Differentiating for Student Learning Needs

Students come to your classroom with a variety of learning styles and abilities. Use your knowledge of each child to promote successful learning for all. Simple modifications can yield big benefits!

Writing Support

For students who struggle with writing and/or have challenges with fine motor skills

Modification	Benefit
Present alternative ways for students to demonstrate learning. Possibilities include: – drawing pictures/comics – creating a graph – typing using a tablet or computer – singing/rapping the answers – recording answers on a smart phone/iPad	Gives students the flexibility to choose the most comfortable tool to convey thoughts and feelings.
Use Speech-to-Text apps in lieu of writing. Try: – VoiceNote II - (free) browser based app – Voice Typing - (free-built into Google Docs) – IPhone/ iPad - (free) speech dictation	- Reduces anxiety and boosts productivity for students who struggle with writing. - Easier for students with fine motor issues to express themselves.
Dry erase markers and wipe off boards	Reduces students' stress about committing answers to paper and makes it easier to fix errors
Alef Bet Rubber Stamps	Provides an alternative for students who struggle to write Hebrew letters
Pencil grips	Helps students hold and control writing instruments; develops fine motor skills

Reading

For students who need additional support in a classroom reading activity

Modification	Benefit
Assign reading buddies	Peer mentors help foster classroom community, and when paired correctly, encourage students to take risks
Teachers can record themselves reading a prayer or Hebrew/English story, on a smart phone or tablet, for individual playback during class time.	Excellent station activity for auditory learners; allows students to match hearing a text to reading a text, at their own pace.

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Reading - continued

Create a space in your class where students can record their Hebrew reading assignments with a smartphone/tablet recorder, rather than reading in front of the whole class.	Students demonstrate skills for the teacher-not peers- reduces stress for student
Apply transparent, removable highlighter strips to specific reading passages in advance of a lesson	Highlighter strips help the student: • Lessen visual distractions while reading • Strengthen visual tracking skills • Assist focus and concentration

Classroom Community

Creating a safe learning space for all learners

Modification	Benefit

Post classroom rules and regularly refer to them. Include acceptable behaviors:
  – Students can walk around the back of the classroom if they need to stretch
  – Students can stand at their tables/desks while working
	– Clear expectations for behavior and social conduct help facilitate a sense of community.
	– Posted classroom rules allow the teacher and students to refer back to them as reminders.

Praise students often and authentically; making sure to offer a comment to each student.	Positive reinforcement helps students build confidence in their own abilities.
Create opportunities for small group learning. The teacher should make the group assignments so that no one feels left out.	Small groups allow the teacher to key in on student work and skills. This also helps build community.
Name Sticks: Write each student's name on a separate popsicle stick, color one end of the stick blue and the end of the flip side green (or any 2 colors of your choice). Place sticks in front of you with the students' names facing up. After a student has had a turn to talk during a discussion, flip the stick over. Make sure that each learner has had a chance to participate by the end of the activity/day. Idea from: http://www.edutopia.org/blog/practices-promote-equity-in-classroom-shane-safir	Ensures that the teacher is providing an opportunity for every child to participate. It feels fair to students and builds trust within the classroom.

Differentiating for Student Learning Needs

Attentional Concerns
For students who struggle to stay attentive, interested or engaged in the classroom

Modification	Benefit
Review "behavior rules" that were generated, and agreed to, by the class (posted in the class-room).	Daily reminder of expectations sets students up for success
Display picture schedules, with or without words, so that students know what and when different activities will occur.	Predictability! Knowing the flow of the day, including room changes, bathroom breaks and assemblies, fosters feelings of comfort and security in many students.
Behavior Contracts-clear and concise expectation for behavior in the classroom.	Students agree to what is acceptable behavior and are aware of the rewards and consequences of their actions.
Provide fidget toys and sensory balls.	Self-regulation tools keep restless fingers busy, bodies relaxed, and minds focused.
Place velcro below the desk top (check with student to decide what feels best; soft or bumpy)	Provides the student with an opportunity to receive tactile input in a discreet way for their sensory or attentional needs.
Provide step-by-step instructions; break down assignments into manageable pieces	Clear, sequential instructions offer guidance for those who struggle with executive function skills
Use timers as a motivational tool. A few free online timers are: • Timer Pop: http://www.funsumer.com/apps/timer/ • Online Stopwatch: http://www.online-stopwatch.com/full-screen-stopwatch/ • Stopwatch – built into Google search	Timers provide a visual cue; students can see how much time has elapsed relative to how much time is left to complete their tasks.
Timers can also be used for "beat the clock" collaborative activities. It is an especially effective tool for clean-up time and transition activities.	Makes working seem a little more fun and adds a sense of collaboration/team building.
Privacy / study carrels	Helps students focus their attention on the work right in front of them and shield them from some environmental distractions.

Differentiating for Student Learning Needs

Attentional Concerns - continued
For students who struggle to stay attentive, interested or engaged in the classroom

Provide creative digital options for brainstorming and organizing notes and thoughts. Try: • Popplet.com (iPad and web versions) Simple, collaborative, graphic organizing tool (limited free version available) • MindMash (app for iPad) Creative note-taking and brainstorming tool (free download at the iTunes store)	Digital graphic organizers can help students organize ideas and thoughts. Choices allow students to show what they know in a way they can work best.