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***Classroom Considerations
to Enhance Student
Success***

With Karen Kruger

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Karen Kruger, M.S., Hidden Sparks Director of Education, received her master's degree from Bank Street and has taught in elementary and middle schools from Kindergarten through 8th grade. Currently, she works with NYC middle school teachers and administrators to support their Schools Attuned programs and mentors ICP coaches in Hidden Sparks schools. Karen has been a Schools Attuned facilitator since 2003, teaching all courses offered by "All Kinds of Minds", developing curricula for workshops, mentoring and supervising teachers in K-12, leading faculty development workshops for NYC schools and observing students.

Overview of the Session

- During this session, we will use a neurodevelopmental lens to consider how to modify a classroom to enhance student success.
- We will look at the demands that are involved with classroom configuration and discuss how to accommodate diverse learners.

Session Goals:

- To understand how a classroom can physically affect learning.
- To become more aware of the learning pathways involved with your classroom environment.
- To develop strategies for students who struggle in those learning pathways.

What is student success?



What does it look like in your classroom?

Before we begin discussing how and why to modify your classroom, let's brainstorm what it looks like when students are “successful” in your classroom...

Here's what I've heard...

A successful classroom has:

A quiet orderly environment

Everyone working

Students following rules

Students who are happy

Enthusiastic students who are excited to learn

High test scores

Students who are kind to each other

A supportive atmosphere

What is necessary for students...

- To be quietly working and on task?
- To be kind to each other, friendly, supportive of one another and excited to learn?
- To maintain a neat, orderly, organized classroom?

Which learning pathways are involved?

Let's begin by considering the most dominant learning pathways that are involved with these elements of student success in your classroom.

8 Pathways of Learning

Which are most dominant in your physical classroom?

- Memory
- Attention
- Language
- Spatial Ordering
- Temporal Sequential Ordering
- Higher Order Thinking
- Neuromotor function
- Social Cognition

The most dominant pathways involved with classroom configuration are...

- Spatial ordering
- Temporal sequential ordering
- Language
- Social cognition

How does spatial ordering affect the classroom?

Spatial Ordering involves:

How the desks/tables are arranged

How students manage their personal belongings

Where the classroom supplies are located

All physical uses of the classroom:

The walls, the floor, the ceiling...



Students who struggle with Spatial Ordering might:

- Have messy desks or lockers or backpacks
- Lose their homework
- Have trouble with finding their pencils and papers
- Have difficulty with graphs and maps
- Struggle with where materials are located in the classroom

How does Temporal Sequential ordering affect the classroom?

Temporal Sequential ordering involves:

Posted schedules and classroom routines

Clocks and timers

Alphabets

Number lines

Outlines for long term assignments



Students who struggle with Temporal Sequential ordering might:

- Have difficulty turning in homework on time
- Struggle with following sequences and schedules
- Have trouble with long term assignments
- Have difficulty estimating time or understanding time
- Struggle to get to school on time and to get to their classes on time

How does Language affect the classroom?

Language involves:

Daily schedules

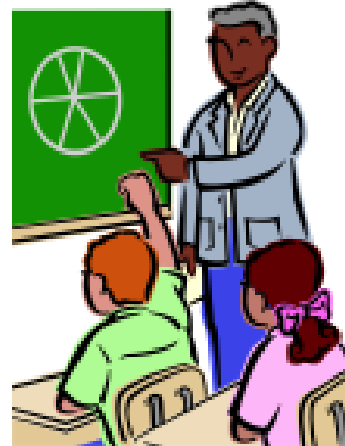
Posted directions for written assignments

Homework

Spoken instructions

Classroom procedures

Class discussions



Students who struggle with Language might:

- Ask for verbal directions to be repeated
- Look confused when verbal instructions are given
- Have difficulty reading posted schedules
- Appear reluctant to participate in class discussions
- Have trouble completing writing assignments
- Show a disparity between their spoken output and their written output

How does Social Cognition affect the classroom?

Social cognition involves:

Small group work

How the desks are arranged

Expectations for student behavior

How conflicts are resolved

Classroom rules and procedures



Students who struggle with Social Cognition might:

- Have trouble making and keeping friends
- Appear awkward in social situations
- Have trouble working with peers in small groups
- Have difficulty resolving conflicts with other students
- Seem to be unable to work with a partner

What can we do to help these students?

There are many ways we can support the students in our classrooms who struggle in these areas. Let's take a look at some strategies that are specifically targeted for these 4 learning pathways: Spatial ordering, Temporal Sequential ordering, Language, and Social Cognition.

Strategies for students who struggle with Spatial Ordering:

Designate specific labeled areas for homework collection, storage of subject materials (writing, math etc.) and students' personal belongings.

Provide students with practice of previewing a task, making a list of materials needed, and collecting and organizing materials and workspace before beginning work. (This technique can be applied to preparing for homework before leaving school and to homework completion at home.)

Provide a consistent format for presenting visual information on Smart board, blackboard, overheads, other printed materials.

Strategies for students who struggle with Temporal Sequential ordering:

Post daily routines in several places – perhaps on student’s desk or notebook in addition to classroom wall.

Preview sequences and alert students to sequences.

Use clocks and timers to help students manage their time. Ask students to estimate how long tasks will take.

Divide long term assignments into manageable chunks.

Use acronyms: **COPS** –for proofreading (**C**apitalize, **O**rganization, **P**unctuation, **S**pelling); **DMSB** – for long division (**D**ad-divide, **M**om-multiply, **S**ister-subtract, **B**rother-bring down; **FACT**- self monitoring for active listening (**F**ocus attention, **A**sk yourself questions, **C**onnect ideas, **T**ry to picture important ideas.)

Strategies for students who struggle with Language:

Make sure that verbal directions are repeated – use student “paraphrasers”, provide written directions in multiple locations.

For younger students, provide visuals to accompany written instructions.

Provide advance warning before calling on students, check for understanding.

Post punctuation rules, writing procedures, editing examples.

Provide checklists and rubrics for students to follow. Consider posting examples of checklists, rubrics on walls.

Strategies for students who struggle with Social Cognition:

Carefully consider groupings/pairings of students to maximize social strengths and weaknesses.

Post clear classroom rules that are created by the students and clear consequences for when rules are broken.

Post clear expectations of small group work; roles of group members, expected behaviors, accountability, and consequences of behaviors.

Use role plays to help students understand acceptable ways of resolving conflicts.

Some final thoughts...

Now that we have considered how our classrooms can affect our student's success, think about how you might change some aspect of your classroom.

What can you do to improve students success with spatial ordering concerns? How might you change the way you handle sequences and assignment deadlines with your students? Think of ways you communicate routines, expectations, rules – how might you improve these communications?

Conclusion

I hope this presentation provided you with some new ideas about how to modify your classroom and provide strategies to enhance student success.

Resources

Dr. Levine, the founder of All Kinds of Minds, is the author of many books on this approach to learning. Two of these books:

- **A Mind At a Time** published by Simon and Shuster.
- **Educational Care** published by Educators Publishing Service.

He has also written a book for elementary school age students:

All Kinds of Minds published by Educators Publishing Service.

Upcoming Hidden Sparks Without Walls Sessions

Wednesday, November 17, 2010	Core Classroom Practices, for All Kinds of Learners, in Judaic and General Studies , with Dr. Judah Weller
Wednesday, December 15, 2010	Mid-Year Modifications to Your Classroom to Enhance Student Success , with Karen Kruger, M.Ed
Wednesday, February 9, 2011	Teaching Reading to Students with Diverse Reading Levels , with Amy Goldman, M.S., M.A.
Wednesday, March 2, 2011	Non Frontal Review Techniques for the Classroom , with Rivkah Dahan, MSED
Tuesday, May 17, 2011	Assessment and Differentiated Instruction , with Dr. Jane Gertler

For more information visit: www.hidden-sparks.org

About Hidden Sparks

Hidden Sparks is a non-profit fund whose purpose is to help children with learning differences reach their full potential in school and life. Hidden Sparks develops and supports professional development programs for Jewish day schools to help increase understanding and support for teaching to diverse learners.

Guided by a philosophy that by helping schools meet the needs of children with learning and behavioral differences, ultimately all students will benefit. Hidden Sparks' programs combine professional development in learning and positive behavioral support, guided classroom observation and one on one coaching. The Hidden Sparks model and program is currently in 21 Jewish Day Schools/Yeshivot in New York and 7 in Boston, through a partnership with Gateways: Access to Jewish Education.

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