Tips for Tutoring Students with Disabilities

Here are some helpful tips to keep in mind when tutoring students with disabilities. However, the student is your best resource; ask him/her what tutoring strategies work best!

Tips for **Interacting with Students**

Relax
- Students’ disabilities may be obvious or hidden, permanent or temporary
- Build Positive Rapport – encourage and support the student

Have clear expectations
- Hold all students to the same standards including the Green River’s Code of Conduct
- Address abnormal or disruptive behavior – don’t just ignore it but ask the student for ways to deal with it
- Some students may be overly honest or direct; it is OK to guide students to appropriate social behaviors
- Allow some time for “oddities” (e.g. student may need to tell you every license plate number in the parking lot before studying; let them do this but cue them when it is time to move on)

Question stereotypes
- Don’t assume that the student with a disability is less capable or will automatically have certain needs, let them tell you what they need, ask for clarification when needed
- Students with disabilities will exhibit the same full range of characteristics; they are smart, funny, talkative, shy, etc.
- Realize the student may have experienced rejection, shame, isolation, low self-esteem or anger due to their disability

Tips for **Communicating with Students**

Listen Attentively
- If the student experiences a disability that affects communication, listen carefully; don’t pretend to understand if you don’t
- Provide information in more than one modality: verbally, visually, and in writing
- Use simple, verbal and written direction and instruction
- Ask frequent and brief questions to check for understanding (e.g. yes or no questions)
- Verify the student’s comprehension of a concept by asking him/her to explain it to you
- If the student does not understand what was said, rephrase it
- Be open to answering the same question multiple times
- Ask the student if they have preferred forms of communication
- Ask the student if they prefer face-to-face communication or sitting side-by-side
- Make sure you have the student’s attention before speaking
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Accommodate

- Be flexible; if one approach doesn’t work, try another. Remember you can ask the student what methods will be most effective and most accessible for them
- Use visual aids to support what is said (e.g. when talking about a page in a book point to page)
- Use more than one example and/or demonstration
- Use role play techniques
- Create outlines with the student
- Review material multiple times
- Break lengthy concepts/assignments into shorter segments
- Pause between ideas/concepts to allow time for processing
- Have the student “teach” you; allow the student to hear his/herself explain the concepts
- Relate concepts to similar task or procedure already learned
- Keep in mind many students require materials in alternative format (i.e. taped, Braille, enlarged). If you plan to provide additional information, talk to DSS about providing it in the proper format for the student
- Be aware of possible problems with lighting or noise backgrounds. If possible, conduct tutoring in a quiet location without distraction

Additional Tips

- Choose a location that is accessible for the student (e.g. tables are high enough for a wheelchair and student has room to move around)
- Refrain from using sarcasm
- If the student has difficulty reading words on different backgrounds consider using colored paper and colored pens to figure out the best contrast for the student
- Encourage schedules and guidelines (e.g. tutoring will be every Monday at 3pm)

Refer – Any student who discloses a disability to you should be referred to Disability Support Services Lindbloom Student Center Room 274; 253.833.9111 ext. 2631; dss@greenriver.edu

References:
- http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/dss