Physical and Health Disabilities

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Physical and Health Disability definition:

There are two types:

Physical Disabilities (Orthopedic Impairments):

Orthopedic impairment means a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term included impairments caused by a congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease and impairments from other causes. (Examples are: poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis, cerebral palsy, amputations, fractures or burns that cause contractures, etc.)

Health Disabilities (other Health impairments):

Other health impairment means having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that –

1. Is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, and sickle cell anemia


General Characteristics of Physical and Health Disabilities:

- paralysis
- altered muscle tone
- sensory disturbance
- unsteady gait
- non-ambulation requiring alternate means of mobility
- loss of, or inability to use one or more limbs
- poor gross/fine and/or oral-motor control
- visual loss
- hearing impairments
- cognitive delay
- pain and fatigue
- breathing loss
- loss of physical control
Strategies teaching students with Physical and Health Disabilities:

1. Provide the student(s) with proper seating and positioning to best benefit them individually.
2. Low tech devices can come in handy such as, pencil grips, adaptive scissors, and slant boards, lap tray, or table to accommodate books, writing materials, keyboards, etc.
3. Allowing in class writing assignments to be completed out of class with the use of a scribe or other appropriate aid.
4. Allow the students to test in different rooms, providing them extended times and read simplified instructions.
5. Be aware of the handicap accessible tools such as ramps, automated doors, elevators, etc. (especially in case of an emergency exit)
6. Set up a buddy system for student with a disability for help maneuvering around the school and between classes.
7. If appropriate, allow the student to leave the class early to ensure making it to their next class safely and without stress.
8. Allowing the student an extra set of books (or eBooks) so that the student can work and study at home without having to carry a large load.
9. Allowing the student to leave specific materials in your classroom, in a safe place, so they don't have to carry an unnecessary load.
10. In your classroom, keep the room organized and with low visual clutter. Make sure that your lighting is appropriate and not too dim.
11. Keep a protein and sugar foods or drinks in case a student is having blood sugar level issues or, if not allowed, let the student bring snacks into the classroom. (Ex: fruit snacks, crackers, juice, etc.)
12. Be lenient and understanding to students sudden outbursts based on individual needs or disability. (Ex: leaving classroom, shaking, wheezing, eating, etc.)
13. Try to keep the students in low stress situations and have a plan with that student incase low stress level is not achieved. (Ex: sitting in the hallway to work)
14. Have a phone nearby in case of emergency. (Ex: in case of epileptic seizure, server asthma attack, server diabetic shock, etc.)
15. Report to the parents if the student has any issues during the day.
Websites:

http://frank.mtsu.edu/~pvpaa/ada/physical.pdf

This website is a great for accessing ways that teachers may assist their students with Physical Disabilities in and out of the classroom and everywhere in between. It includes ideas and strategies such as providing students with partners to assist them to or from classes, allowing them to use low technological devices such as tape recorders in class, and extending deadlines of assignments that are to be done outside of class.

http://www.nsnet.org/start/physical.pdf

This website link provides teachers with ways to meet the individual needs of their students with physical and health disabilities. It provides teachers with an explanation and characteristics of students with these disabilities so they are aware of them within their classroom. It stresses the significant assistance that technology provides to these students needs and gives examples of these devices for proper use; for example, how to seat students in the classroom, how to assist them with accessing computers, and even general strategies for day to day teaching.

http://education.gsu.edu/physicaldis/classmod.pdf

This checklist is an in depth tool to help teachers evaluate the needs of their students. It lists the modifications and accommodations that would meet the individual needs of students with physical and health disabilities allowing the teacher to know the students' essentials.

http://classroom.kidshealth.org/

This website is a great source for teachers to find information about physical and health disabilities and how to help them in the classroom setting. They have separated tips for children and for teenagers. You can also search for individual disabilities and the website provides grade specific tips for that disability. This website is produced my Nemours, which is a children’s health foundation.


This is an abundant website over all, with all sorts of teacher information. This link goes straight to their area for disabilities where they provide links to helpful articles. These articles are written by other educators (the article information is always posted at the top in case you want to research them.) and they are full of helpful tips and specific information and strategies.
Conclusion:

When teaching students with physical and health disabilities, the most important thing is to know the student’s individual needs. There are many different physical and health issues and they are all unique. When making accommodations to these students, a major factor is accessibility within the classroom. The student with physical needs require extra technology and tools for assistance than general education students. Students with health disabilities require attention along the lines of medication, accessibility to food, and low stress environments. When teaching one of these students, the teacher must be flexible according to the needs and unexpected events of the student. Relationships with the student’s parents, school nurse, previous teachers, and other current teachers will be important when working with these children in the best and most helpful settings. It is important to remember that many physical or health disabilities can affect their academic performance and require special assistance to excel to their highest potential.