



# Eight Magic Keys:

## Developing Successful Interventions for Students with FAS



While there is no recommended "cookbook approach" to working with students with FAS, there are strategies that work, based on the following guidelines:

**1. Concrete** - Students with FAS do well when parents and educators talk in concrete terms, don't use words with double meanings, idioms, etc. Because their social-emotional understanding is far below their chronological age, it helps to "think younger" when providing assistance, giving instructions, etc.

**2. Consistency** - Because of the difficulty students with FAS experience trying to generalize learning from one situation to another, they do best in an environment with few changes. This includes language. Teachers and parents can coordinate with each other to use the same words for key phases and oral directions.

**3. Repetition** - Students with FAS have chronic short term memory problems; they forget things they want to remember as well as information that has been learned and retained for a period of time. In order for something to make it to long term memory, it may simply need to be re-taught and re-taught.

**4. Routine** - Stable routines that don't change from day to day will make it easier for students with FAS to know what to expect next and decrease their anxiety, enabling them to learn.

**5. Simplicity** - Remember to **Keep it Short and Sweet** (KISS method). Students with FAS are easily over-stimulated, leading to "shutdown" at which point no more information can be assimilated. Therefore, a simple environment is the foundation for an effective school program.

**6. Specific** - Say **exactly** what you mean. Remember that students with FAS have difficulty with abstractions, generalization, and not being able to "fill in the blanks" when given a direction. Tell them step by step what to do, developing appropriate habit patterns.

**7. Structure** - Structure is the "glue" that makes the world make sense for a student with FAS. If this glue is taken away, the walls fall down! A student with FAS achieves and is successful because their world provides the appropriate structure as a permanent foundation.

**8. Supervision** - Because of their cognitive challenges, students with FAS bring a naivete to daily life situations. They need constant supervision, as with much younger children, to develop habit patterns of appropriate behavior.

When a situation with a student with FAS is confusing and the intervention is not working, then:

- Stop Action!
- Observe.
- Listen carefully to find out where he/she is stuck.
- Ask: What is hard? What would help?

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Deb Evensen and Jan Lutke 1997

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8. Supervision

## **FAS in a Nutshell**



- ◆ FAS is the leading known cause of mental retardation.
- ◆ Most individuals with FAS have normal intelligence.
- ◆ FAS causes serious social and behavior problems.
- ◆ Each year in the US 5,000 babies are born with FAS.
- ◆ Ten times as many are born with alcohol related disorders.
- ◆ No amount of alcohol is known to be safe during pregnancy.
- ◆ Alcohol causes more damage to baby than any other drug.
- ◆ FAS and related conditions are 100% preventable.

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For more information on  
Fetal Alcohol Syndrome  
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