

Supporting Students with FASD

There are a variety of accommodations that can be included in Individual Education Program (IEP) plans for students with a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). There are 13 disabilities identified to determine eligibility for an IEP. FASD is currently not its own category; however, most youth with an FASD are eligible for an IEP under the Other Health Impairment category. Although what works will differ from one student to another, all these ideas have helped at least one student with an FASD. This is by no means an exhaustive list but may help you think of other ideas that could be beneficial.

When the IEP is being created or revised, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Focus on concrete strategies. It is often seemingly minor changes in a staff member's approach that can make a dramatic difference in a student's success. Make sure all strategies discussed are spelled out clearly in the IEP.
- Be as specific as possible in the IEP. For example, some have found it more helpful to say, "The paraprofessional will initiate a sensory break every hour" instead of "The student may take sensory breaks."
- Include language about having the student verbalize their understanding of what they'll do.
- As staff carry out the IEP, it's important they're making sure the student understands what is being asked of them. Don't just ask "Do you understand that?" Instead, ask the student to explain what is expected. It can be helpful to state throughout the IEP that staff should ask the student to verbalize their understanding of instructions given to them. The IEP can also say that when the student doesn't understand completely, instructions should be restated in a more specific way.
- Ensure quantitative measurements while setting up goals in the IEP. It is important when setting goals in an IEP to establish concrete starting and ending points in order to validate progress. The goal should also be measured through quantitative data. This prevents biased results.
- Schools are required to provide progress notes according to the IDEA legislation. It is helpful to clarify in the IEP who is relaying progress notes and how often they are sharing them.

Accommodation Ideas:

Homework

- Shortened homework
- No homework
- Study hall
- Time limit
- Re-dos/late for full credit
- Anything going home with the student should be at the student's instructional level

In the classroom

- Allow fidgets or other sensory tools
- Have scheduled sensory breaks that may include exercise, reading, listening to music, therapy ball, etc., and note who will initiate them
- Allow student to have copies of the teacher's notes and/or advance notice on which chapters, books, content, etc. will be covered
- Recruit a peer to be a confidential note taker for the student with an FASD
- Teacher will give one instruction at a time
- Teacher will provide alternate learning formats for instruction/class materials (visual, kinesthetic, and auditory)
- Directions will be written and repeated (as much as needed)
- Allowing testing in small groups or separate room
- When possible, re-teach in different settings to help with generalization of skills
- Do not remove privileges or strategies (such as use of fidgets) as punishment
- Create seating chart that specifies where the student will and/or will not sit
- Student can stand or move around in class
- Student will not be reprimanded for rocking, laying down or moving around during class
- Student can use squishy seats/listen to music with earbuds/use noise cancelling headphones during class
- Allow student to have an extra set of textbooks at home
- Snacks allowed (can specify things like when, what type of snack)
- Consider eliminating abstract classes like science (be aware this will impact the student's ability to get into most colleges and other higher education institutions, but it may make sense for some students)
- Consequences should be immediate, brief and related to what occurred
- Use feedback for both positive and negative behaviors
- Understand that the use of basic behavioral principles such as positive reinforcement will only be effective if executive functioning limitations have been addressed



Communication with caregivers

- Log goes back and forth between the teacher and caregivers
- Regular communication – determine who is responsible for communicating and how often/under what circumstances
- Do not use the student to transmit the communication (i.e., if a log is in use, do not have the student transport the log back and forth)

Organization

- Teach the student how to use a planner and have regular check-ins
- Teacher puts instructions in a planner and does a check with the student to be sure they can verbalize what they need to do
- Set up weekly locker/desk/cubby cleaning schedule

Teachers and paraprofessionals

- Best outcomes occur when educators and staff have received FASD training
- Be sure the IEP specifies who is performing this role and what they are doing (get more specific than, "a paraprofessional will be present if needed")
- Specify what supports the student needs during unstructured time (such as lunch, passing time, going between the bus and school, and trips to the bathroom)
- Consider special education transportation for extra supervision on bus and to decrease sensory overstimulation

Social interaction

- No other child will grade the student's work
- Do not ask students to "pick a partner" – count off instead, or pair the student with specific peers that they will work well with
- When asking students to give oral presentations, allow the student the option to present just to the teacher rather than to the entire class
- Avoid calling unexpectedly on the student in class unless their hand is up; do not expect them to frequently speak in class

Self-esteem

- Errands, such as passing out books or picking up mail, can be a way to involve the student and accomplish a sensory break at the same time
- If safe, the student could mentor younger students or teach them skills (e.g., reading, jump rope, games)



Sources:

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