Information Literacy for Special Needs Students

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First, a story

A story is a promise of a conversation
A few things about this presentation

• I am not an expert but I did have the opportunity to talk to folks who have a lot of experience in this field.
• I will be focusing on students with learning disabilities and emotional issues but hopefully much of the presentation will be applicable to working with other diverse learners.
Diverse Learners

- Everyone is a diverse learner!
- Different strengths
- Different weaknesses
Wide Range of Challenges

- ADHD
- Autism Spectrum
- Dyslexia
- Anxiety
- Depression
- PTSD

“Students were diagnosed or treated for the following:”

Font size is equivalent to percentage of student response from the 2012 ACHA-NCHA II report.
Learning Styles

- All students have different learning styles
- Visual learners
- Auditory processing
- Listening problems
- Challenges with verbal expression
Multi-Sensory Teaching

- Use simple, well-labeled handouts.
- Do not use library-ese or other language idioms.
- Always use visual, aural and hands-on experience to explain a lesson.
- Follow a logical, sequential, lesson plan.
- Give as many opportunities as possible for practice.

(Adapted from Applin, 1999, at 141)
Universal Design for Different Learners

- Equitable use
  - Spell vocally and write out search words
  - Print words (avoid cursive)
  - Use a sans-serif font

- Flexibility in use
  - Use active learning methods that engage multiple senses
  - Preview and review lesson plans with a vocalized and written agenda
  - Repeat back questions
  - Focus attention internally by asking many questions of the students
Universal Design for Different Learners – continued

- Simple and intuitive instruction
  - Teach only skills directly related to completing assignment
  - Use student-chosen topics

- Perceptible information
  - Stress usability features in databases and websites
  - Shorten task instructions by using few words

- Tolerance for error
  - Allocate 1/3 to ½ of each class for assisted individual work time

(Adapted from Chodock and Dolinger, 2009, at 27)
One on One

• The one on one consultation is critical
• In many cases absolutely necessary
• Strongly encourage students to make appointments
Provide Multiple Options for Accessing Instructional Materials

- Students may have difficulty listening
- Note taking accommodation may not come to the library
- Make slides, notes, and audio available online
- Let students record instructional sessions and consultations
Executive Functioning

- This can be a problem for many Millennials but particularly those facing challenges.
- Students may be used to parents doing the planning.
- Brains are wired differently – need to compensate.
- Easy for students to be overwhelmed.
- Break down assignment into discrete parts.
- Think about tasks to complete each step.
- Time management.
- Problem solving skills.
“Anxiety and Depression can close your mind and cloud your ability to plan and function.”

Andrea Todd, 2017.
What are the student’s strengths?

- Never, ever lose sight of this
- Observe closely
- Help the student to use their strengths and minimize their weaknesses
Stigma

- Stigma may be the biggest obstacle in working with different learners
- You may not know you are working with a special needs student
- If you see a student struggling use any available strategy
- Gain trust
Very Special Thanks to these Two!
Andrea Todd
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https://vtlearningspecialist.wordpress.com
Bibliography

AHEAD, Association on Higher Education and Disabilities. https://www.ahead.org


Questions and Discussion

Thanks!