THOUGHTS ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT -
A PERSONALIZED HOLISTIC APPROACH
FOR COLLEGE LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS

Presenter:

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The seven general steps in the personalization of instruction for the college learning disabled students:

1. Gather all diagnostic data about the student ... from a variety of sources.

2. Determine strengths, weaknesses, needs. Consider how these variables match existing university majors/concentrations.

3. Plan accommodations (auxiliary aids and services) based on this knowledge and information.

4. Make preparation for the successful implementation of these services ... training for faculty/staff, the hiring of specific content area tutors, interdisciplinary communication (student services, etc.)

5. Coordinate the implementation ... incorporate personalized effort and ideas into the "mainstream" structure for each student.

6. Evaluate the student's progress. This may require special forms, the acquisition of releases to communicate with faculty, etc.

7. Make changes and adjustments as needed. Try not to be rigid. As students grow, adapt and experience, their needs change. Be open to consideration of this growth.

Higher education institutions must, as functional large educational systems, disseminate information regarding college students with learning disabilities. College and universities must make efforts toward increasing the understanding of learning disabilities among staff, faculty and all university personnel. This may be done through in-service workshops, internal and external publications (e.g. newsletters), interdisciplinary meetings, or retention committees. Once accomplished, a university can take a proactive stance rather than function in a reactionary mode.
Thoughts on Curriculum Development -
A Personalized Holistic Approach for
College Learning Disabled Students

Marsha A. Glines, Ph.D.
February 1996

With the possible exception of students functioning on Piaget's sensorimotor level (0-2 years), all students are capable of providing meaningful input in the development of curriculum.

If we demand that our students be accountable and responsible for their education, then we cannot continue to ignore their interests, their ideas or their social and emotional needs (in terms of developmental issues). One of the most appropriate means of utilizing students' abilities is to provide them with the opportunity to participate in student-directed curriculum.

It is every faculty's responsibility to consider whether personalizing the curriculum is possible so that it deals with students' abilities, interests, goals and values. This provides more possibilities for ownership of learning.

It is the faculty's responsibility, too, through the development of unique experiential, multi-modality strategies and materials to teach students to think for themselves and not to accept the first ideas that comes to them (Piaget 1964).

It is understood that there cannot exist a curriculum that is appropriate for all students. In The Open Classroom Reader edited by Charles E. Silberman, educator David Hawkins states that "... given the depth and breadth of human knowledge, the rate at which knowledge grows, and the diversity of students' interests and abilities, it seems almost self-evident that there is no single curriculum suitable for all time, or for all students at any given time."

Students are individuals and they must be respected and taught as such. Aptitudes differ, perceptual abilities differ and motivation differs between each developmental and cognitive stage and within each individual. This is particularly evident with the learning disabled student.
We must, as practitioners learn to use environment in every aspect of a more personalized curriculum. We need to be concerned with discovery - each individual's search for information and processing ability. We must help students experiment: in language, in decision making and inferential thinking and in specific skill development. And, acknowledging that it is important to emphasize comprehension, knowledge, synthesis, analysis and evaluation, it is equally important to think about curriculum as the Hadow Commission Report suggests, that students "... would gain greatly in realism and power of inspiration if an attempt were more generally made to think of the curriculum less in terms of departments of knowledge to be taught, and more in terms of activities to be fostered and interests to be broadened."

Curriculum must provide for individual development in cognitive, social, physical and emotion growth. It is our role, as faculty, to observe, encourage, challenge and help lead our students to their own discoveries and experiences regarding their abilities and intelligences as per Howard Gardner. Students become truly empowered when they understand the notion of multiple intelligence and whether their cognitive abilities lie in spatial, linguistic, personal, logical-mathematical or bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.
Sample Accommodation Form

September 1995

From: Dr. Marsha Glines
Dean, School of Education
Executive Director of The Advancement Program

To: (Faculty Name)

Subject: Modifications For Our Learning Disabled Students

This is to inform you that ___________________________ is a student in The Advancement Program. Because of his/her learning difficulties, he/she may need special assistance or consideration. A staff member from TAP can assist you and the student to implement any necessary modifications. Please call us at extensions 146, 246, or 247.

STUDENT'S RIGHTS:
College students with learning disabilities have the right to "reasonable accommodation" under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA. Provisions protecting them from discrimination on the basis of a learning disability are guaranteed.

STUDENT'S OBLIGATION:
Students must demonstrate that they have acquired the same amount of knowledge as all other students. They are obliged to use faculty accommodations responsibly. For example, students who are permitted extra time on tests must use that time conscientiously. They should also request accommodations in advance, allowing sufficient time for instructors to arrange for the modifications requested. Tests may be administered by tutors in the Academic Resource Center (ARC) building.

INSTRUCTOR'S RIGHTS:
When students request an accommodation for a specific course, the instructor of that course has the right to require specific proof of the learning disability from the student or TAP personnel. The instructor has the right, based on the course outline or syllabus, to determine if the student has learned the required material and to grade accordingly.
Name of Student: ____________________________ Date: ________________

- Notetaker/Instructor's Notes
- Books on tape
- Tape recorder for lectures
- Instructor allowing student aids (for tests, exams, papers, etc.) such as: dictionary, editing checklist, revision checklist, calculator, manipulatives
- Reduced class load

Alternative examination procedures:
- directions to test being read to student - student repeats directions - TAP staff give any needed further explanation
- students gives answers orally rather than in writing (essay exams)
- student uses tape recorder to record her/his answers, then transcribes answers onto test paper to faculty or to TAP staff
- student not required to use separate answer sheet or columns to mark answers, e.g. Scantron
- student permitted to number, underline, or circle responses
- take-home tests
- tests written in large type
- visual exam
- open note-open book
- use of flashcards
- altered test format (multiple choice; true-false, etc., instead of essay)
- paper vs. tests
- using typewriter or record answers
- colored paper
- extended time for tests
- Word processor w/spellcheck and/or grammar check

Audit class before taking it
Career planning
Academic counseling
Access to reader
Proofreading
Pre-registration
No penalty for spelling
No penalty for grammatical/capitalization/punctuation errors
Modifications of lighting conditions

Additional notes from file or interview:

Student Major ____________________________ Special admissions consideration requested: Yes No

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
Faculty Workshop

ADA and The Advancement Program

Spring 1995

Submitted by

Marsha A. Glines, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Education
Executive Director of
The Advancement Program and
The Lynn Educational Alternative Program

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407/994-0770 407/241-3939
The Advancement Program

Academic support services continue to be offered through the School of Education. English, accounting and math sessions are offered through the Academic Resource Center. A Clast remediate course is also offered through ARC. Specialized content area tutoring in the areas of science, education and business are offered through TAP. The Advancement Program, which offers three programs for students with learning differences, currently serves more than 100 students on the Lynn campus.

In Component I of The Advancement Program, students enroll in regular college courses and concurrently in elective credit courses designed for this program. One three credit specialized course is offered per semester. These courses, Language and Learning and Research and Writing, are diagnostic and offer an opportunity for students to explore their strengths, learning styles, college skills, and computer abilities and the theories of multiple intelligence. A research based text, Frames of Mind, is required reading. In Component I, programs are scheduled for each individual with special consideration usually resulting in a reduced academic course load. Tutorials, both individual and group, and study groups are facilitated by TAP personnel. Language and writing skills development support is provided.

Tests in all courses may be administered by TAP personnel and advocacy work with faculty is provided by the Executive Director. Component I is offered for a maximum of two semesters. Students in Component I may choose any program of study that the University offers as they work toward degree completion in subsequent years. Students who continue to need support services after one year and transfer students who self disclose their learning problems have the option of electing to enroll in Component II of TAP for specific tutoring and program guidance as needed.

Component III is the most comprehensive program designed for LD students who need more specific accommodations for their learning disabilities. Special faculty work with the Executive Director of TAP to monitor this learning component. Generally, for a four year period, students in Component III register for modified classes taught by our University faculty who have agreed to provide alternative teaching strategies and experiential activities for students. Students additionally enroll in the Language and Learning and Research and Writing. Working with TAP personnel and this designated faculty, students progress through this program as they decide on the human service or hospitality industry. Internships are required in each program.
The Lynn Educational Alternative Program is an extension of Lynn's TAP Program. LEAP provides special academic support services and a combination vocational training academic/internship opportunity for non-traditional and learning disabled students.

The internship component of LEAP provides the student with a paid training position in Human Service or Hospitality Services. At our on-site restaurant facility, interns gain valuable "hands-on" experience in the areas of food production and dining room service. In the classroom, students learn how restaurants and agencies are organized, financed and operated. Management responsibilities, industry opportunities, and future trends are also examined. In addition to preparing young men and women for career opportunities in the food service industry, LEAP enables students to acquire the skills necessary to enter college or to successfully achieve career placement. Upon successful completion of the LEAP program, students are issued a certificate from Lynn University.

Some of the information that follows has been adapted from various sources including:

2. Promoting Postsecondary Education for Students with Learning Disabilities (Brinckerhoff).
3. Troy State University's Seminar for Faculty, "College and the Learning Disabled Student" (presented by the 1994 Accessibility and Accommodations Committee).
4. College Teaching: From Theory to Practice by Robert J. Menjes and Marilla D. Svinicki (editors)

The following information is intended to define the nature of the curriculum and instructional practices related to the Advancement Program (TAP) component III - Human Services Major, "Z" section courses.

**Characteristics of Component III Students.** Component III students have been placed in this level of TAP because of the severity of their learning disabilities. Although the specific difficulties experienced may vary from student to student, in general, students with learning disabilities have problems in the basic psychological processes that are associated with understanding and using language. Such difficulties may be manifested, for example, in difficulty retrieving information from memory, in reading difficulties (phonologic, syntactic, and semantic), or in problems of perception and attention. In
addition to the above areas, low self-esteem is frequently a concomitant characteristic of significant learning problems.

**Nature of Component III Curriculum and Instruction.** Instructors involved in Tap Component III have indicated that the objectives for their "Z" section courses are the same as those that they have established for the Mainstream (non-Z) sections of these courses. The same cognitive content (e.g., facts, skills, concepts, generalizations, etc.) deemed important to course mastery is emphasized. The fundamental difference between mainstream and "Z" section courses is the methodology used to achieve course objectives. Given the characteristics of Component III students noted above, instructors often use hands-on/concrete experiences to facilitate an understanding of course-related material. Emphasis frequently is placed on application of concepts to "real world" concerns. This serves as a useful bridge between theory and practice. We believe that this approach is consistent with current recommendations that critical thinking and problem-solving be infused in the college curriculum. The type of assessment that follow from this experiential type of learning may differ from methods used in mainstream courses. Less emphasis is placed on memorization of facts, definitions etc. Rather, students are often required to demonstrate mastery of material through written application, simulation, role-play, and so forth. Thus, instructional and assessment practices may require that TAP students function at the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (e.g., application, analysis, synthesis).

Many TAP students have a history of negative academic experiences. Often, their learning disability was not detected early enough (if at all) to prevent the loss of self-confidence and self-esteem associated with repeated failures. Of necessity, instructors working with Component III students are especially cognizant of the impact of students' negative-self perceptions on the teaching-learning process. Specific attention is paid to providing experience that foster more positive self-appraisals and empower students as learners.

In summary, although different in some respects from concentrations offered in the mainstream, TAP Component III - Human Services major offers a curriculum that is both rigorous, and responsive to the unique needs of this population of learners.

The most widely accepted disabilities exhibit a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using spoken or written languages. These may be manifested in disorders of listening, thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling, or arithmetic. They include conditions which have been referred to as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, developmental aphasia, etc. They do not include learning problems which are due primarily to visual, hearing, or motor
handicaps, to mental retardation, emotional disturbance or to environmental disadvantage." }Section 121a.5, Federal Register, August 23, 1977.)

The most widely accepted revision was developed in 1981 (revised in 1988) by the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities. It states:

"Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example, sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance) or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences."

Are there different kinds of learning disabilities?

There are many kinds of learning disabilities, which may occur separately or together. These include dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia.

**Dyslexia** Difficulty with reading. This term often includes difficulty with spelling. Most students with dyslexia cannot sound out words by the letters. Others don't recognize words they should know. They don't understand what they are trying to read. Dyslexia is by far the most common learning disability. It is a language based disability.

**Dysgraphia.** Difficulty with writing. Students with dysgraphia have one or both of the following problems:

- Difficulty putting thoughts into writing. Written sentences are jumbled, although spoken sentences may be correct.

- Difficulty forming letters. Muscle control is poor. Writing may be very small or large and may be impossible to read.

**Dyscalculia.** Difficulty with arithmetic. Students with dyscalculia have difficulty in learning to count and in memorizing the facts about addition, subtraction, and
multiplication. In a word problem, they may not be able to state the problem in numbers. They may not understand the terms used in mathematics. They often mix up symbols + and \( \times \), - and \( \div \), etc.

**Characteristics of Students with Learning Disabilities**

1. They may be able to express ideas orally with fluency, but they may be unable to write these same ideas using correct sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and/or spelling. As a result, there is often a marked discrepancy between verbal contributions in class and in-class essays, exams, and/or papers.

2. Students with LD have processing deficits. Two of the most persistent, residual deficits are auditory and visual perceptual problems. Because some adults with LD misperceive what they hear, they misunderstand or do not comprehend what is said. As a result, many LD students may fail exams because of these misperceptions.

3. Among reading deficits, students may illustrate inaccurate comprehension, poor retention, difficulty finding the important points or main ideas, difficulty integrating reading material and lectures, and have a slow reading rate with an inability to adapt a reading speed to suit a variety of purposes.

4. Some common math errors among this population include computational skill difficulties, reasoning deficits, incomplete mastery of basis facts, difficulty in recalling a formula, number reversals and/or transpositions, and difficulty in copying problems and alignment of numbers in columns.

5. LD students have significant study skills weaknesses such as organizing and budgeting time, initiation and sustaining of consistent effort on a task, note-taking and outlining, integrating information from various sources, memorizing, and using the dictionary, thesaurus, and library and research skills.

**Many students enrolled at Lynn are diagnosed ADD**

Students with the medical condition ADD find it hard to pay attention. They are physically restless and often act without thinking. Many students with a learning disability also have ADD. The two disorders are said to be related because they often occur together and appear to have the same cause - minimal brain dysfunction.
Possible symptoms of ADD students may include decreased concentration, distractibility, impulsively, performance inconsistency difficulty with self-monitoring, and hyperactivity. These students may display poor test taking abilities, fluctuations of grades and poor comprehension and retention skills. Because of their history, students often appear lazy or unmotivated in their academic performance. These students may rely on stimulant medication to sustain attention and to decrease distractions and impulsiveness.

**LD and ADD students attend college**

Faculty may ask why students with learning disabilities come to college. They do so with the same motivations as other students: to explore interests, broaden knowledge and understanding, satisfy curiosity, and prepare to contribute to the working world and to society. They bring with them the intellectual capacity to benefit from and to master college-level work with accommodations. Additionally, they bring a strong will to succeed; learning and mastery are often especially prized because of the struggles involved.

Since learning disabilities are expressed somewhat differently in each student, instructors may be unsure which modifications and accommodations are appropriate for a particular student. **Students have repeatedly said that simple personal contact makes a great deal of difference.** Most often, they themselves know what modifications are useful and will reject those that are unnecessary.

There are two basic types of accommodations for students with LD that faculty can provide:

1. Those that relate to teaching methods, i.e., the way that faculty provide information, and
2. Those that relate to evaluation methods, i.e., the way that faculty measure students' mastery.

**Suggested Teaching Accommodations**

1. Make the syllabus available four to six weeks before the beginning of class and, when possible, being available to discuss the syllabus with students considering the course.

2. Begin lectures with review of the previous lecture and an overview of topics to be covered that day.
3. Emphasize important points, main ideas, and key concepts orally and/or highlighting them with colored pens on the overhead.

4. Speak distinctly and at a pace that allows pausing to respond to questions or for students to catch up in their note-taking.

5. Try to eliminate or at least diminish auditory and visual classroom distractions such as flickering fluorescent lights.

6. Give assignments in writing as well as orally and be available for clarification.

7. Select a textbook with a study guide, if available.

8. Help students find study partners and organize study groups.

9. Provide study questions for exams that demonstrate the format that will be used as well as the content.

10. Ask students who self-disclose how you as an instructor can facilitate his/her learning.

**Suggested Testing/Evaluation Accommodations**

1. Allow extended time on exams.
2. Provide a reader or a tape recorded exam when the exam entails a lot of reading.
3. Provide the exam in an alternate format (if appropriate to subject matter).
4. Allow students to take exams in a separate room that is a distraction-free environment.

5. Allow students to answer exam questions using methods other than writing, for example, orally, taping, or typing.
6. Analyze whenever appropriate, not only the final solutions, but also the process the student used to reach the solution.
7. Allow students to use computational aids.
8. Provide ample blank space for students with overly large handwriting. Also, provide a typewriter or word processor for students with illegible handwriting.
9. Discount spelling errors in determining the grade when work is done in class without spelling aids, and correct spelling is not an objective.
10. Provide alternatives to computer-scored answer sheets such as allowing students to indicate their answers directly on the exam.
Most students are concerned about being stigmatized by the label "learning disabled." Their reluctance to label themselves is understandable since misconceptions are widespread.

They reveal their learning disability only when the subject area and the requirements of the particular course demand it. They invariably report great anxiety about their instructors’ first observation.

Students have also experienced negative responses. Some instructors consider them less serious students and suggest that they are trying to get off easy or that they are simply lazy or incapable. On the other hand, some instructors have been wonderful in their responses and their accommodations.

It seems clear that an instructor’s understanding of the complexities of learning disabilities can make a world of difference to a student’s academic success. (Troy State Seminar for Faculty 5/94).

**Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990**

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) extends federal civil rights protection in several areas to people who are considered "disabled". Built upon a body of existing legislation, particularly the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the act states its purpose as providing "a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities."

The ADA is not an affirmative action statute. Instead, it seeks to dispel stereotypes and assumptions about disabilities, and to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency for disabled people. To achieve these objectives, the law prohibits covered entities from excluding people from jobs, services, activities or benefits based on disability. The law provides penalties for discrimination.

A striking example of learning differences comes from the life of Albert Einstein. Despite his phenomenal gifts, Einstein has great difficulties with academic learning. He said of himself: "Writing is difficult, and I communicate this way (by speaking) very badly...I very rarely think in words at all."

Einstein was unable to learn in traditional ways. His genius was rare, but his difficulties with school work were similar to the experience of many learning disabled students. Like
him, learning disabled people often acquire and express information in different ways. They have many kinds of abilities, but these are often eclipsed by differences that may stand out in the classroom and interactions with peers.

There is a great deal of intuitive appeal to the cognitive approach to teaching. It echoes our own experience as learners and is easy to understand. Applying the approach is more difficult, however, because we must give up our illusion of control. That change shakes the foundation of content as the primary focus of our teaching. We are then faced with the task of adapting to the needs of learners, a varied and unpredictable group. Fortunately, if we accept the precepts of cognitive theory—that learning is active, not passive—we will help to develop more productive learners who will function effectively and independently in the uncertainties of the future. Isn't that what it means to be a teacher?

Instructors should do all they can to tap on learning disabled students intrinsic motivation, by taking the following steps.

* "Introduce the course and each topic in an interesting, informative, and challenging way. You should not just review the syllabus during the first session or concentrate on how grades will be determined. Instead, you should highlight the stimulating intellectual tasks to be accomplished, pique students' curiosity, challenge traditional views, and hint at inconsistencies to be resolved.

Present material at a challenging level that communicates respect for your students and their abilities. Monitor the pace at which you present ideas, so that you maintain a balance between a slow pace that leads to boredom and a too-fast pace that leads to confusion.

Use varied and creative styles of teaching to avoid monotony and keep students' interest high. You should be unpredictable but not capricious. Introduce odd but provocative ideas, take the role of devil's advocate, and let students participate in the classroom process.

Focus on higher-order learning outcomes, such as application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, rather than on such lower-order outcomes as knowledge and comprehension. Make certain that evaluations favor students who achieve higher-order educational outcomes.
Model enthusiasm for the course content and for learning itself. Students assume that the instructor who habitually arrives late for class, seems preoccupied, reads directly from notes or from the book, and speaks in a monotone is bored with the class.

Give responsibility for learning back to the students. Allow them to design and select their learning experiences, topics, and methods of evaluation. Promote feelings of autonomy and personal involvement.

* (College Teaching: From Theory To Practice edited by Robert J. Menjes, Mirilla D. Svinicki)
Lynn University
Review For The Advancement Program

Student Name: ___________________________ ID# ___________
Reader: ___________________________ Date: ___________

High School GPA: ___________ SAT Verbal: ___________ Math: ___________
Rank in Class: ___________ ACT Comp: ___________ TOEFL: ___________
Potential Credit: _______ AP: _______ IB: _______ "O" Level: _______
Freshman w/College Credit: Yes: _______ No: _______ Transfer GPA: ___________
Approx. Credits Attempted: _______

Colleges Attended:

Recommendation(s): ___ Essay: ___ Campus Visit: Yes: ___ No: ___ Counselor: ______

Comments:

Date of Eval: ___________

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Discrepancy/Subtest Scores:

Diagnosis:

Needs:

Possible Schedule

Special Comments/Special Review:

Accepted (Circle one): Comp. 1 Comp 2 Comp 3 Comp 3 Modified