D-ESL

Adaptation of learning content for students with SLDs

Educational Needs and Adaptations for students with SLDs

Set achievable goals and track progress

Introduction

Students have to accomplish all sorts of tasks during their learning journey. These tasks always serve a wider goal, but that goal may sometimes seem unclear and abstract to them. **Not having clear goals in mind, however, can be very detrimental to learning**, especially for students that already have some difficulties with the course. Solutions to set clear, achievable goals and tasks, from which progress can be highlighted, must be explored.

The need behind this adaptation

Because of the challenges **students with SLDs** go through every day, they have reasons to be discouraged and they **may feel that their efforts are not paying off**. In those conditions, students with SLDs may be subject to the "Matthew effect", meaning that students who fall behind are likely to stay behind if nothing is done. Fortunately, **solutions do exist**! Such

solutions include the SMART goals methodology, which allows the students to be more involved and focused on their progress.

What is this adaptation all about?

SMART Goals

Setting "SMART goals" simply involves following a specific methodology to decide what goals to achieve, which should be sensible and non-abstract. For instance, "succeeding in my school year", though being a positive goal, is not a SMART goal, because it is too vague and leaves no hint as to how to achieve it.

SMART stands for:

- **S**pecific (simple and sensible).
- **M**easurable (meaningful and motivating).
- **A**chievable: chunk complex goals into manageable ones
- **R**elevant (reasonable, realistic, results-based).
- **T**ime-based (realistic deadline)

You should try to write the goals in a way that describes well what is expected of the students, how they will be assessed, how much time it should take them and what is the deadline.

Your students with SLDs should be helped to get free from the vicious circle of comparing themselves to others all the time. They should be **made aware of their own progress instead**. Assisting them in setting SMART goals may greatly help achieve that purpose. Additionally, involving students in setting their SMART goals empowers them, they are likely to feel more engaged and to reflect on the steps achieved. SMART goals also have the advantage of **providing time boundaries** (students with SLDs often struggle with time management) and a clear organisation with **small, achievable tasks** they can focus on.

Video games can be considered good examples of the application of the SMART methodology. Indeed, video games usually set clear, manageable goals, providing a clear roadmap of the tasks to achieve. Each end goal is usually chunked into smaller, manageable tasks and players get regular rewards along the way that clearly show their progress.

The importance of feedback and progress monitoring

Setting SMART goals is great, but it is only when using their outcomes as indicators of progress that they really reach their potential. **Progress monitoring turns out to be just as important as setting reachable goals**. Students need to receive feedback on their achievements and be made aware of their progress. An entire practice sheet "Assessment and feedback" is devoted to the topic, make sure to have a look.

Planification tools and games

To help them, students can use classical planification and organisation methods (calendars, to-do lists, notebooks, timers …).

However, they may want to go for **gamified planification applications** instead, as they can prove to be **more stimulating and motivating**. Such apps provide the functionalities of other productivity applications and also incorporate game-inspired mechanisms that reward progress. You can learn more about gamified planification apps in the practice sheet "Gamified platforms for planification and for language learning".

Conclusion

Learning rhymes with progressing, from one state of knowledge and skills to the next level by accomplishing tasks of various nature (study, homework, practice, etc.). The **SMART framework** is a great tool to make sure that the goals that are pursued are sensible and that those goals are phrased in a clear way. Using this methodology **may help students to be aware of their progress and motivate them** to learn more, especially when accompanied by the proper tools, such as gamified planification applications, for instance.

Resources and references

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Co-funded by the European Union

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