

Adapting Curriculum for Students with Special Needs Series

Part # III - Checklist of Suggestions for Adapting the Curriculum

ORCLISH, a statewide federally funded project under the direction of the Ohio Department of Education Division of Special Education, put together a checklist of suggestions for adapting instruction. This checklist offers specific areas to focus on when you work with your students with special needs:

What to Adapt?

- Curriculum Materials (textbook assignments, workbook, tests)
- Instruction (grouping strategies, learning centers, audio visuals)
- Classroom Organization and Behavior Management (daily schedules and routines, classroom rules, seating arrangements, and individualized behavior plans).
- Consider these areas, as well as others, and consider adaptations in several areas at one time to maximize results.

Alternate Goals

- Change the expected outcome or goal for the student using the same materials or curriculum as other students. For example: The student will only copy the spelling words, while others will spell from memory, the student will match state names to the map while others will locate state capitals, the student will participate in science by building the DNA model while others build the model, label, and answer questions.

Substitute Curriculum

- Provide different instruction, materials and goals for a student.

For example:

A student may learn computer/keyboarding skills while others are taking a language test, a student may cut out food items from a magazine and create a picture book of favorite foods while others are writing a creative story, a student will create his personal schedule for the day while others are doing group circle or calendar time.

Staying On Task

- Break assignments down into small units
- Provide frequent teacher feedback and redirection
- Provide time in resource room for completion of classwork
- Use a buddy system to remind child to stay on task
- Lessen homework expectations (if necessary)

Homework

- Individualize
- Shorten
- Allow more time
- Provide more help

Presentation of Material

- Present visually written demonstration pictured
- objects computers video maps
- charts calendars audiotapes
- Use consistent expectations
- Divide instruction into small steps
- Provide opportunities to teach and practice skills needed
- Provide needed prompts and cues

Assessment and Assignments

- Shorten
- Modify difficulty
- Alter activity
- Highlight text
- Provide a choice (when appropriate)
- Teach format ahead of time
- Modify question format
- Allow extra time
- Link learning to real situations

Communicating to the Student

- Be concrete and specific
- Avoid using terms like “later”, “maybe”, and sarcasm
- Slow down the pace, allow student to process (3-6 sec)
- If necessary, break tasks into smaller steps
- Use gestures, modeling, and demonstrations with verbalizations
- Provide warnings about change
- Provide information about expectations

Encouraging Communication with the Student

- Pause listen and wait
- Watch and listen to attempts to respond
- Respond positively to attempts
- Model correct format without corrections
- Encourage input and choice when possible

Social Supports

- Create cooperative learning situations where student may share proficiencies
- Establish a buddy system
- Practice specific skills through natural activities with one or more peers
- Structure activities with set interaction patterns and roles when appropriate
- Praise classmates when they treat student properly, discourage teasing
- Focus on social process rather than end product
- Develop social stories
- Teach, rehearse, practice, model and reinforce the following skills:
 - turn-taking responding waiting greeting joining others
 - taking the lead joking and teasing complimenting
- Environment and Routine
 - Provide a predictable and safe environment
 - Minimize transitions
 - Offer a consistent daily routine
 - Avoid surprises, prepare student in advance
 - Recognize distractions and sensory overloads (noise, vision, smell, tactile)
 - Allow modifications to sensory problems when necessary

Self Management/Behavior

- Teach use of visual schedule, cues, and timer
- Provide reinforcement that is individualized, immediate, and concrete
- Incorporate strengths and interests into daily activities
- Encourage choices when appropriate
- Determine why behavior is occurring and develop behavior plan
- Avoid punitive measures, use positive and natural consequences
- Avoid disciplinary actions for behaviors which may be part of their disability