

# Instructional Strategies for Students who have difficulties with:

## **Mechanics of Writing/Drawing**

### **No Tech (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
- Model writing first – teacher/peer/aide writes the word to show student how to form letters
- Use “fill-in-the-blank” answer format
- Modify worksheets – simplify; make templates for student to complete
- Use multiple choice answer format
- Support spelling skills through use of word searches and crossword puzzles
- Warm-up exercises – for hands/arms prior to writing

### **Low Tech (Mechanics of Writing/Drawing)**

- 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 rings – another way to reinforce topic/story vocabulary by putting text, drawn/cut-out/scanned pictures/drawings, story characters, picture communication symbols, etc. on oaktag cards; then create rings with the cards using binder rings, shower curtain rings, pipe cleaners or yarn
- Spelling journals
- Handwriting instruction books/guides, e.g., Beginning Connected, Cursive Writing, Calvert School Store, [http://home.calvertschool.org/hs/schoolstore/enrichment/writing\\_grammar.htm](http://home.calvertschool.org/hs/schoolstore/enrichment/writing_grammar.htm)
- “Writing” letters in sand, finger paints, salt, beans, etc. – to practice letter formation, provides kinesthetic feedback
- Tactile letters, e.g., made with sandpaper, puff paints, glitter, glue, etc. – to trace; for practice in letter formation and for kinesthetic feedback
- Enhance lines to make them tactile – puff paints, glue, hot glue
- Variety of tactile writing surfaces – e.g. sandpaper, screen, etc.
- Magnetic alphabet set – sticks to any magnetic surface, e.g., cookie sheet
- Magnetic alphabet board – for use with magnetic letters/numbers/words
- Magnetic printer paper – to create magnetized letters, words, graphics, etc. (office supply)
- Scrabble or other letter tiles – for writing, spelling
- Letter/number representations – made out of clay, paints, collages; for tactile and visual reinforcement; make a clay alphabet/numbers; have students make their own
- Dot-to-dot letters – letters written in dots for student to complete

- Pencil grips of many types – stabilizes student’s grip on pen or pencil; commercially made or make your own with a piece of foam or non-slip material, e.g., Rug Lock (office supply, grocery)
- Adapted pens/pencils – Dr. Grip – good for adults too (office supply), EvoPen – small, oval, fits in palm, triangular pencils, Squiggle Wiggle Writer – triangular, vibrating, battery-operated; 4 color cartridges
- Nightwriter lighted pen – battery-operated; has light at the tip to support visual tracking while writing
- Vary writing implements – markers, paints, fat crayons/pencils, grease pencils; experiment with what works best for the student
- Drawing/illustrating – crayons, markers, finger paints, paints, Chunky brushes (big handles) – for painting (art stores)
- Shift position of paper – the standard positioning may not work for all students
- 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 them, e.g., Right-Line Paper – Wide Rule of STOP-GO red/green
- White board or Contact Brand white *Memoboard* paper or small chalkboard – write and erase surface for students to communicate quick messages with wipe-off markers/chalk and erasers (office/educational/art supply)
- Erasable crayons on dry erase board for more drag – crayon grip gives more control (educational supply)
- Plastic writing guides – keeps pen/pencil within a limited rectangular space  
Stencils/templates, tracing paper – to serve as guides for practice
- Highlighters for tracing – student can trace directly over black line model
- Rubber stamps & stamp pad – for letters/numbers/name
- Finger grip ruler – keeps fingers out of the way while drawing a line (office supply, educational supply)
- 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)
- Magic Rub Erasers – easier to use than regular erasers; don’t tear paper
- Correction/cover-up tapes – to correct mistakes in writing if erasing is a problem (office supply)
- Dycem or other non skid pads/rolls, e.g., Rug Lock or Contact Brand Grip Liner – use to hold objects in place on table/wheelchair, e.g., slantboard, clipboard with writing paper, Dycem (available at grocery/variety stores)
- Clipboard to hold paper or tape paper to desk – to hold writing paper steady (office supply)
- Prewritten words/phrases on labels/cards/paper – for answering questions or other writing tasks
- Peer/aide takes notes for student – use carbon paper, NCR paper

## **Reading/Decoding Access**

### **No Tech (Reading Decoding Access)**

- 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
- Enhance meaning of reading with gestures, exaggerated facial expressions and intonation during group reading
- Choral reading or singing of words/text – music, rhythm and rhyme are memory enhancers
- Peer tutor – or adult, to support or read to student
- Finger tap for syllable counting – kinesthetic and auditory reinforcement
- Discuss what is depicted in the drawings – how it relates to the text; location of specific vocabulary within the illustrations
- Extensive reading preview – vocabulary development, story line, background information, etc.
- Present several versions of the same story
- Use student interests, e.g., sports, games, as reading material
- Locate high interest/low reading level materials at library, etc. – to facilitate fluency in reading
- Modify homework – to better address student’s grade level
- Poetry for Young People, various titles, e.g., William Shakespeare, Robert Frost (Scholastic) – text with graphics to support shared reading experiences

### **Low Tech (Reading Decoding Access)**

- Word dice made from milk cartons – for sight word development, vocabulary, synonyms, etc.
- Label items/spaces around the classroom
- Use letter stamps to make reading/writing fun
- Highlight syllables – to facilitate decoding
- Highlight target vocabulary words from a larger field of text – removable transparent highlighter tape, highlighters, etc.
- Post-its – to cover (delete) sounds
- 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 Rings – another way to reinforce frequently used words and topic/story vocabulary by putting text, drawn/cut-out/scanned pictures/drawings, story characters, Picture Communication symbols, etc. on oaktag cards; then create rings with the cards using binder rings, shower curtain rings, pipe cleaners or yarn.
- Puppets, finger puppets – with names which represent/reinforce consonant sounds
- Use American Sign Language or create a kinesthetic sign – for reinforcement of letter names/sounds

- Create big oversized props for letters p, b & d – students march around with the letters, saying the names of the letters or an appropriate theme for reinforcement
- Use “word windows” – to make words by mixing sounds with word families
- Reinforce letter names/sounds through tactile enhancement – e.g., students form letters in sand; teacher creates sandpaper letters, raised letters with glue/glitter, etc.
- Word searches & crossword puzzles
- Magnifying glass, word windows, mini-flashlight – for visual tracking of words/letters
- Letter tiles, Scrabble tiles, magnetic letters – to form words/sentences
- Magnetic word sets – to create sentences, poems, etc.
- Magnetic printer paper – to create magnetized letters, words, graphics, etc. (office supply)
- 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.
- Provide adaptive surfaces for reading materials (slant boards, easels, non-slip padding)
- Modify worksheets – simplify format; reduce amount of text; reword in simplified language
- Enlarge print materials – on photocopier
- Word searches and crossword puzzles – ([www.Puzzlemaker.com](http://www.Puzzlemaker.com))
- 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
- 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.)
- Enhance/adapt/modify books:
  - ~ 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.
  - ~ Rewrite text in simplified form and paste over original text associated with graphic – to allow student to read independently
  - ~ Cut & paste Picture Communication Symbols – place over text so student “reads” via the symbols or place under text to facilitate reading of text

- ~ Use clear drawings/photos – which correspond to text or relate to content
- ~ Enhance text with definitions and explanations of text – to enhance understanding of content
- ~ Rewrite text for older students at lower grade levels – begin simply with a sentence or two to summarize paragraphs; increase difficulty by summarizing pages into one or two paragraphs, etc.
- Colored pens for note-taking – to differentiate vocabulary, types of information, sections etc. or to highlight after the fact

### **Mid tech (Reading Decoding Access)**

- Mini flashlight – to support visual tracking while reading (electronics/office supply, department stores)
- Tape record text – for students to hear/review story content or to read along with text
- Books on tape – to preview content/sequence of story/text (library, audiotape purchase or rental stores, Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic)
- Video taped versions of stories – to motivate, make story come alive, and to preview/review story content
- Card reader/recorder – device which speaks aloud text written on a card when card is run through the device; provides auditory feedback to support vocabulary/math skills.
- 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; Speaking Language Master, Special Edition a more sophisticated device which can be customized for different learning disabilities and has adjustable speech speed; ideal for blind users; an extra large screen is provided for visually impaired students (these and other versions available from Franklin Electronic Publishers)
- 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

#### Compiled by:

Boston Public Schools Access Technology Center at Emmanuel College  
(Formerly Special Education Technology Center)

In collaboration with

Maureen P. Dacey, M.S. CCC-SLP, Easter Seals of Massachusetts

#### Contact Information:

Kristen Eichleay, M.Ed., Director

Jack McCauley, M.Ed., Assistive Technology Assessor

Lois Walsh, B.A., Principal Assistant

Boston Public Schools

Access Technology Center at Emmanuel College

400 The Fenway, Boston, MA 02115

Phone: (617) 635-9079 Fax: (617) 635-9179 Email: [atc@boston.k12.ma.us](mailto:atc@boston.k12.ma.us)