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THE T/TAC TELEGRAM



PROMOTING Literacy

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Is Fundamental

Efficient and Effective: The
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Content Literacy: You
Can't Have One Without
the Other!

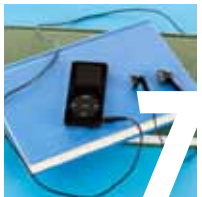
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Northwestern Consortium T/TAC

This newsletter is a collaborative effort by the Northwestern Consortium of the T/TACs, which includes James Madison University, co-directed by Cheryl Henderson and Melinda Bright, and George Mason University, directed by Lynn Wiley.

VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION IS FUNDAMENTAL

Melinda Bright, M.Ed., Co-Director, VDOE Region 5 T/TAC@James Madison University

Struggling readers make up about one-fourth of the secondary school student population and hail from a variety of subgroups to include students who are second language learners, students who are marginalized from the culture of the school, students with disabilities, and students who have received inappropriate reading instruction (Southwest Educational Laboratory, 2000). The challenge for secondary educators to foster an environment which provides opportunities for these students to master content knowledge is exacerbated by the slow reading fluency rates and low comprehension levels for grade level text. In this age of accountability, it must be the responsibility of all teachers to meet the needs of readers at all levels in an effort to move them toward their reading potential.

Multiple dimensions of reading contribute to the problems of struggling readers. Within that realm, the ability to unlock words and their meanings is essential to reading comprehension; therefore, it is imperative that secondary teachers plan meaningful vocabulary instruction for struggling readers. Providing explicit instruction and intensive practice are key tenets in facilitating mastery of key vocabulary for these students.

Teachers may use the following guidelines to provide this instruction and practice:

- Studies show that students must be exposed to a word in context at least six times to gain enough experience to remember its meaning.
- Instruction in new words enhances learning those words in context. Even a minimal amount of superficial instruction has been shown to improve students' chances of understanding words in context. The ability to comprehend new words has been shown to increase by a factor of one third.
- Associating an image with a new word is one of the best ways to learn it.
- Research shows that direct vocabulary instruction does increase student comprehension of new material.
- Student achievement will increase by 33 percentile points when vocabulary instruction focuses on specific words that are vital to students learning new content (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001).

Typically, in a secondary classroom setting, students “learn” new content vocabulary by looking at the new word, hearing it, pronouncing it with the teacher, spelling it, writing it, looking it up in a dictionary or glossary, and using it in a sentence. There is nothing wrong with this method, but it should not be used relentlessly. A six-step

process for teaching vocabulary has been researched by Marzano (2009). The findings indicate that it works with every grade level, and it works better if all the steps are used.

1. Present students with a brief explanation, example, or description of the new term or phrase.
2. Have students restate the explanation, example, or description in their own words.
3. Ask students to create their own nonlinguistic representation of the term or phrase.
4. Periodically engage students in activities that help them add to their knowledge of the term.
5. Have students discuss the term with one another.
6. Involve students in games that allow them to play with the term.

Simply using a strategy does not guarantee success. Marzano cautions that it is how one uses the strategy that determines the type of results. Regarding the six-step process, the first three steps should be used when introducing a new term or phrase. A few days later, the teacher should use steps 4-6 in any order to review and increase student recall. Marzano also points out that step 3 is crucial, and when students do this step well, achievement soars.

Furthermore, words should be taught in a variety of ways to meet the needs of diverse learners and to maintain interest. For example, Chapman and King (2003) suggest assigning each student a word to teach to others using one of the methods from the Learn a Word Choice Board illustrated below (p. 90).

These activities provide a means of adding contextual information, which will improve comprehension when the words are encountered in the future.

For more ideas and strategies to vary and enhance direct vocabulary instruction, please consult the following resources in the Region 5 T/TAC@JMU lending library, which can be accessed at <http://www.jmu.edu/ttac>.

Forte, I., & Frank, M. (2003). *If you're trying to get better grades and higher test scores: Reading & language*. Nashville, TN: Incentive Publications.

Higgins, J., McConnell, K., Patton, J. R., & Ryser, G. R. (2003). *Practical ideas that really work for students with dyslexia and other reading disorders*. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Moss, B. (2003). *25 strategies for guiding readers through informational texts*. San Diego, CA: Academic Professional Development.

Silver, J. (2002). *Real-life reading activities for grades 6-12*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Taylor, S.E., Frackenpohl, H., White, C. E., Nieroroda, B. W., Browning, C. L., & Birsner, E. P. (1989). *EDL core vocabularies in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies*. Orlando, FL: Steck-Vaughn.

Additional resources are also available from the Region 4 T/TAC@GMU lending library, which can be accessed at <http://kihd.gmu.edu/library>.

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- Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. (2000). *Building reading proficiency at the secondary level*. Washington, DC: United States Department of Education, Office of Education Research and Improvement.

Connect the word with something in the student's world and discuss it.	Locate the word in the text, and read the paragraph to get context meaning.	Create a design that depicts the meaning of the word.
Make a mnemonic to remember the word and its meaning.	Make a word puzzle or game.	Contrast the word with something else.
Write a poem with the word, its meaning, and facts about the word. Illustrate it.	Tell a story using the word three times in the plot.	Teach the word and its meaning in a memorable way to a classmate.
Explain how the word is used in the text.	Divide the word into syllables. Chant and tap syllables.	Create a song, poem, cheer, or rap using the word as the topic.
Role play the meaning.	Design a banner or flag for the word.	Sell the word by writing an ad for it.

(Chapman & King, 2003)

Once upon a Time....Storytelling for Teaching and Developing Early Literacy Learning

Cathy Cook, M.Ed., Coordinator, VDOE Region 5 T/TAC@James Madison University

A decade ago I taught middle school Language Arts and I struggled with one particular period of seventh grade students. More than half of them read on a middle elementary level and four out of the 21 students had IEPs. I was determined to find a creative activity to stimulate their imaginations and to teach them to write in complete sentences at journal time. I brought in a poster of a young girl who was sitting on a beach and writing letters with her finger in the sand. I asked the class to imagine what she could be thinking and writing in the sand. I was thrilled to have their attention immediately. The class stayed engaged and after asking questions, exploring possibilities, and sharing several prompts, the students invented a story together and had a great time retelling versions of the story to partners in class.

I wish I could *tell* you and not just write the words to describe this experience. Face to face, you would see the excitement in my expression and you would hear the joy in my voice. There is real power in *the telling* of a story. When the storyteller is in the company of the listener, varies the volume of sound, and uses inflection to make the words “work,” the listener is actively involved. More can be said in telling a story than the written word can express. I love to see a teacher who is really familiar with the book she is reading to the class. She presents it with expression and looks up from the text to see the children. She scans her

audience and uses facial expressions to gain and hold their attention. The words are real and in the moment. The reading comes to life as she makes the story her own and the children become a part of the story that they are hearing.

The experience of storytelling is a social experience when information is received from a “real” person in close proximity. This is a teaching opportunity that allows the adult to model appropriate speaking and listening behavior while engaging with a child. Using intonation, facial expression, and body language the storyteller brings the child into a relationship of sharing and communication.

Storytelling as a practice for teaching has an additional benefit because the story, itself, may convey a social “lesson.” A presentation from the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) declares, “Storytelling offers an opportunity to support children’s social-emotional development by building self-esteem and giving legitimacy to cultural practices and traditions”(Connors-Tadros & Yates, 2003). The research supporting the value of storytelling for social-emotional development is substantial and as an example of how effective stories can be, The Gray Center and CSEFEL recommend the intentional use of social “narratives.” As defined by The Gray Center, “A

Social Story™ describes a situation, skill, or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives, and common responses in a specifically defined style and format”(Gray, 1991). Using stories to give information and support understanding is a well-established teaching strategy that is critical in the preschool classroom.

When a child hears and understands a story, he or she is gaining experience with oral language. According to a preschool policy brief published by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), “Oral language development is facilitated when children have many opportunities to use language in interactions with adults and each other and when they listen and respond to stories. Young children build vocabulary when they engage in activities that are cognitively and linguistically stimulating by encouraging them to describe events and build background knowledge” (Strickland & Riley-Ayers, 2006). Children have the opportunity to hear new and familiar words pronounced correctly and see gestures that put language in context as a story unfolds. In *A Review of Exemplary Practices in Early Literacy* the authors for Thrive by Five Washington write, “The process of sharing oral stories, oral traditions, and personal narratives with infants and young children fosters positive affect for dialogue, builds motivation for a narrative style of communication, supports expressive and receptive vocabulary development, and has

been demonstrated to improve story comprehension in pre-school children (Zassow, Joachim, & Blasingame, 2010; Cutspec, 2006; Isbell et al., 2004).”

When a teacher plans the day for children who come for breakfast, play outside, interact in centers, settle for naps, and transition between each of these activities, the use of oral language is abundant. Directions are given, questions are answered, and active learning takes place. As a compliment to each of these daily activities storytelling can enhance early learning. A conversation at meal time, on the playground, or during center time encourages a child to *become* the storyteller. The story in this circumstance is not a narrative but a series of responses to prompts. A *CELLnotes* summary from the Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) recommends using an interactive technique at reading or story time that includes “elaboration, expansion, and use of ‘Wh—’ words” to “broaden both print and linguistic concepts”(Trivette & Dunst, 2007). Planning for this deliberate interaction is the key and

writing teacher prompts in the lesson plans ensures that opportunities are not missed. Without having those prompts, ten years ago in a lesson plan for my seventh grade class, I would have lost their attention and their stories would have gone untold.

When you begin an interaction with “Once upon a time...” you can bet most preschool children will turn toward your words and listen, if they have had experience with this phrase. When you begin an interaction with a child by saying, “Tell me about the time you...” you may be in for a treat as that child puts into words his own story recalled or invented just for you. If your preschool student has never heard these words it is your responsibility to teach him or her that these words are a signal for story time, which is a great time for children to listen or speak and learn.

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Efficient and Effective: The Importance of Fluency in Reading

Kandy Grant, B.A., Coordinator, VDOE Region 5 T/TAC @ James Madison University

Some of the most vivid memories of my youth regard my years attending Wedgwood Middle School in Ft. Worth, Texas. I especially remember walking out to the mobile reading unit, climbing the rickety stairs, entering, and pulling the color-coded SRA reading card that was my assignment for the day. However, once a week, we did something different. That was the day we practiced our speed and accuracy in reading.

We arrived to a darkened classroom, took our seats, and soon words began appearing on the large white screen. These words were actually highlighted in a sentence, and we read an entire article, as the machine clicked and exposed each word briefly. Then we had a quiz over the information. It was nerve wrecking and I dreaded it every week.

Now, looking at it from a teacher's perspective, I realize my teacher was trying to build our fluency rate. However, fluency is much more than just being able to read quickly. Fluency involves accuracy and automaticity. Fluent readers decode words correctly and effortlessly. They adjust their reading rate according to purpose and the difficulty of the text. Fluency includes the added dimension of prosody, reading with smoothness, phrasing, and inflection. Finally, fluent readers successfully comprehend important ideas.

To further clarify these dimensions of fluency, let's look at the tasks required of the reader. First, s/he must have automaticity in letter and word recognition. With this, there is the capacity to read all or most of the words on the page. If the student incurs an unknown word, s/he must have the ability to quickly and seamlessly apply decoding skills to "unlock" the word. Having this capability, s/he can make oral reading more interesting by changing volume and expression while reading smoothly and with appropriate phrasing. Finally, a fluent reader has to be competent in reading words connected in text while knowing when to adjust his/her rate. Additionally, fluent readers have the ability to retell what they've read. Fluency plays a huge role in developing metacognitive readers. Students who know when they need to reread, slow their pace, use context clues and other resources are able to identify factors that influence their thinking.

With such significance connected to fluency, how do teachers help students become fluent readers? Exposing children to appropriate and inappropriate models of reading allows students to develop the concept of what a fluent reader does and does not sound like. Developing fluency requires explicit instruction, appropriate practice, and feedback. While practicing, it is important to consider reading level and the length

of the passage to ensure effective rehearsal at an instructional level. Short passages and poetry work well.

Explicit lessons and practice contain a variety of options including:

- **Repeated oral reading** - have students read and reread passages as they receive guidance and feedback
- **Tape/MP3 assisted reading** - have students read along with a recorded book or story as a model
- **Readers' Theatre** - using a dialogue-rich excerpt, students rehearse and perform it for an audience
- **Partner reading** - have students work in assigned pairs to read aloud to one another
- **More strategy ideas for teaching and practicing fluency can be found at:**

<http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=4367>

<http://www.readingresource.net/readingfluency.html>

<http://www.primary-education-oasis.com/reading-fluency-activities.html>

Our understanding and instructional methods for developing fluency

have changed over the years since my youth. While reading quickly is important to aide comprehension, fluency encompasses much more. With its impact on the development of comprehension and metacognition skills, it is vital that fluency be taught through direct instruction with monitored practice and feedback.

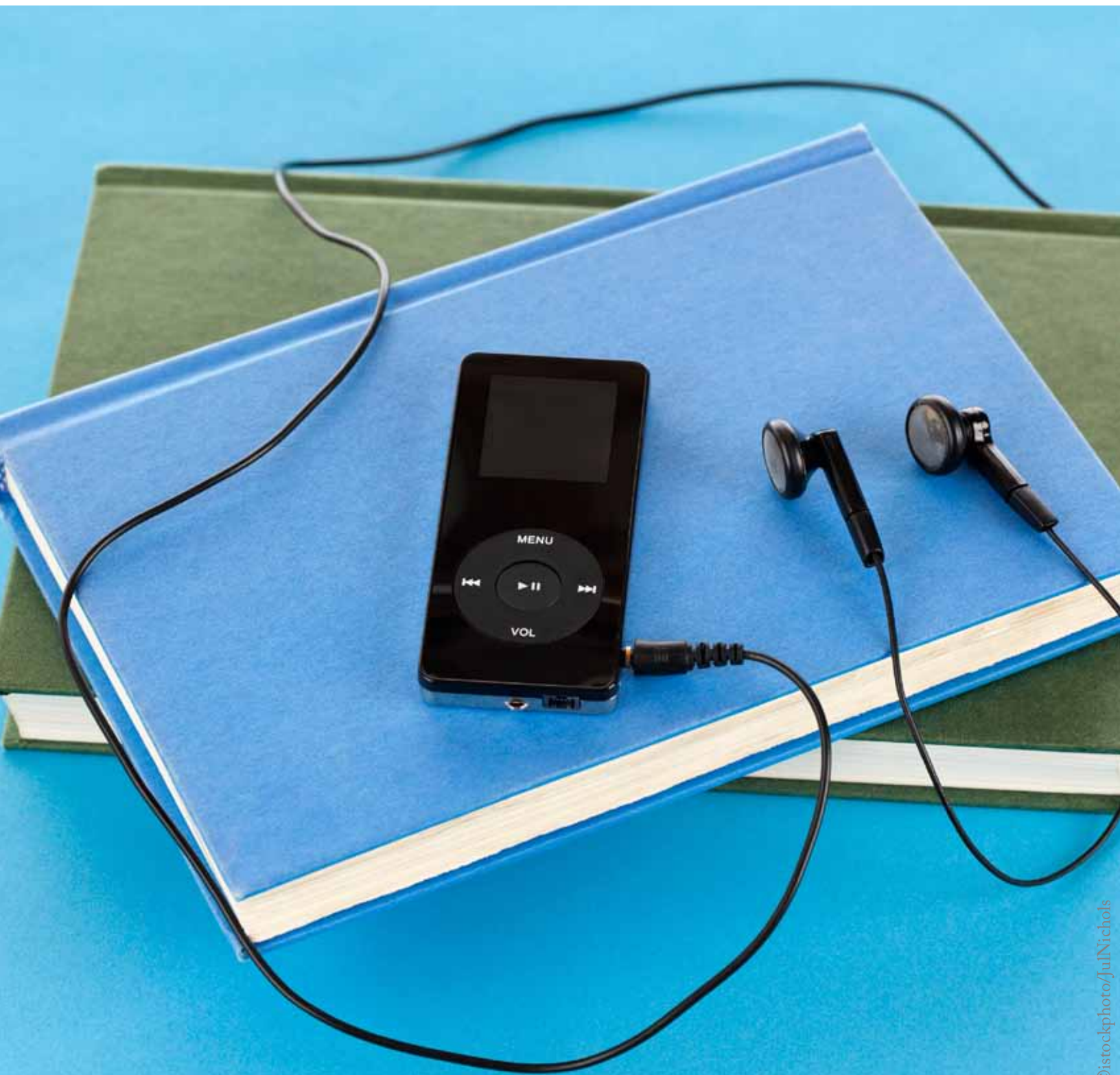
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“To Lead...or Not to Lead” Literacy

Gina Massengill, M.Ed., Coordinator, VDOE Region 5 T/TAC@James Madison University

The Merriam Webster Student

Dictionary defines “lead” in the following ways: 1a: to guide, especially by going in advance, b: to direct on a course or in a direction, c: to serve as a channel for, d: to lie, go, or open in a specified direction 2: to go through, 3a: to direct the activity of, b: to be first or best in, c: to be ahead of.

In order to move instructional leadership for literacy from vision to implementation, it is important for school leadership to “go in advance of,” “be first in,” and “direct the activity” of literacy in their buildings. Strong leadership from both administrators and teachers is an essential building block in constructing a successful literacy program, *but the role played by the principal is key to determining success or failure of the program* (NASSP, 2005).

Guiding Questions for the Literacy Leader

- **How has my leadership supported literacy efforts at our school?**
Do all teachers view literacy as an integral part of the academic program? What structures and resources have I put in place to encourage literacy for all?
- **What do our assessment scores reveal about our school’s literacy practices?**
How is data being used to guide our school improvement plan? Do teachers have access to the data and use it to guide their instructional practices?

- **What do I consider the key elements of our school’s professional development plan?**
How do data and student literacy needs guide the development of the plan? Does our school structure support professional development by allowing time for professional conversations, for examining student work, and for learning new literacy strategies?
- **Are content area teachers skilled at integrating literacy strategies into their daily lessons?**
What training have I provided for our teachers so they can be highly effective at delivering instruction in literacy in their content areas? Are our struggling students being taught by the most effective teachers?
- **What support does our school provide for students who are below grade level in literacy?**
Does the schedule provide these students with additional, not pull-out, time to improve their skills? Do teachers use instructional strategies that support struggling students as they read textbooks and other content-area material?

(Adapted from *Creating a Culture of Literacy: A Guide for Middle and High School Principals*, 2005, National Association of Secondary School Principals, p.5)

Action Steps for Literacy Leaders

The National Association of Secondary School Principals has outlined a set of action steps for literacy leaders. These steps are consistent with those identified by administrators who have led schools through the effort to establish the Content Literacy Continuum™ in their schools.

- **Determine the school’s capacity for literacy improvement prior to making changes in instruction or infrastructure.**
 - Identify the school’s strengths in the area of literacy.
 - Identify the school’s areas for improvement in the area of literacy.
 - Determine systems changes needed to support a literacy initiative.
- **Develop a Literacy Leadership Team.**
 - Identify content teachers, resource teachers, administrators, and others who are committed and motivated to improving literacy school-wide.
 - Set purpose and goals for the team.
 - Collect and analyze multiple forms of data to share with the staff.

- Develop and prioritize needs and determine how to meet those needs.
- Encourage staff to implement research-validated methods to increase literacy.
- **Create a collaborative environment that fosters sharing and learning.**
 - Establish a climate of collaboration and shared decision-making.
 - Provide opportunities for teachers to work together and to discuss issues.
 - Encourage collaborative practices, e.g., co-teaching, peer coaching, modeling, etc.
 - Build capacity by promoting literacy leadership skills within the faculty.
 - Celebrate success.
- **Develop a school-wide organizational model that supports extended time for literacy instruction.**
 - Examine the school structure to determine if there is sufficient time for literacy instruction.
 - Create periods for different levels of intensity of instruction.
 - Engage staff in decisions about how to change the schedule to provide more literacy instruction.
- **Analyze assessment data to determine specific learning needs of students.**
 - Use existing data to screen for students who are below grade level.
 - Administer quick, inexpensive assessments to conduct further screening.
 - Administer in-depth assessments to determine the strengths and weaknesses for those students who need intervention.
 - Determine how to use and share the assessment data.
- **Develop a school-wide plan to address the professional development needs of teachers.**
 - Focus professional development on research-validated practices that can be implemented school-wide for all teachers.
 - Target professional development for teachers who provide more intensive levels of literacy instruction.
 - Provide job-embedded support, coaching, and professional development.
 - Provide administrative support, e.g., classroom visits, verbal support, etc.
- **Create a realistic budget for literacy needs.**
 - Create a prioritized list of needs with the Literacy Leadership Team.
- Shift or locate funds to support immediate and long-term needs.
- Use federal funds, grants, business partnerships, and other external funds.
- **Develop a broad understanding of literacy strategies that work in the content-area classes.**
 - Become familiar with proven literacy practices and methods.
 - Develop talking points to support the selected practices.
 - Observe implementation in classrooms.
- **Demonstrate your commitment to the literacy program.**
 - Attend professional development sessions.
 - Discuss challenges with staff and assist in problem-solving.
 - Encourage staff to continue implementation in difficult periods.

(Leading a School-wide Literacy Effort, 2008)

Key Elements to Improve Middle and High School Adolescent Literacy Programs

Instructional Improvements	Infrastructure Improvements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct, explicit comprehension instruction • Effective instructional principles embedded in content • Motivation and self-directed learning • Text-based collaborative learning • Strategic tutoring • Diverse texts • Intensive writing • A technology component • Ongoing formative assessment of students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended time for literacy • Professional development • Ongoing summative assessment of students and programs • Leadership • Teacher teams • A comprehensive and coordinated literacy program

(Biancarosa & Snow, 2004)

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Improving Literacy for all Students Requires Shared Responsibility: Two Culpeper Schools Implement the Content Literacy Continuum™

Jocelyn Washburn, CLC Division Coordinator/SIM® Professional Developer and Coach, Culpeper County Public Schools, VA

Beginning in the spring of 2009, Culpeper Middle School (CMS) and Culpeper County High School (CCHS) embarked on an adventure to improve the literacy skills of all their students through the use of the Content Literacy Continuum™ (CLC). The CLC is a coordinated, school-wide approach, developed by the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, to increase reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking for all students in secondary schools, enabling them to reach high standards. The CLC provides a framework for school improvement that includes ongoing professional development, levels of support for diverse student needs, and a system for using student and intervention implementation data to drive instructional decisions. What's distinctive about the CLC is that it focuses all professional development around the common theme of literacy, while its application is unique within each discipline.

The CLC employs the use of the Strategic Instruction Model® (SIM®), as one of the evidence-based instructional methods, across all courses. SIM® is designed to promote effective teaching and learning of critical content. Teachers selected the Course Organizer Routine, Unit Organizer Routine, and Framing Routine as classroom routines and several Learning Strategies for students' independent use in reading content material. Administrators

and teacher leaders monitor implementation of SIM® and tailor it to Culpeper. All SIM® Content Enhancement Routines prompt the use of 21st Century Learning, higher order thinking skills, organization and study techniques.

The CLC dovetails nicely with a Response to Intervention (RtI) framework, identified as a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework in Culpeper. MTSS is a systematic approach to providing evidenced-based instruction along a continuum of services in response to student needs. The levels of the CLC can align with the tiers within an MTSS framework. The universal screening tool selected by Culpeper for all secondary students uses the Lexile system, which links text and readers under a common metric. The Lexile characterizes a reader with a measure and a text with a measure, meaning that teachers can use assessment to plan their instruction. This information helps teachers and the literacy leadership team determine which students need more or less support in the classroom or through an elective course focusing on a component of literacy.

Recently, a group consisting of fifteen Culpeper Middle School students came together to lead a project to increase student, parent, teacher, and community awareness of the CLC initiative in Culpeper. While discussing the CLC initiative, students wisely observed that literacy is more

than reading, and in fact, they have to read, write, speak, listen, and certainly *think* in every class. Several of the middle school students commented that "SIM® [Strategic Instruction Model®] helps us organize important information." The student led group, which is also in effect at Culpeper County High School, will launch a web site soon that will house their creative efforts to promote the CLC, such as cartoons, raps, videos, poems, artwork, and more. This web site will be accessible from the CMS and CCHS homepages.

To prepare students for work beyond high school, whether it is a career or college experience, we are compelled to encourage our students to grow beyond basic literacy into an advanced application of literacy skills with the complex text and subject matter. This effort requires all individuals in the school, parents, and community members to support the value of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking. To learn more about the work we are doing and to visit classrooms using SIM® in our schools, consider attending our CLC Demonstration Day on March 22, 2012. Visitors can register for the event through Superintendent's Memo #279-11 or by following this link: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2011/279-11.shtml.

CONTENT LITERACY: YOU CAN'T HAVE ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER!

Judy Adler Bland, M.A., Coordinator, VDOE Region 5 T/TAC@James Madison University

Content literacy is much more than reading. It is the ability to use reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking to acquire new information in a particular content area. As students move from class to class, they are presented with different text, language, content, complexity, and organization. Developing and applying strategies appropriate to each content area is crucial to a student's academic success. Although strategies learned in one area can often be adapted and applied to another, teaching students how to apply previously learned strategies is as important as teaching them new strategies. We know from experience that just because students have learned to read a graph in math doesn't mean they automatically apply those skills to reading a graph in social studies or science.

Content literacy includes general literacy skills, content-specific literacy skills (such as map reading in the social studies), and prior knowledge of content (McKenna & Robinson, 1990). Generally, students receive reading instruction through third grade. From fourth grade on, they are expected to use and apply these skills to acquire new critical information in a variety of content classes. As students advance in school, researchers suggest reading instruction should become more disciplinary, reinforcing and supporting students' academic performance (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

Although most students should come to our classes with the foundational literacy and certain prior knowledge, we know too well that is often not the case. Often the level of information students are expected to understand is above their oral language, adding another layer of difficulty to this complex process. It is helpful when the teacher knows each student's ability level in each component of literacy. Understanding this about our students will help us to create the most conducive learning climate. Setting high expectations while providing appropriate materials, strategies, and teaching techniques will promote content literacy and student learning. Graham & Perin's research reported in *Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools* (2007) demonstrates how writing enhances comprehension. It is not hard to understand how developing higher level skills in one area of literacy can positively impact the other areas.

If you are a content area teacher and have ever been frustrated because your students don't seem ready to learn, keep in mind that our role includes helping our students develop the literacy skills and strategies to acquire and apply the content we teach. "Teachers in "literacy rich" classes:

- Understand the literacy demands of their texts
- Provide guidance to students *before, during, and after* reading

- Provide multiple teacher models of how to process discipline specific text
- Focus classroom talk on how to make sense of text" (Winn, 2011)

Encourage your students to use reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking to learn and expand their content knowledge within and beyond the classroom. No matter how much direct instruction is provided, using literacy activities can provide valuable opportunities to deepen your students' understanding of the content. The way you support literacy in your content will impact your students' adult lives. Here are suggested activities that promote content literacy. Choose two or three strategies and try them several times in your classroom and see how they work for your students.

- Ask students to paraphrase what you have said or what they have read frequently throughout a class period. Using their own language helps them to "own" the information. Paraphrasing can be effective after students read one section, one or more paragraphs, or after you introduce small increments of content. Students can share with the whole class or with a partner as the teacher circulates around the room. This is a great formative assessment tool for the teacher to know at what

level the students have grasped certain concepts.

- Encourage discussion that involves analysis, synthesis, and application of content by asking questions like:
 - “How does this relate to what we studied previously, the article in today’s newspaper, or your opinion about. . .?”
 - “Why do you think he decided to. . .?”
 - “What would you do in this situation?”
 - “Based on previous experiments, how do you think these chemicals will react? Why?”

Formulating and expressing answers to these questions develops comprehension, critical thinking and application of content to real-life situations.

- Have students prepare a written summary of a topic. The summary can be read to a partner, to the class, or turned in to the teacher to be used as a gauge of student understanding and to guide future instruction.
- Have students complete one or more of the following statements. Their responses can be turned in as an exit pass and used to guide your instruction, and they can be jumping off points for more in depth learning. Responses can also be shared with a partner or small group:
 - Something I understand
 - Something I need a little more clarification of
 - Something I am totally confused about

○ Something I wonder about

- Teach students how to navigate and use the text and vocabulary for your content.
- Model, model, model. We learn so much by watching, whether it is watching athletes in action, or watching our parents drive or make scrambled eggs. Demonstrating how to approach a project, organize an assignment, write a lab report or an essay, or interpret text will help students learn the process and develop important skills related to your content. Demonstrating your thought process aloud will help students understand what you are thinking and how to approach the task.
- Provide lots of opportunity to practice. We all have had the opportunity to practice a skill until we learned it, like learning to play a song or learning to whistle, for example, without being expected to be completely competent. Practice gives us the opportunity to reflect and improve.
- Begin a new lesson or unit by doing an activity that generates interest and develops background that can be used as prior knowledge later in the unit.
- Build on prior knowledge – of any kind. Help students to build on any knowledge they have that can relate to the new content.
- When possible, embed specific literacy skills as needed for individual students into your instruction. Seek out your resource teachers for support in

planning instruction.

- Use graphic organizers. These visuals can guide students to sort new information, compare concepts, activate prior knowledge, and analyze relationships.
- Teach students effective note-taking methods for your content.

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Assistive Technology and Literacy

Carol A. Wiegler, M.A., Coordinator, VDOE Region 5 T/TAC@James Madison University

As Bob Dylan sang, “the times they are a changin’” and students with a disability now have more access to a wide and varied selection of assistive technology (AT) to address the challenges of reading and writing.

The proliferation of audio and digital text is now so common that all readers are taking advantage of this universal design. This has encouraged the widespread use of mobile handheld devices (i.e., iPad, Kindle, android, and iPhone) and for youth with learning disabilities it has reduced or eliminated the stigma often associated with some AT. Software (SOLO, Texthelp) and accessibility features on devices offer text-to-speech alternatives which give the user the ability to change the voice, speed, background color, font size, etc. Speech-to-text software (Dragon Dictate and others) gives the user the ability to dictate previously hand or keyboard written materials. The true advantage of these digital formats is the cost which has been greatly reduced (in some cases, free) over the past few years.

For youth with more complex needs or emerging literacy, interactive software and applications (iTunes or androids) can engage and inspire. Adaptive books, virtual pencil, picture symbols for writing and curricula designed specifically for this population (MEville to WEville, Star Reporter, etc.) have made literacy accessible.

How can educators and parents support youth with disabilities in selecting and using AT for literacy?

- Assistive Technology teams or support personnel (speech language pathologists, reading specialists, etc.) within school divisions can help with decision-making about the selection, use, and service of appropriate technology. Understanding each student’s unique learning style and needs, knowing where and when the technology will be used, evaluating the specific task(s) involved, and then deciding on the appropriate AT is best practice (SETT Framework: <http://www.joyzabala.com/>).
 - The Accessible Instructional Materials Center (AIM VA: <http://kihd.gmu.edu/aim>) will produce and deliver alternative formats to students with an IEP or 504 Plan indicating the need for alternatives, including textbooks and assigned novels.
 - The lending libraries at regional T/TACs have a variety of materials and devices available for school divisions to borrow and try (<http://ttaconline.org> to find your regional T/TAC).
 - Many public libraries now have e-books that can be checked out and used on computers and handheld devices so that youth can also enjoy reading for pleasure.
- Resources on AT and literacy:
- Techmatrix (<http://www.techmatrix.org>) offers multiple topics and suggestions for struggling readings and writers and information for educators and parents on guides to choosing the best technology.
 - Accessibility features which enables users to access text-to-speech, voice, and speed options, etc.: Apple: <http://www.apple.com/accessibility/>, Windows: <http://www.microsoft.com/enable/products/windowsxp/default.aspx>, Kindle: <http://www.amazon.com/gp/featurehtml?ie=UTF8&docId=1000632481>
- Writing supports:
- Suggestions to support the creative and physical issues of writing: <http://www.adlit.org/article/33078/>
 - Information: http://www.cited.org/index.aspx?page_id=108
- Reading supports:
- Overview of AT for reading: <http://www.ldonline.org/article/33077/>
 - AT tools for reading: http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/DMGetDocument.aspx/AT_Devices_to_Support_Reading.pdf?p=6CC6799F8C1371F6430622907ED6387EFF83C5F2F5DEB61663F1F60267BFC9BF&Type=D
- Overview of Assistive Technology:
- Virginia Assistive Technology Web site: <http://ttaconline.org/atstdp/>

**ANNOUNCING THE
2011 – 2012
SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY**

All parents of school-aged children and youth who receive special education services in Virginia's schools are encouraged to complete the Department of Education's **annual** Parent Involvement Survey. This survey is not intended to measure satisfaction with the special education program. It is designed to determine whether or not the school facilitated parent involvement. The English and Spanish versions of the survey have been combined into one survey with both languages.

If you are unable to take the survey online, your child's school will provide paper versions for your use. All paper versions of the survey will include a pre-addressed postage paid return envelope. All responses will be sent directly to the Virginia Department of Education.

If you have any questions related to the Parent Involvement Survey, please contact Gloria Dalton gloria.dalton@doe.virginia.gov at the Virginia Department of Education at (804) 371-7420.

**This survey will be available November 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012
This online survey can be found at:**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ParentInvolvementSurvey2011>

**ANUNCIO DE LA ENCUESTA DE 2011-2012 SOBRE LA PARTICIPACIÓN DE LOS PADRES DE
JÓVENES COLEGIALES EN EDUCACIÓN ESPECIAL.**

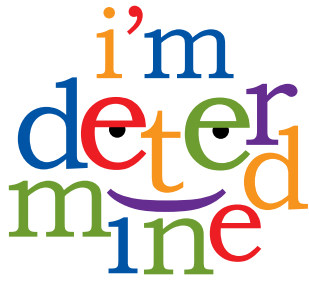
El Departamento de Educación de Virginia querría que todos los padres de jóvenes colegiales que ya reciben los servicios de educación especial completaran una encuesta. El propósito de la encuesta es determinar si las escuelas han facilitado la participación de los padres o no.

La encuesta, disponible por Internet, está escrita en español e inglés. Se encuentra las dos versiones en la misma hoja. Si usted no usa el Internet, la escuela de su hijo le dará una versión de papel y un sobre con sello y dirección para enviarlo al Departamento de Educación.

Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre la encuesta o necesita más información, por favor, llame al centro de padres que abogan por la educación especial de sus hijos (PEATC) al 1-800-869-6782, o a María Isabel Frangenberg de la asociación de gente con discapacidades al 804-827-1547. También, usted puede escribir a Gloria Dalton por correo electrónico en gloria.dalton@doe.virginia.gov.

**Esta encuesta estará disponible el 1 de noviembre de 2011 al 30 de junio de 2012
Usted podrá encontrar la encuesta en línea (Internet) en:**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ParentInvolvementSurvey2011>



***I'M DETERMINED* YOUTH SUMMIT 2012**

The Virginia Department of Education's *I'm Determined* project, in conjunction with the Partnership for People with Disabilities, invites applications for sponsorship to the Sixth Annual *I'm Determined* Youth Summit at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Youth with disabilities from across the Commonwealth will meet to identify ways to become better advocates and lead more self-determined lives. The selected individuals and a parent/guardian will receive paid registration, dormitory accommodations, travel expenses and meals for the two-day event. A concurrent Parent Summit for the selected participant's parent/guardian will be held at the university. The Youth Summit will start on Monday, June 11, 2012 at 9 am, and will end on Tuesday, June 12, 2012 at 3 pm. More detailed information regarding the Youth Summit and Parent Summit will be provided upon acceptance of the youth. **Deadline for submission of applications is Monday, April 2nd, 2012.** Selected youth will be notified prior to April 15th, 2012. Please indicate a phone number and an email address for youth (over 18) and youth's parent (under 18). **NO ACCEPTANCE LETTER WILL BE MAILED.** Accepted youth or youth's parent will be notified by phone call and/or email.

LOCATION: James Madison University
Harrisonburg, VA 22807

For information about past Youth Summits:
www.imdetermined.org

Application Criteria:

- Young person with a disability, 14 years and older
- Young persons under age 18 must have a parent/guardian attend

Application Instructions:

- Complete the application form (essay included)
- Submit applications by email, fax, or postal mail by April 2nd, 2012.

Kim Sheridan
FAX: (540) 831-6263
ksherida@radford.edu

Mail to: Radford University T/TAC
Attn: Kim Sheridan
P.O. Box 7001
Radford, Virginia 24142

Questions? Contact Kim Sheridan at (540) 831-7159.

Copy of the Application and Essay can be found at:

http://www.imdetermined.org/files_images/general/Youth%20Summit%20App%202012%20FINAL.pdf

The Paraprofessional Press

Paraprofessionals: Supporting, Creating, and Encouraging Literacy

Amanda Armstrong, M.Ed., BCBA, Coordinator, VDOE Region 5 T/TAC@ James Madison University

Paraprofessional, paraeducator, aide, education technician, teacher aide, classroom assistant, learning support assistant, teaching assistant, and/or job coach, the title is rarely an indicator of what your role will entail once you walk into your classroom (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2010). The title of the paraprofessional often varies, as does the role of the paraprofessional from classroom to classroom and student to student. Your role is primarily determined by the needs of the individual student who you support and the supervising teacher to whom you are assigned. Your role as the paraprofessional is an essential role to the success of many students and is essential when it comes to their success in literacy.

In 2003, the National Assessment of Adult Literacy administered tests which revealed that an estimated 14% of U.S. residents would have extreme difficulty with reading and written comprehension (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). These people can legally be defined as illiterate, affecting their daily living and life outcomes. Supporting our students to increase their reading and comprehension can be as simple as finding ways to engage them and reinforce them during reading activities.

Have you ever gone to a professional development workshop and felt as

though it was a waste of your time and of no interest to you? Did you think about falling asleep or just leaving? Imagine if you had to attend a workshop everyday for 6-7 hours a day, for 270 days, and then pass a test based on those very uninteresting and non-engaging days. This is the reality of life for many of our students. They are made to be at school and expected to learn and be successful but few people are taking time to learn about the student, find out his/her preferences, and interests, and find opportunities to reinforce their learning and behavior.

You can get to know a student's preferences and interest through observing the student and asking the student questions. When you first began to work with a student someone may give you some background and interaction tips for working with your student. That information is great and often very helpful but try this: the first few weeks that you are with your student carry a notecard and pencil in your pocket. When you observe the student happy, sad, engaged, or angry write down why, who, when, where, and what caused that behavior or emotion. When your student unexpectedly reads something or seems very interested in something, write it down. Keep this information along with any other positive information that you observe about the student in the first few weeks and

find ways to link it into your work with the student.

If you found that your student got very happy or excited to go to the park, when it's library time encourage the student to find a book about being outside, playing on the swing, etc. A book like Mo Willems' *Are You Ready to Play Outside?* is a funny and engaging book about animals wanting to play outside. Another book could be *The Kids Nature Book* by Susan Millord where the book not only offers engaging activities but an opportunity for the students to read and follow directions. These are just a couple of examples but there are many books that you can find that will take the topics or activities that are of interest to your student and create engaging reading opportunities for them.

Once you find things of high interest to the students, they will begin to be more engaged and compliant to various activities thus increasing on task behavior and learning. Getting your students to read more will allow you to begin to recognize their reading needs and be prepared to respond to them. If your student has not learned to read, find books of interest to the student and read to your student. Research has continually shown that when adults read to children, discussing story content, asking open-ended questions about story events, explaining the meaning of words,

and pointing out features of print, they promote increased language development, comprehension of story content, knowledge of story structure, and a better understanding of language— all of which lead to literacy success (Berk, 2009).

Beyond the library there are many opportunities for students to read every day in the environment. Environmental print is great because it gives students clues from the context to guess what the print says (Ashbaker & Morgan, 2010). If they guess correctly it gives you an opportunity to reinforce the students. If they guess incorrectly you can gently correct them and offer the encouragement for their attempt. Environmental print can be snacks, TV ads, cars, street signs, bulletin boards, labels, clothing tags, and any other opportunities whereby words are placed in their environment.

Find ways to reinforce your student for reading, correct question responding, sitting and listening while you read to them, or just pointing to a familiar letter as they walk down the hall. The idea of reinforcement is to reinforce any action by the student that you want the student to continue performing or that you would like for the student to perform more often. An action as simple as walking into the library with a quiet voice could be reinforced in ways such as “Nice job walking into the library,” “Thanks for walking into the library with a quiet voice,” “I love the way you walked into the library,” or “High-five, that was some awesome walking into the library.”

Through observing your student’s preferences, interests, and finding ways to reinforce spontaneous reading you will find an increase in your student’s engagement, thus increasing their reading and literacy and decreasing

behaviors that happen when students are bored. As a paraprofessional you are an essential aide to your student and your classroom teacher. Your knowledge and expertise is a valued part of your school team. Be sure to talk with your supervisor to get a clear definition of your roles and responsibilities so that you can work best with your student.

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Events & Conferences

MARCH

March 7&8, 2012: 11th Annual Autism Conference: Autism - Imagine the Possibilities

Location: The Westin, 6631 West Broad St., Richmond, VA 23230

Sponsored By: Commonwealth Autism Service

Information: This workshop will present practical strategies for enhancing independence and enjoyment among individuals with autism. These strategies which have a scientific basis to support their effectiveness will include procedures for: establishing good relationships, attending to individual likes and dislikes, providing important choices during day-to-day activities, preventing and reducing problem behavior through preference-based teaching and rapid teaching processes. The presenter will also discuss ways to identify and validate indicators of happiness among individuals with significant communication challenges.

For More Information and Registration: 800.649.8481, www.autismva.org/2012conference.

March 8-10, 2012: Virginia Association for Early Childhood Education (VAECE) Annual Conference: Brain Food: Developing Hearts, Minds, and Bodies.

Location: Embassy Suites Hotel, 1700 Coliseum Drive, Hampton, VA

For More Information and Registration: Visit <http://www.vaece.org/futureconference.html>


March 10, 2012: 11th Annual Conference of the Brain Injury Association of Virginia (BIAV) "Opening Doors: Communities, Partnerships, Opportunities"

Location: The Westin Richmond, 6631 West Broad St., Richmond, VA 23230

For More Information and Registration: Visit <http://www.biav.net/biav-conference.htm>

March 12-14, 2012: Technology for Transition; Making the Connection. Virginia Transition Forum.

Supported by contributions from: Virginia Department of Education - Division of Special Education and Student Services and Division of Technology and Career Education; Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services - Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center; Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired; Virginia Association for Career and Technical Education - Special Needs Division; Virginia Division on Career Development and Transition; Virginia Board for People with Disabilities.



Information: The Virginia Transition Forum brings together students, parents, educators, rehabilitation professionals, and others to guide youth with disabilities to achieve successful employment and life outcomes.

For More Information and Registration: Email mail@virginiatransitionforum.org or Visit www.virginiatransitionforum.org

March 13, 2012: Smart Beginnings Shenandoah Valley 7th Annual Early Childhood Leadership Summit

Location: JMU Festival Conference & Student Center, Harrisonburg, VA

Keynote Speaker Dr. Tammy Mann - "The Real Winners When Communities Undertake the Hard Work of Systems Building and Collaboration."

For More Information and Registration: visit www.valleysmartbeginnings.org and click on "Summit." Registration deadline: February 29, 2012.

March 16, 2012: CAREERS & the disABLED Magazine's Career Expo for People with Disabilities

Location: Ronald Reagan Building; 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW; Washington, DC

FREE event scheduled from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

Contact: Annette Maldonado-Cora at 631.421.9421, ext. 10 or acora@eop.com

For More Information and Registration: visit <http://www.eop.com/expo>

APRIL

April 11-14, 2012: Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) 2012 Convention & Expo

Location: Denver, Colorado

For More Information and Registration: visit <http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ProfessionalDevelopment/ConventionExpo/>

JUNE

June 25-29, 2012: 13th Annual Content Teaching Academy

Location: James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA

Contact: Linda Stover at 540-568-4130 or stoverls@jmu.edu

For more information and registration: Visit <http://www.jmu.edu/contentacademy/>

SAVE THE DATE

July 16-18, 2010: Creating Connections to Shining Stars: Virginia's Collaborative Early Childhood Birth to Five Conference

Location: The Cavalier Hotel, Virginia Beach, VA

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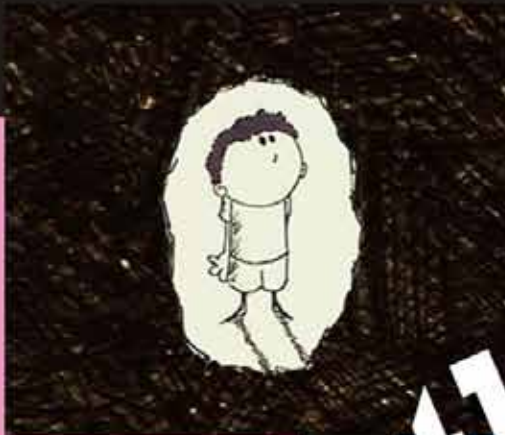
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