


Classroom Considerations and Strategies to Support Young Learners



General Considerations

- ✓ Young children learn best when they feel safe, cared for, and accepted

 **Tip:** Working with young children, always remember to provide positive affirmation

- ✓ Ensure that student(s) basic needs are met; students are not “available” for learning if they are hungry, sick, or overly tired

- ✓ Ensure the classroom is well designed for learning and is not overly stimulating or cluttered

 **Tip:** Plan ahead to ensure there are varied learning stations that are inviting for the student(s) and allow for activities to take place

- ✓ Consider the developmental and chronological age of the student

 **Tip:** With younger students, consider less structured and more naturalistic or play based approaches to teaching


- ✓ Establish norms, routines, schedules and procedures, and practice rules that pertain to class norms and routines

 **Tip:** Practicing rules routinely during “Circle Time” can be a fun way for students to learn them so that they become part of their repertoire

- ✓ Make sure directions given are clear and not over-spoken or too complex


 **Tip:** Ensure directions are delivered in a clear manner and are expressed concretely in language that the student understands

- Consider English Language Learners and pre-teach vocabulary as needed

 **Tip:** Provide directions at a pace that does not overwhelm the student(s) and allow time for the student(s) to process information prior to moving on with instruction or giving multi-step directions

- Check for student understanding of directions given

- ✓ Pair visuals with verbal directions

 **Tip:** Young children typically benefit when visuals are made available and paired with directions or rules - visuals can also serve as reminders and help children feel organized and ready to learn.





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When Planning Lessons



- ✓ Organize lesson plan instruction to minimize interruptions
- ✓ Select activities that are engaging and elicit student(s) responses for active learning
- ✓ Start with easier/preferred tasks and review before teaching new skills, placing new “demands” on student(s), or moving to more challenging learning tasks


 **Tip:** Schedule new and/or more challenging learning tasks during peak attention times rather than later in the day when students may have less energy for learning

 **Tip:** Tie new information and lessons to previous learning and/or areas of student(s) interest so that student(s) form connections to the material being presented/taught.

During Instruction





- ✓ Gain the attention the student(s) prior to giving directions

 **Tip:** Call the student(s) by their name and *establish eye contact before giving directions and/or give instruction within close proximity to the student while checking for understanding

- *Do consider neurodivergent and culturally diverse learners and their comfort level with making eye contact

- ✓ Use an encouraging tone of voice that draws children into your lesson and instruction
- ✓ Provide frequent feedback in the form of praise/encouragement

 **Tip:** Pay attention to even the smallest of behaviors (verbal and nonverbal) and respond to them appropriately (considering the function of the behavior); young children benefit from receiving a lot of praise and encouragement!

 **Tip:** Use specific and descriptive language when giving praise (i.e. Rather than saying “Nice sharing with Samantha!”, say “I like the way you shared the apples and bananas with Samantha while playing in the kitchen, it was nice of you to share that fruit with Samantha!”

- ✓ Frequently model directions while using lesson-based items and use gestures and/or pair visuals with your words during instruction
- ✓ Position yourself to make eye contact and interactions easier for the student(s)

 **Tip:** Get down at their level



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When Addressing Inattentive Students



✓ Provide movement breaks and/or plan physical activities throughout the instructional day (this helps student(s) increase their ability to focus)

✓ Remove visual distractors from student's field of vision



Tip: Pay attention to the physical environment of the classroom to ensure it is not cluttered and minimize “distracting” or overly busy classroom displays

✓ Provide “choices” that allow the student to have some control over their learning and behavior

✓ Consider using ****prompts**

**Be cognizant of student(s) Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) since use of prompts may be specified in the IEP document and/or goals

- Pictorial prompts - provide a picture and/or pictures of tasks in sequence
- Positional prompts - may assist with placement of items
- Use Gestures and point



Tip: Point to and/or /touch what you are talking about within close proximity (rather than pointing to things across the room)



Tip: Try moving your finger from in front of the student's face to an object, pairing your distal point with a verbalization (i.e. “look”)

- Verbal prompt - use spoken words, sounds or provide hints or clues
- Physical Assist - partial or full - may include a tap, touch, or hand over hand assistance

✓ Consider opportunities for group or paired learning, especially if student is socially motivated

✓ Consider use of a timer to help with time management

✓ Use First/Then strategies and visuals

✓ Use contingencies and/or contract with students to give them short breaks or periods of time to engage in preferred activities after completing work

✓ Use ****preferential seating**

**Be cognizant of student(s) Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) since use of preferential seating may be specified in the IEP document and/or goals

- Have the student sit in a location where they are most likely to stay focused on instruction, where distractions are kept to a minimum, and/or where you can readily provide them with cues and/or or pair them with other students who model desired learning behavior

✓ **Stay Positive! Children learn best from adults who are positive, optimistic, and encouraging. These traits also instill confidence, reflect a healthy self-image, and result in less challenges with behavior as students learn.**



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