ACE DisAbility Network News

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A newsletter of the statewide ACE DisAbility Network   **September 2010**

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ACE Disability Research Project

The ACE Dis**Ability** Network has been funded by ACFE to undertake research into good practice in disability inclusion in Adult Community Education across Victoria.

We are employing two methods to obtain this information. The first is through a survey which you should receive via email. The survey can be done on line and doesn't take more than about 20 minutes to complete. If you haven't received an email for this, the link to complete the survey is as follows:
:**http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/X7RDLWM**.

The survey is not intended to make any judgements about individual centres, but is to give us an overall picture of the good work you are doing and to highlight good practice as well as detail where you might be having difficulties so that we can offer more relevant services and supports in the future.

We will also be conducting four focus groups.

Southern Metro Regional forum on August 24th
Barwon Region at their forum on October 18th
Eastern Region (to be determined)
Northern Region (to be determined)

The aim of the focus groups is to collect information about your work with learners with a disability and detail any success stories or issues. If you miss out on being able to contribute please ring or email us with anything you want to share about good inclusive practices at your centre: Tel: (03) 9916 5821 or via email: olympiat@yooralla.com.au

Working with people with an intellectual disability.

Following the policy directions of the *Victorian State Disability Plan*, there are more people with an intellectual disability accessing centres individually as well as in groups. This sometimes means that teachers are finding that they are teaching people with a wide range of abilities in the same class. This issue looks at the possible characteristics of intellectual disability and the impact these can have on learning .We also provide some tips for teaching people with various intellectual impairments.

Adult, Community and Further Education

Intellectual Disability

People with Intellectual Disabilities

Between 1-3% of the Victorian population have an intellectual disability. More than three quarters of these people have a mild intellectual disability, the remainder have a range of moderate, severe or profound disabilities and some have associated physical or cognitive impairments. Intellectual disability is not curable. However education and training, along with adequate support can lesson its effects. Most people with intellectual disabilities are capable, with assistance, of learning.

Definition of Intellectual Disability
The various definitions of intellectual disability are contestable. However the factors which must be present for someone to be defined as having an intellectual disability in order to qualify for a Disability Support Pension are:

• Significantly below average intelligence (l.Q of 70 or less). (The score is obtained from a standardised test whereby 100 is an average).
• Shortcomings in everyday life skills: personal skills such as self care are inadequate compared with other people of the same age and culture
• Disability appears in childhood

IQ tests measure intelligence. Even though there seems to be some doubt as to what exactly this intelligence is that is being measured, it has been shown to be a prediction of performance in academic settings. IQ is, therefore, a measure of potential.

In learning contexts, a person with an intellectual impairment is likely to pick up information more slowly; there is sometimes a reduced memory capacity and short term memory span; and conceptualisation may be difficult .

In general, however, the only commonality between those who have been labelled as having an intellectual disability is that it takes them longer to learn some things (and even these things may be different). "Slow Learner" was at one time a common euphemism for intellectual disability.

Common characteristics of intellectual disability

People with an intellectual disability may have one or more of the following characteristics. They may not have any of these characteristics.

- May take longer to learn something
- May have other disabilities e.g. hearing loss
- May have experienced only protective environments such as special schools, sheltered workshops
- May not be used to social environments
- May cope better in one to one relationships
- May find abstract and potential concepts difficult
- May have low literacy skills
- May have poor short term memory
- May have experienced discrimination in the past
- May react adversely to change
- May have difficulty concentrating and be easily distracted.

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Some do's and don'ts of working with people with an intellectual disability

DO

- Do work in partnership with any support people. Let them know what you are doing that day and how they can help. Some support people are willing to help others in the class.

- Do remember that other people in the class may also be nervous about having someone with a disability participating with them. They may not have had any experience and may be unsure about how they communicate or react. Be patient.

- Do speak clearly and in plain language

- Do give accurate and constructive feedback on how someone is doing and praise for work well done: *"I'm really impressed at how hard you are trying because this is difficult work. See – this is how it should look. Would you like me to show you again before you have another go?"*

- Do speak in concrete rather than abstract or metaphorical terms; the here and now rather than the future: *"Bring boots if it rains"* is better than "*Bring appropriate footwear if the weather is uncertain"*

- Do have clear expectations and tell the learner what they are: *"Today we are going to learn to count to five"*

- Do let the person understand the relationship between you is a professional one. Some people have not had many experiences of relationships and can feel let down if they think you might be their best friend because you are nice to them. Inappropriate touching and hugging should not be encouraged.

- Do let the learner know that it's OK to make mistakes – and that you can make them too.

DON'T

- Don't do a person's work for them. Show them how it is done, but let them do it themselves

- Don't give answers for them until they have tried to work it out for themselves

- Don't cover up mistakes or be afraid to say something when a process has been done incorrectly. If the learner has done something wrong, point out the right way to do it firmly but kindly. Let them make the correction and do it again.

- Don't expect too much too soon. It takes some people longer to learn – but they still learn

- Don't assume someone will understand something that has been implied. Give instructions clearly and concretely

- Don't be over effusive when praising. *"Good work"* or *"Well done"* as for anyone else is fine

- Don't mollycoddle or over protect. The learner is an adult, who should be treated with respect, not as a protected species

- Don't react negatively. If the learner has done something wrong, is not paying attention or is slow to learn (or if you are tired) always respond in a positive manner

- Don't be discouraged – everyone learns at their own pace

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Tips for successfully teaching people with an intellectual disability

1. **Task analysis (or chaining)**
Break each task down to its smallest components (the size will depend on the learner) and teach each component thoroughly until it is mastered before introducing and teaching the next component. Then ensure that both components can be demonstrated correctly together before introducing the third component and so forth. For example, teaching how to make a cup of coffee: start with how to fill a kettle, once this can be done competently, move on to switching a kettle on. Then test that filling and switching on the kettle can be done before setting out to teach how to put the coffee in the cup and so on.

2. **Reverse task analysis**
As with task analysis but starting with the finished product and working backwards e.g. wrapping a parcel starting with the wrapped parcel.

3. **Rehearsal and repetition**
This is especially necessary for people with poor short term memory. Constantly repeating or rehearsing until something is not just right but is second nature can move information from short term to long term memory where it is less likely to be forgotten

4. **Reflection and review**
Start each session with "What did we do last time" and end with "What have we done today"

5. **Streamlining**
Keep procedures for what needs to be done in the correct or usual order. Don't complicate with explanations why, or peripheral information. For example:
"Keep behind the yellow line"
rather than
"Don't go too close to the court. You may get knocked by the ball and you may get in the way of the players"

6. **One instruction at a time**
People with a disability can become easily confused by multiple instructions. If, on occasions, multiple instructions are unavoidable, give the instructions and ask the learner to repeat back what they have to do until they are confident.

7. **Routine**
Set up regular routines so that things are done in the same order for each task and each task is done in the same order each day. This can provide a sense of security and confidence. Take care however that this does not become so ritualised that changes cannot ever be introduced. Add small differences from time to time to show that change is not frightening

8. **Check lists and colour codes**
Create lists of things to be done that can be ticked off. You can use pictographs and colour codes if reading is an issue

9. **Have fun**
Learning doesn't have to be serious. Jokes and laughter make learning easier for all.

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