

Does a diagnosis of FASD make a *difference* for your child?

For children prenatally exposed to alcohol, a strong predictor of success in school and adult life is an appropriate medical diagnosis. Although schools can't make medical diagnoses, we can modify our instructional techniques when we know that a child's brain works differently. When you share your child's medical diagnosis of a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, educators will be better able to create an environment geared to your child's unique needs.

Our school nurses can answer questions and share information with you about the diagnostic process and local resources in a confidential environment. For more information contact your school nurse.



You're not alone

For more information on FASD, here are some helpful websites:

NOFAS: www.nofas.org: Website of the National Organization of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

FAS Alaska: www.fasalaska.com: Website of resources and information

State of Alaska: www.hss.state.ak.us/fas: The official FASD website for the State of Alaska Health and Social Services

FASD Connections: www.fasdconnections.ca/: Website from Canada that provides information on a range of topics relating to adolescents and adults with FASD

E-Learning Modules:
www.fasdoutreach.ca/elearning/modules-guide/modules-guide: Website that provides video presentations on a variety of FASD topics for families and educators

<http://findinghope.knowledge.ca/>: Website where families living with FASD, educators and healthcare professionals share their stories and resources for hope

<http://www.KYFASD.org>: Website of resources from the Kentucky FASD project

www.Whitecrowvillage.org: Website from a village in Canada that has created many resources and programs to improve the lives of those living with FASD.

www.asdk12.org/depts/step: Website for the STEP Center, the parent resource center for the Anchorage School District



Anchorage School District
Educating All Students for Success in Life

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Caring About Kids

FASD

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

Let's
talk
about it!



What is FASD?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) is a range of permanent disabilities affecting a child whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy.

Problems for the child may include:

- Learning disabilities
- Problems with memory
- Behavior problems
- Poor judgement
- Brain damage
- Heart and kidney problems
- Cognitive impairment

It's a fact that a child can be prenatally exposed to alcohol even before the mother knows she is pregnant. Birth defects resulting from prenatal exposure to alcohol will last a child's entire life.



How does FASD *impact* a child's education?

(Let's look at it from a child's viewpoint.)

Here are some things that my brain and I deal with every day:

- I am a *literal, concrete thinker*. This means I may not understand phrases that say one thing and mean another. ("Do the right thing.")
- I have a *hard time learning from experience*. Every situation is brand new to me.
- I *think at a slower pace*. It may take me longer to respond because my brain needs more time to process.
- I am likely to *make impulsive decisions* and then be surprised at the outcomes. A typical behavior plan might not work for me.
- Once I've learned something it's *difficult for me to change it*. It's hard for me to quietly listen to a lecture in the gym because to me the gym is for playing.
- I *don't readily understand non-verbal communication* like body language, facial expression, tone of voice. It's hard for me to get to know and get along with other kids.
- My *short-term memory is inconsistent*. Sometimes I remember things and sometimes they get lost in my brain. I can repeat something to you, and then forget it as soon as I walk away.
- I *experience my senses differently* than most people. A slight touch may feel like a slap; normal lights may feel like strobe lights; some noises seem really loud. I struggle with things that seem normal to everyone else.

**Laura Nagle,*

Bluegrass Regional Prevention Center, 2010

How can parents and educators *work together* to help the child be successful in school?

Strategies that work
Eight Magic Keys:

Concrete – talk in literal terms using words without double meanings or idioms (*think younger when providing assistance, giving instructions*)

Consistent – use the same words for important phrases and oral directions (*set up an environment with as few changes as possible*)

Repeat – if you want the child to remember something it may need to be taught again and again (*short term memory is a big problem*)

Routine – develop routines that don't change from day to day (*knowing what to expect decreases anxiety and increases learning potential*)

Simple – keep the learning environment uncluttered and to the point (*over-stimulation leads to shutdown*)

Specific – say exactly what you mean and tell them step by step what to do (*abstractions and generalizations are very difficult to comprehend*)

Structure – teach habit patterns as the pathway to understanding (*this is the glue that holds the child's world together*)

Supervision – provide constant supervision to help develop habit patterns of appropriate behavior (*there is often a naiveté to daily life situations*)

** Deb Evensen & Jan Lutke, 1997*