

# **CLASSROOM STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY**

T. Shawn Sullivan, Ph.D.  
Akron Children's Hospital  
August 19, 2010

# CLASSROOM STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

- Sensory Function
- Attention
- Language and Communication
- Visual-Spatial Function
- Memory
- Processing Speed
- Executive Function
- Social Function
- Behavior
- Physical Concerns

# Sensory Function: Visual

- Corrective lenses
- Lighting
- *Slantboard*
- Markers/guides
- High contrast material
- Optimal font
- Additional time
- Waive copying assignments
- Peer help locating classroom

# Sensory Function: Auditory

- Optimal seating
- Minimize background noise
- Eye contact
- Written with verbal
- Teacher-prepared notes
- Outline of key points

# Attention: General

- Comfortable temperature and lighting
- Minimize distractions
- Seating
- Desk dividers
- Clear desktop
- Study carrel
- Ear plugs – headphones
- Alternate setting for tests
- Reinforce on-task behavior

# Attention: Sustained Attention

- Change in task
- Breaks
- Timing of information presentation
- Instruction on what should be doing
- Signal for attentional drift

# Attention: Selective Attention

- Quiet environment
- Seek attention
- Reinforce information

# Attention: Divided Attention

- Avoid multitasking
- Teacher-prepared notes
- Outline of key points
- Peer note-taker



# Attention: Shifting Attention

- Advance warning of change
- Settling down time
- Timing of information presentation

# Language and Communication: Word Finding

- Sound cues
- Whole word prompts
- *Word bank* for discussion
- Multiple-choice assessment
- *Word bank* for tests

# Language and Communication: Language Organization

- Pro forma for writing
- Headings, bullets, key words for writing

# Language Communication: Language Processing

- Frontload
- Gaps between information
- Time to process verbal information
- Time to respond to verbal questions
- Repeat instructions
- Written and verbal instructions
- Teacher-prepared notes

# Language and Communication: Language Comprehension

- Quiet environment
- Simplify and rephrase
- Reduce information
- Student explains

# Language and Communication: Written Language

- Quiet environment
- Reduce reading
- Highlight
- Outline-comprehension questions
- Questions prior to reading
- Card with *window*
- Skills to extract information
- Summaries
- Reader for tests
- Clarification of test items

# Visual-Spatial Function

- Visible markers
- Safety
- Simplify visual
- Clear, well-spaced text
- Format for important
- Highlight
- Card with *window*
- Pro forma-tables

# Memory

- Written instructions
- Graphic-visual organizers
- Teacher-prepared notes
- Outline of key points
- Preview-Pre-teach
- Meaningful information
- Link information
- Multisensory/experiential or activity-based
- Cluster/chunk



# Memory

- Mnemonic-visualization techniques
- Flow charts-mind mapping techniques
- Repetition
- Practice remembering
- Test study guide
- Multiple-choice tests
- *Word bank*
- Memory aids

# Processing Speed

- More time for response
- Missed information
- Control information volume
- Appropriate targets for work
- Additional time for work
- Additional time for tests

# Executive Function: Planning and Organization

- External aids
- Daily planner-timetable
- Planning assistance
- *To do* list
- Limit steps
- Outline, key points, purpose of task
- Provide first steps
- Visual organizers

# Executive Function: Planning and Organization

- Monitor progress
- Encourage thinking about next step
- Check-in
- Color coding
- Tracking assignments

# Executive Function: Problem-Solving

- Reinforce problem-solving
- Real problems
- Encouraging thinking about alternatives and consequences

# Executive Function: Self-Monitoring

- Traffic light
- Clues from others
- Prompt for inappropriate behavior

# Executive Function: Initiation

- Signal to start
- Steps of task
- Praise any attempt

# Motor Function: Gross Motor

- Time and space for activity
- Adaptive seating
- Protocol for crowded places
- Peer carries books
- Release from class early



# Motor Function: Fine Motor and Graphomotor

- Alternative methods of recording
- Adapted materials
- Grips-larger writing utensils
- Clips-nonslip surface for paper
- *Slantboard*
- Roller-gel pens
- Teacher-prepared notes
- Peer note-taker
- Use of a scribe
- Use of word processor

# Ataxia or Tremor

- Adaptive seating
- Good posture when working
- Sit rather than stand

# Social Function

- Facilitate positive interaction
- Give feedback
- Model appropriate behavior
- *Buddy system*
- *Circle of friends*
- *Friendship stop*

# Behavior

- Expect variable performance
- Keep stimulation low
- Routines
- Timetable for day
- Involve in formulation of classroom rules
- Classroom – *Dos* not *Don'ts*
- Display classroom rules
- Identify desired behavior

# Behavior

- Generous with approval
- Model behavior
- Seat role model nearby
- Establish start and finish of day
- Redirect inappropriate behavior
- Provide choice and control
- Follow directed task with choice task
- Privileges and rewards for acceptable behavior

# Behavior

- Be consistent
- Structure unstructured
- Close proximity when anxious-excitabile
- Be sensitive to change
- Unusual behavior may indicate confusion, frustration, or fatigue
- Signal for emotional support
- Identify person for support
- Teach self-monitoring

# Physical Concerns: Fatigue

- Phased reentry
- Timetable demanding tasks
- Special transport
- Shift classrooms
- Breaks-rest period
- Designate time-place for rest
- Light snacking

# Physical Concerns: Fatigue

- Peer carries books
- Strategy when fatigue obvious
- Reduce demands when needed
- Necessity of homework
- Additional exam time



# Physical Concerns: Headache

- Protocol for medication
- Headache may not be avoidance strategy