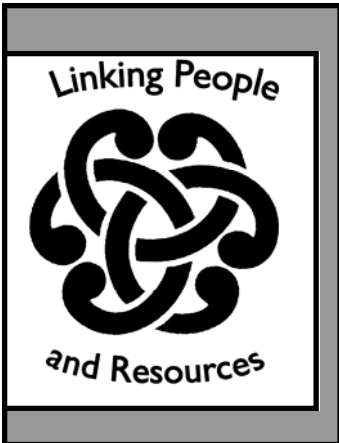


Regional Wrap-Up

Region 5 T/TAC @ JMU

A Cure for the Common Professional Development

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By this point in the year, every teacher around the country has received some form of staff development. Just thinking about attending another lengthy in-service can trigger feelings of anxiety and even hostility. The fact of the matter is that all of us have experienced at one time or another how difficult it can be to sit through typical professional development. This is especially true when we find ourselves tuning out a presenter who comes across as pretentious and disconnected with his or her audience. Other times, we question whether the information being presented truly addresses our students' needs. For those who have been around long enough to see failed mandates come and go, it begs the question whether "this too shall pass." Unfortunately, these negative experiences, which are all too common, are the product of one-shot sessions and poorly planned initiatives.

Research has consistently shown that traditional forms of professional development lead to an implementation rate that is no higher than 10% (Bush, 1984). "The old model of an expert talking to a room full of strangers is in some cases literally worse than nothing, leaving teachers frustrated, disappointed, insulted – feeling worse off than before the session," (Knight, 2007, p. 2). Addressing the need for effective teacher support can be an overwhelming challenge particularly when schools are also dealing with the pressures of meeting AYP. In fact, many districts find a false sense of security in adopting a heavy load of initiatives each year in the hopes of improving test scores. However, without a well-informed plan for building skill capacity and sustaining fidelity of an instructional approach, these initiatives run the risk of

quickly failing. This only contributes to the ongoing cycle of frustration that so many teachers experience since their plates are already full.

To find a solution to this issue, one must begin by looking at what research has to say about effective teacher support. Based on intensive studies from Pathways to Success, a partnership project between the Kansas University Center for Research on Learning and the Topeka, Kansas school district, instructional coaching consistently yielded an 85% implementation rate (Knight, 2007). These results indicate that instructional coaching is an effective and viable means of addressing the professional development needs of teachers.

For some, the term *coach* can have a negative connotation as it conjures up images of an intimidating and overly critical personality. On the contrary, an instructional coach is often trained to perform as a *non-evaluative collaborator* who provides confidential feedback and positive teacher support in order to help identify and implement scientifically proven instructional interventions that effectively address student needs. In addition, coaches assist school administrators in reaching student achievement goals by designing and facilitating professional development, collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data, and serving as a resource for research-based tools and strategies. While the exact roles and responsibilities of an instructional coach may vary from school to school, there are several common factors that contribute to their successful collaboration with teachers.

Cont.....

A Cure for the Common Professional Development

In his book, *Instructional Coaching: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction*, Jim Knight, a Research Associate at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, has proposed seven key principles for building a strong partnership between the school-based coach and the classroom teacher. Violating any one of these principles, which are listed below, could potentially harm the coaching relationship and compromise any future opportunities for mutual professional growth.

1. Equality: Instructional Coaches and Teachers Are Equal Partners
2. Choice: Teachers Have Choice Regarding What and How They Learn
3. Voice: Coaches Empathetically Listen so as to Empower and Respect the Voices of Teachers
4. Dialogue: Natural Conversations Occur to Inquire about Each Other's Point of View
5. Reflection: Teachers Have Freedom to Consider Ideas before Adopting or Rejecting Them
6. Praxis: Teachers Apply Their Learning to Their Real-Life Practice as They Are Learning
7. Reciprocity: Instructional Coaches Expect to Learn from the Collaborative Experience Just as Much as the Classroom Teacher

These seven principles are not intended to be seen as a definitive list and can certainly be expanded upon to address individual coaching situations. Nevertheless, they serve as a guide and reminder that in order for any real change to occur, whether at a social or personal level, certain ideas must be embraced. Otherwise, if we fail to guard against complacency and uninformed attitudes, we create a future that has little or no prospect for any relevant improvement. . Therefore, ongoing communication and self-reflection are essential for guiding the growth of both the classroom teacher and the school-based coach.

As a result, not only does this powerful collaborative effort lead to strengthened instructional practice and higher student achievement, but it ultimately transforms school culture through an innovative and research-based approach to professional development.

References:

Bush, R. N. (1984). *Effective staff developments in making our schools more effective: Proceedings of three state conferences*. San Francisco: Far West Laboratories.

Knight, J. (2007). *Instructional coaching: A partnership approach to improving Instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

TeacherTube (at <http://www.teachertube.com>) is a new educational web site that has been getting a lot of praise since its launch back in March. Similar to YouTube but for teachers, this free service allows anyone to share and learn teaching ideas through uploaded video presentations. Some are obviously more professional looking than others but the concept has tremendous potential for our video-driven generation of learners.

Mark your calendars!



The *Seventh Annual Raising the Bar Conference*, sponsored by the Baird Attention and Learning Disabilities Center and the Region 5 T/TAC at

James Madison University, will be held on March 20, 2008 at JMU. Join researchers, physicians, educators, clinicians, and students to learn more about helping youth with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Plan now to attend this day long event! For more details, visit the web site: <http://chp.cisat.jmu.edu/raisingthebar.html>.

April 28, 2008: *Understanding the Spectrum: The Strategies That Work. De-mystifying Autism*. Presented by Bill Stillman. Sponsored by Region 5 T/TAC & Shenandoah Valley Autism Program. Festival Conference & Student Center, JMU, Harrisonburg.

June 23-27, 2008: *9th Annual Content Teaching Academies*. Sponsored by JMU College of Education, VA Dept. of Education, and Region 5 T/TAC. Held on the campus of JMU, Harrisonburg



Tuition Assistance Available Once Again

The Tuition Assistance Program for Early Childhood Special Educators (preschool) was posted on September 21, 2007 at

<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/suptsmemos/2007/inf203.html>

The 2007-2008 Tuition Assistance Program for Special Educators teaching school-age students (ages 5 to 21) in Virginia public schools was posted for September 21, 2007 at

<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/suptsmemos/2007/inf204.html>

Please read the memo and application carefully for details of the program. Because of the number of requests, the following priorities have been made for special educators teaching school age (5-21 years) students in an accredited public K-12 school in Virginia:

1. Funds are available for full-time paraprofessionals enrolled in undergraduate or graduate courses related to special education areas.

2. Eligible teachers teaching special education students ages 5-21 must hold a valid conditional or provisional license and courses must lead to special education competencies for the endorsement found on the license.

3. Eligible teachers may not participate in another personnel preparation program where tuition assistance is provided by VA Department of Education.

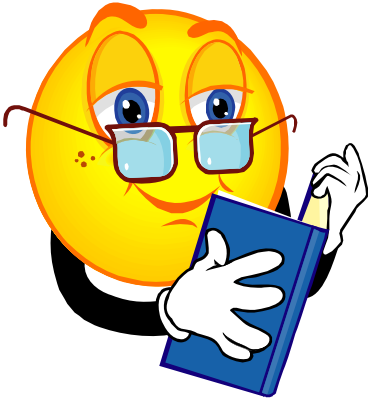
4. No applications will be considered after the last day on which a course meets.

All eligible educators and paraprofessionals are encouraged to apply for tuition assistance as soon as they have enrolled in courses. Funds are limited for each 2007-2008 semester. The notification of the status of each application will be sent within 14 days of receipt of the application to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). If status notification is not received from the VDOE, contact the employing school division central office to ensure that the application has been submitted.

For further information, contact Dr. Patricia D. Burgess, Special Education Human Resources Development, Virginia Department of Education, at 804.225.2096 or <pat.burgess@doe.virginia.gov>.



OFF THE SHELF



CRG 053 ~ Tomlinson, C.A., & Strickland, C. A. (2005). *Differentiation in practice: A resource guide for differentiating curriculum. Grades 9-12*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Teachers find themselves overloaded with research, theory, and overview information concerning the topic of differentiation. This how-to-book is designed to assist teachers in answering the many questions regarding how to design and implement differentiated curriculum.

Dedicated to providing models of differentiated units of study, these “teacher-friendly” units of study include a unit introduction, overview chart, description, and commentary which focus on generic standards, differentiation strategies, and other resources.

CRG 047 ~ Chapman, C., & King, R. (2003). *Differentiated instructional strategies for reading in the content areas*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

This resource provides teachers with ideas and approaches for integrating phonics, word analysis, vocabulary development, and comprehension strategies into subject-area instruction. Each chapter offers samples, suggestions, applications, assessments, and lists that can be used in any classroom. Some focus points include methods for creating a climate for reading, assessing students’ reading abilities, and teaching essential reading strategies.

CRZ 016 ~ Forte, I., & Frank, M. (2003). *If you’re trying to get better grades and higher test scores: Science*. Nashville, TN: Incentive Publications.

The format of this book is Get Ready...Get Set...Get Sharp! The Get Ready component focuses on helping students become more motivated and develop organizational skills for success. Get Set helps students refresh their science tools with tables and formulas for area, volume, mass, time, Metric, etc. It reviews thinking skills such as information recall, cause and effect, compare and contrast, reasoning and evaluative skills, includes study skills for careful reading, note taking, test preparation and test taking. The Get Sharp component focuses on science concepts and processes. The page layout and visuals provide guided instruction through the various science processes. The text can serve as a student resource to reinforce topics, see different examples, obtain content clarification, or review a particular science topic.

CRR 076 ~ Tankersley, K. (2005). *Literacy strategies for grades 4–12: Reinforcing the threads of reading*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Tankersley addresses various issues that struggling older readers (grade 4-12) typically face, offers strategies for motivation, and provides suggestions for being proactive in meeting their needs. Strategies to address fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension are presented in a practical, easy-to-use format. In the final chapter, suggestions for higher order thinking are delineated based on a *new* version of Bloom’s Taxonomy.

CRQ 014 ~ Horstmeier, D. (2004). *Teaching math to people with Down syndrome and other hands-on learners*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House.

Teaching Math to People with Down Syndrome and Other Hands-on Learners focuses on teaching practical math skills that enable students to become independent in daily living skills. The book covers a continuum of math skills from pre-number concepts to money to standards-based mathematics learning. Each chapter begins with a pre/post checklist followed by an overview of the concept. Horstmeier provides specific objectives that can be tied to existing math curriculum or specific individualized education program goals along with detailed lesson plans.

The book also comes with reproducible materials that link to the various lesson plans. Concrete examples for parents to extend the learning at home are included. This resource is best suited for students in the elementary grades.

CRZ 008 ~ Koralek, D., & Colker, L.J. (Eds.). (2003). *Spotlight on young children and science*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

The articles in this collection focus on innovative approaches for making early science experiences an exciting adventure. Several articles focus on specific strategies such as using digital photography to become observers and problem-solvers, and studying insects and butterflies to get keep detailed records about scientific discoveries through drawing, writing, and dictation. Two articles describe science as part of an integrated curriculum, and how science can be used as a foundation for teaching literacy skills. A Quick Recipe Science Unit is introduced as a way to integrate science in lessons that may take only 45 to 90 minutes over a three to five day period. All the articles “reinforce the idea that children can best learn science when it is presented through hands-on, meaningful, and relevant activities” (p.3.).

CRW 004 ~ Chapman, C., & King, R. (2003). *Differentiated instructional strategies for writing in the content areas*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

This book addresses the essential need for students to become active communicators in today’s world of technology. It provides writing strategies and ideas that apply to any content area, as well as meet the needs of today’s diverse learners. It includes writing activities such as poetry adapted for content, creative research contracts, unique journaling ideas, and character spotlights. The activities included will motivate the most reluctant writers.

CRR 048 ~ Bender, W. N. & Larkin, M. J. (2003). *Reading strategies for elementary students with learning difficulties*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press

Bender and Larkin have created a user-friendly book for teaching reading to students with disabilities. It divides the information into six areas including: the reading brain and literacy instruction, phonemic awareness, phonics and word attack skills, strategies to build fluency and vocabulary, gaining meaning from reading, and reading comprehension in content areas. Each section contains information and reflective exercises to allow the reader time to contemplate the ideas presented. Some of the reflective exercises also contain strategy ideas for teachers’ consideration. The book includes a Facilitator’s Guide to direct workshop activities.

CRR 079 ~ Tate, M. L. (2005). *Reading and language arts worksheets don’t grow dendrites: 20 literacy strategies that engage the brain*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

This book focuses on brain-based literacy strategies for grades K-12 using various modalities such as visuals, writing, music, and movement. It is divided into reading strategies and language arts strategies. Each section provides relevant research and strategic activities, as well as reflection and application for each strategy introduced. The reflection and application pages provide the educator with an opportunity to write and reflect on how to use the strategies related to the objectives/standards that must be taught. This is a practical resource that is dedicated to hands on literacy techniques that apply to the way students learn to read.

DSA 057 ~ Hoopman, K. (2001). *Of mice and aliens: An Asperger adventure*. Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

This book is part of the Aspergers Adventures that includes 2 additional books, *Blue Bottle Mystery* and *Lisa and the Lacemaker*. *Of Mice and Aliens* is a science fiction novel for kids with a difference. The humorous parallels between the alien's inability to relate to humans and Ben's own idiosyncrasies highlight the difficulties kids with Asperger syndrome face every day. *Of Mice and Aliens* can be a valuable teaching tool that demystifies children with Asperger syndrome, justifying their individuality as valid and interesting.

CRR 149 ~ Let's Explore the Jungle with Buzzy [Computer software]. (1995). Woodinville, WA: Humongous Entertainment & Random House.

This PC/Mac compatible software is ideal for children ages 3-8. It is a game format and explores the jungles of Asia, Africa, and the Amazon with fun facts, coloring activities, and lots of information about animals. The program has the option of "reading" the text. Icons are easy to understand and are large enough for small hand users. This is an excellent way to review and practice information about plants and animals and their habitat.



TCS 015 ~ Switchit Weather [Computer software]. (2002). Oldham, UK: Inclusive Technology Ltd.

Students can access this software program using a single switch, two switches, touch screen, Intel-likeys and/or a mouse. The program explores the theme of weather and its effects by introducing and demonstrating specific language concepts. It includes information about rainbows, thunderstorms, and other weather-related phenomena. Options include the ability to save information for particular students or a group and use of the information in flash card, pictures and stories. The software is both PC and Mac compatible.

CRZ 010 ~ Switching On Science: Earth [Computer software]. (2005). Omaha, NE: Soft-Touch.

CRZ 011 ~ Test Me: Earth [Computer software]. (2005). Omaha, NE: SoftTouch.

This software includes units on water, air, land, and natural disasters. Each unit has nine activities from which you choose the vocabulary level your student(s) needs. The images can be narrated in short phrases, short sentences, or longer sentences with more detail. Access is by using a mouse, joystick, touch window, or switch. This software is one of a series from SoftTouch software which includes: *Switching on Science: Habitats* and *Switching on Science: Solar System*. After instruction and practice with the content, the student's understanding of the information can be assessed with the SoftTouch software *Test Me: Earth*. Overlays can be ordered if the student needs to access the computer differently than the devices listed.

VDOE Region 5 T/TAC Web site and Phone Number:

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