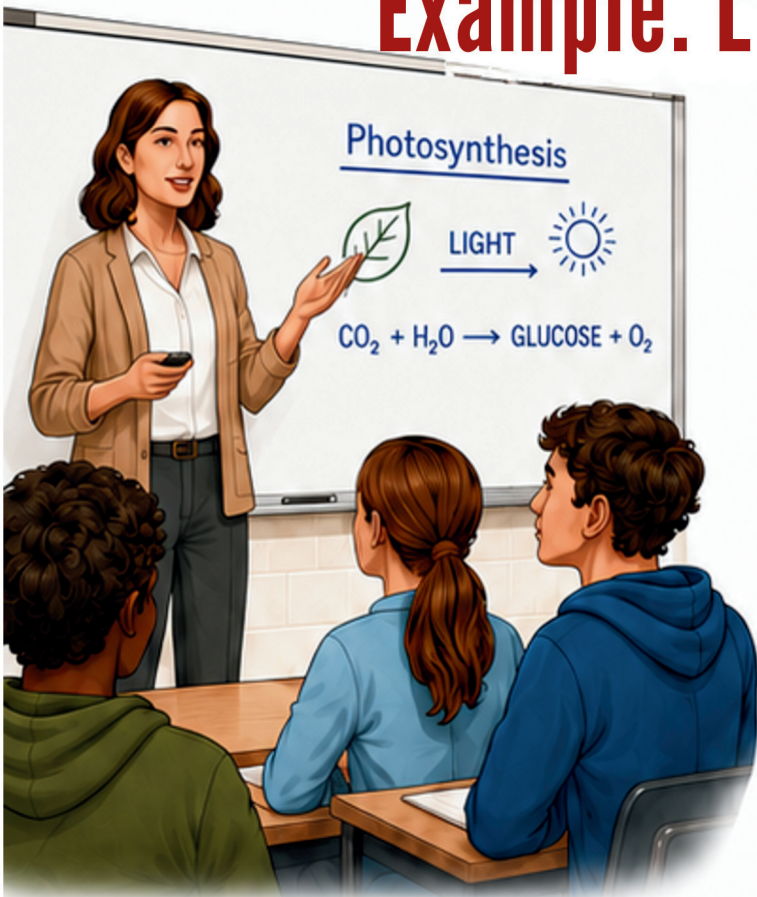


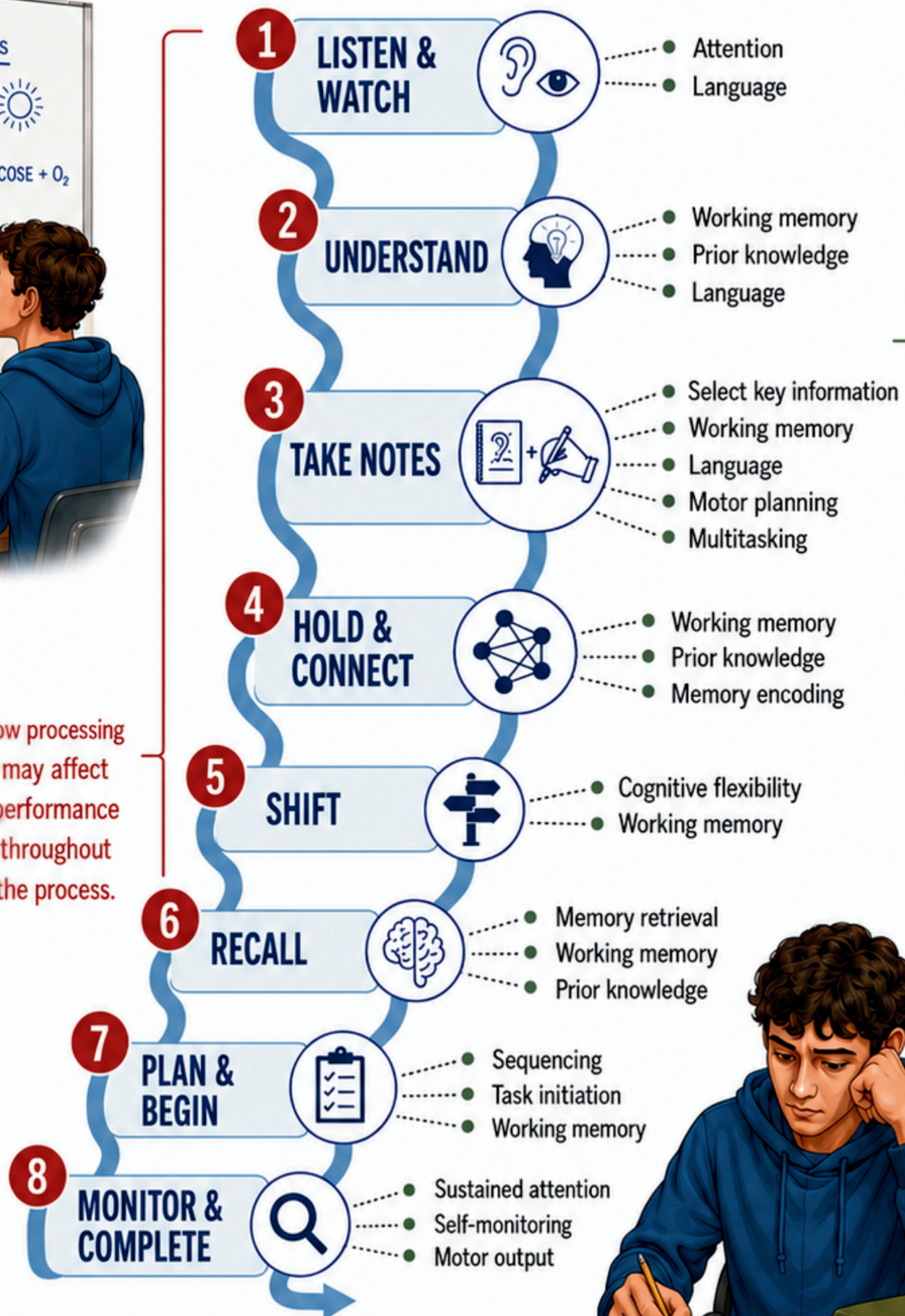
FASD: THE HIDDEN WORK OF LEARNING

Example: Lecture to Independent Work



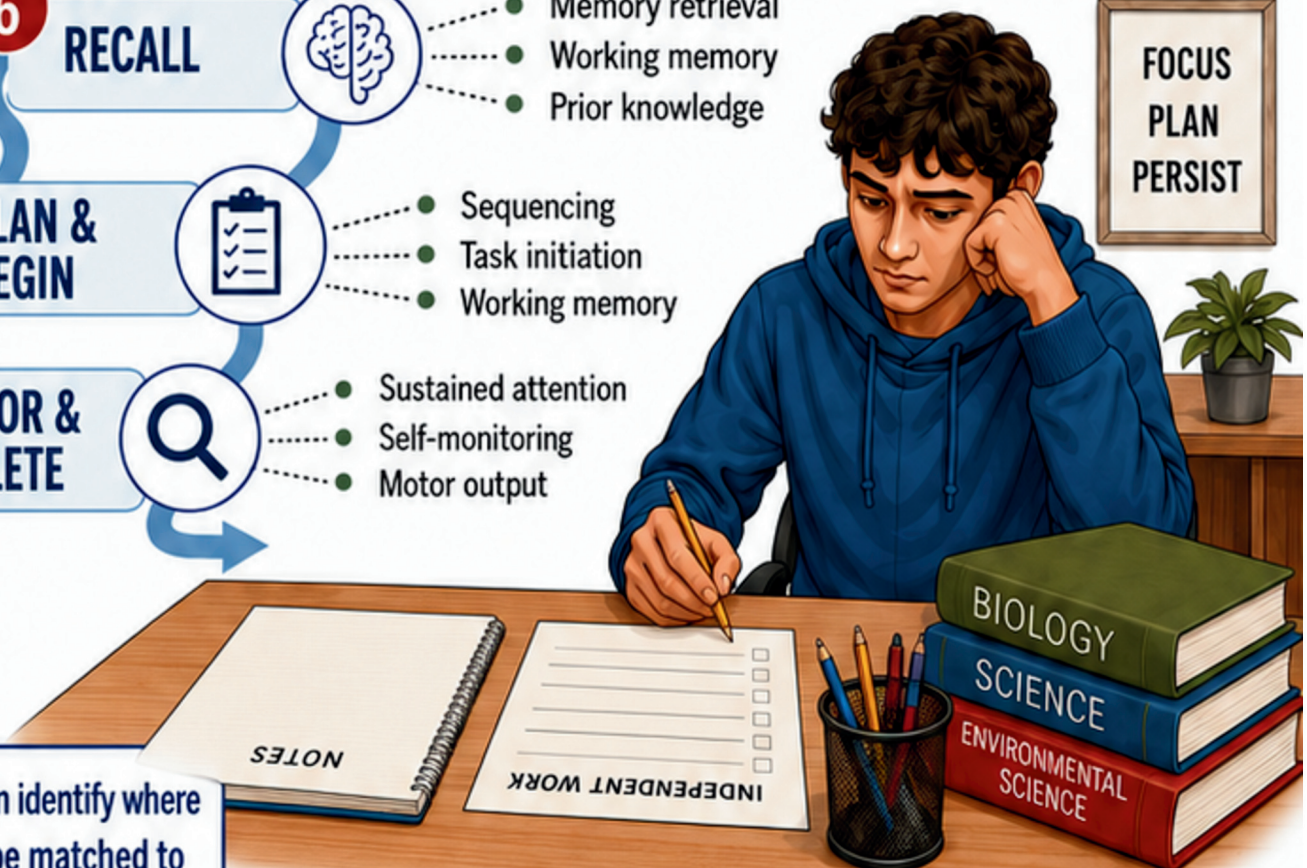

Learning in class is a complex process. Information must move through **many interacting brain systems** before a student can initiate, organize, and complete independent work.

Slow processing may affect performance throughout the process.



Executive functions coordinate many parts of the process.

FOCUS
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Thorough, FASD-informed assessment can identify where breakdowns occur, allowing support to be matched to the student's actual needs.



FASD: The hidden work of learning

Example: Lecture to independent work

A student listens to a lecture, takes notes, moves to a desk, and begins independent work. It may look like one ordinary classroom sequence, but it requires many brain functions to work together. Attention, language, processing speed, working memory, memory retrieval, motor planning, cognitive flexibility, task initiation, sequencing, and self-monitoring may all play a part. These are also common areas of concern for people with FASD.

Difficulty in one area can affect what happens next, and several areas may interact in ways that are not immediately visible. This is one example of the complexity of FASD.

Providing notes may reduce the demands of listening and writing at the same time. Sentence starters may support language and task initiation. A visual cue may help with recall or sequencing. Each support addresses a different part of the process, but no single strategy addresses the entire chain.

Understanding why a student is having difficulty is crucial. Support must be matched to the reason for the need. When the underlying difficulty is accurately identified and the right support is provided, that may be enough to promote learning. This is an important first step in understanding and supporting a student with FASD.

However, supports are not simply additive. When difficulties begin to pile up, connections between the task, the supports, and what to do next may be lost. The student may become confused or overwhelmed. Adding more prompts, checklists, visuals, or instructions can create even more information to process. Even appropriate strategies may not help if the student cannot access them or connect them to what is needed in the moment.

This is when informed human support becomes critical. A person who understands the student can recognize where the process is breaking down, reduce demands, reconnect the steps, and help the student find a way forward. When the person providing support does not understand the student's needs, the interaction itself may become confusing, frustrating, or frightening.

Effective support requires understanding where breakdowns are occurring, how different brain functions are interacting, and what the individual student needs. A thorough FASD-informed assessment is an important first step, but assessment alone is not enough.

Support is also built through relationship and trust. A student may know that something is not working without being able to identify or explain what is wrong. Remaining curious, calm, and helpful communicates that you are on their side. When a student feels understood and supported, they may be more able to accept help, work through difficulty, and try again with you.