Move Beyond the Average.
Design to Reach Each Learner.
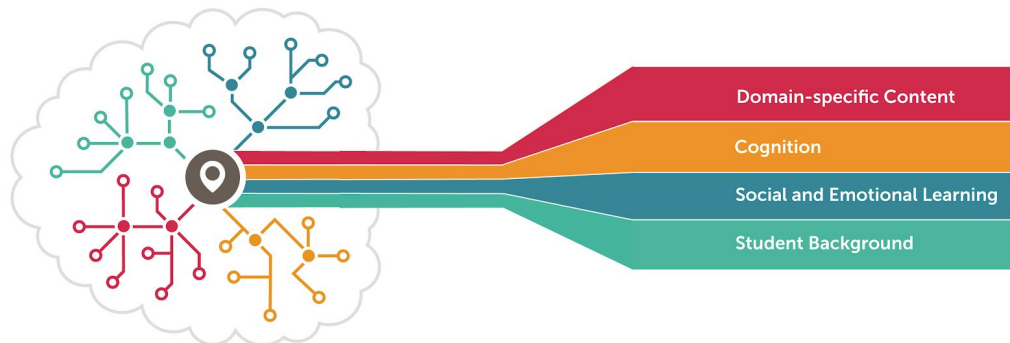
Digital Promise®
Accelerating Innovation in Education

Learner Variability Self-Directed Study Guide

This guide is designed to support your own professional learning around learner variability.

What Learner Variability is:

Learner Variability is the understanding that each learner has a unique constellation of strengths and challenges that impact their learning. Additionally, these strengths and challenges can vary depending on context. Learner Variability encompasses factors from learning sciences research across a **whole child framework**. Connections among factors across domains can offer valuable insight for educators who are trying to support the complex needs of learners.

Domain-specific Content
Cognition
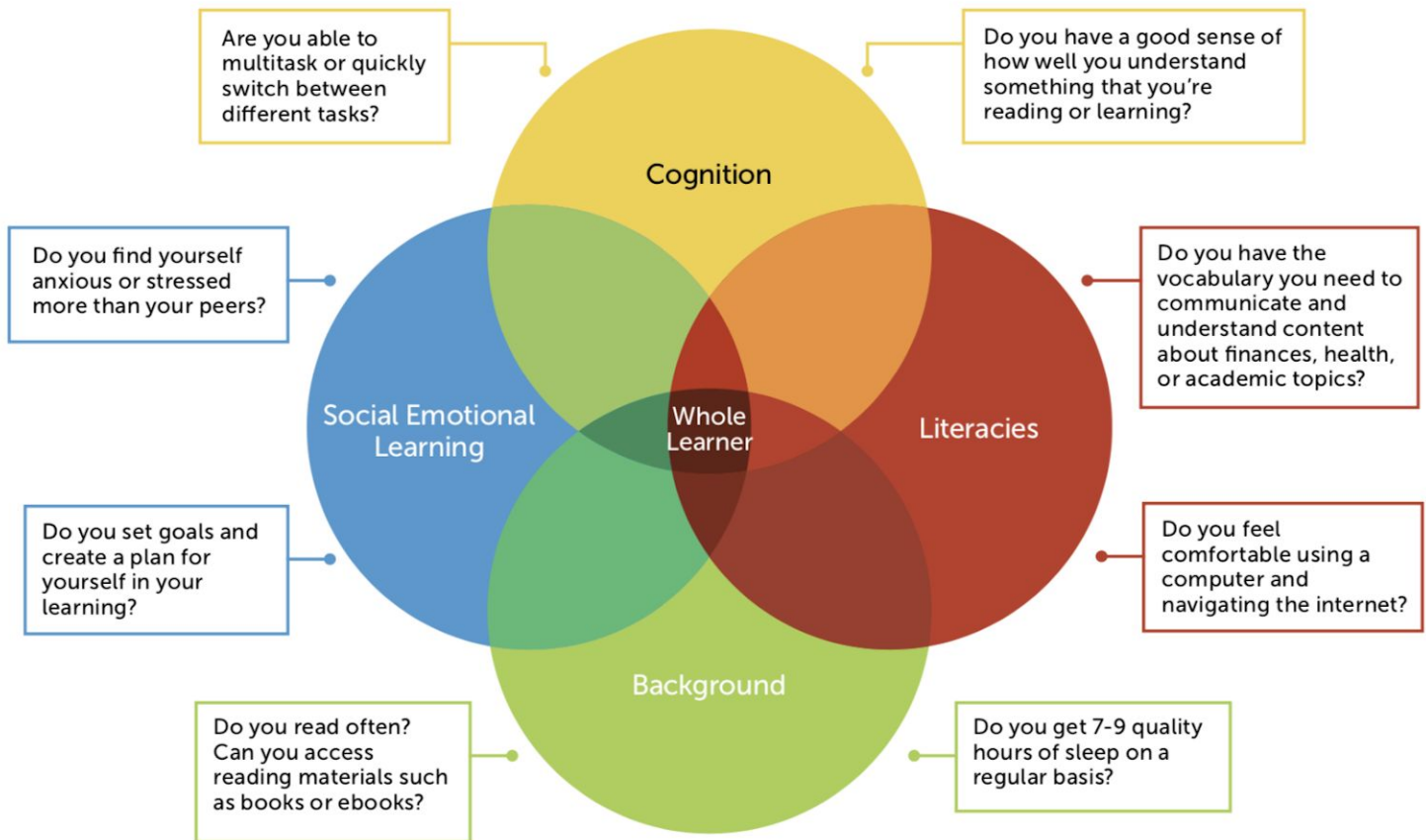Social and Emotional Learning
Student Background

What Learner Variability is not:

Learner Variability is NOT learning styles. The notion of learning styles, while widespread, is not grounded in research and further promotes the idea that students have a fixed way of learning. What research does show is that engaging all students with multiple modalities of learning - audio, visual and kinesthetic - promotes solidifying information into long-term memory. Additionally, which modality a learner uses or prefers can vary greatly depending on the task and context. For instance, you might remember a phone number by repeating it multiple times (auditory), but you might remember someone's name with a visual reminder.

Self Reflection

One way to understand the interconnections among learner factors and how changes in context affect our strengths and challenges is to reflect on your own experiences as a learner.

Discussion/reflection questions:

- Reflect on yourself as a learner. What are your strengths? What are your challenges?
- Identify a recent success or challenge you had as a learner.

Explore the factors and strategies in the adult learner model

- Which factors are related to that challenge? How are they connected to other factors?
- Which factors are related to strengths that helped you overcome that challenge?
- How do those factors influence your learning?
- What strategies were helpful in overcoming challenges?
- How would you advocate for yourself if you encountered a similar challenge now?
- How does your experience as a learner impact your teaching? your students?

Select a learner model on the Learner Variability Navigator that most closely relates to your teaching:

- What are some factors that impact your students? How are they connected?
- What strategies could you use to address the learner variability in your classroom?
- How is this similar or different from your own experience as a learner?
- How can you support your students to advocate for themselves?
- Think of the top 3-5 instructional strategies you employ most frequently and use the Instructional Design Tool to analyze their impact on your students.

Suggested Activities:

- **Read this [white paper](#)**
  - Barbara Pape summarizes the research on Learner Variability.

- **Watch [this video](#)**
  - David Rose describes Learner Variability with eloquent analogies.

- **Tour our [Learner Variability Navigator](#)**
  - Watch [this guided tour](#)
  - Explore a [Learner Model](#) on your own.

- **Complete [the self-reflection](#) with a group of peers.**
  - Discuss your takeaways and set some goals or next steps.
  - Try some new strategies and discuss your findings and observations with the group.

- **Explore our [signature workspaces](#) and create your own**
  - Select 1-2 workspaces and explore the stories and resources in those to see how they address learner variability.
  - Follow [these steps](#) to create your own workspace using [the Learning Needs Explorer](#).

- **Try our [Instructional Design Tool](#)**
  - This tool helps you identify how the strategies you are using support the whole child and find new strategies to address learner variability in your classroom. It's great for self-reflection, lesson planning, or MTSS meetings.

Additional Resources:

- Check out our [Learner Variability Toolkit](#)
- Complete our [Learner Variability Microcredentials](#).
- Join our [edWeb webinar](#) community and see [our past webinars](#).
- [Sign your school up](#) for [free professional learning](#) from the LVP Team.

Visit the free **[Learner Variability Navigator](#)** to explore research-based, whole child frameworks.