



Lighting the Way: Student-Focused Instruction Strategies and Considerations for Working with Adult Learners with Disabilities

Kelly Folsom

Director, Bridge-to-Training Programs

X-Cel Education

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Goals for today

- Identify some common learning disabilities and look at some strategies and activities that can help students become self-actualized learners
- Define Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and explore how it can be integrated into adult education programming
- Examine case studies and share tools and strategies beneficial to your program.
- Identify additional resources for working with disabled students.

Think about:

Looking at the following statistics, try and find something that:

- Reinforces what you already knew
- Surprises you
- Generates a question in you mind

Disability Statistics

- Youth with disabilities are four times more likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system.
- 22% of students with disabilities don't complete high school, compared to 9% of students without disabilities.
- 80% of youth with learning disabilities are bullied at school, and this frequency is greater for youth with disabilities that affect their appearance.
- In 2015, 77% of working-age people with disabilities were unemployed, compared to 27% of people without disabilities.
- Even when they find work, people with disabilities make 37% less money than their comparable peers without disabilities.
- 34% of adults with disabilities live in households with total incomes less than \$15,000, versus 12% of the population without disabilities.

Identifying Disabilities

- 80% of people have hidden disabilities which may have never been diagnosed or treated properly. The student may not even know.
- Building trusting relationships
- Boston Common Accessibility Assessment Tool (BCAAT)
- School IEP (Individualized Educational Plan)
- Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
- Primary care physician
- Online tools

Learning Disabilities

Common Types of Learning Disabilities		
Dyslexia	Difficulty reading	Problems reading, writing, spelling, speaking
Dyscalculia	Difficulty with math	Problems doing math problems, understanding time, using money
Dysgraphia	Difficulty with writing	Problems with handwriting, spelling, organizing ideas
Dyspraxia (Sensory Integration Disorder)	Difficulty with fine motor skills	Problems with hand-eye coordination, balance, manual dexterity
Dysphasia/Aphasia	Difficulty with language	Problems understanding spoken language, poor reading comprehension
Auditory Processing Disorder	Difficulty hearing differences between sounds	Problems with reading, comprehension, language
Visual Processing Disorder	Difficulty interpreting visual information	Problems with reading, math, maps, charts, symbols, pictures

Scaffolded learning strategies

- Cue students to KNOW what to do instead of TELLING them what to do.
- Help students to develop the self-talk they need to cue themselves
- Accommodate bottom up processes that are weak and drain cognitive energy. For e.g.
 - Processing speed (provide extra time, automatize math facts, spelling etc. to increase fluency)
 - Memory (use tools like mnemonics, color coding to help students remember information and procedures)

Best Practices

- Adjust the pace of instruction
- Provide structure
 - Pre-teach foundational skills
 - Break tasks down into smaller steps
 - Provide step-by-step instructions
 - Teach how the parts are connected to the whole

Best Practices continued

- Support weak working memory
 - Provide cheat-sheets or mnemonics to help students remember sequences of steps.
 - Provide practice to automate basic skills
- Provide formative and prompt feedback
- Periodically review previously learned skills and content.

Universal Design for Learning

- The goal of UDL is to minimize the need for individualized accommodations or modifications by teaching and designing curriculum in a way that reaches widest range of students possible. Just like Universal Design, it's a *proactive* approach. It anticipates the needs of learners that have specific challenges and encourages us to design curriculum *from the ground up* to increase accessibility to learning for all.

Multiple Means of Representation

- ▶ **Perception:** How are students perceiving the information you're teaching? Auditorily? Visually? Can we provide varied ways for them to receive and digest or process that information?
- ▶ **Language & symbols:** Are we taking into consideration that not all students will have the same comfort and familiarity with written/spoken English? And even if they do, some people perceive and process the meaning of symbols and graphics more readily than words. Can we use these methods to enhance comprehension?
- ▶ **Comprehension:** Are we helping connect key concepts with one another? Are we not assuming that all students have the same level of background knowledge of a subject?

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9TVKGvnGPoA&feature=emb_logo

Multiple Means of Expression

- ▶ **Physical action:** Is the only way to interact with the class materials through a textbook? Or are there other ways to engage, like through an online tool, a screen reader, or through movement-based activities? Are you allowing all students to engage in an activity, even those with disabilities (e.g. students who are blind, hard of hearing, deaf, autistic)?
- ▶ **Expression and communication:** Are you allowing students to express themselves in multiple ways? Do students *have* to write? Do they *have* to communicate orally? Or are they provided with different ways to express themselves?
- ▶ **Executive functions:** Are you taking into consideration that students have various levels of executive functioning (AKA: ability to self-regulate), and may need different supports to help them build more executive functioning skills? Are you setting individual, appropriate goals for each student? Helping them each improve the ways they take in and process information?

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H66jHEiGNLQ&feature=emb_logo

Kristin said she does not understand what she reads.

Strengths

- ▶ Self-aware
- ▶ Social skills
- ▶ Resilient
 - ▶ Motivated
 - ▶ Persistent
- ▶ Intact oral language
- ▶ Benefits from explicit instruction
- ▶ Decoding text

Weaknesses

- ▶ Attention
- ▶ Working memory (i.e. easily overwhelmed with large input)
- ▶ Vocabulary: breadth and depth
- ▶ Background knowledge
- ▶ Lack of engagement/practice with reading

Kristin

- ▶ What I know about reading comprehension: Reading fluency, vocabulary, and background knowledge are essential for reading comprehension.
- ▶ What I observed: Kristin was able to read the words on the page at a reasonable pace, but could not summarize or paraphrase what she read. When I probed, I found that she did not understand close to 50% of the vocabulary in the first paragraph of the article on the Great Depression that she was attempting to comprehend.

What we did....

- ▶ Worked at the white board with colored markers
- ▶ Read the text one sentence at a time.
- ▶ Identified unknown vocabulary
- ▶ Kristin looked up these words on her smart phone and annotated text with
 - ▶ Definitions
 - ▶ Paraphrasing of the information in her own words.
- ▶ Working in a reciprocal fashion so I could model the process for her.

Kristin - take aways

- ▶ Visual prompts (e.g. color coding, pictures, symbols) are very helpful to Kristin.
- ▶ She needs an infusion of vocabulary to manage the texts she is given
 - ▶ Preteach vocabulary!!
 - ▶ Implement a vocabulary curriculum that includes spiraling and review. She should be actively reviewing and spiraling the words she is learning from text.
- ▶ Kristin's background knowledge needs a huge boost if she is to understand the texts she is given.
- ▶ Kristin needs to go at her own pace
- ▶ Kristin needs a personalized dictionary in which she records the new words she is learning (maybe on her smart phone)
- ▶ Use a strategy note book (maybe on her smart phone)

his chin cupped in his hands. Then the regular movement of the searchlight was reflected through an upper window and the boy had time to fix in memory the pile of cigarettes, the counter, and the small hole under it. The footsteps of a policeman on the pavement made him grab the first packet to his hand and dive for the hole. A light shone along the floor and a hand tried the door, then the footsteps passed on, and Charlie covered in the darkness.

At last he got his courage back by telling himself in his curiously adult way that if he were caught now there was nothing to be done about it, and he might as well have his smoke. He put a cigarette in his mouth and then remembered that he had no matches. For a while he dared not move. Three times the searchlight lit the shop, while he muttered taunts and encouragements. May as well be hung for a sheep. Cowardly, cowardly custard. grown-up and childish exhortations oddly mixed.

But as he moved he heard footfalls in the street, the sound of several men walking rapidly. Charlie Stowe was old enough to feel surprise that anybody was about. The footsteps came nearer, stopped; a key was turned in the shop door, a voice said: 'Let him in,' and then he heard his father 'If you wouldn't mind being quiet, gentlemen I don't want to wake up the family.' There was a note unfamiliar to Charlie in the undecided voice. A torch flashed and the electric globe burst into blue light. The boy held his breath; he wondered whether his father would hear his heart beating, and he clutched his nightshirt tightly and prayed, 'O God, don't let me be caught.' Through a crack in the counter he could see his father where he stood, one hand held to his high stiff collar, between two men in bowler hats and belted mackintoshes. They were strangers. 'Have a cigarette,' his father said in a voice dry as a biscuit. One of the men shook his head. 'It wouldn't do, not when we are on duty. Thank you all the same.' He spoke gently but without kindness.

Charlie Stowe thought his father must be ill. 'Mind if I put a few in my pocket?' Mr Stowe asked, and when the man nodded he lifted a pile of Gold Flake and Players from a shelf and caressed the packets with the tips of his fingers.

'Well,' he said, there's nothing to be done about it, and I may as well have my smokes.' For a moment Charlie Stowe feared discovery, his father stared round the shop so thoroughly; he might have been seeing it for the first time. 'It's a good little business,' he said, 'for those that like it. The wife will sell out, I suppose. Else the neighbours'll be wrecking it. Well, you want to be off. A stitch in time. I'll get my coat.'

Fear of discovery builds up atmosphere of tension

Panic

Relief

Recovers

Gone so far, might as well go through with it

Still afraid

Why this word?

Tension again

'Gentlemen' - very polite and formal

Something out of the ordinary happening

Police?

Police again!

Stacking up - may not be back for some time

Why 'caressed'?

A bit like Charlie, 'if he were caught now there would be nothing to be done about it'

Fear of his 'crime' being found out

Tension

Why 'curiously' adult? - he is realistic about what is happening

Mixture of adult and child

Supposed to be in Norwich

Why not?

Fear of being caught

Like Charlie clenching his nightshirt

Is he under arrest?

Fear, uncertainty

Why 'gently'/'without kindness'? - an unusual combination

Has to ask permission - under arrest?

Or the last!

The end of his family life

Why would the neighbours do that?

Additional Resources

- ▶ <https://dyslexiaida.org/>
- ▶ <https://www.pyd.org/>
- ▶ <https://www.cast.org/>
- ▶ <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-rehabilitation-commission>



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