THE STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Understanding the dynamics of group development help tutors provide proper guidance and support to the group. It also gives them perspective and relief so that they do not feel concerned and responsible if the group is not operating "smoothly."

Small-group instruction is much more effective when the individuals identify themselves as part of a group. The group needs to have an identity and act as a group in the learning process.

The theory and stages of group development are cited often in texts dealing with group instruction. The concepts are still important to reiterate and review on a regular basis. The main areas of group development are:

Interpersonal development: how group members relate to each other as people

Task area development: how group members relate to each other in the context of the group's task

In both areas, the group generally progresses through four stages of development:

♦ Forming;
♦ Storming;
♦ Norming; and
♦ Performing.

The chart on the next page outlines these stages as they relate to the two main areas of development. The role of the tutor at each stage is also identified.

Stage	Interpersonal	Task	*Tutor's Roles
Forming (orienting, testing, discovering ground rules)	Group members test what behavior is acceptable in the group based on reactions from the tutor and other group members.	The group identifies its goal(s), how to accomplish the goal(s), and what the group will need to accomplish them.	**Leader** Clearly delineates objectives and expectations Accepts "teacher" focus Encourages interpersonal relationships
Storming (conflict, polarization, expression of individuality)	Group members become hostile toward the tutor and other group members as they strive to maintain their individuality. Polarizing issues arise.	Group members resist tasks they are asked to perform and unexpected demands that are placed on them.	**Conflict Manager** Accepts the importance of conflict Supports and encourages Pays attention to student concerns
Norming (cohesion and acceptance)	Group members are accepted, and "norms" of acceptable behavior are created and recognized by the group.	Group members exchange ideas and opinions freely and openly.	**Guider** Promotes democratic procedures Enable group members to take on leadership roles
Performing (problem solving, accomplishment)	Roles of group members are flexible, adapting to what is needed to accomplish the task at hand.	The group accomplishes its goal(s).	**Resource** Supervises minimally Reinforces achievement Acts as a facilitator

BUILDING BRIDGES

Laubach Small Group Manual
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OPEN OR CLOSED ENTRY AND EXIT?

| **Open entry and exit:** Students enter and leave a small group at various times.		
Benefits: New students can begin instruction as soon as possible. Even new students waiting for a tutor could benefit from immediate instruction. Students are accommodated when they are ready to start that may improve student start up rates. A student who is put on a wait list may not come when the instruction is finally available.	**Drawbacks:** Open entry can be very challenging for instructors. Instructors have to be very flexible, not only to be able to deal with students at various levels, but also to be able to deal with a constantly changing group dynamic. Having new students in the class can be disruptive and make it extremely difficult to establish group routines. Every time a new student enters the group, the instructor has to take time to bring them "up to speed." Because all learners are going to be at different levels and having varying degrees of comfort in a group situation, there is a need for individualized instruction.	**Solutions:** Allowing new students to enter only once a week may help the instructors maintain some continuity. Making the introduction of a new member the responsibility of other group members can help establish comfort immediately. An icebreaker activity can also be used to make a new student feel at home.

Closed entry and exit: Group membership remains stable throughout fixed period of time or for the duration of a module/unit of instruction.		
Benefits: A solid curriculum with learning outcomes can be developed and followed. Every student in the group should have similar goals. It is easier to develop a strong group identity.	**Drawbacks:** Because the class has set time parameters, instruction moves ahead regardless of attendance. There is not as much opportunity for flexibility with respect to the materials being used/curriculum and the timelines. If members leave before finishing the group size may dwindle.	**Solutions:** Develop a group with a semi-closed policy where members can join for the first two- three weeks or sessions instead of having to commit right from the start.

LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Small-group tutors must consider certain logistical issues that don't arise in the one-to-one tutoring format. The three issues of visual aids, and room arrangement and learning styles are described below.
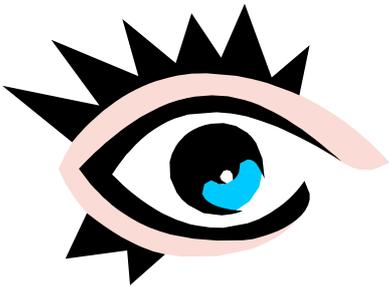
Visual Aids

Visual aids are basic tools for communicating information to groups. Small-group tutors need to know how to make the best use of audiovisual aids. The basic aids are described below.

Overhead Transparencies

Overhead transparencies are effective for emphasizing information on handouts, for presenting information that will be referred to again (for example, steps for creative writing), or for filling in forms (for example, a bank deposit slip). Overheads can be produced easily on a computer and can include graphics. The final production step is to photocopy each overhead onto a separate transparency sheet.
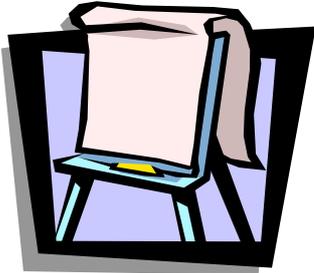
Flip Charts

Flip charts are useful when recording student responses (example: topics for a student newsletter) or displaying instructions. Using markers, the tutor can easily use color to separate information or highlight points. The charts can be posted around the room and referred to later.

Chalkboards

Chalkboards are useful when a large area is needed and information will be revised a number of times (for example, a concept map for a writing exercise). Whiteboards allow you to use a variety of different coloured markers to differentiate when teaching. A cheap, lightweight alternative is to use a large piece of cardboard coated with "chalkboard" paint. This paint can be usually be bought at a hardware store.
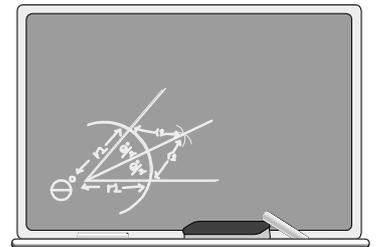
Handouts

Handouts are useful when students need to take information home with them. Handouts also allow students to add their own perspective by writing notes or remarks in the margin, so they should always include space to write. During a class session, it's best to refer to information on a handout by using an identical overhead.

Room Arrangement

Room arrangement can have a tremendous impact on the effectiveness of small-group instruction. Various room arrangements lend themselves to varying degrees of participation, movement, or control.

Circle

A circular arrangement of chairs or desks encourages maximum participation from students. A similar type of arrangement can be made around a rectangular or square table. However, use of visual aids is limited by a circular arrangement. There's usually no way to situate flip charts, overheads, and chalkboards so that everyone can see them.
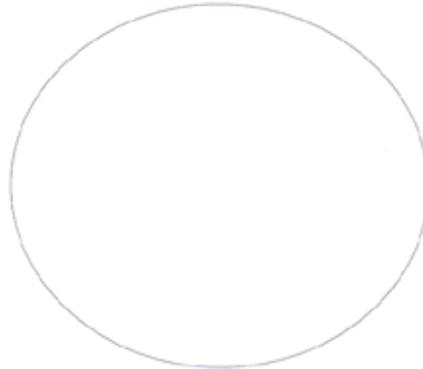
CIRCLE SET-UP

U-Shaped

A u-shaped arrangement lends itself to using various audiovisuals at the front. Students are still encouraged to participate because they can see each other.

U-SHAPE
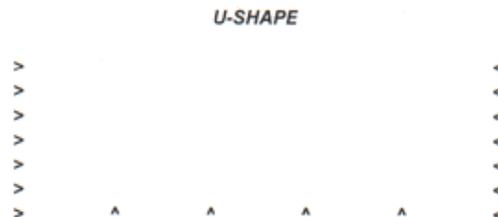
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Classroom

A "classroom" arrangement (chairs in rows, facing forward or tables in rows facing forward) focuses student attention toward the tutor (or another student) standing in front. However, because students can't see each other, participation is limited. Visibility can be improved by arranging tables in a "chevron". The arrangement is similar to the classroom style but the tables are angled slightly towards the front.

CLASSROOM STYLE

WISDOM FROM THE FIELD
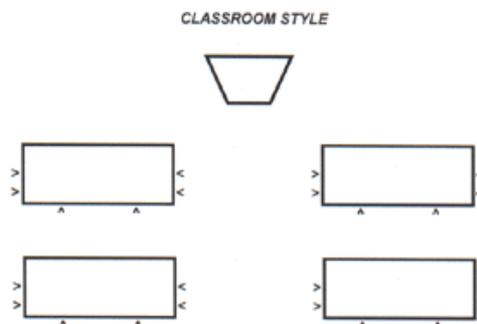
"Once the group has met a few times allow the students to decide how they would like the room arranged. If they room must be put back, get students to commit to helping with this before and after class."

Is the Learning Experience 'Environmentally Friendly'?

"Basic human comfort needs must be addressed before effective learning activities can occur. Providing students with the proper mix of seating, lighting, temperature, unwanted noise suppression, audiovisual, and proper room set up is essential to facilitating the learning process.

Conduct a "learning environment audit" of your students. Watch for students exhibiting the following signs of distress caused by improper seating systems: interlocking fingers of two hands, crossing of legs or arms, placing arms on hips, placing a hand on same or opposite shoulder, hands in pockets, head in hand, elbow on the knee or general fidgeting in their chairs. Most of these traits are triangular bracing moves attempted by the human body as a self-defence mechanism for improper seating arrangements. These distress signals are a good indicator that basic human comfort needs are lacking and that the learning process has been significantly compromised by substandard learning environment components."

— Don MacLaurin http://www.pcma.org/publications/AdultsLearn/roomsets2.htm

Learning Styles

The small-group tutor must be aware that each student in the small group may have a different learning style, or combinations of styles. Students may need information in visual form (written instructions, maps, pictures, or drawings), in auditory form (spoken instructions or descriptions), or in kinesthetic or tactile form (a hands-on exercise). The tutor must present the same information in several ways to make sure that each student understands.

Example: The group is going to play Phonics Bingo. First the tutor writes the rules, using an overhead, flip chart, or handouts. Then she reads the rules aloud. Finally she plays one or two practice rounds in front of the group.

Learning styles refers to the highly individualized ways we take in, process, and organize information. Our preferred learning style is the natural channel we use to learn most quickly, easily, and effectively.

Recognizing learning style preferences and using specific learning style strategies enhances our ability to learn, remember new information, do our jobs, and work with others.

Sensory Style

While everyone uses all of their senses in the learning process, most people learn best through a particular sense. For example, when learning something new, would you rather hear it, see it, do it, or feel it? The answer to this question is just the start in determining your sensory style preference. The brain receives over 50,000 sensory impressions per second, from the pressure on your toes as you walk to the smell of food cooking to the blood pumping through your right

thumb. In other words, there are far too many sensations being registered in the brain at any given moment for us to be consciously aware of them all. The brain deals with this sensory overload by focusing primarily on one or two senses.

A person's approach to information is, in part, dictated by the unconscious preference his or her brain has in valuing sensory impressions. An adult's response to stimuli — and to the world in general — can be described by the senses he or she has "chosen" as the favoured doors to obtaining information. (How this choice is made is a matter of speculation. Many factors of nature and nurture may contribute to it.)

While adults have the ability to employ all their senses, they will favour and build more skills related to their preferred senses. This means most adults will be more successful at learning through their favoured senses. Sensory preferences include **Tactual, Visual, Kinaesthetic**, and **Auditory**.
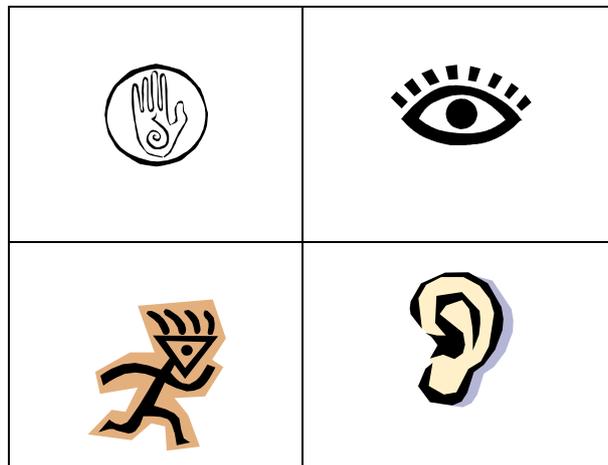
TACTUAL

The tactual student learns through body sensations and small motor movement. Studies show 15 to 25 percent of the population are tactual.

Needs and Behaviours
The tactual student learns through:
- Subtle sensations, some as fine as those registered on the surface of the skin.
- A variety of sensations, including odour.
- Emotional changes in others.

The tactual student might be considered particularly "sensitive."

Values
The tactual student values:
- Personally relating to learning and to other students.
- Emotional issues and real situations.
- Touching things he or she is learning about.
- Feeling how others feel about a subject.

Curriculum
The tactual student learns most from curriculum that includes:
- Learning by *feeling.*
- Personal meaning.
- Social interaction.
- Cooperative learning.
- Personal expression.

Small Group Management
In the classroom, the tactual student:
- Learns by doing in quiet ways, such as writing and drawing.
- Remembers emotional content and people's feelings.
- Focuses on emotions, colours, and moods rather than on sights and sounds.
- Is easily distracted by emotional conflict, temperature variations, and other changes in class or teacher mood.
- The tactual student solves problems through "feel," generally choosing solutions that appeal to him or her rather than organizing or experimenting.

http://www.plsweb.com/

VISUAL

The visual student likes to take in information by seeing. About 35 to 40 percent of the population shares this preference.

Needs and Behaviours
The visual student learns through:
- Observation.
- Watching demonstrations.
- Reading.
- Viewing pictures.
- Watching videotapes and movies.

Values
The visual student values:
- Reading detailed descriptions.
- Thinking in pictures.
- Planning in advance.
- Organizing thoughts by writing them.
- Order and neatness.

Curriculum
The visual student appreciates curriculum that involves:
- Letting students work on their own.
- Deliberate problem solving.
- Quiet time in the classroom.
- Reading and writing.
- The visual arts rather than music.
- The visual student would rather be shown how to do something, or read the instructions, than be told what to do.

Small Group Management
In the classroom, the visual student:
- Lists thoughts and takes notes.
- Examines classroom structure.
- Tends to remember faces and forget names.
- Is generally unaware of sounds.
- Can be distracted by visual disorder or movement.
- The visual student tends to focus on details and components rather than a task as a whole.

http://www.plsweb.com/

KINAESTHETIC

About 25 to 35 percent of the general population are kinaesthetic learners, gathering data about the world through body movement and physical activity involving the large muscle groups.

Needs and Behaviours
The kinaesthetic student learns by:
- Doing, in addition to seeing and hearing.
- Being actively and physically involved in learning.

Values
The kinaesthetic student values:
- Building things and taking things apart.
- Learning by *moving* and *doing.*
- Lying on the floor to write.
- Standing to act out a story instead of reading it.

Curriculum
The kinaesthetic student favours curriculum that involves:
- "Experiencing" learning through physical activity.
- Acting out a subject rather than discussing it.
- Art forms that can be touched, especially sculpture.
- (When reading is required) Stories in which action occurs early.

Classroom Management
In the classroom, the kinaesthetic student:
- Remembers best what is done, not what is seen or talked about.
- Attacks problems physically, impulsively.
- Is less attentive to visual or auditory presentation than to hands-on learning.
- Tries things out: touches, feels, manipulates.
- Responds to music by physical movement.

http://www.plsweb.com/

AUDITORY

Sounds of all kinds play a large part in learning for the auditory student. Only about 10 to 15 percent of people share this primary sense.

Needs and Behaviours
The auditory student learns through:
- Speaking and listening, with an emphasis on speaking.
- Participating in discussion.
- "Thinking out loud."
- Talking about the pros and cons of a situation.

Values
The auditory student values:
- Dialogue and plays.
- Learning through verbal instruction rather than reading.
- Talking problems out verbally or sub vocally.
- Thinking in sounds.

Curriculum
The auditory student prefers curriculum that includes:
- Class or group discussions.
- Sounds; reading aloud.
- Phonics instead of illustrations.
- Music rather than visual arts.

Classroom Management
In the classroom, the auditory student:
- Tends to remember names and forget faces.
- Memorizes by auditory repetition.
- Spends more time talking about pieces than looking at them.
- Can be easily distracted by sounds.
- The auditory student tends to appreciate a task as a whole more than the individual details.

http://www.plsweb.com/

Perceptual and Organizational Styles

Your brain processes and organizes sensory information in a variety of ways giving you a perceptual and organizational style preference. Do you prefer getting the "big picture" before beginning a project, or is a step-by-step process the best way for you to begin? Do you prefer working with concrete objects or do you gain satisfaction focusing on thoughts and ideas? These styles involve the brain's organizational preferences — how the brain associates and stores sensory input. Anthony Gregorc developed an inventory of these style traits. Most people have one of four combinations of the traits: abstract-sequential, abstract-global, concrete-sequential, and concrete-global. Each individual trait is described below.

ABSTRACT

Abstract students prefer symbols and concepts to the real, physical world. They are most comfortable when dealing with words, representations, numbers, and abstractions and remember them much more readily than the physical realities the symbols represent. As an example, an abstract learner is more likely to use — and remember using—the word "apple" than to remember an actual apple. The spellings, characteristics, and functions of the word "apple" will come to mind more often than an experience of an actual apple being eaten.

http://www.plsweb.com/

SEQUENTIAL

Sequential students approach work and learning as a "step-by-step" process, and they remember information in a logical, step-by-step manner. Their memory is like a filing cabinet in which every piece of data has a category heading and file location. As a result, sequential students may struggle in creative, or "open-ended," situations

http://www.plsweb.com/

GLOBAL

This designation refers to how information is organized in the brain. Global/random learners have a "free association" structure for organizing thoughts and memories. They like the "big picture" rather than the details. Highly intuitive, these students sometimes connect seemingly unrelated ideas or segments of information to come up with a "right answer," but they may be unable to explain how it was done.

http://www.plsweb.com/

CONCRETE

This term describes perceptions of the real world that are most readily noticed. For the concrete student, the brain relates primarily to real objects, colours, and sounds, storing memories around these "building blocks."

http://www.plsweb.com/

A great group activity could include describing each of the traits and have each group member try to decide what combination best describes them. Turn it into a writing activity by having each student write their reasons for their choice. This not only helps the student, but also helps the tutor in planning how material should be presented to ensure the best reception.
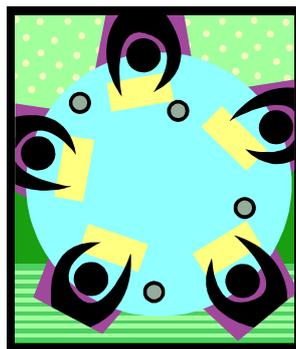
Selecting Published Materials

Criteria for selecting published materials for small group instruction:

Learning Activities are Designed with Group Work in Mind

✓ In order to complete some of the learning activities, students have to do something with someone else.

✓ The learning activities use small group language, such as "Turn to your partner…"

✓ Learning activities found in the materials involve more than one person at a time to participate, such as role-plays, dialogues and information grids.

✓ Learning activities are designed so that the class can move forward even if someone doesn't want to participate.

Materials Encourage and Support Conversation and Discussion

✓ Questions raised by the materials are designed to help students uncover interests, goals, issues and topics that can help the tutor or teacher develop future lessons.

✓ Topics covered in the materials and questions raised by the materials are provocative. They spark conversation among students and allow for a variety of viewpoints.

✓ Questions raised by the materials are designed to help students uncover interests, goals, issues and topics that can help the tutor or teacher develop future lessons.

✓ Conversation activities are structured so students have an opportunity to speak a lot to other people, not just the instructor.

Materials Should Be Diverse

✓ Topics and characters in the materials represent the cultural, racial and ethnic, gender and age make-up of the group.

✓ Learning activities are designed to accommodate a variety of learning styles within the group – visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and tactile.

✓ The reading level of the material is not too easy or too difficult for the members of the group. This is especially important in multi-level groups. In Ontario, in a Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities funded program, it is also important approximate Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) level of the materials.

✓ Learning activities are balanced between skill work and experiential/contextual activities (discussions, reading and writing activities with "real-world" purposes.

One set of materials is not going to meet all of the criteria. Using a variety of materials to ensure all needs are being met, including real world and student-generated materials, is a better approach.

You may use a set of materials as the base for a group, for example, the *Voyager* Series (New Reader's Press), but should continually bring in other relevant materials to enrich the learning process. Encourage students to bring in materials that are relevant to their lives.

BUILDING BRIDGES

Laubach Small Group Manual
Laubach Literacy Ontario
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*A Checklist for Evaluating Adult Basic Reading Material

Appeal

- Is the material:
    - ☐ Fresh?
    - ☐ Enjoyable to read?
    - ☐ Of interest to adults?

Relevance

– Does the material:
    - ☐ Pertain to adult life experience?
    - ☐ Add to the general knowledge of adults?
    - ☐ Present, where factual, up to date information?
    - ☐ Present language naturally?

Purpose

-Does the content:
    - ☐ Include statements of broad goals and specific objectives?
    - ☐ Fit the purpose of the student?
    - ☐ Fulfil a functional purpose?

Process

- Does the process deal with:
    - ☐ Pre-reading experiences?
    - ☐ Word analysis?
    - ☐ Well-constructed reading passages?
    - ☐ A clear progression of ideas or story line?
    - ☐ Comprehension
    - ☐ Appropriate vocabulary
    - ☐ Silent reading?
    - ☐ Oral reading?

Human Relations

-Does the material
    - ☐ Depict a cultural, ethnic, racial and sex group in a positive way, avoiding stereotypes?
    - ☐ Represent various current occupations?
    - ☐ Avoid sexist language?
    - ☐ Present workers in non-stereotypical roles?
    - ☐ Stimulate interpersonal exchanges and evoke discussions?

Evaluation

-Does the material:

☐ Offer suggestions for continuing to evaluate the student's progress?
☐ Provide pre-tests and post-tests?

Functions of the Material

-Does the material:

☐ Encourage wide reading?
☐ Suggest other resources and activities for student exploration?
☐ Promote inductive thinking?
☐ Provide student instructions that are clear and understandable?
☐ Give a sense of continuous success and mastery?
☐ Provide an answer key for the instructor?
☐ Provide a key designed so that teachers do not need special training?
☐ Provide an answer for the student?

Format

-Is the material format:

☐ Usable?
☐ Pleasing and attractive?
☐ Appealing to adult students?
☐ Pictorial or illustrated where appropriate (e.g. photos, maps, graphs)?
☐ Presented with ample space between lines and in margins for easy reading?
☐ Set in type (large and medium) appropriate for the material and the student?

Content

☐ Do the materials provide for appropriate reading level experience?
☐ Are the selections short enough to hold interest and long enough to give meaning?
☐ Is there recognition of the amount of reinforcement needed at the content reading level?
☐ Does the readability develop at an appropriate rate and by increments?
☐ Are there comprehension exercises included?
☐ Are problem-solving selections included?
☐ Are writing activities included and linked to reading selections?

*Blankenship Cheatham, Judy, Ruth Johnson Colvin, Lester Laminack. *Tutor A Collaborative Approach to Literacy Instruction*. Literacy Volunteers of America Syracuse: New York. 1974. pages 190-191

WISDOM FROM THE FIELD

A quick approach to evaluating material is to use the S.M.A.R.T. method. Ensure that the materials are: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Bound

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Lesson Planning

1. **Assess and Review**: As you plan for the next lesson, remember to assess and review you notes from the current lesson plan.

2. **Over plan:** It is better to have too much planned than not enough. The excess goes into the next lesson, or you may want to skip some planned activities in favour of others.

3. **Over teach:** When your students can retain something for a period of at least three lessons, you can usually assume that it is learned. Don't panic when what you thought was learned seems to have been forgotten.

4. **Be Flexible:** Many a good lesson on paper fails to work well because a learner is upset, circumstance intervene, or some other part of your plan took longer than you had anticipated.

5. **Be Positive:** Encourage your students, but be honest. Guarantee some success with every lesson.

6. **Be efficient:** Make your plans carefully. It is the best way to assure that you will be relaxed yet alert to the needs of your students. Notes successes as well as needs on the lesson plan during lessons.

Blankenship Cheatham, Judy, Ruth Johnson Colvin, Lester Laminack. *Tutor A Collaborative Approach to Literacy Instruction*. Literacy Volunteers of America Syracuse: New York. 1974, page 128

Planning Group Activities

1. Am I clear on what learning task I want the group to accomplish?

2. Have I selected a grouping strategy that is appropriate to the nature of the task?

3. How much time is needed to accomplish the task and is sufficient time available?

4. Are some groups likely to finish the task before others and, if so, are there meaningful ways to extend the activity?

5. What is the goal of the learning activity? Is it related to the group, to the individual, or to both?

6. What measures can I use to assess the group learning effort?

7. What roles will group members need to perform to accomplish the learning task?

8. What kind of furniture arrangement does the learning task require?

9. Are any materials required for the task and, if so, will they be available?

Managing Group Activities

1. Can I give clear instructions for forming the teams as well as what is expected from the group activity (i.e., the learning task)?

2. Am I prepared to monitor groups and assist with tasks, as needed?

3. How will receiving feedback from groups be handled?

4. When and how will evaluation and assessment information be relayed to groups and/or to individuals?

Daily Lesson Plan

Date: _____   Instructor: _____

Session Goals	Notes:
Planned Activities	
Take up/Review from last session	
Homework assignment	Next Scheduled Class Time:

Portfolio Development

"Portfolios are collections of artefacts that reflect students' literacy abilities and ways they use literacy in their lives." Students should be involved in setting criteria for choosing the contents and assessing progress, selecting pieces for inclusion in their portfolio and reflecting on their progress. Portfolios are especially appropriate when part of the curriculum involves a learner-centred whole language approach."

Fingeret, Hanna. "Portfolio Assessment in Adult Literacy Education" Mosaic: Research Notes on Literacy, April 1994, Vol. 4, No.1.

Implementing Portfolios

1. Introduce and explain the concept of portfolio development to the group.
2. Decide areas in which you will implement portfolio assessment and types of materials you and the students will collect. Some items to consider for inclusion:
   - Individual and group training plans
   - Check-ups
   - Pieces of student writing
   - Skillbooks certificates
   - Completed demonstrations
   - Student self-assessments
3. Schedule portfolio development as part of ongoing group work.
4. Keep portfolios accessible at all times. They can be kept in the classroom or each student can be responsible for their own.

Portfolio Idea

Have student file work in a folder at the end of each session. At regular intervals, schedule time for students to review work and summarize what they have done. File the summary with only "the best" examples in the portfolio. This is especially effective for a group that meets frequently. A sample "summary sheet" can be found on the next page.

Student Name:	
Date: From To	
Reading Activities	
Book/Newspaper/Reader	Title of story/article/lesson

Writing Activities

Other Exercises or Activities

Demonstrations Completed

Notes

Training Plans

Each student should have an individual training plan. In addition to the individual training plan, "group" training plans may be developed where the group is going to work on a specific task or activity for a period of time. A sample blank group training can be found at TAB 5 in "Module 1 Elections".

Administration – Tracking and Reporting

There are several "housekeeping" roles that need to be looked after on an ongoing basis. Classes should be scheduled ahead of time to ensure that both the students and the instructor are prepared. A simple monthly calendar, such and the example below, is one of the easiest ways to schedule the classes. Blank calendars can be distributed and filled in as a monthly group activity.

APRIL   2001

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

It is important to record attendance accurately and promptly. A sample attendance form follows.

Small Group Attendance Record

Instructor: _____
Month/Year: _____

STUDENT	DATE																				

Student	Current LBS Level	Success Story Attached		Total contact hours for month
		0 yes	0no	
		0 yes	0no	
		0 yes	0no	
		0 yes	0no	
		0 yes	0no	
		0 yes	0no	
		0 yes	0no	
		0 yes	0no	

Note: This attendance record takes into account some of the element required for the "Information and Management System" being used by MTCU funded Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Programs.

Challenges a Small Group Tutor Might Face

Individual needs

Try to incorporate the need into a group lesson. Meet with a student individually. Stay after class for ½ to provide an opportunity to deal with individual needs and questions. Have the group work on an activity independently and assist the student with an individual need during this time. Set the student up with a one-to-one tutor outside of class to provide additional help. If possible use a computer program to address a specific need.

Overeager or domineering students

The instructor needs to direct questions and conversation to other students to give them a chance for participation.

Open entry/exit policy

When the small group has open entry and exit the instructor needs to be extremely flexible. Every lesson should include a variety of activities some of which can be adapted easily to accommodate different levels.

Questions of Authority

Some students come to the group believing that the tutor is the sole authority. Students, who feel that the tutor prefers facilitating to teaching, placing too quickly the burden of instruction on the students, may doubt that "real" learning will occur. "Who's in charge here?" they wonder. Other students may be deeply suspicious of the instructor's role. They may have a defensive response to instruction: "I'm an adult. I've gotten along OK so far. What makes you think you have anything to tell me?"

The fundamental challenge is for the tutor to take some authority while always working to defer and share that authority. This stance is reflected in the styles of instruction during a class session. In other words, class time should be divided between direct and indirect instruction. In direct instruction, the tutor teaches the information the students both want and need. The tutor introduces a skill, models it, practices it with the students, allows them to practice it on their own, and helps them apply the skill. Activities that instruct indirectly-such as open discussions within the group, peer collaboration, games, and free writing-give learners control over their own learning and help reinforce skills and information presented through direct instruction.

Students may be unprepared to participate in the type of class described above. They may assume that they are simply there to listen and, thereby, learn. In order to break down this barrier to learning, students must believe that what they think, say, and write is important to the tutor and for the class. This is not necessarily an issue of learner self-respect. Learners may know full well that their thoughts are intrinsically important and valuable.' But they, will be hesitant to share if they feel that the tutor is not truly interested. This is one reason why students should help select the class's curriculum.

Since the tutor's opinions can come across to some students as the "Voice of authority," he or she must be careful when entering discussions. The tutor's comments on a theme may silence other voices. If misinformation comes up in a class discussion but the error is not critical to the discussion, the tutor should either say nothing or withhold comment until later so as not to interfere with the class focus.

Staying out of a conversation can also present dilemmas, however. If handled properly, removing oneself from a discussion doesn't mean you lose the position of authority, but instead reinforce it by using the veil of "objectivity."

The group is not "gelling"

Several students and a tutor do not automatically form a coherent group, no matter how willing the participants. The tutor and the students must have patience, tolerance, and confidence. Group instruction, like any activity involving human interaction, can be both messy and beautiful at the same time. The tutor and the students need to realize in advance that the process will not be fluid or perfect and that shared experiences over time will help the group to gel. The first steps for a new group instruction should be seen as experimental.

Patience and perspective must be applied to each class session. It's important for the class to recognize, for instance, that not all silences in the session need to be filled, and the tutor is not solely responsible for the outcome of a session. People get nervous because they think everything has to work smoothly, like a performance. But there's no need to put out patter or always be entertaining. Other members of the group will help out. The group should steer the tutor.

Teaching Suggestions for Adults with Suspected Learning Disabilities/Differences

1. Break tasks down into a logical sequence of discrete steps.

2. Pre-test, teach, test, reteach as needed, review.

3. Provide multiple opportunities to respond, interact with the teacher and classmates, and participate. The more active the learner, the more learning is taking place.

4. Be sure mastery has been achieved before moving on to the next step in the sequence of learning tasks.

5. Provide frequent feedback that describes what was done well and how it might be improved.

6. Encourage students to tell you how they learn best, and use this information to design future lessons.

7. Use colour, highlighter, enlargement of print, and underlining to strengthen the visual input and enhance visual memory.

8. De-emphasize oral reading as this may interfere with comprehension and also embarrass the student. Use oral reading only for select purposes and in private. When instruction takes place in small groups, call on students with LD only if they volunteer to participate. Preparing passages for oral reading in advance of the group instruction may help to prevent failure and embarrassment. Choral reading may be helpful.

9. De-emphasize closely timed tests and tasks.

10. Slow down the rate of your speech (if it is usually rapid) emphasizing important points. Maintain eye contact in order to assess level of comprehension, encourage participation, give and get feedback, and maintain attention.

11. Maximize success and enhance self-esteem by providing opportunities for the student to be successful.

12. Encourage the use of compensatory strategies (e.g. tape recording sessions, directions, assignments, and discussions) as aids.

13. Teach word processing skills, use of spelling and grammar checkers, and other software.

14. Use multi-media approaches such as audiocassette with text or videotape to supplement information from print.

15. Teach memory enhancement strategies that will aid recall such as listing, re-writing, categorizing, alphabetizing, visualizing, and use of associations and acronyms.

Blankenship Cheatham, Judy, Ruth Johnson Colvin, Lester Laminack. *Tutor A Collaborative Approach to Literacy Instruction*. Literacy Volunteers of America Syracuse: New York. 1974, pages 188-189.

Check out these sites for more information on learning disabilities

Organization	Link
Learning Disabilities Association of America	www.ldanatl.org
International Dyslexia Association	www.interdys.org
International Reading Association	www.reading.org
National Center for Learning Disabilities	www.ncld.org
Schwab Foundation for Learning	www.schwablearning.org
Learning Disability Association of Ontario	www.ldao.on.ca
Learning Disability Association of Canada	www.ldac-taac.ca
LDOnline: Learning Disabilities Information And Resources	www.ldonline.org

There are also many resources available at AlphaPlus Centre.