

Observation Checklist

Identifying Learning Struggles

“A problem well stated is a problem half-solved.” --Charles Kettering

Before we can effectively help a struggling or underperforming learner, it is essential to get to the “why” or root cause of the child’s difficulty. Use this checklist to identify what might be holding the student back. Once you have a good sense of the underlying reason, you can find efficient and effective strategies to begin supporting the student in your Mindprint Toolbox.

Realistically, not all difficulties can be identified and understood by observation alone, but this checklist can help you begin to focus on the most likely areas of concern. Any one of these difficulties can cause a child to “shut down.” Conversely, addressing the problem can make a world of difference.

Executive Functions

- Does she have trouble staying focused? Does she need more breaks? (*attention*)
- Is her work inconsistent? (*attention*)
- Does he have trouble following directions or solving multi-step problems? (*working memory*)
- Does she have difficulty planning? Organizing? (*attention, working memory*)
- Is he uncomfortable making mistakes? (*flexible thinking*)
- Is she uncomfortable with uncertainty? Transitions? (*flexible thinking*)

Reasoning

- Does she understand more easily with visuals or with words? (*abstract vs verbal reasoning*)
- Does she have gaps in content knowledge? (*reasoning, memory, attention*)
- Does he get easily frustrated when he sees challenging problems? (*flexible thinking*)

Memory

- Does he learn easily but still has difficulty on tests? (*memory*)
- Does she seem to freeze on tests? (*memory*)
- Does he seem to remember words more easily than pictures or vice versa? (*verbal vs visual memory*)

Speed

- Does he have difficulty finishing tests or assignments? (*processing speed*)
- Does written work take her more time? (*visual motor speed, dysgraphia*)
- When he finishes on time is his work inconsistent? (*processing speed*)
- Does she hesitate to answer in class discussions? (*processing speed, expressive language*)

Social-emotional

- Does he work well independently but have difficulties on group assignments? (*collaboration*)
- Is she struggling with social issues? (*social*)
- Does he often seem sad or quiet? (*emotional*)
- Does she lack an interest in learning across subjects? (*emotional*)

