



DCDSB Understanding & Supporting All Learners

What does it mean to Learn More Slowly?

Students who learn more slowly have weaker thinking and reasoning skills than others of the same age. This is not a diagnosis, but rather a description of a learning style. They find it difficult to understand and learn information at the same level as their classmates. It may take them longer to learn the same things, and they may have to work much harder to get the same results as their classmates. They may not be able to understand some information and new material at their grade level, especially if it is complicated. They make slower progress in reading, writing, and math skills. As they get older, the gaps in their learning may get bigger. Many people who learn more slowly may become frustrated and overwhelmed at school. It may be difficult for them to stay interested and motivated in learning. They are at risk for school drop-out, low self-esteem and mental health difficulties. However, people who learn more slowly can still learn at their unique level. They learn best with simple and concrete instructions, many examples, and hands-on/real world learning opportunities. Parents and teachers can help to support them as they become independent adults.

How does learning more slowly impact one's learning and school functioning?

- Slower progress in learning to read, write, and do mathematics
- Difficulties applying what one already knows (e.g., rules, strategies) to new situations and new problems
- Getting easily overwhelmed with long-term or complicated projects (i.e. need help breaking complex tasks down into small steps)

What are helpful learning strategies?

- Teach with simple and related facts instead of broad concepts
- Use direct and simple instruction with many opportunities for repetition and review
- Encourage student to repeat or explain instructions in their own words
- Start new topics by reviewing related topics that your child has learned already
- Use highly structured assignments (e.g., use word banks, fill-in-the-blank activities, true/false and sentence starters)
- Use everyday life events to practice academic skills (e.g., cooking, building, and budgeting)
- Given extra time and frequent breaks
- Break down complicated projects into small, manageable steps
- Set reasonable and small goals; praise when these are achieved

This resource is not intended for diagnostic purposes. It is to be used as a reference for your own understanding and to provide information about the different kinds of difficulties you may encounter in your classroom.

Strategies to help support your child at home

- Consult with school staff, as needed
- Provide a predictable routine, which may include a calendar and/or visual schedule
- Set up a quiet work area away from distractions and clutter
- Keep your language simple and allow your child time to respond
- Encourage your child to repeat or explain your instructions in their own words
- Break complicated ideas and projects into small and manageable steps; work on one step at a time
- Use simple visual and verbal supports (counters, pictures, clocks, and/or written words) to help your child understand and remember information
- Provide many examples of the concept to be learned (e.g., adding two numbers) before moving on to the next concept (e.g., subtracting two numbers)
- Use everyday situations to practice real-life academic skills (e.g., math in cooking recipes, reading in videogames)
- Take turns reading to each other from books you have and online libraries; ask your child to re-tell the stories in his/her own words
- Praise your child for effort
- Try to keep your expectations realistic: focus on one thing at a time, and make small goals
- Provide opportunities for fun activities (e.g., art, Lego, exercise, and board games)
- Stay positive and celebrate your child!

