

Tutoring Students with Disabilities: Information & Strategies

Students living with a visible or hidden disability have special needs as a result of their conditions. Students who have documentation of a physical, learning, or psychiatric disability are eligible to receive accommodations from the Disabled Students Program. These accommodations can be any reasonable adjustments to the academic environment that address the barriers to learning, and assist students in achieving their academic and career aspirations. Information on students with learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), and psychiatric/psychological disabilities can be found in the sections that follow. When you suspect a student may have a disability:

DO

1. Speak to the student in private about your concerns.
2. Refer the student to the Disabled Students Program (893-2668).
3. Acknowledge the difficulties the student is experiencing.
4. Be sensitive that low self-esteem may be associated with the disability.
5. Be aware that the Disabled Students Program may need to contact a faculty member and/or T. A. to follow up on accommodations.
6. Be aware that all disabilities need medical documentation before the student is eligible for services from the Disabled Students Program.

DON'T

1. Assume the student knows s/he may qualify for assistance from the Disabled Students Program.
2. Assume the student wants to receive assistance from the Disabled Students Program.
3. Pressure the student to acknowledge his/her disability.
4. Speak to the student in a derogatory manner.

Common disabilities to be aware of:

❖ Learning Disorders (LD)

- Have difficulty with writing, spelling & math concepts
- Process information slowly & need more time to think & respond
- Can have problems recalling & integrating information presented orally
- Students with **Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI)** can exhibit similar characteristics

❖ Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD)

- May have difficulty sustaining attention, following through with instructions & completing tasks
- Tend to lose things & forget appointments
- May interrupt or blurt out answers before questions are completed
- May appear restless or seem not to listen when spoken to

Common areas of difficulty for these students:

- Organization & planning
- Memory
- Frustration
- Preparation
- Concentration
- Self confidence

Tutoring Strategies:

❖ Be an Effective Facilitator

- Ask the student how they learn best
- Reduce distractions in the tutoring area
- Provide a clear structure for the session
- Break down assignments & topics into manageable parts
- Repeat information and summarize frequently
- Use mnemonic devices when possible
- If the student loses focus, remind the student to pay attention with cue words (“listen”, “look”, “name”) or nonverbal cues (eye contact, touch)
- Aim for quality not quantity

❖ Help Students be Managers of their Learning

- Encourage students to develop a study schedule they can stick to; written checklists can be a useful tool.
- Organization is crucial! Teach students how to outline & organize topics: categorizing and “chunking” information can aid retention