Definition of a Learning Disability

provided by Carvallo, Foley, Saunders and Bowman (2005) and draws from the United States National Joint Committee for Learning Disabilities as:

A general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the lifespan. Problems in self regulatory behaviours, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability (cited in NCVER 2002).
Research Purpose
To investigate teaching and learning strategies that contribute to unit of competency completion rates of apprentices at risk.

Methodology
- Qualitative approach using mixed methods
- Rationale for research tools
- Research sample

Findings from focus groups
staff employers and families
Focus groups identified apprentice difficulties with reading and writing course theory and coexisting behaviours:
- Anxiety
- Distractibility
- Withdrawal
- Disruptiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulties experienced</th>
<th>Students Reponses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding texts</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>78.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessments</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organisations</td>
<td>11</td>
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</tbody>
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Strategies for success
- focus groups identified instructional approaches as effective
- Apprentices found mentoring and tutoring as being most important by:
  - simplifying terms and clarifying concepts
  - mind mapping
  - task analysis
  - use of equipment and visual representations to present abstract concepts

Potential for Technology
- Staff and students acknowledged the benefits of technology and the need to extend its application as a learning strategy
Potential of technology-
Demonstration
Students Completions Project

ACTIVITY trialling technology

• Work in groups to discuss strategies and trial technology
• Consider the applications
• Report to main group
Return to groups to consider:
• Measurement effectiveness of strategies
• design of a study