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# TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR THE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

1

## Quick Tips for Teaching Students who are Deaf

Communication is Key! What is the student's key system for communication?

- Optimum classroom lighting ensures faces can be clearly seen for speech and visual cues. Natural light is best; be aware that standing in front of lights and windows can cast a shadow on your face.
- Support verbal instructions with print and/or visual aids.
- Summarize classroom discussions on the board; seat student where he/she can see the speaker and classmates (round table, semi-circle).
- Provide lesson materials, such as vocabulary lists, in advance.
- Encourage the student to ask for clarification, express opinions, and contribute to discussions.

### Working with an Interpreter

- Ensure that everyone speaks clearly and naturally to support the interpreter.
- Look at the student, not the interpreter, when communicating.
- Preview lesson materials with the interpreter to ensure he/she is adequately prepared for the lesson.
- Interpreters will take breaks. Plan activities where the student will experience the most success with the other supports in place during these breaks.

## 2

## Quick Tips for Teaching Students who are Hard of Hearing

Communication is Key! What is the student's key system for communication?

- Ensure your classroom provides an optimum listening environment. Keep general noise levels as low as possible (e.g. close windows, cushion chair legs).
- Provide access to assistive listening devices and appropriate technology such as FM systems, sound field systems or phone amplifiers. Check these systems daily to ensure they are in proper working condition.
- Optimum classroom lighting ensures faces can be clearly seen for speech and visual cues. Natural light is best.
- Support verbal instructions with print and/or visual aids.
- Summarize classroom discussions on the board.
- Seat student where he/she can see the speaker and classmates and receive the clearest possible audio signals (round table, semi-circle); repeat comments and questions from other students if necessary.
- Provide lesson materials, such as vocabulary lists, in advance.
- Ensure everyone speaks clearly, normally and directly to the student. Talking loudly or over-enunciating can prove to be more challenging.
- Ensure your classroom provides visual access. For example use notes on a whiteboard, handouts, multi-media, closed captioning, pictures, etc.

3

## Quick Tips for Teaching Students who are Blind

- Understand orientation and mobility needs for navigating the classroom and common rooms such as the gym and library. If the classroom furniture is changed or moved, warn your student. Have clear lines of traffic.
- Address the student by name.
- Read notes from the board or projector.
- Describe visual materials.
- Assess environment and safety issues with students who are blind. For example emergency procedures, class changes and the location of school areas/exits.
- Investigate the use of specialized equipment (e.g. alternative textbooks/print material for example large font or braille, braille-writers, braille computers, described video, screen-reader/ speech-synthesis software and braille translation and printing).
- Provide braille signage in the school.
- During discussions practice having speakers identify themselves. Address students by name so a student who is blind knows who is being addressed and speaking.
- Use a multi-media approach so there are various ways to glean information from lessons.
- If the student works with a service animal don't touch or address the animal. Service animals are working and have to pay attention at all times.

## 4

## Quick Tips for Teaching Students who have Low Vision

- It is important to obtain as much information from the eye specialist as possible. The eye report should include information regarding acuity (with and without best possible correction), field of vision and peripheral field.
- Assess environment and safety issues with students who have low vision, for example emergency procedures, class changes and the location of school areas/exits.
- Investigate the use of specialized equipment (e.g. enlarged print and graphic materials, large fonts, colour contrast, magnifying devices, audio recording, described video, screen-enlarging software, electronic reading systems, and tilt-top desks and book stands).
- Ensure appropriate illumination. Some students require direct light, others low light.
- Expect the same standard of work, but reduce the quantity required and/or provide additional time. It may take more energy to complete tasks at the same rate as peers and to allow for eye fatigue.
- Provide large print signage.
- During discussions practice having speakers identify themselves. Address students by name so a student with low vision knows who is being addressed and speaking.
- Make notes for the student in advance and provide the student with a buddy to take notes from the board. Read notes from the board or projector.
- Use a multi-media approach so there are various ways to glean information from lessons.

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## Quick Tips for Teaching Students who are Deaf-blind

- Become familiar with the student's communication system and the approaches he or she uses for everyday tasks.
- Give the student opportunities to learn by doing.
- Make best use of residual/functional hearing and visual abilities.
- Respect the student's use of touch since his or her hands may be the link to everybody and everything in the environment.
- Investigate mobility and orientation strategies used by the student to ensure the proper accommodations are provided. The environment must be safe and feel safe.
- The student may first need to be moved co-actively, often in a **hand-under-hand** manner, through an activity to know what is expected. This support should be phased out over time to avoid building prompt dependence.
- Model good interaction and communication skills.
- Identify practices for the student to access print, auditory, and tactile materials.
- Allow plenty of time for reactions and decisions. Since understanding the whole picture is difficult, it may take longer to 'put the pieces together.'
- Ensure the student is included in social and group activities.

## 6

## Quick Tips for Teaching Students who have a Physical Disability

- Provide enough space for a wheelchair. Ensure there is enough room for knee clearance under tables and desks.
- Aisles between desks, tables, etc. should be at least 91.4 cm (36 inches) wide; consider where a wheelchair might turn around.
- If possible, ensure doors use handles with levers instead of door knobs.
- Ledges and things on the walls should not stick out more than 10 cm (4 inches) from the wall.
- Ensure clear pathways with even surfaces. Aisles should be free of potential barriers such as backpacks and chairs.
- Provide an accessible reserved washroom.
- Ensure resources are visible and within reach. For example books, school materials, coat hooks/cubbies should be less than 106.6 cm high.
- Provide additional supports/equipment such as assistive technology or a note-taker.
- A wheelchair or mobility device is considered a part of the body. Teach other students that they should ask for consent before touching an individual's wheelchair or mobility device.
- A physical disability does not define students. They want to be viewed and treated the same as others.

## Top 10 Tips For Inclusion at School/In the Classroom

### **Don't assume;**

What you see isn't always what you get.

### **Always communicate;**

It's the only way to be sure.

### **Take the time to listen;**

Listening is the first step in learning.

### **Empathy is key;**

Put yourself in someone else's shoes.

### **Don't categorize;**

Everyone is different, uniquely.

### **Be an enabler;**

Saying yes leads to success.

### **Plan for accessibility;**

Make it a priority from the start.

### **Be supportive;**

Positivity is inspiring.

### **Teach inclusion to everyone;**

It is important for all.

### **Treat everyone equally;**

Everyone is capable of great things.