



Bridging the Gap



Strategies and interventions to help students with learning disabilities, AD/HD and emotional disorders meet the Standards in regular ed classrooms

This section has been created by Special Education teacher Anne Sepe with a mini-grant from the Rural Education Advisory Committee



Writing

This section focuses on helping students with LD, AD/HD and ED organize language and ideas from their heads onto paper

Handwriting

- Assess the task in terms of the student's ability. For students with fine motor skills problems, modify expectations, break work into manageable segments to decrease frustration and enhance success.
- Make sure student has correct materials (*good quality pencil with eraser, lined paper, etc.*)
- Allow extra time so student doesn't need to rush
- Provide direct instruction in letter formation, direction, spacing, etc
- Provide handwriting models with arrows to show direction to correctly form letters
- Check pencil grip. Change pencil size, use a pencil grip to help student hold writing utensil correctly.
- Use primary-lined paper to help student size upper and lower case letters
- Recognize well-done work

Note-taking

Remediation:

- Make sure student can see/read material to be copied. Check vision, seat students with vision problems near front of room.
- Notes written on a chalkboard are hard to read. Where possible, write notes on whiteboard or overhead projector instead of chalkboard.
- When using white board or overhead transparency for notes:
 - 1) Use black or dark-colored whiteboard markers. Avoid writing with red, orange, yellow markers (*hard to read*). Check for glare.
 - 2) Print neatly. Do not write notes in manuscript (cursive).
 - 3) Don't crowd the space on whiteboard or transparency. Make sure the words are large enough to be read from the back of the room.
- When using overhead projector, make sure the transparency is clean and the type unsmudged.
- Simplify note-taking with cloze format.
 - 1) Prepare overhead transparency and student handouts listing information, with main concept words blank.
 - 2) Using overhead projector, fill in missing concept words on overhead transparency as you lecture.
 - 3) Students fill in notes as you lecture, using multiple learning channels {seeing, hearing, writing} to reinforce learning.
- For students who have difficulty copying from board or overhead, provide material to copy at their desk

Compensation (bypass):

- Avoid frustrating students whose (dis)ability makes note-taking difficult or impossible:
 - 1) Give student a copy of your teacher notes
 - 2) Make a copy of another student's notes (*check for legibility and accuracy*)
 - 3) Provide a scribe (another student, aide, teacher).
 - 4) Copy text, instruct student to highlight key concepts directly on copied pages, have student save and refer to highlighted pages in lieu of classroom notes

Writing Sentences:

- Teach student that whole sentences must contain the following information:
 - 1) “who or what” and “did what”
 - 2) Teach student to make sentences more interesting by adding words and phrases that tell: “where”, “what kind of”, “when”, “why” and “how”
- Teach student to write complete (*subject/predicate*) sentences as follows:
 - 1) Have student brainstorm interesting “who or what” words (*Saturn; a puppy; an acrobat, the lawyer, etc.*). Write each on a card. Explain that this part of the sentence is called the subject.
 - 2) Next, brainstorm interesting “did what” words (*chirped; sniffled; orbited; crashed; etc.*). Write each on a card. Explain that this part of the sentence is called the predicate.
 - 3) Have student make combinations of “who” and “did what” cards. Explain that each combination is a complete sentence, and that any sentence that tells “who (*or what*) did what” is complete because it has a subject and a predicate.
 - 4) Explain that any sentence that does not tell both “who” and “did what” is not complete, no matter how many words it contains, and that an incomplete sentence is called a fragment.
 - 5) Give student examples of complete sentences to highlight subject words in one color and predicate words in another.
 - 6) Provide a sheet of sentences and fragments. Have students identify complete sentences and correct fragments by adding needed words.
- Teach student to write interesting (*expanded*) sentences as follows:
 - 1) Explain that a simple subject/predicate sentence is complete, but not interesting or informative. Informative, interesting sentences tell us details such as “where”, “when”, “what kind of”, “how” and “why”.
 - a) “where”(under the table; in China; in the garden; at the mall; etc.)
 - b) “when” (at daybreak; in colonial times; after we do our homework; etc.)
 - c) “what kind of” (tall; speedy; kind-hearted; red; powerful; hairy; etc.)
 - d) “how” (suddenly; with all his might; joyfully; etc.)
 - e) “why” (because they were hungry; since it was snowing; due to the fact that it was my turn; etc.)
 - f) “who or what” (the marine biologist; Uncle Michael; an armadillo; etc.)
 - 2) Have students brainstorm phrases that tell:
 - a) “where”(under the table; in China; in the garden; at the mall; etc.)
 - b) “when” (at daybreak; in colonial times; after we do our homework; etc.)
 - c) “what kind of” (tall; speedy; kind-hearted; red; powerful; hairy; etc.)
 - d) “how” (suddenly; with all his might; joyfully; etc.)
 - e) “why” (because they were hungry; since it was snowing; due to the fact that it was my turn; etc.)
 - f) “who or what” (the marine biologist; Uncle Michael; an armadillo; etc.)

g) “did what” (*sneaked; twirled; chuckled; leaped; snored; etc.*)

- 3) Choose phrases from each category to write on cards. Start with “who” and “did what”. Next, have student select phrase from other categories to add to the basic subject/predicate sentence. As each phrase is chosen, have student place it in the sentence.
- 4) Have the student experiment with combining the cards in varying ways to see how many different sentences can be created. Read sentences out loud for students to hear and correct illogical combinations.

Narrative Paragraphs:

- Teach the student that everything in a paragraph is about a specific topic, identified by a topic sentence, and that only information about that topic should be included in the paragraph. Reinforce this concept as follows:
 - 1) Have the student write down as many sentences about themselves as they can in ten minutes.
 - 2) Show student how sentences fall into certain categories (*friends; family; interests; pets; etc.*). Have students highlight each sentence about friends one color, family sentences another color, etc.
 - 3) Have student group sentences by color (*which will also group by topic or category*). Explain that each color group belongs in a separate paragraph and only information that goes with that topic can go into that paragraph.
 - 4) Teach the student to choose a color group and write a sentence that tells what the sentences of that color are about (*My family is small; My pets mean a lot to me; I like to spend time with my friends*). Explain that they have just written a topic sentence that tells the main idea for a paragraph.
 - 5) Next, have student add the appropriate color group sentences to the topic sentence in a logical order. Emphasize that only information about the topic sentence should be included in the paragraph (*“Only the blue sentences should go into the paragraph about family. Yellow sentences go into the friends paragraph, etc.*).
 - 6) Repeat this process by having students generate information about other subjects, then color-code the information by topic and organize into paragraph form.
 - 7) Teach students the use of transition words (*first of all, next, finally, etc.*) to set off supporting details within a paragraph.
 - 8) Teach students to end paragraphs with a concluding sentence

- The skill of color-coding sentences topically transfers readily. It is especially useful to organize information into main idea/supporting details format for essays and research reports

Descriptive Paragraphs:

- Teach student to describe things by the way they look, sound, feel, taste, smell and what they do.
 - 1) Provide several objects with distinctive characteristics (*orange, teddy bear, headphones, etc.*)
 - 2) Starting at the top and continuing all around, have student describe what they see. Add details describing smell, feel, utility etc. As the student speaks, record their description in graphic organizer web format (*name of object in center circle, descriptive details on lines radiating out from circle*)
 - 3) Teach the student how to turn web details into a paragraph.
 - 4) Help the student write a topic sentence identifying the object and its location (*The teddy bear lives on my bed; the orange was on my lunch tray; the headphones are connected to my CD player*)
 - 5) Have student combine related web details into complete sentences (*One of the bear's fuzzy brown ears sticks up and the other flops down over its shiny glass eye; The two hard round earpieces are connected by a flexible band of black plastic about 1 inch wide; etc.*)
 - 6) Teach students to use transition words and phrases in front of sentences to set off details (*First of all; in addition; finally, etc.*)
 - 7) Teach students to write a concluding sentence telling what the object is used for (*My teddy bear has given me years of comfort and love; The headphones let me hear my music without bothering my mom*)
 - 8) Assemble descriptive sentences into a paragraph starting with topic sentence, listing descriptive details connected with transition words and ending with concluding sentence.

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