

FASD: Questions and Answers

By Marilyn Macdonald



Marilyn Macdonald is a Registered Psychologist who has worked in education for over 25 years in a variety of settings. Marilyn serves as the consultant on the board of directors of the FASD Support Network of SK. She is currently working as a school psychologist with the Saskatoon Public Schools. She is available to discuss educational issues or concerns. Thank you Marilyn for your response to the following question.

Q. After a diagnosis of FASD, what do I tell my child's teacher?

▲ Depending on the age of the child and previous school experiences, parents have valuable information that educators require to formulate appropriate programming and behavioral strategies that will ensure your child's progress—both academically and socially.

Contact the teacher to meet about your child. Be prepared to talk about and share information—about your child's health, i.e. allergies, sensitivities (textures, sounds, etc.), physical limitations, strengths, likes/dislikes, rewards that “work”, best ways to calm or alleviate frustration, and ways that you can support your child's learning at home. Ensure that the teacher is familiar with the characteristics and educational implications of FASD. You are the expert when it comes to your child—share your expertise.

It is crucial to establish a good working relationship with your child's teacher, the resource teacher, the school Principal as well as your

child's teacher assistant, if they have one. Children with FASD often have an individualized personal program plan established to meet their special learning needs and to address their behavioral/social issues. As a parent, you will be asked to review and contribute to this learning plan at least twice annually in most schools. Parental suggestions and input should be ongoing; don't wait for the program meetings if things are not working for your child.

Remember to report to the school any changes or inconsistencies that may upset your child's routine. Family changes (health problems, moving to a different residence, or a new baby) will precipitate behavior changes in the child with FASD. Extra patience and understanding will be necessary to accommodate for reactions to those changes.

Teachers should be aware of the need for extra supervision required for your child. Clear and specific directions are helpful with visual support (gestures, pictures, role play) to ensure understanding. Opportunities for relevant, hands-on learning with repetition and consistent routine is necessary for your child in order to gain learning through various modalities and help with memory retention.

Redirection of behaviours and changing the environment to accommodate your child's needs are ways to deal with behavioural issues. For example, anticipating this student will react negatively to a noisy assembly or unstructured time may require that he or she have a choice to leave when feeling “overloaded” or to be provided with extra supervision. Reduce clutter in the school environment

to lessen the possibility of sensory overload. Do one thing at a time, allow time to clear away papers and other materials, and to take out the new work. Children with FASD need an allotted time to organize their desk and locker area.

Increase the “wait-response” time for children with FASD. They may need some extra time to process the vocabulary words, the sequence of instructions, and to do the action required. Remember, these children have a degree of brain injury and require more time to respond. Patience, consistency, knowledge about FASD, and knowing the child as an individual are keys to successful adjustment at school.

Above all, it is necessary for teachers and parents to collaborate and set up consistent strategies and routines that are realistic and “do-able” at school and home. There should be welcome and goodbye routines and ways to organize for “easy” transitions to home and school. Adherence to these routines will help everyone – especially the child with FASD – in order to know what to expect and be familiar with the way things are done.



Download a free resource in PDF format, [Let's Talk FASD](#). This book provides an overview of successful parenting approaches with “real” parent comments.

See the review on page 5.

Disclaimer: *Living with FASD* offers this question and answer column as general information. It is not intended as a substitute for professional advice on medical, behavioural, educational, or legal matters specific to your situation. If you have a question, concerns, or would like more information on this topic, contact the Network office. See contact information on page 12.