

Role of Teachers and Parents in Honing Their Hidden Talents of Slow Learners

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Abstract

Slow learners are the students who are not able to perform equal to average student in academic field. They should not be mismatched with mentally retarded or reluctant learners. Even two slow learners are not identical. Reasons for slow learning can be different from individual to individual. Dealing with slow learners is one of the biggest challenges faced by parents and teachers. Normally parents are able to recognize the problem of slow learning in their child in early ages before going to school but if they fail to do so it is responsibility of teachers to find out the cause of problem so that appropriate remedies can be made available to him. Help of a Doctor and Psychologist (if necessary) can be very useful for exploring the root cause of problem in slow learners. Problem can be at home, at school, in environment or within child itself. A little more extra effort from parents and teacher can be helpful in enhancing the rate of learning in slow learners. This paper will discuss the common characteristics generally observed in slow learners for identifying and differentiating a slow learner from normal child and reasons of development of problem of slow learning in child. Developing necessary life skills should be the ultimate target of teachers and parents in case of slow learners which will certainly help them in earning their livelihood and spending a respectful life in society.

Key words

Slow learner, Teacher role, Parents role and Remedies.

Introduction

Students with below average cognitive abilities whom we cannot term as disabled are called slow learners. They struggle to cope with the traditional academic demands of the regular classroom. Actually slow learners are normal students but the problem is that they are simply not interested in studying under traditionally accepted system of education. Slow learners should not be confused with students in need of special education or reluctant learners who are non-cooperative. A student may fail to excel in some classes or in some subjects but it does not imply that he or she is a slow learner. The teachers and guardians may resort to some of the teaching aids available to special education students that may enhance interest of slow learners and help them get involved in the learning process.

Slow Learners may have problems not only with math and reading but also with coordination such as penmanship, sports, or dressing. Often they are quiet and shy, and they have trouble making friends. They may have a poor self confidence. They have trouble with abstract thinking such as in social studies or doing math word problems. They often have a short attention span. All of these problems cause them to have a poor self esteem.

In the days before formal schooling, these students would carry on productive lives working at tasks that did not require extensive reading, writing or math. However, nowadays the emphasis is less on occupational learning and more on academic preparation. Thus, to provide them the best possible opportunities in a changing world there is a growing need to help remediate these children. There are basically two commonalities emerge with slow learners. First, they need more or extra time to complete tasks. This means parents or guardians must be willing to augment what happens at school regardless of the fact how fruitless it might appear. Secondly, the child must be offered appropriate incentives. Depending on the child, the best incentives are family projects or activities, such as building a model or attending a concert or game. The incentives should require delayed gratification, so the child learns patience. The next area which is very important is proper nutrition, like children need good breakfast. Research suggests a quality breakfast and proper sleep are the two best ways to improve student

performance.

Finally, a teacher or parent must seek lessons and other resources that make it easier to differentiate the curriculum and make learning more vital and relevant. To this end, special education sites on the Internet have some great ideas. Although slow learners do not qualify for special education classes, the concepts teachers use with special education students are ideal for helping a slow learner once the student's weaknesses have been diagnosed. Having a slow learning child is not unusual, about 10 percent are slow learners in a classroom.

Characteristics of Slow Learners

In general, slow learning students may exhibit some or all of these characteristics, depending on their age and degree of problems acquiring knowledge at school.

- First, slow learners are recurrently immature in their relations with others and do poorly in school.
- Secondly, they cannot do multifaceted or complex problems and work very slowly.
- They lose track of time and cannot convey what they have learned from one task to another well.
- They do not easily master skills that are academic in nature, such as the times tables or spelling rules.
- Perhaps the most exasperating trait is their inability to have long-term goals. They live in the present, and so have considerable problems with time management perhaps due to a short attention span and poor concentration skills.

One thing which we should remember is that, just because a child is not doing well in one class does not make that student a slow learner. Very few children stand out in all subject areas unless there is great deal of grade inflation at that school. So it's fundamental that the parent or teacher examine in depth standardized tests scores to look for trends. Also, slow learners vary from reluctant learners. A slow learner to begin with wants to learn, but has a problem with the process. A reluctant or hesitant learner is not motivated and can also be passive aggressive, creating more problems for teachers and parents through non-cooperation. Reluctant learners

seldom have learning disabilities.

Examples of Interventions For Slow Learners

Environment: Reduce distractions, change seating to promote attentiveness, have a peer student teacher, and allow more breaks.

Assignments: Make them shorter and with more variation, repeat work in various forms, have a contract, give more hands-on work, have assignments copied by student, have students use “three transfer” method.

Assessment: Use shorter tests, oral testing, redoing tests and short feedback times, don't make students compete. What to avoid: Don't use cooperative learning that isolates the student and places him or her in a no-win situation or standardized tests. Definitely don't ignore the problem.

What to encourage: Grouping with a patient partner. Learning about the child's interests Placing the student in charge Mapping, graphic organizers, and hands-on work. Using Bloom's taxonomy of tasks to make the assignments more appropriate.

Responsibilities Of The Teacher On Slow Learners:

Slow-learners are not averse to learning, and have no limitations for learning, but in fact have their own psychology for learning. Hence the challenge for the parents or guardians or teachers is to understand the student's areas of interests and develop a teaching plan to cover syllabus in a given timeframe. Slow learners are very sensitive and self-conscious as they are very well aware of their weakness in comparison with the fast learners. The following are the responsibilities of the teacher on bringing out them:

Building Up Confidence Among Slow Learners: The first responsibility of the teacher is to build up confidence among these learners and make them believe that they are no less than others. Encouraging words and phrases may bring about a positive impact on the slow learners and will boost them to perform better.

Finding out the Main Reason behind the Learner's Weak Performance: Teachers are first required to find out the main reason behind the learner's weak performance and also to study those areas minutely where she needs to work upon in order to guide the slow learner to perform well.

Interact With The Slow Learners More Often: She needs to interact with the slow learners more often so that she can keep a record of every movement of the learner and adopt ways in which the slow learner can be guided.

Giving Extra Care And Practice: Extra care and practice should be given to the slow learners as compared to their peers. If need be the teacher can take extra classes or may allow the learner to come to her place so that she may work out the areas of concern along with these learners. The teacher may utilize some of her time to do a good deal of research in order to find out simple ways of helping these slow learners to study in an easy and simple way. She might set mock tests for the learners or give them simple home assignments which are interesting and related to the lessons completed in-side the classroom.

Pay Equal Attention In The Class Room: Inside the classroom she must never make the slow learner feel neglected or unwanted as it might create a feeling of inferiority among these learners which might lay an effect on their grades. She must pay equal attention to these learners and may make them sit in the first row if possible.

Arrangement For Special Learning Resources: Special programs with the help of the audio-visual aids, graphics, displays,

reference books, online material and work sheets must be created for these slow learners to enhance their learning.

Maintenance of Cumulative Records : Cumulative records must be maintained by the teachers in order to keep a track of the learner's progress. This cumulative re-cord is mandatory for the teacher to maintain as she will know how the slow learner is responding to her ways of teaching. If she finds any area where the learner has not made much improvement then she can change her ways of teaching and try out another way that might be proved comfortable for the learner.

Maintaining Friendly Relationship: A teacher needs to be a friend to these learners on whom they can fall back upon. These learners cannot express themselves fully to their peers or to their parents and hence needs somebody whom they can rely upon. Hence it is up to the teacher to fill up that vacuum and enhance these slow learners' all round development.

Repetition: Saying the same thing over and over, but it helps make a concept more concrete. A slow learner with limited reasoning skills will take longer to comprehend what may seem easy and almost natural to us.

Encouraging Other Activities: Encourage on other activities helping the child to experience success. Put up posters in his work space so whenever his concentration drifts, he is constantly reminded of the task at hand. Repeat these from time to time so as to keep up a healthy level of confidence.

Apply the theory of Multiple Intelligence: By allowing the child to dabble in a range of activities at a young age helps in success not only boosts confidence but excelling in a certain area, whatever it maybe, allows the child to feel socially accepted and 'normal'. Additionally, sports can then also be used to teach various mathematical computations and calculations, for instance.

Arranging For Peer Tutoring: Peer tutoring is one of the most effective strategies for slow learners. Parents and teachers should identify tolerant and caring peers and allow the slow learner to be taught alongside them or through them. The more a child interacts with those of his age, the more successful he will feel, eliminating the problem of self-confidence.

Adding Variety to the Academic Routine: Add variety to the academic routine by making learning a fun process through the use of educational puzzles and games. It has-been observed that the majority of slow learners enjoy activities which are hand held and allow them to play an active role. It allows the child to learn by using his tactile sense, one that leaves more lasting impression in his memory. Also ensure lessons are short and frequent rather than long and strenuous.

Encouraging Oral Expression Instead of Written Reports: For slow learners, many writing assignments go un-attempted or are begun only half-heartedly because these learners recognize that their written product will not meet even minimal writing standards. A carefully organized taped response to an assignment might be considered. This has the advantage of avoiding spelling, syntax, and writing errors.

Teaching them Learning Skills: Learning skills can be increased by teaching note-taking, outlining, and listening. These skills are acquired through observation by higher ability students, but they must be specifically taught to slow learners. Unless your slow learners are actively engaged in the learning process through interesting concrete visual stimuli, there will be little contact emotionally and intellectually with the content you are presenting. This contact can be attained most easily when you vary your instructional material often and organize it into bits small enough

to ensure moderate-to-high rates of success

Using Innovative Strategies : Several innovative strategies to deal with such slow learning students to learn and enhance memory like's Involve students with a practical model or case study of short time span and relaxed environment so that they can visualize or feel the situation's Proceed in steps once the students are comfortable and involved in looking for solutions' Involve them in activities discrete from routine home chorus like sports and excursions to motivate such students to learn without cramming monotonous textbooks. Provide a variety of activities for learning such as painting a picture of a reading assignment. o Provide them ample opportunity for success. Fortunately nowadays resources are available in libraries as well as online to develop learning habits to create interest for slow learners.

Other Remedial Measures: Remedial Teaching is identifying slow learners and giving them the necessary guidance to help them overcome their problems, after identifying their areas of difficulty. Contrary to what is said, remedial teaching is done perfunctorily without identifying their areas of difficulty and underlying cause for lagging be-hind. Some students are unsympathetically branded as 'blockheads' without an earnest attempt to know the real cause of their slow learning (Y. Sridhar Rao).

Teaching Them Simple To Complex: Learning takes place from simple to complex. If for some reason the student has not learnt the basics, it is futile to teach him the advanced topics. Remedial teaching is not revising the topics taught repeatedly. Careful analysis of the students' performance in the examination and diagnosing the areas of difficulty are key aspects in remedial teaching. Once the difficult areas are identified, the next task is to plan the learning experiences to teach the basics to understand the given topic.

Teaching them Required Basic Mathematical Operations In Physics: Poor performance in physics can be remedied by first teaching the required basic mathematical operations.

Activity-oriented learning: Student is central in the learning process. The learning experiences should be activity-oriented and the teaching should motivate and create interest in the student to learn own. When group discussions are held in the classroom, the slow learners are benefited much. Suitably tailored lesson plan by the teacher and careful monitoring by the school administration will help slow learners have a better grasp of all lessons in schools.

Strategies For Slow Learners At Home

Eating breakfast and getting enough sleep are two factors that have been shown to encourage learning (www.health.ucsd.edu). A minimum amount of stress at home also can promote an environment without distractions, which many slow learners need when they're working on homework assignments. Provide a quiet place for your son or daughter to study where he or she can easily communicate with you. Organize your child's homework sessions into brief periods that allow time for review. When he or she has completed a new assignment, suggest a fun activity that relates to the concepts just learned. Free math and verbal games are available online in a variety of topics. Your child might also enjoy painting a picture or performing a theatrical skit related to the learned concepts. Allowing for variety within your child's homework sessions may reinforce his or her capacity for recall. Offer your child choices during homework sessions. You might ask him or her to order homework assignments, choose a scratch paper color or propose an activity to do once the homework period is over. When your child feels a degree of autonomy with his or

her schoolwork, he or she is more likely to actively engage in academic activities. Allot one or two activities per homework assignment that highlight your child's strengths. Speak with his or her teacher about minimizing the amount of problems he or she must complete per homework assignment to enhance a feeling of self-accomplishment. Make sure to give your child enough time to think through homework problems; it's helpful if he or she doesn't feel overwhelmed by a time constraint.

Before bed, review the concepts your child has worked on that day. Ask him or her questions about school topics. Explaining concepts aloud may improve your slow learners ability for recollection and articulation. Finally, consider taking your child to lively places where academic skills are used outside the classroom, such as an aquarium or a local university event.

Reassure Your Slow Learner: If you expect that your slow learner will eventually grow out of his academic challenges, your child may feel your lack of acceptance of his or her present condition. It's helpful for your child to feel supported by you, regardless of the pace at which he or she learns. According to Jere Brophy's book *Motivating Students to Learn*, students with high levels of self-confidence learn with greater ease than children who are overwhelmed by anxiety or a fear of failure.

Conclusion

From above discussion we can conclude that slow learner exist in every school, it is responsibility of parents and teacher to recognize them at right time and invest more time and efforts with them. Proper planning and application of scientific methods of teaching can bring slow learners in win to win situation. Teachers must be provided with specialized training which includes theoretical and practical sessions to deal with the problems of slow learners. By collaborative efforts of parents and teachers necessary life skills can be developed among them by uplifting level of their confidence and self esteem. It is possible to draw strong academic performance from slow learners through steady application of practical strategies. Joint efforts of both parents and teachers are important to achieve positive results. Knowledge of what you can do as a parent or teacher to help slow learners enables you to put in your best efforts in the right direction and contribute to the children's success in later years.

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