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When a student is having difficulties succeeding in the classroom, it is sometimes hard to isolate the source of the problem. Several teachers have found this simple question process very helpful. Hopefully you too will find something here, previously unconsidered, that will make it easier for your student to learn and succeed.

1) Can I make changes in the physical environment?

You can decrease distractions by closing doors and window shades, seating the student close to instruction and away from high traffic areas, and reducing extra noise during instruction. Classrooms that are too hot or cold, poorly lit or too bright, and/or too noisy or cluttered may also present problems.

2) Can I use other instructional methods?

Students who have difficulty gaining information through reading, for example, can be provided the same information through oral presentations, videos, visual representations, hand-on activities, cooperative learning activities, or a combination of different instructional methods.

Most students show improved learning when instructional supports such as graphic organizers, vocabulary cards, guided note taking sheets, or time management tools are included in instruction.

3) Can I use different materials?

Worksheets with small print, limited space for written responses, and tiny multiple-choice bubbles can present obstacles. You can enlarge worksheets, provide adequate writing space, and allow students to highlight correct responses. Supplement reading material with tape recordings,

three-dimensional models, and illustrations. Using materials such as erasable pencils, screens, sticky notes, and manipulatives make it easy for students to change their response and correct errors.

4) Can the student demonstrate his or her learning in a different way?

Students who have difficulty expressing their thoughts in writing can be allowed to create an outline or semantic map, record an oral explanation, or create an illustration or model to demonstrate their learning. Providing students with a few options has been found to improve student achievement. Let the student choose if they want to write an essay, design a poster, or make an oral presentation.

5) Can I make changes in time, location, and/or structure?

Some students are best able to face their most challenging subjects or activities early in the morning, after physical activity, or on a full stomach. Try switching your schedule a bit. You can also change the structure of the activity, such as substituting a 30-minute presentation with three 10-minute presentations separated by three-minute activities. When students have more than one task to complete, let the students pick which to do first.

6) Can I change the classroom climate?

Instructional climates can be authoritarian, inquiry-based, highly structured, or open to all types of student expression. The climate of student interaction can represent a community of learning friends or a collection of separate (sometimes competitive) groups. Students respond better to classrooms in which student-student and teacher-student relationships are supportive, caring, interested, and

achievement oriented. Evaluate what type of climate is most prevalent in your classroom. Are there changes you can make that would be more conducive to student success?

7) Can I engage the students in a different, though related, activity?

Students with visual or language difficulties, for example, can be involved in hands-on exploration of three-dimensional models, while listening as classmates view a video on whales. Students with limited language skills can complete a vocabulary-building activity, while classmates write a poem. Even if students are doing something slightly different from their peers, they still derive educational benefit to meet their learning needs. This book report choice board provides a common example.

When completing research on the environment, some students can be asked to locate statistical info online, others can use print publications to find the answers to specific questions, others can locate graphics to represent various concepts, and a four group can conduct face-to-face interviews. All students can then combine their findings in a cooperative jigsaw approach.

8) Can another adult help?

Teachers can seek the assistance of volunteers such as retired individuals, university education majors, and high school students. Some communities have active school-to-work programs in which business and community employees donate time and resources to schools.

Write one paragraph about the main character.	Create a comic strip showing the conclusion of the story.	Write a song/rap about the main events in the story. Share with the class.
Write a poem about the main event in the story.	Create a different ending for the story.	Make a timeline that sequences the events in the story.
Draw a picture that represents the setting in the story.	Create a T-Chart comparing/contrasting two characters in the story.	Illustrate the main idea of the story.

As always, my intent in presenting these activities is to help teachers answer this question -

What can I do to make it easier for my students to learn and behave?



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