

Epilepsy - classroom strategies

classroom management

- ensure, where possible that you can see the student's reaction to instructions (the student's concentration may be low or they may be experiencing absence/partial complex seizure).
- Check that the student is not sitting near visual distraction (venetian blinds, flickering lights, ceiling fans,) if this is known to cause problems.
- At the end of the lesson, check that the student has not missed any section of work covered and knows what the homework/assignment is.
- Know what type of seizure(s) the student has and how to deal with it (them)- this helps to promote an atmosphere of acceptance and 'normality' in the classroom.
- Consider your part in disclosure to other students or staff if the student wishes this to happen
- keep a very brief record of any seizures or relevant concerns (e.g. poorer quality and/or reduction of work in class)
- be aware of any bullying/teasing
- take a sympathetic view of students performance if it is a 'bad day' or the day following a 'bad night'
- liaise with parents via a separate home-school diary (avoid using homework diaries as other students may have sight of these)
- if behaviour can change (e.g. during a seizure or as a result of change in medication),
ensure that policy for dealing with this is in place. this may need to be done in consultation with parents. fostering an understanding of changes in behaviour among other students may be necessary.
- Utilise students strengths .encourage positive self-esteem .
- Appropriate support should be in place if students experience specific leaning difficulties.
- Have patience with the student who has word retrieval problems and discourage any adverse comments or body language from students. Foster a tolerant atmosphere amongst all students

learning

where memory, processing and organisational difficulties occur:

- where possible, deliver verbal information in 'chunks'. This could be interspersed with a question and answer or practical session. the key is to avoid information overload. If possible, give breaks in middle of long lessons.
- 'chunk' verbal instructions
- give repetition where necessary. Importantly, encourage the student to ask the teacher (or his peers during discussion) for repetition.
- Where possible, explain topics in different ways as the student may be able to attach this to prior learning or experience.
- Encourage the student to use visual, auditory or kinaesthetic 'pegs' for memory.
- Where possible, employ multi-sensory teaching methods to facilitate retention of information by the student's stronger skills.
- Back up verbal information or instructions with notes on whiteboard. Give key words on the board.
- Ensure that the student sees a written version of new vocabulary memory is weak .
- Ensure that the student has understood instructions and written them down correctly as he may misread, miscopy or mishear words.
- It may be necessary to write down instructions for the individual student with poor auditory memory. During PE lessons, instructions given verbally may have to be repeated.
- Homework diaries can be used to note equipment needed for the next lesson. Have spare equipment available should this system not work.
- Many teachers will place students with concentration problems at the front of the class . Research has shown that noise or distraction coming from behind an individual is far more distracting than that between individual and the speaker
- encourage the use of mnemonics to aid memory.
- Teach skimming and scanning skills for effective reading
- regular revision of learned topics may be necessary

- help student to develop effective revision skills-mind mapping may be useful tool
- where possible the teacher can attempt to pace the delivery of lessons to suit the needs of the student.
- Allow the student extra time for reading activities in the classroom. this includes work on the board. many students go home with half-completed notes or homework instructions because they do not tell the teacher that they have not finished copying from the board. Check that he has written all information needed to complete homework. Ensure that all instructions and information needed to complete homework are fully understood and written down
- were possible, give breaks to allow for processing and retention of information. The student may appear to be daydreaming when reading but he may subconsciously be stopping to avoid information overload. He may not necessarily be having a seizure.

Use charts for planing work, particularly when longer projects are being undertaken. This exercise can be carried in the classroom, with the help of a support assistant,if available. Enlist the support of parents to help the student to develop this strategy with a view to this becoming his independent way of working. It may be helpful if,initially, it is possible to give assignments in smaller chunks.

- a student who may experience confusion may have difficulties with lesson change-overs and may require a map with areas of the school colour-coded. Timetables can be similarly colour-coded to match the maps it helps if the student has a copy in his bag, at home, in his locker and his form tutor has a copy in the event of him losing or forgetting any of these.
- Homework diaries can also be colour-coded using different colours for different subjects for easy reference to particular subjects.
- The student should be encouraged to develop ways to help him to organise work. Folders can include dividers and plastic pockets.
- Parents can ensure that bags and equipment are checked and packed correctly in the evening which prevents lost time and frayed tempers in the mornings.
- The older students who has a tendency to lose work may find that recording work on a computer may help although he should be encouraged to organise his work in folders to prevent time wasted searching though multitude of files.
- Be aware that students may experience tiredness or lethargy. Note if this happens at a regular time of day. A sympathetic approach should be taken to this and care taken

that leaning is not missed.

- Accommodate erratic performance-students may have good and bad days.
- Consider using assistive technology and equipment (e.g. digital voice recorders) for assisting reading, writing and taking notes. Lansyst (www.dyslexic.com) are extremely helpful suppliers!

Handwriting

- use lined paper for writing. Allow the student to choose a pen or pencil that is comfortable for him to use.
- There are now many types of writing aids available that are appropriate for all ages of students, including pen and pencil grips, triangular pencils, easy grip pens, finger grip rulers and writing slopes.
- Stencils or templates can be giving to help with accurate drawing of shapes.
- Take a sympathetic view of a slow speed of writing. Where possible, give shorter written tasks or chunk tasks to prevent the student feeling overwhelmed by the amount of writing expected of him at one time.

Access arrangements

- extra time (if the student has absence seizure or qualifies due to attainment assessment)
- an exam supervisor can sit with the student to identify seizures and add extra time missed
- exams sat at different times (e.g. students who have nocturnal or morning seizures could sit exams in the afternoon)
- supervised rest breaks
- special consideration can be requested if the student has a seizure during or close to an exam and this affects performance
- adult support for practical exams (e.g. food technology, science)