

Working with Children Who Move, Communicate, Learn or Behave Differently

General Facilitation Tips:

1. **Build a positive relationship** with the child. They will focus better and work harder when they trust and look up to you. Finding time to be silly and fun helps to build this relationship. In a group or class, try to build the strongest relationship with the child who struggles the most!
2. **Build consistency into your class routine.** Have a predictable opening and closing song or routine each week. If a child wanders, have a concrete 'spot' to direct them back to (e.g. a coloured spot or line on the floor, a hula hoop, a pylon with their name on it, etc.)
3. **Try visuals** – children may not be following along for a variety of reasons. They may get distracted easily, not understand the verbal instructions, or not remember the instructions. Either way, visual schedules and visual teaching tools can help!
4. **Count down every transition.** Five minutes, two minutes, one minute, 10, 9, 8, 7... Try focusing on something exciting about the next activity, or give the child a concrete task like helping to hold or carry equipment.
5. **Be proactive to set a positive tone for class behaviour.** Outline the expectations (e.g. that children are expected to be a good friend, a good listener, and have a good attitude.) Consider rewarding all "good" behaviours with a whole group motivation system (e.g. the group can earn tokens or points for every good behaviour, and work towards a group goal. Get creative!).
6. **Provide opportunities for choice whenever possible.** "Do you want to hold the hoop or hold my hands?" "Do you want to use the blue ball or the red ball?" Make sure both options accomplish what you want the child to do (e.g. wait, participate, etc.) but give them some choice or control over how they do it.
7. When giving instructions, **use the child's name, and tell them what you need them to do** (not what to stop doing). "Sally, keep your hands on your knees. Good job." "Jimmy, keep your bum on the chair. Thank you."



8. **Try using helper language** – some kids respond really well when given helper jobs or responsibilities. Try to engage peers as active helpers and “includers”. Instead of cueing the child who struggles, cue their peers to help/show/include them. The peers may just learn to naturally jump in and continue with this role!
9. **Use redirection and distraction** as early intervention strategies to prevent or minimize behaviours.
10. **Catch the good stuff, and tell them what you saw** (reinforcement).
11. **Get help!** Ask other instructors, the parents, or a recreation therapist for ideas or support. You are not alone – lots of people want to see your child be successful, and are willing to help.

**For more information, training or consults please call
KidsAbility and ask for a Recreation Therapist
519-886-8886 or 1-888-372-2259**

