

## **DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES**

### **History/Social Studies**

#### **Students Who Have Difficulty Related to Organization, Memory, Comprehension, Attention, Reading and Writing**

**Instructional strategies for all learners, including those with cognitive and physical disabilities who have difficulties with:**

- Inattention/distractibility
- Organization
- Following directions
- Memory/recall
- Reading decoding/access
- Understanding/comprehension
- Mechanics of writing/drawing

#### **Problems with Inattention/Distractibility:**

Teach students how to:

- Use class and individual schedules.
- Check off tasks as they are completed.
- Set goals for how much of a task they can complete in an allotted time.
- Verbalize while working.
- Use self-monitoring techniques. such as SLANT (sit up, lean forward, ask questions, nod your head, track the teacher) to help them remember the needed behaviors.

Before, during, and following instruction:

- Give students advance notice (a physical cue, special word) that you will be saying or showing key information.
- Break assignments down into shorter segments.
- Alternate short work periods with teacher-controlled breaks - have this student be your official pencil sharpener, note-runner.
- Vary presentation of a task.
- Use physical, visual, or auditory signals/cues to redirect student to stay on task.
- Provide copies of work that is on the blackboard or textbook.
- Use color cues such as neon-colored highlighters to direct student attention to important information, key words, and directions.
- Use games to reinforce concepts.
- Allow additional time to complete assignments/tests.
- Limit the number of problems that students copy and solve problems. Highlight the number of problems you want the student to complete.
- Use a digital, silent kitchen timer to help a student who is slow to complete work.

- Assign a peer tutor. Surround student with appropriate role models.
- Introduce only one concept at a time and provide scaffolding within your instruction.
- Reteach concepts frequently by varying the instructional approach.

Provide a physical environment that is:

- Free from distractions and clutter. Have the student remove all but the material with which he is working from his desk.
- Seat student in area free from distractions such as open doors or air conditioners.
- Use study carrel.
- Use proximity seating.

Provide work materials that are:

- Try not to copy on both sides of the paper.
- Use frequent indentations, double spacing, and boxes around key words to provide visual clues.
- Block extraneous information on pages to limit distractions.
- Present material on colored paper.
- Provide "windows" cut from paper or cardboard to expose only one segment at a time.

## **Problems with Organization**

Teach students routines and procedures:

- Goal-setting skills.
- Note-taking skill to identify and highlight key information.
- Decision making/prioritizing skills.
- Time-management skills to help them estimate how long it will take to complete assignments.

Within the environment:

- Provide a time weekly for organizing desk and notebooks.
- Use assignment books and calendars.
- Have students "check" unneeded books and notebooks at the door. They can pick up their items as they exit class.
- Attach things that often get misplaced (pencils) to students' desks with Velcro.
- Check that homework assignments are written down daily.
- Check homework daily.
- Send daily/weekly progress reports home.
- Color code notebooks and school book covers.

Before, during, and following instruction:

- Provide page numbers where answers can be found.
- Provide boxes for students to write in answers.
- Provide advanced organizers or outlines of the content.
- Use slot outlines.
- Color-coding to identify vocabulary, main ideas, and details.
- Use a variety of teacher demonstrations & modeling, guided, independent practice, and frequent review opportunities.
- Provide a copy of assignments for home.
- Use checklists and mnemonics to help students remember the expected behaviors.
- Avoid cluttered/crowded worksheets.
- Allow student to use a computer to complete assignments.
- Assign a peer buddy to assist with organization.
- Create backwards timelines for larger projects.
- Introduce only one concept at a time and provide scaffolding within your instruction.
- Reteach concepts frequently by varying the instructional approach.

## **Problems with Following Directions**

Teach the student to:

- Verbalize written directions. By doing this, you will detect early errors or misunderstandings.
- To repeat or re-explain directions.
- Look at the person who is speaking.
- Write down each step of a problem and check off as they complete it.

Before, during and following instruction:

- Face the child and speak slowly and distinctly.
- Check frequently that the student is following directions.
- Model or demonstrate each step. Have students check off each step as it is completed.
- Present the key points of a lecture at the beginning of your talk, then summarize.
- Divide longer orally assigned tasks into shorter ones.
- Very gradually help the student learn to take orally presented notes.
- Provide example of completed item.
- Give the student extra time to respond to oral questions.
- Provide only one portion of the assignment at a time.
- Provide an outline of your lectures; use graphs and tables to reinforce concepts.
- Provide practice in noticing, describing, and comparing details.
- Provide visual displays such as - flowcharts, webs, pictorials, pre-reading questions, and keyword note-taking organizers frequently to help students listen and follow directions.
- Use a buddy system to clarify directions.
- Use cooperative learning activities.
- Use mnemonic aids to signal steps.
- Introduce only one concept at a time and provide scaffolding within your instruction.
- Reteach concepts frequently by varying the instructional approach.

## **Problems with Memory/Recall**

Before, during and following instruction:

- Provide the student with a written out schedule of classroom routines and timelines.
- Chunk pieces of information together. (For example have students learn the number facts in sets of three).
- Provide a balance of visual and auditory stimuli in your instruction.
- Provide multiple opportunities for practice in different formats.
  - Use flashcards for individual or group review.
  - Use songs, rhymes, or rhythms to help remember information.
  - Use acronyms to remember words or phrases.

- Use mnemonics like "Please excuse my dear Aunt Sally" (order of operations) to remember sequenced steps.
  - Play memory games.
- Use semantic maps and diagrams to help students remember the connections between concepts.
- Introduce only one concept at a time and provide scaffolding within your instruction.
- Reteach concepts frequently by varying the instructional approach.

## Problems with Reading/Decoding Access

### Before reading:

- Teach students to read strategically – e.g., review title/chapter headings; locate main ideas, etc.
- Reduce amount to be read
- Adjust allotted time for assignment
- Present several versions of the same story
- Locate high interest/low reading level materials at library, etc. – to facilitate fluency in reading
- Enhance/adapt/modify books:
  - Enlarge print materials – on photocopier
  - Rewrite text in simplified form and paste over original text associated with graphic – to allow student to read independently
  - Use objects and actions to enhance meaning of text, specific vocabulary – toys or other objects and role playing can be used to provide cues to meanings of words.
  - Cut apart and remake books, which have graphics but no text – for student to “tell” the story from the pictures.
  - Make props – cut graphics out of one copy of a book, put Velcro on back of graphics/pictures and Velcro on the pages of a second copy of the book, the book becomes interactive, e.g., students can match characters/objects to the picture in the book, choose the correct picture when asked by teacher, do interactive worksheets, etc.
  - Use clear drawings/photos – which correspond to text or relate to content
  - Cut & paste Picture Communication Symbols – place over text so student “reads” via the symbols or place under text to facilitate reading of text
- Extensive reading preview – vocabulary development, story line, background information, etc.
- Label items/spaces around the classroom
- Provide adaptive surfaces for reading materials (slant boards, easels, non-slip padding)
- Have needed books on CD-ROM, videotaped, or audio taped if possible
- Have computer generated text available if possible

### During reading:

- Enhance meaning of reading with gestures, exaggerated facial expressions and intonation during group reading
- Use choral reading or singing of words/text – music, rhythm and rhyme are memory enhancers
- Peer tutor – or adult, to support or read to student
- Discuss what is depicted in the drawings – how it relates to the text; location of specific vocabulary within the illustrations
- Highlight target vocabulary words from a larger field of text – removable transparent highlighter tape, highlighters, etc.

- Use a magnifying glass, word windows, mini-flashlight – for visual tracking of words/letters
- Segment components of stories/words – so they can be physically manipulated (stickies, index cards, sentence strips, etc.), e.g., sequencing parts of stories, manipulating word families, etc.
- Colored acetate filters laid over text – can make a tremendous difference for students who have Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome (SSS – a sensitivity to light which affects depth perception); especially helpful for students with Autism/Asperger’s Syndrome, e.g. Transparency Pockets (office supply stores) or filter kit from See It Right which includes multi-colored sets & instructions (See It Right); special colored glasses – may be necessary for some students with severe SSS
- Color code word targets to match answer location – e.g., put yellow arrow sticky in section of text where answer will be found
- Colored pens for note-taking – to differentiate vocabulary, types of information, sections etc. or to highlight after the fact
- Graphic Organizers – to preview/review story narrative, vocabulary, characterization, etc.; e.g., concept maps, Venn Diagrams, story boards, sequence grids, & webs (webs are effective for brainstorming ideas individually or in groups by choosing a topic placed in a circle in middle of page; free associate quickly; list all responses without judgment; related ideas branch out from the topic and can later be grouped into clusters; pictures/symbols can also be used as templates, e.g., spider, tree, flower, etc.)
- Have books on tape or in digital format for students to hear/review story content or to read along with text.
- Video taped versions of stories – to motivate, make story come alive, and to preview/review story content
- Hand-held talking dictionary/speller – e.g., Franklin Homework Wiz & Speaking Homework Wiz, dictionary/thesaurus; spell check; create personal word list; words appear on small screen; target words, definitions, & synonyms can be pronounced aloud if speaking version; offers practice in cursive and print handwriting; arithmetic tutor & calculator

#### Following reading:

- Songs – teach students original or other songs, then use overhead device with song lyrics on the overlays; students read as a group; students take turns tracking the words with a pointer
- Word walls – to reinforce frequently used words and topic/story vocabulary; create on blackboard, whiteboard, or cards posted on walls; words may be grouped together by category and color-coded  
Word dice made from milk cartons – for sight word development, vocabulary, synonyms, etc.
- Word searches & crossword puzzles
- Letter tiles, Scrabble tiles, magnetic letters – to form words/sentences
- Magnetic word sets – to create sentences, poems, etc.

- Modify worksheets – simplify format; reduce amount of text; reword in simplified language
- Reteach concepts frequently by varying the instructional approach.



## **Problems with Understanding/Comprehension**

Teach the students:

- The meaning of key vocabulary words.
- How the textbook is organized and the format for each page or section.
- How to verbalize as they complete or work through problems.

Before, during, and following instruction:

- Teach in small chunks so students get lots of practice with one step at a time.
- Model and teach metacognitive strategies (Model and verbalize procedure, guide students through verbalization of problem computation, monitor student verbalizations as they complete procedure, periodic reviews provided).
- Provide an example of a correctly solved problem at the beginning of the lesson.
- Provide visual cues to help students who may have difficulty visualizing shapes, dimensions and sizes.
- Provide learning aids such as calculators to help students focus on conceptual understanding.
- Provide many practice opportunities and include problem solving, reasoning, and real-life application to help with transfer of information.
- Use cooperative learning techniques such as "jigsaw" or "think-pair-share".
- Use taped textbooks.
- Introduce only one concept at a time and provide scaffolding within your instruction.
- Reteach concepts frequently by varying the instructional approach.

## Problems with the Mechanics of Writing/Drawing

Make accommodations for writing through the following strategies:

- Allow more time to complete assignments
- Reduce quantity of final product
- Explore different forms of writing – for example, don't restrict writing to cursive

Consider using an adapted writing surface:

- Enhanced line paper – commercial raised line paper or adapt your own paper by printing lines in a color, then laminating the paper and gluing over the lines to enhance.
- Variety of tactile writing surfaces – e.g. sandpaper, screen, etc.
- White board or small chalkboard

Consider using adapted writing tools:

- Pencil grips stabilize a student's grip on pen or pencil. These can be commercially made or make your own with a piece of foam or non-slip material.
- Use adapted pens/pencils such as triangular pencils, Squiggle Wiggle Writer, triangular shaped, vibrating or the *Nightwriter* lighted pen.
- Experiment with a variety of writing implements by trying markers, paints, fat crayons/pencils, grease pencils.
- Use rubber stamps & stamp pad – for letters/numbers/name.
- Use magnetic alphabet letter sets – sticks to any magnetic surface, e.g., cookie sheet
- Scrabble or other letter tiles – for writing, spelling
- Highlighter markers or tapes, colored dots, correction tape – to “take notes” in text by highlighting important points or to indicate margins or start/end points on the writing paper (office supply)
- Use computers with touch screens or switch access if available

For positioning try:

- Shifting the position of paper – the standard positioning may not work for all students
- Using a clipboard to hold paper or tape paper to desk – to hold writing paper steady
- Using a three ring binder or slant board.
- Use adaptive equipment for posture: booster seats, arm rests, phone books, etc.

For longer assignments, taking notes, or completing worksheets try using:

- Prewritten words/phrases on labels/cards/paper
- A peer/aide takes notes for student – use carbon paper, NCR paper
- “fill-in-the-blank” answer format.
- Modified worksheets by making templates for student to complete
- Use multiple choice answer format

- Word walls – to reinforce frequently used words and topic/story vocabulary; create on blackboard, whiteboard, or cards posted on walls; words may be grouped together by category and color-coded
- Correction/cover-up tapes – to correct mistakes in writing if erasing is a problem (office supply)

## **Links and Resources**

History and Social Science Resources and the Virginia Department of Education  
<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/sol.html#history>

Teaching and Learning Virginia k-3 Virginia History and Social Science Standards of Learning - <http://k3hss.pwnet.org/>

The Story of Virginia - An American Experience - Virginia -  
[www.vahistorical.org/storyofvirginia.htm](http://www.vahistorical.org/storyofvirginia.htm)

KidsCommonwealth: All About Virginia  
[www.kidscommonwealth.virginia.gov/AllAboutVA/VaHistory.asp](http://www.kidscommonwealth.virginia.gov/AllAboutVA/VaHistory.asp)

Connections + - <http://www.mcrel.org/resources/plus/index.asp>

The US50 - A guide to the state of **Virginia - History** - [www.theus50.com/virginia/](http://www.theus50.com/virginia/)

Social Studies Lessons [www.csun.edu/~hcedu013/plans.html](http://www.csun.edu/~hcedu013/plans.html)

**Teaching Social Studies** with the Internet. ...  
[www.kidsource.com/education/teaching.ss.internet.html](http://www.kidsource.com/education/teaching.ss.internet.html) **Social Studies** Education:  
 National

Council for the **Social Studies** - [www.ncss.org](http://www.ncss.org)

Social Studies. Org [www.socialstudies.org/standards/teachers](http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/teachers)