

CLASSROOM ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THE STUDENT WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES

The needs of students with learning differences center around information processing. It is important that these students receive and transmit information in the way that works best for them. Many of the same methods and aids used by students with other handicaps are also helpful to the learning differenced. These include tape recorders, readers, note-takers and taped texts. Students who concentrate on their strengths and develop learning strategies to compensate for their disability, have the opportunity to be successful in regular classes. A learning differenced student's capacity for learning is intact. It is only the means by which information is processed that is different. Remember that by providing a variety of approaches to learning you allow all students the chance to use their strong modalities.

The following lists are suggestions for some accommodations that might allow these students to receive and transmit information more easily and be more effectively evaluated.

Note: "Accommodations" should not mean lowering standards. The learning differenced student is intellectually capable of higher education. By providing accommodations we are allowing the student the chance to let his/her intelligence shine. Because they are intelligent and have lived with their perceptual problems for so long, the students themselves are the best people to answer your questions.

GENERAL TEACHING

1. Encourage the students to identify themselves and explain their special needs in private. Respect the confidentiality of these disclosures.
2. Sequence materials and activities from simple to complex.
3. Suggest mnemonic devices for memorizing facts.
4. Use analogies, illustrations, films, overheads, records, tapes.
5. Use the chalkboard or overhead projector to highlight key concepts or words. Leave the words up long enough for students to copy them.
6. Respond to requests to sit near the front.
7. Provide handouts of new words or key words at the start of each class.
8. Relate abstract concepts to concrete activities.

9. Be flexible and willing to experiment. Recognize each learning disabled student's individual learning style and abilities.
10. Use photo-copied handouts instead of dittos (for clarity).

GIVING ASSIGNMENTS AND DIRECTIONS

1. Provide a variety of different kinds of assignments.
2. Notify students of assignments verbally, on the board and on handouts.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

1. See "beyond" the spelling and punctuation errors and acknowledge appropriate vocabulary and ideas.
2. Allow students help with proofing mechanical errors in writing.
3. Encourage the student to use typewriters or word processors.
4. Allow the use of varieties of lined paper and folding.
5. Allow the use of calligraphy, colored pens, colored paper, tracing and other multi-sensory materials.
6. Allow use of tape-recorder for brainstorming ideas before writing.
7. Allow student to read writing onto tape to help with editing.
8. Allow student to quietly read aloud written work to help with proofing.

MATH ASSIGNMENTS

1. Have students verbalize the problem step by step to find out where the difficulty is.
2. Check to be sure the meaning of key symbols is clear.
3. List steps of a process on a study sheet. Allow student to refer to it as he works.
4. Help students categorize math vocabulary according to the meaning of the words.
5. Emphasize the importance of position of numbers and direction of proceeding when computing.

6. Use concrete materials so students can learn concepts through manipulations.
7. Allow extra time.

TEST TAKING

1. Provide a “pre-test” on the material to prepare students for the official test.
2. Allow for untimed tests.
3. Check multiple answer sheets to make sure the student is filling it out correctly.
4. Test knowledge of concepts: not reading or spelling ability.
5. Allow take-home exams which test understanding: not memory.
6. Allow additional time if needed.
7. Give frequent short quizzes instead of one long exam.
8. Provide alternate tests as a second chance.
9. After the test circulate copies of test answers or model answers.

TEST FORMAT

1. Add at least one example for each different set of items within any section of the test.
2. Group items which measure similar skills in progressive order of difficulty.
3. Place answer options in a vertical format with answer bubbles (horizontal ovals) to the right.
4. Use continuation arrows and stop signs to organize the flow of items within the tests.
5. Provide alternative format such as take home essay.

THE STUDENT EXPERIENCES DIFFICULTY WITH VISUAL MEMORY (I.E., CANNOT REMEMBER INFORMATION RECEIVED VISUALLY)

1. Draw the student's attention to key aspects of visual images (e.g., highlighting, outlining, drawing arrows, etc.).
2. Provide the student with more than one exposure to the visual information prior to requiring him/her to remember it.
3. Reduce visual distractions by isolating the information that is presented to the student (e.g., cover other information on the page, expose only a portion of a picture at a time, etc.).
4. When the student is required to recall information, provide him/her with visual cues to help him/her remember the information previously presented (e.g., using key words printed on the chalkboard, exposing part or all of a picture, etc.).
5. When the student is required to recall information, provide him/her with auditory cues to help him/her remember the information previously presented (e.g., say key words, give a brief oral description to clue the student, etc.).
6. When the student is required to recall information, remind him/her of the situation in which material was originally presented (e.g., say "Remember yesterday when we talked about..." "Remember when we were outside and looked at the...").
7. Teach the student to learn sequences and lists of information in segments (e.g., telephone numbers are learned as 314, then 442, then 7094, etc.).
8. Cut pictures from a cartoon strip. Let the student look at the pictures in sequence, mix them up and let him/her put them back in order.
9. Have the student play concentration games (e.g., matching numbers, words, symbols, etc., by turning them over and remembering where they were located).
10. Have the student read and follow one-, two-, and three-step directions.
11. Provide the student with written directions, rules, lists. Reinforce the student for being able to recall the information in verbal, then in written form.
12. Require the student to remember days of the week, months of the year, birthdates, addresses, telephone numbers, etc., after seeing this information in written form.
13. Teach the student to recognize common visual symbols (e.g., a red octagon means stop, golden arches symbolize McDonald's fast food restaurant, a skull and crossed bones stands for poison, etc.).

14. Give the student the opportunity to find objects which are the same or different in size, shape, color, etc.
15. Have the student sort objects according to size, shape, color, etc.
16. Have the student use play equipment such as a ladder, jungle gym, blocks, teeter-totter, balance beam, etc., to become more aware of body position in space.
17. Have the student complete partially drawn figures, words, numbers, etc.
18. Have the student use paper pictures from magazines, catalogs, etc., to assemble features and body parts.
19. Have the student build an object according to a pattern (e.g., Tinker Toys, blocks, etc.).
20. Have the student engage in sequencing activities (e.g., put numbers in order, place pictures in correct order, etc.).
21. Have the student complete jigsaw puzzles (e.g., beginning with simple self-made puzzles and progressing to more complex puzzles).
22. Develop a variety of activities for the student using a pegboard or geoboard.
23. Provide the student with a variety of classifying activities (e.g., from simple classifying of types of clothes, cars, etc.; to more complex classifying of what items would be located at certain stores, etc.).
24. Have the student find specific shapes in the room (e.g., the door is a rectangle, the clock is a circle, etc.).
25. Provide the student with simple designs to be reproduced with blocks, sticks, paper, etc.
26. Provide the student with dot-to-dot worksheets following specific patterns, etc.
27. Have the student identify objects by looking at the outline of objects on a cardboard silhouette, etc.
28. Have the student repeat the names of objects, shapes, numbers, or words presented to him/her for a limited time period.
29. Provide the student with a variety of exercises in which he/she must identify the missing body parts, common objects, etc.
30. Provide the student with a variety of visual recall tasks (e.g., the student writes numbers, shapes, and words he/she was shown for a specific time, etc.).

31. Use a variety of colored tiles to make a pattern. Have the student duplicate the pattern while looking at the model, then complete the design from memory without using the model.
32. Place on a tray several items, such as a pencil, flower, penny, and a piece of gum. Allow the student to study the items, then take the items away and have the student identify what was on the tray.
33. Have the student practice tracing outlines of pictures. Worksheets with dotted lines of pictures, letters, numbers, etc., can be used to develop eye-hand coordination.
34. Play a matching game like “Concentration” in which hidden pictures, numbers, or shapes, are turned over one at a time and the student must remember where the matching picture is located.
35. Using pictures from magazines, remove an important part of the picture and ask the student to identify what part is missing.
36. Read directions orally to the student before he/she is asked to do a workbook page. Work the first problem with the student so he/she understands what is expected.
37. Reduce the amount of information on a page for the student (e.g., less print, fewer problems, etc.).
38. Provide math problems on graph paper so the numbers are in columns in the ones, tens, and hundreds places.
39. Have writing paper color-coded so the student knows where to start and stop on the page.
40. Highlight or underline important words, phrases, etc., in the student’s assignments that require reading.
41. Allow the student to use a typewriter to facilitate skills and reinforce word recognition.
42. Provide the student with shorter tasks, but more of them. Increase the length of tasks as the student demonstrates success.

THE STUDENT NEEDS CONTINUED DRILL AND PRACTICE IN ORDER TO LEARN SPELLING WORDS (I.E., TAKES MUCH LONGER TO LEARN WORDS THAN OTHER STUDENTS)

1. Give the student fewer words to learn to spell at any one time, spending more time on each word until the student can spell it correctly.
2. Have a peer spend time each day engaged in drill activities with the student on his/her spelling words.
3. Have the student use his/her spelling words in sentences he/she writes each day.
4. Have the student highlight or underline his/her spelling words in passages from reading assignments, newspapers, magazines, etc.
5. Develop crossword puzzles which contain only the student's spelling words and have him/her complete them.
6. Write sentences, passages, paragraphs, etc., for the student to read which repeat the student's spelling words throughout the written material.
7. Have the student act as a peer tutor to teach his/her spelling words to another student.
8. Have a list of the student's current spelling words taped to his/her desk with the requirement that they be practiced whenever the student has time. Reinforce the student for practicing the writing of the spelling words.
9. Have the student review his/her spelling words each day for a short period of time rather than two or three times per week for longer periods of time.
10. Use wall charts to introduce words with visual images such as pictures for the student to associate with the letter sound.
11. Teach spelling integrated with the total language arts program (e.g., activities, methods, and materials are related to the teaching of reading and language as a whole rather than in parts).
12. Require the student to use a dictionary or Spell Master/Language Master to find the correct spelling of any word he/she cannot spell correctly. The emphasis in this situation becomes spelling accurately rather than memorizing spelling words.
13. Have the student quiz others over his/her spelling words (e.g., teacher, aide, peers, etc.).
14. Make certain that the student's spelling instruction is on a level where success can be met. Gradually increase the degree of difficulty as the student demonstrates success.

15. Initiate a “learn to spell a word a day” program with the student.
16. Use words for the student’s spelling list which are commonly found in his/her daily surroundings (e.g., commercials, hazard signs, directions, lunch menu, etc.).
17. Require the student to proofread all of his/her written work for spelling errors. Reinforce the student for correcting each spelling error.
18. Have the student identify a list of spelling words (5, 10, or 15) each week which he/she wants to learn to spell. If the student is interested in cars, he/she can identify words from automotive magazines, advertisements, etc.

THE STUDENT DOES NOT REMEMBER MATH FACTS

1. Beginning with the addition and subtraction facts, separate the basic facts into “sets”, each to be memorized successively by the student.
2. Using a building technique to help the student learn math facts, present a few facts at a time. Gradually increase the number of facts the student must remember as he/she demonstrates success.
3. Provide the student with many concrete experiences to help him/her learn and remember math facts. Use popsicle sticks, tongue depressors, paper clips, buttons, etc., to form groupings to teach math facts.
4. Use fingers to teach the student to form addition and subtraction combinations. Have the student hold up fingers and add or subtract other fingers to find the correct answer.
5. Have the student use a calculator to reinforce learning of the math facts. Have the student solve several problems each day using a calculator.
6. Provide practice of math facts using a computer with software programs that provide immediate feedback for the student.
7. Use daily drill activities to help the student memorize math facts (e.g., written problems, flashcards, etc.).
8. Develop and post basic addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division charts the student can use in solving math problems.
9. Build upon math facts the student already knows, reinforcing facts the student has mastered. Add one new fact at a time as the student demonstrates success.
10. Have the student use a number line to add and subtract.
11. Choose one fact with which the student is unsuccessful and review it several times a day. Make that fact the student’s “fact of the day”.
12. Have the student complete a math facts worksheet and have him/her use a calculator to check and correct the problems.
13. Avoid going on the multiplication and division facts until addition and subtraction facts have been mastered.
14. Use manipulative objects (e.g., peg board, abacus, base ten blocks, etc.) to teach the student basic math facts while providing a visual image.
15. Have the student use a calculator for drill activities of basic math facts.

16. Find opportunities for the student to apply math facts to real life situations (e.g., getting change in the cafeteria, measuring the length of objects in industrial arts, etc.).
17. Develop a math facts reference sheet for addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division for the student to use at his/her desk when solving math problems.
18. Have the student solve half of his/her math problems each day and use the calculator as reinforcement to complete the other half of the assignment.