

Speech, Language and Communication (SLCN) in Secondary schools

k) Functional use of Language: Study Skills

By secondary school children/young people are expected to work increasingly at an independent level and to have developed competent organisational skills. Organisational skills require “executive skills”- higher level skills that are essential for addressing more demanding tasks including coping with new learning situations.

Students with significant speech, language and communication difficulties typically have fewer automatic or learned responses for dealing with unfamiliar or more challenging curriculum demands as well as many everyday tasks.

It is important to teach organisational skills at the start of secondary school and allow ample time for rehearsal and generalisation within the context of the curriculum tasks

Characteristics

Difficulties remembering information whilst carrying out a task

Difficulties finding solutions to “new” problems

Problems adjusting existing learning to incorporate more advanced conceptual awareness

Possible skills affected

Meta-cognitive - awareness of the thinking process and the ability to plan these to participate fully in school

Meta-linguistic skills (greater awareness of using language for different purposes)

Independent working skills

Managing own behaviour

Organisational skills – (academic and social)

Strategies

Whole school/General

Teacher

Allow time for study skills to be taught as a separate entity and reinforce through day to day practice

Make a task explicit – state the purpose / learning objective and give an example of what successful implementation of the task would look like / would involve

Use visual cues to aid the child/young person’s memory and enable them to hold enough information in their heads as they carry out the task

Scaffold tasks using colour coding to signpost key elements/ stages/ processes

Support more abstract elements of a task – i.e. time management (time warning, use of a clock, verbal countdown etc.)

Support staff

Teach organisational skills explicitly and practice from the start of secondary school
Graphic organisers such as mind maps enabling students to draw, map and visualise what they have to do
Use time connectives such as “first, then, next” to order a task.
Use systematic approaches (folder with dividers/ filing systems) for organising information into subject and/or topic areas
Promote and prompt the use of the school planner for listing books and equipment required on specific days/ lessons. Post - its provide a quick means of recording information especially if the child/young person has problems recording themselves
Creating personalised visual timetables for some students that can be used between home/school
Praise and verbalise appropriate use of skills used by students.
Prompt child/young person to keep personal possessions / schoolwork well organised

Student

Use a task management board to process and plan the tasks.
Use self-monitoring tools
Self-questioning techniques to research/ organise information under set headings
Self-talk - individually / working collaboratively at small group level
Encourage students to rank information in order of priority against task criteria
Self-evaluation using strengths and weaknesses questionnaires / student skills questionnaire to assess how a pupil learns best. Use strengths as a vehicle for accessing learning
Self-rating own performance / group evaluation in terms of skills evident / applied in a specified lesson / in completing a piece of work
Use checklists

Linked Resources

Brent. M, Gough. F and Robinson S (2001) Working with secondary students with language difficulties. David Fulton Publishers
De Bono (1985) Six Thinking Hats www.thinkinghats.com
Stewart. S and Hampshire A (2007) Understanding Me STASS publications
Hayden. S and Jordan. E (2012) Language for learning in the Secondary School Routledge.