

Working with Children with Learning Disabilities

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General Approaches

1. The overall teaching goal is to present material that the child is ready for in a way that it can be learned. Flexible and creative application of a variety of techniques is a key to helping the child with a learning disability.
2. Emphasize the use of positive feedback. Chart progress and regularly celebrate successes. Have students set individual goals and then use a strongly positive approach with a great deal of feedback. Provide feedback at least every 30 minutes through teacher comment, self-assessment, peer assessment, or technological feedback (i.e., computer response).
3. Start remediation at a level just below the child's functioning level in order to provide the motivation of initial success.
4. Make reasonable expectations; reduce and modify as needed. For example, give fewer spelling words, assign shorter writing assignments, and make allowances for handwriting and spelling.
5. Attend to the affective elements of the child with a learning disability. Years of frustration and struggle often take a toll on the child's coping skills and self-concept. Be aware of and challenge academic avoidance behaviors.
6. Reduce stress and threats in the classroom and teach stress management skills. Eliminate peer threats, embarrassment, unreasonable demands, and humiliating assessment so that students feel more secure and comfortable. Simple breathing exercises, visualization, and self-talk instructions can aid in learning self control.
7. Encourage and support areas of competence outside of academics.

Curricular Modifications

1. Teach functional and meaningful skills. For example, teach words like *exit*, *soccer*, and *hot-dog*. Have a student write a letter to her grandmother. Have a student read about his favorite rock star on the internet.
2. Whenever possible, use a multisensory approach. Give auditory, visual, tactile, and movement cues when presenting new material. Integrate physical education, music, drama, dance, and art into the curriculum.
3. Use high interest materials. For example, use cereal boxes, signs, ads, catalogs, teen magazines, and comics to teach reading skills. Find out what the child is interested in and use related instructional materials.

4. Use high-interest, low vocabulary books such as those available through Wieser Educational Inc. (800-880-4433).
5. Build word decks of mastered reading words. Create stories using these words.
6. Use a strong phonics-based teaching approach such as Project Read or Orton-Gillingham.
7. Allow the student to use aids in the classroom such as a number line, math tables, left-right reminders, an alphabet line, reference tables, etc.
8. Bombard young children with words. This exposure, especially for children with language disabilities, will improve the development of later vocabulary and reading skills.
9. Teach cursive writing early. The smooth, connected strokes of cursive writing are much more consistent with the neurological development of young children than are the angles and directional orientations required in printing. Use programs such as Handwriting Without Tears.
10. Instruct students to periodically stop while reading a passage to reflect, visualize, or jot a few notes. This improves comprehension and recall.
11. Teach students to use memory aids. Visualization, songs, mnemonics, and rhythm can all be used.
12. Teach good study skills such as staying organized, taking and reviewing notes, using textbook glossaries and chapter headings, etc.

Technological aids

1. Have students use a tape recorder with a counter to highlight lectures.
2. Make use of books on tape through the local library or the Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic (800-221-4792).
3. Use highlight tape in textbooks. (This tape can be removed without harming the book.)
4. Practice reading skills on computer software programs.
5. Download books on a computer and have the computer read the book aloud.
6. Develop skills in using a computer word processor or a portable keyboard (such as AlphaSmart: 800-274-0680).
7. Have students use spell check programs.
8. Use a calculator to compensate for lower math calculation skills.

For Additional Information:

Learning Disability Association 412-341-1515
www.ldanatl.org

LD Online www.ldonline.org

LD resources 800-868-3214
www.ldresources.com

The SLD Center of Grand Rapids 616-361-1182
www.sldread.org