



## Supporting Students with Specific Learning Difficulties

### Creating Safe Learning Environments

- Establish strong and authentic relationships with your students. This is important for all students but especially important for students with specific learning difficulties. This relationship will form the foundation of safety that will allow the student to take risks in their learning.
- When a student is finding a task difficult, join with them and empathise about the difficulty. Acknowledge how they are feeling, e.g. “It sounds like you are feeling worried/ frustrated/ angry etc. about how hard this task is”. Putting words to worries acknowledges how the student is feeling and helps to increase safety
- Ensure that the classroom is a safe learning environment. Ensure that students with learning difficulties are not humiliated or shamed. Be mindful of not putting a student in a situation where their learning difficulty is made public (e.g. do not ask students to read out loud, ask them to scribe on the whiteboard etc.). When a student feels secure in the classroom they are more likely to have a go and take risks in their learning.
- Think about how activities can be modified or adapted to suit the learning needs of the student so that they can access the curriculum. What is the purpose of the task you are asking the student complete? How can they best demonstrate their learning? Can you consider options such as movie making, PowerPoint presentations, model making etc. to achieve your learning outcomes.
- Minimise the chance of failure and maximise success. Ensure that tasks are pitched at just the right level for the student.
- Consider classroom placements. Ensure that the student is sitting in a location where they can get support from the teacher. Place the student with peers who provide the right kind of support and understanding. Be aware of students who might over help or overcorrect a student with learning difficulties.
- If a student is receiving additional support and is to be withdrawn from the classroom ensure that this withdrawal time does not occur during a favourite lesson (e.g. sport or art etc.).
- Help students to develop their positive self-talk and to build their internal resilience. Give students plenty of positive reinforcement and ensure that the student has opportunities to shine.
- Remember that students with specific learning difficulties are cognitively working harder than their peers. Therefore they will often fatigue sooner than their peers. Provide opportunities for short breaks which may where appropriate include some physical movement. This fatigue means that students have good days and bad days and that they may not retain information that they have learned. This fatigue can also impact the amount of homework a student can cope with, be aware of not overloading the student.

The British Dyslexia Association has some great information available about supporting students with learning difficulties. This information can be found under the heading of Dyslexia Friendly schools on their website [http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/files/dfs\\_pack\\_English.pdf](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/files/dfs_pack_English.pdf)