

## Classroom Adaptations for Students with Special Needs & Learning Difficulties

*"From a socio-cultural perspective, disabilities do not disappear: rather, the interactions in the classroom provide a context for abilities to appear for children to develop their individual ways of knowing and learning" (Vodd Group, 95)*

Outlined below are some useful learning strategies that may assist those students who struggle with their learning, or demonstrate some difficulty with everyday classroom tasks. Student, teacher and parents must work together to maximize the student's learning potential and to create a positive, productive and successful classroom community.



### Remember:

- Collaboration between home and school will facilitate a successful education for the student.
- Have effective parent-teacher communication, collaboration, and consistency concerning goals, successes, and problems.
- Remember that we all learn in different ways and we cannot expect that all students will respond in the same way to a specific teaching strategy (some different learning styles: auditory, visual, kinesthetic, and tactile).

### Helping your child to be successful:

- Consistency and communication between home and school
- Join the class for field trips and other activities.
- Stress your child's strengths.
- Work with your child to develop different ways to eliminate difficulties in learning such as: create an environment that encourages learning, plan activities that compliment their learning, and be active in helping your child solve problems.



- Gather resources about learning disabilities to better understand how you can be most effective.
- Ensure your child understands what their academic difficulties are.
- Make a reasonable agreement about how much time your child will spend on homework.
- Remember that your child's homework is their responsibility. You are responsible for providing

a place and monitoring progress.

- Read at home if there is no regular homework to be done.
- Provide your child with the tools they need at home, including: pencils, pens, ruler, eraser, paper, dictionary, thesaurus, calculator, felts, etc.
- Treat your child to a brain break as a reward.
- Compliment your child on a job well done.

### Learning tips in the classroom:

- For some students, large assignments can seem daunting and unattainable. Break work into small chunks so that the student can achieve a small amount of success each day.
- If the student has difficulty copying notes from the chalkboard, offer an alternative so that the work can still be done. For example: photocopy a handout for the student or lend your notes to use.
- Minimize distractions for the student by placing them in a seating plan away from the temptation of excess chatting, or noise or high-traffic areas like windows that may cause a disturbance.
- Review the student's Education Plan and follow through with the recommended learning adaptations that have been set by the school or former teacher. Monitor the learning strategies and consider altering them if the student is not performing to his potential.
- For those students who require constant reminders about how to follow class procedures, provide them with an enlarged checklist of the daily routine or assignment expectations and tape it on their desk or binder. They will be able to keep track of their work more independently.
- Reserve a daily morning time for checking student planners and homework so that expectations are clear and students can clear up any difficulties right away and still work toward achieving a productive day.
- If students have difficulty with cursive writing or printing, provide them with practice strategies, but do not let the difficulty prevent them from completing the assignment. Use alternatives such as a computer, scribe or an extension on the assignment. Consider evaluation alternatives like testing a student orally as opposed to writing down all the answers.



### Getting organized:

- Set a routine for homework and consistent study time in an area with minor distractions.
- Discuss time management and meeting deadlines.

- Use a planner or timetable to stay on track and manage assignments.
- Allow time for other enjoyable activities once homework is complete (play a game outside, draw, and bake cookies).
- Support your child's achievements as much as their troubled areas: keep a positive attitude about their learning.

### Learning in Different Ways:

- Stop, look, listen, and think before jumping in headfirst. Take the time to think about what is expected and clarify with your teacher if necessary.



- Read the question or problem out loud or have someone else read it to you. Draw a picture or make a list of the assignment or question expectations.
- When you are finished your work, check for mistakes.
- Ask yourself questions about the work you are doing. This will help you to remember better. Remember the 5 w's and the h

(who, what, when, where, why, how).

- Ask the teacher questions. Listen to the other student's questions. They may be asking the same thing. Really listen when questions are asked and answered. That means pay attention to the discussion, don't play with things at your desk or think about what is being served for lunch!
- Use tricks to help your mind remember. Draw a picture or a sentence of a question. Repeat a word over and over to help you remember how to spell it or make up a funny saying to spell a word. For example: *because* could be Boys Eat Candy And Ugly Snake Eyes!
- Use a tape recorder to record stories. Colour-code your materials using a highlighter pen. Draw pictures of ideas. Learn to use the computer word processor. Write in a journal everyday. Get your thoughts down on paper to help you organize them.

### Asking for Help:

- Have you really tried your hardest? If you are working with a partner, have you talked to your partner about it? Sometimes the best way to figure something out is to discuss it. If you have tried the question in different ways, then you should probably ask for some assistance.
- Are you working too fast? It is important for students to take their time and really think about the question or problem. You probably know the answer, but you are trying to get the work done too quickly.



- Write down the information or ideas that are given to you when you ask a question. Try the solution you discuss with your teacher. If it doesn't work, think through the problem again

### Tools for being a better reader:

- Some kids read best when there is quiet music playing, while others need absolute silence. Whatever your needs are when you are going to read by yourself, you need to be comfortable!
- If you have difficulty following words, use a plain ruler or piece of paper to help keep your place. If you are distracted by sentences, have your parents make a special place



keeper that only looks at one word at a time. Just cut a little hole in the paper that is big enough for only 1 or 2 words.

- Use pictures in the story. If you think about what the picture is telling you it can help you better understand what the story is about.
- Make a working dictionary for yourself. Words that you have trouble with should be written down, defined, and used in a sentence to help you remember.
- Have your parents give you a topic and make up a story about it. The story can be any length and any topic as long as you are interested in it.
- Use your reading guide or questions for the story. Your teacher or parents may ask you to answer certain questions about the story. Keep these in mind when you are reading.
- Discuss what you are reading with your parents!

### Tools for being a better writer:

- Practice your fine motor skills everyday. This means using your fingers and hands to draw, colour, practice writing movements like drawing circles, squares, letters, and numbers.
- Find a comfortable position to sit in while you write and use a proper pencil. Tape your paper in place or hold it with one hand while you write.

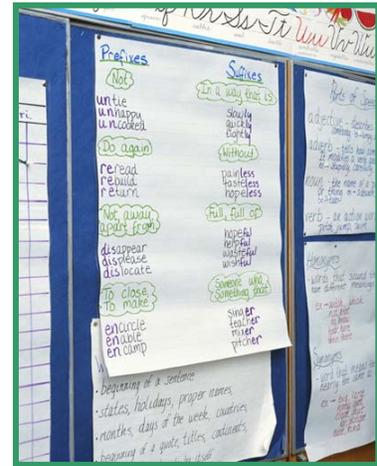


- Your pencil should be between your thumb and middle finger without placing too much pressure on the pencil. If you have discovered another way to hold the pencil that works for you and helps you to write neatly then use that.
- Try tracing the printing or writing of books or newspapers or try to copy different styles freehand. It is good practice.

- Get your parents to draw some big shapes and then you try to draw between the lines of the shape. This will help you to keep within the lines.

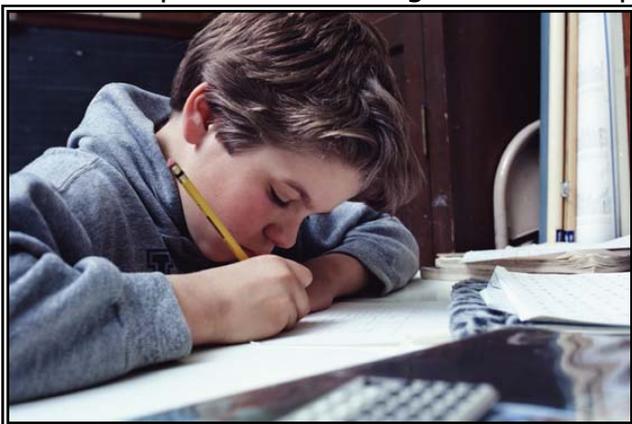
### Tools to be a better speller:

- Look at the word, say it in a sentence, and write it in a sentence. Make sure you actually see the word in your mind.
- Record all new words in your personal vocabulary dictionary so that you can be quizzed on them for practice.
- Try to complete word search puzzles, they are a great way to help you recognize different letters and words.
- Write each word out several times.
- Sing, or act the word out.
- Say each letter of the word to yourself.



### How to handle homework problems:

- If your child is not doing their assigned homework, you may need to determine if it is too difficult, too easy or just too much. Speak with the teacher to discuss the problem.
- Ensure that your child knows what is expected for the homework. Sometimes instructions need clarity. Assist your child in getting started and then check in during the process of working time to offer positive feedback.



- Your child may need breaks during the homework time to get re-energized. Getting fresh air and a snack is helpful.
- Write the teacher a note if homework is not done for any reason so that the problem can be rectified.
- If your child is not willing to do homework you will need to let the teacher know. Consequences at home (example: no playing with friends until the work is done) are helpful in demonstrating accountability and

responsibility to your child. Discuss priorities with your child and monitor the homework time for a while afterward to ensure the routine is back on track.

**-Excerpts from a research paper by Robyn Ross, VSB teacher, M.Ed and Fored BC director**

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