

Verbal and Non-verbal Communication Skills

Strategies

Modification to the Learning Environment

- Be aware of vocabulary demands of tasks. Teach and reinforce new or unfamiliar vocabulary as it arises.
- Consider reducing the rate and pace of lesson delivery and reducing language demands of tasks - for example, by decreasing length of sentences used in oral instruction and/or written texts.
- Ensure your language is clear and that it is consistent when explaining concepts.
- Explain complex language or concepts and illustrate with examples.
- Supplement verbal instructions with visual cues and demonstration.
- Use peer mentoring and buddy systems within class.
- Consider seating arrangements (proximity to supportive peers, proximity to teacher, position in relation to windows and doors, and consistency of seating).
- Use visual prompts and cues within the classroom setting to promote understanding, such as visual timetables and pictorial representation of subjects.
- Where possible, provide a calm classroom environment, keeping disruptions to a minimum.
- Use of reader/scribe/ICT as appropriate.
- Take into account sensory preferences and be aware of how sensory factors such as noise or visual stimuli may affect communication and interaction.

Establishing Structures and Routines

- Use visual timetable to support understanding of predictable routines and reduce anxiety.
- Use visual cues to support understanding of changes to routines to reduce anxiety.
- Provide 'get out of class early' passes for those who find transition times, such as between classes and end of day, difficult*.
- Use consistent, clear classroom procedures, and prepare fully for any changes to regular routines.
- Check understanding regularly by asking learners to summarise what they have heard.
- Encourage use of word banks, subject glossaries and personal dictionaries.
- Use ICT that supports literacy (e.g. specific computer programmes for literacy).
- Provide support at break times to support social communication*.
- Ensure homework is written down (consider giving printed copy).
- Set clear expectations of what is required in a writing task (e.g. full sentences or bullets, specific headings, length of piece, etc.).
- Use consistent roles in group work (e.g. note maker, reporter, discussion leader, etc.).

Approaches to Enhance Motivation

- Consider literacy demands and differentiate appropriately to ensure engagement.
- Facilitate use of first language when appropriate.
- Use learners interests when designing tasks.
- Encourage learners to monitor their own understanding and to ask for clarification when needed.
- Use effective questioning - for example, consider using graded and targeted questions. Give adequate 'thinking time' before expecting a verbal response.
- Use experiential or active learning techniques, such as building models or drawing, to encourage engagement.
- Use reinforcement, repetition and rephrasing.
- Facilitate positive social interaction (such as peer mentoring) or by building on learners own social groups within the wider school*.
- Give general encouragement for desired communication.
- Practise and prepare for change and/or new experiences.

*See page 70