

Special Education Handbook

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Learning disability

What is a Learning Disability?

Learning disabilities are neurologically-based processing difficulties that obstruct an individual's learning skills such as reading and writing. Learning disabilities have also been associated with poor organizational skills, poor time management, and long and short-term attention. There are different types of learning disabilities including auditory processing disorder (APD), Dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyslexia, non-verbal learning disabilities, visual perceptual motor deficit, and language processing. Learning disabilities do not include learning difficulties that can result from physical disabilities such as visual disabilities or external factors such as economic and environmental disadvantages. Some components can be used to identify a learning disability including poor academic performance in one or more school subject areas, problems with mental processing disorders, and specific diagnosis such as dyslexia. (LDA, 2018).

Teaching Students with a Learning Disability

Educators have the responsibility of helping students with learning disabilities “learn how to learn” (LDA, 2018). Educators have the responsibility of ensuring that they teach the students to participate in the learning process. There are different modifications that the teachers can utilize to provide that students with learning disabilities fully participate in the classroom. Some of these modifications include direct instructions and use of different learning strategies instruction such as differentiated instruction. It is vital that educators focus on student’s achievement, progress, and learning to achieve the best results for the students with learning disabilities. Use of differentiated instructions by the educators is one of the methods that meet a specific, intensive yet individualized plan of instruction that will help improve the learning process of these students.

(LDA 2018)

Technology Associated with Specific Learning Disability

Many assistive technologies can be used in the classroom to help students with learning disabilities. The use of these technologies has been found to be a practical approach towards the enhancement of many children with learning disabilities. Helping students work around their disabilities and challenges helps them experience greater success in the learning process.

Technology such as abbreviation expanders, alternative special keyboards, audio books, electronic math worksheets, and graphic organizers and outlining are some of the technologies that can be utilized by educators and caregivers. Laptop and tablets are also crucial assistive technology because they improve the quality and quantity of notes. Some computer-assisted instructions such as the special keyboards provide the educators with immediate and dynamic feedback.

Annotated Resources

LDOonline.org

This website contains a wealth of information about learning disabilities and provides the most up-to-date information on the what is happening with that disability.

Council for Exceptional Children www.dldcec.org

A professional organization that can be joined by teacher, parents, or other professionals. This council promotes current issues and acts as an advocate for members in various situations.

Understood.org

Features resources and discussion about a multitude of disabilities.

International Dyslexia Association

The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) is an organization that concerns itself with the complex issues of dyslexia.

Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA)

LDA is the largest non-profit volunteer organization advocating for individuals with learning disabilities and has over 200 state and local affiliates in 42 states and Puerto Rico. The membership, composed of

Intellectual disability

What is Intellectual Disability?

Intellectual disability refers to the significant limitation in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior. Intellectual functioning refers to the individual's capability to learn; reason, problem-solving skills, and ability to make decisions while adaptive skills are important everyday skills that enable individuals to interact with one another as well as take care of self. A child with an intellectual disability has below-average intelligence and lacks basic day-to-day skills. These individuals learn new skills at a slower rate as compared to other individuals. Intellectual disability ranges from mild to profound. Various signs can be used to identify intellectual disabilities in children including talking late, crawling and walking late, slow in mastering things such as potty training, poor problem-solving skills, and inability to remember things. Students with a mild intellectual disability have delays in cognitive, social, and adaptive behaviors in classrooms but have a functional social life outside classrooms.

(Project Ideal, 2018).

Teaching Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Children with intellectual disabilities require supportive classroom environment to achieve a high quality of life. Educators should alter instructions to help these students get to their optimum potentials in their academic and other parts of their lives. Use of direct instructions in classrooms to develop the skills of the students helps them develop independence in the school and their future lives. Project Ideal (2018) also notes that tying instruction to the specific interests and behavior of an individual child helps in improving the academic performance of the student also known as the prelinguistic milieu teaching. Further, educators are advised to breakdown larger tasks into smaller more specific parts to help in teaching various skills to students in classrooms. Students with intellectual disabilities master complex concepts over time, dividing them enables them to learn these skills at their pace. (Project Ideal, 2018).

Technology Associated with Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

Technology helps in motivating students in their daily learning environments (Project Ideal, 2018). The type of technology used will depend on the amount of training that an individual requires. Various software packages have been devised to help students with intellectual disabilities. A good example is the literacy software that combines “reading for meaning with direct instruction for understanding” (Project Ideal, 2018). The software utilizes audio and video-based curriculum that helps educators meet the set academic requirements for individual students.

(Project Ideal, 2018).

Annotated Resources

<http://www.projectidealonline.org/v/intellectual-disabilities/>

The website provides vital information on the different intellectual disabilities and their implications in the classroom.

American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Researches and protects human rights for people with intellectual disabilities.

Best Buddies

Best Buddies and organization that enhances the lives of people with intellectual disabilities by providing opportunities for social and life skills.

TASH (formerly The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps)

TASH is a civil rights organization for, and of, people with intellectual disabilities, autism, cerebral palsy, physical disabilities and other conditions that make full integration a challenge.

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Emotional disturbances

What are Emotional Disturbances?

Students with emotional disturbance disorders experience personal identity and psychological well-being crises, depression, and chronic inappropriate behavior. Some signs of emotional disturbances include when a student responds to a circumstance with an unexpected emotion or action, anxiety disorder, mood disorder, and oppositional defiant disorder. These students may experience difficulties in sustaining personal relationships with others. According to Project Ideal (2018b), some emotional disturbances may include mental illnesses such as schizophrenia. Individuals have different characteristics of emotional disturbances with African American students having higher levels of the disability as compared to white students. Students with emotional disturbance may always result into physical aggression, which results to higher levels of depression and anxiety.

(Project Ideal, 2018).

Teaching Students with Emotional Disturbances

According to Project Ideal (2018), students experiencing emotional disorders have low intelligence levels and have low academic achievements especially in math and spelling. Educators should, therefore, provide an environment that offers emotional and behavioral support to replace the emotional problems with appropriate ones. There are different methods that instructors can use to ensure that students with emotional disturbances have a supportive environment. Project Ideal (2018) discuss the importance of wraparound, which is a shared process that helps in the creation of a natural support system that incorporates a student's strength and interests in their community. The level of disturbance that students have in class will determine how maladaptive their behavior and performance. Educators will be required to reduce the external and internal negative behaviors of such students to ensure that they support academic performance. Unlike the first two disorders, which mainly depend on individualized instruction Project Ideal (2018) notes that the best practices for the emotional disorder are best practiced for every student. Further, students should be given opportunities to choose different classroom tasks and be given constant praise.

(Project Ideal, 2018).

Technology Associated with Individuals with Emotional Disturbances

Some software packages such as the word processing software are essential in dealing with students with emotional disturbances because it provides them with an opportunity to revise and correct their work as they create it. Such software ensures enhancement of a student's spelling and writing consistency skills by simplifying the process.

(Project Ideal, 2018)

Annotated References

<http://www.projectidealonline.org/v/emotional-disturbance/>

This site provides essential information on emotional disturbances and the various teaching strategies of students with the disability.

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American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

The AACAP the leading national professionals in researching, evaluating, diagnosing, and treating psychiatric disorders.

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

This program addresses the behavioral and discipline systems needed for successful learning and social development of students.

Physical and Motor disabilities

What are Orthopedic Impairments

Individuals with orthopedic impairments include those with impairments brought about by congenital anomalies, disease, and other causes such as amputations. Students with severe orthopedic impairments are severely affected in their academic performances. There are different types of physical impairments including cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, and spina bifida. Cerebral palsy affects a child's movements, motor skills, and muscle tone. Muscular dystrophy is a genetic disorder that progressively deteriorates the body's muscles, which leads to loss of ability in doing things such as walking and movement of arms and hands. Finally, Spina Bifida happens when a child's backbones fail to form as usual, which may result in a damaged spinal cord.

(Project Ideal, 2018)

Teaching Students with Orthopedic Impairments

The extent of the impact of physical and motor disabilities of a child is highly dependent on illness, its severity, and personal elements. Different individuals with a similar diagnosis may have different capabilities depending on their characteristics. Many students with orthopedic impairments do not have any cognitive, learning, and language problems apart from those suffering from neuromotor impairments that may suffer from an extra impairment. For this reason, most educators are required to focus on the accommodation of the students towards receiving academic instructions.

Teaching modifications will mainly depend on individual students' orthopedic impairments. Project Ideal (2018) suggests that the special and general educator should work together towards ensuring that the student participates in the general curriculum because these students do not have cognitive disabilities. To accommodate these students, educators should provide special seating arrangements for the students, incorporate instructions centered on the development of fine motor skills, and be aware of the condition of the student and its impact. Schools may also utilize different specialists who will help in implementation and development of the appropriate educational program for the students. Such specialists include physical therapists, occupational therapists, massage therapists, and speech-language pathologists among others.

(Project Ideal, 2018).

Technology Associated with Individuals with Orthopedic Impairments

The levels of severity of physical and motor disabilities differ greatly, which prompts the need for multiple types of assistive technology. The assistive technology in these type of disability enables the student has access to their curriculum. There are two categories of assistive categories utilized in orthopedic impairments including a device that helps in access to information and those that help in positioning and mobility. The first category includes devices that help in speech recognition, alternative communication gadgets while the second category includes wheelchairs, canes, walkers, and crutches. The second categorization helps students participate in educational activities while the former enables the students to have access to important educational materials.

(Project Ideal, 2018).

Annotated Resources

<http://www.projectidealonline.org/v/orthopedic-impairments/>

This source provides important information on the definition of orthopedic impairments as well as its prevalence and characteristics. It provides further information on teaching practices suitable for students with the disability.

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United Cerebral Palsy Associations, Inc.

Spina Bifida Association of America

SBA serves adults and children who live with the challenges of Spina Bifida through education, advocacy, and research to enhance their lives.

Blindness and Visual Impairment

What is Blindness and Visual Impairment?

Deafblind refers to the combination of hearing and visual impairments, which results in serious communication and other developmental and instructive requirements that may not be successfully incorporated in special education programs meant for deaf and blind students.

(Kidshealth, 2018).

Teaching Students with Blindness and visual impairment

Educators should strive to accommodate students according to their specific needs. There are some recommended practices that educators can utilize to ensure the most effective adaptations for the students. Firstly, the teachers should promote independence for the student to avoid over-dependence on other students and educators. This can be done by ensuring that the educator takes into consideration the level of awareness that the student has and how they work and learn best. The students should be encouraged to move around the class in an independent manner. Further, every material useful in the playing and teaching activities should always be placed in consistent areas where they will be easily located. All cabinets and doors must always be closed, and chairs must be pushed to improve the safety of the students. All these actions will ensure that the student acts in an independent manner without being dependent on the instructor or fellow students.

Access to textbooks and instructional materials is an integral part of ensuring that deafblind children are fully accommodated in the classroom. Educators must strive to use appropriate media including Braille for blind students and recorded media. Students with low visions can be accommodated by use of large print text and use of recorded media or optical gadgets to access information.

(Kidshealth, 2018)

Technology Associated with Blindness and Visual Impairment

Visually impaired students must be instructed in the utilization of various adaptive gadgets and equipment that have been developed through time. Computer developments have allowed for the development of multiple adaptations including;

- Braille translation software and equipment, which translates print into Braille and Braille into print
- Braille printer which links a computer and prints Braille on paper
- Screen enlargement software
- Refreshable Braille display
- Screen reader

Other adaptive devices include Braille note taker, optical character reader, talking calculators, and electronic Braillewriters. Visually impaired individuals can also utilize optical devices such as magnifiers, CCTV, and telescopes. These devices become useful if a specialist helps the students train for their usage.

(Kidshealth, 2018)

Annotated Resource

<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/visualimpairment.html>

The website provided important information on the visual impairments and various ways to include visually impaired individuals.

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Blind Children's Center

The Blind Children's Center is a home-based program that helps the children acquire skills and build their independence.

National Braille Association, Inc. (NBA)

The mission of the National Braille Association, Inc. is to provide continuing education to those who prepare braille and to provide braille materials to persons who are visually impaired.

Deafness and Hearing Disabilities

What are Deafness and Hearing Disabilities?

An individual with deafness and hearing disabilities experiences a permanent or fluctuating hearing loss, which hinders the attainment and sometimes the maintenance of hearing skills that are vital for the usual development of speech, academic excellence, and language. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) classifies deafness and hearing impedance into different categories. Some of the categories include instructive deafness and hearing debilitation. Extreme hearing disability is classified as deafness while less serious hearing problems are labeled as a hearing weakness, which can be solved using a hearing aid. (Project Ideal, 2018)

Teaching Students with Deafness and Hearing Disabilities

Learners with hearing problems may experience major concerns about group and rational advancement, dialogue and verbal communication, and academic excellence. Social development is very reliant on communication among students and teachers. Therefore, students with hearing impairments may fail to take part in the cooperative activities and play, which may negatively affect the socialization process. Further, if a student does not have any coexisting disability the level of intelligence is not affected because hearing impairments do not affect their cognitive abilities. However, the most affected area of development for students with deafness and hearing impairments is the speech and language because they cannot provide auditory feedback, which means they do not experience normal speech and language development.

Educators dealing with deaf and children with hearing impairment have the responsibility of ensuring that these students feel like a part of the classroom. Educators work with specially trained individuals including audiologists, speech-language pathologists, and interpreters. Educators need to embrace the use of reliable and aware of noticeable message modes such as finger-spelling and sign-language. Teachers and professionals are encouraged to work together to ensure that the students have their maximum benefits. It is also vital to involve parents with the instructions because most of the deaf children are born to hearing parents. There are alternative methods that educators can utilize including the use of regular language and speech, use of amplification systems, use of alternative communication methods among teachers and peers, and use of captioned films and videos.

(Project Ideal, 2018)

Technology Associated with Individuals Deafness and Hearing Impairments

Students with hearing impairments have major advantages because of the advancement of modern technology. Some of the devices that modern technology has introduced include hearing aids and auditory training devices. Hearing aids are used to amplify sound while auditory training devices are more simplistic such as the FM system where the educator uses a microphone, and the student uses headphones to listen. Cochlear implants are devices implanted surgically that enable sounds to become audible for persons with sensorineural hearing impairments. Computers also contain special software packages for students with hearing impairments. The packages enhance instruction by providing extra instruction in the form of speech drills, sign language instruction, and language tutoring. Another vital device is the alerting devices, which use vibration and light instead of noise to alert the student. Such devices include fire alarms, alarm clocks, and watches. Finally, the use of captioning and telecommunication devices is important because information becomes visible to individuals with hearing impairments. Telecommunication has introduced text messaging and a telecommunication device for the deaf.

(Project Ideal, 2018).

Annotated Bibliography

<http://www.projectidealonline.org/v/hearing-impairments/>

Provides vital information on the definition, teaching strategies and characteristics of hearing impaired students.

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American Society for Deaf Children

The American Society for Deaf Children supports and educates families of deaf and hard of hearing children and advocates for high quality programs and services.

American Speech-Language Hearing Association

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association is a group that advocates on behalf of persons with communication and related disorders; advancing communication science, and promoting effective human communication.

Autistic disabilities

What is an autistic disability?

Autism is a development disability that starts to show before the age of three. The disability has major effects on a student's academic performance and developmental paces and sequences, socialization, communication, and participation in various activities. Autism is also linked to abnormal responses to sensory experiences, resistance to change, and involvement in redundant activities. If a student has been diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder, Asperger's Syndrome, or Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, the term autism may be used in these situations as long as their academic performance has been greatly affected (GADOE, n.d.).

Teaching Students with Autistic disabilities

Educators have to accommodate students with autism by ensuring that they support communication in their classrooms. Supporting communication requires receptive language support and expressive language support. This is done by use of straightforward verbal communication that is simply understood by the learners without the use of sarcasm and any other methods that may lead to confusion. Further, educators should address social skills and use specific methodologies that will support the development and use of social skills within and outside the classroom. Some of the social skills that should be taught include turn-taking and social distance. Different methods of presentation should be used including visual and physical guidance for the students. Educators should strive to eliminate distractions or giving excess work to certain teams.

Technology Associated with Autistic Disabilities

Some of the technologies associated with an autistic disability include visual representation systems that help in visualization of different systems in different situations. Some of the low-level technology include dry erase boards, photo albums, and highlight tapes. Language master, calculators, and timers are classified as mid technologies while high technologies include cameras and computers. Other devices include the Bluebee pals which are a tool utilized to keep learners in education and socialization by a majority of speech-language pathologists.

(Do 2 Learn, 2018).

Annotated Bibliography

Do2learn. (2017). Do2Learn: Educational Resources for Special Needs.

Provided important information on how to incorporate students with autism in the classroom and improve on their social skills.

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Autismspeaks.org

Promoting solutions, across the spectrum and for the needs of individuals with autism and their families through advocacy and support; increasing understanding and acceptance of people with autism spectrum disorder.

National Autism Resources

Providing cost effective, research based therapeutic tools that meet the needs of people on the autism

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