

Strategies for Optimizing Learning

Many teaching strategies that assist students with disabilities are also known to benefit students without disabilities. Instruction provided in an array of approaches will reach more students than instruction using one method. The following suggestions are designed to assist you in meeting the growing diversity of student needs in the classroom, particularly those related to disabilities. Please let us know if there are other strategies that you have found to be effective.

TWO IMPORTANT POINTS:

- **The barriers encountered by students with disabilities can vary dramatically even within the same disability type. Always talk with the student about his/her specific learning style and academic barriers, and consult with SSD as needed.**
- **Many disabilities are not obvious. NEVER assume that you do not have a student with a disability in your class.**

General Guiding Strategies for UDL Teaching and Presentation

- Begin class with a review of the previous lecture and an overview of topics to be covered that day; give questions the students should be able to answer by the end of the lecture. At the conclusion of the lecture, summarize key points.
- Highlight major concepts and terminology both orally and visually. Be alert for opportunities to provide information in more than one sensory mode.
- Emphasize main ideas and key concepts during lecture and highlight them on the blackboard, overhead, or ppt.
- Speak directly to students; use gestures and natural expressions to convey further meaning.
- Diminish or eliminate auditory and visual distractions.
- Present new or technical vocabulary on the blackboard, overhead or ppt, or use a handout. Make available handouts in alternative formats if needed (i.e., photo copy instead of ditto, 18 pt. font instead of 12 pt.).
- Use visual aids such as diagrams, charts, and graphs; use color to enhance the message.
- Give assignments both orally and in written form; be available for clarification.
- Provide adequate opportunities for participation, questions and/or discussion.
- Provide timelines for long-range assignments.
- Use sequential steps for long-range assignments; for example, for a lengthy paper, 1) select a topic, 2) write an outline, 3) submit a rough draft, 4) make necessary corrections with approval, 5) turn in a final draft.
- All materials handed out in class must be in an accessible format. Give feedback on early drafts of papers so there is adequate time for clarification, rewrites, and refinements.
- Provide study questions and review sessions to aid in mastering material and preparing for exams.
- Give sample test questions; explain what constitutes a good answer and why.
- To test knowledge of material rather than test-taking savvy, phrase test items clearly and economically.
- Be concise and avoid double negatives.
- Facilitate the formation of study groups for students who wish to participate.
- Encourage students to seek assistance during your office hours and to use campus support services.

Before or at Beginning of the term

Class Syllabus: Please be sure that your syllabi contain this statement (or similar ADA statement): Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations, who have any emergency medical information the instructor should know of, or who need special arrangements in the event of evacuation, should make an appointment with the instructor as early as possible, no later than the first week of the term. Students may also wish to contact the COCC Disability Services Office in the Boyle Education Center, 541-383-7583.

Review of letter from SSD: When a student has registered with SSD, they will be given a letter to bring to your attention outlining the accommodations for which they are eligible. Please review the letter and consider accommodations in the contexts of your class. Discuss any questions or concerns you have with the student or the SSD Coordinator.

First Class: Bring the syllabus statement to the attention of students at the first class meeting. This approach preserves students' privacy and also indicates your willingness to provide accommodations as needed.

Assignments: Because many students with disabilities need additional time to process and complete assignments, convey expectations at the beginning of the course (e.g., grading, material to be covered, due dates) in written and in oral format.

Announce reading assignments well in advance to assist students using taped materials or other alternate formats.

First meeting with the student with a disability: Students should make arrangements to meet with you to present the letter they received from SSD and to discuss the implementation of the eligible accommodations.

Assistance with identifying a note taker: SSD asks for your assistance in identifying a note taker for the class. If you know of a qualified student, please make the appropriate recommendation. If you do not know of anyone, please read the announcement of the need for a note taker in class as soon as possible. If you need assistance, please contact SSD.