

Remedial Teaching for the English Language

Remedial Teaching is also known as developmental education, basic skills education, compensatory education, preparatory education, and academic upgrading. It is generally assigned to help the students in order to achieve expected competencies in core academic skills such as literacy and numeracy.

Whereas special education is designed specifically for students with special needs, remedial education can be designed for any students, with or without special needs. For example, even people of high intelligence can be under-prepared if their education was disrupted, for example, by internal displacement during civil disorder or a war.

Aim of Remedial Teaching:

The objective of remedial teaching is to give additional help to pupils who, for one reason or another, have fallen behind the rest of the class in the subjects of Chinese, English, Mathematics, etc. Children with learning difficulties have the same psychological needs and characteristics of other children. Some may have poor memory, poor level of motivation, the short span of attention in work situations or associated behavioural problems. Therefore, the ultimate aim of remedial teaching is to help pupils who have fallen behind to learn to the best of their ability and to bring them back into the mainstream classes as far as possible.

Principles of Helping Pupils with Learning Difficulties:

Teaching preparation:

Before preparing for their lessons, remedial teachers should identify pupils' diverse learning needs as soon as possible so that they may design appropriate teaching plans to facilitate pupils' effective learning.

Devise various learning activities:

Since pupils have different characteristics in learning, teachers must devise different learning activities with the same teaching objective to develop pupils' varied abilities and skills in problem-solving. It is more effective for teachers to adopt a series of relevant and simple teaching activities than assigning one long teaching activity since pupils may acquire the required knowledge and skills through diversified activities.

Design meaningful learning situations:

Remedial teachers should specifically design meaningful learning situations, language environments (especially for English subject), games or activities so as to provide personal learning experiences for pupils and stimulate their interest and initiative in learning.

Teaching approaches:

Teachers should give concrete examples before proceeding to abstract concepts by way of simple and easy steps at a pace in line with the learning abilities of students. Teachers should encourage pupils' active participation by more frequent use of teaching aids, games and activities.

Provide clear instructions:

Pupils with learning difficulties are less competent in understanding written language. Therefore, remedial teachers should give pupils short and clear instructions to avoid confusion.

Summarize the main points:

Teachers can guide their pupils to link up the knowledge they learn from class with their life experiences so as to enhance the effectiveness of learning. Besides, guiding pupils to repeat the main points in verbal or written form is also an effective way of learning.

Enhance learning interest and motivation:

It is most important to help pupils overcome their learning difficulties so that they may gain a sense of achievement and recover their confidence and interest in learning.

Encourage pupils' active participation in in-class activities:

Remedial teachers should patiently encourage active participation in class. Pleasurable learning experiences may help enhance pupils' interest in learning.

Focus on the learning process:

Teaching should not only focus on the transmission of knowledge. It is also important to see that pupils are benefited from the entire learning process. Teachers should provide ample opportunities in class for pupils to practice and think about what they have learnt, and allow them to solve problems by different means.

Show concern for the performances of individual pupils:

Pupils may encounter different problems in their studies, therefore, teachers should carefully observe the learning process of individual pupils in the class. Whenever necessary, they should provide individualized remedial teaching before and after class, during recess or lunchtime, so that they can remove their learning obstacles as soon as possible.

Curriculum Adaptation:

- Facilitators should adapt the curriculum to accommodate the learning characteristics and abilities of pupils.
- Facilitators should set some teaching objectives which are easy to achieve to ensure that pupils may acquire the knowledge as desired after the completion of each module.
- Teaching should not be directed by textbooks which should not be taken as the school curriculum.
- Schools can classify the teaching content into core and non-core learning aspects according to the teaching objectives and pupils abilities.
- Core learning aspects require in-depth studies and application whereas materials in the non-core or advanced learning aspects may be streamlined or appropriately selected for teaching.
- Teachers are encouraged to adopt recommendations on cross-curricular teaching by linking up related teaching areas flexibly so that more time can be spared for effective activities and learning.
- Teachers should make good use of all teaching materials. For example, they may select and use the materials in textbooks to meet the teaching objectives, or compile their own supplementary teaching materials.

Remedial Teaching Strategies:

Individualized Educational Program (IEP):

Geared to the learning needs of individual pupils, the Individualized Educational Program aims to reinforce the foundation of learning, help pupils overcome their learning difficulties and develop their potentials. Individualized Educational Program should include short-term and long-term teaching objectives, learning steps, activities and reviews to ensure that the program is implemented effectively.

Peer Support Program:

Peer support program helps pupils reinforce their knowledge, and develop their communication and cooperation skills as well as good interpersonal relationship. To enhance the effectiveness of the program, remedial teachers must provide training to the pupils concerned beforehand and make regular reviews on its effectiveness.

Reward Scheme:

The reward scheme has a positive effect on enhancing pupils' motivation. It aims at guiding pupils to set their own objectives and plans, and positively reinforcing their good performance.

Handling pupils' behaviour problems:

Remedial teachers should observe the following when dealing with the behaviour problems of pupils:

- Always observe the performance of pupils in class and their behaviour in groups.
- Establish a close relationship with pupils, develop mutual trust and listen carefully to what they say.
- help pupils understand the effect of their behaviour on the other as well as their own selves.
- help pupils build up self-confidence and a healthy self-image.
- give positive reinforcement to pupils' good behaviour, and do not pay undue attention to their misbehaviour.

Development of Generic Skills:

Remedial teachers should help pupils develop good learning habits and attitudes, such as complete the assignments tidily, keep their promise and be responsible and disciplined. A constructive attitude is a foundation for life-long self-learning and it helps enhance pupils' learning effectiveness.

Pupils should be helped to master basic self-learning skills and abilities. For example, teachers may teach them how to set appropriate learning objectives and priorities, time management, note-taking, reading skills and examination taking skills, etc.

Pupils can be taught to solve problems by different methods, tools or by drawing insight from their past experiences. For example, teachers can teach them the use of dictionaries, as well as the skills of seeking and handling information obtained from the school and public libraries. These are ways to develop students' flexibility, creativity, and independent thinking.

Teachers should train pupils to establish a good interpersonal relationship so as to facilitate effective communication and collaboration as well as to enhance the team spirit of students.