

How to Design and Host



Community Conversations about Learning Disabilities

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**Chilliwack
Community
Services**
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Background and Introduction

In November 2009 Literacy BC and the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities offered a training event entitled: A Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy Settings. As a front line family literacy facilitator I found the topic and the purpose of the conference very pertinent. Over the past few years program participants had shown a significant rise in the number and severity of learning difficulties and learning disabilities. Professionally, I questioned if my years of experience and training adequately met the learners' needs. The keynotes, workshops and informal conversations with colleagues at the conference provided new insights and ideas. I left with tools and a renewed energy to address the needs of adults with learning disabilities.

When the training ended each participant was encouraged to return to their community and share what they had learned. I felt that it was vital that I continue the learning disabilities discourse. I soon discovered that our community did not have any simple mechanisms to locate support or resources for those with learning disabilities. I contacted Debbie Denault, the Literacy Outreach Coordinator for the Chilliwack Learning Community Society and asked if she would partner with me to address this challenge.

We decided to host 2 sessions of "A Community Conversation about Learning Disabilities" as a means of:

1. Increasing knowledge throughout the community about what learning disabilities are, and the challenges people with learning disabilities may face
2. Disseminating information about the new Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy Settings Project and website www.ldandwholelifelearning.ca
3. Gathering and sharing information about existing local resources and sources of expertise on learning disabilities
4. Increasing support for persons with learning disabilities
5. Providing a 'template' or format for participants to use for carrying on the Conversation in their professional or personal settings.

During the planning process, it was important to us to use a community development approach as we wished to:

1. Bring interested people together where they would have a venue to build or maintain relationships with each other
2. Draw on the existing knowledge of the community
3. Provide and exchange relevant and useful information and resources, and
4. Provide a way for people to carry on learning and sharing their knowledge about the topic of learning disabilities.

About this Document

This document comes in two parts. Both parts include the same “How to” steps for developing and providing Community Conversations about Learning Disabilities. Grounded in a community development model, the steps provide a simple and effective method to launch or continue a disability discussion. Part 1 explains how the steps were used to deliver a two hour pilot in March 2010 and Part 2 describes how the steps were employed to hold a six hour workshop in October 2010. The first conversation gave us the opportunity to discover the interest and resources related to learning disabilities in Chilliwack. The second built on the feedback and successes of the first. This tool enables the reader to see the similarities and differences between the two workshops and quickly reference them. The writers intended the document to be friendly, concise and easy to use. The goal was to provide other communities with the necessary information and templates to host learning disabilities conversations. Some readers may wish to compare the 2 hour workshop to the 6 hour version. Some people will choose to read this document in electronic form (vs. hard copy). Consequently, the document contains text boxes with hyperlinks at the end of each step to take readers back and forth between Parts 1 and 2.

Here is a summary list of the “How to” steps included and described in both Parts One and Two:

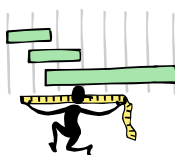
1. Gather people to plan and host a Community Conversation
2. Scan your community
3. Determine your target audience, what your goals are and how you will know you’ve reached them
4. Decide how to accomplish your goals
5. Determine a budget
6. Determine logistics (i.e. date, time, location, food/refreshments)
7. Design the agenda
8. Promote the Community Conversation event
9. Produce a supply list and gather what you need
10. Determine the amount and nature of the feedback you need to gather
11. Design and prepare hand out packages
12. Host and enjoy your Community Conversation
13. Collate and disseminate any information gathered at the Conversation
14. Review outcomes and learning
15. Initiate or make plans for next steps.

Part 1: The “How to” Steps – Pilot 2 Hour Workshop

1. Gather people to plan and host a Community Conversation

Gather a (small or large) group of people willing to work together to plan and host a Community Conversation.

In Chilliwack we assembled a team of three people, from two organizations to host the pilot.



To compare what we learned in the six hour workshop go to [page 18](#)

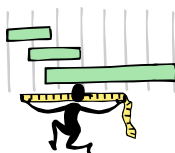
2. Scan your community

Determine the breadth and depth of understanding in your community on the subject of learning disabilities. A scan could include questions such as:

- Is it widely known who the local key Learning Disabilities stakeholders/service providers are?
- Are there any existing networks established around the theme of Learning Disabilities?
- Does your area have a resource/information repository where community members (professional and non) can find resources, services or supports for people with Learning Disabilities?
- Do you have a clear idea about what topics may be of interest to a targeted audience of people if “A Community Conversation” was to be held?
- Are you aware of the most auspicious date, time & location for a Community Conversation?

We learned that Chilliwack:

- Did not have a network established around the topic of Learning Disabilities
- The topic of Learning Disabilities did not formally appear as a separate and distinct topic at our community tables, and
- There is no community resource for finding out who our local experts are.



To compare what we learned in the six hour workshop go to [page 18](#)

3. Determine your target audience, what your goals are and how you will know you've reached them

This step provides the means to focus all other organizational choices.

In the pilot:

The **target audience** was broad:

Anyone interested in the topic of learning disabilities was invited. The registration limit was set at 25 participants.

The **goal** was to provide a simple way for people to begin and carry on formal and/or informal Conversations about learning disabilities. We saw the potential for these outcomes:

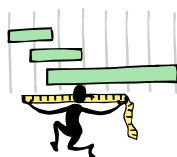
- an increase in community knowledge on the definition of learning disabilities
- an increase in community understanding about people with learning disabilities
- an increase in the community ability to support people with learning disabilities
- an increase in knowledge of what expertise and resources are in Chilliwack, in the region and in the province

The **evaluation of goals** was based on “success indicator” questions:

Do you think you will initiate conversations about learning disabilities as a result of joining today's Conversations? Yes_____ No_____

If yes, please share your ideas about where or with whom:

If no, is there anything you will do as a result of today's Conversation?



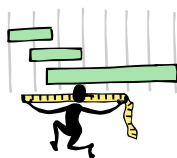
To compare what we learned in the six hour workshop go to [page 18](#)

4. Decide how to accomplish your goals

Method can determine the likelihood of success.

To achieve the pilot outcomes the workshop was designed to:

- be highly interactive
- support the dissemination and collection of information
- provide ample opportunity for conversation



To compare what we learned in the six hour workshop go to [page 19](#)



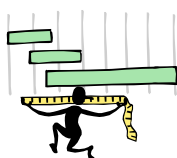
Goal	Potential Item and/or activity	Notes
Relationship building Establishing a comfortable learning environment	Welcome Introductions	A few extra minutes for starting late (because that just happens sometimes) Welcome and acknowledgements Introduction of facilitators Housekeeping details
Relationship building Establishing a comfortable learning environment	Interactive Warm Up	Include an opportunity for people to introduce themselves (either to the whole group or at their table) A question to help people focus on the session and topic (we asked them to turn to their neighbor and tell them how they would define Learning Disability)
To increase knowledge about what learning disabilities are	What is the “Whole Life” Project? presentation	Presentation – provide acknowledgement, context and overview of the project Review of note hand outs: a definition of a Learning Disability, and the Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy Settings Project
To increase knowledge of what expertise and resources are in Chilliwack, in the region and in the province	Introduction to the Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy Settings Project website	Presentation – show the Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy Settings Project website to the group via a lap top computer and projector
Relationship building To increase understanding of people who have learning disabilities	Table Group Conversation and Discussion with: 1. What do you believe is the biggest challenge that persons with Learning Disability face?	Tables of approximately 5 people Facilitator/recorder at each table Questions to generate exploration and learning; and to share existing knowledge or expertise

Goal	Potential Item and/or activity	Notes
<p>To increase knowledge of what expertise and resources exist in Chilliwack, the region and BC; and to gather information for a simple community resource</p> <p>To inform decision making and determine interest in a carrying on the Conversation to increase the community's capacity to support persons with learning disabilities</p>	<p>2. What helpful resources are you aware of in your community, region, or province?</p> <p>3. What other resources or opportunities could be helpful to you and/or your agency?</p>	<p>The participants exchange information and viewpoints; and pool information</p> <p>High priority for spending as much time on as possible within a two hour session</p>
Learning and processing	Review of the morning conversation	Whole group review of material collected on flip charts
An increased ability of the community to support people with learning disabilities	Next Steps/Feedback to shape a Regional Event	Time for people to say a word or two about the session and complete information/feedback forms
	Thank you	Thank participants and hosts and end on time

5. Determine a budget

Step five can determine the size and length of the Community Conversation

The pilot workshop did not have a resourced budget. Through contributions made by the partner organizations, we were able to accomplish it on a “shoe string”. The venue, photocopying, markers and coffee were provided in kind by Chilliwack Community Services. One pad of flip chart paper was purchased by Chilliwack Learning Community Society. A volunteer collated and typed the information collected at the session.



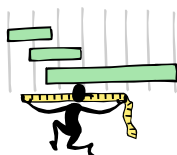
To compare what we learned in the six hour workshop go to [page 22](#)

6. Determine logistics (i.e. date, time, location)

Consider items such as:

- What time of day would be the most convenient to the targeted audience? What would participants need? What are you able to provide? Is food or refreshments required?
- What type of room is needed? Is there access to technical equipment, if required?
- Is there easy access to the location and into the building? (i.e. public transportation, parking, elevators etc.)
- Are there other community events that could cause schedule conflicts?

The pilot workshop was held as a morning session. Coffee, tea and water were provided. The room was on a ground floor, held the targeted number of participants, and could accommodate our technical needs. The venue had parking nearby and was close to public transportation. The date was set three months in the future allowing for ample planning and promotion.

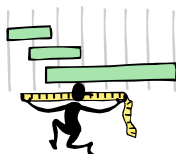


To compare what we learned in the six hour workshop go to [page 22](#)

7. Design the agenda

The agenda can be designed once the following are considered:

- community assets, needs, opportunities and gaps
- the goal, target audience and anticipated outcomes
- a budget is developed
- the logistics are worked out



To compare what we learned in the six hour workshop go to [page 23](#)

The pilot agenda included:

Time	Item
9:30	Welcome Introductions
9:45	Warm Up
9:50	What is the “Whole Life” Project?
10:00	Introduction to the Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy Settings Project website
10:20	Table Group Conversation and Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you believe is the biggest challenge that persons with Learning Disability face? • What helpful resources are you aware of in your community, region, or province • What other resources or opportunities could be helpful to you and/or your agency?
11:00	Review of the morning conversation
11:20	Next Steps/Feedback to shape a Regional Event
11:30	Thank you

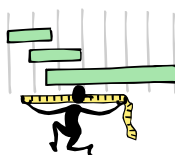
Appendix A March 2010 pilot Community Conversation Agenda

8. Promote the Community Conversation event

Promotion of this type of learning event is vital to ensure a full room of the target audience attends.

The pilot flyer included:

- date
- time
- location
- project name
- registration information
- partner logos
- the agenda



To compare what we learned in the six hour workshop go to [page 23](#)

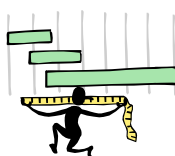
Appendix B March 2010 pilot Community Conversation promotional flyer

9. Produce a supply list and gather what you need

Determine who will be in charge of each of the supplies.

The supplies needed for the pilot were:

- registration sign in
- markers/pens
- flip charts/paper
- name tags
- hand out packages
- projector, screen, computer
- internet access
- refreshments

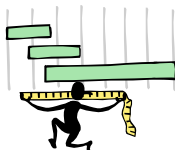


To compare what we learned in the six hour workshop go to [page 24](#)

10. Determine the amount and nature of the feedback you need to gather

Evaluation is essential to choosing next steps.

For the pilot the “information collection” and “session feedback” were combined into one form. The participants received the handout at the beginning of the workshop which enabled them to give make notes or give feedback throughout the session.



To compare what we learned in the six hour workshop go to [page 24](#)



The pilot workshop collected:

Collective intelligence	Purpose
Helpful community, regional or provincial resources	To create a local resource list as none existed
The participants beliefs on the biggest challenge faced by persons with learning disabilities	An opportunity for the participants to process what they had discussed during the session Provide an opportunity for people to express in writing what was not expressed verbally
The participants belief on why it is timely to talk about learning disabilities	As above
Information	Purpose
The learning needs and preferred learning formats (i.e. training, websites etc.) for the participants	To help inform our decisions for potential next steps
Session feedback	Purpose
The participants were asked to rank the importance of the information provided and what made it important or unimportant	Outcome evaluation – was this a good use of their time?
The participants were asked, if as a result of the session, they could foresee themselves initiating conversations about learning disabilities	This question was our success indicator. It helped measure if community development or community capacity building had occurred
Contact Information	Purpose
Name, organization or not, phone number, email address	Firstly, to inform potential participants if a larger event was warranted based on the success of this Community Conversation Secondly, to provide participants with future updates

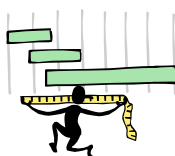
Appendix C March 2010 pilot Community Conversation Information/Feedback form

11. Design and prepare hand out packages

Review the workshop goals and decide the most useful information to disseminate. Try to balance this with costs and use of trees (paper).

The pilot hand out package included:

- a) agenda
- b) facilitator contact information
- c) the Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy Settings Project handout
- d) a definition of learning disabilities
- e) information collection/feedback form



To compare what we learned in the six hour workshop go to [page 24](#)

Appendix D Whole Life project description

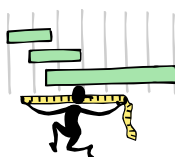
Appendix E The official definition of learning disability

12. Host and enjoy your Community Conversation

The potential for learning and networking are inherent in every community development activity.

The pilot workshop was considered a success because we were able to:

- a) ensure the complete set up of the workshop before the participants arrived
- b) begin and end on time
- c) accomplish everything on the agenda
- d) observe engaged participation and lively conversation from those who attended



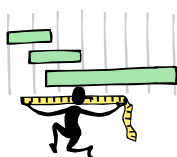
To compare what we learned in the six hour workshop go to [page 25](#)

13. Collate and disseminate any information gathered at the Conversation

Decide on the most succinct method to collate and share what you learned.

In the pilot session:

- the programs, services and resources that the participants were aware of, were collected on flip chart paper and shared during the workshop
- the information/feedback form was used as a template for collating and recording the participant's workshop comments and responses
- the facilitators held a post-event meeting to review and evaluate the workshop



To compare what we learned in the six hour workshop go to [page 26](#)

14. Review outcomes and learning

A review of the planning, implementing and hosting of a Community Conversation can expose the needs for further community development around learning disabilities.

The following was learned from the pilot:

The feedback showed that the importance of the provided information:

	Moderately	Important	Extremely
Whole Life Project	2	9	9

"It was new information to me & seems like an excellent resource"

"The Whole Life project will benefit our Family Literacy students and curriculum development & delivery."

"Important – to take back to the employment center & share with other staff members"

	Important	Extremely
Learning Disabilities	15	5

"Increased my scope of understanding, ie: definitions, resources"

"Important for program development and adaptation of teaching materials"

"Contacts made today & information shared"

Participants believed that the biggest challenges that people with learning disabilities face are:

- self esteem issues and uncertainty about their own potential
- stigma
- access to employment, safety, housing, information, funding
- difficulty manoeuvring through everyday life

The explanations given for the most important reason to talk about learning disabilities included:

- to help a new generation
- sharing ideas
- re-evaluation and ongoing learning
- the community domino effect

The majority of participants told us that they would like to attend another/larger forum.

Yes	No	Not answered
15	3	2

The majority of participants said they would initiate conversations about learning disabilities as a result of the session.

Yes	No	Unknown
17	2	1

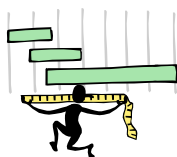
Examples of ideas of where or with whom included:

- my Spanish community
- Kiwanis
- community forum on citizenship
- colleagues, family, youth leaders
- co-workers at Ministry of Housing & Social Development.
- family literacy programs and agency accreditation
- just as it comes up in everyday life

Feedback also indicated interest/need for training in the area of screening and assessment as well as strategies /approaches to help people learn.

Summary:

The pilot Community Conversation about Learning Disabilities met the set outcomes and was deemed to be a success. The feedback indicated a desire for further training so preparations to move forward with an additional event were set in motion.



To compare what we learned in the six hour workshop go to [page 26](#)

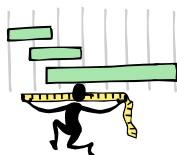
15. Initiate or make plans for any next steps

Step fifteen will vary and is completely dependent on:

- what was learned at the first Community Conversation
- community/individual capacity to provide additional Conversations.

After the March 2010 two hour pilot workshop, it was decided to proceed with an application for funding with a view to facilitating a full day Community Conversation.

To create the second Community Conversation all fifteen steps were implemented once again.

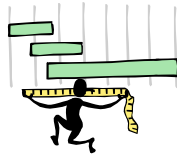


To compare what we learned in the six hour workshop go to [page 29](#)

Part 2: The “How to” Steps – 6 Hour Workshop

1) Gather people to plan and host a Community Conversation:

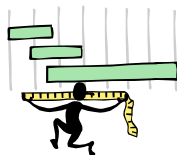
The partnership of 2 organizations (Chilliwack Community Services & Chilliwack Learning Community Society) was expanded to include the University of the Fraser Valley.



To compare what we learned in the pilot two hour workshop go to [page 4](#)

2) Scan your community:

Due to the pilot we were aware that there was an interest in screening/assessment and strategies /approaches to help people learn. A search for local experts was initiated.



To compare what we learned in the pilot two hour workshop go to [page 4](#)

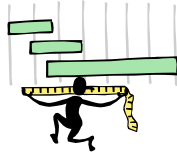
3) Determine your target audience, what your goals are and how you will know you’ve reached them:

A broad **targeted audience** was the aim for the full-day, October 2010 Community Conversation.

The established **goals** were:

- a. To increase awareness about:
 - the Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy Settings Project
 - the importance of talking about learning disabilities
 - how screening and assessment happens in Chilliwack
 - where/who our local experts and resources are
- b. Increase community capacity to detect a possible Learning Disability and provide resources, strategies and approaches to help people learn
- c. To provide a venue where the community could discuss any possible next steps for carrying on conversations about learning disabilities.

Feedback forms were again included in the session as a way of capturing information about the extent to which the **goals were met**.



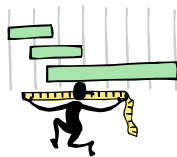
To compare what we learned in the pilot two hour workshop go to [page 5](#)

4) Figure out how to accomplish your goals

Once again, the intention was to create an inclusive event that anyone in our community who wanted to learn more about learning disabilities would attend. The goal to be people friendly was kept in mind when considering the setting and presentations.

Our community wants best-practice information on how to support the learning needs of its citizens. A question that arose from the pilot was: How do I support the learning needs of this adult, who seems to have a learning disability but has never been assessed? This question created the focus for the full day training.

Many of the components from our first session were implemented again as well as the items identified by participants who attended the pilot.



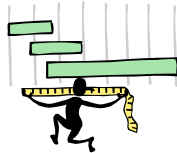
To compare what we learned in the pilot two hour workshop go to [page 6](#)

Goal	Potential Item and/or activity	Notes
Relationship building Establishing a comfortable learning environment	Welcome Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We factored in a few extra minutes for starting late (because that just happens sometimes) Welcome and acknowledgements Introduction of facilitators Housekeeping details
Relationship building Establishing a comfortable learning environment	Interactive Warm Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include an opportunity for people to introduce themselves (either to the whole group or at their table) A question to help people focus on the session and topic
To increase knowledge about what learning disabilities are	What is the Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy Settings Project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation – provide acknowledgement, context and overview of the project Review or note hand outs on the Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy Settings Project
To increase knowledge of what expertise and resources are in Chilliwack, in the region and in the province	Introduction to the Whole Life and Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy settings project website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation – show the website to the group via a lap top computer and projector
To increase awareness about where/who our local experts and resources are	Continue to develop the community resource document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a way for the participants to add to the resources listed during the pilot. Update and print during the session and provide copies to each participant at the end of the day

Goal	Potential Item and/or activity	Notes
Relationship building To increase understanding of people who have learning disabilities	Table Group Conversation and Discussion: What do you believe is the biggest challenge that persons with Learning Disability face?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables of approximately 5 people • Facilitator/recorder at each table • Questions to generate exploration and learning; and to share existing knowledge or expertise • The participants exchange information and viewpoints; and pool information • High priority for spending as much time as possible on conversation within the session
To provide a venue where the community could discuss any possible next steps for carrying on conversations about learning disabilities	Next Steps/Feedback to shape next steps	Time for people to say a word or two about the session and complete information/feedback forms
	Thank you	Thank participants and hosts and end on time

5) Determine a budget:

We were very pleased to learn that we had been successful in our grant application to the Whole Life Project for \$3,000.00. We set our budget to include – venue, stationary, clerical/coordination support, speakers' fees, and food/refreshments.



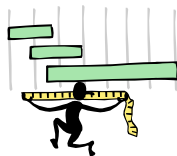
To compare what we learned in the pilot two hour workshop go to [page 9](#)

6) Determine logistics (i.e. date, time, location, food/refreshments):

We decided to develop a 6 hour Community Conversation because of 1) the importance of the topic of learning disabilities, 2) the interest expressed by the community on this topic and 3) the addition of funds/budget.

We were very pleased to be provided with a classroom at the University of the Fraser Valley which had:

- a central location with parking and public transportation nearby
- an accessible building (i.e. elevators)
- on site caterers for lunch and refreshments
- the technical equipment and support we needed (which included access to a printer for printing final products for the participants – Community Resource List and Chilliwack's Top Ten Tips).

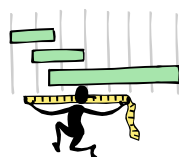


To compare what we learned in the pilot two hour workshop go to [page 9](#)

7) Design the agenda:

The agenda for the October Community Conversation:

Time	Item
8:45	Coffee and Muffins
9:00	Opening/Welcome
9:10	Presentation by Betsy Alkenbrack of the "Whole Life" Team:
10:30	Coffee Break
10:45	Presentation by University of the Fraser Valley
11:45	Presentation by Ford Mountain Correctional Centre
12:30	Lunch
1:15	Learning disabilities resources in our community
1:30	The Chilliwack Learning Community Society, Chilliwack's Top 10 Tips Challenges faced by people with learning disabilities
2:30	Feedback and Closing

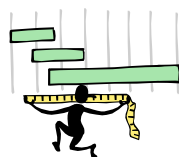


To compare what we learned in the pilot two hour workshop go to [page 10](#)

Appendix F October 2010 Community Conversation Agenda

8) Promote the Community Conversation event:

A flyer was produced for the event and was distributed widely through email.



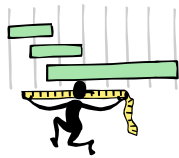
To compare what we learned in the pilot two hour workshop go to [page 11](#)

Appendix G October 2010 Community Conversation promotional flyer

9) Produce a supply list and gather what you need:

We added the following items to our supply list:

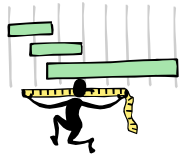
- writing paper
- duotang covers and labels for handout packages
- table top manipulative activities, such as fiddle sticks/pipe cleaners for playing with
- microphone and speakers (to ensure everyone would be able to hear any computer presentations that included sound)
- food and refreshments.



To compare what we learned in the pilot two hour workshop go to [page 11](#)

10) Determine the amount and nature of the feedback you would like to gather:

We adapted our initial feedback form to make it applicable for this session. For example, we did not collect information about “helpful resources” as that topic was incorporated into the actual session.



To compare what we learned in the pilot two hour workshop go to [page 12](#)

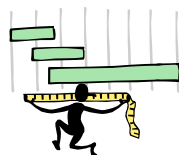
Appendix H October 2010 Feedback/Information Collection Form

11) Design and prepare hand out packages:

The hand out packages included the same material as the first session with the addition of:

- a collection slip for people to use for recording resources to add to the data base
- Understanding Learning Disabilities hand out
- a handout package from Betsy Alkenbrack that included:
 - A Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy Settings
 - Creating a Learning Portrait
 - Top 10 Tips for creating a learning environment that works for everyone, including those with learning disabilities
 - Bow Valley College Learning Disabilities Check List.

Copies of the information collected to date for the Community Resource list were placed on each table.



To compare what we learned in the pilot two hour workshop go to [page 14](#)

Appendix I Community Resource Data Collection Slip

Appendix J Understanding Learning Disabilities

Appendix K A Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy Settings

Appendix L Creating a Learning Portrait

Appendix M Top 10 Tips for creating a learning environment that works for everyone, including those with a learning disability

Appendix N Bow Valley College Learning Disabilities Check List

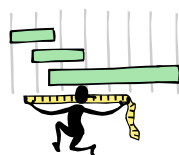
12) Host and enjoy your Community Conversation:

We did! All presentations were high quality and included rich discussions. The original goal was to produce a list of “Top 10” ways to create learning environments that work for everyone, including those with learning disabilities – however – we settled on a list of 25 tips in order to accommodate everyone’s ideas.

A conversation about next steps revealed interest in a learning disabilities network, but there appears to be a lack of community capacity to take the lead to establish a new group. As an alternative, the Chilliwack Learning Community Society invited participants to consider joining an existing Adult Literacy task group. This group would be willing to add the topic of learning disabilities to their existing agenda.

We pre-arranged for any leftover food to be picked up and distributed to people who would appreciate it. We were also very pleased to have clerical help who added an additional element of efficiency to the day by:

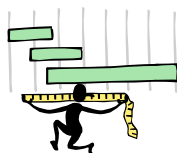
- Taking care of the registration table and providing people with their hand out packages and name tags,
- Typing and printed an updated resource list, and Chilliwack’s Top Ten tips throughout the day.



To compare what we learned in the pilot two hour workshop go to [page 14](#)

13) Collate and disseminate any information gathered at the Conversation:

We agreed to post this document, the updated resource list and the “top 25” document on the local literacy organization’s website (Chilliwack Learning Community Society) www.chilliwacklearning.com. An email will be sent out to the participants when these documents are posted.



To compare what we learned in the pilot two hour workshop go to [page 15](#)

Appendix O Community Resource List

Appendix P Chilliwack’s Top 25 Tips for creating learning environments that work for everyone including those with learning disabilities

14) Review outcomes and learning:

A review of the feedback forms revealed that the vast majority of participants found the information discussed during the day to be important. They also said they would carry on conversations about learning disabilities.

	not important	somewhat	moderately	important	extremely
Whole Life Project	0	0	0	13	4
Learning Disabilities	0	0	1	12	5
Chilliwack’s LD Resources	0	0	1	12	5
Top 10 Tips	1	1	1	12	3

Do you think you will initiate conversations about learning disabilities as a result of joining today’s Conversations?

Yes: 13 No: 0 Maybe (I hope so.)

Examples of what participants said about the importance of information about the Whole Life Project and Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy Settings Project:

- As a teacher, I am looking for updated information
- As a facilitator it increases my resources & knowledge
- Great info & resource(s)
- Will explore website; of particular interest FASD blog
- Resource for future learning / tutoring

Examples of what participants said about the importance of the information on learning disabilities:

- Really increased my empathy & understanding of the system
- Identified barriers
- The more they're discussed, the higher the awareness, the more people can share their experiences & knowledge, the better for our society
- Raising awareness of assessments & differences between Ministries
- Recognition of possible disabilities in students
- I need to understand LD better.

Examples of what participants said about the importance of having a Chilliwack Resource list:

- Good to be able to pass this information onto parents and students
- Impressive how well-informed people in group were
- Invaluable resources
- Great that we worked on a list today
- I have no personal experience with these resources. Improved my awareness.

Examples of what participants said about the importance of information on Chilliwack's Top 10 Tips for creating a learning environment that works for everyone, including those with learning disabilities.

- Good to have "outside" points of view
- These are good tips for any classroom
- Good reminders & tips, useful for implementing in day to day work environments
- Chance to reinforce principles & see new perspectives & improve my interaction with those affected by LDs.

Ideas cited about where or with whom to talk about learning disabilities that were different than the list from the first session included:

- program participants
- literacy organizations
- university
- students
- parents
- school district

Others wrote that they would:

- advocate; educate
- inform myself about what is available in the community so I can pass the info along when appropriate

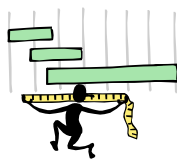
Examples of what participants believed the biggest challenge facing persons with learning disabilities, which differed from the pilot session:

- 3 A's – appearance, acceptance, assessment
- Lack of affordable/free resources for assessment, courses, accommodations
- Eroded self-esteem, anxiety, depression, lack of trust
- Access to resources that are good matches for your life, support & funding
- Multiple barriers.

Examples of why participants thought it was timely to talk about learning disabilities, which differed from the pilot session:

- To help children / adults gain access to services / programs
- More identification of learning disabilities requires more resources & advocates
- Resources are available now! (But learning disabilities will always be here.)
- Having a strong support system
- Awareness; mindfulness; acceptance
- To network with any / all resources out there & to advocate for them
- public discussion
- To make it easier for people to access resources
- Awareness, ongoing financial support
- To learn of services available in order to make referrals & network
- Public education to reduce stigma attached.

The extensive positive feedback highlighted the depth of learning that took place during the day. We determined that a learning disabilities conversation is a very important activity for a community to have.

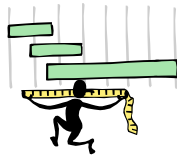


To compare what we learned in the pilot two hour workshop go to [page 15](#)

15) Initiate or make plans for any next steps:

Our post event “to do” list included:

- posting information collated at the session (as mentioned above)
- completing a project report
- developing this document “A How To Design and Host a Community Conversation about Learning Disabilities”
- invite interested participants to join the Chilliwack Learning Community Society’s Adult Literacy Task Group



To compare what we learned in the pilot two hour workshop go to [page 17](#)

End Note

Thank you for reading this document. We hope you enjoyed reading and found it to be helpful. Good luck with “carrying on the Conversation”.



A Community Conversation about Learning Disabilities



Agenda

Time	Activity
9:30	Welcome, Introductions
9:45	Warm Up
9:50	What is the “Whole Life” Project?
10:00	Introduction to the Whole Life and Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy website
10:20	Table Group Conversation and Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ What do you believe is the biggest challenge that persons with Learning Disability face? ❖ What helpful resources are you aware of in your community, region, or province? ❖ What other resources or opportunities could be helpful to you and/or your agency?
11:00	Review of the morning conversation
11:20	Next Steps/Feedback to shape a Regional Event
11:30	Thank you

This session is brought to you by:

The Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy Settings

The "whole life" project is hosted by Literacy BC in partnership with the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities.



**Chilliwack
Community
Services**

SHARE • GROW • BELONG



**Chilliwack
Learning
Community
Society**

A Community Conversation about Learning Disabilities

Have you ever thought about how you would buy groceries if you couldn't decipher labels? Or what if you asked directions and you couldn't understand the answer? Have you ever wondered what resources are available to help people? Do you want to know more?

Join us for a community conversation about Learning Disabilities

Wednesday March 31st from 9:30 – 11:30

At Chilliwack Community Services, Wellington St, Board Room

Please register with Cari Moore at moorec@comserv.bc.ca or 604-793-7203

(This conversation is limited to 25 people)

Who is it for? Anyone who has an interest in the topic of Learning Disabilities

This conversation will include:

- Challenges people with Learning Disabilities face
- Helpful Resources

This session is a pre cursor to a regional event and participants will be asked their opinion to help shape it. Specifically:

- What do you believe is the biggest challenge that persons with Learning Disability face?
- What helpful resources are you aware of in your community, region, or province?
- What other resources or opportunities could be helpful to you and/or your agency?

This session is brought to you by:

The Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy Settings

The "whole life" project is hosted by Literacy BC in partnership with the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities.

<http://www.literacybc.ca/LDProject/home.htm>



**Chilliwack
Community
Services**

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**Chilliwack
Learning
Community
Society**



A Community Conversation about Learning Disabilities Feedback

Appendix C

For you, how **important** is the information received today?

	not important	somewhat	moderately	important	extremely
Whole Life Project					
In what way was the information important or not important for you?					
	not important	somewhat	moderately	important	extremely
Learning Disabilities					
In what way was the information important or not important for you?					

What do you believe is the biggest challenge that persons with LDs face?

What do you think is the most important reason to talk about LD at this time?

Would you like to continue the conversation at a Regional Forum?

Yes_____ No_____

If yes Print Name	Organization if applicable	Phone number	Email address

Do you think you will initiate conversations about learning disabilities as a result of joining today's Conversations?

Yes_____ No_____

If yes, please share you ideas about where or with whom:

If no, is there anything you will do as a result of today's Conversations?

Thank you for your time!!!



A Community Conversation about Learning Disabilities Feedback

What helpful resources are you aware of in your community, region, or province?
(Publication, web sites, people) Please use back of page if you need more space.

Name of Resource or Person	Topic	Location or Contact Information	Cost

What areas are you most interested in learning more about?	Preferred Format					
	Training	Manuals Brochures Booklet	On line i.e. on a website	DVD	Power Point	Other
General information about LDs						
Screening and Assessments						
Acquired LDs (i.e. trauma, brain injury...)						
Please specify						
LDs that people are born with (i.e. FASD, autism etc.)						
Please specify						
Strategies / approaches to help people learn						
Best Practices						
Directory of Services						
Opportunities to carry on Conversations						
Other –						

Additional comments:

Thank you for your time!!!

Resources from the Community Conversation about Learning Disabilities

Learning Disabilities and Whole Life Learning Website

<http://www.ldandwholelifelearning.ca/>



Welcome

This is a project of the “Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy Settings” project, based at Literacy BC in Vancouver, Canada.

A “whole-life approach” to learning disabilities recognizes that learning is social, cultural, emotional and also deeply personal. Successful strategies for people with learning difficulties attend to the “whole person” and diverse learning styles. In fact, successful learning strategies for people with learning difficulties can work for everyone.

This site features articles, resources, facilitated discussion forums and a blog. Please feel free to contribute to the forums, access our resources and let us know how we can support you and your literacy program to meet the needs of adults with learning difficulties!

On the website you will find:

- What is the Project?
- Who is involved?
- Why is it important?
- What are the goals?
- How do I get involved?

Contact information for Workshop Facilitators:

Family Literacy Facilitator Pamela Auffray

auffrayp@comserv.bc.ca

604-792-1631 ext. 230

Chilliwack Learning Community Society

Literacy Outreach Coordinator Debbie Denault

debbied@chilliwacklearning.com

www.chilliwacklearning.com

604-795-0025 ext. 2434

The official definition of a learning disability

Adopted by the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada January 30, 2002

<http://www.ldac-taac.ca/>

“Learning Disabilities” refer to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual deficiency.

Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning. These include, but are not limited to: language processing; phonological processing; visual spatial processing; processing speed; memory and attention; and executive functions (e.g. planning and decision-making).

Learning disabilities range in severity and may interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following:

- Oral language (e.g. listening, speaking, understanding);
- Reading (e.g. decoding, phonetic knowledge, word recognition, comprehension);
- Written language (e.g. spelling and written expression); and
- Mathematics (e.g. computation, problem solving).
- Learning disabilities may also involve difficulties with organizational skills, social perception, social interaction and perspective taking.

Learning disabilities are lifelong. The way in which they are expressed may vary over an individual's lifetime, depending on the interaction between the demands of the environment and the individual's strengths and needs. Learning disabilities are suggested by unexpected academic under-achievement or achievement which is maintained only by unusually high levels of effort and support.

(LDAC, 2002).



A Community Conversation about Learning Disabilities

9:00 to 3:00
October 22nd at UFV

Agenda

- | | |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8:45 | Coffee and Muffins |
| 9:00 | Opening/Welcome from Pam Auffray and Debbie Denault |
| 9:10 | Presentation by Betsy Alkenbrack of the “Whole Life” Team: |
| 10:30 | Coffee Break |
| 10:45 | Presentation by Glen Whitfield, University of the Fraser Valley |
| 11:45 | Presentation by Catherine Drennan, Ford Mountain Correctional Centre |
| 12:30 | Lunch |
| 1:15 | Learning disabilities resources in our community – Pam Auffray |
| 1:30 | The Chilliwack Learning Community Society, Chilliwack’s Top 10 hints, and Challenges faced by people with Learning Disabilities – Debbie Denault |
| 2:30 | Feedback and Closing – Pam Auffray and Debbie Denault |



Join us for A Community Conversation about Learning Disabilities

Have you ever thought about how you would buy groceries if you couldn't decipher labels? Or what if you asked directions and you couldn't understand the answer? Have you ever wondered what screening & assessment tools you could use to learn how to best help a person or what community or provincial resources are available to help people? Do you want to know more?

This session is for anyone in our community who wants to learn more about Learning Disabilities

The topics:

- Why talking about Learning Disabilities is important
- The Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities project and resources
- Challenges people with Learning Disabilities face
- Screening and assessment tools
- Strategies and approaches to help people learn
- Where/who are our local experts are

Date: Friday October 22nd, 2010

Time: 9:00 to 3:00 (lunch will be provided)

Location: University of the Fraser Valley, Yale Road Campus, Room D239
(Please note that pay parking is in effect)

Register by: Friday October 15th - Space is limited to 50 people
Please register with: Debbie Denault debbied@chilliwacklearning.com (with Community Conversation registration in the subject line please) or phone 604-792-0025 ext. 2434

This session is brought to you by:

The Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy Settings

The "whole life" project is hosted by Literacy BC in partnership with the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities.

<http://www.literacybc.ca/LDProject/home.htm>





A Community Conversation about Learning Disabilities
October 22nd, 2010 **Feedback**
For you, how **important** is the information received today?

	not important	somewhat	moderately	important	extremely
Whole Life Project					
In what way was the information important or not important for you?					
	not important	somewhat	moderately	important	extremely
Learning Disabilities					
In what way was the information important or not important for you?					
	not important	somewhat	moderately	important	extremely
Chilliwack's LD Resources					
In what way was the information important or not important for you?					
	not important	somewhat	moderately	important	extremely
Top 10 Tips					
In what way was the information important or not important for you?					

What do you believe is the biggest challenge that persons with LDs face?

What do you think is the most important reason to talk about LD at this time?

Do you think you will initiate conversations about learning disabilities as a result of joining today's Conversations? Yes_____ No_____

If yes, please share you ideas about where or with whom:

If no, is there anything you will do as a result of today's Conversations?

Thank you for your feedback & any additional comments ☺

Community Resource Data Collection Slip**CHILLIWACK'S RESOURCES FOR ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES
(PLUS A FEW MORE)**

October 2010

Name of Resource or Person	Topic	Location or Contact Information	Cost

Name of Resource or Person	Topic	Location or Contact Information	Cost

Name of Resource or Person	Topic	Location or Contact Information	Cost



Understanding Learning Disabilities!

By Elizabeth Walcot-Gayda, Ph. D., Past President, LDAC

'What are learning disabilities?' 'What do they look like in my classroom?' and 'How can we help students with learning disabilities (LD) succeed?' In order to frame the responses to these frequently asked questions a current, research-based, national definition of LD¹ is used. This definition, which underlines the capacity of those with learning disabilities to be successful in their elementary, secondary and post-secondary studies, makes evident the measures needed to support secondary graduation and options at the post-secondary level.

The definition targets the following fundamental parameters:

- Learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual deficiency
- Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning
- Learning disabilities range in severity and may affect any or several areas of life
- Learning disabilities are life long
- Learning disabilities are neurobiological and/or genetic in origin

It is important to understand what is meant by each of the statements and what such impairments look like and to recognize that each presents serious implications for educational practices and policies.

Learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual deficiency

This distinction is important. As such, learning disabilities refer "to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning,"² In order for students with LD to be able to benefit and learn from the whole educational experience, instructional interventions must be appropriately balanced between general education and remediation. The question remains as to how best to do this.

Ministries of Education/Learning have generally opted for a controversial policy of full inclusion.³ Within this approach, the integration of remedial specialists within the general classroom is one model used to address the balance of remediation and education. This model may be more or less successful in providing support for students with LD depending on a number of factors: qualifications of the teacher and specialist, frequency and amount of time allotted per week, time for planning, and curriculum constraints. However, even under the best conditions, there is not enough time or support given to teachers to help them provide the same students (if needed) with materials in alternate format, or in a media, other than print, for the essential concepts of social studies, biology, history and geography. This implies that a number of students with LD miss out on broader learning opportunities, because they cannot easily and meaningfully access the same information as their peers.

Given both remediation and a solid general education, elementary students with LD can learn to the same levels as their peers and make relatively smooth transitions to middle or secondary school. In turn, secondary schools must maintain remedial services, while providing accommodations⁴ for poor reading and writing skills. By addressing students' specific learning needs, schools can foster students' engagement, and willingness to take risks and responsibility for learning. Such motivation promotes the completion of secondary studies and, thereby, creates openings to further educational options. At the present time, only a few school districts and provincial/territorial educational authorities offer this balance.

Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning

For the most part, school related information enters through the eyes (visual perception) and through the ears (auditory perception). Almost simultaneously, such information is 'processed' by different parts of the brain. Examples of these processes are "language processing; phonological processing; visual spatial processing; processing speed; memory and attention; and executive functions (e.g. planning and decision-making)."⁵ The following table provides some examples of how these cognitive impairments are manifested.

Table 1: Examples of some cognitive manifestations of learning disabilities

Impairments in processes related to:	Perceiving	Thinking	Remembering	Learning
Language Processing	Difficulties in processing sarcasm or understanding when someone is joking Difficulty taking another's perspective	Difficulties in understanding: long or complex sentence structure; and with figures of speech	Difficulties with: retrieving vocabulary words; orally presented task demands	Difficulties with new vocabulary and responses to teacher-directed questions
Phonological processing	Sounds in words (e.g. bat/bag) are confused; poor sound sequencing in words; limited automaticity in decoding	Difficulty with comprehension of content caused by lack of fluency in decoding	Difficulty retaining sound/symbol correspondence	Difficulty extracting essential concepts due to focus on decoding
Visual spatial processing	Difficulty with oral or written directions for an activity; perceiving organization of ideas in a text	Difficulty identifying main ideas in a text	Difficulty with left/right; north south, hierarchical structures	Poor integration of sequential information (days of the week, recipe)
Processing speed	Poor social interactions; does not keep up with fast-paced lessons	Few connections between isolated bits of information in texts	Slow linking of new with previously learned information	Less material covered or takes extra time and much effort to cover material
Memory	Few strategies when trying to remember content or concepts	Difficulty writing since spelling may not be automatic	Difficulty retrieving previously learned information	Forgets spelling words after test; difficulty recalling significant events in history; any new learning is difficult
Attention	Difficulty knowing when to pay attention Poor reading of social situations; impulsive	Poor concentration when putting ideas together	Little effort expended for remembering	Work may be disorganized; goes off on tangents,

Impairments in processes related to:	Perceiving	Thinking	Remembering	Learning
Executive functions (planning or decision making)	Poor recognition of value of planning; impulsive	Difficulty problem solving and understanding consequences of decisions	Difficulty in linking new with previously integrated knowledge; Few strategies	Difficulties in higher levels of learning, but has isolated pieces of knowledge

As implied, the impairments “may interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following:

- oral language (e.g. listening, speaking, understanding);
- reading (e.g. decoding, phonetic knowledge, word recognition, comprehension);
- written language (e.g. spelling and written expression); and
- mathematics (e.g. computation, problem solving).⁶

Learning disabilities range in severity and may affect any or several areas of life

Learning disabilities are identified along a continuum from mild to severe. How an individual's learning disabilities are classified relates to how significantly they interfere with current learning and with the individual's ability to function in society. For the most part, persons think of LD as related to academic problems. However, poor organizational skills, poor ability to ‘read’ social situations and to take another's perspective have significant impact on social interactions within schools, the family, significant relationships, and recreational activities.

In addition, even though students pass their academic courses, the effort required to do this or the ‘just passing’ results may indicate the presence of learning disabilities. (See Table 2.)

Table 2: Examples of general manifestations of learning disabilities

Learning disabilities are suggested by:	Examples of some manifestations of the presence of learning disabilities
Unexpected underachievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talks well on self-selected topics, but difficulty answering a teacher-directed question • Exhibits knowledge of concepts taught when tested orally, but written test responses are short and do not exhibit same level of understanding • Strengths in reasoning, but weak reading skills
Unusually high levels of effort and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework completion is very slow when compared to other children • At the college, university level, student asks to reduce course load in order to give extra time to completing work requirements • Individual receives tutoring 3/ 4 hours (or more) per week over several years or in several subjects to keep up with peers

The range of severity and the variety of academic and social/familial areas in which learning disabilities are manifested implies intervention as soon as the disability becomes apparent, whether in kindergarten, late elementary or secondary school. Intervention should initially consist of pre-referral information from the student's current teacher and a timely and specialized assessment process. Referrals may be recommended when the students are having difficulties in any of the academic areas or when the performance is inconsistent or effortful.

What does such an assessment mean for educators at the primary, secondary and postsecondary level? It implies explicit teaching of specific skills, strategies and the use of tools that are recognized in the current research literature as being part of ‘best practices’ for this population.⁷ The consequence of an assessment requires interventions that involve the family, the school, the community and the workplace, depending on the needs of the individual.

Learning disabilities are life long

Learning disabilities influence the lives of children, adolescents, young adults and adults. However, the “way in which they (learning disabilities) are expressed may vary over an individual's lifetime, depending on the interaction between the demands of the environment and the individual's strengths and needs.”⁸ Instructional intervention decision-making must take into account what the individual needs in order to be able to function in a society of the future. Within all levels of schooling, students need to know how to explain their learning disabilities and what accommodations support learning and task completion. Without this self-awareness and ability to appropriately self-advocate, persons with learning disabilities are less likely to participate in successful post-secondary studies.

Learning disabilities are neurobiological and/or genetic in origin

What are the causes of learning disabilities? How are they different from other disorders of learning? In general, it is now recognized that:

Learning disabilities are due to genetic and/or neurobiological factors or injury that alters brain functioning in a manner, which affects one or more processes related to learning.⁹

The neuro-biological basis of LD is supported by current reviews of the literature in the United States¹⁰ and Canada.¹¹ Such a basis does not imply that such students cannot learn. Taking the three first processes discussed earlier, it becomes apparent how the difficulties present themselves throughout the academic career of the students with LD.

Table 3: Examples of manifestations of neurological basis of learning disabilities at different age levels

Impairments in processes related to:	Examples of some manifestations of the presence of learning disabilities in students at the		
	Elementary Level	Secondary Level	Post-secondary Level
Language Processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty with responding to oral task demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Task demands no longer a problem, tasks seldom given only orally• Difficulty with learning new vocabulary in geography or history• May have few friends because misreads social interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has learned some vocabulary in geography and history, but has difficulty in courses, which require learning specific vocabulary (e.g. geology, medicine)• Difficulty being a roommate
Phonological processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty learning to decode	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Phonetically regular and frequently seen words are decoded, but difficulty with unfamiliar, multi-syllabic words• Difficulty learning to read a 2nd language• Tutors necessary to cover the content material	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty fulfilling the language requirements• Unfamiliar words are skipped, so loses meaning in college level texts• Great effort must be exerted to access unfamiliar words while completing assignments
Visual spatial processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty with letter formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Handwriting is barely legible• Difficulty with reading maps and understanding longitude and latitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uses word processing, so handwriting no longer a significant problem• Difficulty getting from one place to another on campus• Difficulty with organization of lab work

Educators recognize that students with learning disabilities can and do learn, but they must be prepared to review material frequently, to teach compensatory strategies (e.g. note taking skills for those with poor memory), and to present material to be learned in a variety of formats and media.

Conclusion

Knowledgeable persons with the field frequently criticize definitions of 'learning disabilities' for the choice of vocabulary, phrasing and implied ideas. Although there may never be a universally accepted definition, a definition that reflects current research is used here to make evident some of the cognitive and behavioral manifestations of learning disabilities. In turn, one hopes that a better understanding of LD will lead to more cohesion in educational approaches to these students. Canadian educational systems must begin to deal with issues of inadequate elementary and secondary programs for students with learning disabilities. The need for appropriate and timely assessment, remediation, education and accommodations is critical if these individuals are to participate fully in Canadian society.

Elizabeth Walcot-Gayda, Ph.D. is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Sherbrooke in Sherbrooke, Quebec, a former teacher and administrator of a private school for students with learning disabilities. She is also a Past President of the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada.

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¹ The LDAC definition of Learning Disabilities (2002) can be found at the following address <http://www.ldac-taac.ca/> or can be requested by post from the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC), 323 Chapel St, #2, Ottawa, ON, K1N 7Z2. (This definition has been adopted and endorsed by LDAC and its provincial affiliates, the Canadian Teachers Federation, National Education Association of Disabled Students, some provincial Ministries of Education, etc.)

² Ibid, para. 1.

³ Most definitions of full inclusion imply that the needs of students with learning disabilities are met within the context of a general class.

⁴ The term 'accommodations' refers to practices seen as supporting students with disabilities in learning content material. Examples are extra time for exams, oral exams, taped books, screen readers and voice activated writing tools. (Screen readers are software that reads aloud computer text and information on many websites. For examples see <http://www.kurzweilededu.com/> and <http://www.macspeech.com/>. For an example of a voice activated writing tools see <http://www.speakingsolutions.com/>)

⁵ LDAC definition of Learning Disabilities (2002), para. 2.

⁶ Ibid, para. 3

⁷ For a website that describes a number of instructional interventions, see <http://www.ldonline.org/>

⁸ LDAC definition of Learning Disabilities (2002), para. 4.

⁹ Ibid., para. 5.

¹⁰ L. Joseph, "The Neurobiological Basis of Reading," *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 34 (6), 2001: 566-579

¹¹ C. Fiedorowicz, E. Benezra, W. MacDonald, B. McElgunn, A. Wilson and B. Kaplan, "Neurobiological Basis of Learning Disabilities: An Update," *Learning Disabilities: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 11 (2), 2001: 61-74.

FACT SHEET <i>Understanding Learning Disabilities</i>	2004	DISTRIBUTED BY:
Learning Disabilities Association of Canada 250 City Centre Avenue, Suite 616 Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1R 6K7 (613) 238-5721 (613) 235-5391(fax) information@ldac-taac.ca www.ldac-taac.ca		

A Whole Life Approach to Learning Disabilities in Adult Literacy settings

Learning disabilities, especially in relation to adults, is not an exact science. Our understanding of learning disabilities is changing and growing rapidly – it is still a new field.

So what can educators do to support learners who have difficulties learning and/or a specific learning disability?

Be **knowledgeable** about what learning disabilities are and are not and understand the different kinds of learning disabilities that may be present.

Be **equipped** with a bank of strategies to support learners who are demonstrating difficulties

Be **flexible** and ready to discard strategies that are not working and to try new ideas.

Be **OK with complexity**: There is no magic bullet or quick fix when it comes to working with adults with learning disabilities. Take a positive, “detective approach” and involve learners in exploring the nature of their learning, what helps and what does not.

(Cesba (2007). *LBS Practitioner Training: Module Three: Working with Adults with Learning Disabilities*. Toronto: Ontario.

Handouts:

1. *Creating a Learning Portrait (Suzanne Smythe)*
2. *Screening Checklist (Bow Valley — separate attachment)*
3. *Top 10 tips for creating a learning environment that works for everyone, including those with a LD*

Creating a Learning Portrait:

A tool in screening for learning disabilities/difficulties

Suzanne Smythe

Learning is about relationships, and half the work of identifying and addressing learning difficulties in adult literacy settings is to know the learners, and to understand (and help them to understand) how they learn best.

Below are guiding questions that help us to screen for learning difficulties. People who avoid some kinds of activities or work and excel in others, who dislike some kinds of learning, who have had difficulties in school or work all their lives, are likely to have a learning difficulty.

Over time, gather information that will help you and the new learner, to best meet his/her learning needs. Be prepared to share information, to share your own learning experiences, to make this more of an ongoing conversation (don't interview on the first day of class!) Use your sensitivity to know if it is or is not OK to ask questions, and be OK with information coming out slowly as you work together.

What are your plans/goals? What would you like to work toward?

What makes it pleasant, easy for you to learn? (working alone/working with others, music, food, quiet, etc.)

What makes it difficult to learn? (e.g bright lights, background noise, music, sitting too long, listening to too many instructions, too much printed text, etc)

What was school like for you?

What subjects/parts of school did you enjoy?

What did you dislike?

What are you good at?

What do you enjoy doing?

What kinds of work have you done?

What kinds of work are you doing now?

How long have you lived in (...)?

(If appropriate): How are you children doing in school?

Your turn: What other information may be helpful in screening for learning styles and learning difficulties?

And...SHARE your experiences of learning, what makes learning difficult or enjoyable for you. Create a setting in which people talk about their learning, as part of the learning process.

Paying attention to:

Areas in which the person excels, and areas of interest

Ongoing difficulties in school related to reading, writing, behaviour, etc.

Difficulties keeping a job because of new skill requirements, organization skills, etc, organization;

Low self esteem

Children who have been diagnosed with a learning disability (LDs are hereditary)

Social supports, resources and quality of everyday life

Follow-up this conversation with informal assessment/placement that pays attention to:

Reading skills (reading a familiar text)

Fluency (Speed and accuracy)

Comprehension

Analysis of type of errors

Eyes: tracking the print in a conventional way or moving all around the page?

Pronunciation: Phonemic awareness (know the sounds the letters make?)

Writing skills

Spelling (nature of errors)

Fluency (speed and accuracy)

Handwriting (laboured or smooth, legible or?)

Sentence structure and meaning – does it make sense?

Organization/Disposition

Losing things?

Seems disoriented, gets lost?

Difficulty focusing, following instructions?

****Assess dynamically.** This means, intervene during the assessment when you see the learner is having difficulties and ask them how you can help, and what the nature of the difficulty is. This will give you valuable information about the nature of the difficulty, instead of a blanket result of can/can't do.

For more information on how LD may show up in reading, see:

http://www.lbspractitionertraining.com/prac_training/M3%20-%20Learning%20Disabilities/3.3_popup_LDandReading.htm

Top 10 Tips

For creating a learning environment that works for everyone, including those with a learning disability

Adapted from: Suzanne Smythe, "Promising strategies for supporting learning", ABEABC handouts.

1. Keep the room quiet, uncluttered and well-lit. For times of **play, song, music, dance, drama** (highly recommended for oral language development, stress and multimodal learning), involve the whole group if possible, or use a separate room for people who need it quiet.

2. Pay attention to people's bodies. People need to move, to eat properly, to hydrate, to stretch, to change activities, when they need to.

3. When making worksheets, handouts or other materials use clear language strategies:

Large font

Pictures that relate to the text

Lots of white space – do not crowd the page with text.

Draw attention to important information.

Colours if possible (if you do not have a colour copier, encourage learners to colour their handouts or flyers).

Bullets

AVOID USING ALL CAPITALS Because mixed case gives the word shape which provides visual clues.

4. Avoid asking people to read aloud in large groups unless they offer

5. Give people time to formulate answers and to complete tasks. Help others to understand this and respect other learners by saying, "we all need time to think about what we want to say. Let's all take a moment to think...or...Mary, let us know when you are ready..."

6. Show learners how to enlarge font on the computer, reduce the backlight glare on a screen and how to use a text reader. (Most recent computers have a text-reader feature). You can use this to read information on the screen, and to read information (a story, etc.) into the computer.

7. As often as possible, teach in different modes. When teaching in a group or in one-to-one settings, use your voice, print, photos and other visual/auditory cues to get across your main points. Summarize key ideas verbally and in writing. Encourage learners to make/build/draw/paint to communicate their learning. Experiment with new technology (videos, digital stories, etc)

8. Provide manipulatives for those who need to “fidget” to settle/reset their somatic system (this is a sensory-motor function whereby people re-focus and sharpen their understanding through movement/play). Clay, fimo, pipe cleaners, etc all work well).

9. Specific strategies for learners with visual processing difficulties:

- **Ensure people have had a vision screen/check.**
- Read printed material aloud.
- Provide the learners with models of printed materials so they can see the different “looks” of various types and use them for their own purposes, i.e. paragraph, book report, point form notes, lists, charts, essay etc.
- Ensure learners have learned phonemic skills and know the sounds letters make.
- Provide information in other visual forms – checklists, graphs.
- Provide explicit teaching for taking notes, making summaries, proofreading own work, preparing study notes etc.
- Limit the amount of direct copying the learner has to do.

10. Specific strategies for people with auditory processing difficulties.

- **Ensure people have had a hearing test.**
- Provide ear plugs to shut out noise in written work time
- Provide opportunities for word play, rhyming, and hearing/paying attention to first and last letters of words.
- Provide opportunities for oral language learning and vocabulary development using visual information (photos, videos, etc.)
- Use signposting in oral language: “This is important”. “first, second...”
- Break information into chunks.
- Ensure learners have been taught phonemic skills and letter-sound relationships.
- Use audio tools to support written text: computer text readers, voice recordings of important information, audio books, etc.



Learning Disabilities Checklist

Learning Disability is the term currently used to describe a handicap that interferes with someone's ability to store, process or produce information. Learning disabilities create a gap between a person's true capacity and his day-to-day production and performance. (Levine, 1984)

The following checklist was designed for Bow Valley College's ESL Literacy programs. It aims to help instructors determine whether or not an ESL literacy learner might have a learning disability that interferes with his or her learning. Although many of the patterns could also apply to English speakers, this list has been designed specifically for **English as a Second Language literacy learners**. It is not designed to professionally diagnose students. If you begin to notice inconsistencies in the learning patterns of your student and you suspect that it is more than just a language-learning problem, refer to the checklist. Mark off behaviors that the learner exhibits consistently and monitor this behavior over a period of time. Watch for patterns in where the learner seems to have difficulty.

Once you have recognized whether or not there is a learning disability present, try to work with this disability, focusing on the learner's strengths and presenting materials in a manner that is easier for the student to process. Plan tasks in such a way as to utilize different learning strategies. For example, if the student has trouble remembering words that they have read, try doing paired reading exercises: read to them, then let them read to you. Try adding visuals to the text.

The presence of one or a combination of these characteristics does not absolutely mean that there is a learning disability present. It may simply be a language-learning problem. **If you suspect that a learning disability is interfering with your learner's achievement, use the checklist to identify patterns of learning difficulties and watch to see if there is a combination of the indicators listed below.** If you repeatedly observe a combination of behaviors from the checklist and discrepancies in the learner's performance ability, or the learner identifies a history of difficulties in his/her native language, then it is most likely that there is a learning disability present.

Key things to watch for that when combined with some of the behaviors on the following checklist could indicate the presence of a learning disability are:

- **Is there a discrepancy between what the learner seems to be capable of and what he/she is actually achieving?**
- **Are there discrepancies in the different areas of language, i.e. the learner reads well, but has difficulty writing; the learner understands when read to, but cannot understand when reading alone; the learner has great difficulty recalling information from work that he/she has completed previously?**
- **Has the learner experienced similar difficulties in learning his/her native language?**

Checklist

Written Language (reading and writing) Difficulties:

- ☐ The learner reads well, but does not write well or vice versa.
- ☐ The learner speaks well, but does not read or write well.
- ☐ The learner understands when material is read to him/her, but does not understand text when he/she reads alone.
- ☐ The learner has difficulty recognizing and using word analysis skills for reading and spelling.
- ☐ The learner's written language may be comprised of ideas that are tangled together, lacking paragraph organization, main idea and structure while his/her oral language displays much more complexity.
- ☐ The learner makes many spelling errors and spells the same word a number of different ways in the same piece of writing.
- ☐ When the learner spells on paper, it is very different from their oral spelling.
- ☐ The learner unintentionally omits, substitutes or inserts words in written work. It seems that the brain is saying one thing, but the hand operates as though it has a mind of its own.
- ☐ The learner learned how to write with a pencil in their own language, yet still displays labored handwriting, uneven pressure, lots of broken pencil points, awkward pencil grip and unique letter format.
- ☐ The learner exhibits a lack of punctuation or overuse of punctuation as though he/she cannot hear the breaks and rhythm of language.
- ☐ The learner uses familiar words in the wrong context, confuses words intended with similar ones, or makes up his/her own words.
- ☐ The learner has difficulty listening and taking notes at the same time.

Visual Processing Problems:

- The learner confuses similar letters or numbers, reverses them, or confuses the order of letters, numbers or syllables in a sentence.
- The learner adds, reverses or substitutes words without meaning to. He/she has trouble tracking when reading and may mix up words from lines above or below.
- The learner is unable to read familiar words in isolation, but has no difficulty with the same words in context.
- The learner does not notice errors when proof reading. He/she doesn't catch omitted words or errors when reading for meaning.

Auditory Processing and Oral Language Difficulties:

- It takes the learner a very long time to answer questions, but the answers are usually correct.
- The learner has great difficulty understanding and applying phonics.
- The learner has difficulty remembering a series of instructions told to him/her orally, but has no trouble remembering these instructions if they are written down.
- The learner has difficulty understanding speech unless they can see the person speak, and the person speaks slowly and distinctly.
- It takes the learner a very long time to process and respond to questions presented to him/her.

Classroom Behavior / Organization / Attention Difficulties:

- ☐ There is performance inconsistency from day to day.
- ☐ The learner appears to tire quickly or may be easily distracted.
- ☐ The learner is not able to block out background noise distractions and focus on the task at hand. He/she may appear to be daydreaming or blanking out.
- ☐ The learner fidgets a lot or needs to get up and move around the room to keep alert and focused.
- ☐ The learner consistently needs more than the usual amount of time to complete tasks.
- ☐ The learner appears to be forgetful.
- ☐ The learner has difficulty sequencing.
- ☐ The learner tends to repeat a task over and over again, or continues to refer to a past lesson or error even after you have moved on.
- ☐ The learner seems disorganized in time and space: he/she confuses left and right, up and down, and seemingly has no concept of time.
- ☐ The learner has trouble paying attention when listening to speech unless it is accompanied by pictures, gestures and other non-verbal cues.

Social Behavior Irregularities:

- ☐ The learner may be overly defensive, and reacts out of proportion to the simple correction of an error.
- ☐ The learner has great difficulty understanding humor and using it appropriately.

Adapted from:

Karassik, June (1989). *Literacy and Learning Disabilities: A handbook for literacy workers*. Ottawa, Ont.: Learning Disabilities Association of Canada.

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (1991). *Bringing Literacy Within Reach: Identifying and Teaching Adults with Learning Disabilities*. Ottawa, Ont.: LDA of Canada.

Root, Christine (1994). *A Guide to Learning Disabilities for the ESL Classroom Practitioner*. TESL – EJ Vol. 1 No.1 A-4.



Strategies for Working with Learning Disabled Students

If you encounter a student who appears to be having trouble progressing but seems capable of more, he or she may have a learning disability. Try observing the student while referring to the Learning Disability Checklist to determine whether or not there is a learning disability present.

Learning disabilities cannot be “cured,” but the instructor and student need to learn to work with them, drawing on the student’s strengths and working around the difficulties. The following strategies compiled from *A Guide to Learning Disabilities for the ESL Classroom Practitioner*, *Learning Together: The Challenge of Adult ESL Literacy*, *The Adult ESL Literacy Student and Learning Disabilities* and *LD Toolbox* can be employed to aid the student in their learning. These strategies are helpful to any learner, and many of them would benefit the non-learning disabled student as well.

- Present material using graphic or sensory media.
- Write it, say it and repeat it. Use a multi-sensory approach to teaching which uses all of the student’s senses to reinforce learning: Have the student listen to the way a word or letter sounds, see the way it looks in writing and feel the movement of the hand when writing it or of the mouth when saying it. Many students must see, say, hear, discuss, or draw things before they can fully understand new materials presented.
- Use colour for visual impact.
- Always explain the purpose of each lesson or activity.
- Never make assumptions about what the learner already knows. Always explain things clearly and precisely.
- Re-teach and review materials consistently and in a variety of different manners.
- Make your student feel comfortable asking for repetition. When you do repeat, make sure you use the exact same language so that you do not defeat the purpose of the repetition.
- Break learning down into small, sequential tasks and issue instructions for each part one at a time.

- To check for understanding, have the student tell you what they are going to do after instructions have been given.
- Give the student time to process the instructions given to him/her before beginning a task.
- To check for accuracy, provide the student with opportunities at the end of each activity to express what has been taught in their own words.
- Give the student extra time to complete in-class assignments, homework and tests.
- Try using alternative formats for tests and assignments, such as on the computer.
- If the student has access to a word processor, encourage him/her to use it. Students who have fine motor, sequencing and spelling problems will be less frustrated when writing with a word processor to help them rewrite and revise.
- Give the student short-term tasks with short breaks in between the tasks.
- Provide plenty of pre-discussion, pre-writing and pre-reading for students to think about items that will be covered in class.
- Reduce the level of visual and auditory distraction in the learning environment.
- When presenting new topics and tasks, do so in a very structured, concrete manner. Don't jump from one topic to another, and always move from easy to more difficult and from concrete to abstract. Relate new materials to daily life.
- Provide physical demonstration of abstract concepts whenever possible.
- Build on what the student already knows, and make learning developmental.
- Teach new concepts by relating them to practical applications.
- Whenever possible, organize new material in clusters by category.
- Help the student organize his/her notebooks on a regular basis.
- Establish a routine to promote organization and consistency.
- Look for the student's learning strengths. Build on these strengths and eliminate the weaknesses. Provide the student with lots of praise and reinforcement.

- Talk to the student about how they think they learn best and make a chart with them outlining what they think are their strengths and challenges in each area of learning (reading, writing, listening, memory, attention, etc.) You can learn a lot from his/her perception of how he/she learns.
- Make eye contact frequently to maintain attention and encourage participation.
- Encourage the student to review their work before completing a task and to check for errors.
- Encourage a student with visual problems to use a marker or their finger to keep their place when reading.
- When building a sight vocabulary, have the learner practice visualizing a new word by closing their eyes and trying to see it flashing on a screen in their mind.
- Read together with the student. Have them follow along visually while you are reading, and then give them a turn reading while you follow along.
- Make new material easier to understand by using pictures, charts, maps and diagrams.
- Encourage the learner to use context clues to self-correct errors when reading.

While this handout does not focus on assessing modalities, when working with learning disabled learners a key technique is to watch for strengths and weaknesses in the individual's learning pattern. Focus on these strengths to help the learner capture what is being taught. If you notice your student's learning strengths and weaknesses, you could employ some of the following strategies presented in the National ALLD center's article: *The Adult Literacy ESL Student and Learning Disabilities* to help him/her:

Techniques for students with visual learning problems:

Visual learning problems will make it difficult for the student to detect differences in forms, letters, and words and to retain a full mental image of what he/she has seen.

- Help the student see his/her progress using checklists, graphs, or other visuals.
- Use simple drawings to clarify new terms.
- Use colour for visual impact.
- Use visual aids: overhead projectors, films, videos, slides, chalkboards, flip charts, computer graphics, or illustrations.
- Use assistive technologies such as colour coding, calculators, computers, graph paper, etc.
- Teach visual patterns in words, numbers, pictures.
- Be sure print is large enough.
- Select materials with simple visual layouts.

Techniques for students with auditory learning problems:

Individuals with auditory learning problems often have difficulty recognizing differences between sounds and storing and recalling what they have heard.

- Reinforce main ideas and concepts through rephrasing rather than through verbatim repetition.
- Ensure clear pronunciation of complex or difficult words.
- Encourage the student to repeat verbal information.
- Have the student use a tape recorder as a self-checking device for pronunciation.
- Use games, songs, and rhymes to help the student listen to and repeat sounds.
- Repeat words that may be ambiguous or have unaccented syllables in them.
- Repeat blended sounds over and over again to help the student differentiate among them.
- Encourage the student to repeat verbal information.

Techniques for tactile kinesthetic learning:

Tactile learning is learning by touching and kinesthetic learning is learning by doing. Some students need to feel and manipulate objects to understand a concept. If the instructor wants to teach the difference between hard and soft, he/she could use props such as a cotton ball and a brick to illustrate each concept. To teach up and down, the student may need to actually go up and down the stairs.

- Use various types of writing tools – pencils, soft felt tip pens, large markers.
- Draw or cut out words and letters learned.
- Use clay to make letter shapes.
- Trace letters.
- Play charades for comprehension.
- Act out action verbs written or pictured on cards.

{Green, Susan, Ed. (1996). *The Adult Literacy Student and Learning Disabilities*. National ALLD Centre.}

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**CHILLIWACK'S RESOURCES FOR ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES
(PLUS A FEW MORE)**

October 2010

Name of Resource or Person	Topic	Location or Contact Information	Cost
Career Tracks	Youth Employment	45860 Cheam Ave Chilliwack, BC V2P 1N6 (604) 793-6644 supportstaff@careertracks.ca www.careertracks.ca	Free
Chilliwack Learning Community Society	Volunteer Tutors for adult learners Workplace Essential Skills Training Conversation Circle for English as a Second Language Learners	c/o UFV 45635 Yale Rd Chilliwack BC V2P 6T4 (604) 792-0025 ext. 2434 debbied@chilliwacklearning.com www.chilliwacklearning.com	Free
Chilliwack School District 33 Education Centre	Alternative school setting. Adult education	8855 Elm Drive Chilliwack, BC V2P 4Y8 (604) 792-9277 www.sd33.bc.ca/pages/onramp/10	Free
James Cameron School	Dyslexia	20245 Dewdney Trunk Rd Maple Ridge, BC V2X 3C9 (604) 465-8444 www.jcs.bc.ca	

Name of Resource or Person	Topic	Location or Contact Information	Cost
Learning Disabilities Association of British Columbia	<p>Provides programs and services to individuals with Learning Disabilities</p> <p>Conducts relevant studies on the topic of Learning Disabilities</p> <p>Advocates for government policy that better supports those with Learning Disabilities.</p>	<p>Suite 513 - 7360 137th St Surrey, BC V3W 1A3 (604) 591-5156 info@ldabc.ca www.ldabc.ca</p> <p>Fraser South: Carol Bennington (604) 464-1187 info@ldafs.org www.ldafs.org</p>	
OPPS Fund Opportunity Funding	Skills training, self employment, wage subsidies	<p>Career Tracks: Chantal 45860 Cheam Ave Chilliwack, BC V2P 1N6 (604) 793-6644 supportstaff@careertracks.ca www.careertracks.ca</p>	Free
TASK UFV program –employment skills	Pre-employment training	<p>UFV: Alyson Seale 45635 Yale Rd Chilliwack, BC V2P 6T4 (604) 702-2621 Alyson.seale@ufv.ca www.ufv.ca/uup/programs/Workplace_TASK_Program</p>	\$2,000. Funding might be possible.
Agassiz- Harrison Community Services -CALL Program Community Access to Literacy & Learning	Learner –Tutor matches Computer Basics classes ESL classes & conversation circles	<p>7086 Cheam Avenue Agassiz, BC V0M 1A2 (604) 796-2585 www.agassiz-harrison.org</p>	Free

Name of Resource or Person	Topic	Location or Contact Information	Cost
DeLamb International	SOI assessments ESI workshops	Chilliwack 1-877-894-0583 www.delamb.com delamb@myibocs.com	Varies
Pacific Developmental Pathways	Ministry referrals for Day programs for young adults with special needs	Unit 1 - 45890 Cheam Ave Chilliwack, BC V2P 1N6 (604) 795-3634 www.pacific-pathways.com	Referral based
Gizelle Debad	Workplaces for people with Disabilities	Chilliwack Society for Community Living (SEP) Supported Employment Program 9353 Mary Street Chilliwack, BC V2P 4G9 (604) 792-7726 www.cscl.org/sep_index.html	Ministry Referral
CHWK Society for Community Living	Provides services to Individuals with Developmental Disabilities	9353 Mary Street Chilliwack, BC V2P 4G9 (604) 792-7726 www.cscl.org	Referral based
British Documentary "Can't read, can't write"		Partial story on Youtube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0M6aGbfY04	
Overcoming Dyslexia		By Sally Shaywitz	\$20
Source for Dyslexia		By Regina Richards	\$50
Fraser Valley Distance Education	Assessment/ home support, education at home	49520 Prairie Central Rd Chilliwack, BC (604) 794-7310 www.fvdes.com	Free
Whole life project	Resources, Discussions, blogs		
Rewards	Decoding Words	Sopris West (Dave Clyne 604-824-6718)	\$20/Workbook \$100/ TG

Name of Resource or Person	Topic	Location or Contact Information	Cost
Fraser Valley Child Development Centre	Assessments & Key Workers	45480 Luckakuck Way Chilliwack, BC V2R 2X5 (604) 824-8760 www.fvcdc.org	Free
Triumph Vocational Services	Work prep/ employment	(Delivered by Buxton Consulting) Suite 200 - 45905 Yale Road Chilliwack, BC V2P 2M6 (604) 792-2807	Free
Jenny Horsman (researcher)	Learning and Violence research project	www.learningandviolence.net	Free
Literacy BC "Read line"	ABE/ESL Programs across BC for refer	www.directory.literacybc.ca/index2.html 1-888-READ-234	Free
The Fraser Valley Brain Injury Association	Brain injury support programs. Drop In Programs operated by Communitas Supportive Care Services.	45966 Yale Road Chilliwack, BC V2R 4A7 (604) 792-6266 info@fvbia.org www.fvbia.org	
Dr.Abraham Schmitt (author)	"Brilliant Idiot"- Easy Reading; autobiography of dyslexic psychologist with 5 university degrees	Public Library	
Norma Friesen	Employment & Training for First Nations	Sto:lo Aboriginal Employment & Skills Training (SASET) Bldg #8A - 7201 Vedder Rd Chilliwack, BC V2R 4G5 (604) 858-3691 Norma.friesen@stolonation.bc.ca www.saset.ca	Appt. based

Chilliwack's Top 25 tips for creating a learning environment that works for
everyone,
including those with a learning disability

1. Establishing trusting relationships
2. Accepting uniqueness of each individual
3. Sharing & Valuing common ground
4. Identifying individual learning styles
5. Use of humour
6. Inclusion & Respect
7. Transparency
8. Using multi-modal teaching
9. Make it relevant to their lives
10. Make learning material accessible to all, regardless of age/sex/race and or reading level
11. Safe learning environment
12. Assess achievement levels
13. Nutrition, adequate sleep, play & exercise
14. Focused sequential skill development
15. Practice – makes permanent brain paths
16. Give people time to formulate answers & to complete tasks
17. Encouragement for specific successes and recognize these
18. Give students time to explain their answers
19. Paraphrase instructions
20. Be flexible with assignments
21. Let student have credit, let their comments stand on its own
22. Awareness of cultural differences
23. SMART goal setting – Specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bound.
24. Reflect: what worked, didn't, would do differently
25. Brain based education