



Teaching Students with Intellectual Disabilities

MR. YOGESHKUMAR P. PATELIYA

Ph.D. Scholar,
Singhaniya University, Rajasthan

Abstract:

When we teach children with intellectual disabilities, we need to keep in mind several factors. First of all we need to set goals that are most important for the child. Learning the names of the planets may not be as important as learning about how plants grow. Next we need to make materials and set up the environment so that it supports the child's learning. Finally we need to use some teaching strategies to teach and motivate the child to learn. Here we explore a few effective teaching strategies for students with intellectual disabilities.

Keywords: *Child, Disability, Intellectual disabilities, Learning, Student*

1. Introduction

Students with intellectual disabilities can learn math, literacy and science. They just need to be taught in a different way. Here are some effective teaching strategies for students with intellectual disabilities that we can use in the classroom.

2. Hands on Learning

Hands on learning is the process of using activities and other hands on tasks to teach skills. All children and especially children with intellectual impairments learn best through this process. An example would be to do science experiments to learn science concepts. Another idea is to use play dough and make letter shapes to learn letters. Hands on learning are also a great way to learn math.

3. Play Based Learning

Play based learning is when we use play activities to teach cognitive skills. For example if a child is playing with cars, we sit with the child and start playing too. While playing we use statements like "can I play with the red car? Can you give it to me?" In this way we teach skills to the child while he or she is playing.

4. Baby Steps

Children with intellectual disabilities need to learn through baby steps. Every task, skill or activity needs to be broken down into small baby steps. The child is taught one small step at a time. Slowly, he or she learns to combine these baby steps to learn a bigger concept. For example, we will not teach the concept of red color in one day, we will first teach sorting red, then matching red, then identifying red, then naming red and finally generalizing red. In this way try to break up every skill into small baby steps.

5. Chaining

Chaining is the process of breaking a task into its small steps and teaching them in a sequential manner. It is usually used to teach daily living skills and life skills. For example, we first teach a child to hold a pant with two hands, then we teach him to hold it and bring it down to his legs. Next we teach him to hold it, bring it down to his legs, and put one leg inside. This process is called forward chaining. Backward chaining is when we teach the child the last step first. We do the activity of the child and let the child do the last step on his own. Then we do the activity till the second last step. In this way the child does more and more of the activity and we do less till the child can do the whole activity on his own.

6. Group Learning

Group learning is one of the most effective teaching strategies for students with intellectual disabilities. It is when we bring children together in a group to teach various skills. Children often do better when they are in a group. Behavior difficulties are less, and children motivate each other. The only difficulty in group learning is that we need enough hands to help children learn together.

7. Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is to reinforce the child positively every time he learns a new skill, or performs or practices a known skill. It is a great way to motivate children with intellectual disabilities. Use reinforcements that are appropriate for the child. These are just a few effective teaching strategies for students with intellectual disabilities. The best way to teach, however, is to understand the child, understand his abilities and his needs. From there comes the natural selection of strategies and methods that fit him or her.

8. Life Skills for Disabled Students

Students with disabilities who are preparing to graduate from school can benefit from taking life skills courses. Through learning essential skills for personal care, household cleanliness, and daily outings, these students can more readily adjust to the circumstances and challenges of adult life. Essential life skills for students with disabilities are important to learn and are frequently addressed in special education high school courses. Students with varying levels of independent functioning, from those who will live in group homes as adults to those who may live on their own, can be encouraged through exposure to basic life skills.

9. Life after High School

Though a number of people with disabilities continue to reside with their parents after graduation, the mastering of routine daily tasks in early adulthood may increase a person's likelihood of living independently in the future. Depending on the severity of one's disabilities and the types of programs available to students who are in the process of receiving post-secondary transition services, life skills practice can be applied to: **group home living**, through which a person with moderate to significant challenges can perform tasks to the best of his or her ability with assistance from professional aides. **Living with parents or roommates**, through which a person can manage a number of tasks on his or her own or with assistance from others. **Independent living**, through which a person with disabilities is capable of functioning to the degree that he or she can perform routine activities with little to no assistance.

10. Essential Skills

The types of life skills that special needs students are typically introduced to range from personal hygiene tasks to effective communication skills. Examples of essential tasks that can be learned through school instruction include: **grooming and bodily care**. A person with disabilities can practice life skills such as bathing and showering, brushing teeth, styling hair, and choosing weather-appropriate clothing. **Performing basic household chores**. Students can learn to help maintain a clean household by wiping down countertops and appliances, making beds, vacuuming, and disposing of garbage. **Using public transport**. People who are able to travel independently can learn life skills such as buying and using a bus pass, changing buses, using a taxi, or driving a car to specific destinations. **Interacting with other adults**. Adults with disabilities who seek employment can receive instruction on applying for jobs, handling job interviews, and communicating with co-workers or customers.

11. Implementing a Life Skills Course

School districts can implement life skills courses for special needs high school students through hiring trained teaching staff and offering a reputable and effective curriculum. Methods of teaching essential skills to students include: **modeling a skill** - the teacher engages in role-play with the student in order to demonstrate a certain task. **Rehearsing a skill** - the teacher and student practice a certain skill and work toward mastery goals. **Discussing a skill** - the teacher advises the student on how to improve on the task, and the student shares any concerns that he or she has in regard to mastering the task. Teaching essential life skills for students with disabilities is beneficial for young adults who are planning to either live independently or with assistance. By learning the daily living skills that are necessary for a healthy and productive home and work life, students with disabilities can prepare for a post-high school transition.

12. Conclusion

Students with intellectual impairment will require educational adjustments to be made to enhance educational access, participation and achievement. Adjustments may need to be considered regarding:

- age appropriate, high interest activities
- curriculum content
- alternate formats for class tasks and assessment items
- breaking tasks into smaller and logically sequenced sub-tasks
- frequent and specific feedback for reinforcement and correction
- concrete materials and examples
- modelling, physical and verbal prompts
- short clear directions
- real life experiences connected beyond the classroom
- allowing 'wait time' for student to process information
- visual supports (e.g. symbol charts, pictorial timetables, self-organisation charts)
- over learning opportunities and
- assistive technology.

References

1. Life Skills for Vocational Success--<http://www.workshopsinc.com/manual>
2. ERIC Digest--<http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-9216/life.htm>
3. Life after High School--<http://www.lifeafterhs.org>