



Provide Opportunities for Success

Four general classroom strategies help students be successful and encourage progress and learning.

PROVIDE AUTHENTIC POSITIVE FEEDBACK.

Many students with language-based learning disabilities (LBD) get a great deal of critical feedback and very little positive feedback on their academic work. Providing feedback can be very encouraging to a struggling student, as most are motivated by success.

When a student answers a question or offers an opinion—even if it is wrong or misguided—find ways to reinforce the classroom participation. Examples:

- *“Yes, Bismarck is the capital of North Dakota, Rebecca. Can you tell me the capital of South Dakota—it begins with the sound /p/ and is a French name.”*
- *“You’re right that 2^2 means multiply 2 by 2. When you square something, you need to multiply it by itself. 3^2 means multiply 3 by 3. Can you tell me what 4^2 means?”*

When a student shows any progress in areas of difficulty such as writing or homework, make an effort to comment on it specifically. Examples:

- *“Zaid, I noticed you completed all the math homework last night...that is a real improvement. I hope you’ll take credit for your accomplishment.”*
- *“Mary, you wrote a compelling opening paragraph in your essay. I liked the way you used a current news story to spark the reader’s interest.”*

Providing students with opportunities for success is key!

PROVIDE “WAIT TIME.”

Students with LBD often process language more slowly than their peers. When you ask a question, wait 10 or 20 seconds before calling on a student to answer. You can also provide the question or discussion prompt and ask them to consider (or write down) their answers while you write something on the board. Make an effort to call on reluctant-to-participate students when they do raise their hands, and reinforce their contributions.

PROVIDE CUES.

Students with LBD often have weaknesses in memory. Visual and oral cues enhance their success. When asking a student to provide a vocabulary word for a given definition, for example, draw a picture or write the first letter of a word on the board, or provide the first syllable if the student cannot generate the word after 10 or 20 seconds. When asking questions, be clear and concise. Rephrase (rather than repeat), cueing for specific information when needed. For instance, when a student seems unable to explain how to solve a problem, try to narrow the question—from “*What do you do next?*” to “*How would you eliminate the 2 to solve for x ?*”

PROVIDE MODELS OF ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE WORK.

Many students with LBD lack a frame of reference for what their work should look like. Even rubrics do not provide enough information for students to use as a model. Save models of strong and weak student work from past years (or borrow from other teachers, or create your own), remove identifying information, and share with the class what makes the model assignment strong or weak. In this way, students can “see” how much information you’re looking for, what pieces of the assignment to pay attention to, and where they might begin.