

Slowed Processing Speed

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

After sustaining a brain injury, students may have slowed processing speed that can contribute to problems with learning. It can take longer to understand, think about and respond to questions.

CAUSES

Damage that commonly occurs to the brain during a TBI can significantly slow processing speed. Sometimes, when the brain is injured, there is a breakdown in the ability to transmit information properly.

SOLUTION

Help students compensate for slow information processing.

STRATEGIES

Understand the problem

Slowed processing speed can contribute to problems in areas such as attention, memory, decision making, problem solving, analysis, initiation, organization and planning. It is important to understand how it is impacting your student and to work with parents, teachers and support staff to put in place accommodations that meet your student's individual needs. Participating in classroom discussions can be frustrating and confusing because by the time the student grasps a concept or formulates a response, the conversation has moved to another subject. While they were working hard to process the last information and form a response, they may have missed the beginning of the conversation about the new concept and have no idea what the current topic is.

Example: A student with slowed processing speed may be able to follow along in a lecture but stopping the lecture and asking that student a specific question may not be effective because the student would need to quickly access the information and formulate a response. Instead, call on a different student and ask the student with a brain injury at a later time.

Use the same routines

Learning a new routine takes more processing energy than following a familiar routine. As with all things, the more you practice a skill the better you get at it. Keep instructional routines stable and familiar so they can become as automatic as possible. Establishing routines that are used daily in the same situations helps all students to be successful.

Example: A student will be more likely to remember to turn homework in if it is done at the same time (ex. beginning of class, just before leaving, etc.) in each class throughout the day.

Use organizational supports

The use of organizational supports will help to minimize processing requirements and allow the student to focus on the content or meaning of what is being taught rather than the structure in which it is being presented.

Example: Provide written plans, outlines or agendas (using words or pictures as appropriate to the task and the student) to help students stay organized and oriented within a task.

Use nonverbal supports

Spoken language requires rapid processing, even if you speak slowly. Use outlines, pictures, symbols and gestures to reinforce what you say and keep it in the student's mind longer than your spoken words.

Example: A daily schedule written on the whiteboard will serve as a nonverbal support that will help the student throughout the day.

Check understanding of directions

Students with slow processing speed often miss directions or do not understand them completely. Make sure the student understands instructions and new information before moving on to something new.

Example: Ask the student to repeat the instruction or information back to you before moving on to something new or giving more directions.

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