

LEARNING SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

Intellectual Disabilities Teacher Guide

Purpose

Practical classroom strategies, accommodations, printable learning support ideas, and assessment options designed specifically for ASL teachers working with students who have intellectual disabilities.

What is an Intellectual Disability?

An intellectual disability is a condition involving limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive skills, such as communication, self-care, and social participation, that emerges before adulthood. Students with intellectual disabilities are capable learners who often thrive with concrete instruction, repeated practice, real-life connections, and a strengths-based approach.

Student Strengths

- Warm and social
- Strong rote memory with repetition
- Hands-on learner
- Motivated by real-life tasks
- Persistent with practice
- Responsive to encouragement

Teaching Strategies

- Break skills into small, sequential steps
- Use concrete, real-life examples and objects
- Provide frequent repetition and practice
- Model each sign or task before asking for it
- Pair new signs with pictures and familiar routines
- Give immediate, specific positive feedback

Learning Support Activities

- Picture-sign matching with everyday objects
- Task cards broken into small steps
- Repetitive sign drills tied to daily routines
- Functional vocabulary practice (home, food, safety signs)
- Errorless learning activities with high success rate

Assessment Ideas

- Observation checklists tied to daily skills
- Video responses
- One-on-one, task-based assessments
- Shorter, frequent checks instead of long tests

Things to Avoid

- Abstract explanations without concrete examples
- Long strings of multi-step directions
- Rushing through new material without repetition
- Assuming slower pace means lack of effort or ability

Remember

Every student is unique. Use these strategies together with each student's IEP, Section 504 Plan, school policies, and professional judgment. The goal is not to lower expectations, but to provide meaningful access to learning.