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# Teaching Students with Severe Multiple Disabilities

• Work with and consult with your school nurse, therapists & specialists every time you see them – keep a list of questions.

• When possible, use age-appropriate materials that are of interest to the student.

• Use a variety of materials within routines & sequences.

• Plan for extra time & attention for the student

**Medical Needs -** Students are frequently medically fragile. Consult with school nurse.

• Have health care plan immediately available. Have nurse update plan as needed & review it at each IEP meeting.

• Document each medical procedure, each seizure, etc.

• Have school nurse train you & all paras to care for student medical needs, so when one staff is absent, others can step in – seizures, g-tube feedings, catheterizations, meds, etc. ALWAYS follow school & district policy.

• Sanitize materials daily or provide student with his own set of materials.

• Never recommend medication, a medical procedure, or a Dr. visit; consult your district policy about legal liability. Work with your school nurse.

• Spitting up & diarrhea – due to medical conditions, some students spit up or have diarrhea many times daily. Have nurse consult with parents & Dr. about including this in the student's health care plan so the student doesn't have to be sent home every time it happens.

**Circle Time**

• Song props

• Communication Switches

**Tactile or Object Daily Schedule**

• Use objects the student will use when he gets to the activity or therapy

• Real objects are better than miniatures; ei a real spoon rather than a piece of plastic food

**Feeding** – consult with parent, nurse, OT & sp therapist as needed

• Have nurse include chewing, sucking, swallowing in health care plan as needed

• Better to err on the side of caution than to have the student choke

**Gross Motor** – consult with PT

• Always on a mat

• Standers daily (or at frequency recommended by PT) even when the student cries or screams

• Positioning

• Side-liers

• Special Seating

**Fine Motor** – consult with OT

• Purchased switch toys

• Home-made switch toys

• Put in / Release

**Sensory Activities**

• Touch

• Light & sound

• Create your own "sensory room" in a corner of your classroom

**Vision** – consult with vision specialist

• Teach students to use the vision they have

• Red & yellow

• Black background

• Large

**Communication** – consult with speech therapist

• Choices empower students

• Choose between 2 toys

• Refusing is making a choice

• Communication switches

Dr. Whited is now in her 35th year of teaching students with severe disabilities. She currently teaches students with severe multiple disabilities at Horizon School (Alpine School District) in Saratoga Springs, UT.