

General Instructional Accommodations for the Diverse Classroom

All classrooms are made up a diverse population of unique learning styles and needs. The list below includes general classroom accommodations to support success for all learners.

To communicate clearly with students:

- Post a daily classroom schedule. Preview the schedule with students and highlight academic and behavioral expectations for each activity. Leave the schedule up through the entire day.
- Make eye contact with the student before giving directions. Have individual students repeat directions back to you before beginning assignment.
- Use simple, clear language when communicating with the child. This is especially true for students who struggle with behavior or receptive language. Less is best when giving directions, as many students will tune you out after a short period of time.
- Keep instructions brief. Break multi-step directions into smaller subsets and have the student complete one subset before advancing to another.
- Write assignments or complex directions on the board in addition to saying them. Add visual cues whenever possible.

To ensure student understanding of newly introduced academic material:

- Structure lessons so that they contain no more than one-quarter new material. (Students are most successful when they can 'anchor' new concepts to known information.)
- Use a 'think-aloud' approach: Talk through the steps of a problem-solving strategy as you teach it so that students can understand and internalize those steps. Then have them use the same 'think-aloud' approach as they work through the strategy, so that you can observe them and offer feedback.
- Give the student your master notes as a guide for improving or expanding his or her own notes. Or at the end of each class period, have the student compare his or her notes for thoroughness and accuracy against those of a classmate who takes thorough notes. If note taking is extremely difficult for a student, provide a peer scribe or copy of other student's notes.

To promote student attention and motivation in group instruction:

- Seat the student near the point of action in the room, so that you face him or her as you teach. Insure that seating is in area of reduced distractions (window, door, heater, etc.)
- Use alerting cues to get the class's attention before giving a directive or assignment. Make a statement like "I'm going to say something important." or use visual cues.
- Present instructional material in short sessions at a brisk pace.
- Require that students engage in some type of active responding to teacher instruction (e.g., students respond to teacher question in unison or in partners; students write down their response and then share out with partner or group, students break into small groups and use cooperative-learning strategies to solve a problem).
- Use visual timers prior to transition or during an assignment. The website <http://www.lefthandlogic.com/timers.php> provides directions, demonstrations and links for using Power Point Timers in the classroom.

To increase the student's persistence with independent academic tasks:

- Allow choice whenever possible. (task completion sequence, seating, preferred-not preferred schedule)
- Decrease assignment length. (reduce number of items, shorten the required length of an essay). Mastery of the goal of the assignment should not be influenced by outside factors. For example if the goal is writing a persuasive paragraph, mastery of this goal should not be affected by penmanship unless that is specified in the outcome requirements. A student can show mastery of math problems by completing 5 rather than 15.
- Break assignment into smaller, more manageable 'chunks'. Acknowledge, praise, or reward student for completion of each chunk.
- Explicitly recognize, praise, and reward the effort that a student puts into an assignment-no matter how imperfect the outcome. Students can become more motivated as they learn that effort (a factor that is entirely within their control) can actually pay off!
- Have student monitor and chart own work completion as a motivation-builder.
- Provide the student with a copy of reading material (e.g., expository article) with main ideas already highlighted.
- Post a range of modest classroom 'work accommodations' that any student in the room can take advantage of (e.g., moving to a different part of the classroom to work; choosing which of several in-class assignments to do first; using technology to dictate the first draft of an essay, etc.). Encourage students to choose those accommodations that help them to work most productively.

To ensure that students who need help with independent classwork get it promptly:

- Create easy-to-follow 'strategy' sheet that lays out academic problem-solving steps in a clear manner for student to refer to as needed. Give copies of this model to each student, and mount poster-size versions on classroom walls as part of a reference center.
- Teach students acceptable, unobtrusive ways to get academic assistance from peers.
- Put together 'help-signal' program: when a student gets 'stuck' on seatwork, he or she displays help-signal (e.g., brightly colored index card) on desk, switches to other work until teacher is freed up to approach and provide assistance.
- Provide a visual reminder when students need to ask someone besides the teacher. (small cone or stop sign at the reading group table, place a stop sign on the overhead to project when working individually with students)