



DiverseMind

GUIDE AND WORKSHOPS FOR TEACHERS

time to learn



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Table Of Contents

03

Introduction

06

Chapter 1 - Autism spectrum

17

Chapter 2 - Sensory processing disorder

28

Chapter 3 - Specific learning difficulties

39

Chapter 4 - Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

50

Chapter 5 - Specific language disorders

62

References



CONTEXT AND MEANING OF NEURODIVERSITY



Introduction

Neurodiversity is a phenomenon that is becoming increasingly visible in society. It refers to the diversity within the human population in terms of brain development and functioning and the associated ways of experiencing the world and of functioning at school, university, work and in relationships. This diversity is caused by both genetic variation and environmental factors.

The awareness and knowledge of neurodiversity opens up new perspectives on how to think about other people and social relationships, and often also about oneself. The awareness and knowledge of neurodiversity opens up new perspectives on how to think about other people and social relationships, and often also about oneself. The concept of neurodiversity frees us from a purely medical understanding of the spectrum of autism, ADHD, specific learning difficulties and other such neurological diversities. Instead, it emphasises the importance of adapting the environment to different individual needs and the role that this adaptation plays in the development and realisation of individual life goals and, consequently, social goals and processes. It is estimated that 15% to 20% of the population have styles of action, feeling and cognition that go beyond common perceptions.



Neurodiversity was coined in the 1990s by the Australian sociologist Judy Singer. The meaning of the term is still evolving and can be interpreted in different ways. It can be understood as an approach that assumes that we are all neurodiverse. These differences are manifested in cognitive and mental functioning, in the areas of communication, behaviour, sociability, interests, learning methods, emotional self-regulation and others, while at the same time moving away from pathologising these differences.



Neurodiverse people with unique ways of thinking, perceiving and behaving have unique perspectives to offer that can contribute to the development of society. Imagination, creativity, meticulousness and the ability to focus on details are extraordinary gifts for the world. Unfortunately, neurodivergent people too often face a lack of understanding, and their atypicality is seen as a weakness, a disease, often laziness or lack of intelligence. Acceptance and understanding of neuroatypicality, individual needs and challenges can contribute to a change in thinking and help create a more sensitive and integrated society in which every person is treated with respect and greater empathy. With increasing awareness and the number of scientific studies, we are able to better distinguish what is actually a neurological disorder and what should be considered a variant of the norm. All that is needed is for individuals to be aware of their particular predispositions and accept limitations in certain areas. This is a challenge for modern societies, educational programmes and employers. How far will we be able to make proper use of scientific advances and increased awareness of neurodiversity?



CHAPTER 1

AUTISM SPECTRUM



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WHAT IS AUTISM SPECTRUM?

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder, which means that autistic people develop differently to typical children. The brain of autistic people works in a different way from the very beginning of life. This is why the development of people with autism is unique. It is not a disease and cannot be cured, but it can be worked on so that children with autism can develop and adapt to a group as well as possible.

Autism is not the same in every person, but is a spectrum of different characteristics. People on the autism spectrum have very different behaviours and their severity.

The developmental disorder resulting from autism affects the way these people perceive the world, communicate and establish social relationships. The first signs of autism usually appear in early childhood and its diagnosis is based on specific diagnostic criteria defined by DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) and ICD-10/ICD-11 (International Classification of Diseases).

Causes of autism

The causes of autism cannot yet be conclusively determined, but research suggests that both genetic and environmental factors can play a role. There is evidence that certain genetic mutations can promote the development of ASD. In addition, environmental factors such as advanced parental age, pregnancy complications or exposure to toxins can increase the risk of autism.



Characteristics of autism

Autism affects several key areas of a child's functioning, including:

1

Communication

Some people with autism do not speak very well, but use other forms of communication, such as pointing to pictures in books or writing. People who are highly proficient in speech use speech in a way that may seem unusual or rigid. People on the autism spectrum often repeat the same words or phrases (this is called echolalia).

Symptoms of autism in communication include

- facial expressions not matching the statements
- difficulty interpreting facial expressions, tone of voice and gestures of others
- unusual tone of voice or speech rhythm, e.g. pronouncing every sentence as a question
- repeating words or sentences, so-called echolalia, e.g. repeating a question instead of answering it
- difficulty in communicating needs or desires
- taking statements too literally - not understanding a sense of humour, irony, metaphors

2

Social interaction

People with autism have difficulty understanding other people's behaviour. It is often difficult for them to understand how other people feel and what they have in mind. It is challenging for them to make friends and get along with people in everyday situations.

Symptoms of autism in terms of social interaction include

- young children do not try to interest their parents in what is interesting to them, e.g. they do not point at things that are interesting.
- little interest in people or lack of awareness of their presence.
- avoidance of eye contact.
- difficulty initiating contact, engaging in group activities, making friends.
- lack of role-playing and pretending when playing
- difficulty in understanding or talking about feelings



3

Behaviour and interests – repetitive behaviour, routine activities and specific, often intense interests in certain topics are characteristic. This can include stereotypical movements (e.g. waving arms, rocking the body), persistent attachment to a specific routine, lack of acceptance of change or fascination with specific objects or topics.

Symptoms of autism in terms of rigid behaviour include

- attachment to routine, e.g. a child insists on walking exactly the same route to school or eating from the same plate.
- difficulty adapting to changes in schedule or environment, e.g. rearranging furniture, changing the time of leaving for school.
- atypical attachment to toys or objects, e.g. keys, light switches, threads.
- interest in a narrow field of knowledge, e.g. tram timetables, dinosaurs, numbers, specific brands of vacuum cleaners
- spending a lot of time arranging toys in a specific way, observing moving objects (e.g. fan, washing machine), concentrating on a specific part of an object (e.g. car wheel)





4

Hypersensitivity or sensory under-responsiveness – Many children with autism show atypical reactions to sensory stimuli such as sounds, light, textures or smells. This can lead to an overreaction to stimuli (e.g. covering the ears when there is noise) or, on the contrary, to them being barely noticed (e.g. no reaction to pain).

What can sensory difficulties indicate?

- covering the ears when certain sounds are heard
- aversion to being hugged or touched or, conversely, seeking affection by hugging, e.g. covering oneself with heavy duvets, hugging tightly, sitting in confined spaces
- search for sensory experiences, e.g. bouncing up and down vigorously, staring at light
- strong reactions to stimuli, e.g. crying when touched specific texture of an object, e.g. loose things - sand, groats, rice

Sometimes, people who do not have any visible movement problems and whose hands and feet are physically healthy can have problems with performing everyday movements, such as holding a pen or jumping over a skipping rope. They may feel as if they do not have full control over their body. Some autistic people experience these difficulties.





WAYS OF IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING THESE STUDENTS

To diagnose autism it is necessary to take into account the various behaviours of the child. The first step is, of course, observation, taking notes and then interviewing the parents and taking psychological tests with a specialist. It is very important that the intervention and diagnosis is made as soon as possible, because this is the crucial step from which everything starts and it is of great importance for the child's development, enabling the implementation and tailoring of therapy to their individual needs.



Support

Supporting pupils with autism requires, above all, an individual approach and the adaptation of teaching methods to the specific child. It is crucial to observe the child constantly and to adapt the learning pace flexibly. It is useful to use a variety of learning materials and visual aids. This makes it much easier for children with autism to acquire knowledge, concentrate their attention and engage more willingly in activities.

The most important skills to be developed are communication and social skills. Teachers should use different forms of communication, such as speech, gestures or images, to reach such a student and check what is easiest for them to read and what needs to be reinforced.



Playing and doing activities with other children helps with integration and teaches appropriate social behaviour (e.g. playing charades or guessing using clues from classmates). Children with autism need abstract concepts and metaphors to be explained, e.g. through images or the use of opposites. It is also important to constantly adapt the language of instructions to each child with autism separately. It is recommended to compliment the student as often as possible, specifically describing what they did well.



In order to properly monitor the progress of autistic students, it is worth using individual educational and therapeutic programmes (IPET). PET is developed for the period for which a special education needs assessment has been issued, but the programme can be modified as a result of a multi-specialist assessment of the student's functioning (WOPFU) to adapt to the student's changing needs. Teamwork is also crucial here – parents, teachers and specialists and their constant contact, exchange of knowledge and mutual adaptation to the child, his or her needs and problems.



Introduction of additional forms of support

Depending on the needs of the autistic child, it may be necessary to use additional forms of support, e.g. individual classes or therapies. A support teacher can also be an invaluable support for the student. Such a person can help to adapt teaching materials and methods, monitor the student's progress, support their social and emotional development, and react in situations of conflict with peers.

To support children with autism even more, it is worth testing behavioural, speech therapy, sensory therapies and specialised educational programmes.



STRATEGIES FOR CREATING INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

The integration of children with autism at school is based on creating an inclusive culture where every child, regardless of their needs, is accepted and supported.

Adaptation of the learning environment

The appropriate space is very important for the well-being of children with autism. It must be a room that they already know well, which is clearly arranged and marked for them, and it is important to remember not to introduce changes in them, and if it is necessary, to prepare the child well in advance, explaining exactly what will be changed and when. It is a good idea for lessons to be conducted by the same teachers and that children do not change their desks. It can be helpful to present daily or lesson plans verbally and support them with written or pictorial form. The child can have such a plan on their desk and tick off the activities they have completed.

The sensory needs of children on the autism spectrum should not be forgotten either. It is important to minimise stimuli that may cause discomfort, such as noise (e.g. the sound of the bell and the telephone), bright light or strong smells. If the child is hypersensitive to smells, it is worth avoiding the use of strong perfumes, and also allowing the child to have objects that calm them down.



Peer support

Children on the autism spectrum have difficulty making friends with their peers. Unfortunately, most children with autism experience rejection at school. Children want to establish good relationships with their peers, but they need help to do so. This is why the role of the teacher is crucial. The teacher will not only prepare the other children to behave appropriately and understand their autistic classmate, but will also support and guide the autistic child so that they can express their thoughts and intentions in the best possible way and participate fully in school life. It is important to keep building acceptance and empathy among peers, as this is crucial for the proper development of children with autism.

Extending the time to process information

Children with autism process information that enters the brain in a different way. Therefore, they may need a little more time to react to a command or answer a question. Asking too many questions or rushing to answer them can make them feel lost, overwhelmed or anxious to escape the conversation. Allowing more time for autistic children is key to creating inclusive conditions.





TEACHER SELF-DEVELOPMENT WORK, TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, SAMPLE STATEMENTS/BEHAVIOURS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RESPONSES FOR TEACHERS

Dealing with problematic behaviour

Children with autism may display challenging behaviour due to sensory overload, misunderstanding of the situation or communication difficulties.

How to react?

➡ Instead of punishing, look for the cause of the behaviour.

➡ Apply the 'instead of' strategy - suggest an alternative solution.

➡ Provide the child with a space to calm down.

Behaviour	Wrong reaction	Good reaction
Sensory overload	Stop shouting, you're disturbing everyone	Want to go somewhere quiet? We can put on noise-cancelling headphones
Reluctance to change routine	You have to adapt	Today, we have a change of plan – instead of maths, we're going on a trip. Here is a picture that shows what will change.
Difficulties in working in a group	You have to adapt to the group	You can work alongside a group and gradually join in

TEACHER SELF-DEVELOPMENT WORK, TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, SAMPLE STATEMENTS/BEHAVIOURS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RESPONSES FOR TEACHERS

Work on appropriate communication

When communicating with children with autism, it is crucial to reach them and be clearly understood. Therefore, it is worth changing your habits and working on:

- Speaking in short and simple sentences.
- Avoiding metaphors and irony.
- Use visual aids (pictograms, illustrations, gestures).
- Allow your child extra time to process information.



Exercise 1



RECOGNISING THE STRENGTHS OF SUCH PUPILS AND BUILDING ON THEM

Superpower Poster

1

Introduction (5 mins)

The teacher starts the conversation by saying:

- 'Each of us has something we are good at. Some are great at counting, others at drawing, and others are masters at remembering facts.'
- 'Today, we will try to discover our superpowers, or strengths, and think about how we can use them!'

2

Brainstorming - Examples of strengths (5 min)

The teacher writes examples of different skills on the board:

Logical thinking

Drawing

Sense of rhythm

Perception

Memorising facts

Saying interesting things

Helping others

Imagination

Each student can add something of their own.



Exercise 1



RECOGNISING THE STRENGTHS OF SUCH PUPILS AND BUILDING ON THEM

3

Individual work (10 min)

Each student receives a worksheet with questions:

- What do I like to do?
- What comes easily to me?
- What do others ask me to help with?
- What brings me joy?

(Students can write, draw or use symbols).

4

Create a Superpower Poster (10 min)

- Each student draws a picture of themselves as a hero with a superpower (e.g. 'Master of Puzzles', 'King of Memory', 'Imagination Artist').
- They write their strengths under the picture.
- The teacher can help by suggesting: 'I noticed that you are great at counting, maybe that's your superpower?'

5

Presentation and discussion (10–15 mins)

- Students who are willing to do so present their posters and talk about their strengths.
- The teacher summarises: 'Now we know that everyone has something special! We can help each other by using our superpowers.'



Exercise 2



RECOGNISING AND DEALING WITH WEAKNESSES

Brainstorming Boxes

1

Introduction (5 mins)

The teacher starts the conversation:

- Each of us remembers something that is difficult for us. That's normal!
- But we can find ways to deal with it. Today we will try to do it together.
- Examples of difficulties:
 - 'I don't like it when the classroom is noisy.'
 - 'Sometimes I don't know how to start a conversation.'
 - 'New situations stress me out.'

2

Individual work (10 min)

Each student receives a piece of paper with two questions:

1. What do I find difficult?

(Students can write, draw or tick ready-made answers, e.g. 'noise', 'many people', 'incomprehensible questions', 'new places')

2. What can help me?

(Students choose or write down solutions, e.g. 'I use headphones', 'I ask the teacher', 'I have a daily schedule', 'I take breaks')



Exercise 2



RECOGNISING AND DEALING WITH WEAKNESSES

3

Working in pairs / small groups (10 min)

- Students (if they want to) can share their challenges and ideas on how to deal with them.
- The teacher emphasises: 'We all have different ways - we can learn from each other.'

4

Creating an 'Ideas Box' (10–15 min)

- The class writes down ways of dealing with difficulties on the board/poster together.
- Examples of strategies:
 - 'If I have a problem, I can ask for help.'
 - 'If the noise annoys me, I can use headphones.'
 - 'If I get stressed, I can take a few deep breaths.'



Exercise 3



SOFT SKILLS TECHNIQUES (FOR TEACHERS) TO SUPPORT THESE STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM AND AT HOME

Mirror Reactions – Soft Skills Training

Objective: To develop the teacher's soft skills, such as empathy, active listening, patience and the ability to adapt communication to the autistic student.

For whom: Teacher (can practise alone or with a student).

Duration: 15–30 minutes

Materials: Mirror or phone camera, list of typical school situations, pen and paper.

Preparation (5 minutes)

The teacher chooses one of the situations that is difficult for them and that often arises when working with a pupil with autism.

- Examples of situations:

- 1 The pupil does not respond to instructions and looks away.
- 2 The pupil avoids eye contact and appears withdrawn.
- 3 The pupil starts repeating one sentence or behaviour over and over again.
- 4 The pupil gets upset when something does not go according to plan.
- 5 The pupil ignores the rules of a social conversation (e.g. interrupts, changes the subject).



Exercise 3



SOFT SKILLS TECHNIQUES (FOR TEACHERS) TO SUPPORT THESE STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM AND AT HOME

Practice in front of a mirror or camera (20 minutes)

- The teacher looks at their reflection (or records themselves) and simulates calm, empathetic responses to a chosen situation.
- They repeat sentences out loud, controlling their tone of voice, facial expressions and body language.
- Examples of responses to practise:



Situation 1: A student does not respond to instructions and looks away.

Reaction exercise: 'I can see that it's hard for you to concentrate. Do you need more time or a different explanation?'



Situation 2: A student gets upset when the timetable changes.

Reaction exercise: 'I know you don't like changes. Would you like me to show you the new plan on a piece of paper so you can prepare?'



Situation 3: The student avoids eye contact.

Response exercise: 'You don't have to look me in the eye if it's difficult for you. You can look at my hands or the board.'

Reflection and recording of conclusions (5 minutes)

After the exercise, the teacher records his/her observations:

- Which reactions seemed natural?
- Was his/her tone of voice and facial expression calm and supportive?
- Which sentences caused difficulty?





CHAPTER 2

SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER



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WHAT IS SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER?

Sensory processing disorder (SPD) is a neurological condition in which the brain has difficulty processing sensory input from the five senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell) as well as proprioception (body awareness) and vestibular sense (balance and movement). It can lead to difficulties in daily life, affecting social interactions, learning, and emotional regulation.

Types of Sensory Processing Challenges:

1. Sensory Modulation Disorder (SMD) – difficulty with regulating responses to sensory input:

Sensory Over-Responsivity (Hypersensitivity)

- Overwhelmed by loud noises, bright lights, or certain textures
- Avoids messy activities like finger painting
- Strong reactions to tags on clothing or certain food textures

Sensory Under-Responsivity (Hyposensitivity)

- Doesn't notice pain, temperature changes, or name being called
- May not react to loud noises or strong smells
- Can appear unmotivated or sluggish

Sensory Seeking (Craving)

- Constantly moving, jumping, or spinning
- Enjoys strong flavors, bright lights, or deep pressure
- Frequently touches objects or people



2. Sensory-Based Motor Disorder (SBMD) – difficulty with movement and coordination:

Dyspraxia (Motor Planning Issues)

- Trouble with fine motor skills (writing, buttoning clothes)
- Clumsy, frequently bumps into objects
- Struggles to learn new movements

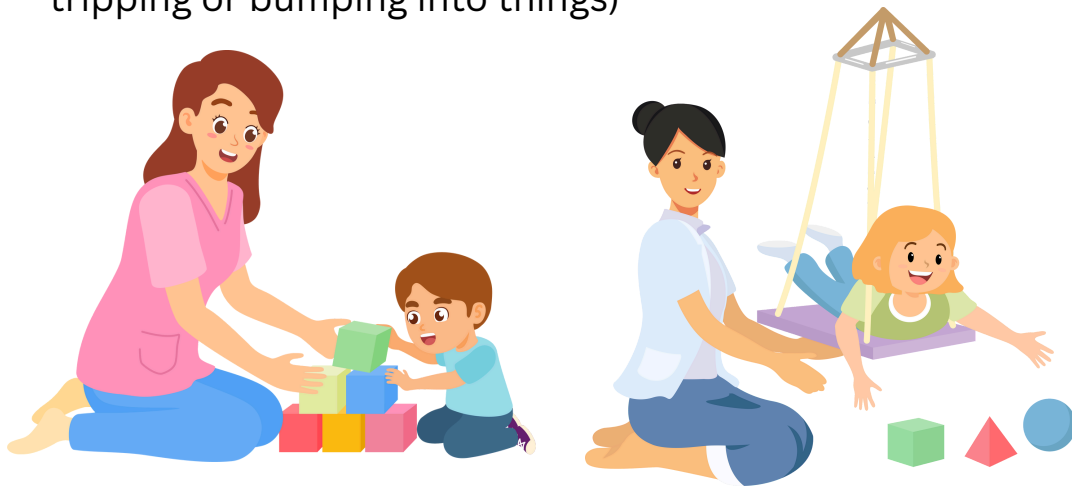
Postural Disorder

- Weak muscle tone, poor balance
- Easily fatigued and prefers to sit rather than stand
- Avoids playground activities or sports

3. Sensory Discrimination Disorder (SDD) – difficulty

distinguishing between different sensory inputs:

- Trouble identifying objects by touch alone (without looking)
- Difficulty differentiating sounds (e.g., mixing up similar words)
- Problems judging distances or depths (leading to frequent tripping or bumping into things)



SPD is often seen in children but can also affect adults. It commonly occurs alongside conditions like autism, ADHD, or anxiety disorders. While SPD is not officially recognized in the DSM-5 (the manual used for diagnosing mental health conditions), many occupational therapists specialize in helping individuals manage sensory challenges.

WAYS OF IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING THESE STUDENTS

Students with Sensory Processing Disorder may struggle with processing and responding to sensory information in ways that affect their learning and behavior. Here are common signs in different sensory areas:

1. Over-Responsivity (Hypersensitivity)

- Easily overwhelmed by loud noises, bright lights, or strong smells
- Avoids touch or certain textures (e.g., food, clothing)
- Distracted by background noise that others ignore
- Avoids crowded or chaotic environments

2. Under-Responsivity (Hyposensitivity)

- Seeks intense sensory experiences (e.g., spinning, jumping, crashing into things)
- Does not notice pain, temperature changes, or personal space boundaries
- Appears unmotivated or slow to respond to stimuli

3. Sensory-Seeking Behaviors

- Constantly moving, fidgeting, or touching objects
- Loves rough play or strong hugs
- Enjoys chewing on objects (clothing, pencils, etc.)



4. Motor Coordination Issues

- Struggles with fine motor skills (e.g., handwriting, buttoning clothes)
- Has difficulty with balance and coordination
- Avoids playground activities or sports

5. Emotional and Behavioral Challenges

- Easily frustrated or has frequent meltdowns
- Struggles with transitions and unexpected changes
- Difficulty with social interactions due to sensory sensitivities

By identifying and addressing sensory processing challenges early, educators can help students with SPD thrive in their learning environment. The main approach to supporting children with SPD is to include specific exercises in the course of classes that take into account working with the difficulties of these students and which also support the development of all, including healthy children as well.





Symptoms of sensory disorders in school-age children aged 7–12 years



...has trouble
writing, writes
slowly, does not fit
within the lines,
holds the writing
tool incorrectly.

...is hypersensitive to
noise (blocks ears, is loud
– purrs, makes sounds),
hypersensitive to smells

...does not like
cuddling, does not like
selected textures of
clothes, labels irritate.

...performs tasks
slowly, cannot
keep up with the
class.

...is tiring;
has difficulty
concentrating.



...takes an incorrect
posture at the desk.

...has difficulty
reading.

...confuses
sound-like
words.

...speaks unclearly,
has incorrect
articulation.

...is clumsy,
often stumbles
and often spills drinks.

...cannot sit still,
is agitated and mobile,
fidgets at the desk,
gets up during lessons.

...is sluggish, avoids
physical activities in favor of
activities at the table
or on the floor.



STRATEGIES FOR CREATING INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Creating an inclusive learning environment for students with **Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD)** involves designing spaces, instructional methods, and classroom policies that accommodate their sensory needs. Here are key strategies:

1. Classroom Environment Adjustments

- **Reduce sensory overload:** Minimize background noise, use soft lighting, and limit strong smells.
- **Provide sensory-friendly seating:** Offer wiggle seats, fidget tools, or weighted lap pads for comfort.
- **Create quiet zones:** Designate a space where students can take breaks when overwhelmed.
- **Control classroom visuals:** Use neutral colors and limit excessive decorations.

2. Instructional Strategies

- **Offer multisensory learning:** Combine visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile elements to engage students.
- **Use structured routines:** Predictability helps students feel secure.
- **Give movement breaks:** Allow short physical activities to help with self-regulation.
- **Provide alternative ways to complete tasks:** Offer options like oral responses, typing instead of handwriting, or hands-on activities.



3. Sensory-Supportive Social Strategies

- **Teach self-regulation skills:** Encourage deep breathing, sensory breaks, or mindfulness techniques.
- **Foster peer understanding:** Educate classmates about sensory differences to promote empathy.
- **Respect personal space:** Allow students to choose seating arrangements that feel comfortable.

4. Collaboration with Specialists

- **Cooperate with others:** Work together with occupational therapists, speech therapists, and special educators to tailor accommodations.
- **Communicate regularly with parents** to understand triggers and effective strategies used at home.

By implementing these strategies,
educators can create a classroom
where students with SPD
feel safe, supported and ready to learn.





TEACHER SELF-DEVELOPMENT WORK, TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, SAMPLE STATEMENTS / BEHAVIOURS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RESPONSES FOR TEACHERS

1

Observe the child's response to different textures, sounds, movement, and social settings
- evaluate how a child responds to sensory input in daily activities.

2

Cooperate with other specialists and parents to make a sensory plan - use motor, coordination, and self-regulation planning.

3

Reduce background noise (use noise-canceling headphones).

4

Allow dim lighting or natural light instead of bright fluorescent lights.

5

Use soft, seamless clothing to avoid irritation.



Use visual schedules to prepare for transitions.



Provide deep-pressure activities (weighted blankets, firm hugs, or compression clothing).



**Avoid unexpected touch
-let the child initiate contact.**



Encourage oral sensory activities (chewing gum, crunchy snacks).



Offer sensory breaks with active movement (jumping, running, dancing).



Allow standing desks or movement-friendly seating (yoga ball, wobble stool).





Sample Teacher Statements, Behaviors, and Actions



Scenario	Teacher Statement or Behavior	Proposed Action or Response
A student refuses to participate in sports activities.	<i>Don't worry, I can help you if you need. You don't have to do this exercise if it is too difficult for you.</i>	Support with your presence by providing help when it is needed.
A student starts screaming because he is afraid of the noise and bustle during class breaks.	<i>I'll wrap you in a blanket to help you calm down. Let's go to the quiet room. When you're calm, tell me what scared you so much.</i>	Encourage participation in breaks with other children, despite the stimuli that are difficult. Ensure the presence of a teacher nearby. React when there are difficulties in receiving external stimuli that are difficult for the student.
A student works slower than other children in the class.	<i>You can do only part of this exercise. Here you are the different exercise you can manage to do on your own in the same time.</i>	Define tasks appropriate to the student's level of learning. Let him/her do only some of the exercises planned in the lesson plan. Adjust to his/her pace.
A student has trouble with writing, writes slowly, does not fit within the lines, holds the writing tool incorrectly.	<i>Please, work slower, but carefully. You don't have to copy everything. Use this pencil, it has a special cap that will help you write the correct letter shapes.</i>	Adapt educational materials to the specific needs of the student. Provide access to notebooks with enlarged rulings and other required supplies appropriate to their graphomotor level.



Sensory-Friendly Exercise Script for Children with SPD

Objectives: To create a supportive and engaging environment where children with SPD can recognize their strengths and develop motor skills, body awareness, focus, and confidence through structured exercises.

1. Warm-up: Sensory Superpowers Activation (5 - 10 minutes) To help children recognize their sensory strengths and activate their bodies and senses.

2. Core Activities: Based on Needs & Strengths (20 - 30 minutes)

Example goals:

- Encourage movement exploration while developing coordination and balance,
- Strengthen fine motor skills and sensory integration using hands,
- Improve balance and coordination through movement challenges.

A. Strength-Building: Gross Motor & Body Awareness

B. Fine Motor: Tactile & Hand-Eye Coordination

C. Balance & Focus: Vestibular & Spatial Awareness

3. Cool Down: Safe Space Relaxation (5 - 10 minutes)

To help children self-regulate and feel calm after movement activities.

4. Conclusion: Positive Reinforcement

Summarizing with a group reflection, praise their efforts and offering sensory-friendly stickers or small textured objects as a reward.



Exercise 1



RECOGNISING THE STRENGTHS OF SUCH PUPILS AND BUILDING ON THEM

Objectives: To create a supportive and engaging environment where children can recognize their strengths and develop motor skills, body awareness, focus, and confidence through structured exercises.

"Superhero Moves" (Sensory Superpowers Activation)

Goal: To help participants recognize their sensory strengths and activate their bodies in a fun, positive way.

Instructions:

1. Gather participants in a circle and ask "What are your super senses?"
2. Encourage them to share things they do well (e.g., "I hear things from far away", "I love soft textures", "I move really fast").
3. Announce, "Let's activate our sensory superpowers with movement!"
4. Call out different superhero moves while emphasizing sensory strengths:
 - **Super Stomp:** Jump up and land with feet firmly on the ground (helps with proprioception).
 - **Eagle Ears:** Cup hands behind ears and walk around to listen to different sounds.
 - **Feather Fingers:** Rub hands together and then lightly touch fingertips together (stimulates tactile awareness).
 - **Slow-motion Stretch:** Reach arms high, then bend down slowly, touching toes.

Variation: If there are participants sensitive to loud sounds, use hand signals instead of verbal instructions.



Exercise 2



RECOGNISING AND DEALING WITH WEAKNESSES

“Teachers’ experiences”

Step 1 - Sensory Difficulty Recognition

Goal: To understand how children with SPD respond to different sensory stimuli.

Description: Teachers can conduct a simulation in which, for example, ears are covered, a blindfold is put on, or clothes with different textures are worn. This will help teachers better understand how children with hypersensitivity or insensitivity to stimuli may feel.

Reflection Questions: What difficulties did you encounter during the task? What was uncomfortable about the situation?

Step 2 - Sensory hypersensitivity recognition

Goal: To understand hypersensitivity to sensory stimuli (e.g. sounds, light, textures).

Description: The teacher introduces stimuli that may trigger hypersensitivity in children (e.g. loud sounds, intense light, different textures of materials) and observes the reactions of the participants. Collects information about which stimuli cause discomfort.

Reflection Questions: What strategies can help the child cope with hypersensitivity? What environmental modifications would be helpful?

Step 3 - Sensory Integration

Goal: To work through calming and stimulating techniques depending on the child's needs.

Description: Teachers create a variety of tasks that require a combination of different senses, such as games that require manipulating objects with different textures, solving puzzles in the dark, or working with sensory masses (e.g. kinetic sand, play dough). After each exercise, discuss how



RECOGNISING AND DEALING WITH WEAKNESSES

the children felt and which senses were most engaged.

Reflection questions: Which exercises were the most calming? Which ones caused overstimulation?

Step 4 - Problem-solving and space adaptation

Goal: To adapt the school space to the needs of children with SPD

Description: Teachers analyze the space in the classroom and come up with changes that could help children with SPD. These changes could include: quiet zones, better lighting, special mats for sitting, reducing noise, adjusting sounds.

Reflection questions: What changes in the space could help reduce sensory discomfort? What strategies could work in the children's daily functioning?

Step 5 - Empathizing with the child's experiences

Goal: To increase empathy and understanding for children with SPD

Description: The teacher plays the role of a child with SPD, experiencing situations that may cause difficulties, such as intense light, noise, uncomfortable clothing, etc. This exercise aims to make the teacher aware of how different stimuli can affect the child.

Reflection questions: What were the feelings during the role-play? What changes in behavior can help the child's daily functioning?

Conclusion

These exercises can help teachers not only recognize the difficulties of children with SPD, but also develop specific strategies to deal with these challenges in their daily work.



Exercise 3



SOFT SKILLS TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHERS TO SUPPORT THESE STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM AND AT HOME

Teachers' soft skills are the abilities and behaviours that individuals in this field use to complete their duties successfully.

The specific difficulties of children with SPD require a special approach from teachers to support the emotional development of these students.

The most important soft skills you as a teacher have to improve:

1. Communication – the basis of effective teaching

Clear and positive communication is key in the relationship with students. The teacher must be able to adapt his language to the level and age of the recipients, both verbally and non-verbally.

2. Empathy and building relationships in the classroom

The ability to put yourself in the shoes of a student and understand their emotions is incredibly important. Building strong relationships with all students and creating a positive classroom environment promotes effective learning.

3. Patience and perseverance

If you want to learn how to develop this side of your character, you can focus on:

Self-regulation of emotions. Learn to recognize and manage your emotions.

Empathy. Try to understand the student's perspective - don't lock yourself away in your own world. It's important to students with SPD.

Realistic expectations. Set realistic goals for yourself and your students to avoid frustration.

Analysis and reflection. Do you know how important it is to draw conclusions from difficult situations?

Self-reflection is an incredibly important skill!

Exercise 3



"Mirror" - reflection of communication

Objective: To develop active listening skills, empathy and clear expression of thoughts.

Duration: 20-30 minutes

Materials: not needed

Instruction:

Step 1 - Introduction (5 minutes)

Divide participants into pairs: each pair consists of a teacher who will speak and a teacher who will listen.

Step 2 - Story of an experience (10 minutes)

The person who speaks tells for 3-5 minutes about one of their experiences related to working at school. It can be something positive or difficult that happened in the classroom. The person listening does not interrupt, but listens actively, paying attention to the words, tone of voice, gestures and emotions.

Step 3 - Reflection (10 minutes)

After the story is over, the listener is asked to repeat what they heard, but in the form of a reflection: "I understand that...", "Do I understand correctly that...?"

It is important that the listener tries to repeat the essence of the message, without adding their own interpretations or assessing the situation.

In addition, he or she can ask about the feelings accompanying the experience, e.g. "How did you feel in this situation?" or "What was the most difficult for you?".



Exercise 3



Step 4 - Summary (10 minutes)

After the reflection is completed, both people share their feelings. The speaker can describe how they felt when their experience was reflected, and the listener can tell how easy or difficult it was for them to correctly understand and reflect the message.

Step 5 - Group debriefing (10 minutes)

The whole group shares their impressions of the exercise: *What were the difficulties in communication? What was the most important in reflecting the message? What skills are worth developing in everyday work?*

Benefits:

Active listening: It helps teachers become more attentive listeners, which can improve communication with students.

Understanding students' emotions: Thanks to the reflection, teachers can better understand the emotions and needs of students.

Increasing empathy: The exercise helps to develop empathy, because the listening teacher tries to understand the perspective of the other person.

Conclusion:

This exercise can also be done in a larger group of teachers and students together by organising a discussion about communication in school, which will allow for the exchange of experiences and observations.



Exercise 3



"Putting Yourself in Others' Shoes"

Objective: *To increase teachers' empathetic skills by understanding the perspectives of students, parents, and other teachers*

Duration: 90 minutes

Materials: sheets of paper, pens, board (for writing down conclusions), Sample scenarios of situations from school life

Instruction:

Step 1 - Introduction (10 minutes)

Introduce the topic of empathy, explain why it is important in working with students and colleagues and also for teachers. Propose a short discussion about personal experiences related to empathy.

Division into groups (5 minutes): Teachers divide into small groups (4-5 people).

Step 2 - Assigning roles (10 minutes)

Each group receives a card with a description of a specific situation concerning a student, parent, or teacher (e.g. a student with learning difficulties, a parent with personal problems, a teacher struggling with burnout). The groups are tasked with getting into a given role and discussing what thoughts, feelings and needs the characters might have in the described situation.

Step 3 - Simulation (20 minutes)

Each group presents their situation through a short scene. The other participants are tasked with observing and writing down their observations.



Exercise 3



Step 4 - Reflection (20 minutes)

Each presentation is followed by a discussion. Participants share their feelings and reflections on what they noticed during the simulation.

The leader starts the conversation, asking questions such as:

What emotions appeared while taking on a given role?

What surprised the participants in the behavior of other characters?

What conclusions can be drawn for the future?

Step 5 - Summary (15 minutes)

The teacher collects conclusions from the exercise and emphasizes the importance of empathy in every interaction with students and colleagues. Participants can write down their reflections and specific actions that they plan to implement in their work.

Conclusion:

The exercise is not only aimed at developing empathy, but also at building a better atmosphere in the both group: teachers and students. Regularly organizing such meetings can contribute to improving relationships in the school and better support for students.



Exercise 3



"Teachers' Challenge"

Objective: To support and develop teachers' perseverance and patience skills

Duration: 1.5 hours

Number of participants: 5-15 people

Materials: sheets of paper, pens, clock or stopwatch

Instruction:

Step 1 - Introduction (15 minutes)

Introduce the participants to the topic of patience and perseverance, sharing short examples of situations in which these qualities are essential in the work of a teacher.

Divide participants into small groups of 3-5 people (5 minutes).

Step 2 - Challenge (40 minutes)

Each group receives a card with a description of a difficult situation they may encounter in the classroom (e.g. a student who does not want to cooperate, a group of students distracting the lesson, an unexpected change in the plan).

The groups have 20 minutes to develop a strategy for dealing with the situation. They should include how to remain patient and perseverant, also in the face of frustration.

After the time is up, each group presents its situation and solutions to the rest of the participants.



Exercise 3



Step 3 - Reflection (20 minutes)

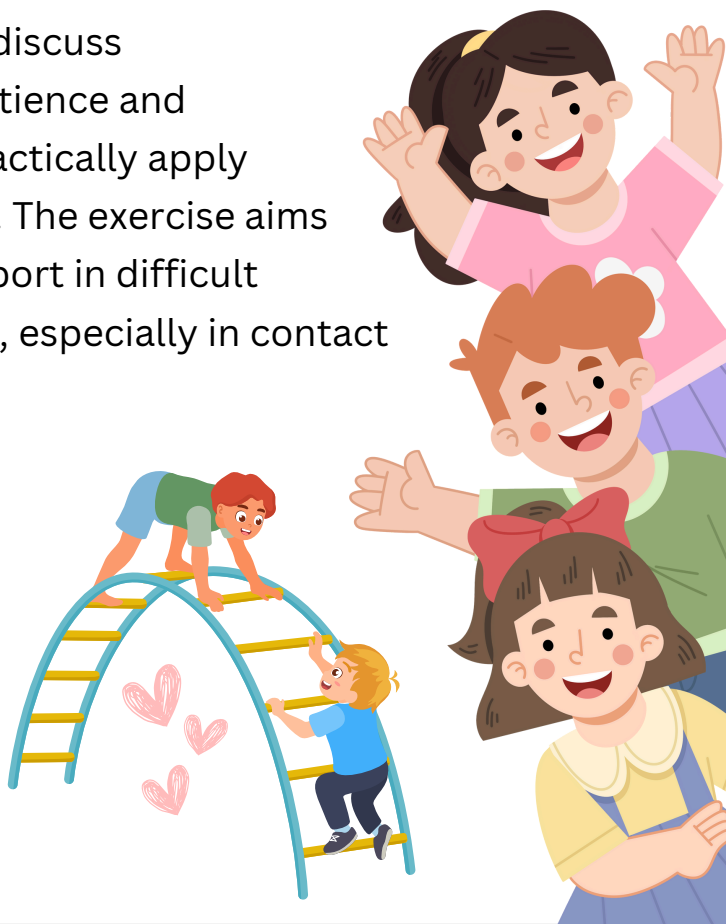
After the presentations, the leader asks questions for reflection:
What was the most difficult part of developing the strategy?
What emotions were present during the brainstorming session?
What specific steps can be taken to develop patience in everyday work? Participants write down their thoughts on cards.

Step 4 - Summary (10 minutes)

Joint discussion on how to implement the developed strategies in life and what techniques can help in shaping patience and perseverance on a daily basis at school and at home to support the parents as well.

Conclusion:

Participants aim not only to discuss the theoretical aspects of patience and perseverance, but also to practically apply these traits in real situations. The exercise aims to build community and support in difficult moments of a teacher's work, especially in contact with children with SPD.



DYSLEXIA



CHAPTER 3

SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTY



DiverseMind



WHAT IS SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTY?

Specific Learning Difficulty (SLD) is an umbrella term that encompasses a range of neurodevelopmental conditions that affect an individual's ability to acquire and use academic skills. These difficulties are not related to intelligence but rather differences in cognitive processing (British Dyslexia Association, 2022).

Common Types of SLDs:

- **Dyslexia:** Affects reading, writing, and spelling skills. Individuals with dyslexia may struggle with phonological awareness, decoding words, and reading fluency. They often find it difficult to process and remember written words, leading to challenges in academic tasks that require reading comprehension and written expression. Dyslexia can also impact sequencing skills, making it harder for individuals to follow instructions or recall information in the correct order (Rose, 2009). It is a lifelong condition, but with tailored interventions, individuals can develop strategies to manage their difficulties effectively.
- **Dyscalculia:** Impacts mathematical understanding and number-related tasks. People with dyscalculia may struggle with number sense, recognizing numerical patterns, and performing arithmetic calculations. They often have difficulty with time management, money handling, and problem-solving involving numbers. This condition can affect the ability to grasp mathematical concepts such as fractions, percentages, and equations, making academic progress in math-based subjects particularly challenging. Individuals with dyscalculia may also experience anxiety related to math tasks, further hindering their performance (Butterworth, 2005).

- 
- **Dysgraphia:** Influences handwriting and fine motor skills required for writing. Those with dysgraphia may experience trouble with letter formation, spacing, and overall legibility. Writing tasks can be slow and laborious, and they may have difficulty organizing thoughts on paper. This can impact note-taking, written exams, and creative writing tasks. Dysgraphia is often associated with poor motor coordination, making it challenging to use tools like pens, pencils, or keyboards efficiently. The condition may also cause discomfort or fatigue when writing for extended periods (Berninger & Wolf, 2009).
 - **Developmental Coordination Disorder (Dyspraxia):** Impairs motor coordination and movement. Individuals with dyspraxia may find it difficult to perform coordinated movements, affecting activities such as handwriting, using utensils, and participating in sports. It can also impact speech clarity and organization skills. DCD often affects spatial awareness, making tasks such as navigating spaces, catching objects, or learning new motor skills more difficult. In a learning environment, individuals with DCD may struggle with tasks requiring hand-eye coordination, including drawing, using scissors, or playing musical instruments. Additionally, DCD can affect oral communication, making speech slower or more effortful, particularly in high-pressure situations (Missiuna et al., 2006).



Specific learning difficulties are not related to intelligence, but rather a different way of cognitive processing!

WAYS OF IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING THESE STUDENTS

- **Dyslexia** – Primarily affects reading, spelling, and writing. It is often associated with difficulties in **phonological processing, working memory, and sequencing**, making it challenging for individuals to decode and recognize words efficiently (Snowling & Hulme, 2021).
- **Dyscalculia** – Impacts the understanding of numerical concepts, making arithmetic operations and problem-solving difficult. Research suggests that individuals with dyscalculia struggle with **number sense, estimation, and spatial representation of numerical data** (Butterworth & Yeo, 2020).
- **Dysgraphia** – Affects handwriting, spelling, and written expression, often linked to **poor motor coordination and difficulties in structuring written content**. Individuals with dysgraphia may struggle with handwriting legibility and organization of thoughts on paper (Snowling & Hulme, 2021).
- **Dyspraxia (Developmental Coordination Disorder – DCD)** – Affects motor coordination and spatial awareness, making tasks such as handwriting, tying shoelaces, and using tools particularly challenging. Individuals with dyspraxia often experience **difficulty with fine and gross motor movements, which can impact both academic and everyday activities** (Kirby, Sugden & Edwards, 2019).



STRATEGIES FOR CREATING INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

1. Classroom Environment & Materials

Provide Multisensory & Visual Supports (Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia)

- Use **color-coded maps, diagrams, mind maps, and graphic organizers** to aid comprehension.
- Offer **text-to-speech tools** for students with dyslexia and **audiobooks or video explanations** for text-heavy materials.

Reduce Physical & Writing Barriers (Dyspraxia, Dysgraphia)

- Provide **printed/digital notes** for students with dysgraphia to reduce handwriting demands.
-
- Arrange **seating with back support and clear pathways** for students with dyspraxia to navigate comfortably.

Adapt Materials to Suit Different Processing Needs (Dyslexia, Dyscalculia)

- Use **sans-serif fonts, increased spacing, and pastel backgrounds** to support students with dyslexia.
- Replace **complex numerical data with visual graphs or pictograms** to assist students with dyscalculia.

Incorporate Assistive Technology (Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia)

- Allow students with dysgraphia to use **speech-to-text tools** and typing instead of handwriting.
- Provide **online graphing tools and calculators** for students with dyscalculia to ease number-based tasks.
- Use **interactive mapping tools** for students with dyspraxia to assist with spatial understanding

2. Teaching Strategies

Break Down Instructions & Use Step-by-Step Scaffolding (Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia)

- Give **clear, concise, step-by-step instructions** with **visual cues** for students with dyslexia and dyspraxia.
- Use **number lines, checklists, and guides** to help students with dyscalculia and dysgraphia organize their work.

Encourage Alternative Ways to Demonstrate Learning (Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia)

- Allow students with dysgraphia to complete work via **oral presentations, videos, or mind maps** instead of written reports.
- Use **drag-and-drop geography exercises** for students with dyscalculia instead of requiring precise calculations.
- Offer **verbal response options** for students with dyspraxia who struggle with fine motor tasks.

Scaffold Reading & Writing Tasks (Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyspraxia)

- Provide **sentence starters and fill-in-the-blank worksheets** for students with dyslexia and dysgraphia.
- Allow students with dyspraxia to use **pre-drawn maps and labeled diagrams** instead of requiring them to draw complex visuals.

Use Hands-On & Real-World Examples (Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Dyslexia)

- Provide **tactile activities** (e.g., using clay to model landforms) to support students with dyspraxia.
- Teach geography concepts like **map scales using real-world distances** to help students with dyscalculia grasp numbers.
- Offer **paired reading** or video explanations for students with dyslexia who struggle with dense text.



3. Assessment & Exam Strategies

Provide Extra Time & Flexible Testing Formats (Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia)

- Give students with **dysgraphia extra time** for writing-based tasks.
- Allow students with **dyscalculia to use calculators or reference sheets** for numerical questions.
- Offer students with **dyspraxia the option of oral exams** to reduce fine motor strain.

Use Pre-Structured & Visual-Based Questions (Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia)

- Provide **pre-labeled graphs, maps, and partially completed tables** for students with dysgraphia.
- Use **color-coded visuals and fewer written instructions** to support students with dyslexia.
- Offer **step-by-step problem-solving guides** for students with dyscalculia.

Reduce Memory Load with Reference Materials (Dyscalculia, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia)

- Allow students with **dyscalculia to use formula sheets and worked examples** for calculations.
- Provide students with **dyslexia printed summaries or key vocabulary lists**.
- Use **visual maps with clear labels** to help students with **dyspraxia navigate spatial data**.

Assess Understanding in Multiple Ways (Dysgraphia, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia)

- Allow students with **dysgraphia to use oral recordings, diagrams, or bullet points** instead of essay-style responses.
- Provide **interactive assessments, such as matching exercises**, for students with dyslexia.
- Let students with **dyspraxia complete practical projects instead of heavily structured written exams**.



4. Classroom Culture & Emotional Support

Foster a Growth Mindset & Reduce Anxiety (Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dyspraxia, Dysgraphia)

- Praise **effort, creativity, and problem-solving skills**, rather than focusing on speed or handwriting.
- Normalize different learning styles by sharing **examples of successful people with these SLDs** (e.g., Richard Branson, Daniel Radcliffe).

Encourage Peer Support & Collaboration (Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, Dyspraxia)

- Use **study buddies** to help students with dyslexia and dysgraphia take notes or organize work.
- Pair students with **dyscalculia with peers for number-based tasks**, allowing collaborative learning.
- Assign **group mapping activities** to support students with dyspraxia in understanding spatial concepts.

Create a Safe, Non-Judgmental Learning Environment (Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, Dyspraxia)

- Avoid putting students with **dyscalculia on the spot for mental math questions**.
- Ensure students with **dyspraxia feel comfortable asking for adjustments** during practical tasks.
- Allow **private discussions** where students can express what supports work best for them.

Teach Self-Advocacy Skills (Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, Dyspraxia)

- Encourage students with **dyslexia and dysgraphia to advocate for assistive tech options** that help them.
- Teach students with **dyscalculia how to use reference materials effectively** to navigate number-based tasks.
- Support students with **dyspraxia in creating organization plans for project-based work**.



TEACHER SELF-DEVELOPMENT WORK, TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, SAMPLE STATEMENTS/BEHAVIOURS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RESPONSES FOR TEACHERS

Teacher Self-Development Work

- Expand your knowledge of SLDs through courses, webinars, and educational psychology texts.
- Engage in reflective practice—assess and adapt your teaching to support diverse learners.
- Collaborate with specialists (e.g., special educators, occupational therapists) to build inclusive strategies.
- Develop empathy by listening to student experiences and using simulation tools that mimic SLD challenges.

Tips and Recommendations

- Use multi-sensory teaching methods (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) to enhance understanding.
- Provide clear, consistent routines and structured lessons with step-by-step instructions.
- Offer extra time and alternatives for assignments (e.g., oral presentations instead of written reports).
- Use assistive technologies (e.g., speech-to-text tools, audiobooks, math apps).



TEACHER SELF-DEVELOPMENT WORK, TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, SAMPLE STATEMENTS/BEHAVIOURS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RESPONSES FOR TEACHERS

Sample Statements/Behaviours

- “I notice Jamie struggles with copying from the board and spelling words correctly.” (possible dyslexia)
- “Sam’s handwriting is hard to read and causes him frustration.” (possible dysgraphia)
- “Ava counts on her fingers and avoids math tasks.” (possible dyscalculia)
- “Liam often drops materials and struggles with fine motor tasks.” (possible DCD)

Possible Actions and Responses

- Provide differentiated instruction tailored to each student’s needs
- Break tasks into smaller steps and celebrate progress, not just outcomes.
- Work with support staff to create an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Encourage peer support and positive reinforcement to boost self-esteem
- Document observations regularly and communicate with families to ensure consistency in support



RECOGNISING THE STRENGTHS OF SUCH PUPILS AND BUILDING ON THEM

Starter activity 1 - this should catch the students' interest and engage prior learning. Pair work is great here to help students with retention issues. The starter is visual, it involves discussion.

Activity 2: Strength-to-Strategy Match (20 minutes)

Activity: Small Group Task – “Make It Work”

Instructions:

Each group receives cards or a list containing:

- Common strengths of dyslexic learners
- Typical classroom tasks (e.g., reading comprehension, note-taking, spelling tests, group projects)

Task:

Match each strength to ways the pupil can approach or contribute to the task effectively.

Example Matches:

- Creative thinker → Use mind maps or visual storytelling to summarize reading
- Good verbal communicator → Share ideas orally instead of written responses
- Big-picture thinker → Lead group discussions or presentations
- Artistic strength → Design visuals, posters, or illustrations for class content

Outcome:

A bank of classroom strategies that build on what learners do well, rather than trying to “fix” what they struggle with.



RECOGNISING THE STRENGTHS OF SUCH PUPILS AND BUILDING ON THEM

Activity 3: Reflect and Apply (15–20 minutes)

Activity: Individual or Pair Planning – “Tomorrow’s Classroom”

Instructions: Ask participants to write or discuss:

1. A pupil they’ve worked with who has dyslexia
2. One strength they’ve observed in that pupil
3. A subject or task that’s been a challenge
4. One way they can adjust the task to leverage the pupil’s strength

Optional: Share ideas in small groups or post them on a “Strength Wall” for inspiration.

Key Takeaway:

Dyslexia may present challenges in reading and writing, but it also comes with incredible potential. When we **recognise and build on the strengths** of dyslexic learners, we create inclusive, empowering classrooms where everyone can thrive.





RECOGNISING AND DEALING WITH WEAKNESSES

Activity 1: “In Their Shoes” Simulation & Discussion (15–20 minutes)

Purpose: To build empathy and first-hand understanding of how dyslexia impacts learning.

Instructions:

1. Give teachers short reading or writing tasks that mimic dyslexia challenges, such as:
 - Jumbled letters and spacing
 - Text written in mirrored letters or unusual fonts
 - Instructions with missing or scrambled words
2. Ask them to complete the task under a short time limit.

Pat decided time move life. tired stresses
job dreamed travel guide! world, meet new
people, experience cultures far lands day's
work belief. needed find opportunity new life
world. miracle, day Pat learned travel agency
block home looking travel guide! stop?
Sicily! adventures!

Debrief Questions:

- What did that feel like?
- How did it affect your focus, confidence, or motivation?
- What strategies would have helped?

Goal:

Help teachers recognise the processing, fluency, and working memory difficulties many dyslexic students face and reflect on supportive teaching practices.





RECOGNISING AND DEALING WITH WEAKNESSES

Activity 2: “Spot & Support” Case Study Challenge (15–20 minutes)

Purpose: To identify specific weaknesses and apply practical, classroom-based interventions.

Instructions: Provide 2–3 short student profiles, each describing a learner with typical dyslexia-related difficulties, such as:

- Slow reading speed
- Difficulty spelling
- Trouble copying from the board
- Mixing up letters or sequencing

Task for Teachers: For each profile, write:

1. The observed weakness
2. The impact on classroom learning
3. At least one support strategy (e.g., coloured overlays, dictation tools, audio books, multi-sensory learning)

Example Strategy Matches:

- Spelling difficulty → Use speech-to-text tools or focus on phonics-based interventions
- Reading speed → Provide extended time or pre-read materials aloud

Goal:

Empower teachers to spot early signs of dyslexia and respond with practical, inclusive solutions.





RECOGNISING THE STRENGTHS OF SUCH PUPILS AND BUILDING ON THEM

◆ Part 1: Quick Starter – “*More Than Numbers*” Discussion (10 minutes)

Activity: Group Brainstorm or Think-Pair-Share

Prompt: “List skills and qualities that are often strong in pupils with dyscalculia.”

Expected Strengths Might Include:

- Creativity and imagination
- Strong verbal or storytelling abilities
- Empathy and collaboration
- Big-picture thinking
- Artistic or musical talents

Purpose: To shift the focus from deficits to strengths, reframing dyscalculia as a learning difference rather than a limitation.

◆ Part 2: *Strength-Based Strategy Workshop* (20 minutes)

Activity: Small Group Task – “Match the Strength”

Instructions: Each group is given a set of strengths and a set of classroom math tasks (e.g., solving word problems, learning multiplication tables, understanding time, spatial reasoning).

Task: Match each strength to a strategy for supporting that pupil in math.

Examples:

- Strong verbal skills → Use storytelling to frame math problems.
- Creativity → Let pupils design their own board game using math concepts.
- Empathy → Use peer tutoring or group problem-solving.

Outcome: A toolkit of strength-based approaches tailored to the classroom.



RECOGNISING THE STRENGTHS OF SUCH PUPILS AND BUILDING ON THEM

◆ Part 3: *Reflect & Plan (15–20 minutes)*

Activity: *Personal Reflection and Action Plan*

Instructions: Each participant writes down:

1. One strength they will start looking for in pupils with dyscalculia.
2. One classroom adaptation or strategy they will try based on that strength.
3. A potential barrier and how they'll overcome it.

Optional share-out or pair discussion at the end.





RECOGNISING AND DEALING WITH WEAKNESSES

Supporting Pupils with Dyscalculia:

Part 1: Awareness Activity – “Walk in Their Shoes” (10–15 minutes)

Activity: Simulation Task

Instructions:

Participants complete a short simulated math activity with:

- Reversed digits (e.g., 41 written instead of 14)
- Timed basic facts under pressure
- Tasks with confusing spatial layouts

Goal:

To help educators feel the anxiety, confusion, or frustration pupils with dyscalculia may experience.

Debrief Questions:

- How did you feel during that task?
- What helped or made it worse?
- What might a pupil need in that moment?

Part 2: Identify the Challenges (15–20 minutes)

Activity: Small Group Discussion or Matching Exercise

Instructions:

Each group is given cards or slides with:

- A common difficulty (e.g., poor number sense, sequencing issues, difficulty telling time)
- A scenario (e.g., “Sam gets lost when counting backwards”)

Task:

Match the difficulty with a real-world classroom scenario and brainstorm ways to support it.

Example Supports:

- Use number lines, manipulatives, or apps to visualize quantities
- Give extra time and reduce timed activities
- Use visual schedules or analog clocks with clear increments

Goal:

Understand how weaknesses appear in class and how to adapt instruction accordingly.



RECOGNISING THE STRENGTHS OF SUCH PUPILS AND BUILDING ON THEM

Part 1: Awareness Activity – Gather Writing Samples – Type and Write (10–15 minutes)

Activity: Multisensory creative writing

Instructions: Participants complete a short 250-word writing activity:

- 100 Words must be handwritten
- 150 words typed
- Students should be provided with visual prompts: inspiring images, etc.

Goal: To help educators establish dysgraphia as the key difficulty and not other SLDs. Students will also be encouraged to check for difference in grades when using Assisstive Technology

Debrief Questions:

How did you feel during that task?

What helped or made it worse?

What might a pupil need in that moment?





RECOGNISING AND DEALING WITH WEAKNESSES

Part 2: Identify the Challenges (15–20 minutes)

Activity: Participants will identify 3 challenges faced by students with dysgraphia

Instructions:

Some teachers will be given a piece of writing written by a student with dysgraphia others will be given that same piece but in typed format.

Participants will grade the work they have in front of them according to a standard grading criterion.

Task:

Compare the grades between the written and typed pieces

Goal:

Understand how weaknesses appear in class and how to adapt grading accordingly



Exercise 1

Developmental Coordination Disorder



RECOGNISING THE STRENGTHS OF SUCH PUPILS AND BUILDING ON THEM

Part 1: Identify the Challenges (15–20 minutes)

Activity: Participants will identify 3 challenges faced by students with DCD (Dyspraxia)

Instructions:

Teachers will be presented with expert observations of the difficulties experienced by students with DCD.

Task:

Observe, recognise and identify 5 areas within your own practice that you can become more DCD fr

Goal:

Understand how weaknesses appear in class and how to adapt grading accordingly



Exercise 2

Developmental Coordination Disorder



RECOGNISING AND DEALING WITH WEAKNESSES

Area of difficulty for students with Dyspraxia	Possible strategies
Strategies to support a student who has difficulty with handwriting due to challenges with grip, spacing, and letter formation.	Use adaptive pencil grips (e.g., triangular grips, foam grips, or weighted pencils). Try shorter or thicker pencils to encourage a more natural grip. Experiment with different writing tools (e.g., gel pens, markers, or ergonomic pens).
Difficulty with note-taking and copying from the board, which can affect their ability to keep up in class	Provide Alternative Note-Taking Options Give printed or digital handouts with key points to reduce copying demands. Share teacher-prepared notes before or after the lesson. Use guided notes with blanks for key terms so they only need to fill in crucial information.
Challenges with writing Struggling with spatial awareness (e.g., organizing work on a page, lining up numbers in math) Problems copying from the board or taking notes quickly	Offer Word Banks & Checklists Provide lists of key words related to the topic. Use a simple checklist to remind them of what to include (e.g., "Does my sentence start with a capital letter? Have I included details?").
Difficulties with executive functioning, following instructions, sensory processing	Give one-step instructions instead of complex, multi-step directions. Ask them to repeat instructions back to confirm understanding. Use visual cues or demonstrations instead of just verbal instructions.

Exercise 3



SOFT SKILLS TECHNIQUES (FOR TEACHERS) TO SUPPORT THESE STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM AND AT HOME

Students with SLDs benefit from consistent, supportive communication, and strategies that reduce frustration and build self-esteem. These soft skills techniques help create an inclusive, empowering environment.

1. Active Listening

Why it helps: Validates student challenges and builds trust.

Classroom tip:

- Give full attention and allow extra time to express thoughts.
- Acknowledge feelings: *“I hear this was tough—let’s work through it together.”*

At home: Let them talk through frustrations without rushing to solve.

2. Empathy & Patience

Why it helps: Reduces anxiety and supports emotional regulation.

Classroom tip:

- Avoid judgment; respond calmly to mistakes or off-task behavior.
- Offer breaks when signs of overload appear.

At home: Reassure, don’t compare. A calm tone works wonders.

3. Clear, Positive Communication

Why it helps: Prevents misunderstandings and supports focus.

Classroom tip:

- Give short, step-by-step instructions.
- Use visual aids and written directions when possible.

At home: Use timers, checklists, or visual schedules to reinforce tasks.

4. Positive Reinforcement

Why it helps: Builds self-esteem and encourages effort.

Classroom tip:

- Praise specific behaviors: *“Great job using your strategy!”*
- Focus on effort, not just outcomes.

At home: Recognize small wins—*“You kept trying even when it was hard.”*



5. Emotional Regulation Support

Why it helps: SpLDs often come with emotional frustration.

Classroom tip:

Teach simple coping strategies (deep breaths, safe space).

Normalize mistakes as part of learning.

At home: Use consistent routines and talk through big emotions calmly.

6. Flexibility

Why it helps: Supports students who learn or behave differently.

Classroom tip:

Offer alternative ways to complete tasks (oral, visual, hands-on).

Adjust pace and expectations based on needs.

At home: Adapt chores and learning to their strengths and energy levels.

7. Build Rapport

Why it helps: Trust improves engagement and motivation.

Classroom tip:

Show interest in their hobbies and strengths.

Greet them by name, celebrate small progress.

At home: Spend quality one-on-one time regularly.

8. Collaborate with Families

Why it helps: Reinforces consistency and shared strategies.

Classroom tip:

Keep communication simple and solution-focused.

Share both challenges and successes.

At home: Let teachers know what helps your child stay calm and focused.

Final Note:

Soft skills aren't just for students—they're a vital toolkit for teachers and parents supporting learners with SLDs. With empathy, structure, and encouragement, we can create spaces where every student can thrive.



CHAPTER 4

ADHD



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WHAT IS ADHD?

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects focus, impulse control, and energy levels. It is often diagnosed in childhood but can persist into adulthood. People with ADHD may struggle with:

- Attention
- Organization
- Following instructions
- Completing tasks

They are often easily distracted, forgetful, or prone to making careless mistakes. Hyperactivity, more common in children, manifests as **excessive movement, restlessness, or an inability to stay seated**. In adults, it may appear as **inner restlessness or difficulty relaxing**. Impulsivity can lead to speaking out of turn, interrupting conversations, or making quick decisions without considering the consequences.

The exact cause of ADHD is not fully understood, but research suggests it results from a **combination of genetic, neurological, and environmental factors**. Studies show that ADHD is highly hereditary, with brain imaging revealing differences in areas responsible for attention and impulse control, particularly in dopamine regulation. Additionally, prenatal exposure to tobacco, alcohol, or other substances, as well as premature birth and low birth weight, have been linked to an increased risk of developing ADHD.



Diagnosis is based on clinical evaluation, including symptom assessment, medical history review, and input from parents, teachers, or caregivers.

Treatment typically includes a combination of **behavioral therapy, medication, and lifestyle modifications**. **Stimulant medications**, such as methylphenidate (Ritalin) and amphetamines (Adderall), are commonly prescribed to improve focus and self-regulation. Non-stimulant medications are also available. Behavioral therapy helps individuals develop coping mechanisms, improve time management, and enhance social skills.

Despite its challenges, ADHD does not define a person's potential. Many individuals with ADHD excel in creative and dynamic environments, benefiting from their adaptability, problem-solving abilities, and high energy. **Early diagnosis and the right support** can significantly improve quality of life, helping individuals harness their strengths while managing their symptoms effectively.



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) affects approximately **5-7%** of children and **2-5%** of adults worldwide.



WAYS OF IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING THESE STUDENTS

Identifying and supporting students with ADHD requires a combination of **observation, assessment, and tailored interventions.**

Identification of ADHD students:

Observation of symptoms:

- Inattention (difficulty staying focused, careless mistakes, forgetfulness)
- Hyperactivity (restlessness, excessive talking, difficulty staying seated)
- Impulsivity (interrupting, difficulty waiting for turns, risk-taking behavior)

Teachers and parents report

- Collect feedback from teachers, parents, and caregivers regarding behavior patterns in different settings.

Standardized assessments

- Use ADHD rating scales like the Vanderbilt Assessment Scale or Conners Rating Scale to evaluate symptoms.

Psychoeducational evaluation

- A psychologist or specialist can conduct cognitive and behavioral assessments to confirm the diagnosis.



Supporting strategies for ADHD students:

Classroom strategies

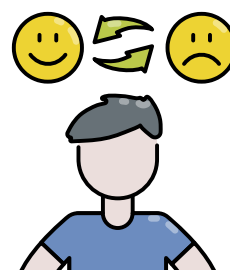
- **Flexible Seating:** Allow standing desks or fidget tools to accommodate restlessness.
- **Clear Instructions:** Use simple, step-by-step directions with visual aids.
- **Structured Routine:** Maintain a consistent schedule to reduce distractions.
- **Frequent Breaks:** Offer short breaks to help with focus and self-regulation.
- **Task Chunking:** Break large assignments into smaller, manageable parts.
- **Preferential Seating:** Place the student close to the teacher and away from distractions.

Behavioral and social support

- **Positive Reinforcement:** Reward effort and progress rather than just outcomes.
- **Self-Monitoring Tools:** Encourage planners, checklists, or timers for task management.
- **Social Skills Training:** Provide guidance on turn-taking, listening, and emotional regulation.

Parental and external support

- **Regular Communication:** Collaborate with parents to maintain consistency between home and school.
- **Counseling or Therapy:** Behavioral therapy can help with emotional and impulse control.
- **Medication (if needed):** Some students may benefit from medication under medical supervision.



STRATEGIES FOR CREATING INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

First of all, it is crucial to clarify that creating an inclusive learning environment for students with ADHD involves strategies that support their unique needs while benefiting all learners. This way, the student will not feel different and distant from the rest of the classmates.

One of the most common and modern line of action is the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). These strategies create flexible learning experiences that accommodate various learning styles.

- **Multiple Means of Representation:** Present information in different formats—text, audio, visuals, hands-on activities.
- **Multiple Means of Action and Expression:** Let students demonstrate understanding in different ways—oral presentations, projects, creative writing, digital media.
- **Multiple Means of Engagement:** Allow students to choose topics for assignments, provide gamified learning experiences, and encourage collaboration.



Universal Design for Learning (UDL) promotes **equity** by providing multiple ways for students to engage, learn, and express their knowledge. It enhances accessibility for **diverse learners**

Here are some key approaches taking into account different areas:

Classroom structure and organization:

- **Predictable Routines:** Establish clear schedules and routines to reduce anxiety and distractions.
- **Flexible Seating:** Allow students to choose seating arrangements that help them focus, such as standing desks or fidget-friendly seats.
- **Minimized Clutter:** Keep the learning space organized to reduce distractions.

Instructional Strategies:

- **Chunking Information:** Break lessons into smaller, manageable parts with clear objectives.
- **Multisensory Learning:** Use visual aids, hands-on activities, and movement to engage different learning styles.
- **Frequent Breaks:** Encourage short movement breaks to help students reset their focus.
- **Use of Timers:** Provide time management tools to help students stay on track.

Behavioral & Emotional Support:

- **Positive Reinforcement:** Recognize and reward efforts rather than just outcomes.
- **Clear & Consistent Rules:** Set straightforward expectations with visual reminders.





TEACHER SELF-DEVELOPMENT WORK, TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, SAMPLE STATEMENTS/BEHAVIOURS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RESPONSES FOR TEACHERS

TIPS

1

Educate Yourself: Stay informed about ADHD by reading workshops, online courses.

2

Foster Patience: ADHD students may struggle with attention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity. Practice patience and understanding.

3

Practice Self-Care: Managing ADHD students can be demanding. Prioritize your well-being to maintain patience and energy.





TEACHER SELF-DEVELOPMENT WORK, TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, SAMPLE STATEMENTS/BEHAVIOURS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RESPONSES FOR TEACHERS

SAMPLE STATEMENT/ BEHAVIOURS

1

Using Positive Reinforcement: "I noticed you raised your hand before speaking. That's fantastic!"

2

Redirecting Behavior: "I see you're having trouble sitting still. Would you like to stand at your desk while working?"

3

Providing Structure: "Your schedule is on the board. After math, we have a short break."



TEACHER SELF-DEVELOPMENT WORK, TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, SAMPLE STATEMENTS/BEHAVIOURS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RESPONSES FOR TEACHERS



PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RESPONSES



1

Behavior Management: Use a reward system or daily report cards to encourage positive behaviors.

2

Mindfulness Activities: Introduce breathing exercises or mindfulness practices to help students manage impulsivity and stress.

3

Collaboration: Work closely with parents, counselors, and special education professionals to create a supportive network.

4

Individualized Support: Develop personalized learning plans that cater to the student's strengths and challenges.

Exercise 1



RECOGNISING THE STRENGTHS OF SUCH PUPILS AND BUILDING ON THEM

Title: Identifying and supporting the strengths.

Duration: 1' 30"

Goal: To recognize common ADHD students traits and implement strategies to support the strengths they have.

1. Energizing Introduction (15 min)

- Warm-up Activity: "ADHD Strengths in Action" – Teachers participate in a brainstorming where they write down positive ADHD traits.
- Pair & Share: Teachers pair up to discuss personal experiences with ADHD students' strengths.
- Objective Overview: Facilitator sets the importance of shifting focus from challenges to strengths.

2. Interactive Exploration of ADHD Strengths (20 min)

- Station Activity: Teachers rotate through stations, each dedicated to a different ADHD strength (creativity, energy, problem-solving, hyperfocus, empathy, adaptability).
- Debrief Discussion: Teachers share insights from each station and how these strengths manifest in their students.

3. Strength-Based Teaching Strategies (30 min)

- Gamified Learning: Teachers participate in a role-playing game where they act out different ADHD strengths.
- Hands-on Experiment: "Flexible Lesson Planning" – Teachers receive a sample lesson and must modify it to incorporate ADHD strengths



Exercise 1



RECOGNISING THE STRENGTHS OF SUCH PUPILS AND BUILDING ON THEM

Interactive Discussion: Teachers vote on the most effective strategies and discuss their applicability.

4. Action-Oriented Planning (15 min)

- Creative Vision Boards: Teachers design a small vision board illustrating how they will integrate ADHD strengths into their teaching.
- Speed Coaching: Teachers pair up for rapid feedback on their ideas, spending 3 minutes discussing their plan before switching partners.

5. High-Energy Wrap-Up & Q&A (10 min)

- Commitment Pledge: Teachers write down one concrete action they will take in the next week and share it in a quick roundtable.
- Reflection Circle: Each participant shares one key takeaway from the session.
- Closing Activity: "Pass the Ball" – A soft ball is tossed between teachers, and whoever catches it shares one strength they will amplify in their students.

Takeaway Materials:

- ADHD Strengths & Strategies Quick Guide
- Vision Board Templates
- Interactive Lesson Adaptation Guide
- Recommended Reading List



Exercise 2



RECOGNISING AND DEALING WITH WEAKNESSES

Title: Dealing with weaknesses

Duration: 1' 15''

Goal: To equip teachers with the ability to recognize common ADHD weaknesses and implement strategies to deal with them

Warm-up (10''):

- The teachers will quickly list common difficulties faced by ADHD students in 2 minutes.
- In pairs they will discuss the most challenging situations they have encountered with ADHD students.
- To conclude, the facilitator explains how addressing weaknesses with positive and practical approaches can improve student outcomes.

Interactive Exploration of ADHD Challenges (20 min):

- The teachers will walk around the room looking at different pictures to analyze the different weaknesses of these students.
- After this moment they will share insights from the stations and discuss how these weaknesses impact students' learning experiences.

Practical Classroom Strategies (30 min)

- They will have a **Hands-on Experiment**. "Adaptive Teaching Planning". Teachers receive a sample lesson and must modify it to address ADHD-related weaknesses
- Through an interactive discussion, teachers vote on the most practical strategies and discuss their applicability.



Exercise 2



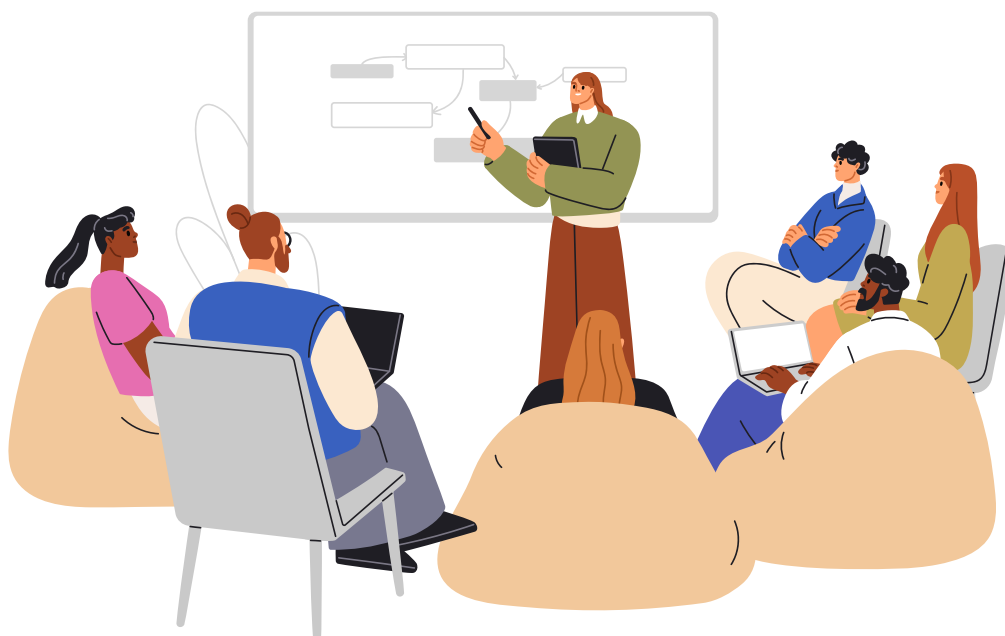
RECOGNISING AND DEALING WITH WEAKNESSES

Closing activity (15'):

Teachers write down a brief story of a time they successfully helped an ADHD student overcome a challenge. These are then posted on a wall for inspiration, and a few are shared aloud.

Takeaway Materials:

- Pictures about ADHD students' weaknesses
- Sample lessons
- Letter template



Exercise 3



SOFT SKILLS TECHNIQUES (FOR TEACHERS) TO SUPPORT THESE STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM AND AT HOME

Title: Developing soft skills

Duration: 1' 30"

Goal: To develop soft skills such as empathy, adaptability, communication and active listening

Warm-up. Sensory Overload Challenge (10"):

- Teachers perform a simple task (e.g., solving a math problem or reading instructions) while being distracted by external stimuli (e.g., background noise, interruptions, flashing images). This is to simulate how ADHD students experience distractions and difficulty focusing.
- After this moment is time to discuss: *How did distractions impact performance?/How does this relate to ADHD students' daily struggles?/What soft skills are necessary to support them?*

Interactive Exploration of ADHD Challenges (20 min):

- Teachers are divided into pairs or small groups and given realistic classroom/home scenarios involving an ADHD student. One teacher plays the student, while another practices empathetic and adaptable responses as the teacher.
- After this moment they will discuss about the following guide: *What strategies worked best?/How did empathy and adaptability influence the interaction?/How can these skills improve classroom/home dynamics?*



Exercise 3

SOFT SKILLS TECHNIQUES (FOR TEACHERS) TO SUPPORT THESE STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM AND AT HOME

Reflective listening (20 min)

- Teachers practice active listening by pairing up and taking turns discussing a challenge they face with an ADHD student. During this task, the listener must paraphrase what the speaker said, ask clarifying questions and Validate the speaker's emotions.
- Through an interactive discussion, teachers vote on the most practical strategies and discuss their applicability.
- After this moment there will be two cardboards and the teachers will ask in a word or in a short sentence the following questions: *How did it feel to be truly heard?/What makes active listening effective in ADHD support?/How can teachers apply this with students and parents?*

Takeaway Materials:

- Cardboards
- Materials to create distractions





CHAPTER 5

SPECIFIC LANGUAGE DISORDERS



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WHAT IS SPECIFIC LANGUAGE DISORDERS?

Specific Language Disorders (SLD) refer to a group of conditions that affect an individual's **ability to understand, produce, or use language effectively**. These disorders are not caused by cognitive impairments, hearing loss, or neurological damage but rather by difficulties in language processing and development. SLD can significantly impact a person's ability to communicate, learn, and engage socially, particularly in academic settings.

Some of the most common Specific Language Disorders include:



Aphasia – A neurological disorder affecting language comprehension and expression, often due to brain injury or stroke. It can impact speaking, understanding, reading, and writing.



Mutism / Selective Mutism – A condition where individuals, often children, consistently fail to speak in specific social settings despite being able to speak in others (e.g., at home but not at school). It is frequently linked to anxiety disorders.



Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) – A condition in which children struggle to acquire language skills despite normal intelligence and no clear sensory or neurological deficits. It affects vocabulary, sentence formation, and overall communication.



Why is important?

Understanding Specific Language Disorders is crucial for educators, as these conditions can hinder a student's academic success, social interactions, and emotional well-being. Teachers play a vital role in identifying these challenges early and implementing appropriate strategies to support students in developing their communication skills. By fostering inclusive classroom environments, educators can help neurodiverse learners overcome these language barriers and fully participate in their education.

This module will provide practical tools, strategies, and resources to help teachers recognize, support, and accommodate students with Specific Language Disorders, ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all.



Specific Language Disorders (SLD) affect around 7% of children worldwide, meaning roughly two students per classroom may experience language difficulties. SLD is more common in boys than girls, with a 2:1 ratio. Early detection and intervention are crucial to improving outcomes and minimizing long-term challenges.

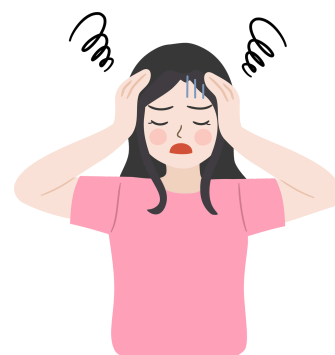
WAYS OF IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING THESE STUDENTS

Identifying Students with SLD

1 . Classroom Observations and Behavioral Indicators

Teachers play a crucial role in the early detection of language disorders by observing students' communication patterns. Some key signs of SLD include:

- ✓ Difficulty following verbal instructions (especially multi-step directions).
- ✓ Limited vocabulary compared to peers.
- ✓ Struggles with forming coherent sentences, often omitting key words or mixing up sentence structure.
- ✓ Frequent grammatical errors that persist beyond the expected age.
- ✓ Difficulty expressing thoughts clearly, leading to frustration.
- ✓ Challenges with reading and writing, including spelling and phonetic awareness.
- ✓ Avoidance of speaking in class, especially when required to answer questions aloud.
- ✓ Difficulty engaging in conversations, showing trouble maintaining a topic.





2. Standardized Assessments and Screening Tools

Once signs of SLD are noticed, formal assessments should be used to confirm and analyze language difficulties. Some commonly used tools include:



- ✓ Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (CELF) – Evaluates receptive and expressive language skills.
- ✓ Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) – Assesses vocabulary comprehension.
- ✓ Test of Language Development (TOLD) – Measures spoken and written language abilities
- ✓ Teacher and Parent Questionnaires – Help assess the impact of language difficulties in different environments.

Screening should be conducted in collaboration with speech and language therapists (SLTs) to obtain a professional diagnosis and determine appropriate interventions.

3. Collaboration with Parents and Specialists

Communication with parents and caregivers is essential in understanding the child's language development outside of school. Teachers should:

- ✓ Discuss observed difficulties and gather insights about language use at home.
- ✓ Work with SLTs and special educators to create individualized support plans.
- ✓ Encourage families to reinforce communication skills in daily activities.

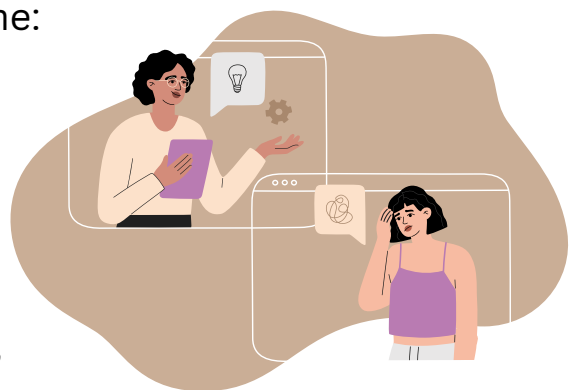


Supporting Students with SLD

Once identified, students with SLD benefit from tailored strategies that accommodate their needs while building confidence and independence.

1. Classroom Strategies for Teachers

- ✓ **Simplify Instructions:** Use short, clear, and direct language. Break instructions into small steps and reinforce them visually.
- ✓ **Use Multisensory Learning:** Incorporate visuals, gestures, and hands-on activities to support understanding.
- ✓ **Encourage Alternative Communication:** Allow students to respond using writing, drawing, or assistive technology if verbal expression is difficult.
- ✓ **Scaffold Learning:** Provide structured templates, word banks, and sentence starters to guide students in forming responses.
- ✓ **Allow Extra Processing Time:** Give students additional time to formulate answers and complete tasks.
- ✓ **Implement Peer Support:** Pair students with patient, supportive classmates for cooperative learning activities.



2. Assistive Technology and Adaptive Resources

Technology can play a key role in helping students with SLI communicate and learn more effectively. Some useful tools include:

- ✓ **Speech-to-Text Software:** Helps students with difficulties in written expression (e.g., Google Voice Typing).
- ✓ **Text-to-Speech Programs:** Supports reading comprehension (e.g., NaturalReader, Read&Write).
- ✓ **Picture-Based Communication Apps:** Beneficial for students with selective mutism or expressive language difficulties (e.g., PECS, Proloquo2Go).
- ✓ **Interactive Storytelling Apps:** Engages students in language practice through digital storytelling (e.g., Book Creator).





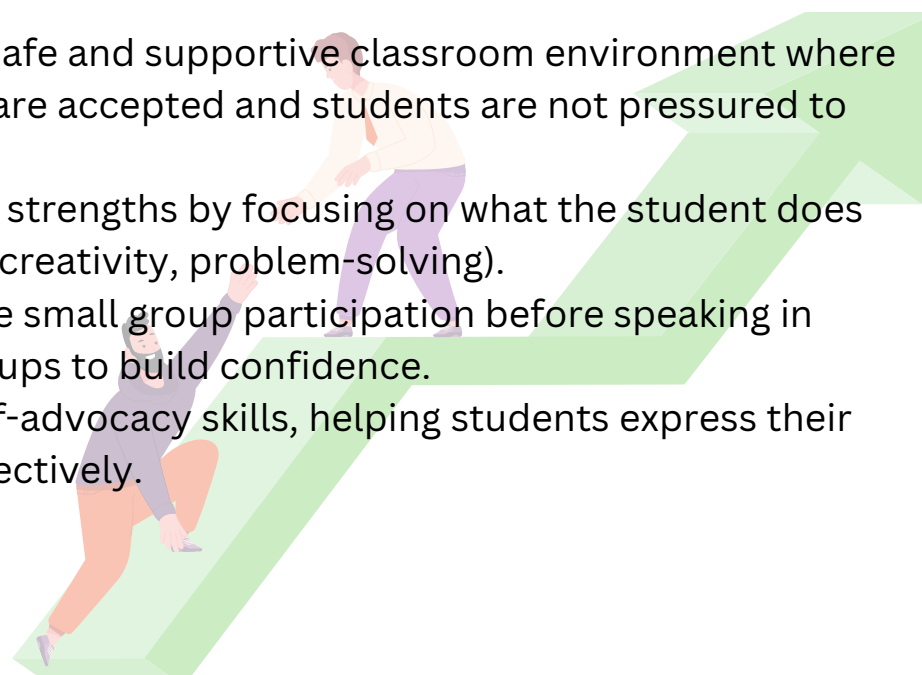
3. Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and Accommodations

A Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) or Individualized Education Plan (IEP) should be created for students with SLD to ensure consistent and structured support. This plan should include:

- Specific learning goals tailored to the student's needs.
- Adaptations in assessments, allowing oral instead of written responses if needed.
- Regular progress tracking to adjust strategies as required.
- Collaboration between teachers, therapists, and parents to maintain consistent support.

4. Encouraging Social and Emotional Growth

Students with language difficulties often experience frustration, anxiety, or low self-esteem due to their communication challenges. Educators can:

- Create a safe and supportive classroom environment where mistakes are accepted and students are not pressured to speak.
 - Reinforce strengths by focusing on what the student does well (e.g., creativity, problem-solving).
 - Encourage small group participation before speaking in larger groups to build confidence.
 - Teach self-advocacy skills, helping students express their needs effectively.
- 

STRATEGIES FOR CREATING INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Supporting Students with SLI



1 Classroom Strategies

- ✓ **Simplified Language:** Use clear, concise instructions and visual supports.
- ✓ **Multimodal Communication:** Encourage gestures, visuals, and assistive technology.
- ✓ **Structured Routines:** Provide predictable schedules to reduce anxiety and confusion.

2 Individualized Support Plans

- ✓ **Adapted Learning Materials:** Modify assignments and assessments to match the student's communication level.
- ✓ **One-on-One Assistance:** Provide additional support through special education teachers or speech therapists.
- ✓ **Encourage Peer Support:** Assign peer buddies to facilitate communication and inclusion.

3 Encouraging a Positive and Inclusive Environment

- ✓ Promote patience and understanding among classmates.



- ✓ Celebrate small achievements to build confidence.

- ✓ Foster a supportive space where students feel comfortable expressing themselves.



TEACHER SELF-DEVELOPMENT WORK, TIPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, SAMPLE STATEMENTS/BEHAVIOURS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS AND RESPONSES FOR TEACHERS

Tips and Recommendations for Teachers

Build Awareness and Knowledge

- ✓ **Stay Informed** – Regularly engage in training on neurodiversity and language disorders.
- ✓ **Learn the Signs** – Understand how aphasia, mutism, and developmental language disorder manifest in students.
- ✓ **Collaborate with Experts** – Work alongside speech therapists, psychologists, and special educators

Adapt Teaching Methods

- ✓ **Use Clear and Simple Language** – Avoid complex sentences and give instructions step by step.
- ✓ **Incorporate Visual Supports** – Use images, gestures, and written cues to aid comprehension.
- ✓ **Encourage Alternative Communication** – Accept non-verbal responses, assistive technology, or peer-supported communication.



Foster an Inclusive Classroom

- ✓ **Be Patient and Encouraging** – Allow students extra time to process and respond.
- ✓ **Promote Peer Support** – Pair students with supportive classmates for activities.
- ✓ **Create a Safe Speaking Environment** – Never force a child with selective mutism to speak, but encourage participation in non-verbal ways.

Adapt Assessments and Assignments

- ✓ **Offer Multiple Ways to Express Knowledge** – Allow oral, written, or visual project-based assessments.
- ✓ **Reduce Pressure in Verbal Tasks** – Use small-group discussions instead of whole-class speaking tasks.
- ✓ **Provide Structured Learning Plans** – Set clear expectations and scaffolding techniques.



Sample Teacher Statements, Behaviors, and Actions

Scenario	Teacher Statement/Behavior	Proposed Action/Response
A student struggles to follow verbal instructions	<i>"Let's go step by step. First, watch me, then you can try."</i>	Break tasks into smaller steps and use written/visual instructions.
A student with selective mutism avoids speaking in class	<i>"It's okay if you're not ready to speak yet. You can write it down or point to the answer."</i>	Provide alternative ways to participate and reduce verbal pressure.
A student mispronounces words frequently	<i>"That was a great effort! Keep practicing, and we'll work on this together."</i>	Focus on positive reinforcement rather than correction.
A student struggles to express thoughts clearly	<i>"Take your time. You can show me with a drawing or choose from these options."</i>	Offer visual choices and non-verbal communication methods.
A student gets anxious when called on to speak	<i>"Would you like to share in a small group first?"</i>	Give the student options for participation at their comfort level.

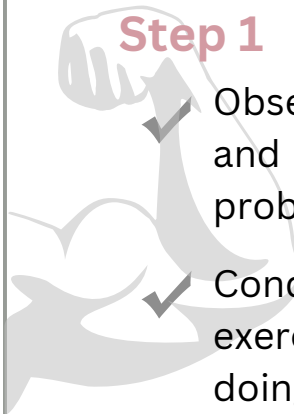


Exercise 1



RECOGNISING THE STRENGTHS OF SUCH PUPILS AND BUILDING ON THEM

Step 1 Identifying Strengths



Observe the student in different classroom situations and note areas where they excel (e.g., creativity, problem-solving, visual thinking, social skills).

Conduct a short, informal conversation or worksheet exercise with the student, asking them what they enjoy doing most at school.

Step 2 Creating a Personalized Approach

Develop a learning adaptation plan that incorporates the student's strengths.

- If the student excels in visual learning, integrate diagrams, charts, and mind maps.
- If they are creative, encourage storytelling through drawings or digital tools.
- If they have good social skills, allow peer collaboration and mentoring.

Step 3 Applying and Evaluating

- Implement the adapted approach in a lesson and observe the student's engagement.
- Gather feedback from the student on what helped them feel more confident.

Outcome:

- ✓ Increased self-esteem and participation.
- ✓ Greater motivation through strength-based learning.
- ✓ A shift from a deficit-based approach to a focus on abilities.





RECOGNISING AND DEALING WITH WEAKNESSES

Step 1 Identifying Weaknesses

- Choose a student and observe difficulties they experience in communication, comprehension, or participation.
- Record situations where they struggle (e.g., following oral instructions, forming sentences, reading aloud).

Step 2 Developing Targeted Support

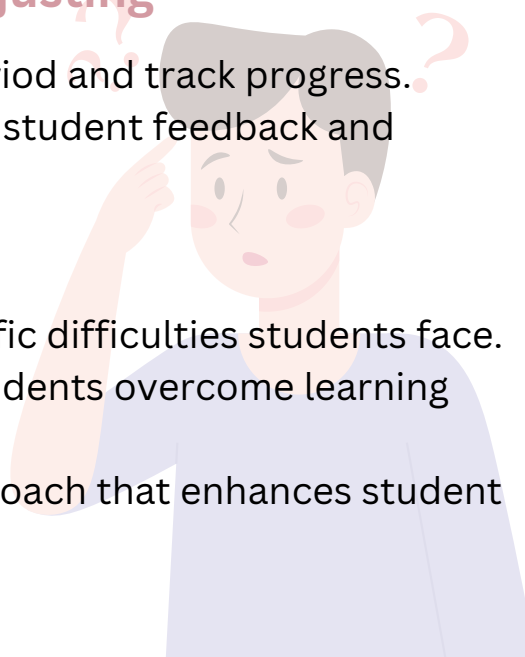
- For listening comprehension difficulties, provide visual aids and written instructions.
- For verbal expression challenges, encourage alternative communication methods like gestures, writing, or assistive technology.
- For reading/writing struggles, use structured sentence-building exercises and speech-to-text tools.

Step 3 Monitoring and Adjusting

- Apply strategies over a set period and track progress.
- Adjust the approach based on student feedback and engagement levels.

Outcome:

- ✓ A clear understanding of specific difficulties students face.
- ✓ Concrete strategies to help students overcome learning barriers.
- ✓ A more adaptive teaching approach that enhances student confidence.





SOFT SKILLS TECHNIQUES (FOR TEACHERS) TO SUPPORT THESE STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM AND AT HOME

Step 1 Understanding Soft Skills

Discuss essential soft skills for working with SLD students, such as patience, active listening, empathy, adaptability, and clear communication.

Step 2 Role-Playing Scenarios

Scenario 1: A student is struggling to express their thoughts verbally.

- One teacher plays the role of the student; the other practices using supportive questioning, visual aids, and encouraging body language.

Scenario 2: A parent is unsure how to help their child at home.

- One teacher plays the parent; the other provides simple home strategies such as using visual schedules, breaking tasks into small steps, and reading together.

Step 3 Reflection and Discussion

- Teachers discuss what worked well in each role-play and how they can apply these strategies in real classroom and home settings.

Outcome:

- ✓ Teachers enhance their ability to communicate effectively with SLD students.
- ✓ Improved collaboration between teachers and families.
- ✓ Increased confidence in handling everyday classroom situations involving neurodiverse students.

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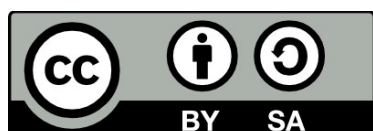
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Authors

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