely, which may compound reading difficulties; lacks complex language and word recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizes and uses fewer words, expressions, and sentence structures than peers

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WRITING DIFFICULTIES

Many individuals with learning disabilities have difficulties with written expression and often in conjunction with reading. “Dysgraphia” is a term sometimes used to refer to difficulties with writing.

Characteristics of Writing Difficulty	Examples
Has difficulty communicating through writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rarely writes letters or notes • Needs help completing forms such as job applications
Written output is severely limited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggles to produce a written product • Produces short sentences and text with limited vocabulary
Writing is disorganized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Omits critical parts or puts information in the wrong place • Writing lacks transition words
Lacks a clear purpose for writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not communicate a clear message • Expresses thoughts that do not contribute to the main idea
Does not use the appropriate text structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses sentences that contain errors in syntax or word choice • Fails to clearly indicate the referent of a pronoun
Shows persistent problems in spelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spells phonetically • Leaves out letters • Refrains from writing words that are difficult to spell
Has difficulties with mechanics of written expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Omits or misuses sentence markers, such as capitals and end punctuation, making it difficult for the reader to understand the text
Handwriting is sloppy and difficult to read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has awkward writing grip or position • Letters, words, and lines are misaligned or not spaced appropriately
Demonstrates difficulties in revising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is reluctant to proofread or does not catch errors • Focuses primarily on the mechanics of writing, not on style and content

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MATHEMATICS DIFFICULTIES

In some instances, individuals with learning disabilities have normal or above-normal math skills. For others, it is the area of primary difficulty. “Dyscalculia” is the term used to refer to difficulties with math.

Characteristics of Mathematics Difficulty	Examples
Does not remember and/or retrieve math facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a calculator or counts on fingers for answers to simple problems
Does not use visual imagery effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot do math in his or her head and writes down even simple problems • Has difficulty making change
Has visual-spatial deficits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confuses math symbols • Misreads numbers • Doesn't interpret graphs or tables accurately • Has trouble maintaining a checkbook
Becomes confused with math operations, especially multi-step processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaves out steps in math problem-solving or does them in the wrong order • Cannot do long division except with a calculator • Has trouble budgeting
Has difficulties in language processing that affect the ability to do math problem-solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not translate real-life problems into the appropriate mathematical processes; avoids employment situations that involve this set of skills

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THINKING DIFFICULTIES

Although adults with learning disabilities do not have global difficulties in thinking, they may have specific problems in cognitive processing.

Characteristics of Thinking Difficulty	Examples
Has problems with abstract reasoning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asks to see ideas on paper• Prefers hands-on ways of learning new ideas
Shows marked rigidity in thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resists new ideas or ways of doing things and may have difficulty adjusting to changes on the job
Thinking is random, as opposed to orderly, either in logic or chronology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May have good ideas which seem disjointed, unrelated, or out of sequence
Has difficulty synthesizing ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pays too much attention to detail and misses the big picture or idea when encountering specific situations at home or at work
Makes impulsive decisions and judgments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Shoots from the hip” when arriving at conclusions or decisions; does not use a structured approach to weigh options
Has difficulty generating strategies to acquire/ use information and solve problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approaches situations without a game plan, acting without a guiding set of principles

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OTHER DIFFICULTIES

An individual with learning disabilities may have issues in addition to those previously listed.

Characteristics of Other Difficulty	Examples
Has problems with attention, which may be accompanied by hyperactivity, distractibility, or passivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not focus on a task for an appropriate length of time • Cannot seem to get things done • Does better with short tasks
Displays poor organizational skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not know where to begin tasks or how to proceed • Does not work with time limits, failing to meet deadlines • Workspace and personal space are messy
Has eye-hand coordination problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Omits or substitutes elements when copying information from one place to another, such as invoices or schedules
Demonstrates poor fine motor control, usually accompanied by poor handwriting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoids jobs requiring manipulation of small items • Becomes frustrated when putting together toys for children
Lacks social perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stands too close to people when conversing • Does not perceive situations accurately; may laugh when something serious is happening or slap an unreceptive boss on the back in an attempt to be friendly
Has problems establishing social relationships; problems may be related to spoken language disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not seem to know how to act and what to say to people in specific social situations and may withdraw from socializing
Lacks “executive functions,” including self-motivation, self-reliance, self-advocacy, and goal-setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates over-reliance on others for assistance or fails to ask for help when appropriate • Blames external factors on lack of success • Does not set personal goals and work deliberately to achieve them • Expresses helplessness

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Appendix C:

Psychological and Neuropsychological Evaluation Reports

Below is a listing of the documentation that is commonly included in psychological and neuropsychological evaluation reports.

I. Psychological Test Results

- A. Interpretation of results from the following tests (administered or interpreted from previous testing):
 - Intelligence: Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS-R or WAIS III), Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-III), --or-- Stanford-Binet IV
 - Achievement: Full Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery-Revised (Test of Achievement) --or-- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT)
- B. Observations of evaluator (processing time, distractibility, motivation, etc.)
- C. In the case of ADHD, diagnostic evidence such as developmental history that defines symptom onset, specific computerized tests of attention such as the TOVA, Gordon Diagnostic Battery or the CPT
- D. Results from additional evaluations performed (i.e. Bender Gestalt, ADHD diagnostic criteria, etc. as needed to verify auditory processing deficits, etc.)

II. Need for Disability Accommodations

This information is usually in the form of a description of relevant personal, academic, family, or medical history (particularly in cases of psychological impairments causing disabling anxiety, or needed accommodations due to the effects of prescribed medications).

III. Types and Patterns of Disability

Description of the individual's disability as well as a comparison of the degree and significance of discrepancy between the following:

- A. IQ potential and achievement test proficiency
- B. Verbal IQ and Performance IQ scores
- C. Disparity between individual subtests and mean score or among subtest groups

IV. Recommendations for Testing Accommodations

- A. GED-specific accommodations
- B. Accommodations in general for other testing situations (i.e., for continuing education or workplace certification)

V. Recommendations for Instructional Accommodations in Continuing Education/Training Situations

- A. Best methods for instruction (based on the student's learning strengths)
- B. Instructional methods to be avoided (based on the student's learning difficulties)

VI. Recommendations for Job Accommodations (if employed or in vocational training)

- A. Types of tasks at which the individual is likely to be successful (based on the student's learning strengths)
- B. Types of job accommodations recommended (based on the student learning difficulties)

VII. Completed Accommodations Form(s)

- A. For GED Accommodations: Form L-15: Accommodation Request for Learning Disabilities and/or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder or Form SA-001: Request for Special Accommodation in GED Test Administration for Candidates with Physical Disabilities. The evaluator and the individual must sign and complete the appropriate form.
- B. Application for Service from Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (if student has a reading disorder and could benefit from using study materials on audiocassette)

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