



Micro-Unit and Structure Tasks

Because high levels of anxiety can further disrupt working memory capacities, it is important to present material in a familiar and structured format that will micro-unit the necessary steps and tasks. This helps to alleviate anxiety as well as working memory demands. Below are strategies that can be applied to any classroom.

WORKING MEMORY CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

| Strategy | Components | Explanation |
|---|---|---|
| Rituals and Routines | | Daily rituals and routines allow expectations and activities to become automatic. A consistent school, period, or class schedule reduces pressure on working memory and allows students to focus on instruction. This also alleviates anxiety around uncertainty pertaining to schedules and what is coming next. |
| Memory Aids *It is important to give students reminders and practice time to appropriately utilize memory aids. | Checklists Cue cards | <p>Checklists can be created for any activity or process. They can include one word cues and visuals. Students can keep checklists on their desks, computers, or binders as reminders for the steps to follow. They can be helpful for packing backpacks and getting ready for homework, as well.</p> <p>These quick reminders aid students in remembering what to do without drawing attention to them.</p> <p>Both of these strategies give students a resource to reference rather than requiring them to remember significant amounts of information independently.</p> |



Landmark Teaching Principle™ #3

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Task Break-down | Micro-Unit and structure | Tasks that can be broken up allow for things to be done in smaller steps, therefore making them more manageable for students to complete. Focusing on one step at a time can prevent students from becoming overwhelmed easily. |
| Strength and Weakness Understanding | Use preferred processing method | Teachers should play to the students' strengths by providing instruction and materials in a manner that best fits student learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic.). This allows students to feel comfortable in the classroom. |
| | Reinforce what works | Working memory is similar to a muscle: the more you use it, the better it works. |
| | Use visuals | Visuals provide students with a format that is often easier to process and remember. Just like road signs indicate familiar directions to drivers, an image associated with a classroom task may helpfully jog a student's memory. |
| Technology as an Aid | Assistive Technology | Technology can be incredibly helpful in supporting learning and instruction by alleviating some working memory demands. Technological tools help students to better manage large amounts of information, which in turn reduces anxiety. |

HOW DOES THIS CONNECT TO MICRO-UNIT AND STRUCTURE TASKS?

When specific tasks are broken up into parts and presented in structured units, they become easier to complete and process for students with both high anxiety and working memory deficits. These strategies highlight how to do that and not overwhelm the students in the classroom.