

Meeting the needs of INTROVERTED LEARNERS

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1) PROVIDE EXTRA TIME TO THINK

- Allow students to think before asking them to share with the class or contribute to a group.
- Introverts tend to rely more on long-term memory so retrieving information can take longer.
- Introverts' brains often process stimuli more deeply.

2) BALANCE GROUP WORK WITH INDIVIDUAL TASKS

- Introverts gain energy from solitude. Time alone is essential for recharging, creativity, and deep thinking.
- Being alone allows introverts to engage their prefrontal cortex — the part of the brain tied to abstract thinking, planning, and reflection — without being distracted or overstimulated.

3) RECOGNIZE THE ROLE OF ANXIETY

- Anxiety affects verbal expression. Stress can impair memory and concentration, adding another challenge when introverts are expected to speak.
- Allowing students to prepare, and giving them a heads up that they are going to share, alleviates anxiety.

4) UNDERSTAND THE INFLUENCE OF AGE AND DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE

- David Yeager explains that between the ages of 10 and 25, young people care deeply about status and respect, which means they are very sensitive to how others perceive them. This heightened concern for social evaluation can affect their motivation, behavior, and willingness to engage in learning. This sensitivity may be heightened for introverted learners.
- Students this age are wondering, am I good enough? Where do I fit in? What will they think of me? This is why being asked to speak in front of their peers can seem so daunting.

5) VALUE LISTENING

- Introverts often prefer listening over speaking. They often feel more comfortable taking in information than responding quickly in conversations.

6) ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO COMMUNICATE AND PARTICIPATE IN A VARIETY OF WAYS

- Set up the learning environment so that introverts have a chance to show their thinking in different ways, not just by speaking.
- Examples: Written reflections, sticky notes, drawing, exit slips, vertical whiteboards, graffiti walls, mind maps, gallery walks
- Thinking quietly or sharing differently is just as valid as being outspoken.
- For some people, writing is easier than speaking.

7) CREATE A CALM ENVIRONMENT, QUIET TIMES, AND AVOID OVERSTIMULATION

- Design the day so there are quiet times for introverts to process, decompress, and connect with their inner world.
- Introverts are more sensitive to dopamine – too much stimulation can feel overwhelming, while acetylcholine (released during focus and calm) suits them better.
- Be mindful of noise and sensory overload.

Resources

“10 to 25: The Science of Motivating Young People,” By David Yeager

“The Introvert Advantage,” By Dr. Marti Olsen Laney