Positive Choices
Drug and Alcohol Information
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Introducing Learning with FASD: Evidence-based resources on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder for teaching and support staff

Introducing Learning with FASD

Researchers at the University of Sydney's Matilda Centre, in collaboration with leading experts and Australian educators, have launchedLearning with FASD to assist teaching and support staff to understand and support children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). The development of Learning with FASD was funded by the Australian Government Department of Health.

What is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a term used to describe the lifelong neurodevelopmental, physical, psychological, and behavioural impairments caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol. It is estimated that FASD affects between 2% and 5% of the general population, meaning as many as 15,000 babies could be born with FASD in Australia each year. To put this in perspective, this is more than the number of babies born with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down's Syndrome, Spina Bifida or Cerebral Palsy.

Watch the below video to learn more about FASD:

How does FASD affect learning and behaviour?

Children affected by FASD may learn and behave differently to neurotypical children due to the impact of prenatal alcohol exposure. Like everyone, each child with FASD will have their own strengths and challenges, however all are likely to have severe difficulty in at least three of the below neurodevelopmental domains:

- Academic achievement
- Language
- Attention
- Adaptive behaviour, social skills, or social communication
- Memory
- Emotion regulation
- Cognition
- Motor skills
- Executive function
- Brain structure/neurology

It's important to remember that FASD is primarily a brain-based disorder - the focus should be on understanding that a child's performance is based on brain injury, not deliberate misbehaviour.

For more detailed information on how FASD presents in the school environment, check out the resource:Understanding FASD in a school environment.

How can educators help?

Early diagnosis and appropriate intervention can greatly reduce the risk of difficulties associated with FASD, such as a disrupted education, mental ill-health, contact with the justice system and harmful substance use. However, in Australian FASD is under-recognised and often goes undiagnosed. Teaching and support staff can play a vital role in recognising neurodevelopmental concerns, connecting families and health services, and implementing strategies in schools to ensure children with FASD are supported in their ongoing education.

Learning with FASD

Learning with FASD provides evidence-based tools and resources that assist educators to understand and support children with FASD in Australian schools. The website saves educators much needed time by housing nineteen tools and resources all in one place, including factsheets, videos, guides, webinars, quizzes, and externally developed resources. The resources were developed with the primary school setting in mind, however, the strategies and information on Learning with FASD are applicable to students in a secondary context, particularly as children with FASD often experience developmental dysmaturity. Visit Learning with FASD to access a selection of resources covering the following topics:

1. **Understanding FASD:** Resources to help educators understand FASD and its impact on learning and behaviour.
2. **Classroom strategies**: Short-format resources containing evidence-based strategies that teaching and support staff can implement in the classroom to support a child with FASD in their ongoing learning.
3. **Family engagement**: Resources providing guidance for educators on sensitively and effectively communicating and engaging with parents, caregivers, and families of children with FASD.

Visit the Learning with FASD website to learn how teaching and support staff can ensure children with FASD are supported in their ongoing education.

There are also lots of ways to connect. You can:

- Follow *Learning with FASD* on Twitter @LearningwFASD and Facebook @LearningwithFASD
- Sign up to their newsletter to receive updates
- Contact the *Learning with FASD* team at info@learningwithfasd.org.au

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