Frequently Asked Questions

Updated September 2016

Categories

Alexia Disorder (Acquired dyslexia)

My student has been diagnosed with Alexia following a stroke. How can I help him learn to read again?

Alexia is an acquired disorder of reading subsequent to brain injury or stroke in a person who was previously literate. There are several types of alexic disorders, which are characterized by the types of paralexias (incorrect production of words used in oral reading) produced, and by the properties of words that tend to affect reading performance.

Alexia is discussed at http://www.strokenetwork.org/newsletter/articles/alexia.htm and apparently the extent of the acquired reading disability depends on which parts of the brain were damaged. How severe does it seem to be? Can he recognize letters? Any words? Can he sound anything out? There are descriptions of the different types of alexia at https://sites.google.com/a/georgetown.edu/center-aphasia-research-rehabilitation/about-aphasia/alexia

The information regarding the research of effective treatment plans indicate that the student will have to have both a tactile and verbal approach to learning. This means spelling the words out

loud while tracing the letters with his fingers, and he may need to first learn the letter shapes by tracing them on something really rough, like sandpaper or a piece of masonite – something with a lot of texture on it. He might move from that to writing the letters/words with sidewalk chalk – still lots of texture. It may or may not help for him to use a keyboard to write and practice writing. The research suggests that this approach to remediation works for teaching the student sight words, but not word attack skills, because the area of the brain damage is the same area that controls phonemic awareness. So basically, the issues are the same as for someone with severe dyslexia; the difference is that remediation may be very limited due to the brain damage. However, by using other channels to learn (tactile and verbal), the student may be able to learn enough sight words to function more independently.

During the (probably long) process of remediation, you should introduce the student to some technology that will help him to function and read on his own. For example, he may want to download a free text-to-speech reader like Natural Reader. Audio books are always good. Something like the Reading Pen might be helpful and the AALRC has some of those you can borrow if he wants to try one. But they're only good for scanning and hearing a word or phrase now and then, not a whole page. But it might be helpful after he's learned a lot of sight words.

Be sure that both he and the tutor or teacher understand that he'll have to practice his letters and words every day – not just once or twice a week. Otherwise, his brain will not re-route to establish the new learning pathways. He needs lots and lots of drill and repetition. They might want to make some flash cards with that puffy paint stuff so he can practice feeling the letters and words when he's not with his tutor or teacher. As always, it's good to put a picture with the letter or word on the flash card to remind him of the sound or the word.

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)

What documentation do adult students with AD/HD need to request accommodations on the GED®, and who can conduct the evaluation?

To request and receive accommodations on the GED® for documented AD/HD, the documentation must be no more than 3 years old. Certified professionals for diagnosing AD/HD include medical doctors, psychiatrists, and psychologists.

When the student goes for the initial appointment, s/he should take a copy of the AD/HD Documentation Guide for Evaluators. The doctor should write a signed letter (on his or her official letterhead) stating the diagnosis of AD/HD and providing supporting diagnostic evidence of this disability. Information presented must clearly document how the ADHD substantially limits the candidate's current ability to take the GED® Tests under standard conditions, and identify the accommodations that are requested in light of those limitations. Each suggested accommodation should include a brief rationale for the accommodation. Further, the documentation must confirm

that the ADHD symptoms are not due to other emotional/mental health factors. A DSM-5 diagnosis must be included with the certifying professional's or advocate's signature attesting to the diagnosis of ADHD.

For students with documented AD/HD, what accommodations should be applied and when should the accommodations be used?

Students with documented AD/HD should receive accommodations for any TABE tests, classroom instruction, and the official GED® Ready practice test and GED® Tests. Usually, a student with AD/HD will benefit from distraction-free testing and teaching (private room for testing), frequent breaks, and extra time to complete tasks. It may also be helpful to take only one test per day for GED® testing. GED Testing Service will ONLY approve extra time, frequent breaks, and a private room for testing for students with AD/HD, unless the student has additional disabilities that warrant other accommodations.

Auditory Processing Disability

What instructional strategies would help me teach a student who has an auditory processing disability?

- Draw the student's attention to key aspects of auditory communications as they occur (e.g., repeat important points, ensure eye contact before speaking, tell the student what's important and why, etc.).
- Back up auditory/verbal information with the same information in writing. Adding pictures may help with memory.
- Be sure everything you teach is sequenced – step 1, step 2, step 3…and the steps should be given in writing to supplement verbal instruction.
- When the teacher or tutor is working with the student verbally, go slowly.
- Ask the student to paraphrase frequently to ensure communication and comprehension have occurred.
- Teach in an environment that has reduced auditory distractions.
- Try to make all directions, questions, explanations, and instructions as clear and concise as possible and at an appropriate pace for the student.
- Use vocabulary that's on the student's level of comprehension.
- Practice rhyming. If there are words the student confuses on a regular basis, make illustrated flash cards for the student to practice saying and hearing.

- Explain and demonstrate how similar sounds are made (e.g., where the tongue is placed, how the mouth is shaped, etc.) Have the student practice in front of a mirror.

- Encourage the student to watch the lips of the person speaking.

- Identify the speech sounds the student has difficulty differentiating. Spend time each day having the student listen to sounds and have the student use those sounds in conversation, even if that conversation is contrived.

- Present one concept at a time. Be sure the student masters the concept before going to the next one.

- Use graphic organizers to visually organize information for the student.

- The following assistive technology devices may be helpful – check these out from Klaus at the AALRC (klaus@aalrc.org):
  - WhisperPhone (for subvocalization)
  - FM Loop
  - StepPad (digital tape recorder)

Autism Spectrum Disorder

What instructional strategies would help me teach a student who has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder?

- Sometimes students who have autism benefit from auditory input. If using auditory format for textbooks and computer activities as an effective accommodation for the student, audio textbooks are available from Learning Ally at www.learningally.org for students who have a Learning Ally membership. There are sometimes financial waivers available for students who cannot afford a membership.

- Natural Reader software will give your student audio access to computer activities. It's free text-to-speech software available at www.naturalreaders.com

- It may help students with autism to subvocalize when they read.

- Many students with autism are sensitive to light and/or noise. If so, avoid florescent lights. The student should be in a private workspace with natural lighting or full-spectrum light bulbs. Sometimes wearing sunglasses or a visor cap indoors will help. For noise sensitivity, the student can wear headphones or earplugs, or study in a private room.

- Time orientation may be an issue, so class schedules should be tightly structured. Try to structure each learning session in a predictable way; e.g., "We'll do 20 minutes of direct, one-on-one instruction. Then you'll do 10-15 minutes of independent practice,

then take a 5-minute break. Then maybe read for 15 minutes – any reading material." Then repeat that hour. If the schedule needs to change, be sure and give the student as much warning as possible.

- Give individual instructions only.

- Repeat your instructions and check for comprehension by asking the student to paraphrase what you said.

- Talk straight to the point, using clear language without double meaning.

- Avoid irony, sarcasm or humor since the student may misunderstand your meaning.

- Use multisensory instruction. Say it, see it, do it.

- Make sure your instruction will help the student to get and to stay organized.

- Use manipulatives whenever possible. Concrete, real-life examples of what you're teaching will be easier for the student to understand than abstract ideas.

- Find out what the student is interested in. Got any hobbies? Any favorite TV shows? Exercise? Look for materials the student can use for study that relate specifically to individual interests.

- To help with reading comprehension, try this: Start with a short paragraph about something the student is interested in. Either you or the student should type it on the computer - large font, sans serif - and type each sentence on a new line. Leave at least 4 blank lines between sentences. Print it out and now take it one sentence at a time. See if the student can use a yellow highlighter to pick out the most important words in the sentence. Can s/he then draw a picture (or find one on Google images or something) that graphically depicts what the sentence is about? Add that picture next to the sentence. If there's an action verb in there, can s/he act it out? Then the next sentence, and the next, and so on. After all that, can the student now tell you what the paragraph is about? Can s/he tell you the main point? Help the student locate the topic sentence and highlight that whole sentence with a different color highlighter. Ask the student to explain why that sentence is the topic sentence. See if s/he can find something on the internet or in a book that relates to that topic sentence. For homework, s/he does the same activity with the new paragraph s/he's found that relates to that one. I'd try doing this every day and see if the student gets any better after a week or two. Also, I would do this whole activity myself with the student watching me do it <u>before</u> I ask him to do it. If s/he's still not so confident or just can't do it, you can work as a team at first.

- If finding the main idea is too hard for now, have the student first find details and list them.

- If the student is reading a passage that has questions at the end, have him/her read the first question, then look for information in the passage that relates to that question. Highlight. Then on to #2 - highlight with a different color. And so on. Be sure the

student highlights the question itself with the same color s/he uses when looking for answer clues/details in the passage.

- Try suggestions listed under the "Reading Skills" section of this FAQ webpage.
- Set specific goals & objectives. The student needs a calendar of some sort so s/he can organize the objectives for each day. Try to set some goals that s/he can pull off in a week; some s/he can do in a month. How can you celebrate when the student reaches a goal?
- Create a portfolio of the student's best work.
- When the student turns in homework, highlight all the correct answers so s/he can see how many s/he got right instead of first focusing on what s/he got wrong.
- Sometimes a talking calculator helps.
- Look for math applications that relate to individual interests.
- Rhyming may help the student remember facts, especially if there's rhythm involved.

Blind/Visual Impairments

What testing and classroom accommodations are available for students who are blind or visually impaired?

- There is a Braille version of the GED® Ready practice test and the GED® tests. Please contact the state GED office at 501.682.1980.
- The AALRC has several closed-circuit televisions (CCTVs) available for checkout to enlarge print on the TABE.
- There are online courses available from the American Foundation for the Blind at http://elearn.afb.org/default.aspx

Deaf/Hearing Impairments

Can a sign-language interpreter be used to administer the GED® tests?

A sign-language interpreter can be used only to interpret test instructions and the essay topic but not for the multiple-choice test questions. The interpreter must be certified by a national or regional certifying agency. When an interpreter is hired, it should be made clear that the interpreter will be signing only instructions.

Resources to find interpreters in Arkansas:

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS)
Zania Musteen, 501.686.9684, zcmusteen@ars.state.ar.us

Communication Plus+ Interpreter & Consultation Service
Myra Taff-Watson, Liz Watson, 501.224.2521, mgtaffwatson@ualr.edu

What instructional strategies/tools will help a student who is deaf or hearing-impaired?

- The AALRC Library includes an FM Loop in its AT equipment. It has a headset for the speaker to use so their voice goes directly to the student's headset. The student can adjust the volume on their headset. Contact Klaus Neu, AALRC Media Coordinator, at 800.832.6242 or klaus@aalrc.org
- Use a multisensory approach to instruction, not just an interpreter.
- "Boardmaker" can print words with graphics; it's color-coded for kinesthetic grammar practice.
- The Attainment Company makes "Show Me Spelling," which has picture clues instead of auditory.
- TIMO makes software with lifelike, animated people (avatars) that sign. It's designed to be a vocabulary builder and a story builder.
- "Writing with Symbols 2000" lets you write using pictures, and it's geared more for adults than Pixwriter.
- "Co-Writer" is a good tool for students who are deaf.
- Intellitools has an overlay-maker for writing sentences.

GED® Testing Accommodations

What types of disabilities qualify a person to receive accommodations on the GED® tests?

- Intellectual disabilities
- Learning disabilities
- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder
- Physical/chronic health disabilities
- Psychological or psychiatric disabilities

How does an individual apply for accommodations for the GED® tests?

There is an online process for students to request GED® testing accommodations using their GED® account. This process is described at http://gedtestingservice.com/testers/computer-accommodations#Accommodations3

Is there a Special Education version of the GED® tests?

No, there is not a special education version of the GED® tests. All test forms are essentially the same level of difficulty. Accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities who are

approved for accommodations by the GED® Testing Service, and there are Spanish or French versions. The accommodated and special edition tests have the same questions as the regular versions.

Can a 16- or 17-year-old student get an accommodation based on a diagnosis from their local school district?

Yes, if the documentation meets the requirements of the GED® Testing Service. See documentation guidelines at http://gedtestingservice.com/testers/computer-accommodations#Accommodations5

Are there some accommodations that can be given without special approval?

Yes. The following are examples of accommodations that do not require special approval: Earplugs, one test per day, priority seating, large-print test, straightedge, temporary adhesive with spatial directions, magnifying device, colored transparent overlays, clear transparent overlays with a highlighter, and the use of graph paper for working math problems.

General Referral Information

What can parents do if they think their K-12 child may have a learning disability?

They can submit a written request to the child's school that the school provide testing to determine the existence of a learning disability. The school has 90 days to respond to the request. The parents will need to have some convincing evidence in the letter to show a basis for the request, and it would be best if the child's teacher would also make the same request. The parents should also contact the Arkansas Disability Coalition (ADC) at 800.223.1330. They provide help for parents and kids with disabilities in the K-12 system, including parent training. ADC may also send an advocate to go with the parents when they meet with school officials.

If the school denies the request, the parents may want to schedule an evaluation with a private psychologist or a local mental health center, or at the Arkansas Children's Hospital (if they're anywhere near Little Rock). Local mental health centers and Arkansas Children's Hospital accept AR Kids First, Medicare, Medicaid, etc. if the family doesn't have insurance to cover the costs. The mental health centers sometimes do this evaluation on a sliding scale, too. Some private psychologists may also accept AR Kids First, Medicare, Medicaid, etc.

Where can I find more resources to help my students with disabilities?

There is a referral directory at the Referral Directory page.

Intake/Classroom Accommodations

How do I know what accommodations my student should have for their disability?

If the student is not sure what accommodations would be the most effective for teaching and testing, the teacher and the student should partner to discuss and determine the most effective and appropriate accommodations for that individuals needs. Discuss the types of accommodations that are most commonly requested for the person's disability, as well as what the student may have used

in the past (e.g., in Special Education or Resource classes), and by reviewing the student's psychological evaluation and/or IEP.

It should be helpful to test accommodations by applying them to a short test, e.g., the survey TABE, just to get an idea about whether or not the accommodations are effective and appropriate for that individual. Those test scores are part of a screening process, and should not be reported on AERIS unless the student has current documentation of a disability. You should document the process of choosing accommodations with the student, for your own accountability and your students self-advocacy. If you have test scores available with and without accommodations, you should include that documentation with your student's request for accommodations on the GED® tests. There is a form for showing the test comparisons in Appendix H of the LD Policy Manual.

When are accommodations provided for students with documented disabilities in adult education and literacy centers?

In general, accommodations should be applied during all testing and instructional settings, including any intake tests.

LD Referral Process for Diagnosis & Documentation

Where can Arkansas adult education and literacy programs refer students for diagnosis of learning disabilities?

Referral directions are located here. Please note that the arrangements for contracted psychologists and the agreement with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services are ONLY for students who are working towards a GED® diploma.

Math Skills

What can students with learning disabilities do to help them work on math skills?

Sometimes it helps students both understand and remember math concepts and skills if you can find ways to make the abstract concepts/applications more real for the student. Raiding your kitchen/workshop is good for lots of stuff to measure with or relate to basic math like fractions/decimals/percents, geometry, etc. You can bring in sale flyers and figure cost of items with percentage or fraction discounts. Or make recipes bigger/smaller. Anything you can think of related to real life.

Here's some websites that might be helpful in terms of making abstract concepts more real using videos or ideas for class activities you can do together (or the student can do at home):

- The Futures Channel at http://www.thefutureschannel.com has an extensive collection of videos that connect learning to the real world, especially regarding math, science and technology, and

problem solving. **Some videos are free; some cost money**. Schools & districts can buy licenses to use everything, or you can buy individual dvds, like "Algebra in the Real World" for $95.

- Social studies, math, and language activities are found at http://pbskids.org/democracy/educators, which is part of the Democracy Project on PBS. Each lesson includes a short lesson summary, learning objectives, materials list, procedure, assessment tools, and follow-up lesson ideas. **Free.**

- For lessons about **using math in the home**, try http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Math/mathhome.html for activities involving fractions, percentages, probability, and geometry. The focus is on the elementary level, but the use of real items for application would be very helpful for ABE and literacy students who need the tactile-kinesthetic approach to basic math concepts. **Free.**

There's a good book for teaching algebra with manipulatives: Hands-On Algebra, by Frances M. Thompson, available at amazon.com for $2.15 if you buy from an outside vendor. It might be used, but still…the book usually costs $20, and it teaches you step-by-step how to teach every single aspect of algebra using manipulatives. It's pretty amazing.

There's an animated math dictionary at http://www.harcourtschool.com/glossary/math2/index6.html that has moving graphics that might help students remember concepts. Or you might watch some of the moving graphics and re-create those in real life by cutting out shapes or whatever and letting the student demonstrate it.

If the student is practicing math at home and forgets how to do something, s/he can go to www.webmath.com. Just type in the problem and it shows you how to solve it. Categories include math for everyone, general math, K-8 math, algebra, plots and geometry, and trigonometry and calculus.

Memory

What can students with learning disabilities do to help them remember what they've learned from one class to the next?

There are many things a student can try to help them remember what they're learning. Of course, it depends on the individual student's learning strengths, because they should use their strengths to remember. Here are some ideas students might try:

- Use a Learning Styles Inventory to determine the student's area of strengths if you don't already know. There are several free ones available online, or contact Patti White at prwhite@madisoncounty.net for something you can get as a .pdf from her.

- Visual learners can make flash cards they can keep in their pocket and just flash through the deck about 3 times a day.

- Auditory learners can record skills they're learning on tape and they can listen while driving. Or find a cd that teaches basic skills – there are tons of those – just search for "teach with music." You might check out www.rocknlearn.com, which has tons of cds and dvds that cover every subject. The graphics look pretty childish, but well…they're targeting those early grades. If something like that would help the student remember, it might be worth trying. Most is available as a iTune download for around $10, but for $13, you get a book and a cd. Some are available as iBooks for $10, which gives the audio with the book.

- Tactile-kinesthetic learners should find some specific tasks to do each day with real-life manipulatives would help. Kitchen and workshop tools are good for practicing geometry and other math skills. Shopping trips, using maps, writing letters/blogs/journals, making mind-mapping organizers while reading…be creative!

- Remember that practice is not something that happens every now and then. The student needs practice several times each day. It's the Weight Watcher's approach to the GED®. NO binging. This stuff is every day, even on the weekend, at least 3 times a day...and that's in addition to time in class. Have students do that for 2 or 3 weeks and then give a teacher-made test - something short - to see if retention is improving. This requires a lot of commitment from the student, but will improve the learning process.

- Paraphrasing helps for remembering because the student can put what they're learning in their own words. Discussions with other students or the teacher can help students practice paraphrasing.

- Make concepts into pictures.

- Have the student "teach back" to you. This works well incorporated with paraphrasing.

- Mnemonics sometimes help with retention. There are tons of those at http://www.learningdifferences.com/weekly_mnemonics/Mnemonic.htm

- If the student has access to apps on a cell phone, iPad, or sometimes on a pc that has iTunes on it, here's some links to check out for apps that would be great for frequent practice of skills:

    - Tools for Life App Finder, an online database that consists of hundreds of apps that have been used and tested by assistive technology professionals for many people with multiple disabilities. It has an easy-to-use search feature so an individual can search by area of need, such as organization, reading, writing, etc.

Psychological or Psychiatric Disabilities

What documentation do students with emotional/mental health disorders need to provide to request accommodations on the GED® tests, and who can conduct the evaluations?

The GEDTS® requirements for documentation of psychological or psychiatric disorders is available at http://gedtestingservice.com/uploads/files/d2970b9bffab8ddf3014a939f0ab902e.pdf The certifying professional or advocate should write a letter for the student that clearly states the diagnosis, the date of diagnosis, and any additional supporting documentation not covered on the form. The letter should include a list of suggested accommodations, and each suggested accommodation should include a brief rationale for the accommodation. A DSM-5 diagnosis must be included with the certifying professional's or advocate's signature attesting to the diagnosis.

Reading Skills

What can students with reading disabilities do to increase their reading speed?

- Read the questions about the paragraph before you read the paragraph, then scan for key words.
- Use a straightedge to help your eyes stay on the right line and avoid backing up & re-reading a lot. Or put a clear transparency over the page and highlight as you read.
- Use the clear transparency to highlight key words as you read for quick review.

In general, people should read more slowly when they find:

- Unfamiliar terminologies not clear in context. Try to understand it in context at that point; otherwise, read on and return to it later;
- Difficult sentence and paragraph structure; slow down enough to enable you to untangle them and get accurate context for the passage;
- Unfamiliar or abstract concepts. Look for applications or examples of your own as well as studying those of the writer. Take enough time to get them clearly in mind;
- Detailed, technical material. This includes complicated directions, statements of difficult principles, materials on which you have scant background;
- Material on which you want detailed retention.

In general, people should increase reading speed when reading the following:

- Simple material with few ideas which are new to you; move rapidly over the familiar ones; spend most of your time on the unfamiliar ideas;
- Unnecessary examples and illustrations. Since these are included to clarify ideas, move over them rapidly when they are not needed;
- Detailed explanation and idea elaboration which you do not need;
- Broad, generalized ideas and ideas which are restatements of previous ones. These can be readily grasped, even with scan techniques.

- Some students may benefit from using a program like Spreeder, found at http://www.spreeder.com/. This program allows the student to read one word at a time, or chunks of words. The student sets how fast the words are displayed, number of words to be displayed at once, font size, etc.

- Practice, practice, practice. Each and every day, at least 30 minutes a day, just read something.
- Sometimes reading out loud can increase overall reading speed.
- Is the student very distractible? This can interrupt the flow and mess up your comprehension as well as speed. Maybe have the student try reading with some kind of white noise - a fan or something - in the background to reduce distractions. If they are distracted visually, have them face the wall while reading.

- Sometimes bright lights will make it hard for people to read well. If you have florescent lights in your testing room, a baseball cap might help. Even better, ditch the fluorescents and get full-spectrum bulbs.

- Complete the developmental vision screening. The AALRC has the updated software, and it works best if you have a joystick on the pc. (Microsoft Sidewinder, about $30)

How can my student increase reading comprehension?

The "guided reading" principles work well to increase both reading comprehension and metacognitive skills. Work one-on-one to read some passages aloud to or with him. Talk first about what kinds of strategies he plans to use to help him comprehend the passage better. Make sure he includes (1) reading the questions at the end of the passage FIRST, (2) identifying words in those questions that look like key words he should watch for while he's reading, and (3) if he doesn't recognize any words, take a few minutes to Google the word and find out what it means. Then ask him some "pre-reading" questions, and these should be so generic that you can ask them prior to reading just about anything. Then read the passage to or with him, stopping every sentence or three to ask him to paraphrase what he's reading. It might help if he maps out the key concepts of the passage while he reads it , either on paper or using graphic organizing software like Inspiration®. Then read the questions at the end and see how many he can answer. Finish up by asking him what strategies he used to increase his reading comprehension, what worked, what didn't, etc.

Sometimes a student can increase their reading comprehension on their own by using Inspiration® if the student uses it while reading. I would ask the student to create a graphic organizer (picture) of the sentence, paragraph, and/or passage, using the instructional strategy of paraphrasing the information to better comprehend the meaning of the text. Students who use this approach to reading challenging text are better able to both comprehend and retain the information.

The graphic organizers can be as simple or as complicated as needed for the level of the student.

For more information as well as graphic examples, please go to www.inspiration.com.

Writing Skills

How can I teach writing skills to a student with learning disabilities who is a tactile-kinesthetic learner?

Here's something I used to do with my own students that I call "Experience Before Labels": The majority of students with learning disabilities are primarily tactile-kinesthetic learners, and many will benefit from learning new concepts, facts, and methods with a concrete, tactile/kinesthetic introduction to the new information. Below is one example of how to allow the students to experience the learning (concrete) before applying any labels (abstract).

To introduce sentence structure and parts of speech, give the student a list of words to copy on colored index cards. The word list can vary depending on the student's instructional level, but one example might be like this (although your student may need smaller words):

Pink	Green	Yellow	Blue	Orange	White
neighborhood	is	a	to	intelligent	!
workplace	are	an	below	hungry	,
school	going	the	above	demanding	.
supervisor	eats	A	across	beautiful	?
student	believes	An	over	helpful	;
dog	appears	The	behind	interesting	,
place	follows		of	challenging	.
opportunity	tries		under	silly	.

Some students will want to add their own words to the list, which is great, but may require some discussion about what kinds of words need to be with certain colors. Try to discuss the words' functions, not labels. (Ex: Ask the student, "What's the difference between the pink cards and the green cards? Can you see a 'school'? Can you see an 'is'? Can you 'eat'? Can you 'neighborhood'?" etc. Avoid talking about the labels; *e.g.* nouns, verbs, etc.) After the student has transferred each word to its color-coded index card, ask the students to arrange the cards into sentences. One sentence might look like this:

The	hungry	dog	follows	an	intelligent	student	to	
a	place	of	opportunity	.				

The student should continue to make sentences until they have at least one paragraph. (This is more fun if you do it together.) At some point – and this point varies with each student – he or she will begin to see sentence patterns by color. (Ex: "Every sentence has a pink card and a green card," or "There's always a pink card after a blue one, but sometimes there's a yellow one before the pink one.") Eventually, you can add more parts of speech with different colors, but only when the student expresses a need for more complicated sentences. There are some students who should begin this activity using only nouns, verbs, and articles.

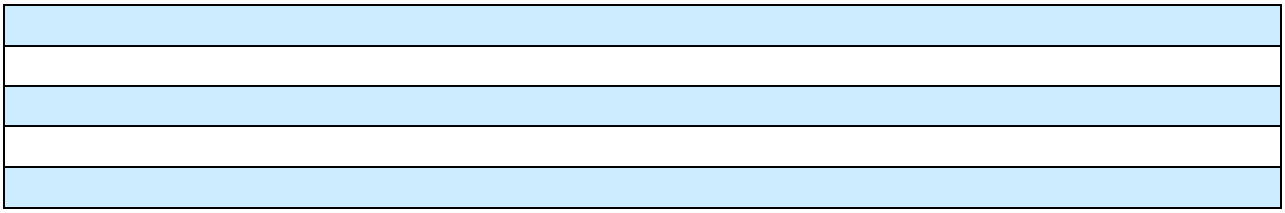
After the student can see and explain the patterns in the sentences they write, you can introduce the labels. This is where you bridge from concrete to abstract. Have the students label each card with its part of speech, and know that some words will fall in more than one category. Let the student decide how to handle those words: separate cards or make one card be half one color and half another.

Students with learning disabilities think more in terms of images (concrete) than words (abstract). By learning sentence structure and parts of speech with the creation of color-coded images, students can refer to image patterns for increased instructional retention and retrieval.

How can students with learning disabilities improve their writing skills?

Adults with learning disabilities sometimes have difficulty with writing assignments for a variety of reasons, including problems expressing their thoughts in writing, coordination and fine motor skills, spelling, mechanics, and visual perception. There are a number of instructional strategies that may help – here are a few that may be helpful for some students:

- Allow access to a keyboard for writing practice for students with fine motor difficulties.
- Some students will benefit by using a speech-to-text software such as Dragon Naturally Speaking. Windows also has a built-in speech-to-text option in their "Accessibility" menu.
- For practice with both writing and reading, encourage students to work in pairs at a keyboard. Tell them to communicate with each other for five minutes without using any spoken language or body language. This can reinforce the idea of both reading and writing as effective means of communication.
- Use Microsoft Word to create paper with rows to write on that has alternating white/color rows for writing. (Use the "insert table" function.) It looks like this:



- Use a spellchecker with auditory feedback, like the Franklin Language Master. Many online dictionaries also have a speaker icon you can click to hear the word out line, like www.dictionary.com.

- Encourage the use of block fonts (sans serif) when the student is using a keyboard. APHont is available on the AALRC Disabilities Home Page at http://aalrc.org/adminteachers/disabilities/overview.html. Some other good ones are Verdana, Arial, and Primer Print. There are also fonts available that are written as dashed lines so the student can practice tracing the letters if you print them out really big. There are a number of these fonts available for free at http://desktoppub.about.com/od/fonts/p/schoolfree.htm

- If the student is using Microsoft Word, here are some things to remember:
  - A right-click on the mouse following a word will pull up a list of choices; one is for synonyms. This is helpful for students with limited vocabularies. There's also a quick link to the thesaurus on that list.

  - Go to https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/kb/306993 for directions on installing and using the "Language Bar," a Microsoft tool that will read text out loud, among other functions.

  - Teach your student how to highlight the text for remembering phrases or sentences they may want to revise later.

  - Change the line spacing to double or more to reduce clutter.

  - To further reduce clutter, change the spacing between words. (Click "Edit," then "Replace." Type one space in the line by "Find what:" and several spaces in the line by "Replace with:". Then click "Replace All".

  - Use the "AutoCorrect" feature located in the "Tools" menu. This is an extensive database of commonly misspelled and mistyped words and abbreviations that will be replaced with the correct ones when typed. You can add or delete from this list. Consider adding words the student consistently has trouble spelling. (And no, this doesn't help them spell better, but it DOES allow them to practice writing fluency without so many discouraging mistakes.)

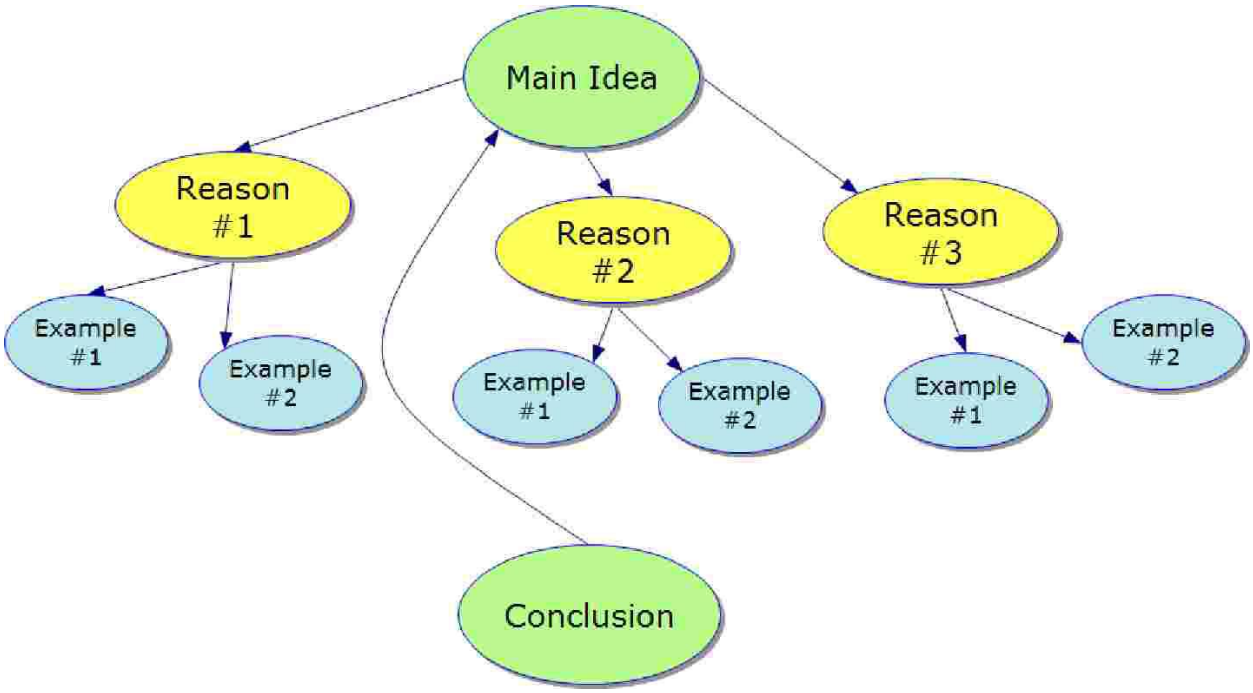
  - Increase the font size.

  - Use a different background color while writing. (Click "Format," then "Background," then choose the color you want.)
  - Use the "Auto Text" function in the "Insert" menu to reduce keystrokes and speed up the writing process.

  - Switch to "Outline" view under the "View" menu to help students organize their writing more quickly.

- Encourage the student to add graphics to their text. Google Images has millions you can search with a key word at www.google.com/images

- Use visual mapping software like “Inspiration™” to quickly brainstorm, organize, add graphics or videos, color-code, etc. for a pre-writing activity. There’s a free 30-day trial of the Inspiration software available at www.inspiration.com Here’s an example of the kind of map your student could use to practice essay writing:



Workplace

Should students with learning disabilities disclose their disability to their potential employer?

The answer usually depends on (1) the potential employee, and (2) the potential employer, so this decision should always be made on an individual basis. There are some places that I would advise the person to disclose upfront just because I know the employer is familiar with LD issues and the fact that there are strengths, not just weaknesses. Or, if the person has terrific self-advocacy skills, they can usually sell themselves on their strengths with a "sandwich approach" to advocacy: "I'm really great at following directions (strength), although it's sometimes more difficult if the directions are only given orally (weakness). But if I get those directions in writing (accommodation), I will follow your directions exactly every time (strength)." So they kind of sandwich the weakness between strengths....works best if they can link the strength to an explanation of how this helps them meet the employer's goals. I've seen this work really well for people who are afraid the employers will be mad if they disclose after they're hired, and that does sometimes happen. So they get the job, but if they don't prove how good they are really fast, it can be a bad situation.

The most comprehensive website that addresses this and other workplace disability issues is the Job Accommodation Network at http://askjan.org/.

Other online resources include:

http://ldaamerica.org/aboutld/adults/index.asp#workplace

http://ldlink.coe.utk.edu/jobseekers_employers.htm

http://ldlink.coe.utk.edu/ld_work_issues.htm (This one is an online tutorial.)