Learning Disabilities Manual

Information on the various types of learning difficulties children with learning disabilities can have.

By Maria Carper and Melanie Cooke
Learning Disabilities Manual

** = good resource for parents

Visual-Spatial Processing
Summary

 Resources
“Visual and Auditory Processing Disorders”
“Phonological Processes listed in Footnote (a)”
“Nonverbal Learning Disorder” **
“Examples of Learning Disabilities” **
“Visual Processing Disorders”
“NCLD: Visual Processing Disorders in Detail” **

Auditory Processing
Summary

 Resources
“Visual and Auditory Processing Disorders”
“NCLD: Auditory Processing Disorders: In Detail” **
“Living and Working with an Central Auditory Processing Disorder”
“LDA: Central Auditory Processing Disorder” **
“NCLD: Auditory Processing Disorders: By Age Group” **
“Our Children’s Brains: Part 2” **
“Kids Health: Central Auditory Processing Disorder: **
“NIDCD: Auditory Processing Disorder in Children”
“NYU Child Study Center: Central Auditory Processing Disorder”
“Central Auditory Processing Disorders: An Overview of Assessment and Management Practices” **

Memory
Summary

 Resources
“LDA: Types of Learning Disabilities”
“Learningbase: Memory: Short term, active, and long term” **
“Learningbase: Registering Text: Impact of Short-term Memory” **
“Strategies to Enhance Memory in Students with Disabilities”
“Tool Kit for Parents: Making it Stick” **

Attention
Summary

 Resources
“All Kinds of Minds: Attention Strategies” **
“All Kinds of Minds: Developing Alertness”
“All Kinds of Minds: Developing Mental Effort” **
“The Dimension of Attention”
“Basics of Attention:” **
“Difficulties with Attention”
Language

Summary

Resources

“Activities to Encourage Speech and Language Development” **
“Aphasia” **
“Causes of Hearing Loss in Children” **
“Childhood Apraxia of Speech” **
“Dysgraphia” **
“Dyslexia Basics” **
“All Children Can Write”
“How Does Your Child Hear and Talk?”
“Language and the Adolescent”
“Language-Based Learning Disabilities” **
“Language Disorders: Aphasia, Dysphasia, or Global Aphasia” **
“When Older Students Can’t Read” **
“NICHCY- Info About Speech and Language Disorders”
“Orton- Gillingham- Based and/or Multisensory Structured Language Approaches”
“Spelling”
“Why Reading is Not a Natural Process”

Motor: Fine and Gross

Summary

Resources

“Stages of Motor Development in Infants/Young Children” **
“Working with Children Who Have Motor Difficulties”
“Fine Motor Development: Tips for Parents” **
“Specific Learning Disability”
“Early Identification: Motor Skills Milestones” **
“Seven Ways to Help with Handwriting” **
“Factors Effecting Handwriting”
“Gross Motor Problems” **
“Dysgraphia”

Organization and Time Management

Summary

Resources

“Helping the LD Child with Organization”
“All Kinds of Minds: Getting Started on Assignments”**
“All Kinds of Minds: Managing Time and Effort”**
“All Kinds of Minds: Maintaining an Effective Work Place”**
“All Kinds of Minds: Taking the Appropriate Amount of Time”
“Lazy Kid or Executive Dysfunction?”
“Schwab Learning:Effective Study and Test-Taking Strategies for Kids with Learning Difficulties”
“Schwab Learning: Organization and Time Management Strategies”**
“Helping your Child with Organization and Study Skills”**
Metacognition/High Order Thinking/Problem Solving
Summary
Resources
- “All Kinds of Minds: Self-regulating Learning”**
- “Teaching Thinking Skills”**
- “Adolescents with Learning Disabilities: Unique Challenges and Reasons for Hope”**
- “Learning Disabilities: Metacognition, Motivation, and Affect”
- “Reducing the Gap by Accelerating Disadvantaged Students After the Third Grade Via a Thinking Development Approach”

Social, Emotional, Behavioral Issues
Summary
Resources
- “Teaching Social Skills to Kids Who Don’t Yet Have Them”**
- “Tips for Developing Healthy Self-Esteem In Your Child”**
- “Social Competence and the Child with Learning Difficulties”
- “Learning the Language of Relationships”
- “Dos and Don’ts for Fostering Social Competence”**
- “Social Skills: The Bottom Line for Adult LD Success”
- “Self-esteem Fact Sheet”
- “The Role of Emotions in Learning”
- “40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents (age 12-18)”**
- “Understanding Children’s Hearts and Minds: Emotional Functioning and Learning Disabilities”**
- “Effective Use of Time-Out”
- “Strategies for Teaching Students with Behavioral Disorders”
- “Bullying: Peer Abuse in Schools”**
- “School Phobia/School Avoidance/School Refusal: A Handout for Parents”**
- “Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports”
- “Anger Overload in Children: Diagnostic and Treatment Issues”
- “Students’ Perspectives/Addressing Underlining Motivation”
Visual-Spatial Processing

Definition

Visual-Spatial processing is the ability to “organize visual information into meaningful patterns” (Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario). It involves interpreting and analyzing visual stimuli to make sense of it. This is a separate problem than blindness or sharpness of vision. A student with a visual-processing disorder may have 20/20 vision.

Characteristics

Students with visual-spatial processing problems have difficulties with:

- Figure-ground discrimination – not being able to determine which picture is in the foreground, and ignoring everything else around the object they should be attending to.
- Realizing an object has properties that do not change even though how and where they see it may change.
- Knowing where an object is in space, and it’s special relationship to other objects that are around it.
- Visual closure- the inability to see the whole picture when it is not complete. Example: asking a child to complete a picture of a face with one eye or the nose missing. The student may not even recognize that it is a face to begin with.
- Form discrimination- the ability to tell a circle from a square and a b from a d.
- Visual discrimination- the ability to tell apart very similar items
- Visual memory- the ability to remember the meanings of symbols such as letters, numbers, math symbols, etc.
- Visual pursuit or tracking- the ability to track an object while sitting or standing still.
- Visual integration- the ability to see the object as a whole, and as parts that make up the whole. Some children will be able to only see the parts, while others may only be able to see the whole object.
- Oral or written directions
- Poor integration of sequential items such as days of the week and recipes.
- Remembering left and right.
- Motor functioning because of the connection of visual and motor. They are often called clumsy because they often bump into things, place objects at the edge of the table so that they fall off, and miss their seat when they go to sit down (LDOnline).
Accommodations/Modifications/Suggestions

Allow students to use a word processor to complete work so that their poor handwriting is less of a problem.

Books, worksheets, and other items in large print.

Give them a ruler that they can use to help guide their reading and help them to attend easier to a limited number of visual stimuli.

For writing, make the paper the student is using more structured. One way to do this is to make the lines darker.

(www.ldonline.org)

Provide verbal instructions along with written ones.

Teaching them to anticipate the kinds of situations they might find difficult.

Use paper that is divided into large sections to help with teaching math problems.

Clearly space words on the page.

Have the student practice with “find the item” challenges, such as “I Spy” and “Where’s Waldo”.

Color code written instruction.

Provide a “note buddy” to check that notes are clear and organized.

Help them learn how to navigate through the school and learn the layout.

Practice social skills that focus on judging appropriate physical proximity to others.

(www.ncld.org)

References


Auditory Processing

Definition

Auditory processing is the ability to analyze and make sense of information that is obtained through hearing. A difficulty in this area is not a physical problem with hearing, but more of a problem with understanding what has been heard.

Characteristics

Students with auditory processing problems often have difficulties with:

- **Phonemic Awareness**- Understanding that words are made up of individual sounds. Difficulties in this area can lead to problems with reading because the student might not understand basic principles of phonics. They may also have problems with rhyming.

- **Auditory Discrimination**- the ability to recognize differences in sounds

  Difficulties:
  - Learning to read
  - Hearing a difference between similarly sounding words such as seventy and seventeen
  - Following directions and remembering details
  - Seems to hear but not listen
  (www.nclld.org)

- **Auditory Memory**- the ability to store and recall information delivered verbally. This can interfere with a student’s abilities to remember the plot to a story read aloud, or remembering directions that were spoken.

  Difficulties:
  - Remembering people’s names
  - Memorizing telephone numbers or addresses
  - Following multi-step instructions
  (www.nclld.org)

- **Auditory Sequencing**- the ability to put something in order, such as lists and syllables. For instance, saying “ephalant” instead of “elephant”

  Difficulties:
  - Confusing multi-digit numbers
  - Confusing lists and other types of sequencing
  - Remembering the correct order of a series of instructions
  (www.nclld.org)

- **Auditory Blending**- the ability to make the individual sounds into words, such as c-a-t into cat.
- Auditory Figure-Ground Discrimination- ability to pick out important sounds from background noise

**Difficulties:**
- Staying focused on information being given such as verbal directions
  (www.ncld.org)

(National Center for Learning Disabilities)

**Other Difficulties include:**
- Hearing conversations on the telephone
- Learning a foreign language
- Organizational skills
- Lack of music appreciation
- Taking notes
- Directing, sustaining or dividing attention (see Attention section for accommodations)
  (Deaf-Blind Perspectives, Fall 1999)

**Accommodations/Modifications/Suggestions**

Do not rely solely on the area of weakness. If you are giving oral instruction, provide the student with some sort of visual so that s/he will have a better chance of understanding.
(National Center for Learning Disabilities)

Simplify oral instructions by giving the student one step at a time

Speak slower

Minimize distractions by placing student’s seat near the audio source and eliminate unnecessary background noises during tasks like the TV, radio or outdoor noises.

Plan activities to target the area of weakness such as rhyming games

Provide written material to go with lectures

Provide visual clues to go along with auditory clues such as teaching gestures or providing images to go along with remembering a verbal list of items.

**References**

National Center for Learning Disabilities- [www.ncld.org](http://www.ncld.org) - general information on LD


Memory

Definition

Memory refers to the brain’s ability to process, store, and retrieve stimuli for later use. According to Lerner (2006), there are three primary types of memory: the sensory register, short-term memory, and long-term memory.

- **Sensory register**: The first memory system that interprets and maintains memory long enough to be perceived (attended to).
- **Short term memory**: A temporary storage facility, it serves as working memory receiving conscious attention.
- **Long term memory**: A permanent memory storage that retains information for an extended period of time.

Long-term memory is further categorized into three types of memory.

- **Semantic Memory**: The ability to recall facts and generalized information. It is memory that is organized into connected groups and categories.
- **Episodic Memory**: Includes memories of important personal events like birthdays and weddings.
- **Procedural Memory**: It is related to completing sequential sets of tasks like riding a bike or making a sandwich.

(Council for Exceptional Children)

- Difficulty with language oriented tasks including recalling sight words, spelling, names, and general receptive and expressive language
- Difficulty remembering multi-step directions or sequences of instructions
- Difficulty making associations with oral and visual information
- Difficulty coding and encoding of information
- Difficulty actively processing short-term and active working memories
- Difficulty remembering what is seen, heard, or shown
- Difficulty remembering sequences in directions or instructions
- Difficulty remembering the names of classmates, neighbors, and teachers
- Difficulty remembering addresses and phone numbers
- Difficulty learning numbers, alphabet, days of the week
- Difficulty remembering the pronunciations of frequently used words
- Difficulty with spelling and handwriting
- Difficulty recalling or memorizing facts
- Difficulty recalling lists of items
- Often appears forgetful and may repeat the same errors
- Lacking automaticity

(Lerner, 2006)

Accommodation/Modifications/Suggestions

- Shorten the task by breaking a longer task into smaller parts
- Shorten homework assignments by giving fewer problems
- Set up short, well-paced, frequent practice sessions
- Use memory devices like mnemonics: ROYGBV (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet)
- Add novelty to the task; make learning more interesting
- Vary the learning groups: work with partners, small groups, or in interest centers
- Alternate highly interesting tasks with less interesting tasks (Lerner, 2006)
- Provide an audio tape
- Provide a copy of the notes, outlines, or study guides
- Present instructions orally and in writing
- Allow frequent breaks
- Provide preferential seating
- Allow extended time for tests
- Provide a space with minimal distractions
- Administer the test in an alternative room
- Administer a test in a small group setting
- Provide on task-focusing prompts
- Administer a test in several timed sessions over several days (LD Online)
- Use highlighters and markers to identify key concepts
- Use graphics and visual organizers like webs and character description maps
- Use pre-reading strategies: introduce key terms and new vocabulary
- Teach students to preview chapter headings, sub-headings, visuals, vocabulary, summary, conclusion, and end of chapter questions before reading the text.
- Have students stop and summarize what they just read out loud, in writing, with a peer; teach students paraphrasing and summarizing (Learningbase)
- Illicit prior knowledge by relating concepts to what students already know
- Use graphic/visual organizers to facilitate classification of meaningful content
- Use memory devices like mnemonics and acrostics (Order of Long Division: Mother, Dad, Sister, Brother= Multiply, Divide, Subtract, Bring it down)
- Use word sorts to categorize information: Living Vs. Nonliving or Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives
- Use repetition and rehearsal of information
- Use agenda, lists, or other types of organizers as visual reminders
- Every pupil response techniques: each student responds with finger signals, etc (Council for Exceptional Children)

References


Attention

Definition

According to Dr. Mel Levine, attention is a complex measure of the brain’s ability to control and regulate three interrelated systems: mental energy, processing, and production.

- Mental energy refers the brain’s ability to sustain the mental energy long enough to complete an activity. Being alert is a key component of mental energy.
- Processing refers to the brain’s ability to attend to important incoming information for the right amount of time. It also refers to the brain’s ability to connect new information to existing knowledge.
- Production refers to the ability to plan, organize, monitor, and predict experiences and events. It also relates to the ability to evaluate situations and experiences.

Lerner and Kline (2006) define inattention as the inability to concentrate on a task. Students who have difficulty with attention may face many challenges in the classroom and at home. These individuals may also have difficulty with relationships.

Characteristics

- Difficulty starting or finishing a task
- Difficulty controlling behavior
- Difficulty attending to the right stimuli
- Difficulty maintaining mental energy
- Difficulty self-monitoring
- Difficulty self-evaluating
- Difficulty falling asleep (or staying asleep) at night

(Levine)

- Fails to give close attention to details, makes careless mistakes
- Does not seem to listen
- Avoids or dislikes tasks that require sustained effort
- Is easily distracted by extraneous stimuli
- Is often forgetful in daily activities
- Attends to the wrong stimuli

(Lerner and Kline, 2006)

- Complains of feeling tired or bored; may seem bored or lazy
- Does not seem well-rested and fully awake during the day
- Has inconsistent work patterns which negatively impact the quantity and quality of his/her output
- Rarely follows instructions carefully or completely

(All Kinds of Minds)

Accommodations/Modifications/Suggestions

Limit Distractions:

- Place student near the front of the room.
- Seat student near the teacher.
- Place student away from noisy or distracting locations, such as windows and hallways.
o Place the student away from students with behavior problems.
o Place student with well-behaved students.
o Keep the routines simple and direct.

Increase Attention:
o Alert the student by using key words, such as, “This is important.” (cues)
o Use visual aids; write out key points.
o Increase the novelty of the task (i.e., work with partners, interest centers, groups).
o Shorten the homework assignments.
o Use distributed practice (i.e., many shorter sessions)

(Lerner and Kline, 2006)
o Adjust the rate, volume, or complexity of information
o Modify schedules so the tasks that require more mental effort are planned for period when student has more mental energy.
o Provide frequent breaks with a purpose such as collecting papers or erasing the board.
o Periodically shift formats, for example mixing lectures with reading, hands-on activities, and discussions
o Provide time for students to pursue high interest activities
o Encourage physical activity during classroom instruction like doodling, squeezing a ball, rolling a ball of clay
o Keep a diary or log to track their improvement
o Monitor performance inconsistencies. Keep track of the factors that seem to affect a child’s mental energy.
o Provide guidance on how to use the attentional highs and lows throughout the days.
o Draw focus to important information
o Use technology
o Connect new information to prior knowledge
o Encourage eye contact and repetition
o Review notes after instruction
o Teach your children to prioritize
o Cue children to upcoming transitions
o Provide guidelines for self-monitoring
o Encourage self-grading
o Set goals and record progress
o Provide consistent feedback
o Have the child discuss the lesson or assignment

(All Kinds of Minds)

References


**Language**

**Definition**

According to Lerner and Kline (2006), language is a communication process involving two or more individuals. Communication includes both receptive and expressive messages. Receptive messages include language that is heard or read (what is understood). Expressive messages include language that is spoken or written (what is said). Difficulty with language acquisition may occur in the area of listening, reading, speaking, and/or writing. Delays or disorders in language may range from sound substitutions to virtually no sound recognition at all. According to Lerner and Kline, the acquisition of receptive language is necessary before the acquisition of expressive language.

**Areas of Language Difficulty**

Phonology: This area refers to the sounds in a language. Phonics is the ability to notice, think about, and work with the smallest units of sounds. (decoding)

Morphology: This area refers to the ability to recognize and use the smallest units of meaning in any word. (i.e., prefix, root word, base word, suffix)

Syntax: This area refers to the ability to recognize and use word order correctly.

Semantics: This area refers to the vocabulary development.

Pragmatics: This area refers to an individual’s ability to understand the rules for engaging in a conversation: turn-taking, staying on topic, and asking pertinent questions.

(Lerner and Kline, 2006)

**Characteristics**

- Difficulty remembering, producing, or articulating sounds or sound elements
- Difficulty producing ideas; can not quickly and automatically name objects; may have difficulty producing sounds fast enough
- Difficulty translating ideas into written or spoken language
- Difficulty recalling the sequences of previous speaking or writing
- Difficulty recalling or understanding the letter symbols that are written
- Difficulty speaking anything or having very limited language development
- Difficulty finding words or deficiency in remembering and expressing words (word substitutions)
- May remember sounds of words, but can not produce sounds
- Discrepancies in oral and reading vocabulary
- Lack of background knowledge to comprehend complex text
- Difficulty comprehending complex reading passages
- Difficulty monitoring thinking and questioning processes
- Difficulty brainstorming, developing, and organizing written work
- Difficulty applying phonics and structural analysis to spell words
- Difficulty with motor skills and the physical writing of words
- Difficulty with grammar and sentence structure
- Difficulty recognizing the subtle differences in word meanings
- Difficulty with social skills

(Lerner and Kline, 2006)
Accommodations/Modifications/Suggestions

Accommodations/Modifications
- Increase the amount of time for repetition, review, and wait time
- Provide a copy of notes, outlines, and study guides
- Provide alternative assessments (dramatic interpretations, visual reproductions, video recordings, power point presentations)
- Allow extended time for completing work (reading, writing, spelling)
- Introduce work more slowly using multisensory methods
- Use computer programs that aid in literacy development (text-to-speech programs, word processing, audio libraries, voice recognition programs, presentation software)
- Avoid asking the child to listen and write at the same time
- Provide an audio tape
- Provide in large print
- Reduce the number of items per page or line
- Provide a designated reader
- Present instructions orally
- Allow sufficient time for verbal responses
- Provide frequent breaks
- Allow use of tape recorder to capture responses
- Permit answers to be recorded directly into test booklet or on a tape recorder
- Provide a space with minimal distractions
- Administer test in a small group setting
- Provide use of pencil grips

(The International Dyslexia Association)

Suggestions:
- Sound substitutions, rhyming and riddle games, naming objects and pictures, word play games, use categories, detective games
- Repeated readings, thinking out loud, role play, discussion groups
- Teach students explicitly to convert letters to sounds (or phonemes) and then blend the sounds to form recognizable words.
- Teach students to analyze letter-sound relationships in previously learned words to avoid pronouncing sounds in isolation.
- Teach students to recognize that a rhyme segment of an unfamiliar sound is identical to that of a familiar word.
- Embed phonics instruction in text reading.
- Help students recognize sight words
- Find opportunities for students to reread passages aloud
- Use predictable books with read along methods
- Teach content vocabulary before reading a chapter
- Find words related to students interests
- Use word webs to study new vocabulary
- Provide students with background knowledge
- Use a K-W-L or other graphic organizer
- Teach pre-reading strategies
- Allow invented spelling in the younger grades
- Use graphic organizers to promote organization of ideas
- Limit the number of spelling words to be learned at one time

(Lerner and Kline, 2006)

References


Motor Skills:  
Fine and Gross

Definitions

Fine Motor Skills- those skills involving small muscle coordination such as eye movement and skills involving the fingers. This includes writing, buttoning buttons, tying shoes, using utensils or other tools.

Gross Motor Skills- those skills involving large muscle movement and coordination. This includes walking, running and throwing a ball.

Dyspraxia- “difficulty planning and completing intended fine motor tasks.” (National Center for Learning Disabilities). This can overlap with learning disabilities, dyslexia, AD/HD and more. Dyspraxia affects about 2% of the total population with 70% of those affected being male. Other common difficulties include low self-esteem, depression, emotional and behavioral difficulties.

Characteristics

Young Children

- Difficulty with eye movements - they may move the whole head instead of just the eyes
- Difficulty using eating utensils and holding a cup while drinking
- Difficulty walking, hopping, skipping, throwing and catching a ball, riding a bike
- Delay in using spoken language and speech that is difficult to understand
- Bumping into objects
- Late establishment of laterality (right- or left-handedness)
- Difficulty doing fine-motor activities such as tying shoelaces or buttoning clothing
- Difficulty with handwriting
- Sensitivity to touch - may find clothing uncomfortable; and may find hair-brushing and cutting, teeth-brushing and nail-cutting unpleasant
- Poor sense of direction

School Aged Children

- Coordination difficulties can be particularly problematic in physical education classes and other sports activities.
- Speech difficulties can interfere with casual conversation, which can result in social awkwardness and an unwillingness to risk engaging in conversation.
- Writing difficulties such as poor letter formation, pencil grip and slow writing can make school work frustrating.

Teenagers and Adults

Difficulties with:

- Driving
- Completing household chores
One of the most common characteristics of poor motor skills with students with learning disabilities is **poor handwriting**.

### Accommodations/Modifications/Suggestions

Offer patience and encouragement when child is faced with a challenging task.

Direct the student by using step-by-step processes that guide them to more complex tasks.

Encourage easier physical activities where they can see their own successes.

Encourage friendships to avoid humiliation and ridicule.

Provide pencil grips and other support items (ie. Word processor, notes provided by teacher, various assistive technology devices to decrease need to hand write assignments) to help with handwriting difficulties.

Engage student in various gross and fine motor extra activities, such as playing games outside, or playing with marbles inside.

Work with the gym teacher to come up with plans for his/her time in gym to make it the most productive for the student possible.

Let the child play with clay or dough to strengthen the major fine motor muscles

Encourage the child to play with puzzles, Legos, miniature cars, small blocks, etc.

### References

National Center for Learning Disabilities [www.ncld.org](http://www.ncld.org)


All Kinds of Minds [www.allkindsofminds.org](http://www.allkindsofminds.org)
Organization/Time Management

Definition

Organization and time-management are essential academic skills. These skills include learning how to plan ahead, gather appropriate materials, prioritize information, and self-monitor steps to task completion (Lerner and Kline, 2006). Keeping organized and using time wisely includes developing the ability to set goals, manage time, and observe patterns and trends in behavior to determine cause and effect. Students with learning difficulties need explicit, direct instruction in study strategies that will enable them to reach their learning potential (SchwabLearning.org).

Characteristics

- Difficulty completing assignments
- Difficulty planning ahead
- Difficulty gathering appropriate materials for school tasks
- Difficulty prioritizing steps to complete an assignment
- Difficulty keeping track of assigned work
- Procrastination, or difficulty getting started on assignments

(Lerner and Kline, 2006)

- Difficulty following routines
- Difficulty knowing how to get started on homework or projects
- Difficulty meeting deadlines
- Difficulty organizing a work space to study and learn
- Rushes through work, or takes an excessive amount of time completing work
- Gives up easily, or shuts down before work is completed
- Messy desk, room, locker

(All Kinds of Minds)

- Poor study habits; may not know what to study
- May not know how to study; no systematic study method
- May not pick up on teacher’s signals about important information
- May not know how to pick out important information from the text
- May not know how to organize binders, folders, lockers, and study materials
- Difficulty self-monitoring: checking, planning, and revising as necessary

(SchwabLearning.org)

Accommodations/Modifications/Suggestions

- Help students to learn to manage time, space, materials, workload, with checklists and organizational materials (LD Online) **
- Provide clear routines for placing objects in designated places (books, assignments, outdoor clothes)
- Provide students with an explicit list of materials needed to complete the task
- Provide a schedule so students know exactly what to do and how much time is needed for the assignment to be completed
- Make sure all students have homework assignments before leaving school
- Write assignments on the board and have students copy it into an agenda
- Provide students with a way to organize their materials in a notebook
- Use a different colored notebook for each subject
- Make a list that will help students organize their tasks; have students check off the task when they complete them  
  (Lerner and Kline, 2006)
- Allow students to have a set of extra textbooks at home
- Provide checklists that include how to follow daily procedures
- Provide student organizers: graphic organizers, outlines
- Teach students how to highlight important information
- Break down all items that are to be included in each assignment and provide goals to be reached by specific time periods
- Provide verbal prompts and cues to ensure the student is prepared  
  (About: Special Education)
- Teach students how to preview chapters
- Teach students how to verbalize what a completed assignment will look like or what they need to do to complete the assignment
- Provide a “jump-start” to help them begin assignments: story starter
- Teach students to analyze a task assignment in advance and determine the amount of time necessary to complete it (budget time)
- Teach students how to balance the amount of effort with pacing (eliminate incentives for frenzied pacing or rushing through work)
- Teach students how to read textbooks efficiently
- Teach students how to break activities or assignments into steps
- Teach students how to establish a space that is dedicated to studying or doing homework  
  (All Kinds of Minds)
- Teach students active listening strategies “This is important” or “Write this down”
- Teach students active reading strategies; convert the chapter headings to questions, look for bold face words, study pictures and tables, read questions at the end of the chapter, write an outline, make predictions/answer them
- Teach test taking strategies: eliminate choices, ignore irrelevant details
- Assist with organizing binders, folders, and lockers
- Help to create a personalized checklist of materials
- Help to review class notes, homework, textbooks nightly
- Teach goal-setting and self-pacing, both long-term and short-term
- Teach students how to analyze and answer test questions: multiple choice, short answer, essay, matching
- Teach time management: weekly planning.
- Provide morning routines: prepare clothes and book bag the night before, make a checklist of morning responsibilities, give verbal reminders
- Provide school organization: 3-ring binder, colored pocket folders, agenda
- Start small with new routines and agree on new strategies to get organized  
  (ScwabLearning.org)

**References**


**Metacognition/Higher Order Thinking/Problem Solving**

**Definition**

Metacognition is the process of planning, assessing, and monitoring one’s own thinking (Cotton, 1991). It involves being aware of one’s own mental processes, one’s knowledge about tasks, and the interaction between one’s own set of cognitive processes in relation to a task (All Kinds of Minds). Lerner and Kline (2006) refer to metacognition as the ability to facilitate learning by taking control and directing one’s own thinking processes. In order to be successful in the general education curriculum, Lerner and Kline say that “…students with learning disabilities must learn the complex concepts and fundamental problem-solving skills of the content areas in the general education curriculum.”

**Characteristics**

- Difficulty monitoring their own learning, comprehension of academic material
- Difficulty interacting with the text and/or merging information with what they already know
- Difficulty self-monitoring or self-evaluating
- May not take action to go back and try to fix academic information that is not understood
- Lacks self-questioning
- Passive learning; waits for teacher direction
- Lacking skills to direct their own learning
  
  (Lerner and Kline, 2006)
- Difficulty distinguishing between ‘guessing’ and using strategies
- Difficulty with ideas, generalizations, or abstractions
- Reluctant to verbalize answers
- Reluctant to give reasons or justifications for a verbal response
- Easily overwhelmed with assignments
  
  (Porgrow)
- Lack skills and strategies to process content area information
- Difficulty with self-regulation: understanding their own progress, rewarding their successes
- Difficulty knowing when and how to use memory techniques
- Difficulty knowing how and when to set personal or academic goals
- Underestimates their own abilities to complete a task
- Relies on one way to present a concept or rule
- Difficulty generalizing rules from one situation to the next
  
  (All Kinds of Minds)

**Accommodations/Modifications/Suggestions**

- Teach students how to classify activities; determine the type, status, or mode of the learning activity
- Teach students evaluation; how to determine the quality of one’s work
- Teach students active reading strategies; how to recognize the loss of comprehension when it occurs
- Teach students “fix-up” strategies
Teach higher level self-questioning strategies: What do you think? Why? How do you know? Can you prove this?

(Lerner and Kline, 2006)

- Generate a creative and intensive conversation environment in order to process ideas and problem solve.
- Reduce teacher talk and direction while increasing student talk and interaction
- Lead students to make inferences through careful and systematic questioning
- Teach students how to synthesize information
- Provide multiple exposure to problem solving activities with feedback and support that leads to higher level thinking
- Provide a shared setting for the discussion of ideas focused on problem-solving and interpreting events.

(Pogrow)

- Teach self-regulation: students evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses on assignments
- Teach self-help: students learn how to look for and use help effectively
- Teach students how to recognize when to use different strategies and approaches based on the demands of the specific task.
- Teach students how to use mid-task self-questioning as they study and do homework: What is working? What should I change?

(All Kinds of Minds)

- Teach sequencing and segmentation
- Use explicit modeling and provide immediate correction and feedback
- Use frequent question-answer interactions coupled with frequent physical responses (pointing, raising hand, writing, repeating)
- Use reflective, open-ended questions

(LD Online)

- Teach paraphrasing and outlining
- Use cognitive maps and advanced organizers
- Provide opportunities for decision making, observation, exploration, and generating hypotheses
- Provide discrepancies and then practice information-gathering skills to resolve the discrepancy
- Lengthen the wait time when asking higher order questions
- Redirect students thinking by asking pertinent questions; avoid giving the answer
- Allow students to use computer aided software designed to improve students thinking and problem solving skills (verbal analogies and logical reasoning)
- Provide sufficient time to develop thinking skills
- Provide a positive, supportive classroom climate that allows for risk-taking

(Cotton)

References


Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Issues

Definition

Many students with disabilities have social, emotional, and behavioral issues. Many lack an understanding of the social construct, and appropriate behavior in social situations. Emotional issues can stem from frustration with the disability, causing a lot of students with learning disabilities to become anxious, or depressed. Behavioral issues can also arise from the frustration these students face each day. All of these areas can be manifested to different degrees. Some students will learn coping skills for the frustration, while others will not.

Characteristics

Social Difficulties:

- Listening during a conversation
- Talking during a conversation
- Taking turns during a conversation
- Noticing and interpreting facial expressions and body language
- Planning and controlling what they do
- Sharing toys/materials
- Approaching others in socially acceptable ways (ie. appropriate distance between people while talking)
- How to make and keep friends  
  (LDonline)
- Adapting to new situations/locations
- Complex social interactions (ie. Persuasion, negotiation, resisting peer pressure, giving/accepting criticism)
- Toleration of frustration and failure  
  (Lavoie)
- Rules for touching another person
- Recognizing and interpreting different tones of voice  
  (Seigel)
- Untidiness
- Disorganization  
  (Hayes)

Emotional Difficulties:

- Low academic self-concept (usually just in specific subjects, not globally)
- Anxiety (more of a feeling that events are beyond their control)
- Depression (due to stress and frustration caused by their learning disability)
- “Escaping” from school (revert into a dreamland that takes them away from their academic frustrations)
- (Gorman)
- Low Self-esteem
  - Is unsure how to understand his or her personal strengths and weaknesses
  - Has trouble knowing where he or she fits into a social group
  - Has limited success getting noticed in positive ways within a peer group
- Is perceived as less popular, and is there for more frequently rejected or ignored by peers
- Believes that outcomes are controlled by external forces (luck, chance, fate, etc) rather than a result of his or her own efforts
- Assumes “learned helplessness” (They’ve been taken along by teachers for so long, that they stopping trying on their own in certain situations)

**Behavioral Difficulties:**

- Initiation of aggressive behavior
- Reacting aggressively towards others
- Bullying
- Threatening
- Being physically abusive to others
- Deliberate destruction to other’s property
- Showing little empathy and concern for feelings, wishes and the well-being of others
- Apathy
- Lack of guilt or remorse
- Blaming others for their deeds
  
  (Strategies for teaching students with behavioral disorders)

- Truancy

**Accommodations/Modifications/Suggestions**

**Social Difficulties:**

Design an unobtrusive “signal system” to help give signs to students as to how to react in a social skill area that they have difficulty with. For example, if your student tends to get stuck on one topic, and is not concerned if the listener is interested or not, you can develop a signal (like touching your nose), that alerts the student that he or she is doing that again.

Establish reward systems to reinforce positive social behavior.

Use group work often in your lessons to help the student feel less rejected by his or her peers because they are being forced to work as a group.

Continually reinforce social information.

Make transitions easier for the child. (Wind-down activities, a visit to a new location the day before a new activity is taking place there, etc)

Work on one social skill behavior at a time.

Assist the student in expressing his or her emotions during a highly stressful time.

Do not force the student to participate in large groups if they are anxious or unwilling.

Do not place the student in highly competitive situations that could breed anxiety.

(Lavoie)
Emotional Difficulties:

Be empathetic and see the world through the student’s eyes

Communicate with respect (answer their question, do not interrupt them, do not put them down)

Give them undivided attention (children love it when you spend one-on-one time with them)

Give the students a chance to contribute and participate.

Treat mistakes as learning experiences

Emphasize their strengths

*(Lavoie)*

Be aware of their emotional state as a teacher (check for problems in their stories or in their behaviors)

Behavioral Difficulties:

Expose students with difficulties to those students who demonstrate appropriate behavior.

Use a direct instruction approach to teach desired behaviors and to eliminate unwanted ones.

Employ a time-out strategy to allow a place for the student to calm down if enraged.

Enforce classroom rules consistently.

Make sure that the punishment fits the crime.

Employ a positive reinforcement system that is stronger than your punishment system.

Provide encouragement to keep on good behavior.

Praise immediately at all good behavior and performance.

Have the student be in charge of an activity. This provides a sense of self-worth and shows them that they are someone who is needed.

Help the child set goals and then help him or her keep track of their achievements.

Have a strong classroom management plan in place.

*(Strategies for teaching students with behavioral disorders)*
References


References

Visual-Spatial Processing


Auditory Processing


Memory


Attention


**Language**

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Motor Skills: Fine and Gross


Organization


**Metacognition**


**Social, Emotional, Behavioral Issues**


