

Accommodations Increase Learning and Independence

Ideas from Overcoming Dyslexia by Sally Shawitz and

Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills by Judith R. Birsh

Prepared by Mire Consulting gmire@mireconsulting.net All accommodations should be individualized and specific to student's evaluation and experience

Tests

- Minimize anxiety
- Minimize fatigue
- Provide extra time
- Provide quiet environment
- Deliver tests and assignments in small increments
- Utilize cues, prompts and trigger questions
- Determine the best method to assess each student
- Coach test taking skills
- Include figures, graphs, videos and illustrations to add contextual information
- Grade written work on content - not spelling
- Allow alternative assessments such as posters, cartoons or oral presentations
- Accept essays in oral form
- Provide take-home pre-test
- Minimize rote memory questions
- Publish grading criteria
- Do not test the disability – adapt assessments to students
- Allow students to use sources (formula sheets, etc) and give credit based on usage
100% (no outside sources), 90% (use notes), 80% notes + textbook

Test Construction

- Understand that Multiple choice gives sparse context and facilitate guessing instead of knowing
- Write “fill in the blank” questions with blank at the end of questions
- Provide a word bank
- Avoid tricky long, wordy true/false
- Avoid asking students to change false statements to true
- Avoid questions with more than one correct answer
- * Utilize best practices in writing multiple choice questions (see attached)

Alternative Test Format

- Cues, Prompts, Trigger Questions (see attached)
- Multiple Choice vs. short essay
- Require student advocacy

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Alternative Test Format (continued)

- Break up tests into smaller parts
- Oral testing
- Large print and highlighting

Note taking

- Allow students to record lectures or use smart pen
- Enlist volunteer note takers
- Provide instructor's notes
- Utilize professional scribe
- Provide study guide or lecture outline for student to highlight

Assignments

- Provide weekly syllabus
- Maximize information on website
- Break down tasks and provide useable rubric
- Extend deadlines if necessary
- Reduce repetitions
- Monitor and model assignment instruction comprehension
- Provide contracts to outline assignments

Alternative sources

- Determine the "objective" of assignment and adjust sources
- Utilize "less dense" material
- Provide "cliff note" instruction
- Use sources on student's reading level (high interest/low vocabulary graphic novels, comic books, cliff notes, movies)
- Use color to maximize understanding of patterns

Equipment

- Ear plugs to reduce distraction
- Lap top, iPad
- F/M System for lecture concentration
- Any technology that levels the playing field
- Text to speech, speech to text, spell/grammar check, recorder, calculator
- Digital Books (Bookshare, Learning Ally, and Accesstext)

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Foreign Language Substitution

- Shawitz reports that Yale allows a substitute that features culture, history, politics or literature of non-English speaking country
- It's more important to focus on classes with mastery potential

Course accommodations

- Design courses that emphasize concepts versus isolated detail and trivia
- Coordinate schedule to avoid taking too many classes at a time
- Recommend extended curriculum (5 year plan or summer school)
- Create an active learning environment
- Encourage repetition and practice
- Provide holiday/summer practice such as pre-reading

Support for Teachers

- Provide one-on-one “talk through” assistance through tutoring program
- Set up “Resource Room” into student’s schedule
- Planning Time
- Parent support
- Assess Accommodations Feedback system – What works?

Resources

Remediation Resources:

- Neuhaus Center www.neuhaus.org - Non profit that provides resources, classes and materials
- International Dyslexia Association www.indys.org - Matrix of MSLPs – list of approved remediation for dyslexia
- CHADD www.chadd.org - ADHD resource

Screener:

National Center for Learning Disabilities www.nclld.org *LD Interactive Checklist*

<http://www.nclld.org/checklists-a-more/checklists-worksheets-a-forms/ld-checklist-of-signs-and-symptoms/checklist/checklist>

Facebook: Helping Kids with Learning Disabilities

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Trigger Questions

Sample Cues and Trigger Questions for oral tests and retrieval:

- How does this question relate to what you did in class?
- Let's break this question down into parts. What does this part mean? How does it relate the other parts?
- How does _____ relate to _____? How does question 3 relate to question 5?
- What do you know about _____? Let's make a list.
- What do these words mean to you?
- Can you draw a picture of this concept?
- Does this sound like another question on the test? How is it alike and different?
- What is the subject and verb in this question?
- What is the teacher asking?
- Let's rephrase this question.
- Can you cross off any multiple choice answers that you know are wrong?
- Are there any words that aren't part of the test material that I can define for you?
- Do you remember talking about this in class? What did the teacher say?
- Explain this question to me.

TEN HINTS FOR WRITING GOOD MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Use the "stem" to state the problem and be brief (the reader should not have to look at the options to figure out what is being asked)
2. Put all repetitive information in the stem. The options should not contain words that can be placed in the stem.
3. State the problem or ask the question in a positive form - the use of negatives is confusing. If you must use a negative, add italics or **boldface** or CAPITALS to emphasize this usage.
4. Avoid the use of 'absolutes' such as "all" "never" or "always".
5. In both stem and options, use basic, easily understood English; avoid difficult words or jargon.
6. Avoid using "all of the above" or "none of the above" as options.
7. Construct the options using parallel form. They should be of similar length and contain similar phrasing.
8. Include only plausible options; don't offer "throwaway" options.
9. Arrange the options in a logical order, if there is such an order. Dates should be in chronological order, words that denote size should be in arithmetic order, etc
10. Be sure the options are distinct from one another; they should not overlap or include one other.

Adapted from "Improving Multiple-Choice Tests" by Victoria L. Clegg and William E. Cashin. Kansas State University: Center for Faculty Evaluation & Development, 1986