# Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

# **Code 44**

## **Definition:**

* FASD is an umbrella term covering different syndromes and disorders that are a result of Prenatal alcohol exposure. Including:
  + Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)
  + Partial Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (pFAS)
  + Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND)
* FASD can result in:
  + Physical abnormalities
  + Developmental delays
  + Learning disabilities
  + Memory Problems
  + Communication difficulties
    - Understanding and expression
  + Understanding Consequences
* The prenatal effects of alcohol are varied, and no two individuals affected will have identical characteristics or needs.
* FASD has a neurological basis that results in students with FASD being developmentally at a lower age than their actual physical age.
  + - **Just because students with FASD appear to be ‘getting it’ or on par with their peers the reality is that expectations and one’s teaching pedagogy need to be appropriately modified for the individual.**
* Students with FASD may be especially vulnerable to being bullied and/or developing bullying behaviour. They may be vulnerable because they lack social skills, are easily influenced by peers or have not developed the ability to empathize with others.
* While there are no statistics on the prevalence of FASD in Canada or Alberta, research estimates that 9 in every 1,000 babies are born with FASD. In Alberta, this means that there are more than 46,000 Albertans with FASD, and an estimated 500 babies are born with the disorder every year.
  + From the Government of Alberta (last modified 2015-08-26)

## **Characteristics:**

* + Ever person born with FASD is a complex and unique individual, like everyone else these students will have personal strengths, weaknesses, and interest or apathy towards subjects or tasks.
  + Typically, students with FASD will demonstrate:
    - Some students have physical manifestations (typically facial formation)
    - Fidgeting
    - Undesirable behavior (reactionary or instigating)
      * Physical or Verbal actions
    - Easily upset over routine changes
    - Poor understandings of boundaries (personal space)
    - Need constant prompting and reminding
    - Find mental work exhausting
    - Appear to act inappropriately for their age (childish or other)
      * Due to the difference of mental development and physical
    - Impulsive and easily influenced
    - Sexual activity or explicit language

## **Teaching Strategies:**

* Talk to the student and/or guardians to learn how you can meet that student’s needs
  + A meeting early in the school year
    - Ask about things that work at home that may be helpful in the classroom
* De-mystify the disorder
  + Understand the individual students type, symptoms, and severity of FASD
  + Lean how the disorder may affect the student’s learning and well being so you can accommodate your teaching style
  + Understand that even though they look 15 they are not there cognitively
* Develop a personalized system of communication of how the student is feeling (via pictures, colours, or phrases) to be proactive and avoid negative situations.
* Always check for understanding.
  + May appear to be understanding but are not.
* Provide the student with FASD a copy of the notes or main objectives in a lesson
  + So they can pay attention rather than focusing on copying
* Set routines for lessons, classroom expectations, and daily/weekly routines
* Cognitively think of a student with FASD actions; as positive ones.
  + Seems like:
    - The Won’t 🡪 they may not be able to yet
    - Acting young 🡪 Developmentally younger
    - Refusing to sit still 🡪 Overstimulated/Overwhelmed
    - Annoying 🡪 Cant (or trying to) remember
    - Not trying 🡪 Exhausted or needs help getting started
* Relate information or the lesson to student’s prior knowledge or interests
* Calming corner
  + An area or space in your classroom where students can go for a quiet or less stimulating environment. Headphones can also be helpful.
    - Students with FASD can go to this corner when they feel overwhelmed or an episode of poor behavior coming to calm down. *Helps students with FASD to self regulate and monitor.*

## **Resources to use:**

## *Re-defining Success was incredibly informative and helpful*

* Re-defining Success: Supporting Students with FASD - Alberta Education 2009
  + <https://education.alberta.ca/media/385140/re-defining-success-supporting-students-with-fasd-2009.pdf>
* Teaching a Student with FASD - Alberta Education 2004
  + <https://education.alberta.ca/media/385139/teaching-students-with-fasd-2004.pdf>
* Government of Alberta statistics on FASD prevalence
  + <http://fasd.alberta.ca/fasd-in-alberta.aspx>
* Manitoba Education: What Educators Need to Know about FASD
  + <https://www.gov.mb.ca/healthychild/fasd/fasdeducators_en.pdf>