How to Help Students with Diverse Needs

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

By

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Abstract:

Many professionals do not have the training or the resources they need to assist the individuals they work with whom have special needs. The purpose of this project is to provide a good reference for professionals to use when working with students who have special needs. The guidebook could be used by anyone when working with young students through adults. The strategies within the book are clustered to support specific disability groups. In addition to the strategies, the project contains a rational for the project, a table of contents, a list of resources and a bibliography.
Acknowledgements

This guidebook was completed with the support and guidance of several people. I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Jacqueline Robertson, for her willingness to help me undertake the project. Her support, time, variety of resources, and friendship over the past three years has helped me tremendously in my undergraduate career. I also need to thank my roommate for proofreading, making suggestions, lending me her resources, and putting up with me for the past four years. My family also deserves a lot of appreciation and thanks. They have given me more support than I could ask for during my five years of college. I could not have finished this project with such success if I did not have these wonderful people in my life.
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General Strategies for Working with Students with Diverse Needs

- Prior to starting the first session or the school year, explain the procedures, what you expect from them, and what they can expect from you.
- Remember confidentiality; you cannot use the student's name and discuss his/her condition with others (unless you are with another professional trying to get information or assistance).
- Find out what the student likes, so that you can think of possible rewards or incentives for the student.
- Use their interests in activities you do together to make learning more exciting and meaningful.
- Always make good eye contact and show that you are listening.
- Do not be afraid to ask the student to repeat answers or questions he or she may have.
- Do not assume a student with a physical disability has other disabilities.
- When working with older students, ask them what works well for them and what areas they really need help with.
- Make sure that a greater portion of your time teaching or tutoring is where you are at the same eye level (sit down and work with them instead of standing over them).
- Make a plan of action (set a goal) together and stick to it.
- Frequently monitor their progress and give them feedback. Teach and encourage them to monitor their own progress using a simple daily chart.
- Work towards independence by fading out your assistance, so that the student can perform the skill own his/her own.
Rationale for Project

Today many students with special needs are included in the general education classroom and follow the general education curriculum. All teachers, regardless of any training, are expected to involve these students in all aspects of the school day. Many professionals do not have the training or support they need to assist these individuals. Even teachers with backgrounds in special education do not have training in all disability areas. Other professionals may have exhausted their core strategies for working with students with special needs. Consequently, the students with special needs in their classrooms or in other educational settings may struggle or get “left behind.” With the passage of PL 221, professionals are being held accountable for each student’s achievement more than ever. Educators and others working with students with special needs should have a variety of resources as a form of support to assist them in helping all students learn.

With the summation of this project, It will be a good reference for professionals to use when working with students with various needs. The guidebook could be used by anyone. It will fit professionals’ needs when working with young students and even adults. Students with
diverse needs will be more likely to succeed if the professionals that teach and work with them are more aware of their needs and understand strategies that can be used to assist them. The purpose of this project is to inform and guide professionals that work with students with disabilities and other needs by providing a collection of strategies they may refer to in order to assist these students reach their goals. People in various professions may benefit from an easy-to-use guidebook like this one. Hopefully, this project will encourage interaction between professionals and students with varying needs because professionals may feel more prepared to assist them. Overall, students will benefit the most from this project.

Included in each section are a list of accommodations, modifications, and strategies that can be used in various educational settings to help students achieve success. Modifications can only be made if indicated in a student’s Individual Education Plan. Where appropriate, some suggestions for modifications are listed.
How to Help Students with Mild Mental Disabilities

Accommodations
- Shorten assignments and tests where appropriate
- Limit multiple choice responses from 4-5 to 2-3
- Give extra time for testing (about 1.5-2 times the normal amount of time)
- Provide student with a copy of class notes for teacher or a student
- Allow use of a calculator and/or counters for math assignments
- Allow use of a computer for longer written assignments
- Utilize a word processor and/or spell check for assignments and tests
- Allow student to take the test in an alternate location
- Allow oral administration of tests

Modifications
- Make materials match ability (if reading at a second grade level, present materials at that level)
- Condense notes or information in text
- Rewrite test to include only the main points of the chapter

Strategies/Things to keep in mind:
- Give short, clear directions
- Repeat lessons; always review material from previous day before moving on
- Present material in small steps and provide enough practice
- Monitor progress frequently, reinforce small steps towards goal
- Remember to still hold high expectations for the student
- Use cooperative learning whenever possible to reinforce social skills
- Be patient if gains are not always seen
- Always use hands-on approaches to learning
- Help the student get organized: color coordinated folders, clean out desk/locker...
- Make them a personal schedule they know how to read/use
- Give them small jobs they can do and succeed at
How to Help Students with Autism

Accommodations
- Break down long tasks into steps and give shorten assignments
- Allow use of alternate testing area
- Minimize distractions
- Give extra time on tests

Modifications
 Depending on the severity or form of Autism, you may have to adapt the content or instructional level. Condensing information is a good modification because students with Autism have difficulty with a lot of stimuli.

Strategies/Things to keep in mind:
- Keep the environment familiar, meet in the same place each day
- Do not talk abstractly, keep directions clear and simple
- Use visual cues and symbols when giving directions or prompting
- Promote spoken language, encourage them to talk to you
- Find out what their interests are and use them as incentives
- Beware of environmental concerns and avoid any distractions
- Help them get organized; they like structure
- Make a daily schedule together with picture cues and check items off as they are completed
- Prepare them for any changes ahead of time
- Be patient if an instruction is not followed through with the first request, redirect the student with a gesture or even physical prompt
- Work in a cleared area on one subject at a time
- Give the student something to hold or squeeze when frustrated like a small ball or soft animal
- Design an individual behavior plan with rewards/punishments if necessary
- Allow the student to have an area where he/she can “calm down”
How to Help Students with Visual Impairments

Accommodations
♦ Option of having tests read orally
♦ Option of giving answers orally
♦ Allow extra time to complete tests if necessary
♦ Allow scribe for tests and class notes
♦ Enlarged print for notes and tests
♦ Allow student to sit in front of the classroom
♦ Have books on tape available
♦ Braille editions of texts if necessary
♦ Allow use of computer with large font or speech output
♦ Allow use of CCTV* machine if available (magnifies print for student)

Modifications
Unless the student has a second disability, a student with a visual impairment should not need to have the content or instructional level adapted.

Strategies/Things to keep in mind:
♦ Do not pet or pay attention to the leader dog
♦ Reread directions to student if he/she cannot read them
♦ Check to see student is writing or completing the correct section of worksheet/test
♦ Give auditory clues, but try to reduce these as he/she becomes more independent
♦ Use grid paper for math work to help he/she keep track of problem done
♦ Have student skip lines or use special large lined paper.
♦ Work on gross/fine motor skills with the student
♦ Teach adapted computer software skills
♦ Use a tape recorder for spelling drills (spell words orally into recorder)
♦ Have the student skip lines when writing
♦ Highlight important information (if vision permits)
♦ Encourage echo or choral reading
♦ Study phonics for reading and spelling (focus on auditory)
♦ Study aloud, recite information
♦ Trace letters with fingers on sandpaper, shaving cream, etc.
♦ Consider projects such as plays and dramatization

* Closed Circuit TV
How to Help Students with Hearing Impairments

Accommodations

- Provide student with written directions in addition to oral ones
- Provide student a copy of class notes if most information is spoken (or have them pair up with a student who takes good notes)
- Allow use of assistive learning devices
- Allow use of word processor with spell check
- Allow use of alternate testing location (reduce noise)

Modifications

Unless the student has a second disability, a student with a hearing impairment should not need to have the content or instructional level adapted.

Strategies/Things to keep in mind:

- Reduce noise in the environment—may need to work in a carpeted area
- Always face the student when speaking in case they are also lip reading
- Use non-verbal cues—visual prompts, or tap vibrations
- Know what to do in case of an emergency (ex: if fire alarm goes off—what should be the plan to get that person out of the building) Sometimes flashing lights are added to an alarm, which helps these students become aware of the emergency.
- Be aware that the student may also have speech problems and may need outside assistance
- Be prepared to repeat directions, or to try a different approach
- Try using a gesture to get their attention
- Know how to care for hearing aids if appropriate
- Utilize written directions and instructions
- Consider replacing oral reports with written reports
- Use charts, maps, diagrams, and illustrations often
- Encourage visualizing words or ideas
- Use colors to organize notes
- Model what is expected for each assignment
- Use flashcards for reading and math
- Draw pictures for story problems
How to Help Students with Attention Deficit Disorder

Accommodations
♦ Break down long tasks into steps and give shorten assignments
♦ Highlight math signs (+,-) on assignments
♦ Make use of a study carrel so student is not distracted by others
♦ If a written test is too long, give the test orally
♦ Allow breaks or times for the student to move around
♦ Allow for preferential seating—away from hallway noise, or in the front of classroom
♦ Request the use of a “move and sit” device for student’s chair
♦ Use alternate testing location
♦ Give the student copies of overheads and notes

Modifications
Depending on child, you may have to adapt the content or instructional level. Due to the student’s inability to maintain his/her focus throughout the lesson, reviewing previous skills maybe needed daily or at least weekly.

Strategies/Things to keep in mind:
♦ Have the student keep an assignment sheet or notebook each day
♦ Know what distracts or bothers them in the environment and avoid it
♦ Help the student get organized—try a three-ring binder and color coordinating subjects
♦ Provide a lot of practice on routines
♦ Have the student keep a daily schedule or make on for him/her, mark tasks off as they are completed
♦ Give directions one at a time
♦ Try a small reward system with the student based on short intervals of on-task behavior (older students can reward themselves for completing so many tasks within a period of time)
♦ Encourage older students to take frequent breaks when studying
♦ Highlight important information
♦ Work at a cleared table or desk
♦ Focus on one subject or skill before moving to the next
♦ Encourage the student to “think aloud” if it helps him/her focus
♦ Arrange for a “study buddy” who will help the student get all the necessary information and keep him/her on track
How to Help Students with Learning Disabilities in Mathematics

Accommodations
- Allow the student to use a math grid or facts chart to complete long math problems
- Allow the student to use a calculator
- Allow extra time on tests
- Allow use of alternate testing location
- Provide copies of class notes
- Shorten assignments

Modifications
The level of the mathematics assigned to the student should be compatible with his ability. The student may need to review earlier skills and work on mastery of basic facts while others continue to move to the next skill.

Strategies/Things to Keep in Mind
- Have you or the student set aside a special time each day to drill math facts or concepts they are struggling with
- Analyze the student’s work to find out what they are doing wrong and suggest a new way for them to solve the problem
- Use demonstrations and manipulatives whenever possible
- Use graph paper for math assignments so that the student can keep his work neat by putting only one problem in each box
- Monitor the student’s work; check every problem or every other problem when he or she begins an assignment
- Highlight the operation symbols in certain colors to make them stand out (example: yellow = add)
- Have the student keep a journal containing the steps/formulas he/she needs to follow for specific types of problems
- Assign even or odd number problems only
- Provide plenty of examples and do not leave out steps
- Encourage the student to “think aloud” as he/she solves problems to identify problem areas
How to Help Students with Learning Disabilities in Language Arts

Accommodations
♦ Allow extra time on tests
♦ Allow the student to use a computer and spell check for writing compositions
♦ Select a quiet or private location for the student to read and work
♦ Allow use of tape recorder
♦ Use of alternate testing location
♦ Provide copies of class notes
♦ Shorten spelling lists

Modifications
Changes may need to made in the reading level of assignments given. Spelling lists may need to be shortened or adjusted. Assessments may need to be adjusted as well to measure the student’s progress on skills.

Strategies/Things to Keep in Mind
♦ Provide a lot of time for the student to practice reading and writing—set aside special times.
♦ Provide them with some literature that is at “their level”
♦ Practice fluency on an easier text
♦ Frequently review main idea, summarizing, and author’s purpose.
♦ Shorten reading assignment or allow him/her to listen to the story on tape or from a friend
♦ Encourage active reading techniques to increase comprehension: underlining, taking notes, writing questions, answering questions, writing summaries, and using SQ3R*
♦ Say, spell, chant, and write new words
♦ Study phonics with flash cards and word work
♦ Give the student a purpose before they begin reading
♦ Take running records of the student’s reading to track fluency progress
♦ Preview vocabulary and words that may cause confusion prior to reading
♦ Read texts more than once before testing comprehension
♦ Have students make predictions about a text before and during reading

*Survey Question Read Rewrite Review, handout located in resources section
How to Help Students with Speech Disorders

Accommodations
♦ Allow for written responses in place of oral exams/reports

Modifications
♦ Students with speech disorders should be able to complete on grade level content. You may need to provide extra practice in expressive language skills.

Strategies/Things to keep in mind:
♦ Always model effective language use
♦ Do not correct the student every time he/she speaks; you do not want to discourage him/her.
♦ Provide picture cues to help the student think of the word he/she is trying to say
♦ Teach basic conversation rules (greetings, staying with topic, waiting, transitions)
♦ Have the student listen to stories on tape and other recorded conversations in order to develop a sense of speech flow
♦ Give them time to speak without interrupting or giving them the word
♦ Provide the student with more wait time when he/she is answering
♦ Encourage social interaction with peers and classroom participation
♦ Consult with a Speech-Language Pathologist
♦ Ask student to expand on answers (do not allow him to just say ‘yes’)
♦ Have small group book or movie discussions
How to Help Students with Physical Disabilities

Accommodations

- Allow the use of a scribe (another student who writes) for written tests and bubble sheet tests if motor control is impaired
- Allow extra time to complete tests
- Allow use of computer for completion of assignments
- Use of alternate testing location in an open area
- Use of note taker if needed
- Allow use of tape recorder in classroom (to tape lessons)

Modifications

- Modifications should not be made to the content of assignments unless the student has a second disability.

Strategies/Things to keep in mind:

- Pair the student up with a buddy to take notes and assist with his/her belongings
- Ask the student before helping; he/she will not need you for all physical activities
- Do part of the task for the student and have them finish it; work towards independence when possible
- Guide the student or lend an arm/hand when moving about the room
- Learn how to use adapted keyboards, joysticks, and other peripheral computer equipment
- Make room for special equipment/devices that are necessary for the student
- Make sure other places you attend are adequately equipped for students with disabilities
How to Help Students who are Gifted/Talented

Accommodations
♦ Consider non-traditional ways of evaluating the student’s progress
♦ Allow the student to omit material he/she has already mastered

Modifications
Lowering the content level is obviously not necessary with these students. You will want to give them enrichment type of activities to complete. Consider giving the student more advanced material in his/her areas of strength.

Strategies/Things to keep in mind:
♦ Have the student work on real world problems, give him/her many authentic tasks
♦ Allow the student complete an independent project on a topic of interest
♦ Provide the student with high-quality literature (supplement basal reader)
♦ Consider promoting the student to a higher grade or sending him/her for a partial day to a higher grade
♦ Find an adult mentor for the student
♦ Keep in mind the student’s emotional needs; watch for isolation from peers
♦ Encourage the student’s questions and comments in class
♦ Insist that the student still follows your rules
♦ Seek extra-curricular programs and other settings where the student can foster his/her creativity and cognitive development
♦ Provide the student with self-discovery activities that stimulate his/her curiosity
♦ Consider having the student tutor or mentoring a student who is struggling
♦ Continue to work on social skills and encourage interaction with same age peers
How to Help Students Who are Learning English as a Second Language

Accommodations
- Provide student with written directions in addition to oral ones
- Provide student a copy of class notes if most information is spoken (or have them pair up with a student who takes good notes)
- Provide books on tape or have them read with a student who is proficient in English
- Shorten written assignments in the beginning
- Allow extra time to complete tests and assignments
- Allow use of tape recorder for lessons

Modifications
In the beginning, modifications to the content may have to be made to ensure success. The content may need be lowered until a certain level of English proficiency has been reached.

Strategies/Things to keep in mind:
- Try to pronounce their name properly the first time you meet
- Become aware of your own biases
- Speak slowly and clearly, not louder
- Avoid sarcasm, cliches, and idiomatic expressions
- Try to learn about the student's culture, show interest
- Rent videos to watch from both cultures to share
- Share foods, customs, and holidays as learning experiences
- Use the language experience approach when teaching reading
- Look for books and other materials in the student’s native language
- Speak normally so that they learn dialect and common phrases
- Provide pictures of words/concepts you discuss
- Tape a beginning conversation and later ones to show progress
- Teach older students common euphemisms
- Use flash cards and repetition to teach vocabulary
- Keep a list of mastered English words
- Let the student teach you some words in their language
- Read to the student or with the student as often as possible
- Utilize group work when possible to reinforce social skills
- Label the environment for younger children
Professional Resources
LEARNING STYLE INVENTORY

Directions:

To gain a better understanding of yourself as a learner, you need to evaluate the way you prefer to learn or process information. By doing so, you will be able to develop strategies which will enhance your learning potential. The following evaluation is a short, quick way of assessing your learning style.

This 24 item survey is not timed. Answer each question as honestly as you can.

Place a check on the appropriate line after each statement

1. Can remember more about a subject through the lecture method with information, explanations and discussion.

2. Prefer information to be written on the chalkboard, with the use of visual aids and assigned readings.

3. Like to write things down or to take notes for visual review.

4. Prefer to use posters, models, or actual practice and some activities in class.

5. Require explanations of diagrams, graphs, or visual directions.

6. Enjoy working with my hands or making things.

7. Am skillful with and enjoy developing and making graphs and charts.

8. Can tell if sounds match when presented with pairs of sounds.

9. Remember best by writing things down several times.

10. Can understand and follow directions on maps.
11. Do better at academic subjects by listening to lectures and tapes.

12. Play with coins or keys in pockets.

13. Learn to spell better by repeating the words out loud than by writing the word on papers.

14. Can better understand a news article by reading about it in the paper than by listening to the radio.

15. Chew gum, smoke, or snack during studies.

16. Feel the best way to remember is to picture it in your head.

17. Learn spelling by "finger spelling" words.

18. Would rather listen to a good lecture or speech than read about the same material in a textbook.

19. Am good at working and solving jigsaw puzzles and mazes.

20. Grip objects in hands during learning period.

21. Prefer listening to the news on the radio rather than reading about it in the newspaper.

22. Obtain information on an interesting subject by reading relevant materials.

23. Feel very comfortable touching others, hugging, handshaking, etc.

24. Follow oral directions better than written ones.

**SCORING PROCEDURES**

**DIRECTIONS:**
Place the point value on the line next to the corresponding item. Add the points in each column to obtain the preference scores under each heading.

**OFTEN** = 5 points  
**SOMETIMES** = 3 points  
**SELDOM** = 1 point

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**VPS** = Visual Preference Score  
**APS** = Auditory Preference Score  
**TPS** = Tactile Preference Score

If you are a **VISUAL** learner, then by all means be sure that you look at all study materials. Use charts, maps, filmstrips, notes and flashcards. Practice visualizing or picturing words/concepts in your head. Write our everything for frequent and quick visual review.

If you are a **AUDITORY** learner, you may wish to use tapes. Tape lectures to help you fill in the gaps in your notes. But do listen and take notes, reviewing notes frequently. Sit in the lecture hall or classroom where you can hear well. After you have read something, summarize it and recite it aloud.

If you are a **TACTILE** learner, trace words as you are saying them. Facts that must be learned should be written several times. Keep a supply of scratch paper for this purpose. Taking and keeping lecture notes will be very important. Make study sheets.
Effective Multisensory Study Methods

1. Learn by doing. Move around when you study. Put as much as you can see and hear into your "spread".
2. Select and organize high-interest material. Lay study cards on the floor in front of you when you study. Put as much as you can into your "spread".
3. Clear study cards with your entire mind and use them where you can.
4. Study in small, repeatable chunks. Give yourself breaks. Move away from the room.
5. Use a timer and decide on an amount of time you feel comfortable with. Leave a timer and decide on an amount of time you feel comfortable with.
6. Set a goal for the amount of information you will learn. If you do not learn your goal, then check your notes or study cards.
7. Make a quick flashcard and use a mnemonic device related to the problem. When you have to recall information on a method of piece. When you have to recall information on a method of piece.
8. When solving a problem, move around and manipulate some visuals from your personal information. Format the idea of the problem, and see it in your mind as much as possible. Use a card reader and say the steps.
9. Write down what you did physically as you try to "feel" how you solved it. Use a card reader and say the steps.
10. When learning exams, try to "feel" how you solved it. Use a card reader and say the steps.

Write down what you did physically as you try to "feel" how you solved it. Use a card reader and say the steps.

1. Read the study cards. Read the study cards. Read the study cards. Read the study cards.
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SQ3R METHOD- STEPS IN TEXTBOOK STUDY

AN APPROACH TO STUDY IN AN ORGANIZED FASHION

Title
Hit the Headlines
Introduction

S SURVEY
Italicized words
Vocabulary list
Pictures, graphs, charts
Summary

Turn headings into questions of your own.
What is the selection about?
What do I already know about this topic?
Read through questions found in text.
Establish purpose(s)
Use study guides

Q QUESTION
Adjust rate to purposes.
Reflect on answers to questions.
Stop and think about what you have read.
Write down key words and thoughts.

R READ
Do this immediately after reading for improved retention.

R RECITE
Close the book.
Recite to yourself main ideas.
Fill in supporting details.
50% study time should be in self-recitation.

R REVIEW
Reread parts relating to the questions you could not recite.
Outline the main ideas and supporting details.
Go over notes taken while reading.
HOW TO MARK RUNNING RECORDS

On a Plain Piece of Paper

Note: Child's name, date, book title

Correct Reading: Check mark for each word correct

ERRORS:

Substitution: Write over the text
student: here
          text: her

Omission: Put a dash on top of text
student: ___
          text: her

Insertion: Add to the text, dash on bottom
student: my
          text: ___

Told: Student cannot correct error=T

NOT ERRORS

Repetition: Draw an arrow back

Self Correction: Mark SC

Based on Marie Clay's An Observation Survey, Heinemann, 1993
Think-Alouds

A way to model what you are thinking as you read.

Explain there are two voices speaking as you read:
1. Your voice reading the words.
2. The voice inside your brain which is saying what it thinks about what you are reading.

Six Thinking Strategies

Connect—What do I know already that connects to this story?
   “This reminds me of…”
   “I remember something like this that happened to me when…”
   “I read another book where the character…”
   “This is like what happens in our school/country when…”

Predict/Anticipate—Where is the story going next?
   “I wonder if/who…”
   “I think I know what is coming next…”
   “He will be in trouble if…”
   “I think we will learn how…”

Summarise/Conclude—Your brain synthesises information using text clues and your life experiences.
   “The most important thing I’ve learned so far is…”
   “It didn’t say why she did that, but I bet…”
   “I know he must be feeling…”
   “So far in our story…”

Question/Monitor—When your brain monitors whether or not your reading makes sense.
   “I wonder what is means when…”
   “I don’t understand…”
   “It didn’t make sense when…”
   “I’m going to reread that, because it didn’t make sense that…”

Imagine/Infer—Using what you know and what the author tells you to think behind & beyond the text
   “Mm, I can almost taste/smell/hear the…”
   “It sent chills down my spine when it said…”
   “I can imagine what it is like to…”
   “I can picture the…”

Evaluate/Apply—The opinions you form or the actions you take based on what you read.
   “My favorite part in this chapter was…”
   “I really liked how the author…”
   “What I don’t like about this part is…”
   “It was really interesting to learn that…”
   “I am going to try this out when I…”
   “If I were her, I would…”
Print Trackers

Print trackers are a tool to help children track print. They are great to use for reluctant readers who need a boost. Teachers will want to designate a special place for them or pass them out and collect them for each use to ensure they the print trackers remain a tool and not a toy!

Some teachers choose to order monster/witches fingers from catalogues like the Oriental Trading Company. These come ready to use.

To make a print tracker, glue two small wiggle eyes to the end of a craft stick. Tell students they know have an extra set of eyes to help them see the words.

Teachers may also choose to use special pencils, decorated wooden dowel rods, or the student's own finger to track print!
Bibliography
Bibliography


