A Study Guide for Educators Providing GED Preparation

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        Daryl Mellard
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A collaborative effort of
The University of Kansas
Center for Research on Learning/Division of Adult Studies
and
The Washington Research Institute

Funded by
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This volume may appear brief in length, but appearances can be deceiving. As you examine the materials we believe that you will quickly become aware that this brief document is somewhat like an iceberg. You are only seeing the tip.

You only see the tip of the iceberg if you quickly scan the pages. You will see the immensity of the iceberg if you engage with your colleagues in the tasks that are outlined within. You will learn that these materials are not completed in a few hours or even days, but that the Guide is a reference for continued program examination, evaluation and improvement.

You will see only the tip of the iceberg if you limit yourself to the materials in this Guide. These materials were selected and edited from significantly larger volumes from the respective USDE-sponsored projects. The larger sets of project materials reflect the collaborative efforts of many practitioners in at least ten states who have been challenged by the unique needs that their learners presented in GED preparation, adult education, and literacy programs. On the following page we have listed many of the educators who have contributed to this product. Their contributions may not have been direct in the sense of writing text or developing an activity, but they contributed concepts or tested materials that were critical to researching and demonstrating the utility of this Guide. Hundreds of high school and adult education participants will remain nameless, but likewise contributed to this Guide’s improvement. This work is for their benefit.

Noelle Kurth deserves special recognition for her layout of the Guide’s materials. She was hardly perplexed by the task of integrating materials from three research projects. She was truly professional in getting us to agree on an organizational scheme and common format.

Last, we acknowledge Dr. Helen Thornton, our US Department of Education project officer, for her guidance and encouragement. She contributed ideas that were important in helping us see how the whole (of three related projects) was far greater than just the sum of the separate projects. Again, this notebook only offers a sampling of materials from the larger projects — the tip of the iceberg.

We hope that readers feel comfortable adapting these materials to their situations and their learners’ needs. What we are offering works, but we also acknowledge the user can and should make improvements.


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Introduction

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Introduction

What’s the Issue?

When asked to identify learners who present the most difficulty in teaching, most educators would probably include those with learning disabilities (LD) or severe emotional disturbance (SED) in their response. These learners are also the groups who are most likely to leave high school without a traditional diploma like the one their agemates would earn after four years. Thus, if they are going to complete their secondary education, they will do so through an alternative program. For many students the alternative to high school is to attend an adult education program. Others may attend an alternative program offered through the local school district. In both options, students might earn a diploma by completing the General Educational Development (GED) tests.

While efficient and effective instruction for learners with LD and/or SED in these various programs may present unique challenges to educators, these challenges can be more easily met through systematic program planning and educators’ openness to incorporate proven innovations in their instruction and/or curricular content. This Study Guide provides a sequence of lessons and activities to facilitate the program planning and incorporation of innovations into your instruction.

Program Components

Figure 1 on the following page illustrates the components that comprise the progression of a learner through a typical adult education program. Parts of this Study Guide address each of these components and how they should be modified to best meet the needs of learners with LD or SED, and other learners with or without disabilities. We use the term “adult education” and “adult” because of the focus of relevant federal legislation. In adult education legislation, persons 16 years of age and older are considered “adults.”
The Study Guide incorporates research and products from three federally funded research projects concerning learners with disabilities. However, the Study materials are more streamlined than the materials from these projects, and specifically designed to be used and applied within programs as an internal staff and program development activity. Each of the contributing projects is discussed on the following pages.
The GED Proficiency Attainment Model

The GED Proficiency Attainment Model was a project of the University of Kansas, the Topeka, KS school district, and the Fort Scott Community College, funded by a grant from the USDE Office of Special Education Programs (Grant # H023P30008). The primary product of this project is The Comprehensive Adult Education Planner, a notebook of materials addressing various adult education program components and how they can be modified for more effective instruction of learners with LD and/or SED. The chapters within the planner include:

1. Introduction
2. Implementing the PAM (Proficiency Attainment Model) through a collaborative approach
3. Pre-Enrollment Component
4. Orientation Component
5. Assessment Component
6. Prescription Component
7. Instruction Component
8. Test Taking Component
9. Transition Component

The two participating sites were adult education programs. They provided adult basic and secondary education (GED), life skills, and English as a Second Language curricula. In Kansas, as in other states, GED curriculum is taught in adult education programs and not in high schools.

The GED Success Program

The GED Success Program was a joint project of the Washington Research Institute and the Seattle Public Schools funded by a grant from the USDE Office of Special Education Programs (Grant # H023P30004). This project focused specifically on GED preparation for high school students with learning and behavioral disorders. The primary product of the project was a manual entitled “The GED Efficiency Model.” This manual includes the following sections:
1. Introduction to the GED
2. Philosophy and Guidelines of the GED Efficiency Model
3. GEDTS Approved Accommodations
4. Model Steps: Orientation
   - Assessment
   - Accommodations, Instructional Style
   - Instruction in GED Test Strategies & Behaviors
   - Instruction for each the GED subject tests
   - Full-length Practice Test and Feedback
   - Official GED Testing
   - Debriefing and Feedback

The Accommodations Project

The Accommodations Project was conducted by the University of Kansas and Kansas State University and funded by a grant from the USDE National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (Grant # H133A950008). A primary product of this project is the Accommodating Adults with Disabilities in Adult Education Programs (hereafter referred to as the Accommodations Notebook), which contains information on legal rights and responsibilities of programs and learners with disabilities and procedures and resources for providing effective accommodations. The notebook contains the following sections:

1. Overview
2. Implementation Guide
3. Adult Educator Handbook
4. Learner Handbook
5. Procedural Guide
6. TARGET Self-Advocacy Strategy
7. Compendium

The Purpose of this Guide

Learners with disabilities have a higher likelihood than their non-disabled peers of dropping out of school and not returning to school or acquiring their high school diploma. Estimates are as high as nearly 50% (Glass, 1998). In addition, learners with disabilities are over-represented in the population that is suspended or expelled from school (USDE, 1996). Cooley (1995) reported that students in special education were twice as likely to be suspended or expelled as students without disabilities. Even more significant was that learners with behavior disorders were eleven times more likely to be put out of school. Mellard and Seybert (1996) concluded that these statistics are a consequence of schools’ inadequate problem solving approaches to students’ disruptive behaviors.
Introduction

Since these learners were put out of school or withdrew, the schools are unlikely to encourage their return. Adult education is the best alternative educational program for many of them. Adult education, however, has had limited preparation and even fewer resources to work adequately with these young adults. The adult education experience has even more limited success in helping these young adults than the K-12 system.

The GED projects at the University of Kansas (KU) and the Washington Research Institute (WRI) started with the very specific focus of improving the recruitment, retention, and successful completion of the GED examinations by adult learners with LD or SED. In the early months of the KU project, however, that focus changed. The KU project found that many adult educators offered more than GED preparation in their programs and that the entire adult education program is a better context within which to address the needs of adult learners (16 years of age and older) with disabilities as well as the teaching needs of the adult educators who serve them. Project staff also learned that improvements they were developing and introducing were positive and significant for all learners, not just those with LD or SED. Based on both facts, the direction of the project was expanded. Although the initial purpose of the project was to identify barriers to GED program participation and completion for young adults with disabilities, and to design, implement, and evaluate an intervention model to accommodate these learners’ needs, the staff agreed to work on the barriers in adult education and to design, implement, and evaluate an intervention model in the total adult education context. Similarly, while the GED projects focused on successful attainment of the GED, many of the principles discussed in this manual are also applicable to preparation for competency certificates (e.g., CASAS) or state alternative diplomas.

The Accommodations Project at the University of Kansas and Kansas State University was a research and development project to determine effective accommodations for adult learners with disabilities. Again, while the interventions and procedures developed and described were originally intended for learners with disabilities, adult educators in the project’s national field test repeatedly shared stories of how the principles for working with learners with disabilities actually benefited all learners in their programs.
How to Use this Guide

This Guide which represents a consolidation of selected portions of each of the research projects, is designed to assist educators not only in meeting the needs of learners with disabilities, but of all learners in their programs. The materials present the issues involved in teaching learners with LD and/or SED, discuss assessment and instructional options, provide procedures for effectively accommodating functional needs, and cover information specific to requesting and successfully utilizing testing accommodations on the GED.

The four modules in the Guide address different program components. You may choose to use any one or more of the modules as appropriate for your needs. The Guide can be used independently by an individual staff person or in presentation or group format. Each module includes a set of initial activities, study questions, narrative on various topics, and review questions. Appendix C contains documents that can be duplicated for program use. These documents can be made into overhead transparencies or handouts depending upon how you choose to use the materials.

Completion of this guide is only a first step, however. We suggest that once you have worked through the exercises herein, that you consider obtaining one or more of the products discussed previously for more in depth coverage, or consulting some of the resources listed for additional information on specific topics. For your reference, we have indicated throughout the text from which of the three products the information is drawn. In this way, you can decide which product to consult for additional information on a certain subject. The products are indicated as shown below:

AEP The Comprehensive Adult Education Planner

EFF The GED Efficency Model

ACC The Accommodations Notebook
Program Evaluation and Planning

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Program Evaluation and Planning

Activities

1. Review the listed standards. Are they endorsed by your program?

2. Determine if these or different standards are more important in your program.

3. Consider the learner-focused activities of your program. Do they encompass one or more of the standards?

4. Review your program’s mission statement. Does it incorporate these standards?

Study Questions

Effective program innovations are planned; they do not occur serendipitously. The rationale for or desired outcomes of understanding innovations is an important part of program evaluation and planning. This rationale can be understood as a set of standards, goals, or specifications. Specific questions that this module addresses include:

1. How can our program help to improve the quality of life of learners?

2. How can our program and staff be more sensitive to learners’ characteristics?

3. What instructional model(s) will increase the academic independence of learners by promoting life-long learning?

4. How do we encourage learner retention?

5. How do we increase the number of learners passing the GED test and/or raise their functional level?

Standards

Listed on the following pages are standards that programs might strive to achieve in order to meet the needs of all learners. Included with each standard is a list of indicators to be used for evaluating your program against that standard.
Improves quality of life
Individuals seek education with a variety of goals in mind, but fundamentally to improve their quality of life. Quality of life is a multidimensional concept that includes the idea of individuals becoming more integrated into the community in which they live. The number one standard is thus to improve the learners’ quality of life through activities that enhance learning.

Indicators:
♦ Preparation for employment and promotion
♦ Preparation for higher income and benefits
♦ Preparation for an increased contribution to family
♦ Preparation for improved social relationships (e.g., personal relationships)
♦ Preparation for additional schooling
♦ Preparation for increased community involvement in organizations and services

Is sensitive to learners’ characteristics
Individuals participating in education share the common goal of improved quality of life. These participants, however, are diverse as a group in age, gender, racial, ethnic, cultural, academic, and experiential backgrounds. This standard was designed to acknowledge that diversity, and accommodate it by addressing the unique needs of individuals in GED attainment and improved quality of life.

Indicators:
♦ Diversity of education/GED participants
♦ Learner satisfaction with staff’s sensitivity to learners’ characteristics

Increases academic independence through an instructional model that promotes life-long learning
Employment is viewed by most as a fundamental necessity for improving quality of life. Attaining a GED or high school diploma is widely viewed as a basic requirement for obtaining employment. This standard was especially designed to provide participants with the learning experiences necessary to complete a GED successfully and to pursue additional educational opportunities in occupational or post secondary settings. Is your instructional model learner-oriented and directed toward empowering them to become more self-directed and demonstrate success in subsequent learning situations?
Indicators:
- Preparation for additional schooling
- Preparation for increased achievement in learning
- Learner satisfaction with increased academic independence

**Is responsive to learners’ emotional needs**
For many learners with disabilities entering a formal education program, their past educational success is rarely considered because of difficulties that have negatively influenced how they feel about themselves, their educational opportunities, and their future. This standard explicitly builds on the relationship between improved self-esteem and increased motivation that comes from achievement of learner-directed goals.

**Indicator:**
- Learner satisfaction with program’s responsiveness to learners’ emotional needs
- Learner’s feelings of success

**Encourages learner retention**
Nationally, drop out rates in adult education programs approach 50% (Glass, 1998). It is speculated the rates are even higher for learners with LD and SED. This standard was designed not only to increase the success rate of participants, but also to provide learning opportunities that encourage participants to remain actively engaged throughout their participation.

**Indicators:**
- Learner retention rates
- Learner level of achievement

**Increases number of learners passing GED and/or raising their functional level**
The GED passing scores were set so that 30% of the general high school graduate population would fail the exams. This standard was designed to help more program participants pass the GED exams and do so at a higher level of performance.

**Indicators:**
- Successful completion rates on GED by learners
- Higher level of achievement by learners
Has a strategic instructional approach emphasizing learner group work.

Two elements of this standard are important. The first concerns the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) and the second concerns cooperative learning. First, the SIM was not designed as a remediation tool, but rather to improve participants’ learning abilities or processing. That is, once learners have mastered the principles of strategic learning, they have a tool to help them learn in new situations and with novel tasks. The SIM approach is not appropriate for all learners, however, and alternatives are necessary and are to be implemented. The second element is that learners bring with them a variety of experiences that give them valuable insights about the tasks they work on and complete with their peers. A cooperative learning structure capitalizes on the value of learners’ working together to reach their goals. We generally live and work in a social community. The learning opportunities provide another opportunity for learners to engage in cooperative, positive interactions as they learn.

Indicators:
- Implementation of validated instructional practices (e.g. Cooperative Learning)
- Use of Strategic Instruction Model (SIM)
- Experience in learning and working with others cooperatively

Increases efficiency

An assumption is that efficient use of learner time and effort are critical to their retention and success in the program. By providing intense instruction that includes immediate application to problems learners may confront (including GED sample exams), this standard decreases the amount of time learners devote to activities unrelated to their goals. This makes the program more efficient.

Indicators:
- Increase rate of learner progress
- Efficient use of instructional time
- Learner satisfaction with program changes
Is supported by consumer validation

Programs have multiple consumers including participants and instructors involved in GED preparation and adult education. Other consumers include employers and social service agency representatives who interact with program participants. Because the various consumers are closely involved in improving the participants’ quality of life, this standard will incorporate information from all the various consumers. This effort will reinforce the concept that successful adult education performance has implications for others besides individual participants.

Indicators:
♦ Learner satisfaction
♦ Instructor satisfaction
♦ Other stakeholders’ satisfaction

Essentials

In working with adult education program staffs, the question was frequently raised about the essential features of a program. As a consequence, we developed a rating scale which program staff could use to assess their progress on implementing the standards, to set priorities for staff development activities, and to help set the agenda for discussions in staff meetings. On the following pages is this rating scale. When using this scale, the more 1’s and 2’s that your program indicates, the greater your progress toward implementing the standards. You can use the tallies of these ratings to determine what areas of your program need the most work and those that are functioning well. The review questions following the rating scale will help the program to organize and develop ways to be more effective. Furthermore, these essentials are provided in Appendix C for duplication.
Collaboration: A collaborative approach to implementing these standards requires the continuous involvement of all program staff. Each individual has unique and valuable experiences and expertise to offer and their perspectives are a crucial part of the implementation process.

1. All instructors and staff are involved.
   
   
   
   1
   Strongly Agree
   2
   Agree
   3
   Disagree
   4
   Strongly Disagree

2. All centers and satellite sites are involved.

   1
   Strongly Agree
   2
   Agree
   3
   Disagree
   4
   Strongly Disagree

3. Issues with current policies, practices, and procedures are identified.

   1
   Strongly Agree
   2
   Agree
   3
   Disagree
   4
   Strongly Disagree

4. All staff provided input in identifying areas of needed improvement.

   1
   Strongly Agree
   2
   Agree
   3
   Disagree
   4
   Strongly Disagree

5. Areas of needed improvement are identified and agreed upon.

   1
   Strongly Agree
   2
   Agree
   3
   Disagree
   4
   Strongly Disagree
Pre-Enrollment: Pre-enrollment requires that an applicant decide which service he or she wishes to receive. Staff members discuss goals with the applicant and offer a choice of services (e.g., scheduling for taking the GED exam or enrollment in adult education classes or English as a Second Language (ESL)).

1. Learner inquiries are welcomed.

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2. Script for phone or in-person inquiries is used.

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3. Information packets of descriptive materials are handed out or mailed.

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4. Program options are explained thoroughly.

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5. Inquiries about learners’ special needs are made by staff.

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6. Next activity is scheduled (e.g. orientation, GED exam, GED practice test, or placement

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7. Learner’s goals and motivations are identified.

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**Orientation:** At this point instructional staff formally welcome learners to the program. Staff become familiar with the learner’s needs and interests, encourage completion of assessments and consequently develop a good working relationship.

1. Orientation is scheduled regularly as a group activity.

   Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

2. Learners are asked to self-identify any disabilities.

   Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

3. Instructional options are thoroughly described.

   Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

4. Learners develop options to address problems that might arise (e.g. child care, transportation, illness, and weather).

   Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

5. Enrollment materials are completed.

   Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree

6. If asked, the learners would comment that they felt like the staff truly cared about their well-being and encouraged their continued participation.

   Strongly Agree   Agree   Disagree   Strongly Disagree
**Assessment:** Assessment provides learners and staff with information that will efficiently and accurately place learners in the correct difficulty level of curricular materials. This necessary information is gathered through assessing the learner’s skills and subsequent placement occurs after the results have been discussed and interpreted with the learner.

1. Placement testing options are described to the learner(s).

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2. Learners’ accommodations are identified and provided.

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3. Learner completes appropriate placement test.

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4. Assessment results are explained to learners individually in a confidential setting and kept in a secure location.

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5. Copy of assessment results is given to the learner.

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6. Assessment results are linked to choice of curricular materials, educational goals and instructional options.

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**Prescription:** Prescription is dependent upon the results of the assessment process. Instructor and learner review the assessment results and identify an instructional plan for the learner’s future. Also at this point, identifying an appropriate plan may require obtaining other educational or disability-related records.

1. Learning abilities and interests are identified.

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2. Learners are asked to self-identify any disability affecting participation.

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3. Release of information forms are completed for relevant educational records.

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4. Instructional options are described again and selected.

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5. Steps are initiated to identify and select appropriate access and instructional accommodations to meet learner’s self-identified goals.

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6. Progress reviews are scheduled and conducted on a regular basis.

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7. The learner understands and values all goals, accommodations, instructional options and class schedules which she/he has helped to set along with his or her rights and responsibilities.

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**Instruction:** The instructional process provides the learner with appropriate instruction consistent with the goals identified during prescription. Staff provides instructional options that are appropriate to help accomplish specified goals and monitor the learner’s progress toward final outcomes.

1. Alternative instructional options are offered.

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2. Learners participate in a combination of individual, dyad, small, or large group instruction, as appropriate.

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3. Independent work (e.g. worksheets, computer drills, workbooks) is used as a supplement or skill reinforcement.

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4. Routine progress testing is conducted at fixed intervals.

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5. Learning strategy classes are offered.

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6. Instruction is provided in GED related activities.

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**Test-Taking:** Instructional staff must familiarize the learner with the GED or other exam and discuss the best time to take the exam. Learners need to be guided through the administrative procedures for taking an exam and later, to the appropriate steps after taking an exam.

1. Test-taking strategies are offered as curricular content.


2. Learners are fully informed about the process of test-taking, including the implications of test outcomes.


3. Staff consults with learners about testing preparation and requirements.


4. Environment and atmosphere are appropriate for successful testing.


5. Appropriate accommodations are available for persons with disabilities.


6. Exams are administered according to standardization directions.

**Transition:** The transition process prepares the learner for life outside the program, or, in some instances, to go back through the program with new goals. Instructors must meet with learners to review what has been accomplished, what should be addressed next and formulate an action plan.

1. The staff reviews with learners their overall participation and success in the program.

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2. Learners identify and record goals for work, personal life, community, and education.

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3. A community resource directory is available for learners.

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4. Individual transition planning meetings are held.

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5. Follow-up contacts are attempted with learners who have exited the program.

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Essentials Review

To help focus collaboration and implementation efforts, review the essentials component items which need the most immediate attention and are most important for your program.

A. List those 3 to 5 items below.

B. Ask yourself what needs to happen to implement an effective change for each indicated item. In this process consider how you have managed to be successful in meeting the other component items.

1. What items are most important and need immediate attention?
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 
   d. 
   e. 

2. What needs to happen to make the changes? and who will assume responsibility?
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 
   d. 
   e. 

Additional Resources

For more information about program standards and essentials, see the Comprehensive Adult Education Planner, Introduction and Implementation sections.
A Study Guide for Educators Providing GED Preparation
A collaborative effort of
The University of Kansas
Center for Research on Learning/Division of Adult Studies
and
The Washington Research Institute

Assessment and Prescription

Funded by
The U.S. Department of Education
Office of Special Education Programs
Assessment and Prescription
Activities

1. Identify what processes your program currently utilizes to identify learners with disabilities.
2. Determine if your program has any procedures in place for identifying and providing accommodations.
3. Review any processes by which your program makes learners aware of their legal rights and responsibilities.
4. Identify community resources you presently utilize in diagnosing or confirming a disability and in providing accommodations.

Study Questions

1. How are LD and SED defined and identified?
2. What specific challenges do disabilities pose for learners in the program?
3. How can we determine if a learner has a disability?
4. What are the legal rights and responsibilities of the program and the learner?
5. What is an accommodation?
6. Which accommodations are appropriate for a particular functional need?
7. What resources can we utilize in determining disabilities and accommodations?

Definitions of SED and LD

Disabilities are defined in research, policy, and practice. Sometimes the same definition is even used in all three areas. In this section we provide definitions and characteristics of learning disabilities (LD) and behavior disorders (BD) or severe emotional disturbance (SED).

Educators might see other characteristics of LD, BD or SED that are not included in this review. We have included those characteristics that are most relevant in an educational setting.
In addition to using these conceptual descriptions of SED and LD, identification of a disability is also based on assessment results. The extensive assessment process that is part of the evaluation and decision making is not included because of the technical nature of that material and the variations in that process within each state.

**Identification of Learners with a Severe Emotional Disturbance.** Based on federal legislation, SED is defined as: A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree, which adversely affects educational performance:

- a) an inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors;
- b) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peer and teachers;
- c) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstance;
- d) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or
- e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

The term includes persons who have schizophrenia. The term does not include persons who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have a serious emotional disturbance (IDEA, 1997).

**Assumptions and Model of an SED.** Assumptions underlying SED include the following.

This disability:

1. Is understood as a disorder that responds to interventions.
2. Is addressed by intense interventions which have a positive, cumulative impact.
3. Is best addressed through modifications in the environment that support positive interactions and successful academic performance.
4. Is distinct from other disabilities; can be concurrent with other disabilities.
5. Is not directly manifested in specific academic difficulties; academic difficulties are a secondary manifestation.
Understanding Learners with Severe Emotional Disturbance. Once learners with a severe emotional disturbance are identified, a next step for educators is to find ways to accommodate their disability educationally. Many myths exist about the nature of mental illness and SED. The following myths and realities section dissolves some of these myths in order for you to better understand your learners with SED (Unger, 1996). This section, along with SED Assumptions can be used to better inform staff of SED and is provided for duplication in Appendix C. Possible challenges faced by learners with SED are included on page 40. These challenges should be taken into careful consideration and accommodations strategies addressing these challenges should be used as well. (See instructional accommodations section on page 51).

**MYTHS AND REALITIES**

**MYTH:** People with mental illness are dangerous.  
**REALITY:** They do not commit more crimes than the general population. They are more likely to be victims of crime.

**MYTH:** Mental illness is a chronic, life-long disease.  
**REALITY:** Prognosis for schizophrenia is 50 to 70 percent recovery. New medications make a normal life possible.

**MYTH:** People with mental illness returning to school will disrupt the learning environment.  
**REALITY:** They are not more disruptive than other students.

**MYTH:** Going to school is too stressful for people with mental illness.  
**REALITY:** With new medication, symptom and stress management, and accommodations, they can be successful in school.

**MYTH:** People with mental illness can only work in entry level positions.  
**REALITY:** They can hold the same jobs as anyone. Accommodations may be necessary.

**MYTH:** People with mental illness cannot learn.  
**REALITY:** Although they may have some learning problems, with accommodations they can reach their educational goals.
Identification of Students with a Learning Disability. Many alternative definitions and models exist regarding LD. The following concepts were central to our understanding and developing interventions.

1. Students identified as having a learning disability have been presented with age/ability-appropriate learning experiences and have had great difficulty in learning.
2. A significant discrepancy may be presumed to exist between aptitude and achievement.
3. An evaluation shows (1) and (2) are not primarily effects of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.
4. Educationally relevant medical findings have been evaluated.
5. Students have a learning disability that cannot be addressed properly without special education or related services.

Assumptions and a Model Of LD. Assumptions underlying the LD condition include the following.

This disability:

1. Reflects a deficit in how individuals process or express information.
2. Has debilitating, lifelong consequences.
3. Begins to appear during the developmental period; is not acquired like a brain injury; may be inherited, though it does show a higher frequency in males.
4. Is not cured. Compensatory strategies and accommodations can be provided, which have variable results.
5. Is not mental retardation; individuals have average or above average IQ.
6. Is an internal disability or dysfunction; is not based on external factors (e.g., interrupted schooling, value differences, and inappropriate instruction), though external factors may contribute in many ways.
7. Is a specific disability, but heterogeneous; it may affect reading, math, oral and written expression, listening comprehension, and social comprehension.
**Understanding Learners with a Learning Disability.** Since educators work with individuals who are past their public school experience, additional information on LD in adults may be helpful. This information may be found in the work of the Kansas Coalition on Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities (formerly known as the Kansas Governor’s Task Force on Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities).

Coalition members examined a number of alternative definitions of the LD condition and developed a definition that could be supported by the many agencies represented on the task force. The text that follows is essentially the same that was provided in the “Report on Definitional Issues in Learning Disabilities” that guided the coalition’s discussion. The following definition was accepted by members at the December 9, 1994 meeting.

**Working Definition of a Specific Learning Disability**

* A specific learning disability is a chronic disorder in the primary information processing system involved in perceiving, understanding, and/or using concepts through verbal (spoken or written language) or nonverbal means. This disorder manifests itself across the life span in a significant difference between a person’s abilities and performance in one or more of the following areas: listening, speaking, word recognition, reading comprehension, writing, math calculation, and math reasoning. Throughout a person’s life the condition can affect self-esteem, educational, vocational, or social competence, and/or daily living activities.

Sometimes definitions can be more confusing than helpful. Certainly in the history of learning disabilities, many definitions have been offered by many agencies and groups. Task force members on the assessment committee met and discussed the various concepts used to describe the LD condition from their perspectives. The following summary reflects an effort to help explain this definition and reflect the varying perspectives. This explanation was considered important as research, training, and dissemination activities occur. Terms from the definition appear below in quotation marks and bold type.
♦ “Specific learning disability.” This term implies that the disability has very defined characteristics. A characteristic may be limited to narrow manifestations in selected areas of daily living such as recognizing words, judging distances, estimating times, maintaining social relationships, and attending to tasks.

♦ “Chronic disorder.” This disabling condition persists across time regardless of the interventions. Persons do not outgrow this disability nor are persons “cured” of the disability. Persons may receive instruction and accommodations that help alleviate the disability, but the benefits are variable, i.e., multiple factors influence the success of interventions.

♦ “Primary information processing system involved in perceiving, understanding, and/or using concepts.” The intent is to indicate that the disorder is intrinsic to an individual, not caused by external factors such as postnatal head injury, illness, or insults to the information processing system. The individual’s learning disability is in how the individual works with information. The disorder may be in one or more areas involved in the acquisition, manipulation, and expression of information. Another important factor is to indicate that the disorder does not necessarily have central nervous system, neurological, or other medical manifestations.

The disability may occur concomitantly with other disabling conditions, but is not the direct result of those conditions or influences. For example, persons with sensory impairments, emotional disturbances, drug and/or alcohol related disorders or other developmental disabilities may also demonstrate a learning disability, but those other influences were not the primary cause of the disability. A variety of assessment information is needed to differentiate the cause of a person’s learning and performance difficulties. In some instances, the differential diagnosis is not necessary (e.g., another disability has been previously identified).
“Through verbal and nonverbal means.” The committee wants to emphasize that a person’s processing of information is multifaceted, not just in an oral or written form. The information also includes the person’s interpretation of another’s behavior, appropriate responses, and social interactions.

“Across the life span.” This disorder manifests itself in the many environments in which persons must function. The disorder is generally developmental and not an “acquired” disability. The disability is not a result of poor child rearing practices, inappropriate or limited educational opportunities, cultural differences, physical accidents, or acquired medical conditions. Persons with this disability behave differently when they are in environments that require functioning that confronts the specific LD characteristics. The possibility exists that persons with a learning disability may not be aware of the condition until an environment (e.g., school, work, or social settings) requires specific processing.

“Significant difference between a person’s abilities and performance.” This disorder manifests itself by the unexpected variation in the quality of a person’s performances. In some areas, the persons show performance or achievement that is consistent with expectations and yet in other, specific areas of major life activities, the performance indicates a serious, severe deficiency. While some persons may be affected in only one area of life activities, other persons may experience such serious impairment that they are disabled in several major life activities affecting multiple tasks in varied environments. Equally important is recognizing that this disabling condition occurs even among those persons with the highest assessed ability.
♦ “Areas: listening, speaking, word recognition, reading comprehension, writing, math calculation, and math reasoning.” This label encompasses a broad range of disorders. The information processing constructs are generally unfamiliar, but most persons are familiar with the range of areas listed above. This list is important to understanding how the disorder is manifested in daily tasks. These areas are the targets for assessment and one or more will be identified as the specific manifestation of the disability. That is, persons will be diagnosed as having a disability in one or more of the areas listed above.

♦ “Can affect self-esteem, educational, vocational, social competence, and/or daily living conditions.” Just as a rock tossed into a pool of water produces ripples, a learning disability has ripple effects as well. This disorder is so devastating because the effects may be experienced in many areas and roles. This experience varies with individuals. The disability has a documented impact in such areas as persons’ self-esteem, educational, vocational, and employment performance and completion of activities of daily living. Knowing the degree to which the disability permeates a person’s quality of life and activities is critical to planning interventions and potential for success.

Disabilities and Possible Challenges in the Learning Environment

It is unrealistic—and unnecessary—to believe an educator can or should be an “expert” in all aspects of a disability in order to provide a learner the best academic environment. The focus instead should be on “essential classroom functions”—necessary tasks and interactions the learner will encounter in your setting that must be negotiated to be successful.
Disability and assessment issues must be discussed openly with the learner. Educators should feel a strong imperative to complete this task. The learner’s constellation of strengths and challenges will be unique; no two learners with the same disability will face the classroom in the same way. The ADA Handbook warns: “public entities are required to ensure that their actions are based on facts applicable to individuals and not on presumptions as to what a class of individuals with disabilities can or cannot do” (EEOC, 1991).

Educators need to keep in mind that other disabilities can mimic LD, and should be considered as possibilities when working with a learner so that they can be appropriately addressed. Examples of other disabilities with some characteristics that may be confused with learning disabilities include: undiagnosed vision problems, medication side effects, chronic illness, history of substance abuse, stroke, or head injury, etc. Furthermore, a learner with LD or SED may also have additional disabilities, not related to their LD or SED, that may necessitate other accommodations.

The following lists are provided to give examples of education related challenges learners with disabilities may face in the classroom setting. The issues addressed coincide with the questions on the Learner Questionnaire for Identifying Functional Needs (pp. 43-45 and available in Appendix C) so you can target the issues a learner may be confronting in your setting.

**Vision Loss**

- Reading regular size print (or reading any print at all if one has little or no vision)
- Reading without good reading light
- Seeing detail (such as print) without good contrast
- Following a line of print without losing one’s place or finding the next line
- Reading so slowly that context is lost
- Writing legibly, especially with standard pens or pencils (or writing at all if one has little or no vision)
- Dealing with glare (often much more sensitive than those without vision loss)
- Moving around the classroom without bumping into objects or tripping over cords, etc. that are of low contrast
Hearing Loss

- Hearing directions, explanations, etc. given by the educator
- Hearing questions, comments, etc. offered by other learners
- Hearing only part of what is going on; misunderstanding what is said
- Dealing with ambient noise in the classroom
- Communicating wants and needs verbally (depending on the extent and onset of the hearing loss)
- Speaking more loudly than necessary
- Writing with proper sentence structure, grammar, etc. (depending on the duration and extent of the hearing loss)
- Communicating by telephone
- Frustration, fatigue, or stress due to straining to hear

Mental or Emotional Disabilities

- Concentrating for an extended period of time
- Feeling restless
- Feeling anxious or withdrawn
- Getting started on tasks
- Feeling frustrated
- Dealing with changes in the classroom setting
- Staying on task
- Interacting with others
- Displaying unusual repetitive physical behaviors or verbalization

Recovery from Substance Abuse

- Memory Loss
- Cognitive impairments (which can mimic some of the difficulties experienced by those with learning disabilities)
- Attending class on a fixed schedule—may need flexibility to attend therapy sessions and find alternate transportation (if license has been revoked)
- Difficulty dealing with loosely structured tasks and settings
- Staying on task or working toward goals without frequent and regular reminders or reviews
Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Attending to and staying on task
- Getting started
- Sitting to complete a task or sitting without becoming restless or fidgety
- Dealing with frustration/becoming frustrated easily
- Staying organized
- Getting along with other learners
- Controlling impulsiveness

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
- Attending to and staying on task
- Staying organized
- Getting started and/or staying on task

Learning Disability (LD)
- Strong preference of one or more academic areas over others
- Word recognition
- Reading comprehension
- Listening comprehension
- Math calculations
- Math reasoning tasks
- Understanding written information
- Written expression
- Oral language expression
- Monitoring performance
- Remembering information
- Understanding auditory information (such as verbal directions)
- Attending to only the relevant information
- Getting or staying organized
- Changing from one subject area to the next
- Getting started
- Social perception and interactions
Physical or Orthopedic Disabilities

♦ Walking
♦ Maintaining balance
♦ Sitting for a period of time without experiencing pain, discomfort or fatigue
♦ Writing
♦ Turning pages, lifting, or repositioning books and other materials, etc.
♦ Holding head upright or steady to read and write
♦ Expressing self verbally
♦ Stabilizing papers, books, etc.
♦ Staying on task without becoming fatigued or losing endurance

Head Injury or Stroke

Challenges vary widely, depending upon the location and extent of the injury

♦ Any of the challenges noted under “Physical Orthopedic Disabilities”
♦ Any of the challenges noted under “Vision Loss”
♦ Dealing with verbal language—speaking, understanding, reading, writing
♦ Remembering/retaining information
♦ Dealing with impulsiveness and low frustration tolerance
♦ Attending to task
♦ Getting started
♦ Handling change in the classroom

Systemic Conditions

This includes chronic health problems such as AIDS, asthma, cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, etc.

♦ Dealing with chronic or intermittent pain or discomfort
♦ Dealing with fatigue or low endurance
♦ Concentrating
♦ Attending classes during “flare-ups”
♦ Attending classes during certain times of the day
♦ Dealing with changes in behavior during medication adjustment periods
♦ Nausea, drowsiness, dry mouth or other side effects from medication
These lists should be used only for a general idea of the kinds of challenges that might be experienced. For example, a learner with diabetes may not experience any difficulty in the classroom related to that physical condition and may not ask for or need accommodations. Another learner with diabetes may experience problems dealing with symptoms and demonstrate a need for some adjustments in the classroom setting such as breaks for checking blood sugar level or for eating a snack. Still another learner may have diabetes as well as a learning disability and will, thus, bring a different complement of strengths and challenges to the classroom.

Identifying Functional Needs

The following Learner Questionnaire can be used as a tool for identifying learners’ areas of functional need. (It is also provided in Appendix C for duplication purposes.) Functional needs are needs that learners experience as they are interacting in their daily environments. For some learners, their needs may be evident in their home, employment, or community settings. Other learners’ functional needs may be more specific to their particular educational environment. After these needs are identified, appropriate modifications to the instructional process or other accommodations can be made so that successful completion of classwork, the GED, or similar test is more likely. Accommodations should be made and used throughout the learner’s participation at the adult education program and, if needed, on the GED test itself. This Questionnaire is most useful if done in collaboration with the learner and gives you, the instructor, a better idea of where to begin.
Learner Questionnaire for Identifying Functional Needs

1. Which of the following areas do we need to work on to help you achieve your goals? Please check all that apply.

_____ Reading (Do you read very slowly or have difficulty seeing the words?)

_____ Seeing things around the room, like the blackboard or posters.

_____ Writing/Spelling (Do you have problems like mixing up letters or writing very slowly?)

_____ Doing math (Do you get numbers out of order or get confused by word problems?)

_____ Paying attention (Is it hard for you to listen to the teacher for more than a few minutes?)

_____ Staying on track (Do you get bored or distracted easily?)

_____ Getting used to changes in the classroom (Do you feel uncomfortable about changes in the classroom?)

_____ Remembering (Is it hard to remember new things?)

_____ Getting frustrated (Do you get angry or upset when trying to learn?)

_____ Hearing the teacher (Do you get confused by noise around you, or is it hard for you to hear unless you sit near the person who is talking?)

_____ Talking with the teacher and others (Do you have trouble talking to people or having people understand you?)

_____ Getting my ideas across to the teachers and others

_____ Getting into or around in the classroom (Do you have trouble walking? Do you have trouble seeing things on the floor or in your path?)

_____ Sitting still (Do you have difficulty sitting still in one place for a long time?)
2. Are there any other areas in which you think you need help?

3. Did you have problems in these areas when you were in school?

4. Do you have any records from school or another agency (like an IEP or test information) or any other information from a teacher or a counselor?

5. Are you taking any medications that might affect your school work or attention span, maybe medications that make you drowsy, thirsty or nauseated?
Legal Considerations

Learners with disabilities have certain legal rights as defined by several different pieces of legislation. Thus, the legal definition of disability and the laws that pertain to disability are important areas of knowledge for adult education programs and staff. The following pages explain information on legal considerations in detail and are summarized in resources sheets that are provided for duplication in Appendix C. Furthermore, Appendix B provides contact information for various agencies that can answer your legal questions.

What is a disability?

The legal definition for “disability” differs in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These differences may be attributed, in part, to the circumstances or aims of the legislation.

Within IDEA, the definition of “children with disabilities” includes school-age children with mental retardation, hearing impairments, visual impairments, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities. The aim of this legislation is to provide “free and appropriate public education” to students who need special education and related services.

The term “individual with a disability” in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is aimed at a broader population. However, this law applies only to entities receiving any type of federal funding. In Section 504, an individual with a disability is defined as any person who has a physical or mental impairment which constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment and who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of major life activities.

The definitions of disability contained in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are almost identical. The primary difference between these two pieces of legislation is that the aim of ADA is broader and more far-reaching because it extends non-discrimination and accommodations mandates to private institutions.
Under the ADA, a person is considered disabled who (a) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of the individual; (b) has a record of such impairment; or (c) is regarded as having such an impairment (28 CFR §35.104). Learners with disabilities include persons with conditions, diseases, and infections, such as orthopedic, visual, speech, and hearing impairments; epilepsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis; cancer; heart disease; diabetes; and infection with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Major life activities include the following:

♦ Caring for oneself
♦ Performing manual tasks
♦ Walking
♦ Seeing
♦ Hearing
♦ Speaking
♦ Breathing
♦ Learning
♦ Working

What are the legal rights of adults with disabilities?
If a person with a disability meets the academic and technical standards requisite to admission or participation in an alternative education program (e.g. adult education, GED preparation), the person must be ensured equal educational opportunity. This includes:

♦ Program accessibility
♦ Use of auxiliary aids and services
♦ Academic accommodations

What is an accommodation?
From our perspective, “accommodation” means any change to a classroom environment or task that permits a qualified student with a disability to participate in the classroom process, to perform the essential tasks of the class, or to enjoy benefits and privileges of classroom participation equal to those enjoyed by adult learners without disabilities. An accommodation is a legally mandated change that creates an equitable opportunity for task completion or environmental access. Further, an accommodation is an individually determined adjustment to a functional need. Specific accommodations can range from low-tech rubber pencil grips to high-tech voice recognition software for a computer.
An accommodation may include use of equipment or changes in environments, procedures, or attitudes such as:

- Additional time to complete tasks
- Assistive devices
- Adaptive tools
- Taped, large print, or brailled text
- Readers
- Taped, typed or dictated answers
- Private work areas
- Calculators
- Note takers
- Repeated instructions
- Oral or sign language interpreters
- Modification of existing equipment
- Written instructions
- Changes in desk height
- Changes in lighting

What are a program’s legal responsibilities?

If an instructor has reason to believe a learner has a disability, then that instructor is legally obligated to inform the learner of his or her rights. This can be facilitated by the use of one or both of the following pages (also included in Appendix C).
Resource Sheet: Legal Rights and Responsibilities for Persons with Disabilities

We are committed to meeting the requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. As part of our commitment we want to ensure that your rights and responsibilities are understood and to avoid any discrimination in services to you.

**RIGHTS**

- Some free education services
- Staff meets needs of students with a disability
- No discrimination due to disability
- Use of barrier-free facilities
- Evaluation for appropriate placement
- Academic accommodations, modifications, or auxiliary aids during learning and tests

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Self-identify as having a disability (learner's choice)
- Request services (learner's choice)
- Document your disability through testing and assessment reports by such professionals as a physician, educational counselor, psychologist, special education teachers, or rehab counselor
ACCOMMODATIONS

Some of these accommodations may be appropriate for you

- Class and test settings free from interruptions and distractions
- Extra time for testing and learning
- Aids for students with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills, to be used in the school environment

Examples:

Hearing Disability
- written instructions/information
- oral or sign language interpreters
- Assistive Listening Devices (ALD)

Visual Disability
- readers
- taped text
- large print text
- Braille text
- tape recording, typing or dictating test answers

Manual/Physical Disability
- note-takers
- adapted classroom equipment
- architectural accessibility

Learning Disabilities
- note-takers
- repeated instructions/directions
- quiet room without any auditory or visual distractions
- tape recording or typing answers
- text individually
- extended time
Providing Instructional Accommodations

Once an area of functional need for a learner has been identified, the next step is to make any necessary accommodations for that need. The list below provides several possible accommodations for a variety of functional needs. These lists are by no means exhaustive, and should be used only to get a general idea of the types of accommodations that might be helpful and appropriate. For information on agencies that can help your center with accommodations questions, see Appendix B.

Reading
- Rewrite the student’s text
- Allow extra time
- Provide shorter assignments
- Allow another learner to read material to learner before the learner is required to read
- Use large print
- Use larger type face while word processing
- Encourage learner to use typoscope
- Tape the material and allow reading along
- Decrease the need to read handwritten materials, such as notes or comments
- Provide a talking calculator
- Allow learner to seek out different sources and intensities of light
- Provide speech synthesis for reading on the computer screen

Accessing Information with Low Vision
- Refer for low vision treatment
- Use appropriate magnification devices
- Use large, bolded print texts and materials
- Allow extra time
- Provide typoscope
- Allow learner to sit close to materials that must be viewed
- Provide yellow acetate overlays or other yellow filter (to enhance print contrast)
- Provide an assistant to read and/or tape items
- Have audio-taped presentation of items
- Use of a computer with a larger display
- Color code keys on calculator or keypad
- Use adapted computer capabilities, such as Zoom Text
- Allow learner to seek out different sources and intensities of light
♦ Provide adjustable lamp, lighting
♦ Allow learner to wear brimmed cap to reduce glare
♦ Use of a computer with speech recognition capabilities

**Accessing Information with No Vision**

♦ Use Braille texts
♦ Provide slate and stylus or brailler for Braille writing
♦ Allow learner to read/study at home, where equipment/technology is available that is *not* available in the classroom
♦ Provide an assistant to read and/or tape items
♦ Have audio-taped presentation of items or for recording responses
♦ Use of a computer with speech recognition capabilities
♦ Use print scanner

**Handwriting**

♦ Provide an alphabet chart
♦ Teach alternate methods of holding the writing utensil
♦ Use adaptive devices such as grips, rulers, guides, paper with raised lines, or universal cuff
♦ Use a paper stabilizing device (e.g., Scotch tape)
♦ Allow the learner to type or use word processing
♦ Use computer software such as voice recognition
♦ Use computer hardware such as key guard to prevent multiple simultaneous keystrokes
♦ Experiment with different writing utensils (felt tip pen, pen, pencil, oversized pencil)
♦ Try different writing surfaces such as different types of paper, more than one layer, or sandpaper underneath paper
♦ Use graph paper or wide lined paper
♦ Adapt work surface (e.g. height)
♦ Allow more time; avoid setting time limits
♦ Have shortened work intervals; encourage breaks
♦ Allow scribe or tape-recorder
♦ Require less writing

**Solving Math Problems**

♦ Have smaller tasks
♦ Use manipulatives (e.g. blocks, cuisinaire rods)
♦ Allow extra time
♦ Have shortened work intervals
♦ Use an abacus
♦ Use computer software or calculator
Use graph paper
Use lined paper oriented vertically

**Remembering**
- Teach learner to make cue notes
- Write all assignments in assignment book
- Use step by step checklists for completing tasks
- Demonstrate tasks to be completed in small steps
- List assignments with instructions on the blackboard

**Paying Attention to Oral Directions**
- Give explanations in small, distinct steps
- Provide written copy of oral directions and lectures
- Provide visual cues on chalkboard or overhead
- Have learner repeat directions orally, or use a written clue

**Attention to Task**
- Free work area from distractions; use carrel or quiet corner
- Use sound absorbing surfaces
- Allow more time to complete assignments
- Use a typoscope when reading
- Use different types of input such as audio tapes
- Avoid lengthy periods of desk work
- Specify time frame to complete task; use a timer
- Encourage breaks and physical movement during breaks
- Have learner work with a partner who will cue learner to stay on task
- Use white noise

**Getting Started**
- Break work into smaller amounts
- Allow learner to decide what task to do first, second, third
- Help learner set time goals for each task
- Help learner develop a checklist for each step of the task
- Assign peer coaches
- Use a timer
Staying on Track
- Provide specified time frame for task completion
- Provide checklists for assignments
- Use carrel, earplugs
- Use earphones (if music decreases distractibility)
- Use a typoscope if learner is distractible while reading

Staying Organized
- Use mnemonics
- Use a notebook to keep track of materials and assignments
- Use color code or visual cue when correcting learners’ papers
- Keep materials in file folder
- Work on only one subject at a time
- Provide a checklist of assignments
- Use a backpack or briefcase to keep things together
- Use a computer to track materials and assignments

Dealing with Change
- Help learner know what to expect, outline day’s plan
- Post daily routine, discuss changes as soon as possible
- Allow learner adequate time to acclimate to new areas, new staff, new learners
- Provide clear, predictable break between two activities
- Allow learner to bring support person to class when difficult changes are anticipated

Frustration
- Have shortened work intervals
- Allow more time for tasks
- Set up break times; allow physical movement during breaks
- Use rocking chair for calming effect
- Use soft, relaxing music (if it is not distracting)
- Use study carrel to decrease distraction
- Allow learner to set up own schedule

Accessing Information with Impaired Hearing
- Provide written copy of oral directions and lectures
- Use a microphone/amplifier combination
- Provide visual cues (such as flashing lights for timed tasks)
- Allow close placement in rooms
Stand directly in front of learner
Provide an interpreter
Use compressed speech
 Eliminate background noise

Accessing Information with No Hearing
♦ Provide written copy of oral directions and lectures
♦ Use signing, lip reading, or an interpreter
♦ Provide visual cues on chalkboard or overhead
♦ Have group discussions in a semicircle so hearing impaired can see everyone
♦ Stand directly in front of the learner who is lip reading

Accessing Facilities with Low or No Vision
♦ Teach layout of the classroom; provide Braille maps of facilities
♦ Enhance visibility of small objects with brightly colored tape
♦ Keep room arrangement constant, unless change is required for better access
♦ Enhance contrast of desk edges and other protruding objects with colored tape
♦ Store cords and other hindrances away from traveled areas

Expressing Self Verbally
♦ Accept alternative forms of information sharing (demonstrations, taped instead of oral report, debates)
♦ Give extra response time
♦ Use computer synthesized speech
♦ Communication board
♦ Use signing or an interpreter
♦ Accept responses in demonstration or written format
♦ Organizational aids (i.e., cue cards)
♦ Allow learner to use a study partner

Accessing Facilities in a Wheelchair
♦ Adjust computer table heights
♦ Change door and aisle widths
♦ Store cords and other hindrances away from traveled areas
Sitting Tolerance: Sitting Increases Agitation and Distraction From Task
- Use fidget objects (paper clips, small balls) to relieve tension
- Allow food in classroom
- Have learner chew gum, licorice, lollipops
- Encourage learner to wear comfortable clothes
- Use different kinds of chairs (beanbag, rocking, therapy ball)
- Have learner sit close to the teacher, far from the window, in a study carrel, or near a quiet corner
- Lower lights, adjust room temperature
- Encourage breaks; encourage physical movement during breaks

Sitting Tolerance: Sitting Causes Pain or Fatigue
- Allow student to stand up or lie down whenever necessary
- Allow extra time to complete assignments
- Use lumbar support chair, footstool
- If student is unable to maintain comfort in class, allow work at home, checking in by phone, or weekly/biweekly at center
- Encourage learner to change positions every 10-15 minutes to prevent pain and fatigue

Review

1. What are 3 characteristics of learners with LD?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

2. What are 3 characteristics of learners with SED?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
3. Identify 3 categories of disabilities and two of
the challenges they might present in the learning
environment.

Disability ____________________
Challenges ____________________

Disability ____________________
Challenges ____________________

Disability ____________________
Challenges ____________________

4. Which three federal laws pertain to learners with
disabilities?

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________

5. What are some accommodations your program is
currently providing? Are there others that you could
easily implement?

___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________

**Additional Resources**

For more information about LD and SED, see the *Comprehensive Adult Education Planner, Introduction, Assessment Component* and *Prescription Component*.

For more information about identifying functional needs, disability-related challenges, and determining and providing accommodations, see the *Accommodations Notebook, Procedural Guide*.

For more information about individual and programmatic legal rights and responsibilities, see the *Accommodations Notebook, Adult Educator Handbook*. 
Community Resources for Confirming Learning Disabilities
Specific learning disabilities occur more often than you might think. They make reading, writing, and arithmetic very difficult for some people. For other people, a learning disability makes communication and comprehension very difficult. A number of people in most communities can help with learning disabilities. They can help with testing for learning disabilities and finding services.

Who can help?

1. For the person under the age of 22 and who did not complete high school, the school district provides free testing if a disability is suspected. Prepare to explain why a disability is suspected.

2. Check with the local office of vocational rehabilitation. In the phone book, the white pages listing would likely be “Kansas, State of — Vocational Rehabilitation Services.” If guidelines are met, testing is free.

3. A psychologist working for the school district may help. Fees for such an evaluation are usually very reasonable. The school district staff has names of local school psychologists.

4. The community mental health agency would include staff who complete testing for learning disabilities.

5. If a college or university is nearby, training programs in areas such as school psychology, clinical psychology, and counseling psychology have students who need to practice testing under supervision of a faculty member.

6. Some employers have services to assist employees with testing for disabilities.

7. Some communities have psychologists in private practice who might complete testing for learning disabilities.

8. If the local or regional hospital provides mental health services, staff members could complete the testing.

9. Several organizations may be able to help locate assessment services. They include the Learning Disabilities Association of America or the Orton Dyslexia Society. Check for a local chapter.
Instruction

A Study Guide for Educators Providing GED Preparation
A collaborative effort of
The University of Kansas
Center for Research on Learning/Division of Adult Studies
and
The Washington Research Institute

Funded by
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Instruction

Activities

1. List the instructional practices you currently use for learners in your program.

2. Review the various types of curricula that you provide.

Study Questions

1. Which instructional practices are effective for learners with LD?

2. Which instructional practices are effective for learners with SED?

3. How can we help learners with SED to manage their anxiety?

Teaching Adults with Learning Disabilities

Most teaching practices in use in classrooms and learning center settings are used because the teachers (a) know how to do them and (b) believe they are effective with particular learners. Most of these practices were learned during teacher education, passed on by other educators, recommended in a staff development or curriculum guide, or developed by the educators themselves. Researchers report that as much as 80% of teaching materials and practices in use with students with LD have not been researched to assess their effectiveness (Scanlon & Mellard, in press).

The practices described in this section do have a research basis. They are practices that have been studied and proven effective for teaching individuals with learning disabilities. Because a very limited amount of research has been done on teaching for adults, some of the practices included have been researched with adolescents or children only.
The fact that these practices have been researched in some form to document their effectiveness should give you confidence. However, the context of teaching is never static; what worked in one situation does not always work as well in another situation. Thus, these practices have high potential to be effective but they must be carried out in ways that are appropriate to the special teaching situations in which you find yourself.

Many educators claim that the best practices for teaching adults with learning disabilities may also be the best practices for teaching other adults with limited literacy skills. While research has not been conducted to investigate this claim in all areas of teaching, literacy providers may find the methods discussed helpful for use with other learners. Learners without disabilities, however, may sometimes find the pace of these practices too slow and may actually be confounded by the “breaking down” of information into smaller pieces, which is an appropriate practice for those with LD.

Regardless of whether or not someone has a learning disability, all learners have preferred ways of learning. Good instruction takes into account the strengths of each learner and how the learner learns best. Good instruction has as its goal the strengthening of a learner’s weaker skills as well.

Thus, what is unique about an adult with learning disabilities, and the adult’s strengths and weaknesses should be taken into account during instruction.

Despite the fact that every individual’s learning disability is unique, certain principles of instruction and practices are appropriate for almost anyone with a learning disability. These instructional principles and practices have been designed and adapted to be used with a broad audience of adults with learning disabilities.
Principles of Effective Instruction for Adults with LD

The following are effective instructional practices that take into account the special learning needs of adults with LD. Combining these with the principles of andragogy should result in teaching that is appropriate for adults with LD (and most other adult learners).

Set realistic learning goals.

Individuals with LD often have unclear or unrealistic goals for learning. Therefore, they don’t always appreciate the incremental goals that are involved in reaching larger goals. For example, they may not understand what intermediate goals contribute to the general goal of “writing well enough to pass the GED exam.”

Goal setting begins with identifying what the learner wants to learn and what the learner needs to learn. The need part is determined by goals related to skills and information that must be learned in the process of accomplishing goals. The instructor and learner should both be clear on what the goals are and be mutually committed to meeting them.

Plan for success.

Some learners with LD have long histories of struggle and failure. If learning is a series of successes instead of a constant struggle, learners are far more likely to believe in themselves and persevere. Also, learners who don’t stay in a program very long will be leaving with some skills having been acquired even if an overall goal remains unmet. Make an assessment of how the individual learner may best learn needed skills. Then, having determined incremental skills that can be easily learned, identify materials and teaching activities that will result in quick successes.

Be sure that the learners are aware of the success that they are achieving and that they attribute it to themselves and their efforts (many learners with LD attribute failure to themselves but success to fate).
Break lessons and tasks into small steps.

Many learners with LD have difficulty processing large amounts and particular kinds of information such as complex concepts, multi-step procedures and so on. Small amounts of information are more readily mastered. A critical role for the instructor is to help the learner make connections between and among small units of information. Also, because success is essential to sustain participation by learners with LD, small steps that are more readily accomplished will assist you in keeping the adult engaged.

Carefully define the immediate task, verbally and visually, breaking it into as many steps as necessary to “break it down” into manageable tasks. This is one more way to give the learner numerous opportunities for success.

Link instructional objectives to previous lessons.

To help learners see the relevance of learning a particular skill or set of information, make obvious how the objectives of a current lesson relate to previous lessons. This should help the learner put the pieces together.

Provide a transition to the current lesson. Provide it verbally and visually. Show where this lesson fits into the overall plan for accomplishing learning goals.

Communicate procedures and expectations for each session.

Learners with LD frequently engage in activities in a passive way. That is, they assume following steps is what is expected of them, when in fact, understanding, reasoning, and appreciating why particular steps are performed are critical aspects of successful learning.

Begin each instructional session by constructing a visual organizer with the learner. Reiterate current goals and subgoals, ask questions giving the learner an opportunity to put the information in his or her own words. Confusion and ambiguity are avoided if the learner knows what is expected and how it is to be accomplished.
Describe and model.

Learners with LD may not have a clear understanding of how they are to perform a skill. They benefit from a description of what they should do as well as a modeling of how it should “look.”

Before asking a learner to perform a skill, explain and demonstrate correct performance for the learner. Expecting a learner to “discover” the correct performance is often unrealistic. Further, learners could easily begin practicing a procedure incorrectly and then have to unlearn what they have taught themselves. As you model a skill for the learner, describe your thinking and your performance. Good learners are conscious of both their thinking about what they are doing as well as their actions as they work through a skill.

Provide explicit instruction.

Individuals with learning disabilities often need explicit instruction as new information is introduced. They are better able to perform a skill independently if they are fully informed about the skill and how to perform it. When providing explicit instruction, the teacher clearly identifies lesson goals, explains precisely what the learner will be expected to do, and describes and models the skills the learner will perform. The instructor assumes initial responsibility for guiding a learner’s performance, then gradually turns control over to the learner as the learner grows in proficiency.

Provide intensive instruction.

Because a learning disability is a cognitive processing problem, learners with LD need to “overcome” their processing deficit. (Remember, a learning disability cannot be cured, but its impact can be minimized). Frequent exposure to a new skill or new knowledge is critical for learners building it into their repertoire. Excessive drilling is rarely the answer, but frequent application often is. The learner has to apply focused, sustained effort on the content or task. For other learners we consider this additional work as “over-learning.” For the person with LD, over-learning, or intense instruction, has to be the norm. Self-paced workbooks or computer modules do not provide this intense instruction.
Good instruction provides multiple opportunities for someone to learn a new skill. Explanations, demonstrations, and practice opportunities rarely result in a learner with LD “getting” new information or mastering a new skill after just one or two exposures. Multiple opportunities to understand and practice need to be provided. These multiple opportunities should also be frequent. Practicing something new once a week is like learning it over again every time for someone with learning disabilities.

Instructional activities should be varied, both to prevent boredom and provide multiple ways for the learner to practice the skill.

**Provide numerous examples for the learner of how to do a task.**

In the spirit of modeling, learners with LD benefit from seeing multiple examples of the performance of a skill.

Generally, an appropriate number of examples to provide is three, although a learner’s feedback will let you know when the learner has a clear understanding of the principle. Involve the learner in doing examples after the first or second example has been introduced.

**Prompt learner response.**

To encourage active participation as well as to check on a lesson’s value to a learner, ask the learner questions about the lesson. Many learners with LD will not readily advocate for themselves if they are struggling with a lesson, and in some cases, they will not be aware of difficulties they are having.

In asking questions, allow enough “wait time” for the learner to respond, and calibrate learner’s hesitations carefully. Avoid questions with yes or no answers when seeking responses. Ask an open-ended question instead. For example, ask “Can you show me which part of this lesson you think you understand the best?/the least?” rather than, “OK, now, did you understand what I just said?”
Guide learners during initial practice attempts.

Following introduction to a new skill, a learner should have opportunities to practice it; this is the time when the learning truly occurs. Good practice is a balance between repetitious activities and varied applications that allow the learner to explore the different ways a skill can be applied. Good practice is, of course, intensive, extensive, and combined with feedback.

Just learning about a skill or learning new information without applying it generally results in very short-term learning. Practice provides the learner with opportunities to develop automaticity in skill performance and to think about a new skill or knowledge and its application.

Begin a practice activity with the instructor completing or modeling how to do the task and then gradually shift responsibility to the learner. Verbally walk through steps required to learn the task as the learner works. Gradually shift the responsibility for talking through the task to the learner.

Provide feedback and reteach, in a new way, with further practice, after incorrect responses.

Particularly during the early stages of learning and practice, learners need to understand what they are doing right and what they are doing wrong in performing a skill. Feedback that informs the learner as to how the learner is doing and clearly explains what was done right or needs to be done differently helps the learner to better understand skill performance. Learners with learning disabilities can be sensitive to feedback that indicates failure. Stress to the learner that feedback is not failure. Move into the lesson again and consider further breaking down of the task or the use of new examples.

Good feedback is like coaching. The learners are informed about their performance as it is happening. Tell the learner what was done well and why, as well as what was done wrong, and why and how to improve it. The learner can be prompted to reflect on the performance and to give “self-feedback” on which the teacher can comment. Good feedback does not have to wait until the learner has completed a task or asked for help.
Also, good feedback does not just tell the learner how to perform the skill, but rather it challenges the learner to be reflective about his or her performance.

**Prompt skill performance.**

Many learners with LD master a skill only to fail to apply it on their own. To help the learner overcome this apparent “learned helplessness,” occasional prompts will be needed to apply what has been learned.

When a learner is approaching mastery of a new skill, attention needs to be focused on helping the learner apply the skill. Practice opportunities should be provided in which the learner can apply the skill in a realistic context. Practice in a skill workbook, etc. gives the learner tools but not an apprenticeship at applying them. Instructors might find the “apprenticeship” concept useful in describing the work to the learner. Gradually lessen the number of teacher prompts to use the skill, encouraging the learner to prompt him or herself.

**Evaluate performance and outcomes.**

The moment a goal is set, evaluation should begin. At that early stage, evaluation is as simple as regularly checking to be sure that desirable and realistic goals have been set. As instruction progresses to describing and modeling, practice, and prompted skill performance, evaluation should be embedded in all activities. Learners with LD are not always aware of difficulties they are having nor of how to express their concerns. Thus, regular evaluation can help the instructor know if the learner is understanding the task and performance.

When you believe instruction on a particular topic is complete, you should be able to establish that fact through a summative evaluation. That is, at the end of a lesson or unit, require the learner to demonstrate what should have been learned. It is not enough to talk about a new skill, nor to demonstrate performing parts of it.
Treat learners as adults.
Regardless of their age, learners in your program are likely functioning as adults. Learners with LD may have experienced patronizing behavior from other educators. This is an unpleasant experience for learners and can be avoided if educators keep the following principles in mind.

**Principles of Andragogy**
*treat adults like adults*


Adults:
- learn according to the social roles and duties they face;
- tend to move from a state of dependence to self-directed learning;
- have extensive reservoirs of experience that affect their learning;
- seek immediate application of the things they learn;
- want some control over how they learn;
- can integrate knowledge from a variety of modalities and sources.

When discussing adult learners with psychiatric disabilities, Unger (1996) acknowledged that many educators believe that students with SED require more resources and time than other students. She explains that it has been the experience of many programs that students with SED may need more time initially to enroll and may need more personal support early in their course of study. However, the amount of time needed decreases as students get acclimated to the program. Overall, she found that they do not put a disproportionate drain on resources.
Because of the unfamiliarity of many education staff with mental illness, Unger (1991) provided the following list of questions to guide educators in their instruction of learners with SED:

1) How would I solve this problem if the person had a physical disability?
2) What accommodations are needed?
3) Is this an academic or a treatment problem?
4) Do I need to make a referral to a community resource?
5) Has there been a violation of the student code of conduct?
6) Am I working harder on the problem than the student who presented it?

The staff might also be helpful by learning simple techniques for helping learners with SED to manage their anxieties. For example, if a learner is extremely anxious, he or she may need a quiet space such as a study carrel to decompress. Earphones with quiet music might also be helpful. If a learner appears to be in a panic, it is important that staff maintain their own self-control, listen accurately to what the student is saying, and help him or her focus on immediate, concrete goals or a plan of action. During the assessment process, or at intake, it is a good idea to ask the learner what they would like the staff to do if the learner becomes symptomatic or anxious.

Some educators may fear that learners with SED will be disruptive in the classroom. In a study of the California community college system (Partons, 1993), students with SED were not shown to cause significantly more problems than other students. This finding has been supported by other research across the country. However, the standard practice recommended is that should a learner with SED cause problems, he or she should be held responsible to the same code of student conduct that all students are and treated accordingly.
In regard to specific instructional practices explained in this section, many of the principles for learners with LD are also applicable for learners with SED. Specifically, it is important to help the learner with SED set realistic and attainable goals, to plan for success, and to break lessons into manageable tasks so that they do not become overwhelming. As noted above, personal support is also especially important, as is attention to anxiety level and/or other discomfort in the classroom.

Instructional Options

The instructional principles described above can be incorporated into a variety of instructional options for presenting curriculum. The materials, staff preparation and procedures necessary for five instructional options are described on the following pages.

An important consideration is that the five instructional options may not work equally well with particular curricula, e.g., adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education, social skills curriculum, self-advocacy, or critical content. For example, curricula for ABE writing and math skill development can be used for independent study or group instruction. Curricular content like learning strategies or self-advocacy, though, are learned much better in a group format. The learning strategies and self-advocacy curricula involve content that is designed for learning through group interaction. One might learn computational skills through individual drill and practice, but learning a social skill such as giving praise or accepting criticism lends themselves to role playing and eliciting comments from others. Thus, the instructional option is influenced by several factors.

Some of those influencing factors to consider in selecting an instructional option are (a) the support a learner might need, (b) the learner’s preference for type of instruction, (c) the expected application of the curricular content, (d) the philosophy and skill of the instructors, (e) the learner’s curricular goals, and (f) the learner’s level of skill and motivation. The table on the following page further describes these factors and options (also provided in Appendix C).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner's Need</th>
<th>Learner's Preference</th>
<th>Expected Application of Content</th>
<th>Instructor Skill Needs</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Study</td>
<td>Developing independent learning skills (social application)</td>
<td>Short-term usage</td>
<td>Needs knowledge of developmental sequence</td>
<td>New approaches to learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial</td>
<td>Social application</td>
<td>Independent study</td>
<td>Needs knowledge of standardisation or Common approaches to instruction</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill I</td>
<td>Social application</td>
<td>Textbook structured</td>
<td>Needs knowledge of normal sequence of curriculum materials</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill II</td>
<td>Social application</td>
<td>Textbook structured</td>
<td>Needs knowledge of normal sequence of curriculum materials</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Instructional Options Chart**

- **Independent Study**
  - Developing independent learning skills (social application)
  - Short-term usage
  - Needs knowledge of developmental sequence
  - New approaches to learning

- **Tutorial**
  - Social application
  - Independent study
  - Needs knowledge of standardisation or Common approaches to instruction
  - Independent

- **Skill I**
  - Social application
  - Textbook structured
  - Needs knowledge of normal sequence of curriculum materials
  - Individual

- **Skill II**
  - Social application
  - Textbook structured
  - Needs knowledge of normal sequence of curriculum materials
  - Individual
1. Independent Study

Independent study has broad application. Independent study essentially involves learners working at their own pace on materials that closely match their skill levels and goals. Independent study was the instruction most frequently observed in our research. Because it is learner directed, the instructor has fewer responsibilities than in preparing for a group lesson. If the learner doesn’t attend, the instructor has invested little effort. Independent study is also popular because the learners feel as if they can make faster progress than in a class in which some learners will not learn as quickly. In addition, the content should be specifically focused on the goals of the individual learner. One might expect then that the progress of the learner should be faster.

The independent study approach relies on the learners’ self-direction. Thus, the learners’ level of motivation is very important. To be successful they should have a good understanding of their own learning methods, their strengths and weaknesses. With this knowledge they can work through curricular materials that have well defined structure with advance organizers, multiple examples, application exercises, and review. This approach (more than the other four instructional options presented) places extensive reliance on the quality of the materials.

Adult learners are provided with materials designed for independent use. The teacher reviews with each adult learner the procedures for using the materials. The participants then work on the materials at their own pace, seeking instructor help as needed. The instructor reviews progress with learners at designated intervals (i.e., predetermined time periods or progress markers). Since the interactions during the learning or work time is more restricted, the instructor must be very systematic in reviewing the learner’s work products so that errors can be identified and corrected.
Materials

Materials for independent study are those participants can use with minimal teacher interaction. Examples include GED practice exams, self-explanatory workbooks and computer programs appropriate for participants’ independent literacy abilities. Features should include: a) clear instructions and manipulatives; b) tasks requiring little or no assistance (e.g., using a calculator, using writing instruments, using procedures that are easy to follow); and c) procedures for self-monitoring and correction.

Staff Preparation

1. Review participants’ adult learning plans to determine whether the independent study approach is appropriate for specific learning goals.

2. Select materials appropriate for each adult learner’s literacy skills so that learners may work at their own pace.

Instructional Procedures

1. Plan on periodic checks. Check with adult learners periodically during each study session to assist in monitoring learning progress. This may be done by asking the learners to “check in” after reaching a certain point in the learning task(s), or by planning to sit and chat with the participants at some point. To ensure reviews do occur, a time should be agreed upon at the outset for this purpose (e.g., after completing particular activities, after studying a number of hours).

2. Spot check of progress. A good idea is to “check in” on learners shortly after study has begun, to be sure they are starting out correctly. Topics a staff member might address include:

   (a) whether the materials being used are helpful,
   (b) if the participants have any questions or need help,
   (c) whether progress meets expectations,
   (d) how learners like the curricular materials and activities,
   (e) feedback on performance to date, and
   (f) praising participants for their work.
3. Review of completed work. At the staff member’s and adult learner’s discretion, a time may be set aside for the staff member to correct/review some of the adult learner’s work samples.

4. Check on appropriateness of the curricular materials. Consideration also needs to be given to determining what materials should be used for reviewing and reinforcing skills or content. Since the learner works independently, a good understanding of the curricular materials’ sequence is important.

2. Tutorial Approach

The tutorial approach is used to address specific skill and/or content deficits for learners with the most severe learning needs. The specificity of the skills or content helps focus the instruction. More general needs (e.g., improving reading rates, learning broad curricular content like social studies, or learning social skills) are better taught through extended interactions such as in a small group setting available through the content classes or the more focused topic classes. The specificity of the learner’s needs (e.g., learning a particular concept or skill) has the advantage of helping the tutor focus on the particular learner’s needs. We also value tutoring because it provides an alternative when the other instructional methods have failed. On the other hand, because of the extensive time requirements on the part of the tutor, tutoring is not recommended frequently.

Tutoring can be provided by staff members or trained volunteers. In several tutorial models, volunteer tutors, who are typically adults, provide instructional assistance to the learners. The tutors may or may not have extended training on instructional methods. Laubach Literacy Action (LLA) and Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) are two organizations that rely extensively on volunteer tutors in providing instruction. Materials and techniques from these two organizations are also adopted in adult education programs. While the obvious benefits demonstrated through the many years of LLA and LVA have been well documented, we believe that their methods are best applied to learners who have high learning potential and can be expected to benefit from a developmental sequence (not remediation) of skills. For learners who do not match these characteristics, we suggest that the instructors provide the needed instruction.
A significant issue is the amount of experience and long-term commitment that’s typical of volunteer tutors. Learners who have experienced repeated failure or have slow learning abilities should be paired with the most talented, experienced instructors in the expectation that such a match will provide the best instructional quality.

**Materials**

1. Instructional materials which focus on very specific skill development.
2. Learning materials such as worksheets.

**Staff Preparation**

The staff person or volunteer should establish good rapport with the learner to be tutored. Since the working relationship is very important to this instructional approach, we believe that the learner and tutor should have interests that are also shared beyond the curriculum. These interests serve as a basis for building and maintaining rapport. The interests might also be useful in selecting examples or curricular materials that would be useful in presenting lessons. For example, if the learner has trouble learning fractions and is interested in outdoor activities like fishing then the weights of jigs might be used (e.g., 1/32, 1/16/, 1/8, 3/16, and so on).

The tutor should also have knowledge of the specific deficits to be addressed and have a strategy to address them that focuses on learners’ strengths.

**Instructional Procedures**

The procedures used will depend on the strengths of the learner and the needs being addressed. Frequently, repetition and controlled practice are sufficient. The most critical element, however, is the timing and specificity of the feedback. Tutoring is most effective when learners are closely supervised so that as they complete the tasks, the errors can be quickly analyzed, correction given, and then continued monitoring of the performance.
Everyone makes mistakes when learning new materials or skills. The tutor wants to focus on the work product so that as patterns of errors occur, those patterns will be recognized.

3. Topic Classes

Topic classes are formed on an as-needed basis for particular learners. In fact, topic classes aren’t scheduled until a number of learners demonstrate particular interest or difficulty in an area e.g., maintaining a monthly budget, planning a home meal menu, scheduling activities, or working with decimal fractions. Participants study in-depth a specific skill or concept from one content domain. For example, in a math topic class on computation, learners study how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide fractions and related skills (e.g., reducing fractions, borrowing from whole numbers, and predicting outcomes). Depending on the topic of the class, prerequisites may be stated for learners to participate (e.g., already familiar with the concepts of fractions and whole numbers).

Materials

1. Instructional materials such as teacher guides and demonstration aids.

2. Learning materials such as practice workbooks and manipulatives.

Staff Preparation

The instructor should prepare a combination of discussion, demonstration, and investigation activities that enable participants to comprehend and assimilate the skills and concepts being taught.
Instructional Procedures

Typically the instructor uses a combination of whole class and small group sessions and other times classes are structured so that participants are actively involved in investigating and practicing the skills and concepts they are learning. For example, in a math content class, problem solving may be the focus, or it may be computation with fractions and decimals; in a reading class, structural analysis of words may be the focus; and in a writing class, the focus may be essay organization.

Frequent review of materials is important. In the reviews the learners should practice applying their skills in different problem areas so that generalization can be taught.

4. Content and Skill Classes

Content and skill classes are offered in such areas as reading, writing, and math. Classes could certainly be organized around other content as well such as work preparation, work maturity, computer skills, or functional skills. In these different content areas, classes may be offered at the basic, intermediate, and advanced levels. Participants learn a body of skills and concepts related to the specific content area. In contrast to the Topic Class option, which is scheduled for specific topics to be taught in a relatively short period of time, this option is scheduled for a longer time frame and covers a broader scope and sequence of content. These classes would likely come the closest to paralleling a developmental approach for instruction. In the developmental sequence, the learners could receive a syllabus of the material and skills or content that will be taught.

As in other class settings, a group of learners meeting at a regularly scheduled interval for a specified time period is planned. In planning these classes, they might be organized to take on the “look and feel” of college or high school classes depending on the learners’ characteristics.
Materials

1) Instructional materials such as teacher guides and demonstration aids.

2) Learning materials such as practice workbooks and manipulatives.

3) Content materials must be organized to cover the development sequence of content and skills. The materials may be geared for beginning (ABE) to secondary level (ASE) learners.

4) Since this option is scheduled for a longer time frame, the materials and other alternatives must be well defined. They should be available in sufficient quantities for the number in the class and have content appropriate to the age of the learners. Age appropriateness is a particularly important consideration.

Staff Preparation

The instructor must be knowledgeable about the normal sequence in which materials are taught as well as having resource materials for those learners who require additional practice or different instructional methods. The instructor should prepare a combination of activities for discussion, demonstration, and investigation that enable participants to comprehend and assimilate the skills and concepts.

We have found that preparing a syllabus of the content and skill sequence was valuable to the learners. The syllabus served as a roadmap of the content that will be presented and was also useful in recruiting learners to the different course offerings.

The classes will be more successful and better attended if some recruitment activities are completed. Allow the learners opportunities for learning about the class and specifying the class meeting time.

Students who complete the classes seem to appreciate the “diploma” reflecting their effort. This recognition could take several forms, but the important point is that the class be organized such that the learners recognize that they started an effort and completed it.
**Instructional Procedures**

Typically the instructor uses a combination of whole class and small group sessions as well as sessions when participants are actively involved in investigating and practicing the skills and concepts they are learning. As in all instructional options, the teacher describes and models skills and minimizes lecture. Active learner participation is critical.

An important part of the instructional activities is providing activities that engaged the learners in applying the concepts or skills. Preparation for these activities required more teacher attention than just “following the book,” but was considered valuable by the learners. Some of those activities included class discussions, role playing exercises, searching newspapers and other resources for related information, town meetings, and developing pictorial collages. The point is that work sheets or work book activities are generally insufficient for ensuring that the learner has acquired the concepts or skills provided in the lessons.

**5. Learning Strategy Classes**

Learning Strategy classes are an applied example of the Topic classes described previously. In these classes the topic is a specific learning strategy and participants learn how to use it. A variety of learning strategies are taught, typically one per nine-week sequence. Examples of strategy classes include the Paraphrasing Strategy, the Test-Taking Strategy, and the Paragraph Writing Strategy. The strategy classes can be organized around a year-long calendar similar to how the Content or Skills Classes are organized. Typically, the strategy classes continue longer than a Topic class.

The strategy classes are not appropriate for every learner. We believe the first important learner characteristic is that the learner has developed basic skills at a fourth grade level or higher. These strategy classes are not designed for the learner with severe learning problems. For those learners with severe learning needs, a much more intensive, individualized approach is needed. The second characteristic is that the learners have demonstrated a commitment to improving their skills.
Since the strategy classes are organized as a group effort, instructors (and the other participants) will find that learners’ level of effort and regular attendance are both critical to success. Class size seems to work with a group as small as three, but gets better as the number of participants increase to five persons who are attending regularly.

Instructors teach a strategy following specific instructional guidelines that are appropriate for that strategy and consistent with the principles of andragogy. Both teacher-directed and practice activities are involved. Consistent learner participation is necessary during all strategy lessons.

Materials

1. Strategy teaching manual. (See Appendix A for information on obtaining strategic instruction and training).

2. Duplicates of instructional support materials for overheads and/or handouts (e.g., cue cards, practice sheets).

3. Typical adult education curricular materials (e.g., GED practice books, job applications, reading materials) with which the strategy can be practiced.

4. In the case of some strategies, instructors may need to identify practice materials in advance of practice lessons (e.g., a list of writing topics or reading passages written at specific reading levels).

Staff Preparation

1. For the specific learning strategies we used, teachers must be “trained” in the teaching procedures in advance of teaching the strategy. See Appendix A for information on how to obtain “training” for these strategies.

2. Teachers need to prepare materials for a given lesson (e.g., cue card handouts, tape recorders).
Instructional Procedures

Instruction on learning strategies is offered in a small group setting in which learners are able to learn from each other as well as practice various strategy activities together. Strategies can, however, be taught in one-on-one situations. Some aspects of the instruction necessarily require individualized attention from the instructor.

After establishing the need for learning a strategy, the teacher typically begins learning strategy instruction in a describing and modeling phase. That is, the teacher takes primary responsibility for describing the learning strategy and modeling its procedures. Gradually, the teacher moves to a facilitator phase, in which the instructor guides the participants as they assume increasing responsibility for performing the strategy. Eventually, as the participants begin to master and work on generalizing the strategy, the teacher moves into a coaching phase in which the instructor merely prompts the strategic participant to perform the strategy appropriately.

Comparison of Instructional Approaches

**Independent Study Approach**
- Is for the very independent worker
- Allows learners to work at their own pace
- Is an individual approach
- Allows learners to work alone
- Is not usually conducted in a group
- Utilizes materials recommended by the instructor
- Allows minimum instruction by the teacher

**Tutorial Approach**
- Is for the student who wants to improve specific content knowledge or skills
- Is useful for difficult topics
- Is typically a temporary instructional method
- Uses a tutor to provide the instructional help
**,Topic Class Approach**,  
- Helpful for a group of learners studying specific skills or competencies  
- Includes both group and individual work  
- Allows learners to identify the topics for the short-term class (≤ 4 weeks)  
- Useful to prepare for a content class or a strategy class  

**,Content & Skill Class Approach**,  
- Is for students who want in-depth, developmental study of specific areas  
- Provides instruction in content areas like reading, sentence writing, math word problems, social studies, science, consumer math  
- Is four to nine weeks in length  
- Is repeated with different instructors at staggered intervals  
- Has small class size  

**,Strategy Class Approach**,  
- Is for students who want to learn specific strategies to improve their academic skills  
- Is chosen by the student; can complete one or more classes  
- Is in a small group  
- Requires basic skills of learners; not for learners with severe learning problems  
- Has strategies for improved reading comprehension, paragraph and theme writing, test taking, and self-advocacy  

**Review**  
1. What are six principles of effective instruction for learners with LD?

_______________________________________________

_______________________________________________

_______________________________________________

_______________________________________________

_______________________________________________

_______________________________________________
2. Which of these principles do you currently incorporate in your instruction?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. What are three techniques for helping learners with SED to manage anxiety?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. What are five instructional options?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

5. Which of these options do you currently utilize?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

6. Which options might you want to add and why?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
7. For group instruction, on what basis would you form groups?
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________

8. How will you handle persons who miss classes?
______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________

Additional Resources

For more information about effective instruction for learners with LD and/or SED, see the Comprehensive Adult Education Planner, Instruction Component, Appendix B.

For more information about instructional options and a comparison of approaches, see the Comprehensive Adult Education Planner, Instruction Component.
Test Preparation and Testing

A Study Guide for Educators Providing GED Preparation
The University of Kansas
Center for Research on Learning/Division of Adult Studies
and
The Washington Research Institute

Funded by
The U.S. Department of Education
Office of Special Education Programs
**Test Preparation and Testing**

**Activities**

1. Describe the procedure you currently have in place for requesting testing accommodations on the GED.
2. List specific motivational strategies you use to prepare learners for taking the GED.
3. List specific test-taking strategies you teach learners who are preparing for the GED.

**Study Questions**

1. What kinds of accommodations are available on the GED for test takers with disabilities?
2. What accommodations are not allowed?
3. What steps are involved in applying to GEDTS for accommodations?
4. How can we motivate learners to do well on the GED?
5. What are some strategies learners can use to be more successful on the GED tests?

**What is the GED?**

A majority of learners in adult education programs have as their goal to prepare for the GED (General Educational Development) Tests. The GED Tests are offered in each state through GED Administrators, who appoint GED examiners at the local level to actually administer the tests to students. Successful completion of the series of five tests (mathematics, interpreting literature, science, social studies, and writing skills) leads to a diploma of high school equivalency. The GED Testing program is responsible for one out of every seven high school diplomas awarded in the U.S. each year. The average age of GED graduates in the U.S. and its territories is 25 (OVAE, 1998).
Testing Accommodations

A critical component of preparing a learner with a disability for taking the GED tests is providing the learner with the knowledge of GED Testing Service (GEDTS) approved testing accommodations or modifications. This information should be provided to the learner during initial discussions about the GED. However, the determination of needed accommodations or modifications is an ongoing discussion between the student and the GED instructor.

1. Terminology

The GEDTS uses both the term testing accommodations and testing modifications. Testing accommodations are for a learner with a documented learning disability, while a testing modification is for a learner with documented SED.

Accommodations for LD

The terminology that GEDTS uses for a learning disability varies from the term(s) used by most states. Most states use the term learning disability or specific learning disability, however, GEDTS uses the following terms:

- Dyslexia (LD that affects reading ability)
- Dysgraphia (LD that affects writing ability)
- Dyscalculia (LD that affects math calculation)
- Attention Deficit/Hyperkinesis/Distractibility (LD that disrupts attention or behavior)

It is important that when applying for GED accommodations for a learner with a LD to use the terms recognized by GEDTS as opposed to the term(s) used within your state. The form which currently must be completed and submitted for requesting special testing for a learner with a learning disability is GEDTS Form #L-15.

GEDTS lists seven possible testing accommodations for a learner identified as have a learning disability. These include:

1. audio cassette edition with printed reference copy
2. large print edition with extended time
3. use of a scribe
4. extended time
5. use of a calculator
6. frequent breaks with extended time
7. private testing room
Accommodations for SED

The terminology that GEDTS uses for SED also varies from the terms used by most states. Most states use the term behavior disorder (BD) or severe emotional disturbance (SED) while GEDTS uses the term emotional or psychological impairment. It is important that when applying for GED accommodations for a learner with SED that you use the term recognized by GEDTS as opposed to the term used within your state.

The form which must be competed and submitted for requesting special testing modifications for a learner with a behavior disorder is currently GEDTS Form #SA-001. It is important to remember that this form is also used for a learner with a hearing impairment, visual impairment, mobility impairment or other disability.

GEDTS gives six possible testing accommodations for a learner identified as having SED. These include:
1. audio cassette edition
2. offsite testing
3. use of a scribe
4. extra time
5. use of a calculator/talking calculator
6. frequent breaks

Accommodations not allowed

At this time, the GED tests are not available on computers. Computers (word processing software programs) may NOT be used to write the Essay (Writing Skills, part II) or record answers on any GED tests.

2. Description of Testing Accommodations and Modifications

Extended time/extra time
Each of the five GED tests has a prescribed time limit for test takers to complete or respond to as many test items as possible. These time limits can be extended under special conditions or whenever the audio cassettes are used. Usually, extending testing time by 150% is adequate for most learners with either a learning disability or SED. However, learners can also apply for double time if it has been found to be needed during instruction and related directly to the learner’s disability.
Private Room
Testing in a private room (alone) is available if the learner’s disability makes testing in a group situation distracting for him or her or to other test takers.

Frequent Breaks
A learner may be granted breaks while taking a GED test. The learner may need to take breaks if he or she has an inability to concentrate for extended periods of time or some physical disability. A five minute break or breaks is usually adequate to allow the learner to refocus and resume testing.

Calculator
Test takers may be granted the use of a calculator without advanced memory functions. A record or history of dyscalculia is usually required for the approval of a calculator. Learners with this accommodation should bring to the testing center the calculator that they have used in the classroom so they will be familiar with its operations.

Audio Cassette (Taped) Edition
An audio cassette edition of all GED tests is available. These editions are tone-indexed so that test takers can locate part of the tape they want to hear again. If a learner has this accommodation approved, it is advised that he or she or the instructor contact the GED testing center in advance because not all testing centers have the audio cassette edition on-site.

Scribe
A scribe (sometimes called a secretary or a recorder) is someone who records the test taker’s response to the essay part of the Writing Skills Test (Part II). This accommodation may be appropriate for some learners with LD who have difficulty writing.

It is critical to understand exactly how a learner who has been granted the use of a scribe will interact with the scribe during the testing session. The following section outlines the responsibilities of the scribe. Every effort should be made to give the learner adequate practice with the scribe prior to the official testing session. The instructional or practice scribe must replicate the exact procedures that will be in effect during GED testing on Part II of the Writing Skills Test.
Recommended Scribe Introduction and Practice During Instruction

It has been found that some learners who need and are approved for the scribe may be very uncomfortable as they first interact with the testing scribe. For this reason, it is highly recommended that instructors carefully and systematically introduce the student to the proper use of the scribe. Because they will meet their testing scribe for the first time during the actual testing session (testing centers furnish all scribes), it is recommended that they eventually work with an unfamiliar practice scribe during instruction. This has proven an effective technique for providing students with practice that best replicates the actual GED testing situation.

a. **Scribe Responsibilities and Protocols**
   GED test takers with a learning disability or SED must be given the same opportunity as other GED candidates to plan, draft, and revise their essays. It is recommended that the scribe write down an outline or other plan for the essay as dictated by the learner. The scribe must also write down the words of the learner EXACTLY as dictated. When a draft of the essay is finished, the test taker must read the essay and dictate any revisions. If the test taker’s disability prevents him from reading the essay, the scribe can read the essay aloud and allow the test taker to verbally make any revisions in the essay.

   **NOTE:** The scribe’s responsibility is to be an accurate and fair recorder who neither diminishes the fluency of nor helps to improve the student’s writing.

b. **Scribe’s Responsibilities Related to Grammar and Sentence Structure**
   Because a good essay demands fluency, the scribe’s job is to record the learner’s production accurately without making the task even more complicated. Clearly, a well-educated scribe could improve the mechanics (i.e., spelling, capitalization, punctuation) of a weak essay. On the other hand, even a capable writer who had to spell out many words and give the scribe directions regarding capitalization and punctuation would begin to sound stilted. The scribe’s job, therefore, is to strike a balance.
Learners, after indicating that they know, for example, to start a sentence with a capital letter and end with some punctuation, or to capitalize the letter “I” when referring to themselves, do not have to continue to specify these conventions throughout the entire dictation. The scribe should apply these conventions automatically.

The scribe will have to make many decisions about how to proceed in situations that are not described here. The guiding principle in making these decisions should be that the process of dictating an essay should neither help nor penalize the examinee.

c. **Learner’s Responsibilities When Testing With the Use of a Scribe**

Just as the scribe has certain responsibilities to the learner, the learner also has some responsibilities when using a scribe. For example, the learner must indicate the beginning and the end of each sentence and paragraph, indicate all punctuation marks, and -without the use of a dictionary-, spell all commonly misspelled words, all technical names, geographic places and people’s names.

### 3. Application Process for GED Testing Accommodations

The identification and subsequent process for applying for GED testing accommodations or modifications is often a troublesome and laborious task. This section describes the process appropriate for students in a high school setting who, at the time of GED testing, are currently eligible for special education services through their local school district or those who may be attending a community-based GED or adult education program.

The steps on the following pages outline the process for the instructor to use in coordinating the identification of, application for, and practice of GEDTS approved accommodations and modifications.
This plan has been specifically designed to introduce accommodations to the learner during the intake process and to continuously determine the need for testing accommodations or modifications during instruction. This process results in a thorough determination of the effectiveness of needed accommodations or modifications based on the learner’s previous classroom experiences, interviews, documented disability and current instructional evaluations.

**Interviews**

Valuable information can be obtained from the learner, his or her parents, and former or current special education instructors. By explaining each of the available testing accommodations or modifications and asking if any have been helpful in the past in allowing the learner “to demonstrate his or her knowledge and skills under appropriate test conditions,” an early indication of possible testing accommodations or modifications can be obtained. This is especially helpful in designing the initial instructional program and in selecting appropriate educational and GED materials.

For example, if the learner, parent, or teacher indicates that “books-on-tape” have been or should be used, then audio cassette instructional materials and practice tests should be examined. If evidence indicates that the learner has successfully utilized a calculator in his mathematics classes, then that accommodation should be considered. Lastly, if the learner informs the instructor that he or she has found extended testing time useful in his or her high school classes, then extra/extended time should be considered. The GED instructor should evaluate, as soon as possible, the use of these accommodations or modifications in the learner’s performance during class instruction and on practice tests. If the learner and instructor determine that the learner’s performance is greater with the use of the accommodation or modification, then the process for applying for GEDTS approved accommodations or modifications should be initiated.
During these interviews, the GED instructor should be aware that some of the learners, parents, and even instructors, may be unaware of these approved accommodations or modifications. For example, few will know what a “scribe” is or a scribe’s responsibilities. A brief explanation of each accommodation or modification should be provided followed by the one of the following questions:

- “Have you ever used this accommodation when taking a test or in any of your classes?” or
- “Do you think this accommodation would help you demonstrate (show) your knowledge or skills on a test?”

**Instructional Assessment & Identification of Testing Sequence**

The learner’s performance on the GED half-length practice tests is used to determine an initial instructional and testing sequence and as a means to evaluate the use of the testing accommodations or modifications identified in the intake interview process. This can best be accomplished by administering two practices tests (different versions) — one without the accommodation and the other with the use of the identified accommodation or modification. The comparison of scores and feedback from the student immediately after testing will indicate if the accommodation or modification was beneficial and whether it should be considered for further practice and eventually applied for use during the official GED testing.

**Instruction With or Without Accommodations**

As the learner begins instruction for the GED tests, further accommodations trials are recommended. Many learners may not have had the opportunity to experience some of the approved accommodations or modifications. By systematically trying out and evaluating the learner’s performance of different accommodations or modifications during instruction, the GED instructor will be able to provide the qualifying official with valid information that will become an important part of the official application process.
Initiation of the Application Form

When one or more GEDTS accepted accommodations or modifications has been proven effective during instruction and the learner is approaching official GED testing, one of the two disability specific GEDTS applications for special testing should be initiated.

We recommend that this process be initiated not less than 30 days before official GED testing. This will allow adequate time for completion by all involved personnel, submittal review, revisions if necessary, and final approval by either the state’s GED Administrator or by the GED headquarters in Washington, D.C.

It is critical that the correct form be completed based upon the learner’s documented disability. Currently Form L-15 must be used for a learner who has been identified as having a learning disability; Form SH-001 for a learner with a documented emotional disturbance. (At the time of publication, these forms are under revision by GEDTS.)

Forward Application to Certifying Professional

The appropriate application form must be completed and signed by the certifying professional. In most school districts, the school psychologist meets the GEDTS requirements as that person. The certifying professional will be completing the application based on a review of the learner’s most recent psychological assessment, from school records, from the GED instructor input, and from an interview with the learner. The GED instructor can greatly expedite this process by providing the psychologist or other professional with specific information on the effectiveness of requested accommodations or modifications during instruction.

Forward Application to GED Testing Center

Once the certifying professional completes and signs the appropriate application form, he or she will need to forward it to the GED testing center where the learner will take the official GED tests.

Completed Application Form Forwarded

After determining that the application for special testing accommodations or modifications is complete and accurate, the Chief Examiner at the chosen GED testing center then forwards the completed application to either the state’s GED Administrator or to the GED headquarters in Washington, D.C.
Some states have been given the opportunity for the state’s GED Administrator to review and approve or deny applications for special testing accommodations. Be sure to check with your local GED testing center as to whether or not your state has this option. Otherwise, the completed application is forwarded to the GED headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Testing Center is Notified of Decision

After reviewing the submitted application for special testing, the state GED Administrator or the GED headquarters will notify the testing center’s Chief Examiner of their decision. This person and center are designated in the upper left corner of the application form. The application form, either Form L-15 or Form SA-001, will be dated and signed by either office as “approved” or “not approved.”

This review and approval process may be time-consuming depending on whether you are required to send the application to your state GED administrator or to the GED headquarters and on the number of applications received by either office. For this reason, you should plan on submitting the application at least 30 days in advance of the anticipated testing date. This will provide the GED instructor and school psychologist with adequate time to revise and resubmit the application if necessary.

Notification to Chief Examiner

After receiving notification of the decision from either the state GED administrator or the GED headquarters, the Chief Examiner at the testing center of choice should notify the GED instructor, who should in turn notify the learner. If the requested testing accommodation or modification has been approved, then the learner and/or GED instructor can make an appointment or reservation at the testing center to take the GED test of choice. When making an appointment for special GED testing, it is critical that the GED instructor or learner remind the Chief Examiner that the learner has been approved for one or more special testing accommodations or modifications. This is especially important if the use of a scribe or an audio-tape cassette version has been approved, in that, the Chief Examiner has to make arrangements to obtain a scribe or the audio-tape cassettes.
Learner Receives Practice With Accommodation or Modification

If a testing accommodation or modification has been approved, it is VERY IMPORTANT that the learner receives sufficient practice using the accommodation or modification PRIOR to actual GED testing. This practice should replicate the conditions that the learner will encounter during the official GED testing session. It is recommended that a practice test be administered, either a full-or half-length version, using the approved accommodation(s).

For example, if the use of a scribe has been approved for the Writing Skills Test: Part II (the essay), the learner should complete a practice test with an anonymous scribe following the exact guidelines set forth in the GED Examiner’s Manual or as described in previously (see Testing Accommodations section). Another example, would be if the learner has been approved to use an audio cassette version of the test. In this case, the learner would want to take a practice test using the appropriate audio cassette, Form FA, practice test.

Completely familiarizing the learner with the approved accommodation(s) or modification(s) and providing adequate practice during instruction and practice testing sessions is CRITICAL if the learner is to optimally benefit from the approved GED accommodation or modification.

Decision to Resubmit Application

If the state GED administrator or the GED headquarters has not approved the application request, the Chief Examiner of the local GED testing center should be able to provide the GED instructor, the learner, and the certifying professional with specific reasons for the denial. Reasons for denial of accommodations or modifications may vary from missing information, lack of evidence that the accommodation or modification is directly related to the learner’s disability, lack of documentation that the accommodation or modification has been shown to be effective in the past or during current GED instruction, or lack of documentation of the qualifications and experiences of the certifying personnel (e.g., the school psychologist or other certifying professional).
Motivation

It is extremely important that learners attending GED preparation programs are highly motivated to attend instructional sessions, to actively participate, and to complete work as assigned. Research has also shown that learners benefit from:
- setting short- and long-term goals;
- orientation to the GED, its five tests, and scoring;
- providing definite observable measures of progress by tracking each successful step toward the final goal of earning the GED;
- using Official GED practice tests; and
- being debriefed after taking an official GED test.

1. Goal Setting

Individuals with learning disabilities often have unclear or unrealistic goals for learning. Therefore, they don’t always appreciate that intermediate or incremental goals are involved in reaching a final goal, like earning their GED. For example, intermediate goals contribute to the final goal of writing an essay well enough to earn a sufficient score.

Goal setting begins with identifying what the learner wants to learn and what the learner needs to learn. The need part is determined by final goals and by what skills and information must be learned in the process of accomplishing those goals. The learner and instructor should both be clear on what the goals are and be mutually committed to meeting them.

2. Orientation to the GED

Orienting the learner to the GED is a critical component of a GED preparation program. This orientation focuses on thoroughly acquainting the learner with 1) the GED tests, 2) the subjects tested, and 3) the scores on the GED.

The GED Tests
Clarify to the learner exactly what it means to “earn a GED.” Discuss with the learner any options that may require a high school diploma or a GED certificate such as certain jobs, college, military service, etc.
The Subjects Tested

Explain that the GED consists of five tests. Briefly discuss the five GED tests, and that it is potentially a benefit to look upon the GED as three tests instead of five. The Social Studies, Science, and Interpreting Literature and the Arts tests can be viewed as “reading” tests. Once the learner becomes familiar with the format of one test, he or she is in a good position to take the three “reading” tests. The two remaining tests are Mathematics and Writing Skills Part I and Part II (the Essay).

Use the Official GED Practice Tests to explain to the learner that questions on the 5 tests are all in multiple-choice format except for one short essay on one test. The questions measure their knowledge in subjects offered in high school. All the information needed to respond to the questions are provided in the passages. The focus is on knowledge application, rather than the recitation of knowledge and information, and students must use cognitive skills to pass the tests (i.e., predictions, comparisons, opinions, etc.).

Scores on the GED

Explain to the learner a major difference between the GED tests and other school or standardized tests is that he or she only needs to attain a score slightly better than 50% to earn a sufficient score for that test. This is unlike other testing situations where the learner is expected to achieve 70% or better. This information can help the learner by alleviating some of his or her anxiety often associated with testing.

Explain to the learner that there are four types of scores on the GED tests. A raw score, a standard score, an average score, and a total score. Be aware that each state determines its own average and standard score needed for being granted a GED diploma within that state. It is necessary, therefore, to find out these scores from your state’s GED Administrator.

A raw score (RS) is simply the number of questions answered correctly. The higher the number of questions answered correctly the higher the raw score.
A standard score (SS) is a score obtained by a mathematical calculation developed by GEDTS. A conversion table can be used to convert a raw score to a standard score, available with the Official GED Practice Tests. Use these tables to highlight for the learner the standard score necessary for each GED test and the average score required within your state.

An average score (AS) is the average score across the number of GED tests taken. For example, if a learner earned a 48 on the Mathematics test and a 44 on the Science test, the learner’s average score would be 46 (48 + 44 = 92/2 = 46).

A total score is the cumulative standard score across each GED test taken. In other words, the standard score on each test that a learner has taken is added together to determine the learner’s total score. In the state of Washington, for example, a total score of 225 points across all five tests and an average score of 45 with no single standard score below 40 is required for a learner to earn their GED in the state. We use Washington as an example, but please note these numbers vary from state to state. More detailed information about scoring can be found in the *GED Efficiency Model, Step 1, Orientation*.

**3. Indicators of Progress**

Explain to the learner that indicators of progress are achievements he or she makes toward the final goal of earning a sufficient average and total score on each of the five GED tests. Each step or accomplishment is recorded so that the learner and the instructor can continually monitor the learner’s path to success. Monitoring progress can be accomplished in many ways. If your program has a tried and true method that has worked in the past, than use it.

**Individualized Standard Score Sheet**

The Individualized Standard Score Sheet can be used to monitor the learner’s progress and is provided in Appendix C for program duplication and use. When a learner takes a practice test, the raw score (RS) is calculated and converted to a Standard Score (SS) using the GED Conversion Tables and then recorded on the form. An identical form can be used after the student has taken an official GED test and has received his standard score from the GED Testing Center.
Instructors should involve the learners in this process and in monitoring their own progress. Teach learners to calculate their own scores and the average scores (AS) needed for each GED test as described previously. Have the learners record their own scores on their individual score sheets.

4. Practice Testing and Feedback

At some point in time it is important that the learner takes a GED practice test as an indication of his readiness to take an Official GED Test. The practice test also allows the learner to become familiar with the test format, answer sheet format, the types of questions on the test, the time requirements, calculation of the Standard Score, and often may reduce his or her anxiety over testing. Practice testing is also used as a diagnostic tool which provides an opportunity for the learner and instructor to pinpoint troublesome areas, such as filling in the answer sheet, allocating available time, following the test directions, etc.

In addition, the use of practice tests allows the learner to practice his or her “mental notes,” which are areas of behaviors and cognitive thoughts that the learner uses during testing. Discussing these mental notes with the instructor IMMEDIATELY after taking the practice test is important in the process of providing effective feedback to the learner regarding his or her performance and score.

As part of this feedback process it is also important that the instructor and learner review all questions on the practice test. This will provide the learner and instructor with information regarding why the learner made a particular choice.

Discussing the learner’s “mental notes” and an analysis of correct and incorrect responses on the practice test will determine whether additional instruction is needed or whether additional practice on sample test items is necessary.

Goals of Practice Testing
- To familiarize the learner with test forms, format, and answer sheet
- To review general test-taking strategies
- To assist the learner in determining what to do when “you don’t know the answer”
- To practice developing “mental notes”
- To practice calculating standard scores
Steps in Practice Testing

- Learner completes one practice test (includes development of “mental notes”)
- Learner and instructor review “mental notes”
- Learner and instructor determine raw score and standard score
- Learner and instructor review each test question
- Learner and instructor develop instructional or testing goals based upon mental notes, test score, and question analysis

Mental Notes

Include:

- “Were there areas of trouble?”
- “What strategies worked?”
- “What strategies did not work?”
- “What did I do when I did not know the answer?”
- “Were there any formats not familiar?”

5. Official Testing De-briefing

It is also important that a smaller process of feedback be conducted after a learner takes an Official GED test. This should include a review of the learner’s “mental notes,” and recording his or her standard score on the “Individualized Standard Score Sheet.”

Test-taking Strategies and Behaviors

Explain to the learner that learning and using test-taking strategies and behaviors are necessary skills for maximum test performance. Successful performance on the GED tests is the result of good study skills, being prepared for the test, and using effective test-taking strategies. Review the following list of general test-taking strategies with the learner and have him or her practice some of the strategies during instruction and while taking a GED practice test.
1. General Test-Taking Strategies

Day of the Test:
• Be physically and mentally alert and ready to take a test after a good night’s sleep
• Arrive early and relaxed for the test
• Take two or more sharpened # 2 pencils, an eraser, a watch & some kind of refreshment such as mints or hard candies
• Ask for clarification about forms, etc. before the test begins

Following Test Directions:
• Read all the directions carefully before answering any directions
• Read each direction twice
• Underline or circle key words in each direction

Taking The Test:
• Answer the questions that you know
• Use a process of elimination if you do not know an answer
• If you do not know an answer, fill in the # 2 bubble

Answering the Test Questions:
• Read all of the answer choices before making selections
• Strike out information that is irrelevant
• Come back to questions to which you don’t immediately know the answer
• Do not change your answers—your first response is more often correct
• Clearly fill in the “bubble” for each answer
• Answer ALL questions
• Check work & review all answers when finished if time permits
2. Strategies For Answering Multiple-choice Questions

- Try to answer the question before reading the choices
- Decide if you are looking for the correct answer or the best answer
- Read all the choices before answering
- Strike out illogical answers
- Look for distractors (words or answers that have nothing to do with the question or statement)
- Look for key words in the answers that relate to the question
- Try each choice in the blank, when you don’t know the answer
- Read the question or statement with each answer choice when the selection is between two choices
- Answer all questions

3. Strategies for Answering Reading Comprehension Questions

- Read the selection over quickly to get a general idea of the topic
- Read the questions
- With the questions in mind, reread the selection, underlying key words, phrases, places, events, and names
- Try to answer the question without looking at the answer choices
- Look at the selection again to determine if you made the correct choice

Review

1. What accommodations are available on the GED for learners with LD?
2. What accommodations are available for learners with SED?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

3. What are the steps involved in applying for GED accommodations?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

4. What are 5 ways to motivate learners preparing for the GED tests?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

5. What are some general testing strategies that might be helpful to learners as they take the various GED tests?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

6. What are some strategies for answering multiple-choice questions?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________
7. What are some strategies for answering reading comprehension questions?

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

______________________________________________________

Additional Resources

For more information about GED testing accommodations and the application process, see the *GED Efficiency Model, Step 3, Accommodations.*

For more information about motivation and scoring, see the *GED Efficiency Model, Step 1, Orientation; Step 6, Full-length Practice Test and Feedback;* and *Step 8, Debriefing and Feedback.*

For more information about test-taking strategies, see the *GED Efficiency Model, Step 5, Instruction.*
References


Glass, D.S. (1998, Sept.). Implementing ABE programs that serve ALL learners. Presentation at the 8th annual conference of the National Association for Adults with Special Learning Needs, St. Louis, MO.


Acquiring Additional Resources

*Accommodating Adults with Disabilities in Adult Education Programs (Accommodations Notebook).*  Available for $24.00 plus shipping, by contacting:

Center for Research on Learning
Pearson Hall
1122 West Campus Rd., Room 521
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas  66045-3101
or
Call:  (785) 864-4780

*The Comprehensive Adult Education Planner:  Providing education for adult learners including those with learning and behavioral disabilities.*  Available for $30.00 plus shipping, by contacting:

Center for Research on Learning
3061 Dole Center
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas  66045
or
Call:  (785) 864-4780

*The GED Efficiency Model.*  Available by contacting:

Washington Research Institute
150 Nickleson St.
Suite 305
Seattle, WA  98109
or
Call:  (206) 285-9317

*Strategic Instruction Model (SIM).*  The learning strategies developed by researchers at the University of Kansas Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities/Center for Research on Learning may also prove helpful in meeting your program’s instructional needs.  To maintain the integrity of the strategies, the authors only make them available to individuals who have participated in “training” to learn about them and the Strategic Instruction Model of which they are part.  For information on strategy manuals and related materials, as well as how to obtain “training” in your area, contact:

Center for Research on Learning
3061 Dole Center
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas  66045
or
Call:  (785) 864-4780
Appendix B
Contact Information

This appendix contains telephone numbers and Internet listings for organizations that can provide additional information about disabilities, accommodations, and legal rights and responsibilities.

A Study Guide for Educators Providing GED Preparation
A collaborative effort of
The University of Kansas
Center for Research on Learning/Division of Adult Studies
and
The Washington Research Institute

Funded by
The U.S. Department of Education
Office of Special Education Programs
### Contact Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Phone number/ website:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABLEDATA</td>
<td>(800) 227-0216 <a href="http://www.abledata.com/">http://www.abledata.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive Environments, Inc.</td>
<td>(800) 893-1225 <a href="http://www.adaptenv.org/">http://www.adaptenv.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AHEAD</td>
<td>(614) 488-4972 <a href="http://www.ahead.org/">http://www.ahead.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Assistive Technology Funding and Systems Change Project</td>
<td>(800) 827-0093 <a href="http://www.ucpa.org/html/innocative/atfsc">http://www.ucpa.org/html/innocative/atfsc</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund</td>
<td>(800) 466-4232 <a href="http://www.dredf.org">http://www.dredf.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM National Support Center for Persons with Disabilities</td>
<td>(800) 426-4832 <a href="http://www.austin.ibm.com/sns/">http://www.austin.ibm.com/sns/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Living Resource Utilization (IRLU)</td>
<td>(713) 520-0232 <a href="http://www.bcm.tmc.edu/irlu">http://www.bcm.tmc.edu/irlu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Accommodation Network</td>
<td>(800) 526-7234 <a href="http://www.jan.wvu.edu">http://www.jan.wvu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Health Information Center</td>
<td>(800) 336-4797 <a href="http://nhic-nt.health.org/">http://nhic-nt.health.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Rehabilitation Information Center (NARIC)</td>
<td>(800) 346-2742 <a href="http://www.naric.com/naric">http://www.naric.com/naric</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording for the Blind &amp; Dyslexic (RFB&amp;D)</td>
<td>(800) 221-4792 <a href="http://www.rfbd.org/">http://www.rfbd.org/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Disability &amp; Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTAC’s)</td>
<td>(800) 949-4232 request regional website address by calling the toll free number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESNA Technical Assistance Project</td>
<td>(703) 524-6686 <a href="http://www.resna.org/resna/hometa1.htm">http://www.resna.org/resna/hometa1.htm</a></td>
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</table>
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These materials are part of A Study Guide for Educators Providing GED Preparation, which was 100% funded by the USDE Office of Special Education Programs through an award to the University of Kansas, Center for Research on Learning (Grant# H023P30008).
Adult Education Program Cycle

Figure 1

Exit

Transitioning

Testing

Recruitment/Pre-enrollment

Instruction & monitoring

Enrollment/Orientation

Assessment and Prescription

Adult Learner
Program Evaluation and Planning Study Questions

1. How can our program help to improve the quality of life of learners?

2. How can our program and staff be more sensitive to learners’ characteristics?

3. What instructional model(s) will increase the academic independence of learners by promoting life-long learning?

4. How do we encourage learner retention?

5. How do we increase the number of learners passing the GED test and/or raise their functional level?
**Collaboration Essentials**

**Collaboration:** A collaborative approach to implementing these standards requires the continuous involvement of all program staff. Each individual has unique and valuable experiences and expertise to offer and their perspectives are a crucial part of the implementation process.

1. All instructors and staff are involved.
   
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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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2. All centers and satellite sites are involved.

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3. Issues with current policies, practices, and procedures are identified.

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4. All staff provided input in identifying areas of needed improvement.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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5. Areas of needed improvement are identified and agreed upon.

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Pre-Enrollment Essentials

Pre-Enrollment: Pre-enrollment requires that an applicant decide which service he or she wishes to receive. Staff members discuss goals with the applicant and offer a choice of services (e.g., scheduling for taking the GED exam or enrollment in adult education classes or English as a Second Language (ESL)).

1. Learner inquiries are welcomed.

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2. Script for phone or in-person inquiries is used.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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3. Information packets of descriptive materials are handed out or mailed.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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4. Program options are explained thoroughly.

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5. Inquiries about learners’ special needs are made by staff.

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6. Next activity is scheduled (e.g. orientation, GED exam, GED practice test, or placement testing) for participant.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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7. Learner’s goals and motivations are identified.

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Orientation Essentials

**Orientation:** At this point instructional staff formally welcome learners to the program. Staff become familiar with the learner’s needs and interests, encourage completion of assessments and consequently develop a good working relationship.

1. Orientation is scheduled regularly as a group activity.

   1. Strongly Agree  
   2. Agree  
   3. Disagree  
   4. Strongly Disagree

2. Learners are asked to self-identify any disabilities.

   1. Strongly Agree  
   2. Agree  
   3. Disagree  
   4. Strongly Disagree

3. Instructional options are thoroughly described.

   1. Strongly Agree  
   2. Agree  
   3. Disagree  
   4. Strongly Disagree

4. Learners develop options to address problems that might arise (e.g. child care, transportation, illness, and weather).

   1. Strongly Agree  
   2. Agree  
   3. Disagree  
   4. Strongly Disagree

5. Enrollment materials are completed.

   1. Strongly Agree  
   2. Agree  
   3. Disagree  
   4. Strongly Disagree

6. If asked, the learners would comment that they felt like the staff truly cared about their well-being and encouraged their continued participation.

   1. Strongly Agree  
   2. Agree  
   3. Disagree  
   4. Strongly Disagree
Assessment Essentials

**Assessment:** Assessment provides learners and staff with information that will efficiently and accurately place learners in the correct difficulty level of curricular materials. This necessary information is gathered through assessing the learner’s skills and subsequent placement occurs after the results have been discussed and interpreted with the learner.

1. Placement testing options are described to the learner(s).

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<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
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<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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2. Learners’ accommodations are identified and provided.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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3. Learner completes appropriate placement test.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
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4. Assessment results are explained to learners individually in a confidential setting and kept in a secure location.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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5. Copy of assessment results is given to the learner.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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6. Assessment results are linked to the learner’s choice of curricular materials, educational goals and instructional options.

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</table>
**Prescription Essentials**

**Prescription:** Prescription is dependent upon the results of the assessment process. Instructor and learner review the assessment results and identify an instructional plan for the learner’s future. Also at this point, identifying an appropriate plan may require obtaining other educational or disability-related records.

1. Learning abilities and interests are identified.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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2. Learners are asked to self-identify any disability affecting participation.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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3. Release of information forms are completed for relevant educational records.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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4. Instructional options are described again and selected.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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5. Steps are initiated to identify and select appropriate access and instructional accommodations to meet learners’ self-identified goals.

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<tbody>
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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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6. Progress reviews are scheduled and conducted on a regular basis.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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7. The learner understands and values all goals, accommodations, instructional options and class schedules which she/he has helped to set along with his or her rights and responsibilities.

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</table>
**Instruction Essentials**

**Instruction**: The instructional process provides the learner with appropriate instruction consistent with the goals identified during prescription. Staff provides instructional options that are appropriate to help accomplish specified goals and monitor the learner’s progress toward final outcomes.

1. Alternative instructional options are offered.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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2. Learners participate in a combination of individual, dyad, small, or large group instruction, as appropriate.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
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3. Independent work (e.g. worksheets, computer drills, workbooks) is used as a supplement or skill reinforcement.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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4. Routine progress testing is conducted at fixed intervals.

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5. Learning strategy classes are offered.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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6. Instruction is provided in GED related activities.

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Test-Taking Essentials

Test-Taking: Instructional staff must familiarize the learner with the GED or other exam and discuss the best time to take the exam. Learners need to be guided through the administrative procedures for taking an exam and later, to the appropriate steps after taking an exam.

1. Test-taking strategies are offered as curricular content.

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2. Learners are fully informed about the process of test-taking, including the implications of test outcomes.

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3. Staff consults with learners about testing preparation and requirements.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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4. Environment and atmosphere are appropriate for successful testing.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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5. Appropriate accommodations are available for persons with disabilities.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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6. Exams are administered according to standardization directions.

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Transition Essentials

**Transition**: The transition process prepares the learner for life outside the program, or, in some instances, to go back through the program with new goals. Instructors must meet with learners to review what has been accomplished, what should be addressed next and formulate an action plan.

1. Staff reviews with learners their participation and success in the program to date.

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2. Learners identify and record goals for work, personal life, community, and education.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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3. A community resource directory is available for learners.

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4. Individual transition planning meetings are held.

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<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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5. Follow-up contacts are attempted with learners who have exited the program.

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Program Evaluation and Planning

Essentials Review Questions

To help focus collaboration and implementation efforts, review the essentials component items which you believe need the most immediate attention and are most important for your program.

A. List those 3 to 5 items below.
B. Ask yourself what needs to happen to implement an effective change for each indicated item. In this process consider how you have managed to be successful in meeting the other component items.

1. What items are most important and need immediate attention?
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 
   d. 
   e. 

2. What needs to happen to make the changes? and who will assume responsibility?
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 
   d. 
   e. 
Assessment and Prescription
Study Questions

1. How are LD and SED defined and identified?

2. What specific challenges do disabilities pose for learners in education?

3. How can we determine if a learner has a disability?

4. What are program and learner legal rights and responsibilities?

5. What is an accommodation?

6. Which accommodations are appropriate for a particular functional need?

7. What resources can we utilize in determining disabilities and accommodations?
SED Assumptions

Assumptions and Model of an SED. Assumptions underlying SED include the following.

This disability:

1. Is understood as a disorder that responds to interventions.

2. Is addressed by intense interventions which have a positive, cumulative impact.

3. Is best addressed through modifications in the environment that support positive interactions and successful academic performance.

4. Is distinct from other disabilities; can be concurrent with other disabilities.

5. Is not directly manifested in specific academic difficulties; academic difficulties are a secondary manifestation.
MYTH: People with mental illness are dangerous.
REALITY: They do not commit more crimes than the general population. They are more likely to be victims of crime.

MYTH: Mental illness is a chronic, life-long disease.
REALITY: Prognosis for schizophrenia is 50 to 70 percent recovery. New medications make a normal life possible.

MYTH: People with mental illness returning to school will disrupt the learning environment.
REALITY: They are not more disruptive than other students.

MYTH: Going to school is too stressful for people with mental illness.
REALITY: With new medication, symptom and stress management, and accommodations, they can be successful in school.

MYTH: People with mental illness can only work in entry level positions.
REALITY: They can hold the same jobs as anyone. Accommodations may be necessary.

MYTH: People with mental illness cannot learn.
REALITY: Although they may have some learning problems, with accommodations they can reach their educational goals.
**LD Assumptions**

**Assumptions and a Model Of LD.** Assumptions underlying the LD condition include the following.

This disability:
1. Reflects a deficit in how individuals process or express information.

2. Has debilitating, lifelong consequences.

3. Begins to appear during the developmental period; is not acquired like a brain injury; may be inherited, though it does show a higher frequency in males.

4. Is not cured. Compensatory strategies and accommodations can be provided, which have variable results.

5. Is not mental retardation; individuals have average or above average IQ.

6. Is an internal disability or dysfunction; is not based on external factors (e.g., interrupted schooling, value differences, and inappropriate instruction), though external factors may contribute in many ways.

7. Is a specific disability, but heterogeneous; it may affect reading, math, oral and written expression, listening comprehension, and social comprehension.
Learner Questionnaire for Identifying Functional Needs

1. Which of the following areas do we need to work on to help you achieve your goals? Please check all that apply.

—— Reading (Do you read very slowly or have difficulty seeing the words?)

—— Seeing things around the room, like the blackboard or posters.

—— Writing/Spelling (Do you have problems like mixing up letters or writing very slowly?)

—— Doing math (Do you get numbers out of order or get confused by word problems?)

—— Paying attention (Is it hard for you to listen to the teacher for more than a few minutes?)

—— Staying on track (Do you get bored or distracted easily?)

—— Getting used to changes in the classroom (Do you feel uncomfortable about changes in the classroom?)

—— Remembering (Is it hard to remember new things?)

—— Getting frustrated (Do you get angry or upset when trying to learn?)

—— Hearing the teacher (Do you get confused by noise around you, or is it hard for you to hear unless you sit near the person who is talking?)

—— Talking with the teacher and others (Do you have trouble talking to people or having people understand you?)

—— Getting my ideas across to the teachers and others

—— Getting into or around in the classroom (Do you have trouble walking? Do you have trouble seeing things on the floor or in your path?)

—— Sitting still (Do you have difficulty sitting still in one place for a long time?)
2. Are there any other areas in which you think you need help?

___________________________________________

___________________________________________

3. Did you have problems in these areas when you were in school?

___________________________________________

___________________________________________

4. Do you have any records from school or another agency (like an IEP or test information) or any other information from a teacher or a counselor?

___________________________________________

___________________________________________

5. Are you taking any medications that might affect your school work or attention span, maybe medications that make you drowsy, thirsty or nauseated?

___________________________________________

___________________________________________

___________________________________________
## Summary of Questions and Answers about Rights and Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is a disability?</td>
<td>A disability means a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ caring for oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ walking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ seeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ breathing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the legal rights of adult learners with disabilities?</td>
<td><strong>Legal rights of adult learners with disabilities</strong> include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ program accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ non-discrimination/equal opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ use of auxiliary aids and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ academic adjustments or accommodations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the legal responsibilities of adult education programs?</td>
<td><strong>Five administrative requirements of the ADA apply to the responsibilities of adult education programs:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ designate a responsible employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ provide notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ establish a grievance procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ conduct a self-evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ develop a transition plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is an accommodation?</td>
<td><strong>An accommodation is a legally mandated change that creates an equitable opportunity for task completion or environmental access such as:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ adaptive tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ assistive devices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ additional time for task completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ oral or sign language interpreters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ taped, large print, or brailled text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ taped, typed or dictated answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ private work area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ modification of existing equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ written instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ repeated instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ note takers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ calculators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What guidelines should be considered in selecting an accommodation?</td>
<td><strong>Accommodations should:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ be based on individual needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ allow the most integrated experience possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ not compromise essential course or program requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ not pose a threat to personal or public safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ not impose an undue financial or administrative burden on the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>◇ not be of a personal nature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resource Sheet: Legal Rights and Responsibilities for Persons with Disabilities

We are committed to meeting the requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. As part of our commitment we want to ensure that your rights and responsibilities are understood and to avoid any discrimination in services to you.

**RIGHTS**

- Some free education services
- Staff meets needs of students with a disability
- No discrimination due to disability
- Use of barrier-free facilities
- Evaluation for appropriate placement
- Academic accommodations, modifications, or auxiliary aids during learning and tests

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Self-identify as having a disability (learner's choice)
- Request services (learner's choice)
- Document your disability through testing and assessment reports by such professionals as a physician, educational counselor, psychologist, special education teachers, or rehab counselor
ACCOMMODATIONS

Some of these accommodations may be appropriate for you

• Class and test settings free from interruptions and distractions
• Extra time for testing and learning
• Aids for students with impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills, to be used in the school environment

Examples:

Hearing Disability
~written instructions/information
~oral or sign language interpreters
~Assitive Listening Devices (ALD)

Visual Disability
~readers
~taped text
~large print text
~Braille text
~tape recording, typing or dictating test answers

Manual/Physical Disability
~note-takers
~adapted classroom equipment
~architectural accessibility

Learning Disabilities
~note-takers
~repeated instructions/directions
~quiet room without any auditory or visual distractions
~tape recording or typing answers
~text individually
~extended time
Assessment and Prescription

Review Questions

1. What are 3 characteristics of learners with LD?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

2. What are 3 characteristics of learners with SED?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

3. Identify 3 categories of disabilities and two of the challenges they might present in the learning environment.
   Disability _________________
   Challenges _______________________
   __________________________________
   Disability _________________
   Challenges _______________________
   __________________________________
   Disability _________________
   Challenges _______________________
   __________________________________

4. Which three federal laws pertain to learners with disabilities?
   __________      ____________     ____________

5. What are some accommodations your program is currently providing? Are there others that you could easily implement?
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
Instruction Study Questions

1. Which instructional practices are effective for learners with LD?

2. Which instructional practices are effective for learners with SED?

3. How can we help learners with SED to manage their anxiety?
## Instructional Options Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Option</th>
<th>Learner’s Need</th>
<th>Learner’s Preference</th>
<th>Expected Application of Content</th>
<th>Instructor Skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Study</strong></td>
<td>High skill level and ability to work independently; Self-directed</td>
<td>Self-directed; Textbook-structured approach to content and skill learning</td>
<td>Targets GED preparation; Educational application, not social application</td>
<td>Needs knowledge of normal sequence of curriculum; Knowledgeable about different curricular materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tutorial Instruction</strong></td>
<td>Very specific needs; Generally good skill level</td>
<td>Short-term usage; Would supplement other approaches, especially independent study</td>
<td>Addresses need for a specific content or skill instruction; Educational application, not social application</td>
<td>Needs knowledge of developmental sequence of skills; Knowledge of the learner’s materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic Classes</strong></td>
<td>Needs developmental, structured sequence for content; Addresses specific deficits</td>
<td>Great for small group of 3 to 5 learners; Good introduction to instructional grouping</td>
<td>May or may not have social application - depends upon the topics</td>
<td>Detailed knowledge of the particular content and alternative in presenting it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content and Skill Classes</strong></td>
<td>Needs developmental, structured sequence for content; Addresses general deficits; Common approach to ESL classes</td>
<td>Good for 5 to 7 learners; Combines individual and group assignments; Builds on the support of class members</td>
<td>May apply in a social setting depending upon the skills; Important for building learners’ basic skills</td>
<td>Must understand curricular sequence and keeping individuals working together; Excellent class management; Perhaps the least demanding option on an instructor’s curriculum knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Strategy</strong></td>
<td>New approaches to learning content or skill e.g., reading comprehension, paragraph writing; Requires average or higher ability</td>
<td>Willingness to study a different approach; Taught in a structured class of 3 or more; Validated with students with learning disabilities</td>
<td>Emphasizes application in settings other than in class (social application); Develops independent learning skills</td>
<td>Instructor must have training in the specific strategies used</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instructional Options

**Independent Study Approach**
- Is for the very independent worker
- Allows learners to work at their own pace
- Is an individual approach
- Allows learners to work alone
- Is not usually conducted in a group
- Utilizes materials recommended by the instructor
- Allows minimum instruction by the teacher

**Tutorial Approach**
- Is for the student who wants to improve specific content knowledge or skills
- Is useful for difficult topics
- Is typically a temporary instructional method
- Uses a tutor to provide the instructional help

**Topic Class Approach**
- Helpful for a group of learners studying specific skills or competencies
- Includes both group and individual work
- Allows learners to identify the topics for the short-term class (≤ 4 weeks)
- Useful to prepare for a content class or a strategy class

**Content & Skill Class Approach**
- Is for students who want in-depth, developmental study of specific areas
- Provides instruction in content areas like reading, sentence writing, math word problems, social studies, science, consumer math
- Is four to nine weeks in length
- Is repeated with different instructors at staggered intervals
- Has small class size

**Strategy Class Approach**
- Is for students who want to learn specific strategies to improve their academic skills
- Is chosen by the student; can complete one or more classes
- Is in a small group
- Requires basic skills of learners; not for learners with severe learning problems
- Has strategies for improved reading comprehension, paragraph and theme writing, test taking, and self-advocacy
Instruction

Review Questions

1. What are six principles of effective instruction for learners with LD?

2. Which of these principles do you currently incorporate in your instruction?

3. What are three techniques for helping learners with SED to manage anxiety?

4. What are five instructional options?

5. Which of these options do you currently utilize?

6. Which options might you want to add and why?
Test Preparation and Testing Study Questions

1. What kinds of accommodations are available on the GED for test takers with disabilities?

2. What accommodations are not allowed?

3. What steps are involved in applying to GEDTS for accommodations?

4. How can we motivate learners to do well on the GED?

5. What are some strategies learners can use to be more successful on the GED tests?
GED Testing Accommodations and Modifications

More Time/Extended Time
Each of the five GED tests has a prescribed time limit for completion. These time limits can be extended under special conditions (e.g. documented learning disability or SED) or whenever the audio cassettes are used.

Private Room
Testing in a private room (alone) is available if the learner’s disability makes testing in a group situation distracting for him or her or to other test takers.

Frequent Breaks
A learner may be granted breaks while taking a GED test if he or she has an inability to concentrate for extended periods of time or because of a physical disability.

Calculator
Test takers may be granted the use of a calculator without advanced memory functions if he or she has a recorded history of dyscalculia.

Audio Cassette (Taped) Edition
An audio cassette edition of all GED tests is available and is tone-indexed so that test takers can locate specific parts of the tape easily.

Scribe
A scribe (sometimes called a secretary or recorder) is someone who records the test taker’s response to the essay part of the Writing Skills Test (Part II) and may be appropriate for learners who have difficulty writing.
## Individualized Standard Score Sheet

**Name**

**Address**

**Phone**

### Standard Score (SS)
- Converted raw score, using GED conversion table

### Adjusted Total SS
- TSS required to pass the GED (e.g. Washington, 225) minus the learner's TSS for that test + number of tests taken

### New Test AS Average
- TSS of all tests taken + number of tests taken

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEST 1</th>
<th>TEST 2</th>
<th>TEST 3</th>
<th>TEST 4</th>
<th>TEST 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>date</td>
<td>date</td>
<td>date</td>
<td>date</td>
<td>date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Total SS</td>
<td>1. Total SS</td>
<td>1. Total SS</td>
<td>1. Total SS</td>
<td>1. Total SS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Test 1 SS</td>
<td>2. Test 2 SS</td>
<td>2. Test 3 SS</td>
<td>2. Test 4 SS</td>
<td>2. Test 5 SS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### New Test AS Average
- TSS of all tests taken ÷ number of tests taken

- **Minimum Score Required to Pass Any One Test (e.g. 40) (5 Tests)**
- **Total Standard Score (TSS) Required to Pass the GED (e.g. Washington - 225)**
- **Minimum Score Required to Pass the State**

---

**Individualized Standard Score Sheet**

**A Guide for Educators Providing GED Preparation**

**Review Questions**

---

---
Test Preparation and Testing

Review Questions

1. What accommodations are available on the GED for learners with LD?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

2. What accommodations are available for learners with SED?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

3. What are the steps involved in applying for GED accommodations?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

4. What are 5 ways to motivate learners preparing for the GED tests?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

5. What are some general testing strategies that might be helpful to learners as they take the various GED tests?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
6. What are some strategies for answering multiple-choice questions?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

7. What are some strategies for answering reading comprehension questions?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________