



ASPIRE

Learn more. Earn more.

Accessibility and Inclusion Policy and Planning

This policy replaces all previous disabilities policies.

Effective date January 1, 2022

Purpose

It is important for all Ohio Department of Higher Education Aspire programs to address the needs of students with disabilities, including learning disabilities. All Ohio Aspire programs will be held to the following policy statements:

General requirements, laws, and legal implications

1. Aspire programs will not discriminate against individuals with disabilities and will ensure that all services are accessible. Federal law requires that Aspire programs meet the administrative requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Screening

2. Aspire programs will have a screening process.
3. Aspire programs will maintain a signed waiver if a student declines a screening.
4. Aspire programs will keep all information related to students' disclosure and documentation of disability and/or screening information confidential.
5. Programs will obtain a signed and dated Release of Information from the student before sharing screening information.

Referral and diagnosis

6. Aspire programs will maintain current information about professional diagnosis, vision screening, and hearing screening and make it accessible to students with suspected, disclosed, or diagnosed learning disabilities and/or vision or hearing difficulties.

Instructional adaptations

7. Aspire programs will provide instructional adaptations to assist students with suspected or documented disabilities.

Accommodations

8. Aspire programs will provide accommodations to students with disabilities to help ensure they have equal access to services.

Professional development

9. Aspire programs will follow the Professional Development Policy which sets the requirements for training and certifications required for Aspire staff.

Compliance

10. Aspire programs will review the Accessibility policy with staff each year.

LAWS AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Programs must understand the legal rights of students with disabilities and share this information with students. This will allow all parties to make informed decisions that will facilitate the individual student's learning and help learners be more successful. Utilizing this knowledge can provide the basis for setting realistic expectations on the part of the learners so they can make appropriate requests for assistance. It can also help program providers deliver the types of services necessary to enhance opportunities for success with all adult learners.

The legal rights concerning learning disabilities are primarily found in three important laws: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (PL 93-112), the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Below are brief descriptions of each of these laws.

Contact your Aspire Program Manager with any questions or clarifications on how federal disability laws affect your program, staff, and students.

Rehabilitation Act of 1973 – Section 504

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/civil-rights-center/statutes/section-504-rehabilitation-act-of-1973>

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits discrimination based upon disability. Section 504 is an anti-discrimination, civil rights statute that requires the needs of students with disabilities to be met as adequately as the needs of the nondisabled. Section 504 states that, "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (29 U.S.C. 794(a), 34 C.F.R. 104.4(a)).

Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) and ADA Amendments Act (2008)

<https://www.ada.gov/>

The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, state and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications. To be protected by the ADA, one must have a disability or have a relationship or association with an individual who has a disability. An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; a person who has a history or record of such an impairment; or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment. The ADA does not specifically name all of the impairments that are covered.

The ADA Amendments Act of 2008 expanded the definition of "major bodily functions" to include neurological and brain functions. This directly addresses LD and ADHD, as both of these conditions involve impairment of these functions. It also changed the definition of

“major life activities” to include learning, reading, concentrating, and thinking. This expansion makes it easier for students with LD and ADA to qualify for protection under ADA and 504.

Adults with disabilities also have a right to choose whether to disclose their disability status. If adults expect disability-related accommodations, they have the responsibility to make their disabilities known, to provide appropriate documentation, and to request specific accommodations. Under the ADA, when providing services, programs must offer reasonable accommodations that will assist adults with disabilities to have an equal opportunity to participate in the program. Reasonable accommodations (sometimes called auxiliary aids and services) are those that make the program accessible to the individual with a disability (i.e., equal access). Such accommodations must be afforded to a qualified individual with a disability unless the service provider can demonstrate that the accommodation would impose undue hardship on the programs, or constitute a substantial alteration in the nature of the program.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1997)

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>

Aspire students who have not achieved a high school diploma and who are under the age of 22 are protected under IDEA, meaning they are entitled to services related to identification and accommodation of learning disabilities. IDEA requires more than accommodation and non-discrimination. It requires that special education and related services be provided free of charge in accordance with state educational agencies and in conformity to individualized education programs. Federal funding defrays part of these expenses, which makes the IDEA unique among civil rights legislation. In 2004, IDEA was reauthorized; an amended version became known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) (IDEIA). Among the changes made were provisions that aligned IDEA with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and revised requirements for screening children with learning disabilities. The core principles of IDEA—that students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education—remain intact.

Implications for Aspire programs

Aspire students have the right to attend programs and also have certain responsibilities within federal law. Students:

- have the right to participate in educational programs without discrimination;
- have the right to reasonable accommodations in courses and examinations;
- have the responsibility to identify themselves as having a disability and request specific accommodations; and
- have the responsibility to provide documentation concerning their disabilities and the need for accommodation.

Aspire staff should familiarize themselves with federal laws and how they impact their program and students. Aspire programs:

- are responsible for ensuring all services are accessible to persons with disabilities and for providing reasonable accommodations in the delivery of services (see page 11 for details); and
- have the right to identify and establish the abilities, skills, and competencies

fundamental to its academic programs, and to evaluate each learner's performance on this basis.

The *Learning to Achieve* training includes additional information on federal law and how it pertains to local programs. The training is required of all new administrators and teachers and is available through the [Ohio Aspire PDN](#).

SCREENING

Whom to screen and when

Programs can choose to screen all students for learning disabilities. Some programs accomplish this during orientation by using a short screening instrument like the Washington 13. It may be appropriate to choose more than one screening instrument based on program needs. Furthermore, some programs use a more in-depth screening instrument (such as PowerPath to Education and Work) at a later point, as follow-up to the quick screening done during orientation.

If your program elects not to uniformly screen all learners for learning disabilities, then you need a process for selecting learners for screening. **Learners cannot be randomly selected.**

The criteria that your program decides upon for selecting learners for screening must be applied consistently to all participants in the program. For example, your program may choose to screen all students who place into levels 1 and 2 on TABE or all students who fail to progress after one month of instruction (with consistent attendance).

Implementing screening for learning disabilities is a process that involves the following steps.

1. Gather information about the learner.
2. Review the observations with the learner.
3. Determine how the learner feels about additional screening.
4. Select a screening instrument.
5. Obtain informed consent.
6. Summarize the results of the screening with the learner and discuss "next steps."
If screening results indicate possible LD, a learner may or may not decide to be referred for Diagnostic Testing; that is the learner's decision.

Programs can purchase screenings or check them out from the [PDN Library](#).

Screening Instruments and ESOL Populations

Most of the LD screening instruments are not appropriate for the non-native English-speaking population, and therefore, should not be administered to ESOL students. The Ohio Department of Higher Education State Aspire Program is not requiring or recommending that LD screenings be used with ESOL students at this time. There are some Spanish versions available for a few of the screening instruments listed above, for example, the ALDS, the C-SIP and PowerPath to Basic Learning, but because of meaning variations between languages, the validity of these have yet to be determined.

Using a secondary or follow-up screening

Some Aspire programs want to use a secondary screening instrument. They have found that a more extensive or in-depth screening such as the C-SIP or the STALD can provide more information for teachers who are trying to adapt instruction to meet the needs of their struggling learners. The process of taking some students, who continue to struggle, through an additional screening can provide the instructor with many clues as to the strengths and

weaknesses of the student. Aspire teachers can share this insight with their students. The door to self-advocacy begins with awareness.

Informed consent

If your program provides screening, you must obtain informed consent from the learner. Informed consent means that the learner knows what is going to happen, who will do the screening, and how the results will be used. If you conduct screening during the intake process for every adult who enters the program, you do not need to obtain the learners' informed consent. It is only when a procedure such as screening is used selectively that you must obtain informed consent before you can legally proceed. Individual administrations of the screening require a signed consent form. The State Aspire Office maintains a [compliant combination consent/waiver form](#) on their website. Programs may choose to create their own, but need to ensure that the form includes all of the following: the name and purpose of the screening test(s); the interval of time for screening; how will the results be used and who will see them; where the protocol forms will be stored and for how long; and the learner's and program representative's signatures and dates.

The learner should be given a copy of the informed consent form and the program should keep the original on file. A student can refuse a screening for learning disabilities at any point. Have the student sign the waiver form indicating understanding that he or she is declining the learning disabilities screening and may choose to undergo the screening at a later point in time. The signed waiver form should be filed with the student's other confidential information and a copy should be given to the student.

Confidentiality

The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to public schools and state or local education agencies that receive federal education funds.

FERPA gives students the right to have access to their educational records, consent to release a record to a third party, challenge information in those records, and be notified of their privacy rights. FERPA rights belong to the student regardless of age (and to the parents of a dependent student-as defined by the Internal Revenue Service). A "student" is a person who attends school and/or for whom the institution maintains educational records (former students and alumni, for example) but not applicants to the institution or those denied admission. The institution must inform students of their FERPA rights, procedures to allow a student access to his or her record, and procedures to consent to release a record to a third party. Publishing this information in a bulletin satisfies this requirement.

Disability related information should be kept in separate files with access limited to appropriate personnel. Documentation of disability should be held by a single source within the institution in order to protect the confidentiality of persons with disabilities by assuring such limited access.

REFERRAL AND DIAGNOSIS

Learning disabilities

Often, adults with learning disabilities have difficulties finding services they need. All Aspire programs are required to maintain a list of local agencies that can provide services to students.

A learning disability may be severe or mild in terms of its effect on learning, and those Aspire students with learning disabilities are purported to be a significant factor affecting the Aspire student population and could involve a significant number of your students. Remember, only qualified psychologists and clinicians can diagnose learning disabilities. For liability purposes it is important to understand that Aspire practitioners, unless they are a licensed diagnostician, cannot tell a student they have a learning disability without documentation from a qualified professional.

The primary advantage of an official LD diagnosis is that the learner can obtain accommodations and protections necessary for success in instructional, work, and testing settings (e.g., entrance tests to postsecondary institutions, certification or licensure testing, or GED testing). Persons with diagnosed disabilities are entitled to protections against discrimination. In addition, they are eligible for special services and accommodations. These protections are established under federal laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (PL 93-112) and accompanying regulations.

Vision and hearing

Many adults have vision and hearing problems that may be severe enough to significantly impair their ability to learn. Many participants in literacy programs may have vision or hearing impairments that may have gone undetected. Adults who struggle to see printed material, frequently ask for statements to be repeated, or seem unable to engage in meaningful dialogue may actually have vision or hearing impairment. A first step in the assessment process for adults who are experiencing difficulty learning should be some type of referral for vision and/or hearing screening. Literacy programs can network with community agencies such as Lions' Clubs and the Red Cross to ensure that adequate vision and hearing screenings are available to their learners free or at reduced cost.

A partnership between Ohio Aspire, Ohio School for the Deaf, and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities was established for Deaf and hard of hearing adults in Ohio who are interested in improving their print literacy skills. More information about the Deaf Literacy Partnership can be found at [this link](#).

Having a referral process in place for ESOL students also is highly recommended.

Other referral services

Other services for which programs may want to provide referral information are:

Childcare

Reliable childcare is often difficult to obtain and maintain and can be costly. Some parents may not know that many communities have a childcare network or referral service.

Problems with childcare often impede adult students' ability to attend class consistently. If you are able to assist your students in securing adequate and reliable childcare, then you are removing a barrier to educational progress for your students.

Mental health

Feeling safe, relaxed, and in a trusting environment is important for learning and supports good mental health. Issues of anxiety, depression, and substance abuse can interfere with learning. Information on local resources to help Aspire student address mental health and substance abuse issues should be available to all students. Providers of mental health and recovery services make excellent guest speakers and should be considered for presenting to both staff and students.

Transportation

Transportation can easily become a problem for students with disabilities, especially when they rely on public transportation for the first time. Deciphering bus or train schedules, and planning a trip that may require changing buses, etc., is challenging for everyone. This frustration is often compounded for those with disabilities other special needs.

INSTRUCTIONAL ADAPTATIONS

Teachers may be able to adjust instruction and incorporate strategies and technologies to benefit all learners and also increase access to students with disabilities.

The [Ohio Aspire PDN](#) has many Moodle courses on instructional strategies to assist teachers with updating and augmenting their instruction. Two key adaptations are the implementation of Universal design for learning principles and incorporating assistive technology.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

UDL is a framework with three guiding principles that parallel three distinct learning networks in the brain: recognition, strategy, and affect (Rose & Meyer, 2002). This framework is important because it reflects the ways in which students take in and process information. Using this framework, educators can improve outcomes for diverse learners by applying the principles below to the development of goals, instructional methods, classroom materials, and assessments. Use of these principles leads to improved outcomes for students because they provide all individuals with fair opportunities for learning by improving access to content.

These principles of UDL provide multiple and flexible means of:

- presentation to give students various ways of acquiring information and knowledge;
- expression to empower students with alternatives for demonstrating what they have learned; and
- engagement to tap into diverse learners' interests, challenge them appropriately, and motivate them to learn.

This information was adapted from the [Tool Kit on Universal Design for Learning](#) from the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs.

UDL in the Aspire classroom

Instruction in the Aspire classroom should incorporate the following principles:

- be flexible, designed to meet the needs of the individual student, and be based on the students' strengths;
- include real-life experiences in the classroom; and
- be jointly agreed to between student and instructor prior to implementation, and be reviewed with the student at regular, appropriate intervals of instruction.

There are multiple methods of presenting information to adult learners, including teaching using Explicit Instruction and incorporating multiple modalities using multi-sensory instruction. Typically, instruction can be presented using visual, auditory, tactile, or kinesthetic input. For most individuals, and especially individuals with learning disabilities, the more modalities that are used, the better the chance that the input will be remembered. Thus, many programs for individuals with learning disabilities encourage the use of multiple input channels.

Regardless of the mode of instruction, teachers will often need to adapt their lessons;

instructional adaptations are accommodations that are made for any learner (with or without documentation of a learning disability) who exhibits difficulties acquiring, storing, or remembering information for later use.

Such adaptations are simply logical choices of tools or approaches that (1) make tasks more manageable (e.g., use of a tape recorder for memory and auditory processing problems; use of a calculator for solving math problems) and (2) enable the individual to have greater control of a situation (e.g., the opportunity to work in a room free of distractions; the allowance of frequent breaks).

You may make material adaptations if (1) the text is too fast-paced, abstract, or complex, (2) the learner has difficulty organizing the material, (3) the learner lacks the experiences and background knowledge necessary to make the new information meaningful, or (4) the learner needs information broken down into smaller chunks and simplified. In such cases, you can alter existing materials, provide more intense and enhanced instruction for the learner, or find alternative materials.

Assistive technology

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines assistive technology (AT) as both a device and a service: “An assistive technology device is any item, piece of equipment, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. An assistive technology service means any service that helps an individual with a disability select, acquire, or use an assistive technology device” (Assistive Technology Act of 2004).

As mentioned previously, different kinds of assistance can be provided depending on the type of learning disability and its severity, as well as the person's age. If your student has a diagnosed learning disability (or other diagnosed disability), he or she may be able to get accommodations in the classroom or workplace based on protections guaranteed by the Americans with Disabilities Act. One must “disclose” their disability to be protected by these laws.

How assistive technology can benefit people with disabilities

Assistive technology may be appropriate for individuals diagnosed with: learning and other cognitive disabilities; Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder; emotional/mental health disorders; and physical/chronic health disabilities. Assistive technology solutions may range from low/no-tech (e.g. job task modification; colored overlays; large-print or full-page magnifiers) to high-tech (e.g. digital reading device; talking or large-button calculator; adaptive computer software program).

Assistive technology may be considered appropriate when it does any or all of the following things:

- Enables an individual to perform functions or approximate a normal fluency, rate, or standard that cannot be achieved by other means.
- Provides access for participation in programs or activities which otherwise would be closed to the individual.
- Increases endurance or ability to persevere and complete tasks that otherwise

- are too laborious to be attempted on a routine basis.
- Enables an individual to concentrate on learning or employment, rather than mechanical tasks.
- Provides greater access to information.
- Supports normal social interactions with others.
- Supports participation in the least restrictive educational environment.

For additional information and resources, please visit the following websites:

- [The Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs \(ATAP\)](#) and [AT Ohio](#)
- [The Beach Center on Disability](#), University of Kansas
- [The Coleman Institute for Cognitive Disabilities](#)
- [Closing the Gap](#)
- [Job Accommodation Network](#), U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).

ACCOMMODATIONS

While all learners arguably have different learning needs, students with the significant learning challenges or disabilities may need modified or varied services in order to achieve education, personal, or work-related goals. It is the commitment of Ohio Aspire to maintain an inclusive environment by allowing for necessary modifications in learning approaches, as well as the physical learning space. Accommodations will be made to allow for equal access to adult learner services. Programs can submit a funding request to the Chancellor to help offset the cost of necessary and reasonable accommodations.

Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities [Memorandum](#)

Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities [Request Form](#)

As long as students entering an Aspire program meet general eligibility criteria, including setting an academic goal and making progress toward achieving that goal, they have a right to receive services. In fact, people with disabilities have legal rights that guarantee them equal access to Aspire services. In other words, being affected by any of any form of disability should not, in itself, exclude anyone from participating in a state-sponsored Aspire program. All programs should have policies and procedures in place to address individuals with specific documented disabilities.

Please be aware not all students who need accommodations will have been diagnosed by a qualified professional. It is not appropriate, in most cases, to attach a label to an individual, even if he or she has hidden disabilities, without appropriate documentation. Some disabilities are visible and apparent, such as a person who uses a wheelchair, and usually do not warrant documentation. However, others are not as transparent. For example, the adult learner who claims to have difficulty focusing and tells you that he or she is often impulsive should not be labeled as ADHD without an appropriate diagnosis by a licensed professional.

Overall, the primary goal of Aspire services is to help students achieve their academic goals. This is done best through high quality instruction. Research suggests that a high percentage of our students have different learning needs, but many of them will not obtain the appropriate documentation to ever know for sure. It makes sense, then, that we implement modified instructional practices, and provide appropriate accommodations as a general rule, whether students have documentation or not.

The [Ohio Aspire PDN](#) has many Moodle courses on strategies to focused on social/emotional learning. The *Learning to Achieve* training also includes information on accommodations.

Accommodations in the Aspire classroom

Accommodations are changes made to “level the playing field” for individuals with diagnosed disabilities.

Accommodations are sometimes considered modifications, and in other instances are considered as the removal of barriers. Both conceptualizations are correct. For example, if a learner with motor control difficulties is required to provide a written report, you may be able

to modify the requirement and allow the learner to write on wide-lined paper. If the reason for the report is to demonstrate the learner's knowledge of a topic (as opposed to the learner's writing skills), you might accommodate the learner by allowing him or her to do the report orally, thus removing the barrier of the writing task.

An appropriately selected instructional accommodation not only provides equal access to learning opportunities but also minimizes the learner's likelihood of failure. Appropriate educational accommodations are determined by taking into account the adult's unique learning needs. Within the teaching/learning environment; accommodations are legally required adaptations that ensure adults with learning disabilities an equal chance for success in learning. An Aspire program's obligation to provide accommodations to learners is a form of nondiscrimination. Most accommodations cost little or nothing and are easily provided, for example:

- Use of computers
- Seating in a quiet area
- Allowing movement/standing
- Colored overlays
- Textured materials
- Use of magnifiers
- Use of slotted cards
- Simple seating or equipment rearrangements
- Allowance of extra time to complete task
- Use of tape recorders headphones
- Color coding
- Highlighters
- Large-print materials
- Index and cue cards

Many accommodations provided to individuals with disabilities in academic, vocational, and employment settings involve altering place, time, or performance conditions. Such accommodations allow the individual to process information in his or her own way while the learning situation is adjusted. These types of accommodations are not sufficient, however, if the individual still processes information in a manner that does not help him or her meet core academic, vocational, or employment demands. For example, providing for oral administration of tests may not benefit an individual if the oral administration negatively affects the use of good test taking strategies, or if the test taker does not know good test-taking strategies. Likewise, note-takers may not lead to improved test performance if, as a consequence of someone else's taking the notes, the learner does not comprehend the information, has difficulty organizing it, or struggles with studying.

Examples of classroom resources

Below are some classroom resources that can be used to accommodate the learning needs of all students. The Ohio Aspire Professional Development Network (ohioaspire.org) can provide paper, highlighters, and temporary adhesive notes and the Ohio PDN Library (ohioaspirelibrary.org) has colored overlays, magnifying strips, calculators, as well as entire LD toolkits for loan.

Audio books are available at most public and university libraries. Audiobooks may be obtained through the Clearinghouse for the Blind.

Colored overlays are colored transparent sheets that a student can place over reading material

or even a computer screen. Some students with Visual Stress Syndrome see remarkable differences when using this simple accommodation.

Colored paper can be beneficial because black text on white background is not easily seen by everyone. Some students, especially those with scotopic sensitivity or other visual processing disorders, may be better able to read words printed on colored paper. Consider using colored paper for your handouts. Experiment to see which colors work best for your students.

Computer software is available that will convert text to voice or will convert voice to text. Magnification software also exists.

Earplugs can benefit students with auditory processing disorders by helping them shut out distracting background noise when working independently.

Graph paper can aid students who have difficulty lining up numbers when working on math problems.

Highlighters can aid some students because they may remember colored text better. The act of physically moving over the text with a highlighter can help focus attention.

Large button calculators are readily available at office supply or even discount stores. Put these out for students to use. With prior approval, students with learning disabilities may be able to use large button calculators on the GED. You can also try talking calculators.

Large print materials are available from most public and university libraries. Most public and university libraries carry large print materials. A quick trick: use the copy machine to easily enlarge the handout you use in class.

Magnifying strips come in all shapes and sizes. They can be placed over reading material. You can find page size magnifying sheets, book marks size magnifying strips, and credit card size magnifying sheet for carrying in your wallet.

Manipulatives can make the solution so much easier to see by having a three-dimensional object that represents the problem you are trying to solve, can. For math manipulatives try: beaded bracelets, dice, checkers, colored candy pieces, chess pawns, number lines, Base -10 rods, dry erase boards, playing cards. There are even manipulatives for algebra. For reading and writing, try letter or word tiles, sentence strips, etc. For some people, being able to manipulate something with their hands helps to focus their attention, such as foam balls, Silly Putty™, or Koosh Balls™.

Straight edges can help students who lose their place when reading.

Temporary adhesive notes can be used as place markers, or a location to jot down thoughts, new words, or questions while reading. The variety of sizes and colors of these notes makes them useful in many different ways.

HSE test accommodations

All information on applying for special accommodations for each of the two approved HSE options can be found on the [Ohio Department of Education and Workforce's Office of High School Equivalence](#). Each HSE option has a different form that is used for their evaluation process; some can be completed online while others must be faxed or mailed in for review. It may take a few weeks to receive approval or rejection once the accommodation application for the particular test is submitted. Students will need to have a section completed by their doctor or psychologist. A student may also be able to submit their IEP developed during their time in K-12 if it captures the necessary information needed to evaluate accommodations.

The most common accommodations are extended time for each section of the test and a private testing room, but other accommodations may be determined to be necessary. Each application is evaluated on a case by case basis.

Aspire student considerations

Learning differences, learning styles, and learning difficulties

There are many ways to categorize styles of learning. For example, Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences describes eight separate learning modalities: musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. Everyone has one or several learning style strengths, and most of us, if necessary, can adapt to learning "outside of" our preferred learning strength. Some of us, however, struggle to learn new information and skills presented in a format other than our preferred learning style.

Learning, however, can pose a bigger challenge. There are times we all have difficulty learning or doing something in life, such as learning to parallel park, learning a new language, or learning to play a sport such as tennis. These difficulties, most often, can be overcome or avoided altogether. It is part of human nature to avoid things that are difficult for us. But when these learning difficulties impact our daily functioning, our ability to achieve goals and be successful in life, they are significant learning difficulties or, if they are very severe, could be learning disabilities.

When learning substantially affects one's ability to perform essential life activities, like acquiring basic academic skills, it is probable that a learning disability exists.

Other areas of consideration

The following is a list of factors which may overlap or affect learning to varying degrees.

Ageing can affect learning. For example, vision, hearing, and memory loss; decreased agility; decreased muscle tone; and increased use of medication are common factors among an aging population. However, the more serious conditions related to aging that may affect learning more significantly are physical or mental disorders such as Alzheimer's or arthritis.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex neurobiological disorder that typically lasts throughout a person's lifetime. ASD is a group of disorders and impairs a person's ability to communicate and relate to others. It is also associated with rigid routines and repetitive

behaviors, such as obsessively arranging objects or following very specific routines. Symptoms can range from very mild to quite severe. Some adults with ASD are able to work successfully in mainstream jobs; however, communication and social problems often cause difficulties in many areas of life. They will continue to need encouragement and moral support in their struggle for an independent life.

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) is a neurobehavioral disorder that affects an estimated 4 - 12% of the school age population. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV (DSM-IV), published by the American Psychiatric Association, describes three subtypes of AD/HD: 1.) Inattentive: can't seem to get focused or stay focused on a task or activity; 2.) Hyperactive - impulsive: very active and often acts without thinking; and 3.) Combined: inattentive, impulsive, and too active

Cognitive disability is a cognitive impairment that interferes with major life activities and may affect an individual's capacity for independent living and self-sufficiency and may be mild to severe. It is important for Aspire staff to know that many individuals with cognitive disabilities have the ability to learn, set academic goals, make progress toward achieving those goals, and, thus, have the right to be served in Aspire programs.

Developmental disability is a severe, chronic disability attributable to mental or physical impairment(s), other than an impairment caused solely by mental illness, such as Down's syndrome, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, autism, spina bifida, etc.

Head injury is a temporary or long-term interruption in brain functioning caused by trauma such as stroke, concussion, or accident.

Mental illness refers to a variety of brain-based diseases that appear as emotional, behavioral, and social disabilities. Like any group of individuals who have lived with many life stresses, Aspire students may experience depression, high anxiety, and other emotional challenges. These stresses can be compounded by a history of poverty and significant learning challenges.

Physical disability refers to a physical, functional limitation that interferes with a person's ability to walk, see, move, lift, or hear. Physical disabilities include blindness, deafness and the inability to use one's limbs.

Temporary disabilities may entitle a person to accommodations and can include injuries such as broken bones as well as non-permanent conditions such as pregnancy or the effects of certain medications or treatments.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ohio Professional Development Network

The Professional Development Network (PDN) offers professional development opportunities on the subject of accessibility. There are both online offerings as well as face-to-face workshops. Both of these types of opportunities can be found, and registered for, by accessing the [PDN calendar](#). Please note that you will need to log into the website in order to access available professional development opportunities.

Ohio Agencies and Organizations

Ohio Special Education Regional Resource Centers

<https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/District-and-School-Continuous-Improvement/State-Support-Teams>

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities

<https://ood.ohio.gov/>

Outreach Center for Deafness and Blindness

<https://deafandblindoutreach.org/>

National/International Organizations

International Dyslexia Association (IDA)

<http://www.interdys.org/>

Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA)

<https://ldaamerica.org/>

National Association for Adults with Special Learning Needs (NAASLN)

<http://www.naasln.org/>

ProLiteracy WorldWide

<http://www.proliteracy.org/>