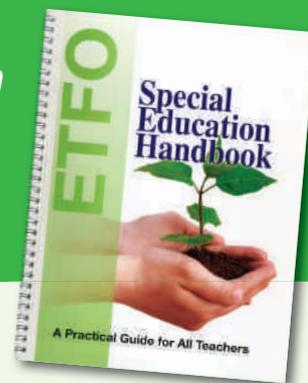


These pages are excerpts from *ETFO's Special Education Handbook: A Practical Guide for All Teachers*. They provide information and advice on working with students with attention and organizational difficulties.



Area of Need: *Organizational Skills*

A student with organizational skills needs has difficulty in keeping storage areas, work, and play orderly.

Indicators

Students with organizational skills needs may:

- be unable to find their materials, and so may come to class without the materials they need
- have a desk and personal space area that is messy
- produce written work that is not organized by topic, or by major points and supporting evidence
- have difficulty following timelines
- have difficulty breaking assignments into an orderly sequence of work units
- miss deadlines for handing in work
- have notebooks and notes that are disorganized
- have difficulty bringing order to information to appreciate the main idea or key concepts when learning or communicating information
- get caught up in details and miss the big picture

Instructional Strategies

- provide and teach organizational schemes to work with, and provide supervision on their use
- teach the student to use an agenda book to record assignments
- provide colour coded notebooks, one for each subject
- provide written outlines of assignments to organize their work
- break down projects into a sequence of clearly-defined work units
- provide graphic organizers and checklists, according to the student's learning style
- cue the student to use the organizers and schemes that have been provided
- reinforce the student for using the organizers and schemes that have been provided
- fade out the prompting and reinforcement as the student internalizes the schemes and uses them
- provide a list of all needed equipment for each of the student's activities
- attach daily schedules to notebooks
- utilize technology (e.g., graphic organizer software)

Environmental Strategies

- provide an organizational scheme for each environment, e.g., backpack, desk at school, desk at home, locker
- provide an individual work space
- seat the student close to the teacher to facilitate teacher prompting
- locate the student's locker close to the teacher or a classmate who can prompt the student
- post visual reminders in the classroom
- supervise weekly "clean-up and organizing" sessions with outcome expectations clearly specified

Assessment Strategies

- provide individual work space for writing tests and exams
- highlight key words and phrases on the test
- provide review outlines in point form
- provide testing materials and equipment (e.g., pencil, pen, eraser, ruler, paper)
- prompt the student about time remaining and progress expected when writing tests, e.g., "There are 30 minutes remaining now. You should be starting question 10 now."



Photo: Jorge Uzon



Photo: Jorge Uzon



Photo: Anne de Haas

Area of Need: *Attention Skills*

A student with attention skills needs has difficulty sustaining concentration and focusing on an activity while ignoring distractions.

The student can concentrate on tasks that are exciting or interesting, but may have particular difficulty concentrating on uninteresting activities.

Indicators

Students with attention skills needs may:

- be easily distracted
- be disorganized
- appear restless
- have difficulty starting and/or finishing tasks
- not be able to sit still
- lack impulse control
- crave immediate gratification
- have trouble connecting cause/effect
- wander around the classroom
- appear to be daydreaming
- have difficulty taking turns
- talk off topic
- often have writing problems
- become quite frustrated and overly stressed when asked to complete tasks that are difficult for them
- have attentional processes that vary from day-to-day

Environmental Strategies

- reduce stimulus (e.g., sit student at front of class)
- preferential seating and use of a single desk
- keep student's space free of unnecessary materials
- use a study carrel
- provide more than one acceptable work area

Instructional Strategies

- chunk or shorten assignments
- have student repeat instructions
- give only one or two instructions at a time
- present directions both orally and in writing, particularly if they involve a sequence
- map information
- provide a posted, written, and structured program to student
- provide direct instruction of organizational skills
- provide positive reinforcement program
- vary presentation format and test materials
- provide access to writing or speech to text software
- use colour coding or highlight critical information
- use overhead projector
- use novelty to help elicit attention
- use a multimedia approach to learning
- allow the restless student opportunities to change focus or tasks
- provide the student with appropriate opportunities to move around the room (e.g., passing out papers, delivering attendance or forms to the office)
- identify critical bits of information and print these or highlight in bright colours or use coloured paper
- provide opportunity for rehearsal/repetition/practice
- present in different sense modalities
- use cueing strategies to help the student identify when off task
- engage the student in helping to deliver the lesson
- utilize a home-school communication book
- provide opportunity for physical exercise
- post visible and clear rules and instructions

Assessment Strategies

- provide opportunities for the student to demonstrate understanding in a variety of ways, such as oral presentation, audio-video taped assignments, bulletin board displays, dramatizations, and demonstrations
- oral tests
- fill in the blanks
- short answer questions
- make assessment expectations explicit
- provide periodic breaks
- provide a quiet location, free from distractions
- allow additional time when required
- allow student to write down the main points and to expand on them verbally
- divide the test into parts and give it to the student one section at a time or over a period of days
- provide prompts for the purpose of drawing the student's attention back to the test



Photo: Brian Summers



Photo: Jorge Uzun