

Invisible Disabilities

- Also called “hidden disabilities.” Hidden disabilities are physical or mental impairments that are *not readily apparent to others*



Invisible Disabilities

- People often judge based on what they see. Sometimes people make conclusions on a person's ability by the way they look.
- When outsiders cannot see symptoms they may believe the symptoms aren't there or are being exaggerated
- Just because you don't see it, doesn't mean it isn't there



What can I do as a teacher to help a student with a disability?

- Recognize there is a need
- Communicate
- Establish a plan to help the student
- Implement plan and adaptations
- Inclusive classroom culture
- Repeat

Changing Classroom Culture

- culture comprises an interlocking set of goals, roles, processes, values, communications practices, attitudes and assumptions.
- The teacher sets the tone of the classroom

Changing Classroom Culture

- Culture affects behavior and performance outcomes.
- culture is not only a causal factor, it's also a *dependent* variable affected by other critical execution-related factors
- Incentives, structures, decision processes, behaviors, people, and controls affect and shape culture.



Why change the culture rather than making regulations?

- Create an accepting environment for the student to thrive
- People try to get around rules
- Regulations inhibit creativity and flexibility
- lasting change
- Often where there are difficulties, the problem is the mindset

The influence of teachers extends beyond the classroom, well into the future. It is they who shape and enrich the minds of the young, who touch their hearts and souls. F. Sionil Jose

Communicate with the student

Why may a student NOT disclose a disability?

- Associated stigma may causes them to be excluded or treated differently as other students
- Afraid of coming across as whining or complaining
- Perceived as looking for special treatment or making excuses for their performance
- Think disability will not impact their performance in class enough to warrant disclosure
- No accommodations can be given for the particular disability so there is no advantage to disclosing

Communicate with the Student

Student may have difficulty initiating contact with a teacher

- Autisms spectrum disorders
- Anxiety
- Paranoia
- Shy
- Intimidated to approach for a teacher to ask for something



The biggest
communication problem
is we do not listen to
understand.
We listen to reply.

When you become aware that a
student has a disability *you*
should approach *them*.

Talk to the student BEFORE
there is an issue

Make a plan

- Ask “How can I help you?”
- Always match the strategy to the student’s needs and abilities
- Be openminded and creative
- Remember what works for one person may not work for another
- Better to offer something rather than just saying “If you need something let me know”. Follow up with this offer

Plan for a student with Dyscalculia

- Make use of mnemonics and visual prompting cards to assist students in memorizing rules, formulae and tables. Repetition is also very important.
- In the early stages of teaching new skills ensure that the mathematical problems are free of large numbers and unnecessary calculations.
- Try to understand the student's errors, do not just settle for wrong
- Allow students to use computers and calculators, especially to self-correct.
- Sit with the student while the student works through the problem and coach them through the problem, rather than showing a student how to complete the problem

Plan with student with Chronic Illness?

Epilepsy

- Make a plan on how to handle a situation if a student were to have a seizure in class or lab
BEFORE you have a student with epilepsy in your class
 - What are you going to do while 911 is on the way?

Chronic Illness

- Make a plans for any possible occasions the student may miss due to illness Before there is an issue
- Bear in mind, the medical condition may not get better. If the student were to wait till their chronic illness resolves, they may have missed their chance

Plan for a student with attentional deficit disorder

- Encourage student participation.
- Use questions that stimulate response, discussion, and a hands-on experience.
- Use teaching aids that press for answers, and capture/hold the student's attention.
- Set up a workgroup environment.
- activities or games
- Sit with the student while the student works threw the problem and coach them threw the problem, rather than showing a student how to complete the problem

Plan for a student with Mental Illness

- Mental illness is the number one hidden disability
- Approach the student BEFORE there are any difficulties. Be supportive and ask how you can help them be successful in class.
- Place student in a supportive group or with reassuring lab partner
- Yes, you can make exceptions for this student to reduce stress to a manageable level – even if it is not listed on accommodations. Use your best judgment without prying into their personal life.
- You are the teacher not a therapist. Always the option to refer the student to school's counselling center

- If you have attended this symposium and it hasn't changed you or how you teach, this symposium has been unsuccessful.
- Sitting here and listening to the lectures is just the starting point. How you use the tools you have been given is up to you.
- Thank you

Picture Credits

- Invisible disability <https://www.jjslist.com/blog/mental-illness-the-invisible-disability>