

Questions and Answers About Learning Problems



Secteur de la formation professionnelle et technique et de la formation continue

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Direction de l'éducation
des adultes et de l'action
communautaire

Development Team

Coordination

Andrée Racine

Coordinator of the Joint Federal-Provincial Literacy Training Initiatives (JFPLTI) program and literacy

Direction de la formation générale des adultes

Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport

Research and writing

Jean Patry, Consultant with the Direction de la formation générale des adultes

In collaboration with

Margot Désilets, Consultant with the Direction de la formation générale des adultes

Digital content

François Matte

English version

Direction de la production en langue anglaise

Secteur des services à la communauté anglophone

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Legend

QI	=	Questions – General Information section
AI	=	Answers – General Information section
QK	=	Questions – General Knowledge section
AK	=	Answers – General Knowledge section
QD	=	Questions – Diagnosis section
AD	=	Answers – Diagnosis section
QS	=	Questions – Strategies section
AS	=	Answers – Strategies section

Section I General Information (QI/AI)

QI1. How did this document come about?

AI1. The questions in this document were expressed by various stakeholders during provincewide training sessions over a four-year period.

The answers provided here are based on the reflective practice of resource persons who have worked with adults with learning, behavioural or other psychological problems for many years. These answers are the culmination of a longitudinal study of sorts. They have been shaped by discussions and were suggested and validated during the training sessions.

These answers are by no means comprehensive; they are but a modest contribution to an extremely complex issue. You are all free to explore the vast amount of expertise in this field and to contribute to it if you wish. Although some of the solutions proposed may seem to require considerable work, most of them take into account the fact that human and material resources are often limited.

Below are some thoughts and quotes that have inspired the creation of this document. We hope they will stimulate reflection on practices to be used when working with adults with learning problems:

- The most dramatic effect of certain learning problems is that they prevent individuals from acquiring the prerequisites for learning deemed essential for carrying out daily activities.
- Learning difficulties affect not only the learner, but also the person working with the learner.
- The solutions adopted to solve learning problems should not cause more trouble than the problems themselves.
- Stubbornly pursuing an unattainable goal is the main cause of ineffectiveness and dissatisfaction among adult learners and the people who work with them.
- It is crucial to make the correct diagnosis in order to choose the correct solution and apply it properly.
- The purpose of knowledge and action is to improve life. They must therefore be useful and lead to practical consequences. (Action principle of cognitive behavioural psychology)
- A problem without a solution is a question that has been poorly framed. (Albert Einstein)
- “As a man is able.” (Socrates)

- QI2. How do I use this html document?
- AI2. If you want an answer to a question about learning problems, simply click on the question. The answer will appear in a separate window.
- QI3. Is there a list of references I can consult?
- AI3. Below are some bibliographic references. Most of these titles can be found in the bibliography of the following document:

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. Formation professionnelle et technique et formation continue. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Practical Guide for Teaching Adults With Learning Difficulties — Literacy, Presecondary and Secondary Education*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2005.

Archambault, J. and R. Chouinard. *Vers une gestion éducative de la classe*. Montréal: Gaëtan Morin, 1996.

Armstrong, T. *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*. Second ed. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2000.

Belleau, J. *Mon intelligence vaut la tienne!* Sainte-Foy: Septembre éditeur, 2005.

Boucher, F. and J. Avard. *Réussir ses études*. Boucherville: Éditions de Mortagne, 1984.

Boucher, F. and A. Binette. *Bien vivre le stress*. Boucherville: Éditions de Mortagne, 1981.

Caron, G. *Accompagner l'enfant selon son tempérament*. Boucherville: Éditions de Mortagne, 2001.

Chabot, D. *Cultivez votre intelligence émotionnelle*. Outremont: Quebecor, 1998.

Destrempe-Marquez, D. and L. Lafleur. *Les troubles d'apprentissage : comprendre et intervenir*. Les Éditions de l'Hôpital Sainte-Justine, 1999 (Collection Parents).

Forget, J., R. Otis and A. Leduc. *Psychologie de l'apprentissage. Théories et pratiques*. Brossard: Behavioira, 1988.

Gagnon, L. et al. *Acti-menu, Programme Santé, Test « Êtes-vous stressé? »*. Montréal, 2002. To obtain this brochure, call (514) 326-2466 or 1-866-356-2466.

Gardner, H. *Multiple Intelligences. The Theory in Practice. A Reader*. New York: Basic Books, 1993.

Lafontaine, R. *Auditifs et visuels*. Saint-Laurent: Éditions du Trécarré, 1996.

Lelord, F. and C. André. *Comment gérer les personnalités difficiles*. Paris: Odile Jacob, 2000.

Malcuit G., and A. Pomerleau. *Terminologie en conditionnement et apprentissage*. Montréal: PUQ, 1977.

Malcuit, G., A. Pomerleau and P. Maurice. *Psychologie de l'apprentissage : termes et concepts*. Edisem, Maloine, 1995.

Marchand, L. *L'apprentissage à vie, La pratique de l'éducation des adultes et de l'andragogie*. Montréal/Toronto: Chenelière/McGraw-Hill, 1997.

- Patry, J. and Ministère de l'Éducation, Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Guide to Customized Literacy Training: The Functional Learning Process (FLP)*. 41-1066A. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002. Also available in PDF format on the DFGA site (in both English and French).
- Patry, J. *Les élèves en difficulté : les reconnaître, les comprendre, les aider — Compte rendu*. Longueuil: Commission scolaire Marie-Victorin, Service d'éducation des adultes, September 2000.
- Ruph, F. *Le fonctionnement de la mémoire et les stratégies de mémorisation*. En collaboration avec le Service d'éducation des adultes de la Commission scolaire du Lac-Témiscamingue, January 1993.
- Staats, A. *Social Behaviorism*. Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1975.
- St-Arnaud, Y. *Connaître par l'action*. Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1992.
- Thériault, D. *Le mal des mots*. Montréal: Les Éditions de l'Homme, 1988.
- The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (Cathy Smith). *For You: Adults with Learning Disabilities*, Ottawa, 1991.
- The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. *Identifying and Teaching Adults with Learning Disabilities*. Ottawa, 1991.
- The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. *Screening for Success*, Ottawa, 2000. For more information, call (613) 238-5721.

MELS Documents

Most of the documents mentioned below are available in PDF format on the Web site of the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, Direction de la formation générale des adultes (MELS/DFGA), in both French and English.

- Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *Recueil de textes. Les problèmes d'apprentissage*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1991.
- Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *Recueil de textes. L'apprentissage*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1993.
- Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Guide to Customized Literacy Training*. Third edition. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1996.
- Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Practical Guide for the Teaching of Literacy to Adults With Learning Difficulties*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002.
- Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *Training Models: How to Use A Practical Guide for the Teaching of Literacy to Adults With Learning Difficulties*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002.
- Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *Frame of Reference: The Transfer of Learning in the Context of Literacy Training*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1999.
- Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *Creating and Managing a Small Business*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1999.

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *Guide d'utilisation du coffret sur les difficultés d'apprentissage*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2003.

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Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. Formation professionnelle et technique et formation continue. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Practical Guide for Teaching Adults With Learning Difficulties — Literacy, Presecondary and Secondary Education*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2005.

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *Sessions de formation sur les problèmes d'apprentissage — 2002-2005 — Rapport*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, June 2005 (unpublished).

School Board Documents

Services éducatifs aux adultes et la formation professionnelle des commissions scolaires de la Montérégie. *Catalogue de stratégies*. (There is a catalogue for vocational training, published in 1999, and one for general education, published in 2002). For more information, please call (450) 773-8401.

VIDEO: *La formation en alphabétisation selon le Guide de formation sur mesure en alphabétisation*. CAPAV. Commission scolaire des Laurentides.

Electronic Resources

Pépin, M. and M. Loranger. *Test d'aptitudes informatisé* (version 2.0). Charlesbourg: Le Réseau Psychotech inc., 1996.

Pépin, M. and M. Loranger. *CO-SKILLS. Cognitive Training Software* (version 5.1). Sainte-Foy: Le Réseau Psychotech inc.

Telephone: (418) 659-7000 – Web site: www.psychotech.qc.ca

Web Sites (valid when this document was written)

Learning Disabilities Association of Québec (AQETA): <http://www.aqeta.qc.ca/english/home/htm>

Learning Disabilities Association of Canada: <http://www.ldac-taac.ca/index-e.asp>

Montreal Research and Treatment Centre for Learning Abilities and Disabilities (MRTC):
<http://www.mrtc.qc.ca/>

Multiple Intelligence Quiz: http://www.carriereccc.org/products/cp_99_e/section1/quiz.cfm

QI4. Whom can I contact if I have other questions (html format)?

AI4. To obtain answers to other questions, please contact Andrée Racine (andree.racine@mels.gouv.qc.ca). This document was last updated in September 2007 and will be updated periodically.

QI5. Who contributed to this document?

AI5. The following people participated in developing this document:

Research and writing

Jean Patry, Consultant with the Direction de la formation générale des adultes

In collaboration with

Margot Désilets, Consultant with the Direction de la formation générale des adultes

Coordination

Andrée Racine, Coordinator for the Direction de la formation générale des adultes

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Section II General Knowledge About Learning Problems (QK/AK)

QK1. How can I make sure that learning has occurred?

AK1. Because learning corresponds to a change in the physical structure of the brain, it cannot be observed directly. The following procedure can be used to verify whether learning has taken place:

Measure performance (e.g. in English, mathematics, science, interpersonal relations) at two different points in time: once at a given time and then again after a certain period of time has elapsed. If there is a difference in performance between these two measurements and if this difference can be attributed to experience or practice rather than motivation, maturation, fatigue or chemical or surgical intervention, then learning is said to have occurred. It should be noted, however, that learning exists independently of external performance.

For more information, please see:

Malcuit G., and A. Pomerleau. *Terminologie en conditionnement et apprentissage*. Montréal: PUQ, 1977.

Malcuit, G., A. Pomerleau and P. Maurice. *Psychologie de l'apprentissage : termes et concepts*. Edisem, Maloine, 1995.

QK2. Why do many adults demonstrate so much anxiety throughout their studies?

AK2. This can be explained using a model developed by the psychologist Arthur Staats. According to this model, a given situation (e.g. a place, a group, a classroom, a particular subject) can elicit pleasant or unpleasant feelings in a person. Such situations will thus be viewed as rewards or punishments by the person who will seek to relive or avoid them, as the case may be. This theory emphasizes the importance of a person's first experience in a given situation.

Let's look at the case of a learner called Philippe. When Philippe was younger, certain events in school caused him great anxiety. School was an unpleasant experience for him, a form of punishment, and he did everything he could to escape it. One day, he gathered up his courage and enrolled in adult education. But because he has never been desensitized, chances are school will elicit the same negative feelings in him. Philippe will relive the same anxiety and will want to avoid it, unless someone helps desensitize him. Note that if his past experience had been pleasant, his reaction would be quite different.

Desensitization can take place in the course of a support-for-learning relationship. Everyday situations (e.g. in the training centre, in the classroom) are thus used to show an adult that these situations can be pleasant rather than unpleasant. The negative association between school and anxiety is undone and replaced with a positive association between learning and enrichment, for example. Encouragement, reassurance and positive reinforcement delivered in a relaxed atmosphere are usually sufficient to attenuate negative feelings so that adults can overcome their anxiety and pursue their training plan.

Comments: Personality type may also explain why a person is anxious. For example, people who are deeply introverted are more likely to feel anxious than those who are not. They

usually worry more, are more solitary, cope less effectively with stress (studying is a major source of stress and stress can significantly affect the learning process). Introverts are also less able to adapt to situations and react more strongly to them. Setbacks may not affect them immediately but may have devastating consequences on their self-confidence.

By comparison, people who are strongly extroverted seek out social relations; they function well (if not better) under stress; they adapt fairly easily to new situations and are rather impulsive: they react quickly to situations but adjust quickly as well.

QK3. What are the main causes of learning problems?

AK3. There are four main causes of learning problems:

- A dysfunction in the learning process
- Inadequate pedagogy (e.g. incorrect diagnosis, inappropriate objectives, methodology that does not take into account different learning styles)
- An environment (e.g. family, social, school, workplace) that does not provide enough stimulation and/or that leaves little room for the exploration of behaviours to be learned or the application of behaviours already acquired
- Problems experienced by learners: inadequate mastery of various prerequisite concepts, psychological problems (e.g. abnormally high stress, anxiety, social or academic phobias, depression), use of medication or drugs, innate cognitive problems (biological causes) or acquired cognitive problems (developmental or traumatic causes)

Note: Whatever the cause, it is important to determine whether a learning problem is due to a predisposition or whether it is triggered and/or perpetuated by environmental factors.

QK4. What is the difference between a learning difficulty and a learning disability?

AK4. Learning difficulties are often related to external factors, to disruptive events that arise in life. They are considered temporary and reversible.

Learning disabilities, on the other hand, are related to internal neurological factors. They may be innate or acquired and are much more resistant to corrective measures than learning difficulties, particularly those that are acquired. They are considered permanent and irreversible.

Certain difficulties are said to be severe and related to past psychological traumas. In some cases, these types of difficulties may be as resistant to treatment as learning disabilities.

Note: Regardless of whether you are dealing with a learning difficulty or a learning disability, it is essential to determine the severity of the problem. Progress in a situation is closely tied to the degree of severity of the difficulty or disability.

QK5. How common are learning disabilities in the population?

AK5. Learning disabilities affect about 10 to 15 per cent of the population, and in 80 per cent of cases, they cause delays in the acquisition of oral language.

Note: There are two types of oral language: “spontaneous” oral language, such as when a person initiates a conversation, and “elicited” oral language, such as when a person answers a question. Oddly enough, some people may have no problem expressing themselves spontaneously but have difficulty answering questions.

For more information, please see:

Destrempe-Marquez, D. and L. Lafleur. *Les troubles d'apprentissage : comprendre et intervenir*. Montréal: Les Éditions de l'Hôpital Sainte-Justine, 1999 (Collection Parents).

QK6. Are there principles that can guide intervention strategies for adults with learning disabilities?

AK6. The following principles may serve as invaluable guidelines in dealing with adults with learning disabilities.

- First and foremost, as difficult as it may be, ADMIT that there is a learning disability. This is the first step that adults and practitioners/those working with them must take.
- Describe the disability as accurately as possible.
- Take into account the adult's personality type (otherwise the intervention will fail). See: AK2.
- Take into account the adult's strengths (potential) and weaknesses and expressed needs. These needs are intricately linked to the adult's motivation.
- Establish realistic objectives based on the actual competencies of the adult.
- Plan the intervention methodically.

QK7. What are the chances of success for adults with learning disabilities?

AK7. Success depends on a variety of interrelated factors and not only on the presence or absence of learning disabilities. The complexity of these interrelated factors makes it difficult to identify precisely the conditions for success. However, the following factors are known to play a determining role in the progress of any situation:

- the severity of the disability
- how quickly a disability is identified (early diagnosis)
- the level of intellectual aptitudes
- the degree of resourcefulness, imagination, creativity, risk taking
- the ability to adapt to change in the environment
- determination, sustained effort and considerable resilience
- a high tolerance to stress
- a supportive environment (family, social, school, workplace)

Note: An environment may help a person resolve or aggravate a difficult situation.

QK8. Are learning disabilities associated with intellectual impairments?

AK8. It is essential to make the distinction between a learning difficulty and an intellectual or sensory impairment (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch). A person with no intellectual or sensory impairment or significant emotional problem who has difficulty learning a given subject matter probably has a learning disability.

A learning disability affects, to varying degrees, the ability to interpret what is perceived by the senses. The disability may be caused by a dysfunction in the brain's information processing system, which is responsible for the acquisition, organization, conceptualization, comprehension and memorization (encoding, retention, recall) of knowledge. People with average and above-average intellectual potential may also have learning disabilities.

QK9 What are the consequences of learning disabilities?

AK9. Depending on its severity, a learning disability can affect learning and the use of:

- receptive and expressive language (vocabulary, reception of messages, expression of ideas, mastery of nonverbal language)
- writing (spelling, grammar, syntax)
- reading (speed, deciphering and comprehension)
- mathematics (calculation, logical reasoning, problem solving)

In all of the above areas and to varying degrees of severity, people with learning disabilities tend to make additions, inversions, omissions, substitutions and repetitions (of sounds, syllables, words, sentences, digits or numbers). Depending on whether language, writing, reading or mathematics is affected, we speak of dysphasia, dysorthography, dyslexia or dyscalculia.

QK10. In addition to directly affecting knowledge acquisition and use, can learning disabilities involve other deficiencies?

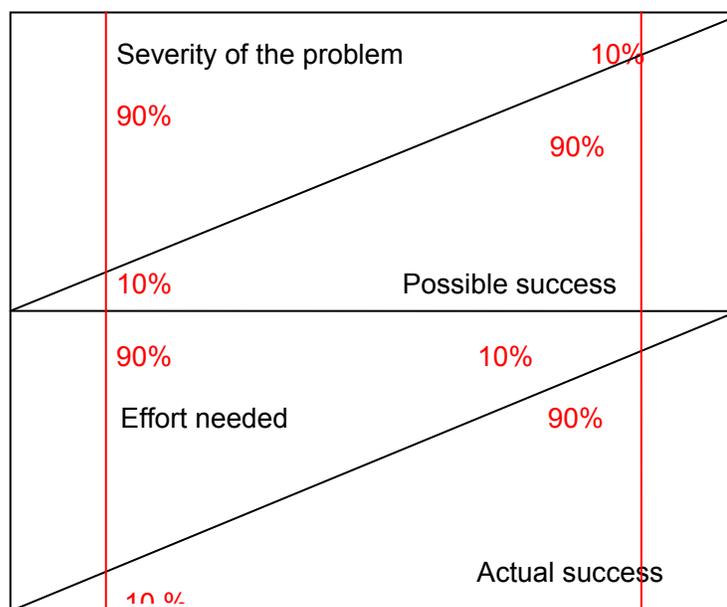
AK10. Several other deficiencies have been noted in people with learning disabilities. For example, these adults may have difficulty with spatial orientation, time management, sensorimotor coordination, understanding and following instructions, adopting appropriate social behaviours, etc. The latter may have been caused by repetitive interpersonal experiences that have extremely toxic effects: contempt and rejection, accusations of laziness or clumsiness, etc.

People with learning disabilities also manifest various symptoms such as anxiety, depression, stress, discouragement, low self-esteem, avoidance or escapist behaviour, etc. When these symptoms are present, they are often accompanied by considerable psychological pain and make rehabilitation work more difficult.

Lastly, people with learning disabilities may avoid learning activities that elicit strong feelings of aversion. Rather than participate in these activities and relive the sense of failure and humiliation they have felt in the past, they favour activities in which they can show off their competencies, such as sports activities, organizing parties or sitting on committees. Such behaviours are often mistakenly attributed to a lack of motivation or, worse, to laziness. This misinterpretation of behaviour is sometimes conveyed to adults and thus reinforces their tendency to view themselves negatively.

Note: Generally speaking, people with learning disabilities obtain lower results than expected, even if they expend more effort and receive more support than what is usually necessary. In the case of adults with severe learning disabilities, the situation may be illustrated as follows:

The more severe a disability may be, the lower the possibility of success, the greater the effort required and the lower the actual success.



Hence, it is important and urgent to take proper action and invest in the correct strategies in order to formulate objectives that correspond to adults' true aptitudes. Adults possess many aptitudes that they can use to increase their chances of success. The operative phrase in this case is to help adults "achieve their full potential." This potential must be identified; however, it is often ignored because it has been improperly assessed.

QK11. How does an adult with a learning disability fare in terms of reading, writing, language and spatial and temporal orientation?

AK11. The following table contains examples of signs of learning disabilities. The column on the left contains messages to be decoded or produced, the column on the right shows how these messages may be deformed by someone with a learning disability.

Reading	
habit except cart	hatib expect cat
in ten hours	ten others
Tomorrow, I will finish my work.	Tom or row, I wi ll fi ni sh my wo rk .
proportion mean lice	portion name like
Decoding	Comprehension
Paul goes to the store to buy some apples. When he gets there, he realizes he has no money. He goes home, grabs his wallet and goes back to the store.	It's about Paul who runs and loses his money. He wanted to buy something. I think it was raisins. I think it also talked about a picture. (Note: in reading, the person may guess at the meaning, take a chance.)
Examples of elements that may be confused an, on, in, • p, d, b, q, g • u, ou, au, • s, z, ch, • 263, 632 • 18, 81 • 6, 9 • 3, 8	
Writing	
They go to the grocery store to buy some nuts.	The got hegrocer y oreto busy must.
Receptive Language	
“I’d like you to come to the movies with me.”	The person understands: “I like movies with you.”
Expressive Language	
“Each day has enough trouble of its own.”	Trouble every day.
“I liked my first day at work, even though I found it tiring.”	I tired the work during the day.
“A story has a beginning, a middle and an end.”	The story has a middle and a beginning.
Space	
“You can use the computer on the left at the back of the class.” The person hesitates, looks around, and then goes to the computer on the right.	
Time (sequences)	
The person can name the months of the year in the correct order, but if asked to name the month after September, must start over.	

QK12. How does memory work?

AK12. Briefly explained, memory involves encoding knowledge as well as retaining and recalling this knowledge. Information processing theory distinguishes between episodic memory, which is autobiographical in nature (events experienced by a person) and semantic memory (knowledge of words, symbols, rules). According to this theory, memory consists of three interrelated systems: the register of sensory information (RSI); short-term memory (STM) and long-term memory (LTM).

For more information on how memory works, please see:

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. Formation professionnelle et technique et formation continue. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Practical Guide for Teaching Adults With Learning Difficulties — Literacy, Presecondary and Secondary Education*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2005. Appendix V.

QK13. Why do some adults with remarkable intellectual potential drop out of school?

AK13. Let's look at the behaviour of an adult learner called Helen. Despite remarkable aptitude demonstrated on several occasions in her schoolwork, Helen has given up on her training plan after four months of school. Personal, family or financial factors are probably at the root of this decision. To understand what may cause someone to act this way, it is helpful to consider the law of equilibrium. This "law" states that, in interactions between an individual and his or her environment (adjustment process), there is constant pressure from the environment on the individual and from the individual on the environment. The balance between these pressures, however, must be maintained or else the individual becomes dysfunctional (adjustment problem). If adjustment efforts are required too frequently, exhaustion or adjustment problems accompanied by depression, anxiety or behaviour modification can occur.

Since the beginning of her studies, Helen may have been exposed to severe, ongoing stress due to family problems, domestic violence, financial insecurity, illness, certain training requirements, etc. Her efforts to withstand this pressure may have been immense and she may have realized that she risked upsetting her equilibrium. She has therefore abandoned her training plan and has preferred to keep the reasons behind her choice quiet.

QK14. Why do adults who say they are very motivated adopt behaviours that prevent them from attaining their goals?

AK14. Let's look at the case of Alexander, who says he's very eager to finish Secondary V because he would like to start college as soon as possible. Alexander is often late or absent from school. He does not do his work nor does he use the strategies suggested to him. When told that his behaviour will not help him achieve his goal, he comes up with numerous excuses to justify his actions. Many factors may cause this behaviour. The law of primacy may help shed some light on the matter.

This law states that motivation swings constantly between two situations (imaginary or experienced). Either both situations are agreeable (pleasure/pleasure), or both situations are

disagreeable (displeasure/displeasure), or one situation is agreeable and the other, disagreeable (pleasure/displeasure). This state can lead to intense stress. Of the two situations, it is the one that has the most "weight" for the individual that dominates and takes precedence as long as that primacy is maintained.

In Alexander's case, depending on the circumstances, his motivation may shift between studying and earning money, between his studies and leisure activities (which are less demanding), between the benefits of studying and the stress that studying causes and that he may try to avoid, at least temporarily.

QK15. How can andragogy help adults with learning problems?

AK15. Andragogy involves establishing a relationship that provides support for learning to adults engaged in a training process. It is particularly useful in dealing with learning problems because its main characteristic is to focus first and foremost on the dynamics resulting from the interaction between knowledge to be acquired, the learning process and the characteristics that generally define adults in training. These characteristics include:

- motivation, which is usually linked to the roles and tasks adults take on to meet their responsibilities
- their perception of time (the clock is ticking): adults engaged in a training process are often pressed for time, which makes them less available
- the personal, social and professional experience they have acquired
- their perception of themselves as individuals who take care of their own needs, make their own decisions, are independent and want to be respected for who they are.

QK16. What approach should a person adopt when dealing with adults with learning problems?

AK16. The first objective is to find a solution to the problem. This solution will be all the more effective and satisfying in the short, medium and long term if the adult participates in finding and applying a solution.

The best way to involve adults is to work from an empowerment perspective, by using everyday situations (personal, family, social, school, workplace) as opportunities for learning in which adults can learn to manage their lives, on their own.

Note: Empowerment is a gradual process that never really ends. It is achieved through the acquisition and use of knowledge (what), skills (how) and attitudes (when and why).

QK17. Do adults with learning problems exhibit specific behavioural traits?

AK17. It is not easy to answer this question and we must be careful not to generalize. That said, according to various stakeholders, adults with learning problems do exhibit a certain behavioural profile. With this reservation, below are some of the behaviours that seem to characterize adults with learning problems. Obviously, a single individual will not necessarily exhibit all of these behaviours:

- unusually low motivation, given the magnitude of the efforts to be expended
- unusually high motivation, given the need to counter a weak self-image

- discouragement and fatigue due to constant exposure to aversive situations and the scarcity of positive reinforcements
- reasoning based on “wishful thinking.” For example, “I’ll succeed if I set my mind to it.”
- difficulty recognizing the need to accept and respect deadlines
- denial of personal limitations regarding goals to be achieved
- avoidance or escapist behaviour (absence, lack of punctuality, dropping out) caused by traumatic experiences in the past (e.g. failure at school, humiliation, etc.)
- for a minority of adults, use of psychotropic medication (anxiolytics, antidepressants, sometimes antipsychotics) or drugs. This can cause cognitive dysfunction (attention, concentration, memory, reasoning, etc.).

Note: Many adults with learning problems come from the regular education sector and have received special education services. Because their problems were not resolved in spite of the services provided, these adults end up in adult education with needs that cannot fully be met, because of a lack of resources, and also because providing the same services that have already been offered for many years is not the solution.

QK18. Do people who work with adults with learning problems exhibit specific behavioural traits?

AK18. As with adults with learning problems, we must be careful not to overgeneralize. However, based on discussions with those who work with adults with learning problems, we have identified certain behavioural traits. These individuals may exhibit, among other things:

- a certain lack of concerted action regarding methods used (screening, strategies)
- denial of adults' limitations regarding goals to be achieved
- a relatively widespread belief in the saying “where there’s a will, there’s a way.” This belief is one of the causes of repetitive, ineffective andragogical measures (see: QS15/AS15).
- helplessness with regard to the complexity of the situation and a sense of isolation, powerlessness and exhaustion
- a frequent lack of differential diagnosis: instructors often cannot differentiate between a learning difficulty, a severe learning difficulty and a learning disability. Moreover, they sometimes confound actual learning problems with behavioural problems (e.g. aggression, social and school phobias), mental health problems (e.g. depression, school and social phobia, psychiatric disorders) and drug-related problems.

For more information on learning problems (theory and practice), please see:

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Practical Guide for the Teaching of Literacy to Adults With Learning Difficulties*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002.

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. Formation professionnelle et technique et formation continue. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Practical Guide for Teaching Adults With Learning Difficulties — Literacy, Presecondary and Secondary Education*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2005.



Section III Diagnosing Learning Problems (QD/AD)

General Questions

QD1. How are learning problems identified?

AD1. In andragogy, screening consists in identifying and describing a learning problem in an individual, in concertation with others, using interviews, observations and measuring instruments. Case studies, which involve sharing the information gathered in order to make decisions, are considered an important element of the screening process. Screening makes it possible to make a diagnosis and determine the strategies to use.

QD2. Who is responsible for screening (who contributes to the diagnosis)?

AD2. Anyone who works with the adult can contribute to the process: teachers, non-teaching professionals (e.g. guidance counsellors, psychologists, special education teachers), school administrators and, when required, family members and professionals outside the training centre (e.g. speech therapists, audiologists, neuropsychologists, medical practitioners). Screening should be done in partnership and should include the participation of the adult as much as possible throughout the process.

Notes concerning the diagnosis

- A diagnosis can be either descriptive or explanatory. A descriptive diagnosis describes what is occurring, what is observed; while an explanatory diagnosis identifies the causes of what is occurring, or at least attempts to do so. A proper diagnosis can be used to choose the most appropriate teaching strategies, while a faulty diagnosis (or a lack of diagnosis) leads to trial and error, dissipates energies in all directions, is a waste of time for all concerned, and leads to repetitive, ineffective measures (see: QS15/AS15).
- A diagnosis, which is considered the cornerstone of educational intervention with adults who have learning problems, is often also the stumbling block. When done poorly, it can lead to inappropriate intervention and thus to ineffectiveness and dissatisfaction both for the teacher and the adult. Common errors include, for example, confusing cause and effect, treating the effect rather than the cause, and forgetting to eliminate the cause while eliminating the effect
- A diagnosis is never completely certain. In fact, a large part of the work is done experimentally. Often it is necessary to *explain the explanation*. Most of the time, the process of understanding progresses from hypothesis to hypothesis. Such an approach has a lot in common with reflective practice (see: QS13/AS13).
- **Because a diagnosis is based on available data, it may be tentative. It can be fine-tuned as new information is gathered. This information must be based on observed facts and the reality of the situation rather than on subjective interpretations.**

QD3. When is it recommended to screen for learning problems in order to make a diagnosis?

AD3. This is a very difficult question. Screening, as defined in AD1, is a demanding process because it requires a large number of people to invest a considerable amount of time (AD2). It must be undertaken with caution. The adult's motivation, determination and commitment to the training plan are valuable indicators. If they are present, the first thing to do is to assess

the adult's intellectual aptitudes. Based on the assessment results, a decision can be made whether or not to undertake full or partial screening.

QD4. What does "differential diagnosis" mean?

AD4. The term *differential* refers to the distinction that must be made between different problems. When screening for learning problems, it is important to differentiate between a sensory impairment (related to one of the five senses), an intellectual impairment, an intellectual limitation, a learning difficulty, a severe learning difficulty, a learning disability, a psychological or psychiatric problem and a behavioural problem. The process used to differentiate among these problems must be rigorous and methodical and involves the participation of many professionals.

QD5. Can multiple intelligence tests and surveys help in the case of adults who don't have the linguistic or logical aptitudes required to achieve their goals?

AD5. Without defending tests or surveys used to establish a person's multiple intelligence profile (or multiple learning **style**), these questionnaires can occasionally be very useful in identifying and describing an adult's main aptitudes and in determining the most appropriate training plans.

According to the theory, there are eight types of intelligence: interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, logical, kinesthetic, spatial, rhythmic and ecological.

Note: Basic linguistic and logical aptitudes are nonetheless necessary to function effectively in everyday life, be it at a personal, family, social, school or professional level.

For more information on multiple intelligences, please see:

Gardner, H. *Multiple Intelligences. The Theory in Practice. A Reader*. New York: Basic Books, 1993.

Belleau, J. *Mon intelligence vaut la tienne!* Sainte-Foy: Septembre éditeur, July 2005.

Functional Analysis

QD6. What tools can be used to establish a valid diagnosis?

AD6. Many screening tools can be used. The one we prefer is the functional analysis grid. See QD8/AD8.

The functional analysis grid includes seven interacting variables that describe and explain how personality is structured and functions:

- 1) temperament
- 2) history in terms of learning and/or development
- 3) physical and mental health
- 4) motivation
- 5) internal and external behaviour
- 6) competencies

7) internal and external environment

There are three main techniques for carrying out a functional analysis: interview, observation (direct and indirect) and measurement (exercises, questionnaires, exams, tests).

QD7. What type of information is gathered on the seven variables of functional analysis? (See QD8/AD8)

AD7. The following information is gathered for each of the seven variables:

1) Temperament: The most useful information on temperament concerns introversion and extroversion. To obtain this information, use different questionnaires to identify tendencies as well as the grid in Appendix III of the following document: Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Practical Guide for the Teaching of Literacy to Adults With Learning Difficulties*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002.

2) History of learning or development: It is above all through interviews that information can be gathered on the history of learning or development. This information can be used to describe development in terms of an upward spiral (success, development of potential) or a downward spiral (failure, weakening of potential). The quality of the living environment is a determining factor.

3) Physical and mental health: It is also through interviews that information is gathered most efficiently on a person's physical and mental health. As with the other variables, a person will open up only if it suits him/her, and information is gathered only to determine how learning is affected. Information regarding stress is particularly revealing. Stress is the body's response to positive or negative situations that occur in the environment. Poorly managed, it can have regrettable consequences on learning. To manage stress adequately, it is important to consider first the sources and signals of stress, and then stress management tools.

The main sources of stress are happy or unhappy events, irritants, boredom, work, financial concerns, the feeling of not having any control over one's own life, and perfectionist tendencies. Stress signals can be physical (e.g. backaches, digestive problems, headaches), behavioural (e.g. increased use of psychotropic drugs) or psychological (e.g. worrying, anxiety). Stress management tools affect how a person reacts to various situations, communicates and organizes his or her time. A good balance between these tools and the level of stress is a desirable objective. In fact, the more effective the tools, the better the stress is managed and the balance preserved.

To assess stress levels and find out more about how to control stress, please see:

Gagnon L. et al. *Acti-menu, Programme Santé, Test « Êtes-vous stressé? »*. Montréal, 2002.

(To obtain this brochure, call (514) 326-2466 or 1-866-356-2466.)

4) Motivation: Information about motivation can be obtained through interviews and observation. Motivation may be extrinsic (related to external gratification, such as money,

a promotion) or intrinsic (related to internal gratification, or the pleasure associated with a given behaviour, such as practising a sport, studying).

- 5) Behaviour: In this context, external behaviour is manifested by regular attendance, punctuality, commitment to the training plan. It is a valuable indicator of motivation or lack thereof. Information on internal behaviour (e.g. reasoning, reflection) is not observable and can only be obtained through verbal accounts during an interview.
- 6) Competencies: In this context, the information to gather concerns academic learning and the functional learning process.

In terms of academic learning, information should be obtained on the following:

- Receptive language: (1) discrimination; (2) compliance with instructions; (3) participation in a conversation; (4) understanding of a presentation; (5) decoding nonverbal language.
- Expressive language: (1) pronunciation; (2) coherence, logic; (3) vocabulary; (4) syntax; (5) appropriate use of nonverbal language; (6) Gallicisms or incorrect borrowings from another language.
- Reading: (1) alphabet, sounds; (2) speed, decoding and understanding of words (syllables), sentences and paragraphs; (3) mastery of punctuation; (4) presence of additions, inversions, omissions, substitutions or repetitions of sounds, syllables, words, lines and sentences.
- Writing: (1) letters, words, sentences and paragraphs in a dictation and writing freely; (2) spelling, grammar, syntax; (3) substance: analysis, synthesis and coherence of ideas; (4) form, presentation; (5) presence of additions, inversions, omissions, substitutions or repetitions of sounds, syllables, words, lines and sentences.
- Mathematics: (1) reading and writing numbers; (2) performance of the four basic operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division); (3) solving written problems (related or not to everyday activities); (4) reasoning, application of concepts to the problems formulated; (5) calculation.

In terms of the functional learning process (which we recommend), we are interested in:

the importance that the adult gives to each of the sixteen competencies of the process in daily life (adaptation to the environment). Information can be gathered using the table in Appendix II of the following document:

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. Formation professionnelle et technique et formation continue. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Practical Guide for Teaching Adults With Learning Difficulties — Literacy, Presecondary and Secondary Education*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2005.

Simplified procedure: Check what importance the adult gives to each of the sixteen competencies on a scale from 0 (0%) = not at all to 10 (100%) = complete. Enter the answers given by the adult in the table in the parentheses next to the competencies.

Refined procedure: For those who wish to refine their approach, the table may be completed in the following way:

- Enter the adult's answers in the parentheses and add up the total for each mode, for example 3 (30%) + 6 (60%) + 5 (50%) + 4 (40%) = 18 out of a possible total of 40 = 45%.
- This percentage is entered in the "overriding competency" space and gives a "percentage interest and competency" for each mode.
- The average percentage for the four modes can also be calculated. For example, if the average for the first mode is 70%, the second mode, 55%, the third mode, 60% and the fourth mode, 75%, the average for the four modes is therefore 65%, which represents the overall functioning of the process.

The above exercise (simplified or refined) makes it possible to see the strengths and weaknesses that adults attribute to themselves in terms of regulating their learning process. The first thing we learn from their answers is their capacity to evaluate themselves. The evaluation may be positive/realistic, positive/unrealistic (overevaluation), negative/realistic or negative/unrealistic (underevaluation). In cases where adults have obvious difficulties evaluating their competencies, guidance can be provided on the basis of the competencies that they actually demonstrate through behaviour. The table is given to the adults to help them use their strengths to correct their weaknesses.

- 7) The environment: It is mainly through interviews that information is gathered on an adult's environment. The external environment includes family, friends, school, the workplace, etc., while the internal environment consists of positive and negative self-talk (talking to oneself in a constructive or destructive way, giving oneself instructions, etc.). Self-talk can affect self-confidence as much as, if not more than, comments from people in the external environment.

Notes

- A complete functional analysis ends with the evaluation of aptitudes using standardized tests.
- The use of the same measurement (the same test, the same questionnaire, etc.) at different times makes it possible to observe if progress has been made with respect to stress levels, grades and the learning process. These are known as pre-tests and post-tests.

QD8. What does the functional analysis grid look like once it is completed?

AD8. The completed functional analysis grid below illustrates the type of information that can be gathered during functional analysis. It can not only help you understand the process, but it can also serve as a screening exercise (contribution to the diagnosis).

First we will try to determine if Martin has a problem, and if so, what type of problem he has. Is it:

- a learning disability?
- a learning difficulty?
- a severe learning difficulty?
- a sensory impairment (hearing or visual disability, etc.)?
- an intellectual impairment?
- a mental health problem?
- a behavioural problem?
- a drug-related problem (medication, drugs, alcohol)?

Then we will suggest possible solutions by specifying:

- the type of activities
- the duration of the activities
- criteria for success
- actions to be undertaken depending on whether or not the objective is attained

Note: Martin’s problem may be attributed to more than one category (See QK4/AK4 and QS18/AS18).

Martin’s Profile	
<p>1. Temperament: predispositions (aptitudes, tendencies) and sensibilities (spontaneous reactions):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extroversion (is talkative, is sociable, functions well under stress) • Introversion (is not talkative, is reserved, does not function well under stress). <p>To evaluate: interviews, observation and Appendix III of the <i>Practical Guide for Teaching Adults With Learning Difficulties</i>, DFGA, 2005.</p>	<p>Martin has an engaging personality. He is somewhat reserved as long as he is not assigned a “particular status.” He seems to have a rich interior life, which makes it pleasant to converse with him. Although he does not seem to react immediately to situations, he mentions them later and reveals how deeply he has been affected by them.</p>

<p>2. History of learning and/or development (character): age, sex, schooling and grades</p> <p>Sensitive period for development (for the acquisition of certain competencies, prevention)</p> <p>ARD System: significant events, early indicators of future problems.</p> <p>Upward spiral: successive successes</p> <p>Downward spiral: successive failures</p> <p>To evaluate: interviews and Appendix I of the <i>Practical Guide for Teaching Adults With Learning Difficulties</i>, DFGA, 2005.</p>	<p>Martin was 32 years old when he enrolled in adult education. He comes from a middle-class family. His brother and sisters have a college education and good jobs. His father is a white-collar worker in a large company and his mother is a teacher. He grew up in a family without any particular problems, except that, in his opinion, his “family was cold.” There were no kind words; no one said “I love you.” At school, Martin had learning problems in written French early on, although he did fairly well in reading and mathematics. Writing a text, no matter how short, required huge efforts.</p> <p>Despite the help he received from both his parents and private resources, progress was surprisingly slim. He scraped by in elementary school, went on to high school, but dropped out in Secondary III. In the years that followed, he worked here and there, often in difficult conditions and for paltry pay. Several years later, his self-esteem quite low, he decided to go back to school, hoping to be able to surmount his difficulties now that he had matured. When he turned up in adult education, he was placed in literacy. Although this surprised and disappointed him, he decided to give it a try anyway.</p>
<p>3. Health</p> <p>Physical health: surgeries, chronic pain, etc.</p> <p>Mental health: stress, anxiety, phobias, depression, etc.</p> <p>Use of medication To evaluate: interviews and test « <i>Êtes-vous stressé?</i> » (Gagnon, 2002, GQ3/RG3).</p>	<p>Physical health: Physically, Martin is in excellent health. He is also quite an accomplished athlete.</p> <p>Mental health: Psychologically, the stress that Martin felt as a result of his problems in school have ended up causing severe anxiety, which he can control only through physical activity.</p>
<p>4. Motivation (approaching, avoidance)</p> <p>Extrinsic: It is mobilized for the purpose of external reinforcement (reward, pleasure), but is unstable because, when the reward is gone, the motivation disappears as well.</p> <p>Intrinsic: It is mobilized for the purpose of internal reinforcement (reward, pleasure); however, it is more stable because the reward corresponds to the behaviour adopted.</p> <p>To evaluate: estimate the level of motivation (from poor [1] to strong [10]) through interviews and by observing behaviour.</p>	<p>Martin's main motivation is to get enough schooling to find a decent job. He's very realistic. He does not deny that it would improve his self-esteem. Being more educated would improve the way he looks at himself, and the way his friends and his family see him too.</p>

<p>5. Behaviours</p> <p>External and observable: regular attendance, punctuality, responsibility, commitment, sociability, submissiveness, aggressiveness, manipulation, affirmation. Words, actions, etc.</p> <p>Internal and non-observable: reflection, reasoning, decision, planning, etc. Positive or negative self-talk. Action in thoughts.</p> <p>To evaluate: interviews and observation</p>	<p>External: Martin excels at anything that isn't school-related (compensatory behaviour?). He is president of the student council and has excellent organizational skills. He has many friends, but they are the ones who sought him out. He rarely makes the first move with others, but once the ice is broken, he takes initiative and risks and assumes his responsibilities. He attends school regularly and is punctual. When he isn't, he says it's because he's momentarily discouraged.</p> <p>Internal: During discussions, Martin shows that he is capable of reflection. He is a man who thinks before he speaks.</p>
<p>6. Competencies: knowledge, skills, attitudes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in oral communication (vocabulary, expression of ideas, reception of messages, mastery of nonverbal language) • in reading (speed, decoding and understanding) • in writing (spelling, grammar, syntax) • in mathematics (operations, reasoning, spatial orientation) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motor skills, attention, memory, perception, planning and performance of tasks - Functional learning process: to feel, explore, understand, act - Personal, social, professional competencies <p>To evaluate: grades, standardized tests; Appendix II of Practical Guide for Teaching Adults With Learning Difficulties, DFGA, 2005. Interviews and observation.</p>	<p>Martin's oral communication skills are surprisingly well developed. Except for the odd mispronounced word (e.g. "govement" instead of "government"), his level of language is significantly higher than that of most students.</p> <p>His reading skills are below average. He decodes words well, but struggles with comprehension. Still, he manages to get by. He is progressing slowly but surely.</p> <p>In writing, be it in dictations or spontaneous writing exercises, his texts are virtually illegible and incomprehensible. With great effort and difficulty, Martin sometimes manages to reread what he has written. He writes words the way they sound, transforms words, omits or forgets to write words and parts of sentences.</p> <p>Martin's mathematical skills are average.</p> <p>Sensory motor skills: no problem</p> <p>Learning process: Like most students at the training centre, Martin has profound weaknesses in terms of learning. His methodological skills are particularly lacking.</p> <p>General aptitudes: Above average IQ.</p> <p>Note. The average is between 85 and 115.</p>
<p>7. Environment:</p> <p>External and observable: ascendant family (parents, brothers, sisters, etc.); descendant family (spouse, children, etc.); friends, colleagues, employers. Ideas that circulate, places, events, situations, things.</p> <p>Encouragement, support, trust and reinforcement (or lack thereof) in the environment.</p>	<p>External: Martin is surrounded by good friends. His family wonders why he isn't succeeding. Even though they don't say anything openly, he feels that they judge him and that hurts and humiliates him deeply. His romantic relationships have never lasted. The fact that he has little schooling and does not have a steady job explains this to a certain extent. It causes him great pain.</p>

Internal and non-observable: physiological and psychological phenomena (sensations, emotions, etc.). Certain internal behaviours produce the same effects as the external environment (e.g. staying motivated, putting oneself down).

To evaluate: interviews, observation.

Internal: Martin has serious doubts as to whether his situation will improve. There are times when he gets extremely discouraged, but then he recovers and gets back to work. He constantly struggles to overcome negative self-talk.



Section IV Intervention Strategies for Learning Problems (QS/AS)

Remedial Field

QS1. How do you help adults who can decode a text but don't understand its meaning?

AS1. First, check their text comprehension by asking them to carry out written instructions. For example, you could write a message asking the adults to go to a given place to pick up an object and bring it back.

You could ask the adults to:

- complete sentences using a selection of words (the length of the sentence and the number of words may vary)
- rearrange a segment that is out of order in a paragraph
- put the sentences of a text back in order
- find, in a paragraph, one sentence that is out of place
- locate, in a text, the sentence that does not suit the context
- summarize short texts
- find the main idea in a text
- underline keywords in a sentence and then retell it in their own words, but using the keywords (if the adults cannot do this, check if they understand the meaning of all the words)
- formulate simple questions about a text whose topic they are familiar with before starting to read as this promotes better understanding

QS2. How do you help adults who have problems keeping ideas coherent when writing freely?

AS2. You can teach the adults to prepare an outline for their text.

You can also suggest metacognitive strategies, such as rereading a text out loud, asking someone else to read the text to them and then have the adults ask themselves questions following these readings, or having the adults reread their text the following day. This will help the adults note inconsistencies.

The adults can also give a concrete form to their text by making logical connections between the introduction, the middle and the conclusion.

As a game, ask the adults to create a text for a cartoon strip that has blank speech bubbles.

QS3. How do you help adults who don't understand the position of a digit in a decimal number? For example, they don't understand the difference between 4.06 and 4.60.

AS3. Help the adults understand the connection between 4.06 and 4.60. Give the adults exercises in which they will have to choose the greater of two sums of money (\$4.06 or \$4.60). Repeat this comparative exercise to help the adults understand that the further a digit is to the right of the decimal point, the lower its value.

Note: When dealing with decimals, examples involving money and anything related to it are what adults find easiest to understand (because money is most relevant to them). Do not hesitate to use this money-related competency (which has already been acquired in most cases).

Use a place value table in which the adults will have to place a given decimal number.

Ask the adults to give several decimal numbers, emphasizing the place value of the digits. For example, ask them to say, "4 wholes and 6 one hundredths" and not "four point zero six." The latter way of citing decimal numbers is a major cause of misunderstanding.

QS4. How do you help adults who have difficulty solving mathematical problems related to activities of everyday life?

AS4. Constantly relate the problems presented and the explanations given to everyday situations.

Act as a model for the adults by solving problems in front of them and expressing out loud the internal dialogue that occurs during problem solving.

Encourage the adults to work in groups in order to pool different problem-solving strategies.

If necessary, present activities that require manipulation, classification, association, series completion, etc. to help the adults develop logical reasoning.

Use problems proposed by adults and use authentic material such as bills, restaurant menus and pay slips.

Teach the adults to reformulate a problem and process data (arrange the data in a table, arrange the data in an ordered list, etc.).

Teach the adults to estimate the result of an operation and come up with an approximate answer by rounding off numbers. Ask the adults to assess the plausibility of their answers. Use real-life situations.

QS5. How do you help adults who work too slowly?

AS5. Emphasize the need to finish a task within a reasonable amount of time.

Set, for each writing activity, a maximum time period. Gradually reduce the time allotted until the adults work at the same pace as most of the other students in the group.

Encourage the adults to develop certain habits, such as crossing t's and inserting orthographical signs only after writing an entire word or sentence; reading and understanding the words to be copied before writing them out because writing pace depends on a person's ability to anticipate.

Try to determine if this slowness is due to stress, lack of mastery of the subject matter, learning difficulties, poor work methods, etc.

To find out more about possible teaching strategies, please see:

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Practical Guide for the Teaching of Literacy to Adults With Learning Difficulties*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002.

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. Formation professionnelle et technique et formation continue. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Practical Guide for Teaching Adults With Learning Difficulties — Literacy, Presecondary and Secondary Education*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2005.

Cognitive Field

QS6. How do you help adults who have attention and concentration problems?

AS6. Help the adults identify the causes of the attention problems experienced inside or outside the classroom.

Avoid cluttering the classroom walls with too many signs that could distract the adult.

Limit comings and goings and eliminate unnecessary noise.

Ask the adults to keep only the materials necessary for the task at hand on their worktable. Eliminate from their field of vision anything that could be a distraction.

From time to time, pair the adults so they can guide each other through a specific task.

Use strategies that encourage the adults to participate actively (work in small groups or as a class, etc.).

Pay special attention to the needs expressed by the adults (the capacity for attention and concentration is often related to the level of motivation).

Vary the types of stimulation.

Give the adults a sheet of paper on which the 26 letters of the alphabet and the numbers 1 to 26 have been scattered. Ask the adults to connect the letters and numbers, without taking the pen off the page, as follows:

1 → a, 2 → b, 3 → c, 4 → d, etc.

QS7. How do you help adults who have problems encoding, retaining and recalling information to be learned (memory problems)?

AS7. Teach the adults to ask themselves whether they have understood information, and in case of doubt, to ask for clarification.

Have the adults make connections between elements of information by breaking down the information into categories.

Have the adults associate information with more familiar concepts.

Make information as concrete as possible by associating it with familiar situations.

Have the adults pay attention to associations that come to mind when attempting to recall information.

Have the adults describe their thought process when using a clue to retrieve a particular piece of information.

In cases where the adults must remember a name or word, teach them to use the alphabet as an aid: have them close their eyes and go through the alphabet in their heads while concentrating on the name or word in question. Very often, the information comes to mind spontaneously.

Teach the adults to use strategies such as mnemonic devices, word games and associations.

Check if the adults have actually thoroughly understood a concept. Memory rarely retains what seems meaningless.

QS8. How do you help adults who have memory problems?

AS8. Ask the adults to write summaries, review, overlearn (i.e. continue to memorize information thought to have been learned); recite, structure and organize the material to be learned; or use mnemonic devices. Simultaneous use of several senses helps develop attention and facilitate assimilation. It seems that people retain:

- 10 per cent of what they read
- 20 per cent of what they read and hear
- 30 per cent of what they see
- 50 per cent of what they see and hear
- 70 per cent of what they say
- 90 per cent of what they do (do, apply, act: fourth mode of the functional learning process; transfer of learning).

To find out more about intervention strategies related to memory, please see:

Ruph, F. *Le fonctionnement de la mémoire et les stratégies de mémorisation*, in collaboration with Service d'éducation des adultes, Commission scolaire du Lac-Témiscamingue, January 1993.

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Practical Guide for the Teaching of Literacy to Adults With Learning Difficulties*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002. Part X.

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. Formation professionnelle et technique et formation continue. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Practical Guide for Teaching Adults With Learning Difficulties — Literacy, Presecondary and Secondary Education*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2005. Section 3.2 and Appendix V.

QS9. How do you help adults who have difficulty following or understanding a conversation or a presentation?

AS9. First, make sure the adults can focus their attention.

Expand the adults' vocabulary through various activities: conversation, reformulation, imitation, role-playing, improvisation, etc.

Stimulate listening skills during group discussions by asking each person to repeat what was said by the preceding person before they speak.

Make the adults aware of other aspects of verbal exchanges: gestures, facial expressions, intonation (depending on the speaker's feelings, whether the speaker is asking a question, making an assertion, trying to convince).

Make the adults aware of the prejudices that can hinder communication (about the subject, the speaker, the type of presentation, etc.).

Ask the adults to rephrase in their own words what has just been said: "If I understand correctly . . ."

QS10. How do you help adults who lack vocabulary?

AS10. Provide various exercises to improve vocabulary, emphasizing the need to be clear and accurate. For example, ask the adults to:

- match words with illustrations
- identify as many elements as possible in an illustration or a photograph
- identify a famous person or an object on the basis of the verbal clues provided
- describe an object based on its characteristics
- list as many elements as possible from a given category identified by a generic term, for example: *family, table, house, car*
- find synonyms and antonyms of various words

In addition, encourage the adults to replace expressions such as "you know," "kind of," "the thing," "whatever," with words that express more precisely what is being talked about.

QS11. How do you help adults who have visual, auditory or tactile perception problems?

AS11. Ask the adults, for example, to find the differences between two almost identical drawings. Use various drawings with differences that are increasingly more subtle.

Or show the adults a series of drawings, one of which is incomplete, and ask them to finish it.

Have the adults listen to recorded sounds and ask them to identify the sounds.

Ask the adults to isolate a figure or a particular shape within a group of figures.

Ask the adults to handle objects with their eyes closed, describe the characteristics and name them (orange, sweet pepper, apple, tomato, pencil, cup, plate, MP3 player, etc.).

Pronounce a series of words that sound the same (same consonance) and ask the adults to say what each one means, for example *man, pan, fan; sea, pea, tea*.

To refine the adults' perceptions, ask them to read out loud the names of colour adjectives written in a different colour than the one they represent (e.g. *red* written in yellow, *green* written in red, *yellow* written in green, *blue* written in orange, *orange* written in blue).

QS12. How do you help adults who have organizational problems (planning work, etc.)?

AS12. Give detailed instructions on how to execute a task: explain exactly what to do, the steps to be followed, the order in which to carry out the steps, etc.

Check if the adults have understood these instructions. Ask them to rephrase the instructions.

Suggest studying using the PAR³ formula: **P**eruse the material to be studied; **A**sk oneself how best to proceed; **R**ead the material, underlining keywords and looking up unfamiliar words; **R**ecite the text or say it out loud; **R**epeat it in one's own words using the keywords to verify understanding; **R**eview by summarizing the material at the end of the study session.

Explain what learning strategies are.

Help the adults discover their dominant learning style.

Help the adults explore the strengths and weaknesses of their learning process and correct these weaknesses by having them rely on personal strengths as much as possible.

Discuss possible strategies to perform a given task and help the adults identify and apply those that suit them best.

For more information about intervention strategies related to the cognitive field, please see:

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Practical Guide for the Teaching of Literacy to Adults With Learning Difficulties*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002.

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. Formation professionnelle et technique et formation continue. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Practical Guide for Teaching Adults With Learning Difficulties — Literacy, Presecondary and Secondary Education*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2005.

Strategies and Organizational Measures

QS13. How can I improve my approach with adults who have learning problems?

AS13. Professional development is an excellent way to improve your actions and practices. It can take many forms: training sessions, conventions, lectures. However, there is another, lesser

known method that provides numerous opportunities to improve one's actions: action science or reflective practice.

The purpose of reflective practice is to make practitioners more effective, more autonomous, more aware and more satisfied with their work. It makes it possible for them to analyze their actions and practices and adjust them to their objectives, that is, to do what is appropriate with respect to what they want to do.

According to the theory of reflective practice, there are three causes for ineffectiveness: a dogged pursuit of unrealistic objectives, inappropriate methods and factors beyond a practitioner's control.

Intervention based on reflective practice basically consists of the following steps:

- Before the intervention: 1) describing the situation by sticking to the reality and facts; 2) formulating an objective and choosing the means to attain it; 3) planning the intervention thoroughly, methodically: the nature of the activities, their duration, criteria for success, and actions to be undertaken depending on whether or not the objective is attained.
- During the intervention: implementing the chosen means and making the necessary adjustments based on ongoing evaluation. It is important to note essential events by numbering and dating them (e.g. 1. 2007-01-22 / 2. 2007-02-15)
- After the intervention: conducting a final evaluation and identifying the causes that explain the results.

For more information on reflective practice, please see:

St-Arnaud, Y. *Connaître par l'action*. Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1992.

Note:

- Evaluating how an adult functions is absolutely essential, particularly when an adult has a learning problem. Such an evaluation can help greatly improve the adult's situation. It is an extension of functional analysis.
- There are basically two different types of evaluation: summative evaluation and formative evaluation. Summative evaluation is based on quantitative data. It provides information to both the practitioner and the adult on the adult's progress with respect to objectives and the degree of mastery. Formative evaluation is based on qualitative data. It enables the practitioner to adjust his or her actions, as much as possible, to the adult's personality, way of functioning and academic progress.

QS14. What means of intervention seem more effective in dealing with learning problems?

AS14. Various techniques can be used to deal effectively and satisfactorily with learning problems. Here are a few examples:

► **Strategies that foster the transfer of learning**

These strategies can help solve learning problems in the sense that the transfer of learning makes concrete use of acquired competencies, which is what people with

learning problems seek most. An environment that makes learning meaningful can thus facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Transfer can be defined as the use of previously acquired learning in a new context. Transfer can also be defined as the use, in various everyday situations, of declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge (knowledge, skills and attitudes) acquired through training.

The conditions and factors that foster the transfer of learning include:

- A family, social and, most importantly, a school environment that:
 - encourages and motivates people to adopt new behaviours
 - provides opportunities for using what has been learned
 - reinforces (rewards) new behaviours
 - downplays failures without trivializing them
 - includes demonstrations, simulations, illustrated experiences and examples of application
 - resembles everyday situations in which the new behaviours can be used
- Learning actually accomplished
- Motivation (identified needs, completion of a real, concrete project)
- The conviction that the new behaviours are preferable to the old ones
- Generalization of learning (the person realizes that what he or she is learning may be useful in many situations)
- Recognition of situations in which acquired learning may be used
- Anticipation of reinforcement (rewards for adopting new behaviours)
- The ability to adapt to the favourable and unfavourable characteristics of the environment

For more information on the transfer of learning, please see:

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *Frame of Reference: The Transfer of Learning in the Context of Literacy Training*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1999.

► **Three-Level Model**

This model can help resolve learning problems because it consists of andragogical measures whose main goal is to promote the resolution of learning problems.

The model works as follows: At **the first level of intervention**, teaching staff use functional analysis to identify a problem (contribute to a diagnosis), using interviews, observation and measurement (tests, questionnaires, etc.). (See: QD6/AD6.) The interventions that result from the functional analysis are based on the screening process

and are accompanied by ongoing evaluation. At **the second level**, a specialized resource intervenes if the problem is not resolved at the first level. This specialized adult education resource establishes a more detailed diagnosis using functional analysis, and implements intervention strategies that are carried out together with teaching staff. At **the third level**, a standardized assessment resource conducts further testing in order to arrive at a diagnosis.

This third level of functional analysis, along with the resulting diagnosis, is necessary to determine the nature and severity of the problem (difficulty or disability) and whether support measures must be put in place.

Examples of support measures:

- Extending the time allocated for an activity
- Retreating to an empty room
- Repeating or reformulating comments, questions and instructions
- Reading a text for an adult learner
- Listening to a text again (more than what was planned in the program)
- Taking a break between exercises

Note: For information on screening and functional analysis, please see Part III - Diagnosing Learning Problems.

For more information on the three-level model, please see:

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. Formation professionnelle et technique et formation continue. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Practical Guide for Teaching Adults With Learning Difficulties — Literacy, Presecondary and Secondary Education*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2005. Appendix IX.

► **Project-Based Learning**

It has long been known that project-based learning, or problem solving, promotes the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Experiments in different environments involving adults with learning problems have confirmed the effectiveness of this approach. Basically, project-based learning can be characterized as follows:

- A group of adults carries out a project or solves a problem.
- With the help of a teacher, the adults determine the steps, deadlines and costs (if applicable) of the project.
- Roles are assigned based on competencies and motivation.
- Adults are generally responsible for the process and the adjustments they make.
- Ongoing evaluation is included in the process.
- Collaboration is essential to the project and its success.

- At the end of the project, the adults review their experience in order to become aware of the results, the reasons for these results and the changes that should be made in the future.

Note: An experiment in project-based learning was conducted by the Ministère de l'Éducation with a group of adults who all had significant learning problems. The results of this experiment were particularly conclusive.

For more information on this project, please see:

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *Creating and managing a small business*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1999.

► **The CO-SKILLS Cognitive Training Software**

Version 5.1 of CO-SKILLS includes 25 programs, each aimed at improving a particular competency. The programs are divided into eight categories of cognitive variables: attention, memory, language, reasoning, arithmetic, hand-eye coordination, visual-spatial skills and problem solving. For each category, the exercises usually progress from easy to more demanding.

In version 5.1, most of the programs include tests to evaluate how well the student has mastered the program's content. These tests can be used for two main purposes: first to assess how useful it is for a student to learn and practice using a given program, and second, to assess a student's progress after training.

The test results are expressed as percentages, in relation to mastery of the program's content. Each test may be used several times, as a pre-test or post-test.

A file is created for an adult to store test results and progress made and can be consulted at any time.

For more information on these programs, please see:

Pépin, M. and M. Loranger. *CO-SKILLS, Cognitive Training Software* (version 5.1), Sainte-Foy: Le Réseau Psychotech inc.

Telephone: (418) 659-7000 — Web site: www.psychotech.qc.ca

Two Preferred Methods

► **Customized Training Approach**

This approach can help solve learning problems as it is based on adults' real needs, it encourages adults to participate actively in their training process and it involves concrete, everyday life situations. Aimed at promoting the transfer of learning, this approach consists of four phases that can be broken down into several stages:

- **Needs analysis** (identifying needs, analyzing situations, measuring prior learning, establishing a final diagnosis of needs)

- **Development of a training strategy** (choosing situations, formulating functional and theme / content-related objectives, planning activities based on the functional learning process)
- **Implementation of the training strategy** and preparation for the transfer of learning (carrying out planned activities, conducting ongoing formative evaluation and preparing for the transfer of learning)
- **Final evaluation and verification of the transfer of learning** (final evaluation to verify the attainment of objectives, verifying the transfer of learning in the situations selected, deciding on follow-up)

Customized training may be an effective way to ensure progress for adults with learning problems, as it is based on their experience, knowledge, personal and collective expertise; it is tailored to adults as individuals, their needs and abilities.

The four main principles underlying customized training also guide decisions concerning the design, organization and implementation of training. They include:

- 1. **Measuring** correctly the elements that come into play when formulating training needs. The main elements to measure are: adults' situation and problems; the collective aspects of the situation in question (family, community); the changes desired by the individuals in this situation; the adults or group of adults and their perception of the situation, their experience, prior learning, needs, resources; the expression of the desired changes as training and learning objectives and the formulation of desired outcomes.
- 2. **Participation:** The focal point of any training situation is the adult. For training to be truly customized, an adult must truly be involved and participate in every stage of the training process. Far from being a training method limited to andragogy, participation is in fact an objective to be attained.
- 3. **Preparing, organizing and measuring the transfer** of learning in a situation: If the objectives of customized training are based on desired changes in a given situation, then customized training must prepare and organize how learning will be transferred to the situation and measure with those concerned the extent to which transfer occurs and the situation changes.
- 4. **Consistency:** Out of respect for adults and the educational institution, customized training must take place in a consistent, unified manner, where all adults are able to master the logic and content of training, to the best of their abilities. The quality of customized training depends above all on the quality of this process which is carried out together with adults in order to define, program, organize and evaluate training based on adults' needs and the situations from which these needs arise.

These combined principles, when applied to the design, organization and evaluation of training, constitute the basis of the customized training approach.

For more information on the customized training approach, please see:

► **The Functional Learning Process (FLP)**

It has frequently been noted that people experience learning problems because they lack the basic competencies for learning. These basic competencies, which are themselves the focus of learning, take the form of learning strategies.

The functional learning process, which is designed to help adults develop learning strategies, is therefore proposed as a training approach, particularly for adults with learning problems.

The functional learning process uses four basic modes of learning: emotions, perceptions, cognition and actions. It is learned through conditioning, and how well it works depends, to a certain degree, on the extent to which a person's potential has been developed throughout his or her learning history and development. It may be restored through empowerment, which consists in teaching the process [learning how to learn] and using the process [helping others to learn].

The first mode of learning, that of emotions, is characterized by *feeling*. It is described in relation to four basic competencies: living in the present, being open to the learning experience, getting involved on an emotional level and trusting one's intuition. The determining factor (or "overriding competency") is MOTIVATION. It is through this mode that one determines what is to be learned and overcomes apprehensions to learning. Extroverts tend to prefer this first mode. The main problem encountered in this mode is avoidance. Remember: "Emotional upheaval impedes cognition."

The second mode of learning, that of perceptions, can be characterized by *exploration*. Like the first mode, it can be described in relation to four basic competencies: gathering information, selecting information, organizing information and describing information. The determining factor (or "overriding competency") is ATTENTION. It is through this mode that one explores passively (e.g. listening to a presentation) and actively (e.g. reading, discussing, consulting) the content to be learned. Introverts tend to favour the second mode. The main problem encountered in this mode is repetition. Remember: "Information is power."

The third mode of learning, that of cognition, can be characterized by *understanding*. It may also be described with respect to four basic competencies, namely, using concepts, making judgments, reasoning and making decisions and planning. Its determining factor (or "overriding competency") is GENERALIZATION. It is through this mode that one verifies comprehension, in addition to listing and planning situations in which learning will be applied in daily life. Introverts tend to favour the third mode. The main problem encountered in this mode is rationalization. Remember: "I think using the words I know."

The fourth mode of learning, that of actions, can be characterized by *doing*. Like the other three modes, it may be described with respect to four basic competencies: taking risks, showing initiative, assuming responsibilities and evaluating one's effectiveness

and satisfaction. Its determining factor (or “overriding competency”) is APPLICATION. It is through this mode that one carries out and evaluates what was planned in the third mode. Extroverts tend to prefer this fourth mode. The main problem encountered in this mode is risk of compensation. Remember: “Without the transfer of learning, a person’s living conditions remain unchanged.”

For more information on the functional learning process, please see:

Québec. Ministère de l’Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *The Functional Learning Process (FLP)*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002.

QS15. What is the main thing to avoid when working with adults who have learning problems?

AS15. First and foremost, never intervene without having determined the adult’s problem as precisely as possible, in collaboration with other resource persons. Once the problem has been identified, set an objective and choose the intervention strategies that are best suited to the situation. Lastly, avoid intensive andragogy, which consists in sustaining a support-for-learning relationship with an adult who does not really possess the competencies required to carry out his or her training plan. Such persistent ineffective measures keep adults in a failure situation and weaken educators’ motivation. If it is true that behaviour is adopted and maintained when reinforced, then inappropriate behaviour should not be reinforced.

QS16. Do training centres that help solve learning problems possess specific characteristics?

AS16. According to many observers, a training centre provides a supportive environment in which learning problems can be solved, if:

- it allows adults to have positive experiences that correct past negative emotions and relationships or the effects of past traumas, and discourages avoidance and escapist behaviours (being late or absent, dropping out, etc.).
- it takes into account the different variables that affect the personality of an adult with a learning problem.
- it implements support measures for adults with a diagnosed learning disability: extending the time allocated for an activity; retreating to an empty room; repeating or reformulating comments, questions and instructions; reading a text for an adult; listening to a text again (more than what was planned in the program) and taking breaks between exercises.
- it practices quality screening (diagnosis).
- it emphasizes differential diagnosis (see: QD4/AD4).
- it is determined to provide adults with a realistic picture of their problems.

Note: Maintaining false hope leads to discouragement, a deep sense of failure and bitterness. This feeling is a source of controversy and, in some cases, even aggression.

- it promotes concerted action to find solutions to adults’ problems and help adults break out of the stalemate they are in. The solution may consist in pursuing a training plan, but it may also mean interrupting a plan in order to take the time to redefine the objective with respect to interests and aptitudes or to spend some time in the workplace.

Often, the solution to an academic problem comes from a job that does not require a terminal degree, but rather specific competencies that the adult possesses and that make him or her feel valued.

Note: Concerted action helps practitioners break out of their isolation, increases their effectiveness and prevents duplication of intervention strategies. It takes into account the expertise of all stakeholders, including administrators, partners, and adult learners, whose participation is essential.

- it ensures that those working with adults take part in professional development to help them diagnose learning problems and find the most appropriate strategies to solve these problems in effective, satisfying and original ways.

Note: The following analogy will help illustrate why it is important to take the time to update one's knowledge, skills and attitudes:

Two lumberjacks were working in a forest. One took breaks at regular intervals, the other did not. In spite of his many breaks, the first lumberjack was much more efficient and seemed much happier with his work. Intrigued, the second lumberjack asked how that was possible. The first lumberjack answered: "During my breaks, I sharpen my axe."

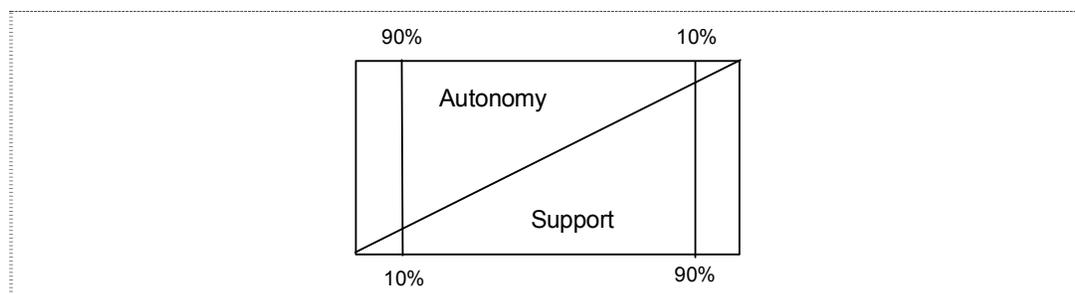
QS17. Are there andragogical measures that are better suited to adults with learning disabilities?

AS17. Given that adults with severe learning disabilities often have deficiencies related to organization, decision making and planning, they may benefit from an environment that compensates for these deficiencies. Such an environment can be characterized as follows:

- It pursues observable, measurable objectives.
- It uses a progressive teaching approach (observance and mastery of all prerequisites).
- It uses systematic, explicit teaching methods integrated with learning situations, projects and problem solving.
- It uses meaningful materials (texts that are closely related to real-life situations, be they personal or collective).
- It uses scientifically proven methods that take into account the basic tenets of learning (cognitive associations, reinforcement, systematic training, etc.).
- It adopts a rigorous ongoing evaluation process that focuses on knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- It adopts teaching strategies that take into account an adult's personality and learning style.
- It adopts teaching strategies aimed at developing an adult's full potential, no matter what it is. For such teaching to be effective, the adult's potential must first be determined.
- It is stimulating and interesting and helps encourage, motivate, incite and reward learners.
- It adopts teaching strategies that promote autonomy through empowerment and develops tools that can be used gradually (as competencies are developed). (See: QK16/AK16)
- It recognizes the importance of effort, review, repetition, training, exercises, practice, and fun in learning and teaching.

- It has teachers who are passionate about what they do. The interest that a teacher has in his or her work and subject matter is one of the most important factors in motivating and maintaining the attention of students. (See: QS14/AS14 on the functional learning process).
- It has teachers who are determined, creative and courageous.

Note: Generally, the more autonomous an adult is (in terms of organization, observance of deadlines, etc.), the less support is needed. The less autonomous an adult is, the more support is needed. This relationship can be illustrated as follows:



QS18. What should be done when an adult does not have a learning problem *per se*, but rather a problem related to mental health, behaviour or psychotropic drug use (e.g. alcohol, illegal drugs or certain medication)?

AS18. To answer this question, it is important to make a distinction between mental health problems, behavioural problems and problems related to psychotropic drug use.

- In cases of mental health problems (depression, anxiety, stress, phobias, etc.), the type of intervention strategy will depend on the severity of the problem. The adult may need psychological or psychiatric care, in which case he or she may need to take a “break” in order to receive the appropriate treatment.
- If the problem does not greatly hinder the way the adult functions, then desensitization, relaxation training and a helping relationship may be used to support the adult throughout his or her training.
- As for behavioural problems, a distinction must be made between a minor, temporary or situational problem and a behavioural disorder characterized by violence, threats, fighting or theft. It goes without saying that, in the latter case, a zero-tolerance policy should be adopted: the adult should be referred to another type of service as quickly as possible.
- In the case of a situational problem (e.g. opposition, sulking, denial), a contract could be drawn up specifying the behavioural changes expected. Whether or not the adult abides by the contract will determine what steps to take next.
- In cases involving the use of psychotropic drugs, the intervention strategy will consist in showing the adult that his or her behaviour can greatly hinder learning and even make it impossible. If the training centre has rules concerning the use of psychotropic drugs, these rules can serve as guidelines in finding a solution to the problem.

Note

- An exception can be made for the use of medication that is medically supervised and does not affect functioning.

- Whatever the problem, it must not disturb others nor prevent them from learning. If it does, then the adult is not in the right place and the decision to inform the adult must be taken by those involved, more specifically by the centre's administrators, since they are the ones who are responsible for ensuring that all students are provided with a climate conducive to learning.

Factors Related to the Learning Process

QS19. What methods can be used to help adults whose learning problems seem related to their emotions?

AS19. You could, for example,

- create an environment in which the adults feel safe
- draw on the adults' needs and involve the adults as much as possible in their training plan
- determine the adults' motivation and try to increase it by helping them see the benefits that learning can bring to the goals they are pursuing
- ask the adults how they feel about what they are learning
- downplay, without trivializing, the situations that cause the adults stress and anxiety
- help the adults verbalize their concerns and fears
- give the adults the time they need to express their feelings without interrupting them; let them "vent"
- ask the adults to talk about situations in which their negative expectations did not come true and to draw positive conclusions

Remember: "Emotional upheaval impedes cognition."

QS20. What methods can be used to help adults whose learning problems seem related to their methodology?

AS20. You could, for example:

- present all of the information related to a given topic and encourage the adults to explore this information as thoroughly as possible. This exploration must be both passive (teaching content, conveying information) and active (asking adults to gather information themselves by consulting documents, participating in discussions, conducting interviews, etc.)
- ask the adults to gather all of the information available on a given topic, telling them where this information can be found
- ask the adults to select information that is directly related to a given topic and keep only what is relevant
- ask the adults to organize this information based on its importance to the topic
- ask the adults to describe the information gathered on a given topic (complete, detailed, accurate, clear description)

Remember: "Information is power."

QS21. What methods can be used to help adults whose learning problems seem related to cognitive operations (concepts, judgment, reasoning, decision making)?

AS21. You could, for example:

- ask the adults to participate in discussions on current events
- ask the adults to solve problems that require them to make judgments and make decisions based on logical reasoning
- ask the adults to make sentences using a series of words (e.g. “adult, work, motivation, pleasure, failure”)
- ask the adults to relate an event using as many details as possible
- ask the adults to explain, in detail, how to get from one place to another
- ask the adults to complete sentences using affirmative or negative statements (e.g. “When I decided to go back to school . . .”)
- have the adults practise inductive reasoning (going from the particular to the general) and deductive reasoning (going from the general to the particular)
- ask the adults to solve a mystery
- have the adults solve crossword puzzles on topics related to the subject matter to be learned.

Remember: “I think using the words I know.”

QS22. What methods can be used to help adults whose learning problems seem related to a lack of transfer of learning?

Note: The transfer of learning in this case mainly involves applying what has been learned to real-life situations.

AS22. You could, for example:

- create situations in which the adults can put into practice what they have learned
- point out that in a given situation the adults can make use of what they have learned in the past
- ask the adults to name situations in which they could use what they have learned
- encourage initiatives that make use of what the adults have learned
- reflect on situations in which learning was put into practice (evaluation): evaluate the results, identify the reasons for the results, promote success, downplay failures (without trivializing them), determine the adjustments that can be made the next time learning is applied, help the adults become aware of the effects of this application on their living conditions
- ask the adults to explain to what extent the application of learning was effective (e.g. to solve a problem, carry out a project) and satisfying (source of pleasure) for them.

Remember: “Without the transfer of learning, living conditions remain unchanged.” (See: QS14/AS14.)

For more information on the learning process and the transfer of learning, please see:

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *A Guide to Customized Literacy Training: The Functional Learning Process (FLP)*. 41-1066A. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2002.

Québec. Ministère de l'Éducation. Direction de la formation générale des adultes. *Frame of Reference. The Transfer of Learning in the Context of Literacy Training*. Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1999.

Specific Behaviours

QS23. While some adults give up on school, others persist doggedly. They exert tremendous effort and are determined to succeed at all costs. However, they refuse to face reality: they don't always obtain the results expected, yet they persist in pursuing an unrealistic goal. Unfortunately, they don't have the aptitudes required to attain their goal. What can be done to help them?

AS23. Among other things, you can help them face facts. Remind them, for example, of the support they have received and the efforts they have exerted and compare these to the results obtained (use samples of schoolwork to back up your claims). You could explore with them the option of pursuing a different goal, which may be just as interesting and perhaps better suited to their competencies. This approach could be carried out together with a guidance counsellor. You could also ask the adults to trust the judgment of the professionals who work with them and reassure them that everyone is there to provide them with the best help possible. Without giving them false hope, you can tell them that things may improve with time. It is not unheard of!

QS24. Some adults systematically refuse to admit they make mistakes in their schoolwork and come up with all sorts of excuses to justify themselves. What can be done to help them?

AS24. Several factors can explain this kind of behaviour. Shame, humiliation and, above all, the risk of further weakening an already fragile self-image are only a few factors. You could start by discussing the problem with the adults, asking them about past failures and their consequences. You could also reassure the adults and show them that mistakes can help them correct a situation and learn, as long as the mistakes are acknowledged. Reinforcing successes, however slim they may be, can also help calm apprehensions related to failure.

If these strategies are ineffective, then the adults must be confronted. The adults must understand that it will be impossible for them to make progress if they do not acknowledge their mistakes, nor will they be able to benefit from the support they receive, since this support hinges on correcting mistakes in order to gradually acquire new competencies.

QS25. What can be done with adults who keep saying that school is boring and they wouldn't be there if they didn't have to be?

AS25. In andragogy, where adults play an active role in their training plan, such behaviour is unacceptable. If these adults do not change, even after you and your colleagues speak with them, then they should not be at the training centre.

QS26. What should be done with adults who only want to fill up exercise books and nothing else?

AS26. These adults undoubtedly find it comforting to do and redo what they find reassuring, to repeat what they master or think they master, even if all they do is simply recopy texts. In such cases, you could:

- ask the adults to explain and justify their behaviour
- explain that this behaviour will not help them make progress
- show them that this type of behaviour is a waste of valuable time that could be used to make progress
- clearly show them the work that must be done according to their training plan

If the adults persist in this type of behaviour, even though it does not help them make progress, they must be informed that, given the circumstances, they are not suited for the training centre and should no longer benefit from the services offered.

Note: Support from peers (friends whom the adults trust) is an excellent way of helping adults overcome the effort required when transitioning to a subject not yet mastered.

QS27. When integrating adults who exhibit slowness in acquiring a given subject matter, what should be done with an adult who does not want to be associated with people he or she considers “mentally retarded”?

AS27. This is a sensitive issue. This type of behaviour is surely dictated by a fear of being perceived as mentally deficient, or worse, that being around people the adult considers mentally retarded will confirm this perception. You must allow the adult to express his or her feelings and provide reassurance by explaining what integration is and how equality and justice make integration not only acceptable but necessary. You may also guide the person through a process of acceptance and respect that will most likely yield positive results (unless the adult shows contempt for others, which should not be tolerated). Reassurance is the operative term. Other people’s misfortune is not contagious!

- QS28. Some adults think they are stupid because they simply can't understand explanations. They say things like: "I've always been like that. I can't learn." And yet they have many aptitudes, demonstrate sound judgment and are capable of logical reasoning. How do you convince them that they have a rich personality even though they face obstacles? How do you help them develop the confidence they lack and move forward?
- AS28. These adults need information about their condition. "Information is power." Demystify the situation by providing accurate information about learning problems. Explain to them what learning difficulties and learning disabilities are. The stereotypical association between learning problems and intellectual impairments must be broken. Give these adults examples of paths to follow, of solutions and possibilities. No matter how things evolve, start by downplaying the situation. This can be done together with other resource persons, particularly guidance counsellors.
- QS29. Some adults make no effort and show no interest in their studies. They don't do the work required by their training plan, ignore recommendations, put off studying for tests and exams. When they don't succeed, they blame it on the methods used, teachers who can't teach or even other adults in the training centre. How do you deal with people like that, if an assessment of the situation reveals they don't have learning problems and they could succeed if they made an effort?
- AS29. This is a question of shared responsibility. These adults must understand that they cannot succeed if they don't assume their share of the responsibility. Explain that, in andragogy, the training process places adults and resource persons in a relationship, where each party assumes a distinct role, along with its attendant tasks and expected behaviours. In the support-for-learning relationship, the adult assumes the role of learner and, as such, is expected to study the subject matter required, prepare for exams, etc. The instructor is expected to support the learner's efforts, keep his or her knowledge and competencies up to date, etc. If all parties respect their roles and tasks, the chances of achieving objectives are good. In this particular case, the adults must alter their perception of the situation and make the necessary adjustments.





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