



ATTUNING A STUDENT HANDBOOK

A Guide to the Attuning a Student Process



All Kinds of Minds®

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OVERVIEW OF THE ATTUNING A STUDENT PROCESS

Attuning a Student is a comprehensive process that strengthens educators' abilities to reach young minds—especially those who are struggling to learn—in a meaningful and lasting way. The words “attuned” and “attuning” are intended to convey a commitment among all of the players—students, educators, and parents—to be aware of and address the wide range of neurodevelopmental and academic strengths and concerns possessed by students.

The process of Attuning a Student provides tools and methods to help teachers, students, and their parents understand how students' neurodevelopmental differences can affect their learning, particularly in school. These tools and methods empower teachers to be careful observers, accurately and richly describing students' strengths and concerns rather than relying on diagnostic labels. The process also considers students' personal accounts of their experiences as learners and acknowledges the value of parents' observations and impressions of their children's learning. These multiple perspectives enable teachers to search for recurring themes that can provide insight into students' struggles and successes.

Students, their parents, and educators are collaborators both in gathering information about students' learning and in planning to manage their school experiences to maximize success and minimize failure. This collaboration forges a sense of alliance and breeds optimism about the future. Together, through the process of “demystification,” these team members share an understanding of the underlying neurodevelopmental functions that may be affecting a student's learning, both positively and negatively. This understanding enables them to shed preconceptions, and even misconceptions, about the student as a learner and to plan for and implement strategies that address her strengths and weaknesses to improve her learning.

ATTUNING A STUDENT – THE SEVEN STAGES AT A GLANCE

Attuning a Student consists of seven major stages, briefly described below. As teachers gain experience with the process, they will recognize that some of these stages may overlap and/or need to be revisited. In fact, Attuning a Student is a cyclical, not a linear process, in which new information is constantly considered and incorporated into the different stages.

- 1. Noticing a Student:** The teacher observes that one of his/her students is struggling with some aspect(s) of learning and decides to begin initiate the Attuning a Student process to further explore the students' strengths and weaknesses.
- 2. Data Collection:** The teacher gathers detailed information about the student as a learner. This information is collected from the student's teacher(s), the student, and the student's parent(s)/caregiver(s) through observation-based questions in the Attuning a Student online tool as well as student work samples.
- 3. Data Analysis:** The detailed information gathered in the Data Collection stage is consolidated and linked to the neurodevelopmental framework.
- 4. Profile Building:** Based on the neurodevelopmental strengths and weaknesses identified in the Data Analysis stage, the teacher applies his/her professional judgment to interpret the data, identifying recurring themes and generating a hypothesis about the student's neurodevelopmental profile.
- 5. Management Plan:** Armed with a deeper understanding of this student as a learner, the teacher considers the interactions between the student's learning profile and the demands of school and plans for the best ways to support that student in meeting those demands. This planning involves two steps:
 - > *Linking the Profile with School Performance* – The teacher determines which elements of the student's profile may be impacting the student's performance in school.
 - > *Management Strategies* – In collaboration with the student, the teacher identifies management strategies that reflect the student's neurodevelopmental profile, his/her academic and nonacademic strengths, and his/her affinities. The student's parent(s)/caregiver(s) may also be involved in this stage.
- 6. Demystification:** The teacher engages the student, his/her parent(s)/caregiver(s), and sometimes other educators in a conversation that enables these individuals to understand how the student's profile may affect school performance. This discussion also affords an opportunity to explore the role each of these individuals can play in helping the student experience greater success in school.
- 7. Implementation and Measurement of Impact:** The teacher, student, and parent(s)/caregiver(s) collaborate in implementing the management plan over time. The teacher monitors the outcomes of the plan and makes adjustments as necessary. Communication and demystification are ongoing.

STAGE 1 – NOTICING A STUDENT

AT-A-GLANCE DESCRIPTION	The teacher observes that one of his/her students is struggling with some aspect(s) of learning and decides to begin initiate the Attuning a Student process to further explore the students' strengths and weaknesses.
DOCUMENTATION	Observations will be recorded in the Attuning a Student online tool in the next stage of the process.

IDENTIFYING A STRUGGLING STUDENT

You observe that one of your students continues to struggle with some aspect(s) of learning, despite your efforts to understand and address the factors that might be impacting his or her learning challenges. You decide to initiate the Attuning a Student process to further explore the student's strengths and weaknesses.

You will record your observations about the student's strengths and weaknesses during the next stage of the Attuning a Student process, Data Collection.

DISCUSSING THE ATTUNING PROCESS WITH THE STUDENT'S PARENTS

After identifying a struggling student, contact the student's parents and explain that you would like to work with them and their child to better understand their child's learning strengths and weaknesses in order to help him/her be more successful in school. Ask if they would be willing to assist in this effort by providing some information using the Attuning a Student online tool, and later, by participating in conversations about how to help their child improve her learning.

If you are engaging in the Attuning a Student process with the student while participating in an All Kinds of Minds module, you will also need to obtain written permission from the student's parents to discuss their child with fellow module participants. A parent permission template is provided in the Online Educator Resources (Log in to www.allkindsofminds.org, click on **Attuning a Student Online Tool**, and click on **Additional Attuning a Student Resources**).

Some parents may be anxious about such a request, especially if their child has had trouble in school in the past. They may be afraid that their child will be labeled or placed in a special program. Assure them that you have no intention of doing either. Make it clear that you want to form an alliance with them so that, together, you can help their child be more successful in school. Most parents want to help their children be successful and will welcome assistance if they understand what you are offering.

DISCUSSING THE ATTUNING PROCESS WITH THE STUDENT

Talk to the student about being attuned, approaching him/her as an ally/partner/advocate. Explain the attuning process, your reasons for initiating it, and how you think her participation in the process might make school easier and more productive for her. Such "alliance formation" with the student and parents is a theme that will run throughout the attuning process.

Some students may also be anxious about this request, imagining the worst about themselves and fearing stigmatization among their peers. Assure the student that all people have both strengths and weaknesses when it comes to learning. Offer an example or two, perhaps even some of your

own. Such reassurance is called “destigmatization,” another ongoing theme of the attuning process. Explain to the student that you want to work together to understand and strengthen his/her learning strengths and improve her areas of weakness, so that he/she may enjoy greater success in school.

When talking with both the student and his/her parents, communicate your optimism about the student’s future in school and in life. Such “infusion of optimism” is another important theme in the attuning process.

STAGE 2 – DATA COLLECTION

AT-A-GLANCE DESCRIPTION	The teacher gathers detailed information about the student as a learner. This information is collected from the student’s teacher(s), the student, and the student’s parent(s)/caregiver(s) through observation-based questions in the Attuning a Student online tool as well as student work samples.
DOCUMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attuning a Student Online Tool: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Parent’s View (Early/Intermediate Learner or Adolescent Learner) > Student’s View (Early Learner, Intermediate Learner, or Adolescent Learner) > Teacher’s View (Early/Intermediate Learner or Adolescent Learner) • 3-4 student work samples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Observations of strengths and weaknesses noted

GATHERING INFORMATION FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES

In this stage of the attuning process, information is gathered from you (the educator initiating and coordinating the Attuning a Student process*), the student, the student’s parent(s)/caregiver(s), and in some cases, one or more of the student’s other teachers. This information will be collected via the Attuning a Student online tool, which is available in the Online Educator Resources (Log in to www.allkindsofminds.org and click on **Attuning a Student Online Tool**).* In addition, you will collect several student work samples and note observations of academic/skills-based strengths and weaknesses on the samples.

In the Attuning a Student online tool, the individual coordinating the Attuning a Student process is called the “Profile Coordinator”. Typically, the Profile Coordinator is the student’s teacher and will submit observations about the student; however, this is not always the case. For example, a Profile Coordinator may be a school counselor or administrator who is coordinating the process for a given student.

This stage involves only *collecting* data, not *analyzing* or *interpreting* it. It is important for everyone contributing information to observe the student with an open mind, seeing him/her as objectively as possible.

**Instructions for using the Attuning a Student online tool are available on the Attuning a Student home page of the Online Educator Resources. See page 7, “Initiating the Attuning Process Using the Attuning a Student Online Tool,” for more details.*

SELECTING RESPONDENTS

“Respondents” are the participants in the Attuning a Student process. Respondents play a critical role in the process, providing observations of the student’s performance across a variety of settings and from multiple perspectives. When thinking about respondents, consider the following:

- The value of the student having a voice in the process by completing the Student’s View. The student’s responses will provide insight into his/her perceptions of personal strengths and

weaknesses, which will be helpful in the demystification conversation you will later have with the student.

- The perspective a parent(s)/caregiver(s) can provide concerning the student's strengths and weaknesses outside of school.
- The teachers in the school who are in a position to make observations of the student as a learner, particularly if the student's performance varies significantly among classes/subjects. You may also consider the student's previous teachers, particularly if these teachers have also participated in All Kinds of Minds programs.

THE "VIEWS"

The Attuning a Student online tool contains observation-based questionnaires called "Views." The tool contains a set of Views for parents, a set for students, and a set for teachers, as follows:

- **Parent's View:** Parent(s)/caregiver(s) share observations of their child at home and other settings outside of school. Response options are based on a 5-point continuum of difficulty, from "very difficult for my child" to "very easy for my child." Two versions:
 - > **Early/Intermediate Learner** – Explores phenomena common for students in grades K-8, including a historical perspective of the pre-school years.
 - > **Adolescent Learner** – Explores phenomena common for students in grades 7-12, including a historical perspective of the elementary years.
- **Student's View:** Student shares his/her insights regarding the aspects of school that are easy or difficult. Response options are based on a 5-point continuum of difficulty, from "very hard for me" to "very easy for me." Three versions:
 - > **Early Learner** – Includes short scenarios describing common learning situations for students in grades 1-2 and asks the student to comment on how frequently he/she experiences the same situation. The scenarios are written for a beginning reader to comprehend.
 - > **Intermediate Learner** – Explores phenomena common for students in grades 3-8 and is organized according to various aspects of learning, such as Following Directions and Understanding and Using Words.
 - > **Adolescent Learner** – Explores phenomena common for students in grades 7-12 and is organized according to academic subjects, such as English and Physical and Biological Sciences.
- **Teacher's View:** Teacher(s) share observations of the student in various learning settings at school. Responses options are based on a 5-point continuum of grade level expectation, from "far less than expected for grade level" to "far more than expected for grade level." Two versions:
 - > **Early/Intermediate Learner** – Explores phenomena common for students in grades K-8 and is organized according to various learning situations, such as Following Oral Directions and Speaking on an Academic Topic.
 - > **Adolescent Learner** – Explores phenomena common for students in grades 7-12 and is organized according to academic subjects, such as English and Physical and Biological Sciences.

When choosing which Views to assign to the respondents, keep the following points in mind:

- Select the View that will provide the best information about the student in his/her current setting.
- Selecting Views across common developmental levels (e.g., all Adolescent, all Early Learner) will provide data based on similar observational perspectives.

COMPLETING THE TEACHER'S VIEW

When completing the Teacher's View, keep the following considerations in mind*:

- Each of the sections in the Teacher's View serves as a "window" for viewing the student in academic and social settings at school. Select and complete only those sections that you feel will provide the best information about the student as a learner or that represent authentic opportunities for you to comment on your observations of the student. In addition, it is not necessary to respond to every question within a section.
- Base your responses to the Teacher's View on observations made over an extended time period – at least 2-3 weeks – rather than on one-time occurrences. Take as much time and as many occasions as you feel are needed to make useful and reliable observations. If possible, try to vary the time of day and the subjects being studied when you make observations.
- If your work with the student is limited to certain times and/or subjects, you may need to recruit other teachers to complete some of the windows.
- If you are completing the Adolescent Learner version of the Teacher's View, in deciding which subject areas to complete, consider the subjects that are of greatest concern as well as those in which the student is doing well.

* **NOTE:** As mentioned earlier, not all Profile Coordinators will complete a Teacher's View; however, at least one Teacher's View should be completed per attuning process.

INITIATING THE ATTUNING PROCESS USING THE ATTUNING A STUDENT ONLINE TOOL

The Data Collection stage involves the use of the Attuning a Student online tool. In order to begin the process as a Profile Coordinator, you will engage in the following steps:

1. Log in to www.allkindsofminds.org and click on **Attuning a Student Online Tool**. This will take you to the Attuning a Student home page.
2. Click on **Enter the Attuning a Student Online Tool**.
3. Create your personal profile (done only once but can be updated anytime)
4. Create a new student record
5. Assign Respondents and Views
6. Send login information to Respondents

7. Complete your Teacher's View (*if applicable*)
8. Document results of the Student Work Analysis
9. Once Parent's and Student's Views (and other Teacher's Views, if applicable) have been submitted, generate and print a Views Consolidation Report

For more details on using the Attuning a Student online tool, consult the "Guide to Using the Attuning a Student Online Tool," a tutorial available on the Attuning a Student home page of the Online Educator Resources. This tutorial is available in two forms: a narrated series of simulations and a PDF document.

COLLECTING STUDENT WORK SAMPLES

Student work samples provide yet another perspective on the student's learning strengths and weaknesses.

Collect 3-4 student work samples that reflect neither the student's best nor worst effort. The following types of work samples are recommended in order to achieve the best range of work:

- a piece of writing that represents original student work
- an assignment or test that reveals aspects of the student's reading comprehension
- a math assignment with the student's completed responses, preferably including both computation and word problems that demonstrate how the problem was solved
- a spelling test, if applicable

In the next stage, you will be identifying patterns of strengths and weaknesses in the student work, and the more work samples you collect, the more easily discernable the patterns will be.

Please note that if the student you're attuning has multiple teachers, you may consider requesting copies of student work from his or her other teachers.

NOTING OBSERVATIONS ON STUDENT WORK SAMPLES

Once you have collected student work samples, review each piece of work carefully, noting areas of strength and weaknesses directly on the paper.

When recording your comments, use common, not neurodevelopmental, language. Examples of observations you might record include "Good elaboration of ideas" or "Used incorrect algorithm to solve problem".

If you have collected work samples from other teachers, you may need their assistance in noting strengths and weaknesses in the student work.

As a reminder, when doing this task, you are still in the data *collection* stage, which is characterized by *observations*, not analysis or interpretation. Neurodevelopmental analysis of these work samples will take place in the next stage of the process and will be incorporated into the student's record in the online tool at that time.

STAGE 3 – DATA ANALYSIS

AT-A-GLANCE DESCRIPTION	The detailed information gathered in the Data Collection stage is consolidated and linked to the neurodevelopmental framework.
DOCUMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attuning a Student Online Tool:<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Student Work Analysis> Views Consolidation Report

In the Data Analysis stage, the data that has been collected through the completion of the Views and the student work samples will be consolidated and analyzed through the lens of a neurodevelopmental framework. It is in this stage that you begin to determine which neurodevelopmental functions and/or constructs appear to be weak or strong for the student.

ANALYZING STUDENT WORK SAMPLES

During the Data Collection stage, you collected several student work samples and recorded observations about strengths and weaknesses of the student's work.

For each work sample, review your observations and link these observations to related neurodevelopmental Constructs and Functions, with the goal of discerning patterns or evidence of recurring strengths or weaknesses.

The Attuning a Student online tool contains a Student Work Analysis component to assist you in documenting your analysis. In this section of the tool, you can record student work analysis data in the following teaching areas:

- Reading Comprehension
- Writing
- Spelling
- Math Computation
- Math Reasoning
- Other (*you specify*)

For each applicable teaching area, a field is provided for each neurodevelopmental Construct and many of the neurodevelopmental Functions. In each field, a drop-down menu is available, with five response options, from "Very Strong" to "Very Weak." It is not necessary to select a response for each Construct and Function; you select a rating only in the applicable Construct/Function fields.

This information will then be incorporated into the Views Consolidation Report, providing further detail and another perspective to inform your hypothesis about the student's neurodevelopmental strengths and weaknesses.

CONSOLIDATING OBSERVATIONAL DATA (VIEWS AND STUDENT WORK ANALYSIS)

Once all of the assigned Views have been completed and submitted and the student work analysis data has been entered into the online tool, you may generate a Views Consolidation Report by simply clicking a button in the online tool.

As its name suggests, this report summarizes all of the Views observations as well as the student work analysis data. The tool sorts the information by neurodevelopmental Construct and Function, and the responses are displayed in relation to a continuum of “weak” to “strong.” Open-ended comments entered on the Views are also captured in the report. This report provides the information needed to begin building the student’s neurodevelopmental profile in Stage 4.

STAGE 4 – PROFILE BUILDING

AT-A-GLANCE DESCRIPTION	Based on the neurodevelopmental strengths and weaknesses identified in the Data Analysis stage, the teacher applies his/her professional judgment to interpret the data, identifies recurring themes, and generates a hypothesis about the student’s neurodevelopmental profile.
DOCUMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attuning a Student Online Tool: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Views Consolidation Report > Profile Summary

In the Profile Building stage, you review the data collected and consolidated in Stages 2 and 3 and develop a tentative neurodevelopmental profile of your student based on this information. The profile is considered “tentative” because as you develop and implement management strategies with the student, you are certain to learn more about his/her strengths and weaknesses and make modifications to his/her profile over time. Neurodevelopmental profiles also change over time, as do the demands of school.

GENERATING A NEURODEVELOPMENTAL PROFILE FOR YOUR STUDENT

The Views Consolidation Report, generated in the previous stage, is the primary document used to inform the development of the student’s profile.

The first step in generating a profile is to analyze the Views Consolidation Report to discern recurring patterns or themes among the various sources of information.

Discerning Patterns of Strengths and Weaknesses

To discern patterns, examine each Construct and Function table in the Views Consolidation Report. Based on where responses fall on continuum of “weak” to “strong,” use your professional judgment to determine whether that Construct/Function is a strength, a weakness, or neither for your student. As you become more experienced with attuning and more familiar with the neurodevelopmental framework, you may want to identify strengths and weaknesses at the Component level (e.g., *Attention*: alertness, mental effort, etc.)

Patterns can exist on multiple levels:

- Within Constructs and/or Functions (e.g., Several sources seem to reveal Higher Order Cognition as strong in all three content areas.)
- Within a content area (e.g., Several sources seem to reveal many neurodevelopmental strengths in physical education.)

In some cases, it may be easy to identify a strength or weakness; responses from the majority of respondents fall clearly under “weak” or “strong” areas of the continuum.

In other cases, determining patterns might be more complicated; responses appear to be incongruous or contradictory, or the data in certain areas just doesn’t reflect any pattern. In these

instances, the following factors may be impacting the spread of responses reflected in the consolidation report:

- Circumstances in the observation process (e.g., time of day, stress, observer bias)
- The different demands between home and school
- The different demands among school subjects/teachers based on curriculum content and/or teaching styles
- One or two sources may have picked up on a subtle characteristic or learning difference that others missed
- If you note mixed evidence of strengths and weaknesses in a given Construct/Function, it may be that the student has variable strengths and weaknesses at the Function or Component level of a Construct (e.g., a student with evidence of both strengths and weaknesses in Expressive Language may have strengths in Sentence Formulation but weaknesses in Discourse Production).

Resolving Apparent Discrepancies or Uncertainties in the Data

In instances in which the Views Consolidation Report appears to reflect discrepancies or fails to reveal patterns about a student's neurodevelopmental strengths or weaknesses, you might attempt to resolve these challenges by obtaining more data. For example, you might:

- Ask respondents for clarification on some of the responses in question
- Ask other teachers to complete a Teacher's View
- Collect and analyze additional student work samples, possibly from the student's other teachers
- Examine the student's work samples (that you've already collected) more closely

If you are unable to resolve the discrepancies or uncertainties in the data, you may consider discussing these questions in your demystification conversation with the student. See *the description of Stage 6, Demystification (pages 18-22)*.

DOCUMENTING STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES ON THE PROFILE SUMMARY

The Attuning a Student online tool includes a form, the Profile Summary, to assist you in documenting these patterns of strengths and weaknesses. This form lists each neurodevelopmental Construct and many of the neurodevelopmental Functions, and a sliding indicator on a "weak" to "strong" continuum for each Construct and Function on the form. You simply slide the bar to the appropriate area on the continuum for each applicable Construct and Function, and add clarifying or descriptive comments as necessary.

When completed, the Profile Summary is a one-page display of the student's "balance sheet" of neurodevelopmental strengths and weaknesses and will become the primary point of reference in developing a management plan for the student in the next stage of the process.

The Profile Summary may also be a useful visual aid during demystification; you may choose to show this to the student and parents as you explain the student's neurodevelopmental profile.

STAGE 5 – MANAGEMENT PLAN

AT-A-GLANCE DESCRIPTION	<p>Armed with a deeper understanding of this student as a learner, the teacher considers the interactions between the student's learning profile and the demands of school and plans for the best ways to support that student in meeting those demands. This planning involves two steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Linking the Profile with School Performance</i> – The teacher determines which elements of the student's profile may be impacting the student's performance in school. • <i>Management Strategies</i> – In collaboration with the student, the teacher identifies management strategies that reflect the student's neurodevelopmental profile, his/her academic and nonacademic strengths, and his/her affinities. The student's parent(s)/caregiver(s) may also be involved in this stage.
DOCUMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attuning a Student Online Tool: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Views Consolidation Report > Profile Summary > Management and Demystification Planning Guide • Schools Attuned Management Resources/Management Strategies book <i>or</i> • Teaching All Kinds of Minds Classroom Reference Guide (<i>Strategies</i> section)

Once you have developed the student's neurodevelopmental profile, the next step is to begin to develop a management plan, including strategies to support the student's success in school, and plan for the demystification conversation you will have with the student in the next stage. A form in the Attuning a Student online tool, the Management and Demystification Planning Guide, is available to assist you in your brainstorming and planning.

MANAGEMENT AND DEMYSTIFICATION PLANNING GUIDE: PART 1 (Management Strategy Brainstorming)

The goal of Part 1 of the Management and Demystification Planning Guide is to formulate and document a preliminary plan that will help the student and his/her parent(s) understand some possible factors impacting certain academic struggles and successes, and what can be done to minimize the former and maximize the latter. The plan is preliminary at this stage because it will be further developed and customized based on input from the student and/or the student's parent(s) during the demystification conversation.

To complete Part 1 of the Management and Demystification Planning Guide, follow these steps:

1. Decide which of the student's academic strengths and weaknesses reflected on the Profile Summary are most important and/or manageable *at this time*.
 - Choose several strengths and up to three weaknesses.
 - Choose at least one weakness for which there is an excellent chance of highly visible success, with the goal of building confidence in this process among all the players.

- In addition to referring to the Profile Summary, you may want to consult the “General Observations” section of the Views Consolidation Report.
 - **NOTE:** Some of the student’s strengths may not seem that relevant to you just now. Some of his/her weaknesses may seem too minor to be concerned with, while other weaknesses may seem too large to tackle as a first effort.
 - Keep in mind that you can always return to this stage and address additional weaknesses later.
2. List the student’s strengths that you have targeted to strengthen and/or leverage.
 3. Note the student’s affinities, which are listed on the Views Consolidation Report.
 4. List the student’s school performance weaknesses that you have decided to target.
 5. Identify the neurodevelopmental Constructs and/or Functions that appear to be impacting the school performance weaknesses.
 - There is no “magic formula” for making the connection between your student’s neurodevelopmental profile and his/her school performance; apply your knowledge from your All Kinds of Minds course work, the content/demands of your classroom, and your knowledge of the student.
 - All Kinds of Minds resources that may help you make links between a student’s neurodevelopmental profile and his/her school performance include:
 - > Views Consolidation Report
 - > LearningBase on the All Kinds of Minds web site (www.allkindsofminds.org/learningBase.aspx)
 - > Construct Elaboration sections of the Schools Attuned syllabus
 - > Teaching All Kinds of Minds Classroom Reference Guide (*Glossary* and *Cues Matrix*)
 6. Keeping the student’s strengths and affinities in mind, brainstorm possible strategies for strengthening the student’s strengths and supporting him/her in his/her areas of weakness.
 - The Schools Attuned Management Resources/Management Strategies book, the Teaching All Kinds of Minds Classroom Reference Guide, and the All Kinds of Minds LearningBase (www.allkindsofminds.org/learningBase.aspx) are excellent resources for identifying Construct-specific or subject-specific strategies. These strategies can be used as-is or customized to meet the student’s specific needs.
 - Strategies for supporting the student in his/her areas of weakness should include an appropriate balance of accommodations and interventions.
 - Strategy brainstorming can – and should – continue with the demystification conversation. Your initial ideas can be revised and/or added to when discussing them with the student and parents. However, it is helpful to put some prior thought into strategies before the demystification conversation.
 - Take care to ensure that the strategies you select will not result in embarrassment or stigmatization of the student. Once the strategies are being implemented, try to convey to all of your students that accommodations do not reflect “special treatment” of one or several students.

NOTE: Often, management strategies implemented to help a particular student end up benefitting many students in the class (e.g., providing advanced organizers for activities).

As with many educational management plans, an All Kinds of Minds Management Plan is a detailed plan of action that aims at improving a student’s school performance. However, All Kinds of Minds management plans have some unique characteristics. They ...

- Are based on the student’s neurodevelopmental profile, acknowledging both strengths and weaknesses
- Provide an appropriate mix of two types of strategies: accommodations and interventions
- Capitalize on student strengths and affinities
- Emphasize demystification of the student, parents, and possibly other teachers

Benefits of Incorporating Strengths and Affinities

Benefits of incorporating strengths and affinities into the management strategies include:

- The student is much more likely to invest in interventions that are tailored to his/her strengths or passionate interests.
- Capitalizing on affinities can be particularly useful for improving areas such as Expressive Language. For example, you might encourage students with weak Expressive Language to focus on one of their affinities when writing a story or essay or developing a class presentation.
- Focusing on a student’s strengths can bolster his/her self confidence.
- This focus may also encourage the individuals involved in the attuning process (parents, the student, and other teachers) to acknowledge the unique strengths of the student.
- The student’s current interests may ultimately develop into domains of true expertise and sometimes even future career opportunities.

MANAGEMENT AND DEMYSTIFICATION PLANNING GUIDE: PART 2 (Demystification as Communication)

After you’ve brainstormed some accommodations and interventions for the student, the next step is to begin planning for the conversation you’ll have with the student and his/her parent(s) about the student’s neurodevelopmental profile and strategies to help support him or her.

When thinking about how you will conduct this demystification conversation, keep in mind that as with all conversations, you’ll need to consider:

- The needs of the message receivers (parents, student, other teachers)
- Your characteristics as a message sender
- The design of the message
- Techniques for ensuring that the message is understood

The “Demystification as Communication” section of the Management and Demystification Planning Guide is designed to assist you in thinking about these elements of effective communication. This form provides space to record responses to the following questions:

- What developmental needs will I consider? For example:
 - > What is the appropriate discussion length for the student?
 - > What kind of language will be most easily understood by him/her?
- How familiar is this student with the concepts I will share? For example:
 - > Is the family familiar with the All Kinds of Minds philosophy and terminology?
 - > What All Kinds of Minds or neurodevelopmental terms might need to be defined for them?
 - > Is this the first time the student has been exposed to a discussion of his/her learning profile?
- Are there emotional needs to consider? For example:
 - > Are the student and/or his/her parents apt to come to the session with a high level of anxiety or frustration?
 - > Would it be best to first meet with the student without the parents?
 - > What support systems are available to help them implement a management plan?
- What aspects of the student's learning profile might affect this demystification? For example:
 - > What have you learned about the neurodevelopmental profile of the student that might inform your communication with him? (e.g., a student with a weakness in Mental Energy is unlikely to benefit from a lengthy session, and a student with weak Receptive Language may require visual support for the message, such as pictures or a diagram)
- How will I manage my personal communication style? For example:
 - > How do you communicate most effectively? Informal chat-like style or following a set agenda or outline? Presenting and then asking for questions or being more continuously interactive? Mostly verbal or making extensive use of visuals or other props?
 - > What do you know about your own communication strengths and weaknesses? Do you have personal characteristics that require careful preplanning, such as a tendency to talk too quickly or too much? Are you too dependent on purely verbal presentation of ideas?

In addition to addressing these elements, consider the following tips as you plan for your demystification conversation:

- Prepare visuals that can be taken home by the student and parents to remind them of the key points.
- Consider alternatives to purely verbal discourse. For example, you may want to use graphically rich materials such as those available in your All Kinds of Minds course materials (e.g., demystification cards, neurodevelopmental framework icons, etc.).
- Think about how you will engender an atmosphere of trust and protection from humiliation for a vulnerable student.

MANAGEMENT AND DEMYSTIFICATION PLANNING GUIDE: PART 3 (Demystification Message)

Part 3 of the Management and Demystification Planning Guide is “Demystification Message Points.” In this section, you record more specific notes around designing your message to the student and his/her parents. This section prompts you to think about:

- How you will convey each of the seven steps of demystification (destigmatization, clarification of student’s strengths, discussion of student’s weaknesses, examples of strategies, infusion of optimism, hope and positive possibilities, establishment of an alliance, and summarization) – see *the description of Stage 6, Demystification, for more details about these steps (pages 18-22)*

Once you have completed the Management and Demystification Planning Guide, you are ready to demystify your student and his/her parent(s) about the student’s neurodevelopmental profile, as well as discussing strategies to support the student in school and at home.

STAGE 6 – DEMYSTIFICATION

AT-A-GLANCE DESCRIPTION	The teacher engages the student, his/her parent(s)/caregiver(s), and sometimes other educators in a conversation that enables these individuals to understand how the student's profile may affect school performance. This discussion also affords an opportunity to explore the role each of these individuals can play in helping the student experience greater success in school.
DOCUMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attuning a Student Online Tool:<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Management and Demystification Planning Guide

Demystification lies at the core of the Attuning a Student process. It is a collaborative process through which the student, his parents, and relevant educators come to understand the student's neurodevelopmental profile and its possible impact on his school performance. Demystification provides an opportunity to persuade the student and parents that difficulties that may have plagued them are, in fact, manageable once truly understood.

When used in the context of the Attuning a Student process, demystification refers to a planned discussion between the student, the student's teacher, and the student's parent(s). However, teachers can also demystify several students or even a class about their learning differences. For example, teachers might have demystification conversations with a small group of students who possess varying or similar neurodevelopmental strengths and weaknesses. Or, they might demystify specific aspects of learning with the whole class (e.g., teach a lesson around Memory).

SEVEN STEPS OF DEMYSTIFICATION

Demystification is comprised of seven steps:

1. Destigmatization
2. Clarification of student's strengths
3. Discussion of student's weaknesses
4. Examples of strategies
5. Infusion of optimism, hope and positive possibilities
6. Establishment of an alliance
7. Summarization

Each of these steps is described in detail below.

Step 1: Destigmatization

From the beginning of the attuning process, when you first spoke to the student and his parents, you have been reassuring them that all people have both strengths and weaknesses. You have explained that your goal is to help the student and parents come to understand the student's strengths and weaknesses, so he/she can not only experience greater success in school but also in planning for a future career.

At the outset of any demystification conversation, it may help to repeat these assurances for the sake of both the student and his/her parents. To do this, you might:

- Mention your own learning strengths and weaknesses (e.g., “Michael, I can understand why you find it so frustrating that you can remember some things well like baseball statistics, but can’t remember enough about the Constitution to pass the test. I’m like that about finding my way anywhere; I can give people great directions on how to get to my house, but I’ll get lost 10 times before I learn the way to a friend’s house.”)
- Cite examples of highly successful people who have struggled with learning problems (e.g., Walt Disney, Amelia Earhart, Jewel, Danny Glover, Whoopi Goldberg, Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison, Ludwig von Beethoven, and Winston Churchill).
- Demystify the conversation you are having by reassuring the parents and student that the conversation is not a discussion of what is going wrong, but a collaborative discussion about both strengths and weaknesses. In addition, you may mention that you have similar discussions with many other students in the classroom.

Step 2: Clarification of the Student’s Strengths

Throughout the demystification conversation, it is important to maintain a constant and genuine focus on the student’s strengths. *Always* talk about a student’s strengths before proceeding to his weaknesses. Other strategies for focusing on strengths include the following:

- Describe the student’s strengths using concrete, highly specific examples and linking them whenever possible to the student’s school performance (e.g., Instead of saying, “Joel, you’re really good at math,” you might say, “Joel, you are good at math because you have a strong memory for math facts and grasp new concepts when they’re introduced.”).
- Cite the student’s strengths in relation to his/her general peer group (e.g., “You’re one of the best readers in the class, Pete,” or “You are a terrific group leader, Dan; everyone wants to work with you!”).
- Emphasize to the student and parents the important role the student’s strengths may play in improving his school performance (e.g., “Kareem, in a few minutes we’re going to talk about how your excellent organizational skills are going to be very helpful in overcoming some of the trouble you have with remembering things.”).
- For older students, you might link strengths to future challenges the student will face after formal schooling (e.g., “Lisa, your creativity can be a real asset in a job setting that values initiative.”).

Consider these strategies ahead of time as you complete Part 3 of the Management and Demystification Planning Guide. *See Stage 5, Management Plan, for more details about this Guide (pages 13-17).*

Step 3: Discussion of the Student’s Weaknesses

A student who struggles with learning issues often finds it quite difficult to improve his school performance. Being unable to describe the nature of his learning problems makes this process even more difficult. A student needs to have the vocabulary and conceptual framework, at a *developmentally appropriate level*, to talk about and reflect on his specific learning weaknesses, as well as his learning strengths.

Begin this step of the session by providing short, relatively simple explanations of the student’s weaknesses. Then, when you are confident that there is a basic understanding of these weaknesses, you can discuss each of them in greater detail, always providing concrete examples from the

student's work and behavior (i.e., links to his school performance). In doing so, engage the student in the discussion to check for understanding and to increase buy-in (e.g., "Jorge, you told me that you have trouble learning mathematical concepts. What we need to do now is to figure out why it's so hard for you and how to make it more manageable. As I mentioned earlier, maybe you are struggling with what we call Concept Formation. I'd like to focus on that first.") Focus on no more than three (two is preferable) weaknesses during one conversation and be sure to label the phenomena and not the student.

During an individual demystification conversation, it is also important to talk about the student's affinities. In preparing for the demystification, use the Management and Demystification Planning Guide to help you plan how you will incorporate affinities in your message. For example, you may want to use these affinities as a source of metaphors when talking about the student's weaknesses; a student who loves soccer might better understand how Attention works by hearing a metaphor about how a soccer coach acts to focus and regulate the actions of the team.

Identifying affinities can also be linked to the infusion of optimism. A student with an affinity for outdoor activities, for example, might leverage that interest into a future career in recreation.

Engage the student in identifying his own affinities. Depending upon the student and the situation, you may want to discuss affinities before concerns.

Step 4: Examples of Strategies

Together, you, the student and, often, his parents, will develop and agree to try some management strategies with a goal of improving the student's school performance by focusing, for now, on a limited number of objectives.

In planning for the demystification conversation, you made notes on the Management and Demystification Planning Guide about possible strategies to employ. Depending on how the conversation progresses, you may begin the discussion of strategies by sharing a few of the strategies that will have the best chance of success. Be sure the student and parents understand the need for them.

Carefully explain the relationship between the strategy and the problem areas you described when demystifying the student and parents. Be very specific and give concrete examples (e.g., "Darrin, do you remember a few minutes ago when we talked about your Graphomotor problem – how hard it is for you to take notes? When I am talking, you have to concentrate so hard on your writing that you lose track of what I am saying. To help you, I'm going to provide a partially completed outline of my notes for you to fill in. This should allow you to keep track of what I'm saying without struggling to keep up with the notes.").

Some of your strategies may fit perfectly with what emerged in your discussion. You may want to modify some of the others, involving the student and/or his/her parent(s) in the process. In addition, new ideas for management strategies may be developed later.

It is crucial to get student buy-in, particularly from an older student. Also, many management strategies are best implemented through collaboration between home and school, so getting the student's parents on board can be beneficial. If at all possible, the same or compatible approaches should be applied in both places.

In addition to discussing management strategies, be sure to address how and when the effectiveness of the strategies will be evaluated. Approach the initial strategies as an experiment. Caution the student and his parents some of the strategies may need to be adjusted over time, but

express your confidence that as long as you all work as a team, the student will eventually enjoy greater success in school.

The Attuning a Student online tool contains a form – the Progress Monitoring Guide – that will help you to track the progress of the student in relation to the strategies. *See the description of Stage 7, Implementation and Measurement of Impact, for more details about tracking strategy effectiveness (page 23).*

Step 5: Infusion of Optimism, Hope and Positive Possibilities

Throughout the attuning process and during demystification conversations in particular, it is important to foster an atmosphere of optimism in which the student and his parents come to believe that there is hope for overcoming the student's learning difficulties. Strategies for infusing optimism include:

- Providing specific examples of possibilities for success based on current strengths
- Tying strengths to future career options can also infuse optimism

Step 6: Alliance Formation

Throughout the attuning process, you have also been conveying to the parents and student the sense that you (the adults) and the student are all working together toward a common goal—that the struggle is between the team and the problem. At this point during the conversation, it may be appropriate to re-emphasize your own struggles with learning, assure the student that this conversation will not have any bearing on report card grades, and to make a point to project the alliance into the near future. Additionally, it is important not to sermonize. For example, “You have so much potential, if only you lived up to it.”

Step 7: Summarization

Wrap up the demystification conversation by briefly summarizing the key points about the student's strengths, weaknesses, and affinities. As part of this summary, you might ask the student to paraphrase the main ideas discussed (e.g., “What do you think you will remember from the conversation we just had?”). In addition, review the decisions you've made as a team about strategies to implement and how and when their efficacy will be evaluated. Provide visual takeaways such as reminder stickers or notecards. You may also choose to provide reading material about the Constructs, Functions, and Components discussed. Other points you may want to cover in this summary include the following:

- Develop and agree on a plan to maintain regular and ongoing communication among all members of the team.
- Arrange for a follow-up session to check on retention of the message and to provide a “booster dose” of information and support.
- Encourage parents to contact you at a later time, when they have had a chance to process the information.

DEMYSTIFICATION GUIDELINES

In addition to the seven demystification steps just described, there are some general guidelines for the demystification environment:

- The demystification session should be no longer than 20-30 minutes in length, as developmentally appropriate.
- The conversation should be two-way, allowing for input and discussion from both the student and his/her parents.
- Provide visual takeaways to the student and parents to increase retention of the conversation.
- Although optimal for the parents to be involved in the session, it is not a requirement. This is a decision that will need to be made with the educator's professional judgment about the student's situation.
- Sit next to the student, not facing them, in a relaxed, collegial location.
- Younger learners will benefit from concrete analogies of strengths and weaknesses. For example, "your mind is like a computer."
- Discuss career possibilities or pathways for older students during discussion of strengths and affinities.

STAGE 7 – IMPLEMENTATION AND MEASUREMENT OF IMPACT

AT-A-GLANCE DESCRIPTION	The teacher, student, and parent(s)/caregiver(s) collaborate in implementing the management plan over time. The teacher monitors the outcomes of the plan and makes adjustments as necessary. Communication and demystification are ongoing.
DOCUMENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attuning a Student Online Tool: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Progress Monitoring Guide

This stage involves putting the management plan into action, evaluating the outcomes of strategies, and making any necessary adjustments to the plan over time. You may use the Progress Monitoring Guide in the Attuning a Student online tool to assist you in tracking and documentation.

As you implement management strategies, it is important to document outcomes that you observe. This will allow you to track which strategies seem to work and which seem less effective. By reflecting on the impact of your strategies, and comparing results you are seeing with those you anticipated, you will be in a position to determine next steps.

It is important to note that sometimes a hypothesis about a student may prove to be inaccurate or a strategy you employ with a student may not achieve the desired results. Moreover, a student's profile may *actually* evolve and change over time, or it may *appear* to change as you learn more about the student you've attuned. These instances may warrant an adjustment to the original plan. In these cases, don't be discouraged, and do what you can to keep the student engaged and invested in the process. For example, you may try new strategies, refine your hypotheses, bolster your understanding of the Constructs and functions, and/or further hone your skills in observing students as learners.

Occasionally, you will find that additional supports may be necessary for a particular student. For example, you may need to actively collaborate with parents with respect to the practice of academic skills at home. In some cases, you may find that more targeted intervention from special education professionals, school psychologists, guidance counselors, speech-language therapists, physical therapists, psychiatric or medical professionals, etc. may be needed.

Communication and demystification are an ongoing part of this stage. Throughout the implementation of a management plan, maintain ongoing communication about the impact of the plan with the student, his/her parent(s), and other educators as applicable. This ongoing dialogue will help to bolster the alliance you have developed with these individuals in which you are all working together to enhance the student's school success.

ADDITIONAL ATTUNING A STUDENT RESOURCES

For additional information about the Attuning a Student process, please consult the following resources:

- “Guide to Using the Attuning a Student Online Tool” – Tutorial available on the Attuning a Student home page of the Online Educator Resources. This tutorial is available in two forms: a narrated series of simulations and a PDF document.
- Attuning a Student section of the All Kinds of Minds Customer Support site – From the Attuning a Student home page of the Online Educator Resources, click on **Additional Attuning a Student Resources** and then **Frequently Asked Questions**.