**Characteristics of Slow Learner**

A website called ‘Helping slow learners’ (www. foundationosa.org/slow.htm) lists ten characteristics of a slow learner:

1. Functions at ability but significantly below grade level.
2. Is prone to immature interpersonal relationships.
3. Has difficulty following multi-step directions.
4. Lives in the present and does not have long range goals.
5. Have few internal strategies (i.e. organizational skills, difficulty transferring, and generalizing information.)
6. Scores consistently low on achievement tests.
7. Works well with "hands-on" material (i.e. labs, manipulative, activities.)
8. Has a poor self-image.
9. Works on all tasks slowly.
10. Masters skills slowly; some skills may not be mastered at all.

 This list highlights issues which teachers can attend to in identifying slow learners. Various tools need to be used in collecting data about these issues. These can be teacher-made or commercially produced, and include tests, checklists, and rating scales. Also, as Genesee & Upshur (1996: 77) note, “observation is basic to assessing human skills and behaviours”, and thus is a useful strategy in identifying behavioural problems. In addition, much useful information can be obtained from interviewing parents, teachers, classmates, and the students themselves.

 Lescano (1995) comments specifically on the characteristics of slow language

learners. He suggests that “their weakest skills are generally writing and reading. That is why, for example, hyperactive or attention-deficit students tend to disturb the class and misbehave whenever these skills are emphasized”. He adds that:

 “Many slow learners show difficulties in perception. They tend to

 ignore details and go for overall comprehension and production. They do

 not notice, for instance, the apostrophe or the plural forms when reading.

 In the same way, some may omit forms of speech when writing or speaking.”

**Major Characteristics of Slow Learner**

**1. Developmental**
 May have immature language patterns or speech problems.

**2. Social**
 Poor judgement, immature social behaviour, prefers company of younger children.

**3. Personal**
 Frustration, aggression, anxiety.

**4. Academic**
 May show proficiency with particular tasks rather than a subject areas, poor memory,

 difficulties understanding several steps in a task.

**5. Learning** Needs to have new information linked to old, difficulties transferring information learned in

one situation to other situations.

**An excerpts from Alan Hasktivz, (Helping your slow learning child) Characteristics of Slow Learners**
In general, slow learning students may display some or all of these characteristics, depending on their age and degree of problems acquiring knowledge at school.

* Slow learners are frequently immature in their relations with others and do poorly in school.
* They cannot do complex problems and work very slowly.
* They lose track of time and have difficulty transferring what they have learned from one task to another well.
* They do not easily master skills that are academic in nature, such as the times tables or spelling rules.
* Perhaps the most frustrating trait is their inability to have long-term goals.
* They live in the present and have significant problems with time management.
* They often have a short attention span and poor concentration skills.

 Slow learners differ from reluctant learners. A slow learner initially wants to learn, but has a problem with the process. A reluctant learner is not motivated and can also be passive aggressive, creating more problems for teachers and parents through non-cooperation. Reluctant learners seldom have learning disabilities.

**Examples of interventions for slow learners**

**Environment:** Reduce distractions, change seating to promote attentiveness, have a peer student teacher, and allow more breaks.

**Assignments:** Make them shorter and with more variation, repeat work in various forms, have a contract, give more hands-on work, or have assignments copied by student, have students.

**Assessment:** Use shorter tests, oral testing, redoing tests, short feedback times, don’t make students compete.

**What to avoid:** Avoid classroom activities that isolate the student and place him or her in a no-win situation. Also avoid lengthy assignments or activities that don’t provide opportunities to demonstrate mastery.

Proven ideas to help slow learners (Tips for Parents)

* Provide a quiet place to work, where the child can be easily observed and motivated.
* Keep homework sessions short.
* Provide activity times before and during homework.
* Add a variety of tasks to the learning even if not assigned, such as painting a picture of a reading assignment.
* Allow for success.
* Ask questions about the assignment while the child is working.
* Go over the homework before bed and before school.
* Teach how to use a calendar to keep track of assignments.
* Read to the child.
* Use the (Three Transfer) form of learning, in which the student must take information and do three things with it besides reading. For example, read it, explain it to someone else, draw a picture of it, and take notes on it.
* Be patient but consistent.
* Do not reward unfinished tasks.



