

Supporting Students with FND in Sustainable Ways

Supporting a student with Functional Neurological Disorder in school settings is often an ongoing process rather than a short-term intervention. Needs may fluctuate, and support strategies may need to change over time.

This guide focuses on **sustainability**. It is intended to help schools, educators, students, and families think about how support can be provided in ways that are realistic, consistent, and maintainable over time, without overextending students or staff.

Why Sustainability Matters in Educational Support

FND symptoms can vary in intensity and presentation. This variability means that support plans may require adjustment rather than fixed solutions.

Sustainable support may help:

- reduce repeated crisis responses
- lower the risk of exhaustion or burnout for students and staff
- support participation in education over time
- make support more consistent when symptoms fluctuate

Sustainability benefits everyone involved.

Setting Realistic Expectations From the Start

Clear and realistic expectations help prevent frustration and misunderstanding.

This may involve:

- acknowledging that needs may change over time
- avoiding assumptions about linear improvement
- focusing on access and participation rather than constant output

Realistic expectations support steadier engagement and trust.

Using Flexible, Reviewable Support Plans

Support strategies are easier to maintain when they can be reviewed and adjusted.

Helpful practices may include:

- regular check-ins rather than permanent plans
- flexibility around attendance, workload, or pacing
- adjusting supports based on the student's reported needs, agreed support plan, and barriers noticed at school
- how the student prefers to communicate their needs and what support is available when communication is difficult

Reviewing support does not mean failure. It reflects responsiveness to changing needs.

Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities

Sustainable support depends on clear roles.

It can help to clarify:

- what educators are responsible for
- what families or caregivers are responsible for
- adjusting supports based on the student's reported needs, agreed support plan, and barriers noticed at school

Clear roles reduce role strain and support consistency.

Supporting Educator Capacity as Part of Student Support

Educator capacity is directly connected to the quality of student support.

Sustainable approaches may include:

- clear boundaries around availability
- shared responsibility across staff where possible
- avoiding informal expectations that cannot be maintained

Protecting educator capacity helps ensure support remains consistent over time.

Avoiding Crisis-Driven Support Patterns

When support is only adjusted during crises, it can increase stress for everyone involved.

More sustainable approaches may include:

- proactive planning rather than reactive changes
- documenting agreed-upon strategies
- communicating changes clearly and in advance when possible

Consistency supports predictability and safety.

Reviewing and Adjusting Over Time

Sustainable support is not static.

It may be helpful to:

- review what is working and what is not
- adjust expectations as circumstances change
- recognize when support needs to be modified or reduced

Change is part of long-term support, not a setback.

Supporting Students Over Time

Supporting students with Functional Neurological Disorder in sustainable ways requires flexibility, clarity, and ongoing communication. When support is realistic and maintainable, students are more likely to remain engaged in education without unnecessary strain.

This guide is intended to support educational practice that balances student needs with long-term sustainability for everyone involved.

Explore more FND resources.

