

This chapter provides suggestions teachers can use to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities in the regular classroom. Information includes:

- characteristics of students with learning disabilities
- role of self-advocacy
- planning for transition
- planning for instruction
- instructional strategies
- accommodations
- assessment.

Students with learning disabilities have diverse difficulties, often hidden or subtle, that affect learning throughout life. There is great variability among students with learning disabilities. They are generally described as individuals of at least average intelligence who have difficulties processing information and unexpected difficulties in academic areas, while showing strength and success in some learning and processing areas. Their difficulties cannot be explained by other handicapping conditions or environmental influences.

Learning disabilities are lifelong. Their impact may vary with the changing demands at different stages of life. Research identifies several factors contributing to success for students with learning disabilities:

- the ability to take control; i.e., make conscious decisions to take charge of one's life
- the desire to get ahead, hard work, persistence, determination
- the ability to set explicit goals
- active awareness of strengths and weaknesses
- the ability to reframe the experience of having a learning disability in a positive and productive perspective
- creativity in developing and using strategies and accommodations to enhance their performance
- the ability to seek out environments where they can succeed
- active involvement in school and community life
- positive educational experiences in both elementary and junior high school grades
- support systems.

As adults, individuals with learning disabilities can be successful in post-secondary education, careers and family life. The strategies, skills, and awareness of their strengths and needs that are developed during the school years contribute to later success. Programming must be based on individual student needs since there is no “one size fits all” approach. Collaboration among students, parents and school staff is key.

Characteristics of students with learning disabilities

To assist students with learning disabilities, it is important to understand the types of difficulties that may be experienced in senior high school, the role of self-advocacy, potential instructional strategies and accommodations, and alternative assessment strategies.

Each student with a learning disability has a different pattern of strengths and needs that affects learning. Most learning disabilities are identified during the elementary grades. There should be information available in students' Individualized Program Plans (IPPs) about their learning strengths and needs, and the educational intervention and supports that have been helpful.

The characteristics outlined below signal the possibility of a learning disability. However, there may be other reasons for these characteristics. When several of these difficulties persist over time, they signal the need to explore the factors contributing to a student's learning difficulties. Students may exhibit difficulties in any of the following domains.

The metacognitive domain involves the active control, coordination and monitoring of learning processes and strategies. Students may demonstrate:

- a lack of understanding of their own learning strengths and needs
- difficulty approaching problems systematically
- difficulty learning and applying strategies
- difficulty choosing effective or appropriate strategies
- difficulty with self-monitoring
- difficulty organizing time and personal space.

The information-processing domain includes how information is received through the senses, attended to, perceived, organized, stored in memory, retrieved and expressed. Students may demonstrate:

- inconsistent attention
- difficulty with fine details
- poor recall of facts
- limited automatic recall
- fine motor difficulties.

The communication domain includes auditory skills, receptive language skills and the expression of language. Students may demonstrate:

- difficulty clearly expressing thoughts
- difficulty receiving and interpreting verbal information
- difficulty participating in class discussions
- difficulty with higher level language skills, for example thinking hypothetically or understanding jokes and puns.

The academic domain includes reading, written expression, spelling and mathematics. As students proceed through school, their learning disabilities may become more apparent in the content area subjects.

Students may demonstrate:

- distractibility when reading
- signs of physical strain when reading; e.g., rubbing eyes, yawning, head held close to text
- use of finger to track when reading
- slow or extremely fast reading speed relative to peers
- apparent carelessness when reading instructions
- lack of understanding of written materials
- lack of strategies to monitor understanding of text
- poor performance on written tests and assignments in contrast to demonstration of knowledge by other means
- ineffective pencil grip
- illegible, slow writing
- inconsistent success when writing
- reluctance to write.

The social/adaptive domain encompasses social competence that involves the ability to engage successfully in interpersonal relationships and adapt to the environment. The student may demonstrate:

- difficulty interpreting verbal and nonverbal communication in social interactions
- difficulty making and keeping friends
- weak understanding of humour
- low feelings of self-worth
- learned helplessness; i.e., a passive approach to tasks and an inability to view one's own behaviour as having a positive effect on schoolwork. For example, students may attribute success on a test to luck or a teacher's good mood rather than to their own effort.

For more information about students with learning disabilities, see *Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities* (Alberta Education, 1996), Book 6 of the *Programming for Students with Special Needs* series. This resource includes a description of each domain and a detailed checklist for observing students.

Role of self-advocacy

Studies of highly successful adults with learning disabilities identify the ability to self-advocate as an important factor contributing to success. Self-advocacy is taking action on one's own behalf. Experiences in the junior high years are important to the development of self-advocacy skills. Students with learning disabilities often experience a low sense of self-worth and an attitude of learned helplessness. They may approach tasks passively, often waiting for direction and assuming that they cannot do the task independently. These students need to be taught how to advocate appropriately for themselves. They need to develop an understanding of themselves as learners and to be able to communicate their needs appropriately.

In senior high school, students have increasing responsibility for their learning. While students with learning disabilities need considerable support in moving toward greater independence, it is important that they learn to self-advocate and that they are involved in all aspects of their education experience. They need to take an active role in goal setting, monitoring, assessment, evaluation, decisions regarding accommodations, transition planning and career planning. They also need to learn to develop and apply strategies for effective learning.

Learning and practising self-advocacy in the senior high school years is important for success. To enhance the self-advocacy skills of students with learning disabilities, consider the following strategies.

- Use the following questions to guide discussions to help students become better self-advocates:
 - How would you describe your learning disability?
 - How would you describe your strengths and areas of difficulty?
 - Do you receive any additional help from someone at school? From whom? How often? Describe the type of help. How can they help you with CALM?
 - What strategies or accommodations do you find the most helpful in CALM?
 - What personal goals are you working on?
 - What will you do if you have difficulty during class time? With homework?
 - Who is helping you with your course selection?
 - What other courses are you taking this semester?
 - Do you have a schedule of test and due dates from your other courses?
- Help students determine their own strengths and areas of need by involving them in self-reflection and self-assessment tasks, such as completing needs assessments and learning preference checklists. See *Student Tool 24: What works for me inventory*, pages 159–160, to help identify individual preferences, strengths and needs.
- Assist students in identifying realistic and tangible goals for their IPPs. Discuss their responses to the *What works for me inventory* to help identify areas of need and appropriate goals.
- Help students identify goals for academic work. See *Student Tool 25: Goal-setting organizer*, page 161. This tool could be introduced at the beginning of the week, reviewed mid-week and evaluated at the end of the week. For more information about goal setting, see the student resource *Make School Work for You* (Alberta Learning, 2001).
- Encourage students to take leadership roles in their own learning by making active contributions to discussions and goal setting at their IPP conferences.

Planning for transition

- Involve students in the evaluation of their own work. Self-evaluation contributes to a better understanding of areas of strength and difficulties. Provide checklists, so students can assess the quality of their own work.
- Provide explicit feedback about the strategies and accommodations that increase students' success. This will contribute to their understanding of the supports they require and increase their ability to ask for what they need.

It is important for senior high school students with learning disabilities to plan for transitions to employment or post-secondary education. Given the diversity of students with learning disabilities, a wide range of appropriate education and employment options should be considered. There are increasing numbers of students with learning disabilities entering post-secondary education and training programs. These students benefit from a variety of supports that are increasingly available in these settings, such as academic accommodations; e.g., extra time on exams, note takers, assistive technology, as well as strategy tutoring and counselling. The employment success of adults with learning disabilities is increased by realistic career planning, and the development of job-related academic and social skills. To facilitate effective transitions from senior high school, consider the following strategies.

- Assist students in the careful selection of senior high school courses. Consider students' abilities and their level of performance with accommodations to ensure that students are in the appropriate courses. Consider the reading and writing demands of courses, and balance the load each term.
- Prepare student portfolios to pass on to other teachers. Gather the following content for the portfolio:
 - updated IPPs that include a record of the accommodations and assistive technology that are effective
 - samples of students' work
 - recent educational assessments
 - medical information
 - list of the students' successes and accomplishments at school and in the community.

Successful transitions are planned, collaborative and comprehensive. To facilitate effective transitions after senior high school, the following are important considerations during the senior high school years:

- Explore career interests and help students develop realistic career goals.
- Help students assess their own values, abilities, challenges and interests so that they can make thoughtful and realistic decisions about career goals.
- Encourage students to identify and learn about their strengths.

Planning for instruction

- Encourage students to become self-advocates.
- Help students and parents prepare for the new demands and increased responsibilities of post-secondary settings.
- Help students select courses that support their future educational and career plans.
- Teach students effective study strategies, such as time management, note taking, test preparation and test-taking strategies.
- Help students and parents learn about appropriate accommodations and assistive technologies.
- Encourage the development of keyboarding skills.
- Encourage students to be active in transition planning.

See the student resource *Make School Work for You* (Alberta Learning, 2001) for practical ideas students can use to be more successful in school. It includes activities to help students understand themselves as learners as well as ideas for getting organized, preparing for and taking tests, self-advocating, staying motivated and getting along with others.

Planning for the diverse learning needs of students with learning disabilities involves making informed decisions about content, materials and resources, instructional strategies and evaluation procedures.

Consider the following questions when planning for the accommodation of students with special needs.²³

Learning environment

- What steps will I take to create a supportive learning environment?
- What classroom management procedures do I need to introduce?

Grouping

- What learning activities can best be achieved individually, in pairs, in small groups or in the whole class?
- How will the pairings and groupings be determined?
- What transitions will ensure a smooth flow from one activity to the next?

Learning activities

- How will I provide lesson overviews?
- Which graphic organizers will I use?
- What strategies activate, clarify and extend prior knowledge?
- How will students make connections between what they know and what they will be learning?
- What key words and concepts are essential?
- Which strategies will introduce and reinforce these words and concepts?
- What are the critical questions students need to think about?
- How will students apply their learning?

- What extension activities will reinforce and extend learning?
- Do these learning activities offer a variety of ways to demonstrate learning?
- How will instructions be reinforced; e.g., key words on board, printed instructions, labelled diagrams on board?
- How will students use handouts and other materials?
- Does this learning activity allow for a frequent change of pace?
- Are there opportunities for discussion, writing, drawing and viewing?
- What alternative activities can I use if students need a change in pace or a refocusing of attention?

Some general considerations for planning are presented below.

- Accommodate a variety of students' learning needs by modifying:
 - the degree of structure or open-endedness of the task
 - the pace of learning
 - the degree of independence
 - the presentation formats
 - the reading level of materials
 - the products and assignments to demonstrate learning.
- Use students' IPPs to guide decisions about:
 - instructional strategies that will be most effective
 - strategies that need to be taught explicitly to increase students' effective and independent approach to tasks, such as note-taking and memory strategies. Such strategies are helpful for all students and essential for students with learning disabilities.

Instructional strategies

Students with learning disabilities benefit from a combination of direct instruction and strategy instruction. Direct instruction is explicit instruction with clearly specified objectives taught in specific small steps with detailed explanations, demonstrations of steps and connections among concepts. Strategy instruction involves teaching students how to approach tasks and use knowledge to solve a problem. Both direct instruction and strategy instruction involve modelling and demonstration, feedback, guided and independent practice, and transfer.

For more information about strategy instruction, see *Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities* (Alberta Education, 1996), Book 6 of the *Programming for Students with Special Needs* and *Unlocking Potential: Key Components of Programming for Students with Learning Disabilities* (Alberta Learning, 2002).

Teachers can guide students toward independent learning by teaching strategies in a structured way until students can use them in a variety of situations without guidance. The goal is to have students transfer these strategies across subject areas and grades. General tips for teaching strategies to students include the following.²⁴

- Teach one strategy at a time.
- Teach a strategy as part of classroom learning, within the context of curriculum.
- Use direct instruction and be explicit in your language and examples.
- Help students see the benefits of a strategy—use real world examples.
- Model the step-by-step use of a strategy.
- Reinforce the strategy with visual cues.
- Provide guided practice with easier material.
- Give students opportunities to show what they know.
- Help students make the link between the strategy and different curriculum areas.
- Encourage students to adapt and personalize strategies.

Strategies for developing thinking skills

Metacognition is thinking about thinking. Students with learning disabilities need to develop these skills.

Sample strategies for enhancing students' metacognitive skills include the following.

- Wait 5–10 seconds before asking students to respond to questions. This allows them to gain control over their thoughts. Some students benefit from cues to indicate they are about to be asked a question or to contribute to a discussion.
- Ask metacognitive questions to prompt students to develop their own strategies for learning. Sample questions include the following:
 - How are you going to remember your homework?
 - How did you remember that yesterday?
 - Does this answer make sense?
 - Why did this reading selection cause you difficulty?
 - What questions do you have? How can you find the answers?
 - How can you use this strategy or information in the future?
 - How can you organize the information to remember it better?
- Discuss the steps of problem-solving and demonstrate ways to apply problem-solving strategies to content areas. Post example of problem-solving steps.

Strategies for developing organizational skills

- Post the daily agenda in a designated spot in the classroom and draw students' attention to it on a regular basis.
- Record due dates for homework and assignments on a monthly calendar. Consider putting the calendar in a central location where all teachers can check it and add deadlines. This approach provides a quick reference for support personnel who may be coaching individual students.
- Post a list of materials that students need for a class.
- Provide a model demonstrating specific expectations for organization of students' notebooks and binders. Demonstrate dating pages, margin use, spacing and organization of old and new work. Consider colour coding binders to match subject areas. Keep the model available for students to refer to throughout the school year.
- Develop regular routines for turning in homework, such as a specific drop-off box, a designated time to turn in assignments and class time to record information in agendas.
- Teach specific note-taking strategies. Initially, record notes on the board to provide a model. Discuss the specific elements of the model and provide opportunities for students to apply the note-taking strategy.

Strategies for developing memory skills

- Make new information meaningful by relating it to students' experiences and prior knowledge.
- Strengthen associations by providing information that appeals to a number of senses.
- Use KWL to introduce a new unit or concept and find out what students know. It provides a visual link between prior information and a new concept.²⁵

K – What I already know	W – What I want to learn	L – What I learned

- Use mind maps or semantic maps as pre- and post-learning activities to help students see what they have learned.
- Use daily reviews to encourage long-term storage; e.g., give a daily warm-up quiz asking one question based on a key concept from the previous class.

- Have students teach material to someone else to reinforce the concepts.
- Pair auditory information with visual information; e.g., use graphs, diagrams or pictures to illustrate information.
- Provide opportunities for discussion and note-taking.
- Encourage questions.
- Write key words on the board.
- Post and review new vocabulary.
- Teach students to use repetition and rehearsal strategies, for example:²⁶
 - Read
 - Cover
 - Recite
 - Check.

Strategies for reading and writing

- Discuss text structure and organization of the text in content areas.
- Introduce new vocabulary.
- Introduce reading assignments with warm-up activities.²⁷
 - Step 1: Read the title of the chapter and introduction.
 - Step 2: Read the headings and subheadings.
 - Step 3: Read the chapter summary.
 - Step 4: Read the questions at the end of the chapter.
 - Step 5: Say, “This chapter will talk about _____”.
- Teach students the relationship between textbook questions and answers. Have students follow these steps when answering questions in the textbook.²⁸
 - Step 1: Read the question carefully.
 - Step 2: Change the question into part of the answer and write it down.
 - Step 3: Locate the section of the chapter that talks about the topic. Use the headings and subheadings to help.
 - Step 4: Read the section of the chapter until the answer is found.
 - Step 5: Complete the answer.
- Teach paraphrasing strategies, such as **RAP**:
 - Read the paragraph.
 - Ask yourself what you just read (main idea and two details).
 - Put main idea and two details in your own words.

- Provide exemplars and clear specific criteria for written assignments. Use rubrics and performance assessment to help students understand expectations.
- Teach explicit strategies for planning written assignments and provide planning frameworks for different types of narrative and expository writing. Teach strategies, such as DEFENDS, that outline steps for developing and evaluating written assignments.²⁹

DEFENDS

Decide on goals and theme

- Decide who will read the assignment and what you hope will happen when they do.
- Decide what kind of information you need to communicate.
- Decide on your theme.
- Note the theme on your planning form.

Estimate main ideas and details:

- Think of at least two main ideas that will explain your theme.
- Make sure the main ideas are different.
- Note the main ideas on your planning form.
- Note at least three details that can be used to explain each main idea.

Figure out the best order of main ideas and details:

- Decide which main idea to write about first, second, and so forth, and note on the planning form.
- Note the best order for presenting the supporting details.
- Make sure the order is logical.

Express the theme in the first sentence:

- Explain what the writing is about in the first sentence.

Note each main idea and supporting points.

- Note your first main idea in a complete sentence. Explain this main idea using the supporting details.
- Tell yourself positive statements about your writing, and encourage yourself to write more.
- Repeat for each of the other main ideas.

Drive home the message in the last sentence:

- Restate your theme in the last sentence.
- Make sure you use wording that is different from the first sentence.

Search for errors and correct.

SEARCH

Set editing goals.

Examine your essay to see if it makes sense.

Ask yourself whether your message will be clear to others.

Reveal picky errors; e.g., capitalization, punctuation, spelling.

Copy over neatly.

Have a last look for errors.

- Encourage students to edit their work using strategies such as COPS.
 - C**OP**S**
 - C**apitalization
 - O**rganization
 - P**unctuation
 - S**pelling

Accommodations

Some challenges faced by students with learning disabilities can be addressed by providing instructional accommodations. An accommodation is a change or alteration to the regular way a student is expected to learn, complete assignments or participate in the classroom. Accommodations lessen or remove the impact of a student's learning disability giving students more equal opportunities to succeed.

There are three types of accommodations:

- classroom and physical accommodations; e.g., alternative seating, adaptive devices
- instructional accommodations; e.g., providing copies of notes, alternative reading material
- evaluation/testing accommodations; e.g., extra time, oral tests

Sample accommodations for reading difficulties³⁰

- Use less difficult or alternative reading materials within a subject area.
- Reduce the amount of reading required.
- Allow students to record lectures and class discussions.
- Allow alternative methods of data collection, such as tape recorders, dictation, interviews or fact sheets.
- Enlarge text of worksheets and reading material.
- Extend time to complete tests and assignments.
- Use large print editions of texts.
- Read directions aloud to students.
- Read test items aloud to students.
- Record directions on audiocassettes.
- Provide written directions for exams ahead of time.
- Use assistive technology; e.g., optical character recognition system, books on tape and CD, screen readers.

Sample accommodations for written expression difficulties³⁰

- Allow students to record lectures and class discussions.
- Provide written outlines.
- Individualize assignments; e.g., reduce volume of work, break long-term assignments into manageable tasks, allow extra time for completing assignments, offer alternative assignments, allow students to work on homework while at school.

- Allow alternative methods of data collection; e.g., tape recorders, dictation, interviews, fact sheets.
- Allow spelling errors on written assignments.
- Extend time to complete tests and assignments.
- Permit use of scribes or tape recorders for answers.
- Waive spelling, punctuation and paragraphing requirements.
- Accept keyword responses in place of complete sentences.
- Use assistive technology; e.g., word processors, spell-check devices, grammar-check devices, text to speech software.

Sample accommodations for attention difficulties³⁰

- Provide alternative seating; e.g., near teacher, facing teacher, at front of class, between students who are good role models, away from distractions.
- Provide personal work spaces; e.g., quiet area for study, extra seat or table, time-out spots, study carrels.
- Permit movement during class activities and testing sessions.
- Allow students to record lectures and class discussions.
- Provide directions in written form.
- Extend time to complete tests and assignments.
- Use multiple testing sessions for longer tests.
- Allow students to take breaks during tests.
- Use place markers, special paper, graph paper or writing templates to encourage students to focus attention.
- Provide visual cues; e.g., arrows, stop signs, on test answer forms.
- Provide quiet, distraction-free areas for testing.
- Allow students to wear earplugs or headphones to screen out distracting sounds.
- Provide checklists for complex assignments.
- Provide specific procedures or processes for turning in completed assignments.

Sample accommodations for memory difficulties³⁰

- Provide written outlines.
- Provide directions in written form.
- Provide specific procedures or processes for turning in completed assignments.
- Provide checklists for long, detailed assignments.
- Read standard directions several times at the start of tests.
- Provide visual cues; e.g., arrows, stop signs, on answer forms.
- Allow students to use assistive technology; e.g., arithmetic tables, dictionaries, calculators, word processors, spell-check devices, grammar-check devices.

Sample accommodations for fine and gross motor difficulties³⁰

- Use assistive and adaptive devices; e.g., slantboards or desktop easels to display written work and reading material, pencils or pens adapted in size or grip diameter, alternative keyboards, portable word processors.
- Set realistic and mutually agreed-upon expectations for neatness.
- Reduce or eliminate the need to copy from texts or boards; e.g., provide copies of notes, permit students to photocopy peers' notes, provide carbon paper to create duplicate copies of notes.
- Extend time to complete tests and assignments.
- Alter the sizes, shapes or locations of spaces provided for answers.
- Accept keyword responses in place of complete sentences.
- Allow students to type answers or answer orally instead of in writing.

Assistive technology

There is growing interest in assistive technology for students with learning disabilities. The term assistive technology refers to items, pieces of equipment or products that are used to help individuals improve their ability to perform specific tasks. Assistive technology allows individuals with learning disabilities to work more effectively within academic and vocational settings.

Computers are the most well-known form of assistive technology but there are a variety of products available. Not all students with learning disabilities need assistive technology. The decision to try assistive technology should be made on an individual basis, after considering students' strengths, needs and motivation. Consider the sample accommodations in the following list.³¹

Examples of assistive technology

	Adaptations	Description
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tape-recorded material • Semantic mapping software • Electronic word recognition and definition • Closed-circuit television • Speech synthesizer/screen reader software • Optical character recognition (OCR)/scanner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio recordings of textbook material and answers to chapter or workbook questions • Software that enables readers to explore and comprehend narrative story or expository writing elements through graphic depiction • Presents definitions of words • Magnifies reading material; limited reading presented at once • Computerized voice reads material on computer monitor • Text is scanned into computer and OCR system computerizes text so it can be read by speech synthesis

	Adaptations	Description
Written expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pencil grip • Alternative-hardware input devices • Semantic mapping software • Tape recorder • Word prediction software • Speech recognition • Electronic spelling devices • Word processing/spellcheck option • Speech synthesizer/talking software 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piece of plastic that is attached where the pencil is grasped • Sticker keys, touch screens, trackballs, customized keyboards • Software for outlining and organizing writing • Standard tape recorder for dictation of written products • Software that assists with sentence structure and syntax • Voice recognition enabling dictation of written content • Devices that speak and display, or only display, words and definitions • Standard spellcheck option • Speech synthesis with word processing program
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graph paper • Calculators • Talking clocks • Timing devices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centimetre squares for aligning numbers • Devices for checking answers; talking calculators; e.g., large keyed calculators • Specially designed clocks that tell time verbally • Various devices for monitoring time

To facilitate the appropriate and effective use of accommodations, consider the following.

- Individualize accommodations to match the needs and strengths of individual students.
- Include accommodations on students' IPPs. Only accommodations specified on IPPs and used by students during the course of their regular studies are permitted on provincial tests and diploma exams.
- Involve students in the process of choosing accommodations. This will increase the likelihood that students will use them.
- Select accommodations that are the least intrusive. Avoid implementing accommodations that isolate students from peers or draw unnecessary attention.
- Ensure students are able to use accommodations consistently. For example, if students use laptops for written work, is there access to an electrical outlet in each classroom? Do students have access to computers at home?
- Provide time and support for the student to learn how to use an accommodation.

- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of accommodations. Record this information on IPPs so that accommodations will be provided in new settings that students may move on to.

Assessment

Frequent, ongoing assessment during program implementation is essential for students with learning disabilities. If a plan is not working, changes need to be made. If objectives are reached, new ones are needed.

Assessment information is important for students to understand their progress and for communicating progress to parents.

- Use a variety of assessment techniques and instruments. Multiple sources of information provide a valid picture of students' learning and challenges. Use this information to assist with planning and revising instruction.
 - Provide students with options for demonstrating their learning; e.g., reports could be done as radio broadcasts, letters to authors, displays or models, dramatic presentations or multimedia products.
- Modify test formats and procedures, and provide accommodations to allow students with learning disabilities to show their knowledge and minimize the negative impact of their disabilities. For example, students with visual processing and/or attention difficulties may perform better on oral tests or on paper and pencil tests that have more white space on the page. Students with slow processing ability may benefit from extra time or shortened versions of tests. For students who struggle with written language but who are strong in the verbal domain, readers or scribes could be used, or students could demonstrate their knowledge by recording answers on tape. Suggestions for modifying test formats and procedures include:
 - adjusting test appearance; e.g., margins, spacing, amount of print on page, type size, colour coding, highlighted instructions
 - adjusting test design
 - allowing extra time for completing tests and assignments
 - shortening tests or assignments
 - breaking tests into chunks.
- Analyze completed assignments and tests to determine students' strengths and difficulties. Sample questions could include the following.
 - Are errors on a test related to misreading directions, carelessness, lack of understanding of concepts, poor application of concepts, test-taking issues or difficulty with studying?
 - Are errors in mathematics related to poor recall of mathematics facts or misunderstanding of computational procedures?

- Use performance assessments to provide opportunities to help students understand the demands of tasks. Share the criteria that will be used to judge the product or performance. Using exemplars, modelling the process and outlining specific expectations help provide the explicit step-by-step instruction that benefits students with learning disabilities. Involving students in self-evaluation and providing specific feedback about their responses, products or performances enhance students' awareness of their strengths and difficulties. It also gives students information they can use to set goals for improvement.
- Consider creating portfolios. Ongoing portfolios help organize teacher reflections, student reflections and examples of student progress over time. Through portfolio work, students are encouraged to assess their growth to increase their self-awareness as learners. Portfolios can give receiving teachers a picture of students' growth and baselines for expectations and assessment. This information can also be shared with parents so they can better support their children's learning.
- Use rubrics specific to assignments to help students understand expectations. Rubrics can assist students in self-assessment of their work and in setting goals for improvement.
- Involve students in the assessment process. Their participation increases awareness of their strengths and difficulties, and of supports they need to be successful.
 - Discuss individual learning strengths and challenges with students. Discuss the strategies they know and use, and what works best for them.
 - Help students evaluate progress toward learning goals.
 - Provide ongoing feedback to students.
 - Involve students in developing assessment rubrics.
 - Involve students in goal setting, reflection and self-assessment through learning logs, goal sheets, self-reflection captions on portfolio selections and self-assessment rubrics.

