

Tips for Helping Students with Special Needs

Each student that you work with is special. No two people learn in the same way. When we are planning our lesson for our religious education class, it may be necessary to incorporate specific strategies to help students who may need accommodation or modification. *Accommodations change how a student learns the material. Modifications change what a student is taught or expected to learn.*

This is not an exhaustive list, just a few tips! 😊

1. Get to know your students by having parents/guardians fill out a sheet about their child. Then have the students fill out a sheet asking what they enjoy, what is difficult for them, what they like to do for fun, and what are great motivators for them. These can be multiple choice if you like!
(I have trouble with: _reading _writing_ working with others_ staying in my seat etc.) Let them know that you won't be upset if they need extra help, which is why you are asking! This should be kept confidential.
2. Give students who struggle with transitions, anxiety, or off-task behavior the agenda before class. This could be sent to the parent to review with the child via email or given the previous week if possible.
All students could benefit from this!
3. Small student tasks like collecting or handing out papers or supplies can help students who struggle with seat work or on-task behavior. Also, a 1-minute stretch break or short fun physical activity can help break things up. Example: Ask a few either-or questions and have students quickly move from the middle of the room to the side they choose. (i.e. Coke or Pepsi? Dogs or cats? Hot dog or hamburger? Chocolate or Vanilla? Marvel or DC? Xbox or PlayStation?)
4. Asking students to read during class? Prepare readers by assigning their passage the week before so that they can practice at home. If books are not taken home, prepare a photocopy for struggling students. This should be given to the parent/guardian or discreetly to the student. If possible, it could be sent via email to parents/guardians.
5. Crossword puzzles or word searches can be difficult for students with reading disabilities. If possible, have students work together in pairs if you know that a student struggles. Have students match words with definitions or, better yet, pictures showing the word or the word in action if possible. One option is to have students work independently for a few minutes, then give them time to work together. This will allow struggling students time to try the work but will allow them to finish with the group. Make sure all students have marked the answers on his or her paper for study purposes.
6. Flashcards are an excellent way to study terms. It may help students to make the cards and apply puffy paint to the words, use colored flashcards, make them on fine grit sandpaper with paint or markers. Students can trace over the sandpaper with their fingers to "feel" the words.
7. Games like trash can basketball (with a wadded paper ball), with questions or definitions to earn a "shot," group "Jeopardy" or other games are great ways to "study" for upcoming quizzes or tests. Students with high anxiety who do not wish to take a turn can still learn by listening. Give a copy of the asked questions with multiple choice answers after the game. See if the students can answer them! Provide the questions for struggling students to fill in during the game or completed questions and answers to take home for study if needed.

8. Never call a student out who is struggling with a task or says they can't do it. It may be more than just a lack of motivation. It may be fear, lack of skill, or a true disability. They may just need a short break to be able to take on a new task to better understand what is being asked of them.
9. Modifications such as reducing the amount required (sentences or paragraphs read or written, or the number of questions to be done), or eliminating or changing the required material, should always be discussed with the parent/guardian. They may wish to help the child with the extra work at home, or they may just like to be informed that their child is struggling to keep up with the amount of work assigned.
10. If ALL or most of your average students are struggling with the workload, task completion, or doing not doing well on tests or quizzes, that is an instructor issue and you must reexamine your methods, the tasks, questions etc.
11. Don't always assume that students should be at a specific level or have specific knowledge just because the text assumes it.
12. Remember all kids are different, but they all have their own unique gifts. If you can figure out what they are, you can teach that child!



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Compiled by Mrs. Julie Feinauer, Diocese of Covington, Director, Office of Safe Environment