

Teaching Strategies for Specific Disabilities

As the faculty of a student with a disability there may be some things you can do to help make your student's learning experience the best possible. In addition to the particular accommodations indicated in a student's notification letter from Students with Disabilities Services (SDS), the strategies described on the following pages may be beneficial. Please remember however that the needs and preferences of each individual student are unique; it is always a good idea to take the time to discuss any questions about your student's specific disability directly, in private, with the student. If you have any questions about a particular request for academic accommodation, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Teaching Strategies:

- Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder
- Chronic Illnesses
- Hearing Impairment
- Learning Disabilities
- Mobility Impairment
- Psychological Disorders
- Speech Impairment
- Visual Impairment

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Teaching Strategies

What is ADHD?

Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) affects cognition, learning and behavior. About 5-10% of the population has been diagnosed with this neurological condition. Symptoms of this disorder have been known to include: low stress tolerance and overreaction, poor organization and task completion, impulsivity, excessive temper, heightened anxiety, and/or mood swings. Though these symptoms affect a student's life, they do not always appear in the same areas over time. ADHD is more accurately described as an inability to regulate attention, impulse control, and behavior.

Students with ADHD have difficulty staying on task and concentrating. They often switch from one unfinished project to another. ADHD occurs in the student's social life as well. They are inattentive at times and frequently shift their conversation topics. They also have poor listening skills and have difficulty following rules and details of activities. Symptoms of this disorder may take the form of restlessness and a difficulty with quiet activities. It is important to remember that ADHD arises during childhood, often before the child reaches the age of 7 and has not been linked to gross neurological, sensory language or motor impairment, or to mental retardation or severe emotional disturbance.

How can the professor help?

In order to enhance the student's learning experience & increase the accessibility of the course material and instructions we suggest the following strategies. Please be reminded that these are only general recommendations meant to support other accommodations.

Strategies:

- Keep instructions brief and as uncomplicated as possible.
- Permit the student to tape record lectures.
- Define course material and requirements clearly.
- Demonstrate information in more than one way.
- Break information into small steps when teaching new tasks.
- Allow time for clarification of directions and essential information.
- Provide study guides or review sheets for exams.
- Provide alternate ways for student to perform tasks (i.e. oral presentations).
- Stress organization & ideas rather than mechanics when grading assignments.
- And most importantly, honor the student's right to privacy.

Chronic Illnesses

Teaching Strategies

What are Chronic Illnesses?

Students affected by chronic illnesses may have what is known as systemic disabilities. Systemic disabilities are conditions where there is a malfunction of one or more of the body's systems: respiratory, immunological, neurological, and/or circulatory. These disabilities are often unstable, resulting in the need for appropriate accommodations.

Some examples of chronic illnesses that may cause systemic disabilities are:

Cancer is a malignant growth that can affect any part of the body. Treatment can be time consuming, painful and may at times result in a permanent disability.

Diabetes Mellitus causes a person to lose the ability to regulate blood sugar levels with their own insulin. People with diabetes mellitus often need to follow a strict diet and may require insulin shots. If a student experiences a diabetic reaction they may experience confusion, personality changes or even loss of consciousness. In extreme cases, diabetes can cause vision loss, cardiovascular disease, kidney failure, stroke or the amputation of limbs.

Epilepsy/Seizure Disorder causes a person to lose consciousness. Episodes or seizures may vary from "petit mal" to the less common "grand mal." Seizures can be controlled and monitored through medication and are normally not emergency situations.

Epstein Barr Virus/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/Fibromyalgia are autoimmune disorders that can cause extreme fatigue, loss of appetite and depression. Any type of physical or emotional distress may affect students with these conditions.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV+), which causes AIDS, can inhibit a student from warding off minor illnesses and infections. Symptoms vary greatly and people with HIV or AIDS are often stigmatized.

Lyme's Disease is a multisystemic condition which can cause paralysis, fatigue, fever, dermatitis, sleep disorders, memory dysfunction, cognitive difficulties and depression. Lyme's disease is caused by the bite of a tick.

Lupus Erythematosus can cause inflammatory lesions, neurological problems, excessive fatigue, flu-like symptoms that never seem to go away, impaired cognitive ability, connective tissue damage and mobility impairments.

Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) often results from overexposure to chemicals over a long period of time. A person with MCS can become overly sensitive to chemicals found in everyday environments. Reactions can be caused from such ordinary things as

cleaning products, pesticides, vehicle exhaust, tobacco smoke, room deodorizers, perfumes and other scented products. Though the reactions vary from person to person, the most common reactions are nausea, rashes, lightheadedness, and respiratory distress.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a progressive neurological condition with a variety of different symptoms, such as loss of strength, numbness, vision impairments, tremors and depression. The degree and intensity of MS symptoms vary from person to person and from day to day. One day a person may be extremely fatigued and the next day feel much stronger. Extreme temperatures can also adversely affect a person with MS.

Muscular Dystrophy is a group of diseases in which the muscles progressively weaken and shrivel away. The most common type starts in childhood and initially affects the muscles of the shoulders, hips, calves and thighs.

Renal Disease/Failure can result in the loss of bladder control, extreme fatigue, pain and toxic reactions that can cause cognitive difficulties. Some students with renal disease are on dialysis and must adhere to a rigid schedule.

How can the professor help?

Each illness affects each student in a unique way and accommodations that may work for one student may not necessarily work for the next. Therefore, when in doubt on how to best assist a student ask him/her or contact the Disability Services Office.

The following are a list of general accommodations that have worked for students in the past.

- Conveniently located parking spots
- Note takers
- Extended time to complete assignments or exams
- Modified course or workload
- Flexible deadline
- Early syllabus and exam modifications.

Hearing Impairment

Teaching Strategies

What is Hearing Impairment?

Hearing impairment is a broad term that encompasses varying degrees of hearing loss from hard-of-hearing to total deafness. Students with hearing impairments vary greatly in their communication skills due to their personality types, nature and degree of deafness, degree of benefit from a hearing device, family environment and age of onset. Age of onset can severely affect the level of the student's disability.

Due to the fact that so much of learning is acquired aurally, many students may have experiential as well as language deficiencies. Although students can overcome some of these problems through the investment of a great deal of time and energy, along with a supportive family and educators, such deficiencies are still common among the hearing impaired.

Not all deaf students are fluent users of the same modes of communication. For example, not all deaf students lip-read; many use sign language. However, there are several types of sign language systems used (i.e. American Sign Language: ASL, or Pidgin Sign English: PSE). However, these are not the only types of communication available to deaf students. They also can use sign and oral language interpreters. These are professionals who assist deaf or hard of hearing students understand communications. They also assist hearing persons with understanding messages communicated by a hearing impaired student. Interpreters also voice when requested what the student says, as well as interpret all information in a given situation including instructor comments, class discussion, and environmental sounds.

The interpreter and the hearing impaired student usually sit in the front of the classroom. Initially

Sign language may be a distraction to the class and the professor, however the initial curiosity of the class will fade and the professor will be able to adapt to the interpreter's presence.

Students with hearing impairments use note takers because it is difficult to follow an interpreter and take notes at the same time. Interpreters and note takers should introduce themselves to the professor at the beginning of the term in order to make any special arrangements necessary.

Real-time Captioning is another option available to hearing impaired students. A Real-time Captionist is a stenographer who uses a steno-machine to take down the lecture verbatim. The words of the lecture are made immediately available to the student on a laptop computer. The student will simply read the lecture as it is presented and will receive a copy on disk of the lecture to use as a study reference.

Most hearing impaired students can be evaluated the same as other students on tests. However, it has been found that some deaf students do better on exams when an interpreter signs the instructions to them.

How can the professor help?

Below are some suggestions to enhance the student's learning experience.

- Make certain you have a deaf student's attention when speaking to them. A light touch of the shoulder, a wave, or other visual signal may help.
- Repeat the comments and questions of other students so the student with the hearing impairment and/or the interpreter is sure to understand what has been said.
- When appropriate, ask for a hearing volunteer to team up with a deaf or hard-of-hearing student for in-class assignments.
- If possible, provide transcripts of audio information.

Face the class when speaking; if an interpreter is present, make sure the student can see both you and the interpreter.

- If there is a break in the class, get the deaf or hard of hearing student's attention before resuming class.
- Because visual information is a deaf student's primary means of receiving information, films, overheads, diagrams, and other visual aids are useful instructional tools.
- When in doubt about how to assist the student, ask him or her.
- Be flexible; allow a deaf student to work with audio-visual material independently and for a longer period of time.
- Allow the student the same anonymity as other students (I.e. avoid pointing out the student or the alternative arrangements to the rest of the class.)

Learning Disabilities (LD)

What are Learning Disabilities?

- Significant difficulties in the use and application of reading, writing, oral communication, mathematics, and general reasoning skills
- Notable discrepancies in potential and observed achievement
- Inability to properly convey or express sensory information
- Disabilities lacking outward physical indications or any simple form of unprofessional diagnosis
- Evident at all intelligence levels
- Real, disruptive disabilities capable of severe consequences in achievement oriented situations

Learning Disabilities are not:

- Psychological disturbances
- Mental Retardation
- Due to inadequate educational or environmental opportunities
- Mental, Emotional, or Physical Diseases
- Conditions that will be outgrown or reversed
- Inability to learn or achieve

How can the professor help?

To enhance the student's learning experience and increase the effectiveness of the course material and instruction, we suggest the following strategies. Please keep in mind that these are only general recommendations meant to support other accommodations.

Strategies:

- Keep instructions as brief and uncomplicated as possible
- Define course material and requirements clearly and in both written and oral forms
- Present information using multiple senses by employing demonstrations, lab projects, audio & video presentations, etc.
- Break information into increments when teaching new tasks
- Allow time for clarification of intricate directions and essential information
- Provide study guides or review sessions for exams that emphasize format and content of the test
- Provide alternate ways for student to perform tasks (i.e. oral presentations)
- Encourage LD students to sit in the front row
- And most importantly, honor the student's right to privacy

Mobility Impairments

What are Mobility Impairments?

Mobility Impairments are most often caused by conditions present at birth, or as a result of an illness or physical injury. The abilities of students with mobility impairments vary widely depending on the age on onset, nature of the disease or injury, and response to present treatment. Mobility limitations may fluctuate with periods of remission and exacerbation. The best source of information regarding the student's functions and limitations is the student him/herself.

How can the professor help?

A student with a mobility impairment may or may not want assistance in a given situation, so ask the student before giving assistance and wait for a response. Listen to the instructions a student gives you because through their experience, the student most likely knows the safest and most efficient way to accomplish the task at hand. Be considerate of the extra time a student may need to speak or move, and allow the student to set his/her pace.

A wheelchair should be viewed as a personal-assistance device rather than something the student is "confined" to. It is also considered part of the student's personal space, therefore, do not lean on or touch the chair and do not push the chair unless asked to do so.

Students with mobility impairments may also want to sit near the door so they do not have to weave through crowded aisles. Students who use wheelchairs will need adequate floor space so they can park without blocking exits and the flow of traffic. Some students may prefer to get out of their wheelchair and sit at a desk. Using a wheelchair on a part-time basis does not mean that a student is "faking" a disability. It is usually a means to conserve energy and move about more quickly.

Classes that are taught in a laboratory setting may need special modifications of the workstations to permit a student to work adequately with the materials and access the lab in a safe manner.

If the class involves field trips, special efforts should be made to ensure that the destination is wheelchair accessible and accessible enough for students with other mobility impairments.

Each student's functional limitations may differ, thus, when appropriate, the professor should be flexible with deadlines that require a student to access libraries or off campus sites. Grant the student the same anonymity as other students in the class and do not point out the alternate arrangements.

Psychological Disorders

What are Psychological Disorders?

A psychological disorder is an invisible disability that may affect people of all ages. Limitations are not usually intellectual in nature, although the age of onset may affect the extent and type of disruption of learning and vocational goals.

A psychological disability reflects a mental condition that interferes with a major life activity. Examples include: major depression, Bipolar disorder, obsessive/compulsive disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder. There are exceptions of conditions identified in the Americans with Disabilities Act (28 CFR 35.1040). These exceptions include diagnoses such as gender disorders, compulsive gambling, kleptomania, pyromania, and substance abuse.

FUNCTIONAL LIMITATIONS

AFFECTIVE

- Lack of affect.
- Feelings of anxiety or fear.
- Depressed mood.
- Feeling worthless.
- Inappropriate guilt.
- Irritability or outbursts of anger.

COGNITIVE

- Short term memory problems
- Time perception and planning difficulties.
- Extreme self-absorption.
- Concentration problems.
- Difficulties with screening environmental stimuli.
- Distractibility
- Recurrent suicidal ideation

BEHAVIORAL/PHYSICAL

- Impulsiveness.
- Repetitive motion.
- Speech may be rambling, halting, weak, pressured or incoherent.
- Muscle tension
- Pacing
- Fatigue or loss of energy.
- Sleep disturbance (difficulty falling or staying asleep).

SOCIAL

- Lack of support system
- Interpersonal conflict.
- Detachment or estrangement from others.

SIDE EFFECTS OF MEDICATION

- Drowsiness
- Thirst
- Blurred vision
- Hand tremors

How can the professor help?

Instructional strategies include:

- Spend extra time with the student during office hours when necessary, and assist the student with planning and time management.
- Be flexible with deadlines when possible.
- Permit the student to tape record lectures.
- Give advance notice of assignments and clearly define course requirements, the dates of exams, and when assignments are due; provide advance notice of any changes.
- When in doubt about how to assist the student, ask him or her.
- Allow the student the same anonymity as other students (i.e. avoid pointing out the student or the alternative arrangements to the rest of the class)
- Encourage student to discuss functional limits.
- Give immediate and honest feedback when behavior is inappropriate. Suggest acceptable behavior. Set clear boundaries and goals with the student.

Speech Impairments

What are Speech Impairments?

The cause of speech impairments can vary greatly due to the fact they may be caused by several different things. A hearing loss, illness, injury, and congenital or psychological conditions most often cause speech impairments. Speech impairments range from problems with voice strength and articulation to an inability to speak at all.

Many students with speech impairments have had some form of speech therapy at some point in their life unless the impairment is recent. The most common impairments are stuttering, chronic hoarseness, difficulty in evoking an appropriate word or term, and esophageal speech which results from a laryngectomy.

Students with speech impairments are often uncomfortable with speaking in class and may be reluctant to do so at all. New situations often make the student anxious and cause the speech impairment to resurface even when they appear to have adjusted well.

How can the professor help?

The professor should strongly encourage self-expression but be careful not to pressure the student to speak. Give the student the opportunity to participate in class discussions as much as possible, even if extra time is necessary. However, take into consideration the fact that speaking in front of a group of people can be an agonizing experience for the student.

Below is a list of recommended instructional strategies that the professor may find helpful when assisting a student with speech impairments. Remember these are only suggestions and when in doubt on how to help a student, ask him or her how you can best be of assistance.

Strategies:

- Encourage participation, but do not require a student with a difficulty in communicating to speak in front of the class.
- Allow students who are unable to communicate verbally an alternate way to do so, either by means of a typewriter, word processor, sign board, or interpreter in class.
- If you do not understand what has been said, do not pretend to know; tell the student you do not understand and allow him/her to repeat it.

Visual Impairment

What is Visual Impairment?

Approximately 500,000 Americans have vision impairment to the point where they are considered "legally blind." However, there are several degrees of visual impairment.

1. Visual acuity 20/200: the average person can see up to 200 ft away, while the legally blind person can only see at 20 ft.
2. Low vision: vision that is limited or diminished and cannot be corrected by standard lenses.
3. Partial Sight: A person whose vision is impaired due to an illness, trauma, or degenerative syndrome.

Only 2 % of people with visual impairments are totally blind. Most people have some scope of vision.

Blind students have the ability to gain access to information through a variety of different methods. Students can use Braille, taped texts, readers, raised line drawings, talking computer terminals and other such equipment.

Partially sighted students have similar ways to access information. They may use material with larger print, magnifying devices, and large print computer terminals. Although some students are able to take notes in class by printing large letters, others may find it more helpful to tape record lectures or note takers.

How can the professor help?

In order to enhance the student's learning experience and increase the accessibility of the course material, we suggest the following strategies. Please be reminded that these are only general recommendations meant to support other accommodations.

Strategies:

- Have copies of the syllabus & other relevant course material ready 3 to 5 weeks in advance so documents are available for enlarging or Braille transcription.
- Arrange to provide student with alternate formats of the material. The student will advise you as to the format.
- Repeat aloud what is written on the board or on overheads.
- Keep a front row seat open for the student.
- Be flexible with deadlines if assignments are held up by the document conversion process.
- When in doubt, ask the student how you can best assist him or her.

It is important to remember that there is a wide range of abilities among visually impaired students. Some students may benefit where others do not from certain services. Most

students however will require some adaptations for taking exams. Such accommodations may include: Braille or large-print text, a reader, a scribe, or a computer. Students may also need extended time on tests, especially if they are reading the test themselves.

Disability-Related Resources on the Web

The following web sites are filled with helpful disability-related information. Please check back often, as we hope to update these links regularly. If you know of any other online resources that you think we should include here, or to report any broken link, please email [Students with Disabilities Services](#) and let us know.

Adaptive Technology

- [ABLEnet Inc., Products for children and adults with severe profound disabilities.](#)
- [Academic Software, Inc](#)
- [Adaptech Project Homepage](#)
- [Ai Squared: Leaders in Low Vision Software](#)
- [CAST - Center for Applied Special Technology](#)
- [Closing the Gap: Computer Technology in Special Education and Rehabilitation](#)
- [Computing Out Loud](#)
- [EASI Equal Access to Software and Information](#)
- [Inspiration visual thinking and learning software](#)
- [IntelliTools, Accessible Technology For Learning](#)
- [Laureate Learning Systems - Special Needs and Language Development Software](#)
- [Matching Person and Technology \(MPT\) Assessment Process](#)
- [ReadPlease--free text to speech software](#)
- [The Screen Magnifiers Homepage](#)
- [TRACEBASE Main Menu](#)

Alternative Text

- [American Printing House for the Blind](#)
- [Bartleby.com: Great Books Online](#)
- [Home Page of the DAISY Consortium](#)
- [Louis Database of Accessible Materials APH](#)
- [Open eBook](#)
- [netLibrary - Home](#)
- [Recording For The Blind & Dyslexic](#)
- [Rocket ebook](#)
- [Texas Text Exchange](#)

Career and Employment

- [Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers \(DBTACs\)](#)
- [Global Applied Disability Research Network for Employment and Training \(GLADNET\)](#)
- [The Inclusion Network - Working To Build A More Inclusive World by engaging people with disabilities in all our daily activities](#)

Disability-Related Information for Educators

- [AHEAD - Association on Higher Education and Disability Home Page](#)
- [ASL as a Foreign Language](#)
- [Foreign Language Teacher's Guide to LD](#)
- [Reasonable Accommodations: What Employers and Educators Should Know](#)

General Disability-Related Information

- [American Association of People with Disabilities](#)
- [Center On Disabilities](#)
- [Disability Access Information and Support \(DAIS\) Home Page](#)
- [Disability Etiquette Handbook](#)
- [Disability Mall: Products for People with Disabilities](#)
- [Disability Resources Monthly \(DRM\) Guide to Disability Resources on the Internet](#)
- [Disability Rights and Activism](#)
- [Disability Statistics Center](#)
- [Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology \(DO-IT\) Program](#)
- [Family Village Disability Resources](#)
- HEATH Resource Center
- [MossRehab Resource Net](#) (accessible travel, disability fact sheets, ADA, newsgroups, etc.)
- [National Organization for Rare Disorders \(NORD\)](#)
- [National Organization on Disability](#)
- SERI - Special Education Resources on the Internet
- [WebABLE!](#)
- [Welcome To Access-Able Travel Source](#)

Legal Resources

- Access ADA
- [ADA Homepage: U.S. Department of Justice](#)
- [ADA Q & A Section 504 & Postsecondary Education](#)
- [Americans with Disabilities Act Document Center](#)
- [Auxiliary Aids and Services for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Full Text of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#)
- [Full Text of the Family Education and Rights to Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)
- [Full Text of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#)
- [Full Text of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#)
- [Section 504 Fact Sheet](#)
- [Office of Civil Rights](#)
- [Special Education Law - Section 504 and IDEA 97 Compared by Rosenfeld](#)

Religion and Disability

- Center for the Study of Religion and Disability
- [DISC BBS--Disabilities Concerns](#)
- [Family Village Worship Center](#)
- [JAF Ministries--The Disability Outreach of Joni Eareckson Tada](#)
- [Mariposa Ministry--By and For Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church](#)
- [Religion & Disability Program](#)

Resources for Specific Disabilities

Asperger Syndrome

- [Asperger Syndrome](#)
- [Online Asperger Syndrome Information and Support](#)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

- [ADD Warehouse](#)
- [ADHD Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [ADHD Article from NIMH](#)
- [Children and Adults with Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder](#)
- [National Attention Deficit Disorder Association](#)
- [One ADD Place](#)

Blind and Visually Impaired

- [A Guide to Internet resources about visual impairments](#)
- [American Council of the Blind](#)
- [American Printing House for the Blind Promoting Independence for People Who Are Blind Or Visually Impaired](#)
- [Blindness Resource Center](#)
- [National Federation of the Blind](#)
- [National Library Service for the Blind & Physically Handicapped \(Library of Congress\)](#)

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

- [CFS-CFIDS-ME-... Reference Guide© v1.32](#)
- [Chronic Fatigue Syndrome](#)

Deaf and Hearing Impaired

- [Alternatives in Education for the Hearing Impaired \(AEHI\)](#)
- [American Speech-Language and Hearing Association](#)
- [Info to Go--The National Deaf Education Network and Clearinghouse at Gallaudet University](#)

- [National Association of the Deaf](#)
- [Postsecondary Education Programs Network \(PEPNet\)](#)
- [The Deaf Resource Library](#)

Dyslexia

- [Davis Dyslexia Association](#)
- [Dyslexics.Net - Free Information For Dyslexia Sufferers](#)
- [The International Dyslexia Association Web Site](#)
- [Reading from Scratch: A Phonics Reading Program for Dyslexia](#)

Learning Disabilities

- [LD Info: LD and Practical LD Information](#)
- [LD OnLine: Learning Disabilities Information and Resources](#)
- [LD Resources](#)
- [Learning Disabilities Association of America](#)
- [National Center for Learning Disabilities](#)

Epilepsy

- [Epilepsy Foundation](#)

Psychological Disorders

- [Andrew's Depression Page](#)
- [Bipolar Disorder...Pendulum Resources](#)
- [Depression.com](#)
- [Mental Health Net](#)
- [Psych Central Dr. John GROHOL's Mental Health Page](#)

Study Tips and Learning Strategies

- [Learning Strategies Database](#)
- [Links to a Better Education](#)
- [Mind Tools - Memory Techniques and Mnemonics](#)
- [Sites to Promote Academic Success](#)
- [Study Skills Self-Help](#)