Section 2
Some Instructional Strategies

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2.1 Introduction

This section primarily discusses instructional strategies that are effective for use with adult learners labelled with intellectual / developmental disabilities.

The discussions provide background or philosophical bases for the literacy activities that comprise the majority of this *Handbook*.

Features

This section of the *SARC Literacy Activities Handbook* features:

➡ **Teaching Approaches**:
   Eleven relevant instructional topics.

➡ **Choosing Literacy Activities**:
   Some criteria to consider.

➡ **Learning Styles**:
   Discussion of four main learning styles.

➡ **General Advice**:
   Helpful advice for tutors from several sources.

2.2 Teaching Approaches

This section outlines several teaching approaches for tutors to consider when working with an adult learner with intellectual / developmental disabilities. While some approaches overlap, they are each discussed individually.

The teaching approaches discussed in this section are:

- Modeling
- Scaffolding
- Repetition
- Joint Construction
- Task Analysis
- Prompt System

- Functional Approaches
- Critical Literacy
- Computer Assisted
- Comprehension
- Motivation
- Literacy Moments

These teaching approaches have proven effective with this learner population, and provide the theoretical framework for specific literacy activities.

> "I think the most important thing I always tell people… is that it's not a magical thing, and you're not going to give tutors who are going to work with adults with developmental disabilities a magical tool such that they now know how to teach somebody with disabilities."
>
> **Lisa Marie Bossert**
> **Alberta Provincial Coordinator, Frontier College (Edmonton, AB)**
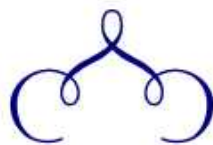
"Approaches to Consider"

Modeling

Tutors can provide instruction to learners by modeling a particular learning task. Here are some techniques that can be tried:

Role Playing: Learners can assume roles in real-life situations, which will help them to learn conversation skills and behaviours appropriate to the settings. Practicing telephone conversations is another role-playing idea.

Thinking Aloud: Tutors can model reading and comprehension strategies for learners by verbalizing each thought as they read. For example, the tutor can say, "This is a word I do not know. What can I do to help me work out the word? I can sound out the word."

Peer Tutoring: Learners can be placed with stronger peer tutors or learning partners, who will serve as literacy role models.

Reading Aloud: The tutor can read aloud, focusing on proper pronunciation and emphasis, while the learner follows along. They can also read at the same time, or take turns reading the same passage.

Scaffolding

Very literally, "scaffolding" provides a learner with some support and security while they attempt to work on a literacy task, such as constructing a sentence. The use of scaffolds should be faded out over time, according to the learner's pace. There are four main types of scaffolds to use (alone or in combination) with learners,:

➡ **Written Scaffolds:** The tutor can employ worksheets that contain a set of partially complete sentences (or question sets) that the learner can respond to. Each worksheet could be on a specific topic, such as

➡ Something that frightened me…

➡ A dangerous animal is…

➡ The best friends are ones who…

➡ The way to be careful with strangers is…

Similarly, the learner could be presented with a set of "key words," and be asked to share her thoughts on the ideas generated from them.

Cloze exercises, where the learner fills in the blanks in a sentence using a word bank, is another scaffolding idea.

Also, the learner could fill in the first letter of similarly sounding words (that may be accompanied by pictures), such as *bat*, *cat*, and *hat*.

"Scaffolds = Support + Security"

➡ **Visual Scaffolds:** There are a number of visual scaffolds that can assist the learner to better comprehend a passage of text or to assist the learner to generate ideas. Photographs, cartoons, illustrations and other visual materials provide scaffolding for stories, poems, and so on. One idea is to use a sequence of photographs as the basis for composing a text. Guided questions can be a further way to scaffold the composition of a text based on photographs or illustrations.

➡ **Oral Scaffolds:** The tutor can ask the learner to complete a sentence or thought that the tutor begins orally. For example, the tutor can begin, "More than anything in the world, the thing I wish I could have is…." Oral scaffolds assist the learner to generate ideas on a particular topic. Activities for written scaffolding easily can be adapted orally, which is particularly helpful for beginning or hesitant learners.

➡ **Decision-Making Scaffolds:** Ranking activities can be used to scaffold decision-making. Examples are ranking a list of movies according to how good they were or choosing places to eat according to overall cost or types of food preferred. Offering a set of choices can assist learners with intellectual / developmental disabilities to better exercise control over elements of their own lives.

Adapted from:
Gerard Girodano. *Literacy Programs for Adults with Developmental Disabilities*. San Diego, CA: Singular Publishing Group, Inc., 1996, pp. 145-156.

Karen B. Moni & Anne Jobling, "LATCH-ON: A Program to Develop Literacy in Young Adults with Down Syndrome," in *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (September 2000), p. 44.

Repetition

Adults with intellectual / developmental disabilities benefit from regular repetition to learn new literacy skills. These learners also can retain skills better if these skills are reinforced frequently.

Here are some techniques to keep in mind when tutoring:

Spiral Technique: Using the spiral technique, the tutor works with the learner on a topic in an introductory way. Later, the same topic is taught in greater depth. If taught in stages, with complexity increasing gradually, learners will be less intimidated.

Computer Technique: Educational computer software easily allows learners to repeat lessons and activities until they are mastered. Using computers can encourage learners to repeat lessons, where otherwise they may become bored.

Warm-Up Technique: At the beginning of each lesson, the tutor reviews something that the learner has previously mastered. This will build the learner's confidence and momentum prior to working on something related or new.

Mixer Technique: When studying the same topic with the learner, it is a good idea to vary teaching approaches and activities. By mixing things up, you can appeal to different learning styles. In that way, you can reinforce learning.

Here is an example of using different activities to teach the same concept. According to the Educational Services Staff of the Vocational and Rehabilitation Research Institute (VRRI), you can use the following games to teach the alphabet letters:

- Alphabet Bingo
- Hangman
- Scrabble Junior
- Matching (Flashcards)

- Boggle
- Wheel of Fortune
- Go Fish (Flashcards)

"Practice + Variety"
"Review + Reinforce + Repeat"

Adapted from:
TESL-NB. *A Resource Guide for Educators of English Language Learners.* Educational Services Branch, New Brunswick Department of Education. Frederickton, NB: July 1996.
[http://www.nald.ca/province/nb/tesl/guide7.htm]

Joint Construction

The joint construction of texts by learners and tutors is an effective strategy. The strategy has several benefits:

Equality: Meaningful text is created among equals in a learning partnership. The act of writing is shared.

Models: Approaches to writing (planning, idea-generation, composing sentences and revising) are demonstrated by the tutor and witnessed by the learner. Each supports the other toward the same goal.

Appropriate Text: The text is interesting and comprehensible for the learner, who has contributed to its construction and has shared personal experiences. Follow-up learning activities based on these texts will be more comprehensible for the learner.

Confidence: The importance of the learner's ideas and contribution are reinforced, building learner confidence.

Success: Learners with intellectual / developmental disabilities are able to complete writing tasks that they may not otherwise be able to do (or easily do) on their own. In some cases, generating ideas can be difficult on one's own. In other cases, difficulties with fine motor control may require the tutor to do writing.

Two examples of joint construction activities are:

Language Experience Approach: In the Language Experience Approach, learners dictate their ideas to their tutors, who write them down. Learners' own language and experiences are used. Learners and tutors have a text upon which to base further instruction. Learners make connections between the spoken and written word. Through this approach, tutors are also better able to get to know the learners and their interests. For more on the Language Experience Approach, see the *SARC Supplementary Tutor Handbook.*

Written Conversation: In this activity, the tutor holds a written conversation with a learner. A single piece of paper can be passed back and forth for writing the script. What would normally be conveyed verbally is put in writing. The learner will have many ideas for responses, since everyday conversation is the model. Having the learner open and use an e-mail account is an effective way to extend this activity and to encourage further writing.

"Partners in Learning"

Adapted from:
Karen B. Moni & Anne Jobling, "LATCH-ON: A Program to Develop Literacy in Young Adults with Down Syndrome," in *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (September 2000), p. 47.

Task Analysis

Very simply, task analysis involves breaking down a task into smaller, more manageable steps for the learner. By employing task analysis, the tutor

➡ becomes aware of the instructional steps to reach a particular learning goal.

➡ has a convenient method to record the learner's progress toward reaching a particular learning goal. (The tutor can put the steps into checklist form in order to evaluate progress.)

Learners with intellectual / developmental disabilities can be intimidated by complex tasks, and so benefit when a tutor employs task analysis.

Task analysis is also similar to a literacy audit. A particular activity (such as banking) can be examined to determine which related tasks have a literacy component (such as filling out forms or writing cheques). Tutoring attention can then be devoted to those literacy tasks.

"Smaller Steps ▶ Greater Success"

Adapted from:
Patty O'Haire, Pamela Phillips & Kathy Browers. *An Implementation Guide for Beyond the Classroom: Community-Based Instruction for Adults with Developmental Disabilities.* Largo, FL: Pinellas County Schools, pp. 19-20.

Prompt System

When offering instruction, it may be helpful for tutors to give prompts to learners with intellectual / developmental disabilities. If done properly, these prompts will allow the learner to proceed with the learning activity, while reducing feelings of frustration. We are not suggesting, however, that the tutor promote learner dependency. Prompts should only be used in such a way that the learner's independence, dignity and self-worth are bolstered.

The different methods of prompting, vary in terms of how "intrusive" they are. The least intrusive method (that still proves successful) is the best choice.

Verbal Prompts (Least Intrusive)

Physical Prompts

(Most Intrusive)

Gestural Prompts

Demonstrative Prompts
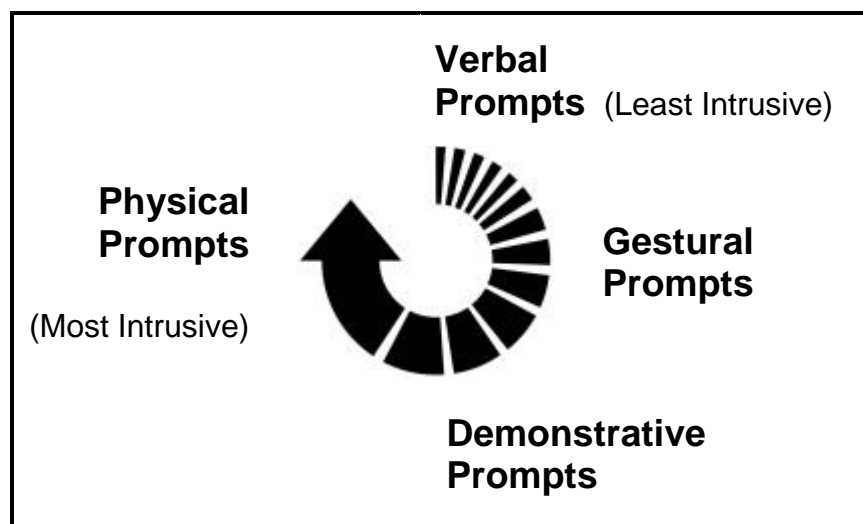
➡ **Verbal Prompts**: The instructor or tutor only offers the learner verbal directions.

➡ **Gestural Prompts**: The instructor or tutor provides directions through motions, cues, and gestures. Verbal prompts are also given at the same time.

➡ **Demonstrative Prompts**: The instructor or tutor provides directions by demonstrating a particular learning task for the learner. Verbal prompts are also given at the same time. When it is the learner's turn to perform the particular task, the tutor can observe the learner and offer additional supports as necessary.

➡ **Physical Prompts**: This is the most "intrusive" prompting method. The instructor or tutor physically (gently) guides the learner through the steps of a particular learning task. Verbal prompts are also given at the same time. As an example of a physical prompt, the tutor can place her hand on that of the learner, to assist in gripping a pencil or drawing a letter of the alphabet.

The amount or frequency of prompting should be reduced as quickly as appropriate, so that the learner can learn to accomplish literacy tasks independently. Intrusive methods of prompting should gradually be substituted with less intrusive methods. This is known as "fading."

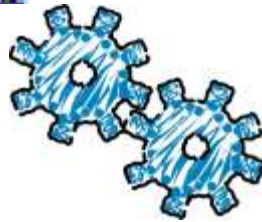## "More Intrusive ▶ Less Intrusive"

"More Frequent ▶ Less Frequent"

"Prompting ▶ No Prompting"

Adapted from:
Patty O'Haire, Pamela Phillips & Kathy Browers. An Implementation Guide for Beyond the Classroom: Community-Based Instruction for Adults with Developmental Disabilities. Largo, FL: Pinellas County Schools, pp. 20-22.

Functional Approaches

Functional approaches put emphasis on literacy skills that involve aspects of learners' everyday lives, such as:

- Employment
- Home Life
- Relationships
- Leisure Activities
- Health Care
- Self-Advocacy
- Community Involvement

When following a functional approach, it is very helpful to use authentic materials when tutoring. Some examples are:

- Signs
- Catalogues
- Package wrappers
- Grooming Items
- Forms
- Newspapers
- Menus
- Recipes
- TV Schedules
- Medicine Labels
- Bus Schedules
- Work Manuals
- Letters
- Electronic Mail
- Bills

The materials that are used to teach literacy skills should always reflect the contexts in which those literacy skills will be applied.

"Skills in Context"

➡️ Using a variety of community-based sites as learning sites can be part of a functional approach.

➡️ When following a functional approach, it is also very helpful to pursue authentic writing opportunities, such as reminder notes, letters requesting information, grocery lists, and so on.

As part of the *SARC Literacy Needs Project*, member agencies were asked to rank the importance of a listing of necessary functional skills. Here are the results:

1.	Personal Hygiene	15.	Dispute Resolution
2.	Self Esteem	16.	Personal Finance/Budgets
3.	Anger Management	17.	Relations with Staff
4.	Social Interaction	18.	Using Health Services
5.	Friendships/Relationships	19.	Time Management
6.	Decision Making	20.	Consumer Rights
7.	Fostering Independence	21.	Using Transportation
8.	Sexuality	22.	Citizenship/Voting
9.	Aging	23.	First Nations Content
10.	Stress Management	24.	Filling out Forms
11.	Leisure Activities	25.	Schedules
12.	Using Money	26.	Caring for Children
13.	Nutrition/Cooking	27.	Stop Smoking
14.	Living Independently		Other Topics

"Community as Classroom"

Adapted from:
Gerard Girodano. *Literacy Programs for Adults with Developmental Disabilities.* San Diego, CA: Singular Publishing Group, Inc., 1996, pp. 145-156.

Critical Literacy

The idea behind critical literacy is that someone can develop and use reading and writing in order to change the world around them. They can become empowered through acquiring and using literacy for purposes of self-advocacy and social action. A fuller definition follows:

"Critical literacy presumes the acquisition of functional literacy skills and constitutes the acquisition, by marginalized individuals and groups, of the means to communicate their experiences and interests in public discourse. Accordingly, literacy programs designed to facilitate the development of critical literacy concentrate on the importance of literacy for persons that are either socially and/or economically marginalized in society. This approach argues that it is disadvantageousness that engenders poor literacy skills and that literacy is necessary to enable such communities of people to both challenge society and empower themselves. This approach argues that prevailing standards of literacy are culturally insensitive. Accordingly, this approach argues that literacy skills development should begin with, and seek to validate, the stories, meanings and experiences of those individuals and groups that have been excluded from genuine participation in society. Clearly, this approach provides for the most demonstrative link between literacy and human rights."

Aleem Lakhani

Aleem Lakhani, *Literacy and Disability: A New Relationship – Project Development Information (Part 2).* **Prepared for Canadian Paraplegic Association, Neil Squire Foundation, Canadian Association for Community Living, Canadian Council for Rehabilitation and Work, Canadian National Institute for the Blind. Ottawa, ON: GAMMA RESEARCH GROUP, September 2, 1997.**

Making the direct connection between developing literacy skills and achieving empowerment can be motivating and beneficial for learners with intellectual / developmental disabilities and their tutors.

The critical literacy approach can involve:

➡ valuing, validating, and recording the life stories and experiences (both positive and negative) of learners.

➡ learning about rights, citizenship, and fuller participation in society.

➡ advocating for changes in policies and practices through writing letters, speeches, awareness events, or possibly through participating with People First.

"Linking Literacy and Rights"

"I see writing as a support for me. I would like to write a story in the *Edmonton Journal.* It would be about the way handicapped people are treated so poorly. I would write it to open people's eyes. It would be explosive. The thing I would like to tell other people is, "Look at yourself before you look at others." I can't write that yet, though. I am not comfortable enough with my writing yet. I need more time. I have to practice more. Susan makes me practice more. She is good to me. She makes me feel that I belong here. We do reading, writing, and math together."

Darren Crawford
Darren Crawford and Angele Hubert, *The Challenges of Literacy and Employment,* **including** *Facilitator's* **Notes by Susan Devins and Maureen Sanders. Edmonton, AB: PROSPECTS Adult Literacy Association, 1995.**

Adapted from:
Roeher Institute. *The Right to Read and Write: A Straightforward Guide to Literacy and People with a Mental Handicap in Canada*s. Toronto, ON: Roeher Institute, 1990, pp. 12-13.

Computer Assisted

Given their unique learning needs, learners with intellectual / developmental disabilities can benefit from the addition of computer-assisted instruction. Attention should be paid to:

➡ **Skill Level**: Learners with lower literacy skills make the greatest gains with computer instruction, compared to other learners. Many software programs can be customized to support a learner's current skill level, advancing only when the learner is ready. Some software can offer word choices and automatic spell checking, which can facilitate the creation of written texts.

➡ **Attention Span**: The use of multimedia effects (colour, sounds, animation) can hold the user's attention and interest. This is particularly important with these learners, who often have short attention spans.

➡ **Need for Repetition**: Learners with intellectual / developmental disabilities require frequent repetition to learn new skills and regular review to retain those skills. Where an instructor alone could become bored or flustered, the computer will repeat tasks as many times as the learner desires.

"Learners + Tutors + Computers"

➡️ **Self Esteem**: Learners using computers may experience improved confidence and self-esteem. Using computers is an important modern day skill, and learners gain added skills in keyboarding and mouse usage.

➡️ **Other Needs**: With the computers, text can be enlarged to assist learners who have difficulties with their vision. Speech recognition software or touch screens can assist those with weak fine motor skills who are unable to type on a keyboard. Computers with an adaptive device such as a speech synthesiser would allow the non-verbal learner to "read" their compositions aloud.

Some advice:

💡 Computer-assisted learning should always be an addition to, instead of a substitute for, the instruction of a tutor or teacher.

💡 As much care should be taken when choosing appropriate software as when choosing appropriate reading materials. For example, software should be age appropriate, it should offer some challenges and it should teach skills that can be applied outside of the computer learning enviroment.

See the entry entitled "Parkland Society Adult Literacy Program a Great Success!" in the Readings section and the "Software" entry in the Bibliography section of this *Handbook*.

Adapted from:
Gerard Girodano. *Literacy Programs for Adults with Developmental Disabilities*. San Diego, CA: Singular Publishing Group, Inc., 1996, pp. 83-103.

Karen B. Moni & Anne Jobling, "LATCH-ON: A Program to Develop Literacy in Young Adults with Down Syndrome," in *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (September 2000), p. 44.

Comprehension

Comprehension of what they read can be a particular problem area for learners with intellectual / developmental disabilities. Struggling with the mechanics of reading can make it difficult for a learner to understand the entire sentence or text. Tutors and learners must work together specifically and deliberately to build comprehension.

This section discusses:

➡ K-W-L Technique   ➡ Mapping

➡ Directed Reading-Thinking Activity   ➡ Questioning

➡ Fix-Up Strategies   ➡ Other Advice

"Reading for Meaning"

"The main area of need is to develop comprehension, specifically reading for meaning. In our experience, while many of the students are able to decode words and texts, they have great difficulty in recalling what they read, finding the main ideas, and reading new words in context."
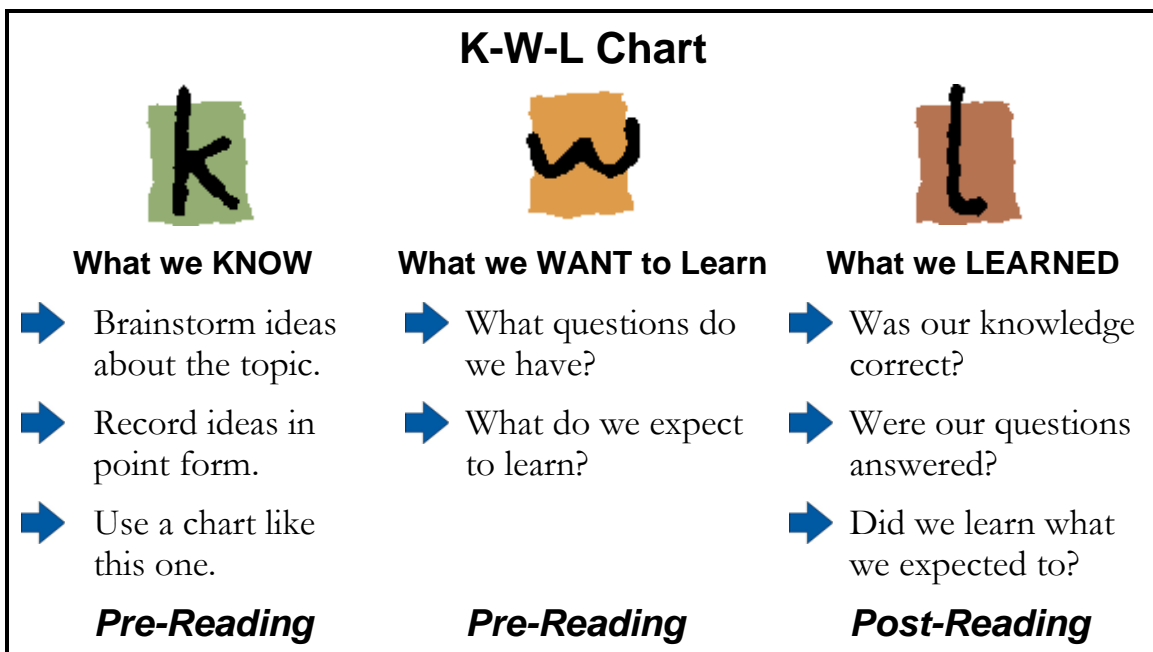
Karen B. Moni & Anne Jobling
"LATCH-ON: A Program to Develop Literacy in Young Adults with Down Syndrome," in *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (September 2000), p. 43.

K-W-L Technique

The K-W-L technique builds a framework that can assist learners to derive meaning from new reading material. This technique can be effective for learners with lower skill levels, either individually or in group settings. It can also be used for almost any subject. It can be used for songs and videos, in addition to text.

The approach is summarized in the following chart:

K-W-L Chart

What we KNOW	What we WANT to Learn	What we LEARNED
➡ Brainstorm ideas about the topic.	➡ What questions do we have?	➡ Was our knowledge correct?
➡ Record ideas in point form.	➡ What do we expect to learn?	➡ Were our questions answered?
➡ Use a chart like this one.		➡ Did we learn what we expected to?
Pre-Reading	*Pre-Reading*	*Post-Reading*

Eventually, the learner may be able to adapt this strategy for independent reading.

"New Information **+** *Prior Knowledge* ＞ *Personal Meaning"*

Directed Reading-Thinking Activity

The Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DRTA) is a technique to help learners build their comprehension skills. It has the following steps:

- Background Experience
- Reading the Passage
- Exploring Vocabulary
- Discussion of the Reading

Background Experience

The first step in the DRTA involves exploring what a passage of text may be about prior to reading it. Together, the learner and tutor can read and discuss:

- Main Title
- Headings or Subheadings
- Visual Aids (Maps, Charts, Graphs, Illustrations, Photographs)
- Highlighted Words (Italics, Boldface)
- Introductory / Concluding Paragraphs (or Summaries)
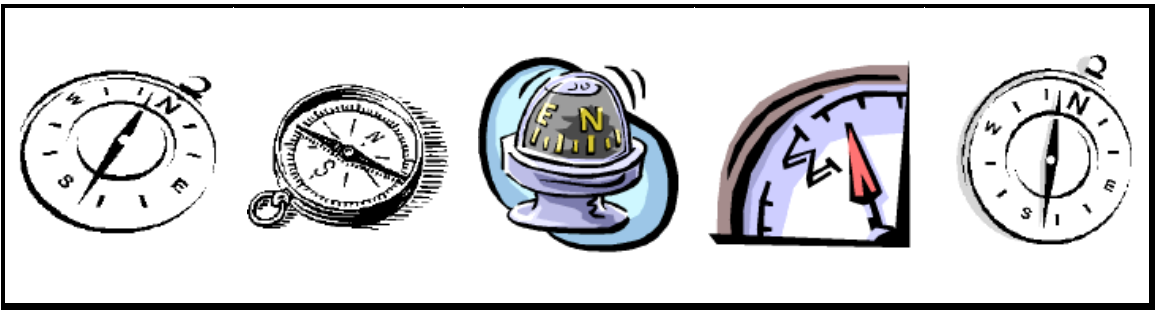
Once the topic is clearly established, the learner and tutor can discuss what they already know about it. The K-W-L chart could be used for this purpose. Where necessary, the tutor can fill in any necessary background information.

Exploring Vocabulary

Next, the tutor can introduce new vocabulary. This should be done in the context of the original sentence.

Reading the Passage

Next, depending on the skill level of the learner, she can read the passage of text. Otherwise, the tutor can read it, or it can be read together.

Discussion of the Reading

The reading can now be discussed. This step goes smoother if the tutor has prepared some likely discussion questions beforehand. Here are examples:

➡ Was the background information confirmed?

➡ Did you enjoy the passage?

➡ Who was your favourite character?

➡ What was the most interesting part?

➡ Was anything new learned?

➡ How could you use the information you learned?

➡ If you had to create a new ending, what would it be?

The questioning can be a useful check for comprehension. If necessary, you may want to re-read the passage again, while the discussion is fresh in the learner's mind.

"Background + Vocabulary +Reading + Discussion ▶ Comprehension"

Fix-Up Strategies

Some strategies to increase comprehension while reading are:

- Reading on to make better sense of the passage.

- Rereading the passage so it makes more sense.

- Looking for clues in the pictures, title, or headings.

- Asking oneself questions related to the passage.

- Putting ideas into one's own words while reading.

- Picturing the ideas while one reads.

- Relating ideas to one's personal experience.

- Asking another person for help in clarifying the passage.
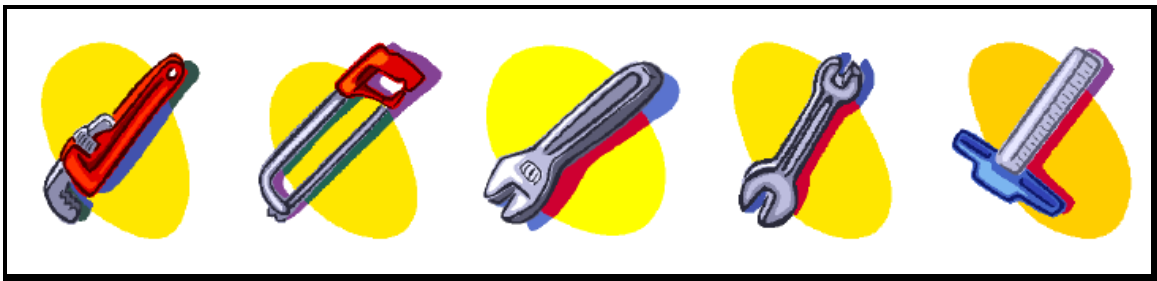
Tutors can help learners to embrace these techniques by modeling them while reading. The tutor can "think aloud" while reading a passage to a learner. For example, to relate a story to herself, the tutor can say: "My husband and I have a dog like Jasper. She barks at the mailman, but not at moths, like in this story. I picture my dog Bailey when the story describes the family's pet. I think the writer is trying to say that pets are a big responsibility."
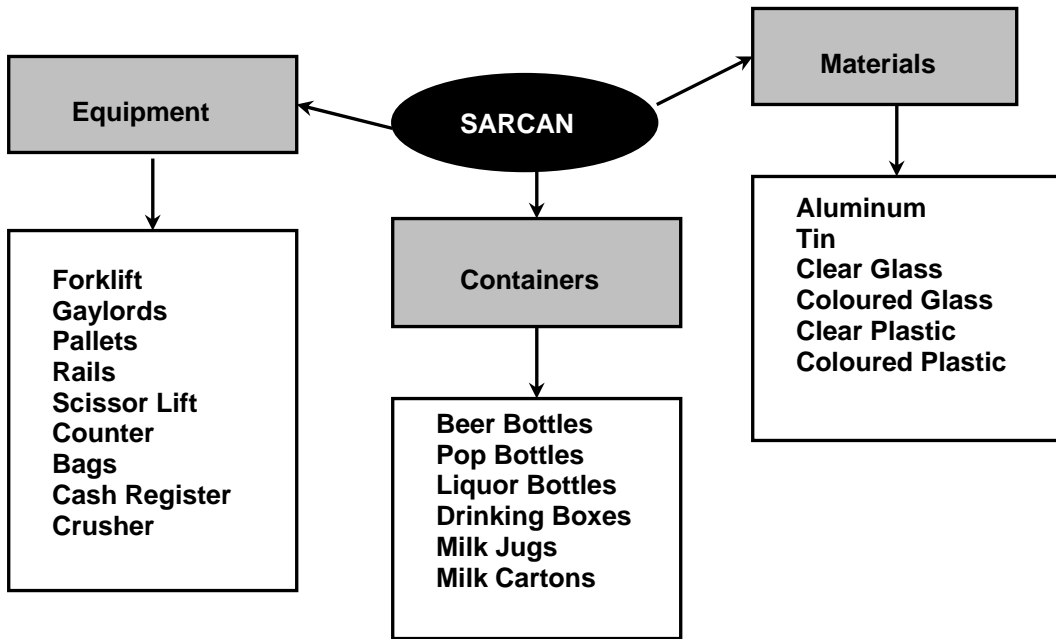
Quoted from:
B. Davey & S.M. Porter, "Comprehension Rating: A Procedure to Assist Poor Comprehenders," in *Journal of Reading*, Vol. 26 (1982), pp. 192-202.

Mapping

Learners may better comprehend a passage of text if the main ideas are represented in pictorial or graphic form, either before or after reading. A visual form is given to thoughts.

Here is an example of a map for a brochure describing the operation of a SARCAN depot:

SARCAN

Equipment

- Forklift
- Gaylords
- Pallets
- Rails
- Scissor Lift
- Counter
- Bags
- Cash Register
- Crusher

Containers

- Beer Bottles
- Pop Bottles
- Liquor Bottles
- Drinking Boxes
- Milk Jugs
- Milk Cartons

Materials

- Aluminum
- Tin
- Clear Glass
- Coloured Glass
- Clear Plastic
- Coloured Plastic

The main idea is placed in a circle in the center, and the main categories surround it. Appropriate lists of vocabulary are placed beneath each category. A long list of terms can be created first through brainstorming, and then mapped.
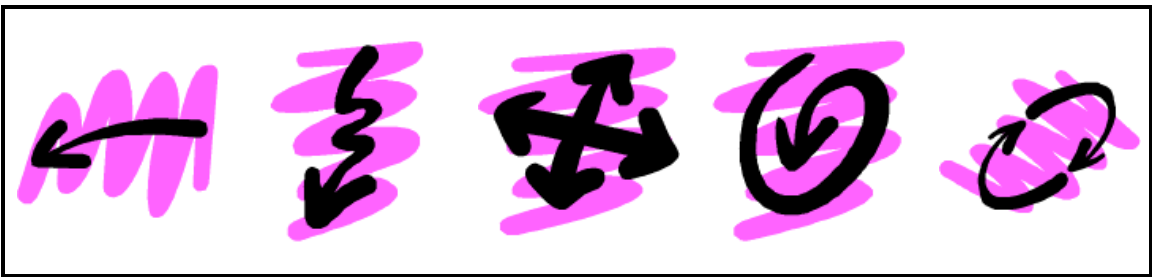
The chart describing the K-W-L technique on a previous page is another good example of displaying information visually.
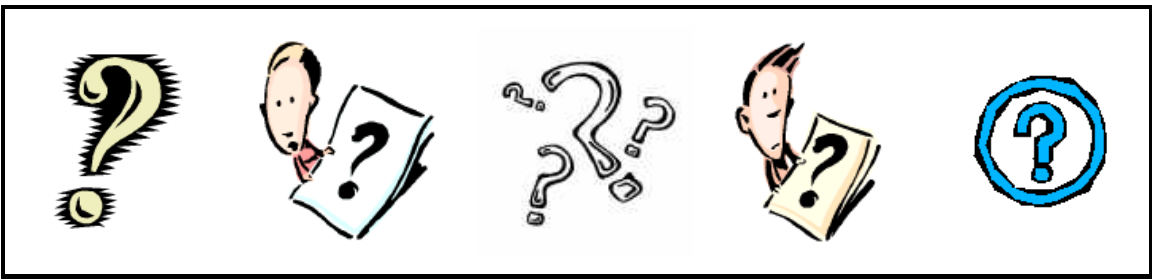
Questioning

Appropriate and detailed questioning can reinforce what is being taught and be an important aid in building comprehension. Here is some advice:

- Open-ended, exploratory questions are more meaningful than questions that merely ask for an affirmative or negative response. For example, ask questions that start with *who*, *what*, *where*, *how*, or *describe*. Yes/no questions may only encourage the learner to guess.

- Ask for concrete information when asking questions.

- Effective questions are brief and use specific language.

- Take some time when giving or asking for information. Some "wait-time" is always helpful – as much as 5 to 10 seconds is not inappropriate.

- Avoid answering questions on behalf of your learner, or completing his or her sentences. Avoid answering your own questions.

- Avoid confusing questions about underlying reasons.

- If necessary, repeat questions more than once.

- If necessary, ask a question in a different way.

- To ensure that the question is understood, you can ask the learner to summarize or repeat the question prior to answering it.

"Reinforcing By Questioning"

② Be careful not to ask questions in a leading way, such that the respondent is guided toward a certain answer.

② Sometimes it is helpful to specifically structure the answer you are expecting. For example, you can ask for three things that are the colour blue that were mentioned in a story.

② Some learners will give an answer that they believe will be most pleasing to the questioner. Encourage learners to respond according to their own thoughts and feelings on a subject.

② Make it clear to the learner when a question can have more than one (or many) answers. This will alleviate fears that the learner may have about giving a "wrong" answer.

② Encourage learners to ask their own questions whenever they do not understand something. Be open to receiving and answering questions in a patient manner.

② Be prepared with questions ahead of time. If you are planning on reading a passage of text together, write down two or three questions to ask beforehand.

② It may be helpful to vary your questioning techniques with learners with lower abilities. This may require longer wait times, providing more clues / cues, or encouraging richer responses through additional questioning.

② For learners with shorter attention spans, it may be helpful to use the learner's name prior to asking the question itself. This "advance warning" may help them focus better on the question once it is asked.

② Always provide feedback on the responses learners provide.

Adapted from:
The Arc of the United States, *A Police Officer's Guide When in Contact with People Who Have Mental Retardation*, Arlington, TX
[http://thearc.org/ada/police.html]
Used with Permission

Hints on Effective Questioning Techniques (From: National Education Association / Illinois Education Association)
[http://www.student-wea.org/misc/question.htm]

Other Advice

💡 **Purpose for Reading**: Comprehension improves if learners have a purpose for reading a passage. They will be more interested, and will be able to relate the information to their own lives. For example, the tutor and learner can work together on reading a safety / usage manual for a tool that the learner will soon use in his workplace. Authentic materials such as medicine bottles, recipes, bus schedules, and television schedules may be more purposeful for learners.

> "I think this is the most important advice. I would argue you should never ask someone to read unless they have a purpose. It actually helps the learner know how to read; that is, what strategy to select. For example, if I say to read this to find out what happened in 1066, you would skim through to find the date and read that sentence. But if I said to read this to tell me the sequence of events, then you would read more carefully and note the different key words like first, second, etc."
>
> **Dr. Christa van Kraayenoord**
> **Director and Senior Lecturer, Schonell Special Education Research Centre**
> **The University of Queensland (Brisbane, Australia)**

💡 **Creating Pictures**: Comprehension can increase if the learner is able to "picture" what he or she is reading. It may be helpful to do this deliberately. Learners can actually draw scenes or characters from a story. Their own descriptions can be written below the pictures.

💡 **Predicting**: It can be helpful to divide a passage of text into logical segments. After reading one segment, the learner can be asked to predict what should come next. Learning to make predictions can help with reading comprehension.

💡 **Variety**: It is important to model and practice a number of comprehension strategies with learners, instead of only one. Some may be more effective for a particular learner than others. Comfort and skill in using comprehension strategies may be a longer-term goal for learners with intellectual / developmental disabilities.

Motivation

Supporting learners' motivation is an especially critical task for tutors of adults with intellectual / developmental disabilities.

Motivation can wane because of:

➡️ **Impatience**: Learners can become impatient with their slower learning progress and become bored with the repetition and reinforcement of teaching.

➡️ **Fear of Failure**: Learners may be fearful of failure, which perhaps stems from previous negative schooling experiences. Avoiding trying may be a safer alternative to possible failure.

➡️ **Dependence**: Learners may not see a reason to develop their skills if parents and caregivers have always assisted them and made decisions for them.

➡️ **Relevance**: Learners may lose motivation if they are unable to relate their literacy learning to their everyday lives. Benefits and usefulness may not be apparent beyond the classroom.

Motivation can be supported through:

Setting Realistic Goals	Focusing on Learner Interests
Making Learning Fun	Making Learning Purposeful
Building in Success	Being Enthusiastic, Committed, and Encouraging.

Discussion

Setting Realistic Goals: Having their own goals to strive toward is important in keeping learners motivated. At the same time, these goals must be realistic and attainable.

Making Learning Fun: Education can seem less like work when fun elements are incorporated. For example, in a class for developmentally challenged learners, a large, soft alphabet block could be tossed to the learner whose turn it was to answer.

Building in Success: It is important that the learner does not become frustrated by lessons that are too difficult. It is also important that they are challenged, so they do not become bored. Learners should be provided with some choices, too.

Focusing on Learner Interests: We all want to learn more about the things we are interested in. If a learner is a fan of NASCAR racing, lessons can be crafted around that theme. A biography of a favourite driver could be read, a fan letter could be written, racing vocabulary could be studied, and so on. As much as possible, learning should be self-directed.

Making Learning Purposeful: Learning should have purpose, usefulness, be related to functional goals, as well as match learner interests. For example, it can be motivating to write a report or autobiography if it may appear in an agency or program newsletter.

Being Enthusiastic, Committed, and Encouraging: The tutor is a role model for the learner, such that their enthusiasm and commitment to the learning partnership can become contagious. Tutors should be liberal with praise and encouragement.

"Enthusiasm + Encouragement"

Adapted from:
Karen B. Moni & Anne Jobling, "LATCH-ON: A Program to Develop Literacy in Young Adults with Down Syndrome," in *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (September 2000), p. 47.

Literacy Moments

At any time during the day, a spontaneous opportunity may arise to do literacy work with an adult with intellectual / developmental disabilities. For example, when walking down the street, the tutor can point out the spelling of a street sign. Otherwise, the learner may ask for assistance with a specific literacy task, such as reading a letter, and teaching can be connected to this.

These "Literacy Moments" can serve as an important reinforcement of more formal literacy instruction with which the learner may be engaged. Or, these opportunities may currently be the only literacy instruction the person is benefiting from. Either way, they can be positive learning experiences.

Disability service providers are engaged in literacy moments all the time, sometimes without even realizing it!

"Residential service providers would be able to supplement the work of the tutor. This wouldn't necessarily happen in a formalized manner but the service provider could give cues and reinforcers during the week.

For instance, if a lesson plan has been about social signs, like ENTRANCE/EXIT, the care provider could intermittently follow up in a natural way, whether during grocery shopping, at a movie or any typical activity."

Lori Riedmueller
Service Coordinator, Pulford Community Living Services (Winnipeg, MB)
April 20, 1993

"There is a need to train operators to look for literacy opportunities. We support this idea because we have been using the strategies listed below and we are finding that they work. We have an 85% success rate of training mentally handicapped individuals to live with minimum support in the community.

Methods we are using:

1. **Food Charts** – which include pictures of main courses, side dishes, vegetables, fruits, snacks and beverages with the word below each picture – to plan menus using sight vocabulary.

2. **Groceries** – lists – using small pictures beside each item so the list can be compared to the menu and food charts.

3. **Picture Recipes** – in simple to follow steps with the words under each picture.

4. **Microwave Chart** – with pictures of food items and time/temp beside each item.

5. **Personal Shopping List** – using picture cards for everyday personal needs with the word for the picture underneath.

6. **Pictorial Cash Sheets** – for recording income/expenses and for planning monthly budgets.

7. **Flash Cards** – to teach Survival Words and Hazardous Products.

8. **Symbols for Laundry** – to teach water temp, use of machine, care of clothing."

Sherri Wallace & Jean Alexander
Program Coordinators
Touchwood Park Association for the Mentally Handicapped (Neepawa, MB)
April 2, 1993

"Embracing Literacy Opportunities"

Some Advice:

○ Tutors should reflect on their everyday interactions with learners, and consider where literacy-building opportunities exist.

○ Adults with intellectual / developmental disabilities benefit from learning in smaller chunks. The "Literacy Moments" approach, therefore, has a place for these learners.

○ When possible, the tutor should incorporate teaching, instead of doing the literacy task on behalf of the learner. The learner's independence should always be reinforced.

○ The tutor should consider which skills the learner would need in order to complete the task on his or her own. Then the tutor can look for opportunities to teach or reinforce those skills.

○ Engaging in "Literacy Moments" with a support staff-person or family member may be welcome reinforcement to learners with intellectual / developmental disabilities who are already engaged in formal, longer-term literacy programs. Other "potential learners" may develop an interest in adult education opportunities through engaging in "Literacy Moments."

"There are different techniques that can be used in teaching new skills. These include modeling, guiding, prompting and shaping.

Modeling is demonstrating the skill or task the teacher wants the student to learn while the student observes.

Guiding entails physically moving the student through the task he or she is to learn. It could mean actually moving the student's hands or entire body to a new station. This is a good technique to use when a student is first learning a new task.

Prompting encourages the correct response from the student using minimal physical assistance. Prompting can be a verbal reminder such as, "What did you forget?" or a physical cue such as pointing to something or in a certain direction. It is a reminder to the student of what is expected. It is not performing the task or providing answers to questions.

Shaping starts with an initial behavior or skill and works towards a terminal, or desired behavior. The steps that are learned are like the desired behavior, but have some differences. The steps are approximate to, or approaching, the skill you want the student to learn. Another name for this is successive approximations. An example of shaping as a method of teaching a new skill is reinforcing a student for putting clothes in a pile, when the desired behavior is to have him or her put clothes in the laundry bin. By reinforcing the student as he or she places the pile closer and closer to the bin in successive attempts, shaping is taking place. The intended outcome is to finally get the student to place the pile of clothes into the bin."

Kathleen Donohue & Patricia O'Haire
The Parent as Teacher: A Practical Guide for Parents of Developmentally Disabled Adults. **Boca Raton, FL: Florida Adult and Comuunity Education Network (ACENET), 1991.**

"Modeling, Guiding, Prompting, and Shaping"

2.3   Choosing Literacy Activities

When selecting a literacy activity to try with a learner with an intellectual / developmental disability, the following criteria should be considered:

- ☑ Learner Needs / Goals
- ☑ Learner Interests
- ☑ Age Appropriate
- ☑ Current Skill Level

- ☑ Setting / Time Required
- ☑ Proven Successful
- ☑ Literacy Skills
- ☑ Learning Styles

Discussion:

Learner Needs / Goals: A learner-centred approach will work best. Activities should focus on teaching skills in keeping with the learner's own learning goals. For example, if the learner would like to improve her banking skills, you can work together on filling out deposit slips and writing cheques.

Learner Interests: Literacy activities should centre on the interests and life experiences of learners. Interest and relevance will keep learners motivated.

Age Appropriate: Whenever a literacy activity is tried, it should be adult-focused. Reading materials should be at lower skill levels, but still be meant for adults. English as a Second Language materials or language experience stories can be used successfully.

Current Skill Level: Literacy activities should mirror the skill level of the learner. The activities must be challenging, yet not too difficult (to prevent boredom and frustration).

"Individual Needs > *Modified Instruction* > *Successful Learning"*

Setting / Time Required: As with all learners, adults with intellectual / developmental disabilities may learn better in certain environments. Some may require quiet, while others respond well to music. Some may prefer a male to a female tutor. Activities should never be too long, as attention can wane. It is best to teach in smaller blocks more often.

Proven Successful: Certain literacy activities have been shown to be promising for this learner population, and are worth trying. We have included such activities in this *Handbook*. Similarly, if a learner responds well to a literacy activity, it should be repeated (perhaps with modifications).

Literacy Skills: Certain literacy skills can be emphasized, depending on the activities that learners and tutors choose. It can be helpful to vary activities, so that different skills are developed.

Learning Styles: All learners have favoured learning styles, and literacy activities can be chosen to emphasize one or more styles. See the next section for more on learning styles.

Literacy Skills
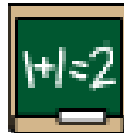
Emergent	Reading	Writing	Numeracy	Listening	Speaking

Learning Styles

Auditory	Verbal	Visual	Tactile

2.4   Learning Styles

People with intellectual / developmental disabilities experience slower development in terms of learning, reasoning, and memory. They often master basic and social skills more slowly, and may require particular supports and resources to participate more fully in literacy instruction.

Like all learners, these adults may learn things (take in information) better by hearing them spoken, seeing them, or repeating them aloud. When working with these learners, it is crucial to consider their different learning styles. Knowing how individuals learn best is valuable information for a literacy tutor, who then can teach in favour of those styles.

You can learn a lot about a learner's preferred learning styles by watching and listening. Your experience with the learner and discussions with the learner can be revealing. You can experiment by teaching a concept focusing on two different styles to see if the learner performs better through one method compared to the other. Formal tests or checklists that are meant to determine the dominant learning styles may be less welcome by these learners, who may have had negative schooling experiences. As such, the results may be less revealing than hoped. Take sufficient time and observe carefully to identify the learners' strengths.

The different senses / learning strengths are briefly explained below:

Auditory

- These activities involve listening skills, or use rhythm or music.
- Information is received best through the ears.
- These learners enjoy oral discussions with their tutors and others. Oral explanations are comprehended the best.

Verbal

- These activities involve speaking, conversation or reading aloud.
- Information is processed best orally.
- These learners may study by repeating things aloud. They may "talk through" the tasks they are performing.

Visual

- These activities involve text, letters and other symbols or use spatial relationships.
- Information is received best with the eyes.
- These learners are good at remembering visual details, and may follow along when someone else is reading aloud. Seeing what is to be learned is best. Written or demonstrated instructions are grasped somewhat more easily. Body language / facial expressions convey significant meaning.

Tactile

- These activities use touch and/or motion.
- Information is best received through touch, physical contact, or body movement.
- These learners prefer hands-on, activity-based learning. They may learn by writing things over and over again. They may also be restless in the class or other "confined" learning environments.

Some general considerations:

➡ Always try to make learning concrete by relating it to familiar events or practical skills. Have the learner do things and handle things. Try exercises which use the hands.

➡ Long explanations, even for the auditory learner, should be avoided, due to shorter attention spans. Frequent repetition and breaking explanations into parts are advisable. Fully utilizing your voice, eyes, and facial expressions can help make meanings and intentions more clear for these learners.

➡ Utilizing computers in your teaching can be effective, as multimedia effects, sounds and images can stimulate the learning. Using a mouse and keyboard allows for a tactile involvement to taking in information.

➡ Modeling (demonstrating tasks step-by-step) can be an effective instructional strategy for learners with intellectual / developmental disabilities, one that can utilize visual and tactile learning.

➡ Because these learners often have shorter attention spans and retention abilities, repetition and reinforcement are crucial. It is therefore advisable to present the same idea in a variety of interesting ways. There is a need to emphasise many intelligences or senses in learning activities.

➡ Sometimes learners with intellectual / developmental disabilities may also have a motor or sensory impairment that can reduce the effectiveness of a particular learning style, such as a hearing impairment. Emphasising other learning styles may compensate somewhat for these difficulties.

"We know where we're going, we know there are a number of roads to get there and we know the student is going to tell us when we find the right road. We only have one challenge left – and that's for the two of us to explore each road."

Shirley Hollingshead
Walkerton & District Literacy Council. ***On the Road Back*** **(Video). Walkerton, ON: Walkerton & District Literacy Council / Saugeen Telecable, 1995.**

2.5   General Advice

This section provides some general advice to tutors assisting adults with intellectual / developmental disabilities. The information comes from several different sources:

➡ a handbook on Reader's Theatre

➡ an online tutorial by a professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Arkansas Tech University,

➡ a fact sheet produced by the National Information Centre for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY),

➡ an "open letter" to parents of children with Down syndrome,

➡ an interview with a literacy instructor,

➡ a workplace literacy guide for employees with intellectual disabilities, and

➡ a guide for parents of developmentally disabled adults.

Here is some "general information regarding the mentally challenged student" from *Reader's Theatre for the Mentally Challenged*:

💡 Some students may have speech impediments. It is difficult to learn phonics if an individual has difficulties pronouncing specific sounds. This may cause the student to learn verbal tasks at a slower rate. Tongue twisters may help with pronunciation and voice projection.

💡 Some students think in a "me" sense of the world. The student may have difficulties comprehending ideas or situations that he / she may not have experienced in his / her life. These students may learn better with concrete rather than abstract ideas. Comprehension is better when an individual can identify with what is being discussed.


READER'S THEATRE
for the
Mentally Challenged

By Cindy Crichton

A Handbook
including Scripts
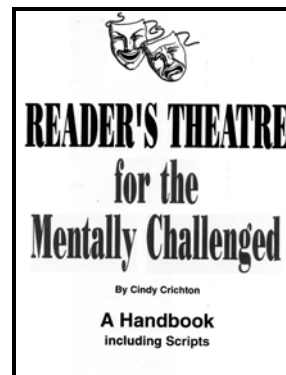
💡 When introducing new materials, some students may require longer times on task. The student may have a short attention span and be easily distracted. It is important to break the task (script) into smaller units or parts for the student. Things like pre-reading, sequencing and new word definitions are strategies to help the student stay on task.

💡 Some students have developed coping methods and / or strategies when reading. This may give the student a 'rigidity' to learning and he / she may resist any change to his / her learning strategies. It is important to use and instruct the student to use the same strategies each time the student is reading. All students require a systematic teaching concept.

💡 Everyone requires built-in successes. Start at a level at which the learner is comfortable, and then work towards advancing his / her skills. This will avoid unnecessary frustrations for both the instructor and the student.

Quoted from:
Cindy Crichton, *Reader's Theatre for the Mentally Challenged.* Olds, AB: Project Read Soon (The Mountain View Society of Alberta), 1997, p. 3.
Reproduced with permission.
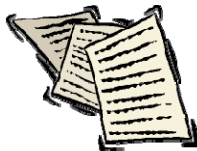
"We can say with certainty that there is a need for continuing education for the developmentally challenged adult. Clients currently being served represent only a small portion of those needing service. Several agencies would like to have this type of education available for their clients. And there are other adults in this largely rural area who are not listed with community living groups and who could benefit from this service."

Catherine Janossy
A Needs Survey & Program Description: Program Delivery for the Developmentally Challenged Adult in Grey, Bruce and The Georgina Triangle. **Walkerton, ON: The Walkerton & District Literacy Council, p. 4.**

Some suggestions on instructing learners with intellectual / developmental disabilities from Dr. Sid Womack of Arkansas Tech University are:

- Keep the learning environment uncomplicated – do not overwhelm the learners with choices.

- Before moving on to something more complicated, ensure that the learner has mastered the present lesson.

- When the learner does something correct, be generous with your praise.

- When correcting the learner, always do so privately.

- Since memory retention can be a problem, test and re-test every day. A learner who may have known something well yesterday, may have forgotten it today.

- Give learners one thing at a time to learn.

- Some topics, such as algebraic formulas, complex sentence structures, complicated pieces of music and involved bookkeeping procedures, are poor candidates for inclusion in an appropriate curriculum.

- To ensure success, avoid giving the learner activities that are not developmentally appropriate for their mental age.

- As for all learners, good lesson design is important when working with learners with intellectual / developmental disabilities. Good lesson design incorporates learning goals for each activity.

- Modelling the behaviour or expected finished product can be helpful.

- Severely limit the amount of input you provide before repeating yourself to the learner, since short lessons are good lessons.

Here is some advice on teaching persons with mental retardation, courtesy of the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY).

It is important to:

- Use concrete materials that are interesting, age-appropriate, and relevant to learners.

- Present information and instructions to learners in small, sequential steps and review each step frequently.

- Provide learners with prompt and consistent feedback.

- Teach these learners, whenever possible, in the same learning environments they would attend if they did not have mental retardation.

- Teach tasks or skills that learners will use frequently in such a way that learners can apply the tasks or skills in settings outside of the learning environment.

- Remember that the tasks many people learn without instruction may need to be structured, or broken down into small steps or segments, with each step being carefully taught.

Adapted from:
General Information about MENTAL RETARDATION. Fact Sheet Number 8 (FS8). Washington, D.C.: National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY), January 2001.
[http://www.nichcy.org/pubs/factshe/fs8.pdf]

The following information is adapted from an "open letter" posted on the website of Mastery Publications, a company based in North Carolina.

Educational Characteristics

Rate of Learning

💡 Learners with intellectual / developmental disabilities will experience a slower rate of learning. They will learn, but the amounts may be less and the pace will be slower. The tutor should be prepared for this.

💡 Learners may learn in spurts and then experience plateaus. The tutor should capitalize on spurts, but avoid losing ground during plateaus (through repetition).

💡 Although repetition is essential, the tutor should vary her teaching to avoid burnout and to prevent the learner from becoming bored.

Language Abilities

💡 Learners with intellectual / developmental disabilities may have poorer language abilities, such that they have difficulty expressing themselves or understanding what others are asking them to do. This requires patience and concentration on the part of the tutor. Instructions must be given very clearly.

Abstractions

💡 Abstractions can be problematic. It may be difficult for these learners to understand what they cannot see, touch, or experience. The tutor should always make learning experiences as real as possible, using manipulatives and concrete, touchable items.

Creativity / Originality

These learners may have weaker abilities when it comes to creativity and originality. They may want to continue doing familiar tasks and may be resistant to change. New ideas may not be thought of independently. The tutor should then present learners with interesting choices.

Incidental Learning

Incidental learning occurs when students learn things that were not necessarily part of a planned curriculum – they may "pick up" things based on others' conversations, through making mistakes, or through observations that they can apply to their own situations. However, this is often an ineffective mode of learning for adults with intellectual / developmental disabilities. In most cases, stressing the "obvious" will be necessary for these learners. Cause and effect in learning situations will need to be explicitly emphasised.

Generalization Skills

Learners with intellectual / developmental disabilities often have difficulty transferring information and making generalizations. Ideas may not be easily transferred between contexts for these learners. It can be difficult for them to adapt existing knowledge so that it applies to new circumstances. The tutor should be aware of these facts, and try to help the learner to develop generalization strategies. The tutor can clearly relate new learning with previous learning, and clearly discuss different contexts or purposes for which the knowledge may apply.

Frustration

These learners may have a lower "tolerance" for frustrations. The tutor should then structure learning tasks that are brief, uncomplicated and only address one new element at a time. Focus on achieving mastery before adding new elements. Review often.

Frustration can be avoided if learning priorities are reasonable.

Advice

- Aim for realistic expectations.

- Always expect enough to encourage progress, but never to frustrate.

- Learning a single skill well is more important than many skills inefficiently.

- Break skills down into smaller steps and focus on one skill at a time until mastery is achieved.

- Review constantly so skills are not forgotten.

- Learners will benefit most from short periods of instruction, usually 15-20 minutes.

- Give learners a change of pace. For example, the tutor can teach something and then give the learner something active to do.

- Learners will pay more attention to things they can do or say. They will work better with concrete, touchable things than with hearing about things they cannot experience first hand.

- Select reading materials with bright pictures.

- Always allow learners to pick reading materials that they are interested in learning or hearing.

Adapted from:
An Open Letter to Parents of Down Syndrome Children. Arden, NC: Mastery Publications, 1999.
[http://www.masterypublications.com/Downs.htm]

The following advice comes from an interview with Bill McCarthy, a literacy instructor working with adults with developmental disabilities at the Gardiner Area Activities Center, located in Maine.

On Goal Setting: "Each student and I set goals together. We have an informal interview in which we sit down and try to discover what goals are important to the student, just what it is that he wants to learn. When we have done this, I draw up a plan (in the form of an IEP, Individualized Education Plan) for achieving those goals. The important part of this process is a careful evaluation of the student; it is imperative to be aware of his primary goals and make those goals the focal point of each lesson."

On Progress: "Some students, naturally, progress more rapidly than others. Others require that extra measure of individual help and encouragement. The important thing is to see some progress in each post-test. Also, we consider the students' attitudes carefully. As you noticed, they are not rocking and pacing; they are cooperating, working in teams, finishing projects they have begun. Their personalities show marked improvement. This is perhaps the most dramatic change of all."

On Discouragement: "As I said before, we devise lessons so that students can progress toward their goals at a rate commensurate with their abilities. Students *are* confronted with an increasing need to make decisions and to accept responsibility. But when an educational limit is met, we don't think in terms of failure. We either try some other way to reach a student's goal or else we counsel and redirect the student, helping him to accept his limitations, if indeed those limits have been met."

💡 **On Participation:** "We do not force students to participate in this program against their will. We encourage regular attendance at the stations' activities, but if on a certain day a student simply won't work, we allow that. We try to find out why he doesn't want to participate, then counsel and reassure him, but we don't force participation in the academic program. The students here are like the rest of us – there may be a problem at home occasionally, or sometimes they just don't feel good. But these people are generally willing to apply themselves and bounce back readily if they have had a day off."

💡 **On Positive Changes:** "The changes in our students are not confined to the intellectual sphere. These people have developed increased self-esteem: they are sociable, cooperative and purposeful."

💡 **On Challenge:** "They should allow an open time frame for accomplishment, challenging students but not pushing them too far too fast."

💡 **On Roles:** "Any literacy instructor needs to be compassionate and understanding, realizing that there are days when he will be called upon to be parent, playmate or friend as well as teacher."

💡 **On Cooperation:** "An instructor must remember at all times that he is part of a larger organization; he should work closely with activity center staff, for example, if that is where his program is being carried out."

💡 **On Equality:** "It is imperative that the instructor remembers that he is dealing with adults, not children. He should never "talk down" to the students, but consider them peers. They *are* peers – often they will be the same age or older than the instructor."

💡 **On Respect:** "I guess the word I'd sum things up with is *respect* – respect for your students and the work you are carrying out together."
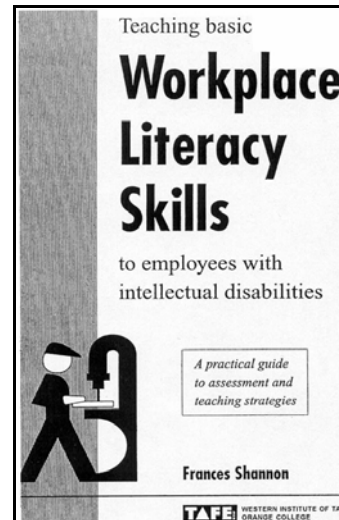

Quoted from:
"Interview with Bill McCarthy: Literacy Instructor," in G. Dulac & William F. McCarthy, *M.S.A.D. 11 Adult Education for the Handicapped.* Gardiner Area School Administrative District MSAD 11. Augusta, ME: Maine State Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities, 1980, pp. 43-49.

The following advice comes from *Teaching Workplace Literacy Skills to Employees with Intellectual Disabilities*. The advice is based on answers to the following two questions:

1. What is the best way to teach workplace language, literacy and numeracy skills to employees with intellectual disabilities?

2. What are the particular considerations when teaching employees with intellectual disabilities?

Teaching basic
Workplace Literacy Skills
to employees with intellectual disabilities

A practical guide to assessment and teaching strategies

Frances Shannon

TAFE WESTERN INSTITUTE OF TAFE ORANGE COLLEGE

💡 Language, literacy and numeracy training should be integrated with other workplace training.

💡 When there is meaning and purpose to a task, learning will take place.

💡 Employees with intellectual disabilities often have difficulty transferring skills from one learning context to another. Tasks should be taught in the context in which they will be performed. Teaching language, literacy and numeracy skills in isolation from the other skills used for a particular task will prove less successful.

💡 People with intellectual disabilities require a systematic approach to the teaching of skills. Learning needs must be continually assessed. Teaching must be planned in steps according to needs.

💡 If a task is broken into steps, it is easier to assess progress toward a task. Additional teaching can be devoted to problem areas.

💡 Once a task is learned, constant practice will be necessary for the person to maintain the skills.

○ In addition to more standard teaching, other comprehension cues can be taught. For example, an employee will recognize lunchtime by a chime sounding as well as the time shown on her watch.

○ Employees will intellectual disabilities, who often have difficulty with print, will benefit from signs that feature symbols or pictorial cues.

○ Teaching employees with intellectual disabilities should be on a one-to-one basis whenever possible.

○ When teaching, the tutor should always keep in mind the particular learning difficulties of employees with intellectual disabilities. Difficulties include memory and the ability to generalize skills learned in one context to another context. This means that review is necessary, and that teaching should be situation-specific.

○ In all cases, teaching will need to be step-by-step with limited aims for each teaching or training session.

○ The pace of teaching needs to be individualized for the learner.

○ Some teaching methods that can be used are demonstration, practice, reinforcement, error correction, and so on.

○ As with all teaching of individuals with intellectual disabilities, assessment and recording of progress needs to be a constant ongoing process and a feature of all teaching sessions.

○ Due to the highly individualized nature of teaching individuals with intellectual disabilities, resources more often than not will need to be made by the tutor.

○ Published resources will need to be used selectively and flexibly, and few are available.

Adapted from:
Frances Shannon. *Teaching Basic Workplace Literacy Skills to Employees with Intellectual Disabilities: A Practical Guide to Assessment and Teaching Strategies.* Orange, New South Wales, Australia: Western Institute of TAFE, Orange College, 1995.

This last set of advice is from *The Parent as Teacher: A Practical Guide for Parents of Developmentally Disabled Adults*. The School Board of Pinellas County, Florida developed this guide.

💡 **Atmosphere**: Successful teaching very much depends on creating a positive atmosphere (physical environment / attitudes / emotions). The learning environment needs to be comfortable, non-threatening and accepting.

💡 **Objectivity**: Every learner has varying abilities and limitations, and these should be viewed objectively. The tutor should set aside any unrealistic hopes, and yet show confidence that the learner will show progress.
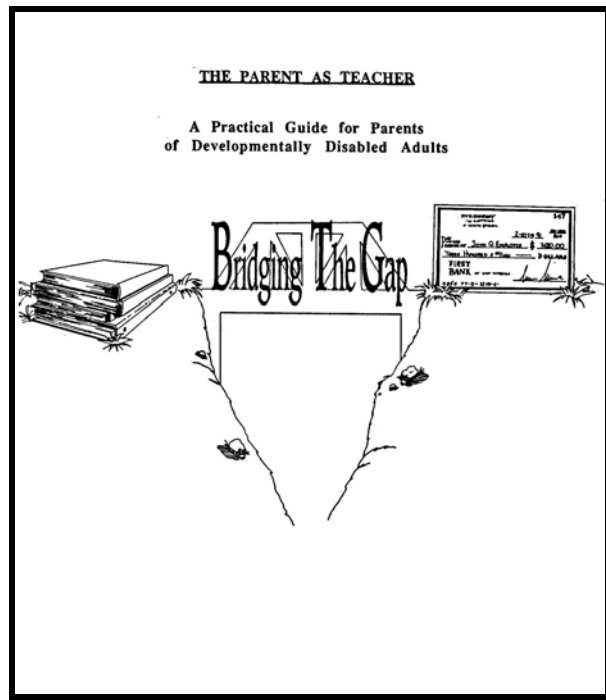

💡 **Attitude**: A positive attitude is important for effective learning. A tutor can easily become frustrated and impatient, especially when a learner is progressing slower than expected or hoped for. Tutors must always remain positive, encouraging, and calm.

💡 **Persevere**: The tutor's patience can be tested as she watches the learner struggle to complete a particular literacy task. The tutor may think it would easier to simply give the answer or to do the task for the learner. However, the learner needs to face challenges if progress and potential are to be reached and independence eventually realized. The learner should not be encouraged to be an underachiever.
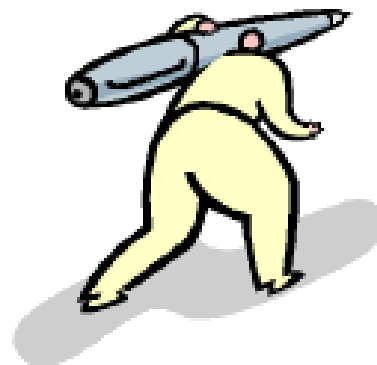
Realism: Real-life learning materials should be used whenever possible. It is relatively more difficult for learners to apply (transfer) learning from a toy model or a paper drawing to real life situations.
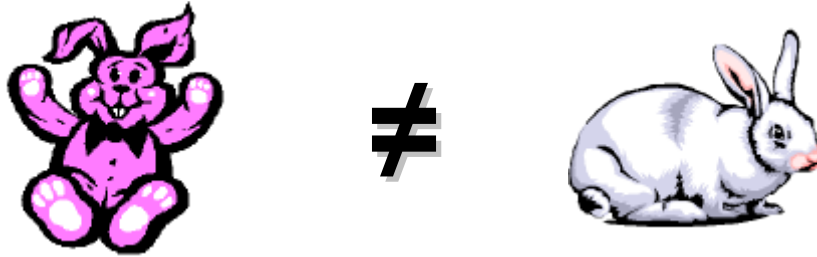
Smaller Steps: Breaking a task down into smaller steps can be helpful. The tutor can concentrate more effectively on teaching smaller tasks, while the learner can learn in smaller steps, leading to a greater sense of achievement and success.

Observation: The tutor must observe the learner's current skill level before deciding at which step of a larger task they must begin teaching. Observation is preferable to hunches, guesses, or simply following the advice of others.

Reinforcement: It is important to positively reinforce a learner's correct responses during teaching. Verbal rewards and praise can encourage continued effort and success. Reinforcement should be immediate if it is to be the most effective. Small, immediate and definite reinforcement is much better than large, distant and uncertain reinforcement. Deliberately praise or compliment some aspect of a learner's work, even small improvements. Praise the learner in front of others.

💡 **Consistency**: A consistent tutor can help the learning process. Learners should always know what is expected of them. Learners should always know what they could expect of the tutor. A tutor that is always serious about a learner's learning and effort will probably find that learner is more attentive and willing to learn. It is essential that the tutor is committed to the learning relationship, as needing to change tutors can be disheartening and disruptive.

💡 **Practice at Home**: Literacy skills can be practised with learners during their daily routine. Lessons can be taught during cooking, shopping, doing repair and maintenance projects and participating in recreation.

💡 **Regularity**: Learning activities should be scheduled at regular times. It is best to teach when you know things will be quiet, unhurried, and free from distractions.

💡 **Limits**: If frustration or weariness becomes evident in the learning process, taking a break or stopping for the day is recommended. Knowing when to stop is important. Starting again at a different time may prove more useful than pressing on. Try to be aware of signs of stress or frustration in the learner's behaviour.

Adapted from:
Kathleen Donohue & Patricia O'Haire. *The Parent as Teacher: A Practical Guide for Parents of Developmentally Disabled Adults.* Boca Raton, FL: Florida Adult and Comuunity Education Network (ACENET), 1991.