

Disability etiquette

Here are some tips on how you can best help your students with intellectual disabilities.



Most importantly: presume competence

Presuming competence means you believe that the student in question has the potential to develop their thinking, learning, and understanding - just like any student without a disability can!

Judgments about students' competence directly influence the sense of belonging students feel within the classroom. The impact of this influences their experience at UVU, and beyond.



Use the zone of proximal development

The goal of all education is to help someone to gain competence in an area where they didn't. The zone of proximal development describes how we best learn in the goldilocks zone of challenge. Too easy and you learn nothing, too hard and you don't understand what's going on. Try and understand where your student is doing well and where they are struggling and plan accordingly



If you have met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism!

This phrase recognizes that autistic individuals are diverse in their expression and personality. This holds true for other mental disorders. Don't be surprised if what worked for one student does not work for another even if they share the same diagnosis.



Accommodations

Faculty who receive an accommodation letter from Accessibility Services are responsible to provide the listed accommodations in a timely manner. Providing the accommodations listed are legally required, not optional. Accommodations are just as important to comply with as FERPA.



Tips on presuming competence

- Ask before you provide assistance
- Communicate: find out what form of communication your student responds best to (written vs. verbal, email vs. canvas) and use that one.
- Use the disability terms the student prefers. Some students may identify strongly with their disability and prefer "Identify-first" terms, like "disabled" or "autistic". Others may prefer "person-first" language, like "student with a disability", or "student with autism". When in doubt, ask the individual! A good practice is to use the same words back that a student uses to refer to themselves.

Don't out them: If your student wants others to know that they are disabled, they will let others know on their own terms. Don't take that decision away from them by outing them.

for more information, contact
Morgan Jacobs, Program Director
Morgan.jacobs@uvu.edu
801-863-5517