# Classroom Accommodations for Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities

**Students with learning difficulties and disabilities will benefit from the provision of accommodations at school, aimed at lessening the functional impact of their difficulties. Accommodations allow them opportunities to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in a manner more consistent with their classmates and intellectual ability. Some of the following strategies may assist these students within the classroom:**

- **Teaching students using multi-sensory techniques** is recommended. A multi-sensory approach to teaching means helping a student learn through more than one of the senses including vision, hearing, touch, and movement. This approach has been shown to be effective in teaching students with learning difficulties. The aim is to pair visual and auditory information with meaningful student activity in a way that promotes understanding and builds on previous knowledge. It also allows students to use their strengths while developing weaker areas.

- **Use a variety of teaching styles and methods,** incorporating as many mediums as possible including visuals (e.g. flashcards, demonstrations, pictures), hands-on materials (e.g. counters, blocks, clay), and verbal explanations.

- **Experiential learning,** such as hands-on activities or computer-assisted learning can assist students with learning difficulties to assimilate information in a meaningful way.

- **Encourage the student to seek assistance** when unsure of the steps to take.

- Where appropriate, **use diagrams or charts** to disseminate information and provide the student with copies.

- A student with learning difficulties **should not be expected to produce work that is beyond their current skill level.** However, they should be given opportunities to demonstrate the required level of understanding and knowledge in alternative ways.

- Recognise that when setting homework tasks, a **student with learning difficulties is likely to take far longer** than other students who do not have difficulties with learning. It is better that they produce a sentence or paragraph that is written correctly than a whole page with numerous errors. Gradually, one sentence can be increased to two and so on.

- **Offer alternative modes of assessment,** such as allowing them to demonstrate knowledge and understanding in oral or taped presentations. This is particularly the case whenever literacy is not a specific outcome.

- **Provide clear, simplified, and concrete instructions.** Check to ensure that the student understands these requirements and provide reminders during the task.

- **Provide one-to-one assistance and small group learning** whenever possible.

- **Structure tasks and present them in a step-by-step manner.** Tasks presented to the student with learning difficulties should be broken into small steps that are given in order of the easiest to the most difficult step. This sequencing will assist in enhancing their understanding. Furthermore, the student needs to have completed a step before being given further direction or instruction.

- Large blocks of text are difficult to read, so wherever possible **prepare worksheets** with clear guidance of where to look for the important information. For example, give overviews or summaries, and use dot points for emphasis. Larger font (14pt), and underlined, highlighted, or bold text is helpful. Using video and audio recordings is also useful to support and illustrate text content.

- **Over-learning concepts through repetition and practice.** Over-learning and repetition is required to compensate for information retention difficulties. Repeated teaching methods, rehearsal of tasks, and intermittent practice will assist in both remembering and understanding concepts.

- **Practical and concrete activities,** rather than abstract tasks, should be included whenever possible. Allowing the student to "do" a task should increase their experience of classroom success and their motivation.

- **Demonstration** of what a task requires is also strongly encouraged. This can be achieved through teacher modelling, at a class or individual level, as well as peer modelling.

- **Provide an example** of the finished piece of work so that expectations are clear.

- **Allow extra time** to complete activities or **reduce the amount** of work the student is expected to complete.

- **Provide positive reinforcement through praise and small rewards.** Positive and meaningful reinforcement should be provided for both good work and sustained task concentration.

- **Provide verbal feedback** to students on their progress, and in turn obtain feedback from students on the perception of their progress, workload and support.

- While students with learning difficulties need explicit instruction in the area of literacy, it may also be useful to allow the use of aids and equipment such as dictionaries, word processors (with spell check programs), hand-held spell checkers, reading pens (available through DSF Literacy & Clinical Services), scribes and calculators to allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and ideas while reducing the burden of the learning difficulties.