

Teaching Strategies

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a **diagnostic term** used to describe impacts on the brain and body of individuals **prenatally exposed to alcohol**. FASD is a **lifelong disability**. Individuals with FASD will experience **some degree of challenges** in their daily living, and need support with motor skills, physical health, learning, memory, attention, communication, emotional regulation, and social skills to reach their full potential. **Each individual with FASD is unique** and has areas of both strengths and challenges.



Building Inclusive Schools

Building inclusivity for FASD in schools requires us to adapt to the needs of the learner.

Students with FASD need a supportive school community that welcomes them, makes them feel safe, and makes them feel like a contributing member of the school.

Implementing Interventions

Intervention research is relatively new in the FASD field, but cognitive, academic, behavioural, social, and caregiver programs and supports have been promising.

Behaviour can become the primary means of communication for a student with FASD.

Shifting from traditional approaches with traditional interventions/consequences aimed at changing people to being able to recognize brain differences, prevent problems, develop effective strategies, and focus of changing environments is an FASD-informed approach.

Students with FASD are consistently underestimated because they often struggle in areas where ability is traditionally measured

Educators should recognize and celebrate the unique strengths of students with FASD and provide opportunities for learners to use and build on their strengths.

There are some strengths that are common among individuals with FASD.

Personal strengths commonly include:

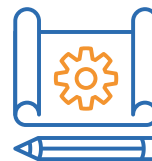


- Being helpful and keen to please,
- Being caring with a strong sense of justice,
- Being non-judgmental,
- Friendly and outgoing,
- Patient and interacts well with younger children, the elderly, and/or animals, and
- Energetic

Learning strengths commonly include:

- Hands-on, concrete learners,
- Lateral thinkers with points of insight,
- Athletic, sporty, creative or musical,
- Persistent, determined, and hard-working, and
- Strong long term visual memories

Classroom Accommodations



- Instructional
- Assessment
- Environmental
- Transition



“Children need hands-on, tactile learning. So, if you’re trying to explain the word ‘ball’, you’re not just going to use the word or picture, you’re going to get a ball, you’ve got to feel the ball, you’ve got to bounce the ball, you’ve got to explore the whole concept of that.”

- Parent

Teaching Strategies

Often individuals with FASD need systematic and repeated instruction. Simplify instruction to avoid cognitive overload using strategies such as:



- Gesture,
- Rhyming,
- Visual supports,
- Reduction,
- Rephrasing, and
- Repetition

Strategies that can be beneficial for all subjects include:

- Differentiated instruction,
- Checking comprehension,
- Correction, and
- Using visuals



Art Challenges

- Sustaining interest until the completion of a project,
- Improvising with materials, props, costumes, music, and voice,
- Space issues where they are in groups with no clearly defined areas of personal space,
- Instruments can be challenging to use due to delays in motor skills,
- Remembering lyrics or notes may be frustrating, and
- Sensory stimulation

Art Opportunities

Art often gives students with FASD another language they can communicate with, and classmates can establish a sense of community and find commonalities with each other.

Music can help students perceive, explore, communicate, and reflect on thoughts, feelings, images, and ideas.

Dance can enhance sensory integration and gross motor activities.

Drama is an appropriate outlet and important area for personal and social development.

Visual Art such as using clay or papier-mâché can address various sensory needs and be very calming for some students.

Art Strategies

Teach the difference between appropriate and inappropriate social and interpersonal behaviours, communication skills, and work behaviours,

- Use multi-sensory experiences, and
- Label and teach concepts like emotion



Math Challenges

- Remembering and recalling basic math facts and skills,
- No real understanding of what a number is and what it represents,
- Spatial direction and organization,
- Problem solving, and
- Computational skills

Math Strategies

- Use chanting, singing, or drawing to remember math facts,
- Use concrete materials and manipulatives when possible,
- Use graph paper to help keep columns and figures straight, and
- Highlight key words in the problem



Literacy Challenges

- Learning sound/symbol associations
- Difficulties with spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, and
- Identifying main ideas, making inferences, making predictions

Literacy Strategies

Multimodal learning

- » Picture walks
- » Word wall

Speech, language, communication, and social skills

- » Fewer and simpler words
- » Articulation support

Comprehension

- » Avoid using figures of speech, euphemisms, and sarcasm
- » Stop at key points to check for comprehension

Reading

- » Use a plain piece of paper to put under each line of reading material
- » Enlarge font and spacing



Science Challenges

- Using/understanding science vocabulary,
- Using the fine motor skills necessary to manipulate scientific equipment,
- Conducting experiments, and
- Demonstrating ability to record, interpret, and discuss observations

Science Strategies

- Use concrete materials to help form concepts,
- Provide students with organizers of key scientific concepts,
- Use alternate texts at the appropriate reading level for the student, and
- Consider not assigning timed tasks or provide assistance with experiments where procedures are time limited