

Learning Exploration

Strengths, Challenges, Strategies and the Learning Exploration Tool (LET)

September 2025



1





Welcome/Introductions

No seriously... welcome. Please tell us what brought you here today.



3



What We Know Let's Zoom out for a Sec



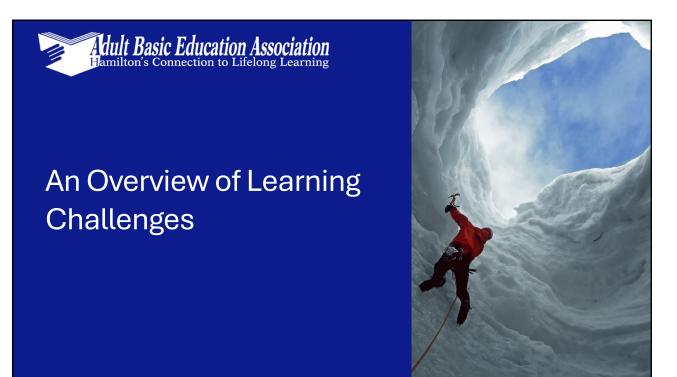
What We Know

- LBS is built for this.
- · You're awesome.
- Everyone is unique.
- Learning is dynamic.
- · Learning is for everyone.
- The "how" matters.





5



Let's Start with Strengths

(Raskind, n.d.)



Everyone has a lot they're bringing to the table. These are as diverse as the people themselves but may include

- self-awareness
- proactivity
- perseverance
- goal-setting
- use of effective support systems
- emotional coping strategies



7

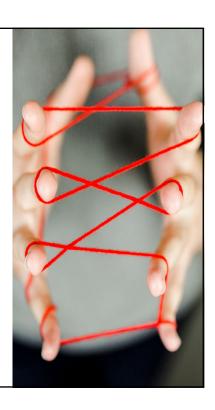
Let's Start with Strengths

(CADDAC, 2024)



Also

- bravery
- creativity
- enthusiasm/energy
- empathy
- problem-solving
- imagination, divergent thinking,
 wide range of interests
- understanding the big picture
- resilience and the ability to adapt
- hyperfocus



What Else?

What other strengths have you observed in your learners?





9

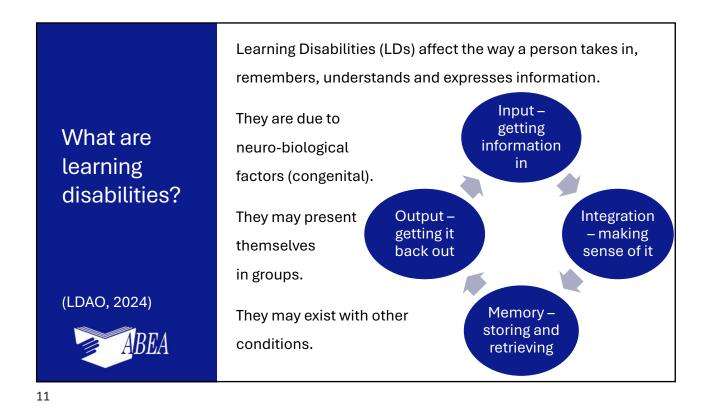
Neurodiversity

(Centre for Diverse Learners, 2024)



- neurocognitive functioning is part of natural human
 variation it's normal to be different
- there's a huge variety in how we think, learn and relate to others
- medical model psychological, neurological or physiological limitations
- includes
 - learning disabilities
 - autism
 - ADHD





People with Learning Disabilities

- people with learning disabilities are intelligent and can learn despite difficulties in processing information
- living with a learning disability can impact friendships, school, work, self-esteem and daily life
- people with learning disabilities can succeed when solid coping skills and strategies are developed



The Facts about LDs

(LDAO, 2024)



- between 5-10% of adults in Canada have a learning disability
- they come in many forms and affect people with varying levels of severity
- they're lifelong but may change how they present at different times and in different situations (mild to severe)
- they are different for each person so each learner will need individualized strategy development



13

They affect

(LDAO, 2024)



- language (receptive/expressive)
- · communication skills
- · reading, writing and math skills
- memory
- reasoning and executive functions
- coordination
- organizational skills
- social skills



Affects

(LDAO, 2024)



Learning disabilities can affect success in

- education
- work
- daily life

They may affect

- relationships
- self-esteem, self-confidence, self-efficacy

Can be associated with feelings of isolation, frustration, anger, resentfulness and negative past experiences (how is LBS different?).

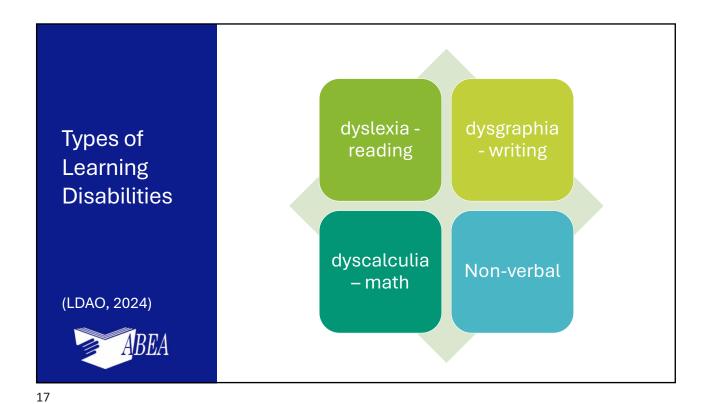
15

Neurodiversity and Mental Health

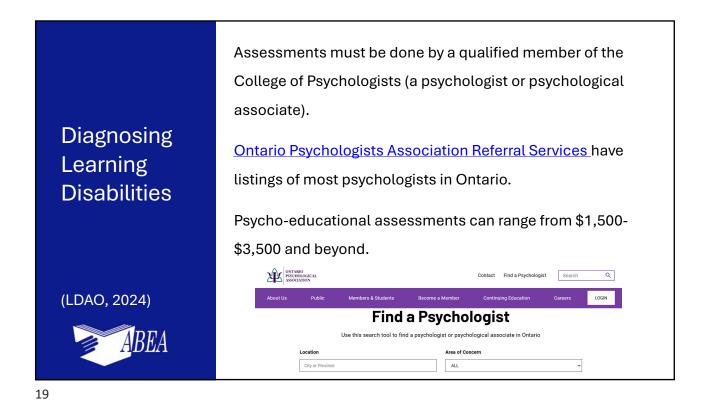


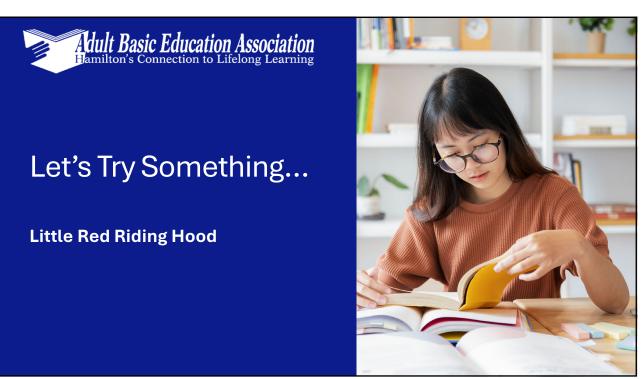
- 36% of youth with learning disabilities don't get their high school diploma (CDC, 2024)
- 46% of adults with learning disabilities are more likely to attempt death by suicide than their peers (CDC, 2024)
- 80% of adults with ADHD have at least one additional mental health condition (CADDAC, 2024)





visual-spatial skills – difficulty perceiving the relative positions of objects in space
 organizational skills - how things fit together in time and in space (example, breaking tasks down into parts)
 motor skills - physical awkwardness, writing problems
 social and emotional problems – difficulty learning the meaning of actions, the nonverbal behaviour and the emotions of others leading to difficulties with social judgement and social interaction





Let's Try Something

Wants pawn term, dare worsted ladle gull hoe lift wetter murder inner ladle cordage. Disk ladle gull worry putty ladle rat cluck wetter ladle rat hat, an fur disk raisin pimple colder Ladle Rat Rotten Hut.

Wan moaning, Ladle Rat Rotten Hut's murder colder inset.

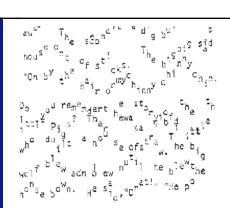
"Ladle Rat Rotten Hut, heresy ladle basking winsome burden batter an shirker cockles."



21

What Dyslexia Can Look Like





(Proper Course, 2011)

(Boland, 2022)

r is created without copying or mirroring shapes. There repeated shapes in a text is decreased. This results in a ual distortions (swirl-effect). The aim is to create internat will maintain the readers' interest and will prevent or frustrated. Diversity in text knows many variations to fact that typography for a novel is different from a new education. Even so a novel has the potential to be elhis can be achieved in any level of creativity, thinking mount of words on a sentence and the character/paper



Characteristics of Learning Challenges



23

Learning Challenges – Working Definition

(ABEA, 2005)



Learning Challenges (used today) is intended to mean

- specific learning challenges (both academic and personal/social)
- likely due to processing difficulties
- require individualized strategy and accommodation development



A Few Notes

- It's important to remember that many people have a few learning challenges characteristics. It doesn't mean that they have a learning disability.
- A person may have many learning challenges, as well as other disabilities.
- Everyone has different challenges and needs, and they need to be supported individually.



25

General Characteristics

(LDAO, 2024)



- has great strengths in some areas but great weaknesses in others
- performs similar tasks differently from day to day
- has a short attention span, is impulsive, or is distractible
- learns something one day but can't remember it the next day
- misinterprets directions or instructions



Reading, Writing and Math

(LDAO, 2024)



- reads well but doesn't write well
- has difficulty keeping their place when reading, following columns, or following small print
- has difficulty sounding out words
- has difficulty understanding what is read
- has difficulty writing ideas on paper but can express themselves orally



27

Reading, Writing and Math

(LDAO, 2024)



- has persistent problems with spelling
- often misreads or miscopies
- has persistent problems with sentence structure, writing mechanics, and organizing writing
- confuses similar letters or numbers, reverses them, or confuses their order



Robyn's Story

(Sonic Learning, 2012)





29

Specific Processing Challenges

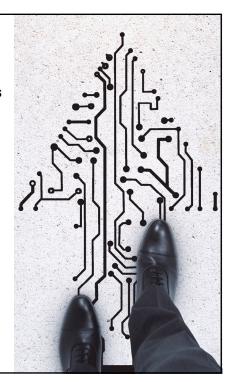
(LDAO, 2024)



- Visual Processing Challenges
- Auditory Processing Challenges
- Organizational Processing Challenges

Other

Attention/Hyperactivity



Visual Processing Challenges

(LDAO, 2024)



Visual Processing Challenges

make it difficult for a learner to make sense of information taken in through the eyes.

These challenges are not because of visual disorders such as myopia, astigmatism, etc.

They can affect a learner's reading, writing, and mathematic abilities.



31

Visual Processing Challenges -Markers

(LDAO, 2024)



- has a physical reaction to print (for example, headaches, tired or red eyes)
- may be sensitive to light (will likely have a lot of difficulty working under fluorescent light)
- text may move or shake on the page learners may see
 rivers of white down the page
- difficulty discriminating between different letters or words
- · has a lot of difficulty tracking text

Visual Processing Challenges -Markers

(LDAO, 2024)

33



- difficulty remembering the "look" of letters or words (visual memory)
- over relies on sounding out words poor sight word memory
- reading substitutions are visually similar (for example, "horse" for "house")
- spellings are usually a phonetic alternative to the correct spelling
- mixes upper and lower letters inappropriately

Visual Processing Challenges -Markers

(LDAO, 2024)



- may spell the same word differently in the same document
- confuses similar numbers or transposes numbers (wrong order)
- · has difficulty copying
- has difficulty with left/right and working in columns



Visual Processing Challenges -Example

My plan to reach a goals
is School and Stoping Smoking
but I can do it at ones.
So it will First School, First
and then setted Smoking

(ABEA, n.d.)



35

Auditory Processing Challenges

(LDAO, 2024)



Auditory Processing Challenges effect how aural information is interpreted by the brain. This can interfere with speech and language acquisition and can affect all areas of learning, especially reading and spelling.

- not a hearing problem difficulty perceiving aural information
- may not be able to recognize or isolate parts of speech or remember spoken language
- · difficulty with auditory sequencing and blending

Auditory Processing Challenges Markers

(LDAO, 2024)



- has difficulty retaining and recalling oral information
- has difficulty explaining themselves to others
- dislikes or avoids reading, especially out loud
- has a lot of difficulty or is unable to use phonics to sound out words
- may reverse or transpose letters



37

Auditory Processing Challenges Markers

(LDAO, 2024)



- has difficulty understanding text on the first reading
- spellings are not good phonetic alternatives
- letters are added or missing or in the wrong order (reverses or transposed)
- has difficulty processing numbers correctly
- says a number backwards or may transpose number when doing oral drills





(ABEA, n.d.)



9. Spell the following words. Start with the left column.

1. ride 1. NMBeF 1. August

2. More 2. Shade 2. Airport

3. Cack 3. Qutic (quit) 3. Kinching (Kitchen)

4. Sayed (said) 4. Reavard (reward) 4. Knors (Knowledge)

(iisten)

5. Staict (stiff) 5. Differ 1: Sen 5. Obsome (awarome)

6. there 6. Krow 6. fragement (program)

39

What's the
Difference?



Visual Processing	Auditory Processing
Physical reaction to print	Typically no difficulty
Difficulty tracking text – text may move on the page	Typically no difficulty
Over relies on phonics	Unable to use phonics
Misspellings are phonetic	Misspellings are not phonetic
Mixes upper/lowercase	Typically no difficulty
Spells the same word differently	Significant difficulty with all spelling
Transposes numbers	Difficulty hearing numbers
Difficulty copying	Difficulty with oral drills

Organizational Processing Challenges

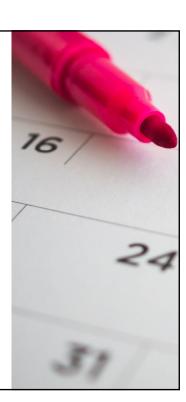
(LDAO, 2024)



Organizational Processing

Challenges make it difficult for a learner to manage time and space and organize their daily activities. The learner may have difficulties when receiving, integrating, remembering, and expressing information. The learner may also difficulty with gross and/or fine motor skills.

Similar to Non-Verbal Learning Disabilities.



41

Organizational Processing Challenges -Markers

(LDAO, 2024)



Difficulty

- remembering things
- performing under stress
- following a schedule
- prioritizing and organizing
- adjusting to change



Organizational Processing Challenges -Markers

(LDAO, 2024)



- writing isn't organized well
- has difficulty with directions
- has an awkward pencil grip
- letters are poorly formed
- may appear clumsy or poorly coordinated



43

Organizational Processing Challenges Example FARE TO WECTOME AND THERE WHO ENRY TACKS LINGE OF SENVONE Shool pay (ABEA, n.d.) ABEA

ADHD

(CADDAC, 2024)



- chronic neurodevelopmental disorder that affects approximately 3% to 5% of adults
- it's highly hereditary up to 75%
- girls are frequently not diagnosed until later in adolescence or adulthood because they often present as inattentive which is harder to spot

There are 3 types of ADHD

- Hyperactive
- Inattentive
- Combined (most common)

45

ADHD Markers

(CADDAC, 2024)



Attention Regulation

- difficulty paying attention for a period of time, especially when doing things that are repetitive or boring
- easily distracted by sounds, sights and thoughts
- unable to pay close attention to details (careless mistakes)
- hyper focus, unable to break focus and refocus attention,
 especially if what they're doing is very interesting to them
- forgetting to complete tasks, even if they're common
- frequently loosing things
- · tuning out, excessive daydreaming

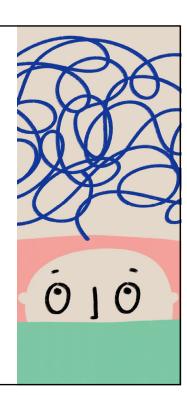
ADHD Markers

(CADDAC, 2024)



Hyperactivity

- fidgeting
- internal restlessness
- mind races or switches focus frequently
- · unable to relax
- talking too much too fast
- doing too much at once
- craving excitement and/or risky activities



47

ADHD

Markers

(CADDAC, 2024)



Impulsivity

- acting before thinking
- making impulsive decisions without thinking them through
- spending first without considering if it's a good idea
- · talking at the wrong time
- interrupting others
- · speaking without thinking
- reckless without considering the consequences
- quick to react to emotions in unacceptable ways

ADHD Markers

(CADDAC, 2024)



Executive Functioning

- difficulty prioritizing
- difficulty organizing
- procrastination
- trouble starting and finishing projects
- difficulty managing time (late, doesn't complete work)
- difficulty planning
- starts many projects but doesn't complete them
- depends on others for organization, household duties, paperwork, etc.

49

ADHD Markers

(CADDAC, 2024)



Regulating Emotions

- reacting emotionally
- emotional outbursts
- impatient
- irritable
- oversensitive to criticism
- · becomes easily frustrated
- mood swings



What about in your classes?

What % of your learners may have learning challenges?



Are attention/hyperactivity challenges prevalent with your learners?



51



Before We Dive In

This is not a diagnostic tool – we're not psychologists. ©

We use this tool to better understand a learner's

- goals
- · past experiences with learning
- strength and challenge areas related to language processing

We use this information to develop a learning plan and identify learning strategies that might be helpful.



53

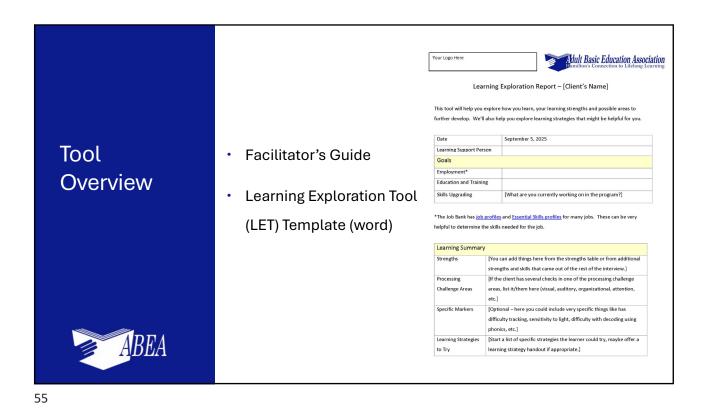
Sections





- Goals
- Learning Summary
- Strengths
- Learning Preferences
- Learning Challenges Pre-Screen
 - Learning Exploration
 - Health/Medical Information
 - Daily Tasks
 - General Learning
- Learning Processing
- School Experiences and Subjects





Learning Challenges Pre-Screen – Role Play



- · You'll be working in pairs.
- One person will be the assessor, the other the learner.
- The assessor will use the Learning Challenges Pre-Screen (or the LET template) to facilitate the pre-screen with the "learner".
- The "learner" will use the Role Play script to answer the questions.
- Together, decide if you would continue with the learning challenges checklists.
- If there's time, complete the other Role Play with switched roles.

Learning Exploration Tool

What do you think?
Would you use this?
Good, bad, needs to change.





57



Big Picture

 Learn as much as you can about the learner and how their processing challenges affect them so you can set clear and realistic expectations together.

- Recognize that behaviour may be the result of feeling confused, anxious and overwhelmed.
- Give the learner direction and explicit instruction.
- Manage the environment with predictable schedules as much as possible. Prepare the learner for changes in routines and give them notice about transitions.

(LDAO, 2024)



59

Some Definitions

Learning Strategies are specific techniques that can be customized to fit a learner's strengths and learning style.

Learning Accommodations are considerations made for the learner that take nothing away from the skill being learned but accommodate their learning needs.

Assistive Technologies are accommodations that utilize technological resources.



Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

(CAST, 2024)



The goal of UDL is to create learning environments that work for all students and gives learners agency in their learning. It's based on 3 principles.

Engagement – the learner drives what they learn.

Representation – teaching through multiple methods and perspectives.

Action and Expression – provide choice and flexibility in how learners express their learning.



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Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

61

In General

(Centre for Diverse Learners, 2024)



- consider your learning spaces sensory inputs – noise, light, other distractions that could be decreased
- encourage learners to explore how they learn and discuss strategies that might work for them
- provide lots of structure and notice of transitions
- encourage and support learners to use technology for learning



In General

(Centre for Diverse Learners, 2024)



- offer instructions in at least 2 ways – verbal and in writing and offer examples
- break things down into parts or chunks with checklists, schedules and graphic organizers
- encourage learners to take their time with their response, they may need more processing time



63

Direct Instruction



- · instructor directed, explicit, in steps
- best teaching method for learners with learning challenges
- **1. Explanation** what is the intention of the strategy?
- 2. Modeling how is it used effectively?
- **3. Self-Instruction** have the learner explain the strategy and how they can use it.
- **4. Practice** various opportunities to practice on different tasks, repeated explanation, instructions, modeling.
- **5. Feedback** from you as the instructor and the learner.
- **6. Implementation** independent and routine use of the strategy.

Direct Instruction – Group Work





Discuss how you could support a learner to use Read&Write
for Google Chrome using direct instruction.

- 1. Explanation
- 2. Modeling
- 3. Self-Instruction
- 4. Practice
- 5. Feedback
- 6. Implementation



65

Auditory Processing Strategies



- Communication typically have very good visual processing skills, give visual directions, give oral directions slowly, repeat and allow learner to process them and respond
- Reading phonics may not work, use a whole word approach (dictate stories, copying, remember shape)
- Spelling use word patterns/families (similar shape) and assistive technology
- Math colour code steps of a math problem
- · Accommodations visual aids, apps

Visual Processing Strategies

- Problem solve physical reactions particularly lighting, text/background contrast of documents
- Communication give step-by-step verbal and written directions
- Reading use a structured phonics program
- Writing/Spelling phonics-based approaches like break words into syllables or chunks
- Math use graph paper to assist with working in columns



67

Organizational Processing Strategies



- Communication/Interpersonal Skills Give the learner verbal direction and explicit instruction. Use the learner's verbal strengths to help them learn what other people learn implicitly, with kindness and patience.
- Instructions Repeat and give in multipole formats.
- Reading Use pre-reading questions.
- Writing Teach printing, cursive or typing explicitly as needed.
- Math May benefit from graph paper to practice working in columns.
- Accommodations Routine, scheduling support.

Attention Strategies

(CADDAC, 2024)



Encourage

- regular exercise
- a healthy, balanced diet
- good sleep patterns



69

Attention Strategies

(CADDAC, 2024)



- · reduce distractions
- encourage frequent breaks
- get the learner's attention before giving instructions (1-2 at a time) – repeat and allow time for processing
- · ask them to repeat instructions for understanding
- give frequent, specific and immediate feedback, encourage positive self-talk
- break activities into small chunks (checklists, graphic organizers), help them develop plans/steps, help them get started
- check-in with them to make sure they're on the right track

Attention Strategies

(CADDAC, 2024)



- work with them on self-monitoring their attention and learning about themselves (when can't I focus?)
- · give advanced notice about transitions
- teach and use reminder cues, teach time management
- help them to identify what is priority
- find out what works for them to focus earphones, quiet places, preferential seating
- encourage things that will help them focus movement,
 chewing gum, other fidget devices
- · use multi-sensory approaches
- use assistive devices like text to speech, speech to text

71

Strategy Lists for Learners



- Auditory Processing
- Visual Processing
- Organizational Processing
- · Attention/Focus



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Learning Strategies

Auditory Processing Challenges

These challenges make it difficult to make sense of information that you hear. You may have trouble sounding out words or spelling words from the sounds in the word. You may have difficulty understanding what you're reading. You may also have difficulty remembering things that you hear.

For help with any of these, connect with your instructor, tutor or us!

Here are some things you could try.

- When it's time to learn, make sure you have a good space to work.
 What works for you? Quiet, with music playing, lots of light, not so much light? Find the way you learn the best.
- Take breaks be sure to get up and walk around every 10-15 minutes so you don't get too tired.
- Take notes about what you're learning. Keep some paper nearby. Or maybe use a note app on your phone or computer. Even writing down a few words will help you work through the material and remember it.



What do you think?

What resonated with you the most from the training? What will you take with you?

Key Takeaways

Learners with learning challenges

- have a lot that they're bringing to the table identifying their strengths, talents and interests will be invaluable
- truly need specialized learning strategies to help them succeed and reach their goals

You are LBS's greatest strength – knowledgeable and passionate practitioners are the key to supporting learners to increase their skills, feel confident and transition to their next step.



75

Key Takeaways



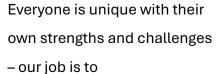
The most important elements to use in the classroom for learners with learning challenges

- use direct instruction of learning strategies
- teach material in small chunks
- · repeat, repeat, repeat
- · teach material in a variety of ways
- help the learner learn through meaning or association
- develop a structure or routine



Final Thought

- I know...
enough
already.



- create meaningful relationships
- honor the individual
- and help them see what
 we see ☺





77

Further Resources

Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada (CADDAC)

Centre for Diverse Learners (CDL)

Learning Disability Association of Ontario (LDAO)

Universal Design for Learning Guidelines



References

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79

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