

Making “Some” Adjustments

Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners Through Classroom Adaptations

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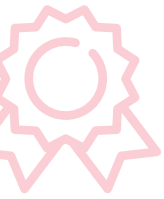
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MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Office of Early Childhood





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ALL Students Proficient and Showing Growth in All Assessed Areas



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EVERY Student Graduates from High School and is Ready for College and Career



3

EVERY Child Has Access to a High-Quality Early Childhood Program

EVERY School Has Effective Teachers and Leaders

4



EVERY Community Effectively Uses a World-Class Data System to Improve Student Outcomes

5



EVERY School and District is Rated “C” or Higher

6



VISION

To create a world-class educational system that gives students the knowledge and skills to be successful in college and the workforce, and to flourish as parents and citizens



MISSION

To provide leadership through the development of policy and accountability systems so that all students are prepared to compete in the global community



Premise

- Children participate in the same community of learners – diverse needs and interests are recognized and addressed.
- Any child has the potential to be a child “at-risk”, depending on the circumstances or the skill involved. High-quality programs provide differentiation for children’s varying needs.



What Does a High-Quality Program Look Like?

A high-quality early childhood program meets the requirements of the *MDE Early Learning Guidelines for Classrooms Serving Three- and Four-Year-Old Children*, including principles of developmentally-appropriate practice based on child development and the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child.



A High-Quality Early Childhood Program has:

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Engaging interactions;

A responsive and predictive environment;

Many opportunities for learning;

Teaching matched to the individual child;

A High-Quality Early Childhood Program has:

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Developmentally-appropriate materials and activities;

Safe and hygienic practices; and

Appropriate levels of guidance.

Teacher Tips

Use a thoughtful process for planning and using adaptations for activities.
Consider:



- Your group of children and the learning experience, activity, or routine to be implemented.
- Goals for this activity. What do you want the children to get from it?
- Appropriate adaptations that will enable the child to participate and learn. Start with the most natural, least intrusive adaptations.
- How the child performs in the activity and adjust as needed.

Consider the interests of each child in your class. By identifying and integrating his or her preferences, such as a favorite song or toy, more participation will result.



- Choices are powerful.
- Ownership creates buy-in.

UDL guidelines can help teachers design flexible lessons to meet the needs of all learners. The principles of UDL provide for multiple means of:

- Engagement,
- Representation, and
- Action and Expression.

<http://ectacenter.org/topics/atech/udl.asp>

MDE UDL Specialist Hope Ratcliff – Frances.Ratcliff@usm.edu



Providing Visual Supports

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Visual supports can include:

- Picture schedules,
- Picture cues for specific activities, and
- Labels for classroom areas and materials.



To meet a variety of needs, labels should include:

- Picture – either drawing or photograph, depending on comprehension level;
- Word(s) in English and other languages spoken by children in the class.



Happy
Feliz



Mad
Enojado(a)



Sad
Triste

Peer Support Can Benefit Every Child

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A child can model how to do an activity or can be paired up to be a helper.

Peers can use praise and encouragement during difficult routines.

Peer helpers learn about differences and acceptance.



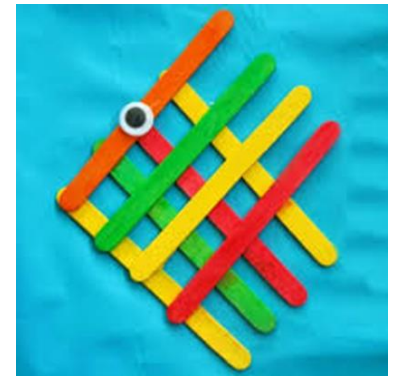
If a child has difficulty turning the pages of a book, simply add popsicle sticks to each page or place raised adhesive dots or self-stick rubber or felt pads in the corner. These adaptations make the pages easier to lift and reading time becomes more independent.



Teach skills within typical activities. Take advantage of the child's interests during free play and routines.

For example, if a child has trouble with counting:

- Help the child count the veggies he is putting in the pot in dramatic play.
- Count the steps it takes to reach the water fountain from your classroom.
- Count popsicle sticks he glued onto his art project.



Adaptations by Classroom Area

Please keep in mind:

- These adaptations are not strictly limited to one area, with many being appropriate to use throughout the classroom.
- Adaptations should only be used as needed and faded when no longer necessary.



Adaptations during Routines

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During arrival, place a picture card in the child's cubby of the first task of the day (ex. Picture of block area).

Provide silly transition cues such as "walk sideways to the bathroom" or "skip to your next center".

Tape construction-paper feet to the ground and over with contact paper to assist with difficulties lining up.

Provide visual cues in addition to auditory cues, such as picture choice cards.

Adaptations during Group Time

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Provide individual carpet squares to encourage children to maintain their personal space during circle time.

Use tangible objects/puppets during circle time to make songs and books more meaningful and interesting.

Use a flannel board with felt pieces that represent the story to help with engagement and comprehension.



Activity

Adaptations in the Writing Center

- Provide writing utensils that vary in size, shape, and color.
- Provide a variety of items to write on, such as manila paper, white paper (lined and unlined), textured papers such as wallpaper samples and card stock, a white board, or a chalk board.
- Allow the children to “write” on a sealed zip-top bag filled with paint or on the table in shaving cream.



- For children with sensory sensitivities, provide a large zip-top bag filled with sand, water, or other items to give them a chance to participate without having to touch the actual items.



Adaptations in the Sand/Water Center

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- Change the item in the sensory table periodically to provide the opportunity for different sensory input.
- For children who perseverate at the sand/water table, provide a timer to limit the amount of time that is spent there.



- Provide a variety of sensory experiences, including things to touch, listen to, and smell.
- Put actual items in the center, when possible, as some children need tangible items to help them develop an understanding of concepts.
- To build connections between an item and its visual and printed representations, pair items with pictures and words.



Adaptations in the Manipulative Center

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- Add Velcro to puzzle pieces and make a Velcro band for the child's hand.
- Glue small blocks to puzzle pieces as handles.
- Provide pipe cleaners for stringing beads.
- Use copy paper box lids for a child's individual workspace.



Adaptations in the Block Center

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- Use or make your own Velcro blocks.
- Provide a non-skid mat for tables.
- Use a tray for children to build blocks so the blocks stay contained.
- Provide blocks in various sizes and weights, including lightweight cardboard blocks.



- Put foam curlers on paintbrushes for easier grasp.
- Use tabletop easels to change angle of view for child.
- Stabilize paper with clothespins or tape.
- Provide easy-to-grasp markers, crayons, and brushes (can add rubber bands if no allergies).
- Provide a marker stand to help keep up with marker tops.
- Provide adapted scissors.



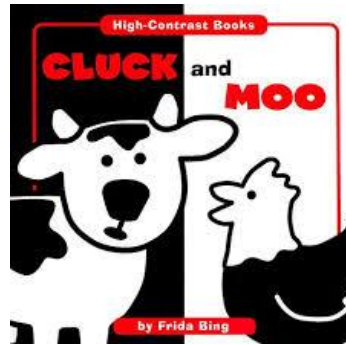
- Provide materials of various textures.
- Use puppets to facilitate language.
- Use Velcro instead of buttons for children who have difficulty fastening clothes.
- Add accessories such as hats, sunglasses, and purses for children who have difficulty with fasteners.



Adaptations in the Library Center

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- Add books with raised pictures and/or high-contrast colors.
- Use headphones and recorded stories.
- Make books with photographs from field trips or pictures parents send from home to spark child's interest.
- Add new books to the center to maintain interest.
- Provide a variety of reading levels.



Adaptations during Outdoor Play

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- Provide alternative items for children who do not participate with gross motor equipment, such as easels and paint, musical instruments, or sidewalk chalk.
- Transport a non-mobile child to the playground in a wagon or riding toy.



Adaptations by Specific Need

Please keep in mind:

- These adaptations are not strictly limited to children with disabilities and may benefit other children as well.
- Children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) may have specific accommodations and/or modifications listed on their IEPs that must be provided. While those items are required, the child may benefit from other adaptations as well.



- Teach children to use a “break” card that can be given to the teacher when the child is feeling overwhelmed or needs to step away briefly.
- Have a “safe place” or “soft zone” in your classroom for children to have a short time of quiet when they need it and teach children how and when to use it.



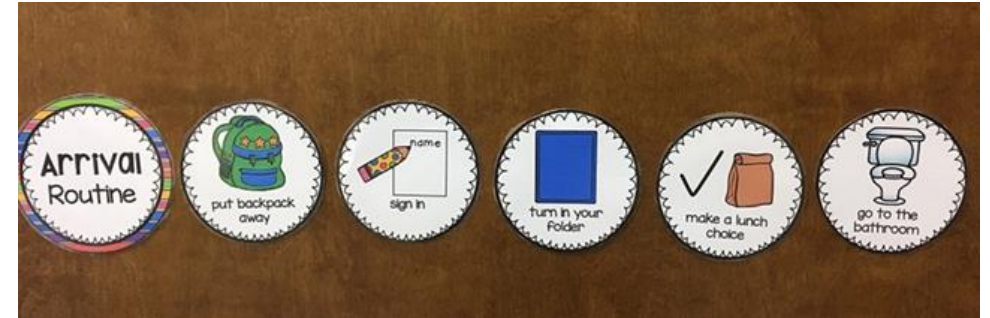
- Ask the child open-ended questions instead of yes or no questions. Rather than asking, “Are you painting?” ask, “What are you doing?”
- Use gestures along with spoken words when giving directions.
- Repeat what the child says so he or she knows that you understand him or her. For instance, if a child says, “want paint”, say “You want to paint.” and then give them the paint.



- Arrange indoor and outdoor play areas so all children using wheelchairs, walkers, or crutches can easily pass through.
- Place materials where they can be reached from any position.
- Provide materials that are easier to grasp and hold (e.g., large cars and trucks, puzzle with knobs, paintbrushes with handles, etc.)



- Establish a consistent routine.
- Verbally review the daily schedule. Provide picture cues as reminders.
- Provide visual cues in addition to auditory cues. For example, create picture choice cards.
- Warn of transitions in advance. Provide visual cues such as a ball for outdoor play or a book for circle time.



- Maintain consistent room arrangement.
- Add tactile cues to anything you would otherwise label with a picture.
- Describe or provide hand-over-hand assistance with tasks requiring a visual model.
- Provide high contrast materials.



- Use total communication (gestures, pictures, demonstration, and verbal language).
- Use sign language (if the child is being instructed in this manner in other settings).
- Teach sign language to peers and other personnel (again, if the child is being instructed in this manner in other settings).
- Teach the other children how to get the child's attention appropriately.



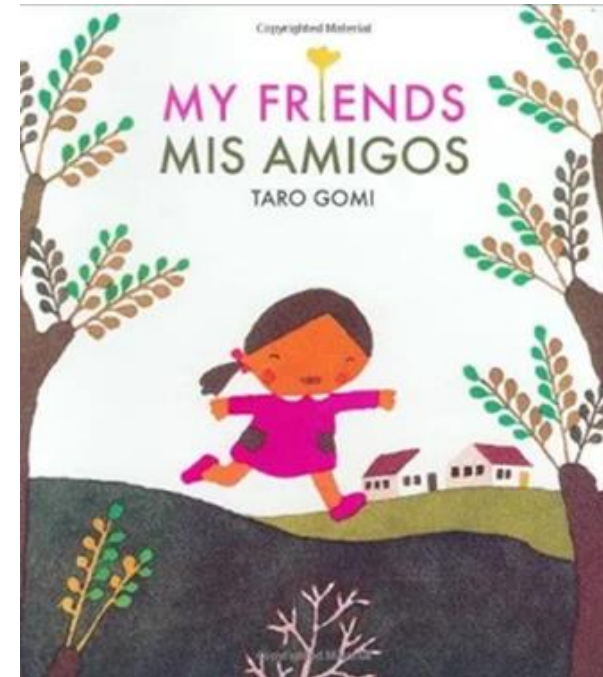
- Be sure to have the child's attention before talking to him or her.
- Use simple, clear language. Directions should be simple, concrete, and carefully defined.
- Avoid long periods of sitting. Children should be actively engaged in learning centers.
- Establish a consistent routine.



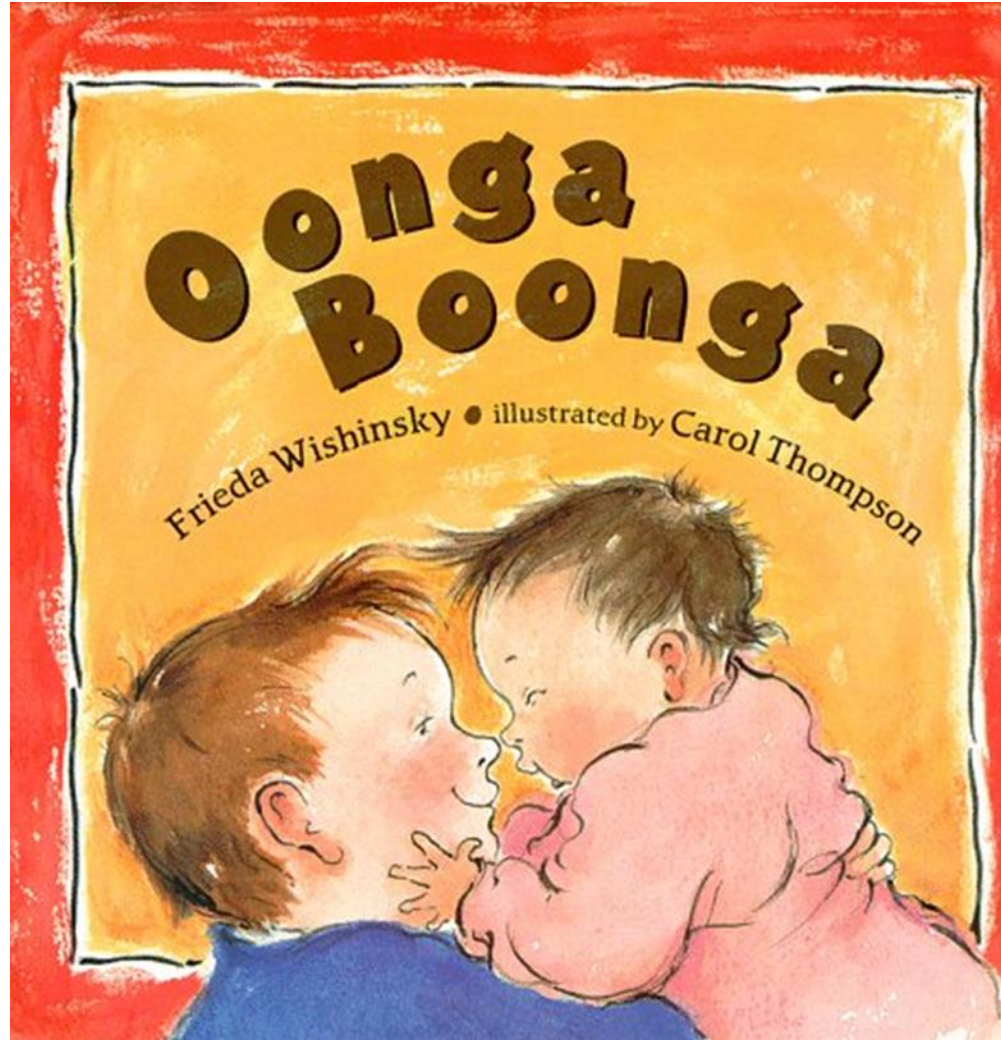
- Use explicit instruction. Show and tell children what to do or think while solving problems (self- and parallel-talk).
- Keep verbal directions simple. Use gestures to help the child understand what is expected.
- Allow the child an extra try (or more) to succeed at a skill, as he/she may need additional repetitions of instruction and practice.
- Increase your wait time when asking questions to give the child more time to process.



- Use both monolingual and bilingual books for the languages of the children in the classroom (including fiction and non-fiction audio books).
- Use music in different languages.
- Try learning 10-20 key words/phrases in the child's home language to help them feel welcome, safe, and comfortable.



Activity



- [*Making Adjustments: Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners Through Classroom Adaptations*](#)
- *Building Blocks for Teaching Preschoolers with Special Needs*
- *Universal Design for Learning: Theory and Practice*
- *Adapting Curriculum and Instruction in Inclusive Early Childhood Settings*
- *High-Leverage Practices in Special Education*
- *Mississippi Early Childhood Inclusion Center - USM*





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