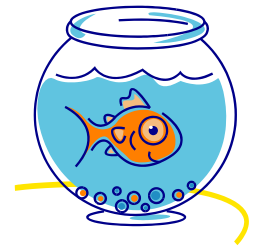




This NEPS Handout has been developed by educational psychologists and is based on current knowledge in this area. It is intended as a guide only. Not all the advice here may apply to any one student or situation. Teachers and parents may wish to identify the strategies that will work best for them.

## Task Completion and Concentration- Teacher Strategies

First, give some thought to the mix of activities that you offer over the course of a school day/week. Are there opportunities for more active modes of learning: action maths, collaborative problem solving activities, team project work, exploring the indoor/outdoor environment? There are lots of resources available to support ideas for differentiation of learning mode, 'Teacher's Change Your Bait' by Martha Kaufeldt is a particularly good one. See the NEPS Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties Continuum of Support for a checklist of whole-class structures and supports.



The following strategies are also likely to be helpful in supporting individual children:

- Have 'quiet working times' when children are expected to work in silence (requests for help can be indicated through an agreed non-verbal signal)
- Seat the child away from the main thoroughfares in the classroom and out of direct eye-line or reach of likely sources of distraction. Remove unnecessary equipment, books etc.
- Build in opportunities for the child to move around over the course of a learning session – this might be through having a special responsibility like sharpening pencils, tearing used paper or short burst movement activities such as those within the Brain Gym or 'Wake Up, Shake Up' programmes.
- Make directions clear and concise, repeat key words and ask the child to verbalise his/her understanding of the task.
- Break tasks into workable chunks. These could be listed (using pictures or words) and 'ticked off' as each section is completed
- Give extra time as needed to experience the 'reward' (sense of achievement) of a task completed.
- Provide feedback on completed work as soon as possible
- Supplement words with visual prompts action, demonstration, photos etc.

- Encourage the child to close his eyes and to think through a problem before beginning, asking questions such as, *'What is the problem here?', 'What equipment do I need?', 'What do I need to do first?'*
- If there is concern that the child tends to give up before really giving the activity a chance, it may be useful to have *'having a really good go, even when it's hard'* as one of his personal targets in a support plan. Encourage him/her to talk through tasks saying, *'I know I can do this even if it's hard'* and award a star or similar token when the strategy is used.
- A red card/ green card system can also be useful in getting children to take responsibility for getting on or asking for help. A card, one side of which is red and one side of which is green, is placed on the child's table. Green side up means *'I'm okay. I know how to do this'*, red side up means *'I need help'*. The child takes responsibility for turning the card as appropriate. It may be necessary to limit the number of times the 'red card' can be shown in a given time period (perhaps linked with the star system suggested above).
- Specifically comment on the child's successes in focusing on tasks, linking to a reward system if appropriate.
- Encourage the child to increase the amount of work done in a given length of time e.g. if s/he produces two sums in ten minutes, give him/her the objective of getting first three, and then four and five sums done in the same amount of time.

