



Education Techniques for Elementary Children with FASD

These techniques were developed by the
South Dakota Affiliated Program, University
of South Dakota School of Medicine.

The intent is to provide a handout suitable for
parents or workshop presenters to give teachers
at a particular grade level.

Valborg Kvigne

Judy Struck

Ellen Engelhart

Tracy West



Shodair
CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

www.shodair.org

Shodair Children's Hospital Medical Genetics Department
2755 Colonial Drive, Helena, Montana 59601 • (406) 444-7500

I. Environment

A. Calm and quiet.

1. Soft calm music may relax the classroom during breaks.
2. Tone down classroom so rooms are not overly stimulating.
 - a. Keep a minimal number of objects hanging from the ceiling and on the walls.
 - b. Use calm colors of paint on the walls.
 - c. Reduce classroom clutter.
 - d. Use bulletin boards as reaching tools and soft colors. (Bulletin boards could be covered when not in use.)
3. Use headphones for quiet time. (Students with FAS/FAE are not always able to block out other noises.)

B. Structure.

1. Establish a few simple rules.
2. Enforce the same rules in the same way.
3. Use the same language when enforcing the rules.

C. Transition from one activity to another activity.

1. Give the student reminders for the ending and beginning of activities. Use a tactile signal. Touch shoulder, tap elbow, and say, "the bell will ring in five minutes, you need to finish up . We will go to lunch when the bell rings."
2. Have the student follow a fairly consistent routine every day.
3. Provide notebooks which have all the students' classroom activities in order for the day. This gives the student a concrete item with which to structure his/her day.
4. Have the students carry the book to the reading area, or a puppet to the puppet story.
5. Give students several breaks during the day. Students may need sleep during the day or some may need to get up and move around more frequently than other students, and may need food snacks. Plan activities to facilitate movement and creative work between seat work assignments.
6. Class periods should not exceed twenty minutes.

II. Language Development

A. Talk with the student at the student's level. Use short sentences.

B. Poor articulation.

1. A speech therapist would be a good resource for the student and teacher.
2. The teacher needs to model proper pronunciation.
3. Articulation errors are common. Accept student's communications without correcting them but repeat their sounds correctly.
4. Music activities can help student learn vocabulary.
 - a. Good morning song.
 - b. Song before the students eat.
 - c. Name songs.
 - d. Circle game songs-sit down, stand up, name games.

- C. Encourage high quality of speech.
 - 1. Be aware that quantity does not indicate quality. Students with FAS/FAE often use a large quantity of speech.
 - 2. Listen for the number of words per sentence.
 - 3. Listen for the number of new words the student uses.
 - 4. Stress concept development through concrete examples encouraging the student to demonstrate understanding. Example: Talk about temperatures so the child would know what to wear on a hot day and what to wear on a cold day.
- D. Sign language may be helpful in teaching students with FAS even when they do not have a hearing loss. Sign language is concrete and visible and can be used along with verbal language.

III. Mathematics

- A. Memorized counting from one to ten does not mean the student understands the numbers. Stress concept development of numbers, encouraging students to demonstrate knowledge.
- B. Teach the student what the number "one" means before any more numbers are taught to the student: "Give me one crayon." "Put one card on the table."
- C. Cut numbers out of paper. Glue oatmeal, rice, glitter, etc. to the number so the student can see, feel, and hear the numbers as well as manipulate objects that represent the number.
- D. Touch and count objects.
- E. Teach functional math-money, time, and practical uses of addition and subtraction.
- F. Use the student's fingers for addition and subtraction or a calculator. These methods should not be the first choice but should not be ruled out. A calculator may be necessary for the student with FAS/FAE to do multiplication and division.

IV. Alphabet

- A. Make letters with paper and glue objects to the letter.
- B. Match letters to objects. Example. "A-Apple." Next, match letters to pictures.
- C. Follow the above sequence with words. Match words to words: "Apple" - "Apple."
- D. Invent new words into other activities, other class work, and home activities. Have a "Letter for the Day." Use the sounds of the letter repeatedly: J, "juice," "jump," "jacket," etc.
- E. Use green and red clues to indicate the beginning and ending of a letter and to encourage proper writing of letters.

V. Reading

- A. Teach left to right direction. Some students may have difficulty focusing their eyes on the left side of the page and moving their eyes to the right.
 - 1. If a student uses a piece of paper to follow the line across the page, the student may have an easier time reading.
 - 2. Use a green marker at the left side changing to red at the right side for written work.

3. Use colored arrows to signal starting points and left to right direction.
- B. Use books with simple, plain pictures. Small detailing marks in a picture can distract the student.
- C. Provide the student with books that follow student's interest and independent reading levels. (Independent reading levels means the student can read 90% of the words in the book.)
- D. Read aloud to the students daily and provide uninterrupted silent reading periods.

VI. Use Sensory Stimulation to Teach Each Concept

- A. Teach a concept through different sensory methods: Teaching the color "orange."
 1. Wear orange clothes.
 2. Paint with orange paint.
 3. Use orange construction paper for projects.
 4. Serve oranges for a snack.
 5. Sit on an orange rug
- B. Use objects as much as possible to teach concepts. **Example:** teaching about "circles."
 1. Laminate polka dot fabric.
 2. Use a cookie cutter to cut circle sandwiches.
 3. Cut circles from construction paper and glue Cherrios on the paper.
- C. Use concrete teaching activities.
 1. **Example:** Child is told to stay in the yard but continuously wanders into the street. Parents obtained four large orange cones and had the child stay inside the cones. Parents gradually expanded the cones.
 2. Teacher sets a work-play schedule by using pictures, nesting cups, and so on. The teacher would set out six nesting cups to show the student he/she has six activities to complete before taking a break.
 3. Make abstractions concrete. **Example:** "What do you want?" This question is actually very abstract. Give child choices he/she can see, feel, touch, and hear.

VII. Managing Hyperactivity

- A. Provide structure, routine, and as few rules as possible.
- B. Make a picture calendar.
 1. Make a board with hooks.
 2. Laminate pictures or take Polaroid pictures of the student doing activities to occur during the day and during work time. **Examples:** Have a picture of a student taking jacket off and hanging up the jacket. Have a picture of a student putting puzzle together.
 3. As the student completes each activity during the day, the student takes the picture off the hook, turns it over, and hangs the picture back on the hook. The student knows that he/she has completed the activity.
- C. Make lists of assignments for the student to follow during the day. (Students may need a list taped to their desk. Some students with FAS/FAE may have difficulty relating chalk board instructions to their own behavior.)

- D. Place each activity in two baskets.
1. Have two baskets for a puzzle, two baskets for a pegboard, two baskets for a matching activity, two baskets for lacing cards, two baskets for scissors and paper activity, etc.
 2. Take the activity out of the "start" basket. When the student has finished the activity, the student puts the activity in the "finish" basket.
- E. Keep the designated activities in the same place.
- F. Enclose shelves and book cases if possible to eliminate visual distraction.
- G. Use vivid colors, sound, and movement to emphasize important concepts.
- H. During organized activities, give hyperactive students structure. They need to know the sequence of the activity, what is expected of them, and what behaviors will be acceptable. **Example:** "During this activity we will stay in our chairs. There will be no talking. Keep your eyes on your own paper. If you want help, raise your hand and I will come to help you."
- I. Balance loosely structured activities with highly structured activities to give the students opportunity to move about, visit, and relax.
- J. Structure the day alternating quiet time and active time.
- K. Help the student control tantrums.
1. Remain calm and quiet. Teacher's body language should not get the student excited. Talk in a calm voice and walk slowly. If the teacher is relaxed, this will help the student relax.
 2. Let the student know there is a protocol for loss of control. Taking the student's hand and holding it a short time will give the student a signal that the teacher thinks the student is losing control. If restraint is necessary, the teacher needs to exercise care and control. Talk to the student, telling him/her that you are helping him/her to control his/her behavior. **Example:** "I am going to hold on to you until you are calm. Are you feeling better? Let me know when you are ready for me to let go."
 3. Take the student to a different room if necessary. Soft music and soft colors in the room may help calm the student.
Talk to the student in a calm, soft voice. Ask the student to tell the teacher when he/she is ready to go back to the classroom.
 4. Determine what happened before the tantrum occurred. Look for antecedents, what caused the student to lose his/her temper.
 5. Look at different ways to eliminate the chances of the student throwing a tantrum. If the student has an extremely difficult time with loud noises and lots of activity, the student should be taught in a relatively quiet and calm area.
 6. Reduce the likelihood of the student having a tantrum by teaching the student new ways of dealing with his/her stress. Teach the student to say, "I'm mad."
- L. Determine whether the student's diet could be a contributing factor for the behavior.
- M. Observe the student for any contributing health problems. For example, with an ear infection, the student may pull at his/her ears. Ask the student to "Show me where you hurt." Look for behaviors which may signify visual problems: abnormal head posturing, squinting, holding paper close to face, obvious errors made when working from the chalk board.
- N. Ignore negative behavior whenever possible and avoid overreaction.

O. Build in positive reinforcement.

1. As the student finishes each activity on the picture calendar, give student positive reinforcement for his/her efforts in completing the activity.
2. When the student does a good job on a project, tell the student he/she did right. **Example:** "I really like the way you wrote your Ks."

VII. Short Attention Span

- A. Determine how long the student is able to work on a given activity.
- B. Expand this time by one more try and reinforce the student.
- C. Determine what activity the student can attend to longest. What is it about that activity that allows him/her to attend. Generalize these features to other activities.

IX. Social Behavior

- A. Show the student how to share playground equipment. You may need to use a timer to share the most popular equipment.
- B. Teach the student how to be a friend.
 1. Use puppets or dolls.
 2. Emphasize the feelings of others.
 3. Practice using manners, consideration statements, and apologies.
- C. Teach the student how to sit with a friend at the table. Emphasize conversation, sharing, and courtesy.
- D. Use peer tutoring.
 1. Pair children for a week so the child with FAS/FAE can learn from other children.
 2. Allow students with FAS/FAE to help other students. **Example:** "Jane will bring the basket around to pick up your papers. Have them ready when she gets to your desk."
 3. Capitalize on academic strengths of the student with FAS/FAE.

X. Eye-Hand Coordination Activities.

- A. Use puzzles with knobs on the pieces or lace cards.
- B. Let student help with tasks that require sorting, stapling, putting things in place, etc.
- C. The teacher may need to guide the child through the activity, and then encourage the student to do the activity on his/her own. The teacher could pick up the puzzle piece for the student and put in the right place in the puzzle or lace the first two holes of the lacing board.

XI. Other Considerations

- A. The following evaluations maybe helpful in learning more about the student's development and assist in planning the teachers activities.
 1. Speech and language evaluations.
 2. Psychological evaluations.
 3. Motor evaluations.
- B. Children with FAS/E usually need more one-to-one teaching.