

Accommodations, Modifications and Just Good Teaching Strategies

INSTRUCTION

Allow the use of manipulatives or a calculator for checking accuracy on daily work.

- Shorten assignments or work periods to coincide with attention span.
- Use a time or cardboard clock to show quitting time and to help children pace themselves.
- Break assignments into smaller parts which allows for more frequent feedback.
- Establish criteria for acceptable work and require students to correct assignments until these criteria are met.
- Involve students in setting time limits.
- Ask students to repeat directions before beginning a task.
- Give instructions in clear and simple sentences.
- Provide an example of what a successfully completed assignment would look like.
- Reduce the difficulty level of assignments.
- Evaluate appropriateness of a task to determine if material is too easy or hard, or if the length of assignments is appropriate.
- Require the student to begin a task within a specified period of time.
- Reduce the number of directions and steps (e.g., give the student each additional step after the completion of the previous step).
- Establish assignment rules (e.g., listen to instructions, start after directions are given, ask questions if you do not understand, begin the task when you know what to do, make certain you have all necessary materials, know where to turn in the assignment when completed).
- Schedule more difficult subjects in morning or when student learns best.
- Have rules for work periods. Rules should clarify expectations and facilitate work production. Typical work period rules might address what to do when you are finished, when to ask for teacher help and when you may visit with peers.
- Allow alternative response modes (e.g., fill in answers instead of essays).
- Use a mixture of high-interest and low-interest tasks (e.g., follow lecture with a hands-on activity).
- Simplify and heighten visual presentations by using clearly printed, uncluttered worksheets.
- Allow tape recording of assignments.
- Ask questions such as, "What do you need to be able to do this?"
- Utilize a syllabus with older students. An effective syllabus specifies both assignments and due dates. A comprehensive syllabus will provide students with a consistent reference for assignments.
- Rewrite directions at a lower reading level if student reads below grade level.
- Indicate a definite starting and stopping point, visually and auditory.
- Move into close proximity to help the student sustain attention.
- Maintain eye contact with the student while giving directions or other important information.
- Use very specific concrete language when giving directions. If possible use visual information and cues along with verbal information.
- Use fast paced lessons in which you frequently ask students questions. Consider not having students raise their hands. Rotate asking the questions.
- Intersperse activities that include physical activity with more sedentary lessons.
- Intersperse high interest activities with typical seat lessons.

- Use instructional techniques that call for a high rate of student responses.
- Provide students with interesting activities to engage in when assignments have been completed.
- Provide the student with sturdy white paper with black lines to write on rather than newspaper print.
- Allow student to write on every other line when writing rough drafts.
- Allow student to select form (e.g., cursive or manuscript).
- Permit liberal use of accommodations such as word processors, tape recorders, spell checkers, etc.
- Avoid assigning writing assignments as punishment.
- Give the student a written copy of the board work if copying from the board is difficult.
- Consider alternatives to paper-pencil tasks (e.g., make a filmstrip; keep a diary; dramatizations; make a poster, mural or display; perform a demonstration; panel discussion; radio broadcasts; illustrations, etc.).
- Grade for content, not handwriting.
- Allow the student to have a writing helper or secretary when completing the assignment is more important than working on handwriting.
- Teach specific methods of self-monitoring for written work (e.g., "Did I write my best? Did I have spaces between words? Did I write on the lines?").
- Have student proofread finished work.
- Make sure that material being presented to the student is at a level that the student comprehends and that he/she is able to complete the assignment.
- Allow sufficient time to complete assignments. Check to see that the student uses his/her time wisely.
- Provide systematic presentation of material in small steps, pausing to check for student understanding.
- Verbal instruction should be accompanied by visual references (e.g., pictures, diagrams, outlines, models, etc.) and demonstration.
- Move into new areas of academic instruction gradually, always reviewing past material so that the student can experience some degree of success.
- Use records, tapes and other tools which have earphones to help the student develop the ability to listen and understand, while at the same time shutting out conflicting sounds in the room.
- Use see-through study sheets.
- Highlight vocabulary words and terms (e.g., use pink for definitions, yellow for facts, etc.).
- Use tape recordings of content areas (e.g., identify instructional objectives; summarize or omit material; insert statements in order to demonstrate the use of skimming, illustrations, graphs, comprehension questions, summaries, and other aids); involve the student in activities or questioning; and have students follow text marks (e.g., *=stop to respond to questions, #=material recorded verbatim, etc.).
- Use hands-on materials.
- Reverse roles; have student direct activity.
- Use mnemonic devices.
- Consider oral tests or have a peer read test questions.

ENVIRONMENT

- Place student up front with his/her back to the rest of the class to keep other students out of view.
- Provide as much structure as possible; provide a highly predictable schedule. Remind the student where and when activities will take place. Keep the student close to you if there is a change in schedule so you can closely monitor.
- Have a cardboard cubicle or "private office" in the classroom in which the student or any student can work to aid concentration.
- Clear space completely before going on to a new task.
- Use ear plugs, cotton, head phones.
- Use line markers.
- Use a penlight flashlight to read.
- Use beeper tapes to help self-monitor.
- Reduce amount of work initially and increase as ability increases.
- Avoid distracting stimuli. Place the student away from: air conditioner, high traffic areas, heater, doors or windows.
- Encourage parents to set up appropriate study space at home with routines established for study time, parental review of completed homework, and periodic notebook and/or book bag, check for study time, encourage organized action.

TESTS

Before the Test:

- Confer with student individually and privately if you plan to modify the test for that student.
- Take the test yourself to make sure there is ample time for students to complete it.
- Provide both written and oral reminders of upcoming tests.
- Provide a structured study guide which matches the design of the test.
- Allow students the opportunity to study with a peer.
- Develop clear, readable and uncluttered test forms. Allow ample space for student responses. Use lined answer spaces for essay or short answer tests.
- Review the test to ensure that it assesses what was taught and how it was taught. If lessons focused on recalling facts, avoid essay questions.
- Adjust the readability of the test to the student's reading level.
- Use more frequent, shorter tests rather than long tests.
- Give a practice test.
- Limit each page to a single type of question (e.g., multiple choice on one page, fill in the blank on one page, etc.).
- Don't use trick questions.
- If essay questions are given, provide an outline to help structure the response.
- Underline or bold key words and phrases.

During the Test:

- Seat the student near the teacher so that he/she can be easily monitored and so that the teacher can assist the student with pacing.
- Allow the student extra time to complete the test.
- Allow the student to take tests orally.
- Avoid placing the student under the pressure of time constraints or competition.
- Allow the student to take tests in an alternative site if he/she is distracted easily.
- Provide short breaks during lengthy tests.

- Avoid statements such as, "Hurry and get finished," or "Do your best. This counts for one-half of your grade."
- Don't threaten dire consequences for failure.
- Allow student to use his/her notes with the test. Teach the student how the notes go along with the test.

After the Test:

- Reward the student for improved performance.
- Communicate positive information about a student's progress with his or her parents.
- Allow students to retake tests after they have been given feedback and been re-taught.
- Emphasize strengths rather than weaknesses in feedback after tests.
- Teach appropriate social behavior, including discussing and practicing behavioral options in various social situations, role playing, video taping.
- Spell out rules and contingencies.
- Teach in natural social situations/settings.
- Set up situations for positive cooperation with other students.
- Meet with student privately to work out cues or signals to use when he/she is losing control.
- Refrain from anger or blaming student on moral grounds; refer to specific behaviors matter-of-factly and avoid discussion of motives, moral judgment.
- Care must be taken that disciplinary actions are not taken against a child when his misbehavior or lack of willingness in participating in a group activity or in completing a task may be due to confusion caused by his attention problems.
- Positive teacher attention is very important. Don't spend too much time attending to negative behavior. Try to ignore non-disruptive minor problems. Alter your interaction with the student to focus on positives. Some potential reinforcers are breaks from academic work, showing what the student has learned, recreation, and helping the teacher with a chore. The time of attention is very important to successful behavior management.
- It is frequently necessary to change reinforcers/rewards often. Children are prone to rapid habituation and satiation, particularly with tangible rewards. Reward menus must be changed often. Find out from parents what kids like and make changes on a regular basis. A particular reward may be effective for the moment in motivating a student's compliance, but will likely lose its value much faster than normal.
- Reinforce the student's good performance publicly as often as possible. Children tend to internalize criticism and need praise and reinforcement frequently and consistently. Call attention to good points as much as possible.
- Positive or negative consequences must be delivered swiftly, immediately, consistently and more frequently. Consequences used with children often must be of higher magnitude than those used with nondisabled children. Consequences chosen for behavior management program must have sufficient reinforcement value to motivate these children to perform desired behaviors. Occasional praise or reprimands are not enough to effectively manage children's behavior. Always emphasize positives in any program.
- Demonstrate firmness, matter of fact approach.
- Communicate with parents regularly; provide data on student's progress (focus on positive) and obtain information that would help (e.g., medication, acute stressors).
- Communicate the same thing to both student and parents.

ORGANIZATION

- Establish, post and follow a consistent daily routine.
- Perform periodic desk checks for all students and praise adequate desk organization.
- Use study guides to help organize test preparation.
- Provide the student with note-taking guides or techniques.
- Provide the student with checklists for proofing assignments that address graded elements.
- Provide students time to organize and clean out their desks at the end of each day.
- Teach test-taking and study skills.
- Talk with the student's parents to create plan for school-home transitions.
- Assign a volunteer or work buddy to help the student with organizing materials and assignments.
- Highlight or underline direction words for students or help them learn to identify direction words.
- Give a warning when transitions are about to occur. Provide specific directions for how transitions are to be carried out.
- Allow the student to have an extra set of books at home.
- Break directions down into small units.
- Provide student with a list of needed materials.
- Provide incentives for meeting organizational goals.
- Teach goal setting and use of contracts.
- Pairing assignments with a checklist on the student's desk on which he/she can check off completed tasks may help with assignment completion. After showing the student how to make the checklist, provide blank checklists for the student to fill out each day.
- Plan long-term projects with the student using a calendar with specific dates on which tasks are to be completed. Check back periodically to see how the student is progressing.
- Organization is particularly difficult for many children. Try using a checklist of what to take home from school each night. Divided notebooks can be useful if the student understands how to use them. Assist with organization of desk or locker space.

MANAGING BEHAVIORS

- Establish a relationship
- Accentuate all positives
- Don't assume they know appropriate social skills
- Teach appropriate social behavior, including discussing and practicing behavioral options in various social situations, role playing, video taping.
- Assure that the ratio of positive to negative statements are at minimum 5 to 1
- Understand which symptoms do interfere with learning and identify the specific target behavior (e.g., difficulty choosing which stimuli are relevant; difficulty taking time to think before acting, etc.).
- Encourage the child to ask questions when he is confused and praise him when he takes this initiative.
- Establishing a positive feeling about asking questions or asking for repetition is essential and will be irreplaceable as he/she progresses through school.
- Teach student to constantly verbalize tactics: "Stop, think, act, feel."
- Use physical signals (e.g., hand on shoulder, tap the desk).
- Allow for movement.
- Model appropriate behaviors.

- Increase the student's self awareness.
- Help the student understand feelings.
- Practice body relaxation.
- Let student use a timer or other system of cues as a reminder to keep on task.
- Channel the student's excessive energy into acceptable activities whenever possible.
- Assign duties such as handing out supplies, gathering papers, erasing the board, being the classroom messenger, etc.
- Praise the student for good performance.
- Take advantage of the energy and spontaneity of the student to help eliminate potential difficulties. For instance, when planning for a class play, the student may be quite successful at acting out the role of the wind which whooshes across the stage and may be quite frustrated (and frustrating to you and classmates) if cast as the father who stands quietly and observes before saying his one line.
- Provide for close supervision during unstructured times, like recess, to help control risk-taking and eliminate potential injuries.
- An individualized behavior modification program targeted at increasing positive behavior can be very effective. For example, a student earns tokens throughout the day for appropriate behavior (e.g., being on task, completing work, staying in seat, playing cooperatively, and following directions) and exchanges the tokens for special activities or privileges, such as computer time, extra recess, helping the teacher, stickers, small toys, treats or selecting from a reward menu.
- Pair the giving of reinforcers with lots of social praise and always be consistent. Some rewards should be distributed on a daily basis, more valuable rewards could be contingent upon appropriate behavior for a week.
- Try to include parents in some kind of structured daily report in which the student earns stickers, stars, etc., and parent provides reinforcers or negative consequences.
- Establish daily/weekly communication through a communication log sent between school and home or email.
- Spell out rules and contingencies.
- Teach in natural social situations/settings.
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Teaching strategies excerpted from:

Behrens, Gene; Ikada, Martin; Noel, George; Reschly-Murdoch, Jane. *Interventions to Enhance Student Functioning: A Guide for Educators*. Heartland AEA 11, Johnson, IA 50131-1603. 1-800-362-2720