

The T/TAC Telegram

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T/TAC

Linking People & Resources

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Northwestern Consortium T/TAC
This newsletter is a collaborative effort by the Northwestern Consortium of the Training & Technical Assistance Centers (T/TACs), which includes James Madison University, co-directed by Cheryl Henderson and Melinda Bright, and George Mason University, directed by Michael Behrmann. Placement, editing, and graphic design of the T/TAC Telegram by Allison Toguchi and Kieno Simeon

New, Flexible Policies Help Teachers Become Highly Qualified

FOR RELEASE:
March 15, 2004

Contact: Stephanie Babyak or Jane Glickman,
U.S. Department of Education
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U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige today announced three new policies giving teachers greater flexibility in demonstrating that they are highly qualified under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) while also ensuring that every child in America is taught by a teacher who knows his or her subject.

These new policies, which take effect immediately, will address the particular challenges of teachers who teach more than one subject, especially those in rural districts and science teachers.

"We know that effective teachers are one of the most crucial factors in student achievement and are needed in every school in America, regardless of state line or city boundary," Paige said. "That's why No Child Left Behind puts such emphasis on giving every student in our great nation an expert teacher. We are committed to the goal of a world-class teaching force and recognize the real challenges states and educators face. The policies announced today offer common sense solutions that will help states and districts get the best teachers in front of the most needy students as soon as possible," Paige said.

Last summer, the secretary announced the formation of the Teacher Assistance Corps (TAC), comprising 45 educators, leaders from higher education and national experts to better understand and support state efforts to implement the highly qualified teacher requirements of NCLB. TAC has visited 49 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, with the 50th state visit scheduled for next month. In addition to explaining the requirements of the law, offering guidance and feedback on state efforts, and sharing information about

promising practices from other states, the teams heard about unique situations, concerns and specific state challenges.

"We listened to educators from across the country, and we learned," Paige said.

"First, we discovered that many states were not using the full flexibility in the law, especially to help their middle school and experienced teachers demonstrate that they are highly qualified. In addition, many were under the mistaken impression that all veteran teachers had to either go back to school or take a test.

"Today, we are responding with changes that make sense, supporting state efforts to strengthen teacher quality and aiding the professionals in the classroom, while also ensuring that the highest standards for qualified teachers—so imperative to student success—remain intact," Paige added.

Under the No Child Left Behind Act, highly qualified teachers must hold at least a bachelor's degree, have full state certification or licensure, and have demonstrated competence in their subject areas. The law calls for all teachers of core academic subjects to be highly qualified by the end of the 2005-06 school year. It also requires that all newly hired teachers in Title I schools or programs for economically disadvantaged students be highly qualified immediately.

One of the new flexibility provisions announced today recognizes that teachers in small, rural and isolated areas—about one-third of the nation's school districts—are often assigned to teach multiple subjects, face unique challenges in meeting the highly qualified provisions in all subjects they teach, and may need additional time to meet the requirements in all subjects they teach. As long as teachers in eligible districts are highly

qualified in at least one subject, they will have three more years to become highly qualified in the additional subjects they teach; newly hired teachers would have until their third year of teaching.

For science teachers, the Department's guidance will allow states the flexibility to use their own certification standards to determine subject-matter competency, rather than requiring it for each science subject. For example, if a state certifies teachers in the general field of science, a science teacher may demonstrate subject-matter competency through a "broad field" test or major. If a state requires certification or licensure in the specific science subjects, such as chemistry, biology or physics, the teacher would be required to demonstrate competency in each of the subjects.

The third flexible provision announced today assists current teachers who teach multiple subjects, particularly teachers in middle schools and those teaching students with special needs. Under the law, current teachers have the option—instead of taking a test or going back to school—to demonstrate subject-matter competency through a process called HOUSSE—high objective uniform state standard of evaluation. The HOUSSE may include a teacher's years of experience, high-quality professional development success as measured by a teacher's students' test scores, continuing education and other objective evaluations.

The change streamlines the HOUSSE process by allowing teachers to demonstrate subject-matter knowledge through one procedure for all the subjects they teach while maintaining the same high standard for subject-matter mastery.

Paige noted that more than \$5.1 billion in federal funds are available for teacher-related programs, with \$2.9 billion specifically geared to help states meet the highly qualified teacher requirements. These funds, under the Improving Teacher Quality State Grants (Title II of NCLB), may be used for teacher training, professional development, recruitment and retention activities.

He also explained that the Department has been thoroughly enforcing the law, imposing conditions on grant awards for 26 states that had missing or incomplete data on the percentage of classes taught by teachers who are highly qualified. Paige said the Department is prepared to delay the release of its July 1 funding until the conditions are satisfied. "To do

what's best for our nation's children, we need data and knowledge about the qualifications of our classroom teachers, particularly those in high-poverty districts."

The secretary said he will soon be unveiling additional efforts to support America's teachers and the implementation of the highly qualified teacher provisions. These will include a new Web site—www.teacherquality.us—to share information about initiatives at the state and local levels, summer institutes for teachers to be held across the country, and a National Teacher Summit later this year.

"I applaud our nation's teachers for their dedication to their profession and their commitment to helping all children learn. Their passion is my passion, and I look forward to continuing the partnership with educators and states to help all students excel academically," Paige said.

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So, You're Going to Team Teach

By Judith L. Fontana, Ph.D.,
VDOE T/TAC Region 4
at George Mason University

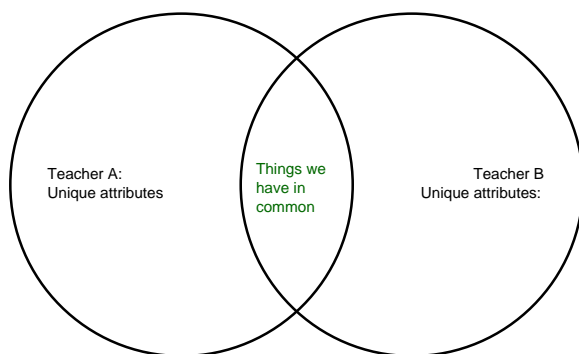
The percentage of students with learning disabilities (LD) served in the general education setting is increasing (Lerner, 2003). According to data from the US Department of Education, 95.5% of students with disabilities receive educational services in regular school buildings. The majority of students with learning disabilities and language impairments are served, or included, in regular classrooms (OSEP, 2003). Inclusion in its simplest terms refers to the practice of placing students with disabilities in general education classes for instruction (Lerner, 2003). The inclusion movement is a complex socio-cultural change in education and in the perception of instruction for children with disabilities. The role of the special educator is evolving. While they continue to instruct and accommodate the needs of students with IEPs, they increasingly support general educators who instruct students with special needs in general education settings. If you have not already had the opportunity to co, or team-teach, it is likely that you will soon. This article will attempt to increase your awareness of several non-instructional issues, such as organizing and roles, balancing the workload, territory, grading, and effective communication, of which first time team-teachers should be aware.

Key elements for successful co teaching are:

- √ Professional competence and mutual respect for the partner's expertise.
- √ Good communication and problem solving skills
- √ Flexibility and an open mind
- √ Strong organizational skills (at least one member of the team)
- √ Sense of humor.

Beninghoff (2002) describes six models for co-teaching that vary primarily according to how instructional responsibilities are shared. In the "Duet" model, perhaps the most collaborative format, both teachers plan, design and deliver instruction. In the "Lead and Support" model the role of the special educator is to share in the delivery of instruction and act as a back up to the general educator. In the "Skills Group" and "Learning Styles" models teachers plan for and instruct segments of the class. Each instructor works with fewer students and differentiation occurs according to the students' academic needs or preferred mode of learning. Remembering that the general education teacher is ultimately responsible for the delivery of content, the role of the special educator may vary according to her level of expertise in a specific content.

If you will be team teaching with a virtual stranger, consider completing and sharing a self-assessment. Make a list of your professional strengths as well as personal hobbies and interests. Note and be honest about your areas of low tolerance and where you would like to improve your skills. You might want to use a VENN-diagram to compare and contrast your attributes.



The distribution of the workload is a critical issue that must be discussed and resolved.

You and your partner are interdependent. You have been teamed to promote student achievement. This is not a 50/50 partnership. Be prepared to give more than your fair share. Candidly discuss roles and responsibilities. Vary these enough so that the students see both teachers as adults in authority in the classroom. If you need to formalize things, list tasks (warm- up, homework, introduction, strategies...) necessary for the

smooth functioning of the class and decide who will be in charge. You may choose to alternate some tasks. The "Plan" book must be available to any team member.

Some of us are rather territorial about our classrooms. The visiting teacher should have a space that is hers. This space should be respected by all students and the classroom teacher. A desk may not be available, but shelf space, or room in a storage cabinet is essential.



Grading can be a particularly hot issue and as such must be addressed head on.

Develop and clarify the criteria for performance (rubrics or answer keys). Both teachers must be aware of IEP requirements including provisions for extended time and specific accommodations. Make sure that all students have hard copies of project options, expectations, and grading rubrics. Consider using a benchmark system to provide interim feedback on major projects. This option would be available for all students. Teachers might alternate grading class or homework assignments. Co-grading, when each teacher takes half, works best on objective worksheets. For student work that grading is more subjective both teachers may grade all student products and then discuss discrepancies to reach consensus.



Finally, be aware that team teaching is not easy. Well functioning teams do not just happen. There will be stress. There may be conflict. It is a challenge with intrinsic rewards. It is a philosophy translated into action and requires flexibility, shared goals, shared responsibilities and shared students.

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Lerner, J. (2003). *Learning disabilities: Theories, diagnosis and teaching strategies (9th ed.)*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin

OSEP (2003), Executive Summary: Twenty-fourth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act. Retrieved March 3, 2004. www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/osep/2000execsuom.html

Autism Spectrum Disorders and Communication

Karen Berlin, M. Ed.

*VDOE T/TAC Region 4 at
George Mason University*

Difficulties in language and communication are defining characteristics of students with autism spectrum disorders (DSM-IV, 1994). While the spectrum is wide, ranging from non-verbal to those who talk incessantly about a favorite subject, students with autism spectrum disorders experience communication challenges. Some general characteristics may include the following:

- Delay or lack of expressive language skills
- Poor comprehension of spoken and written language
- Lack of responsiveness when addressed
- Impairments in nonverbal communication, such as use of gestures, facial expression, eye contact and imitation
- Differences in pitch, intonation, rate, rhythm, and/or stress. Some individuals with autism may demonstrate monotone or distinctly rhythmical speech
- Repetitive or idiosyncratic language
- Echolalia
- Pronoun reversals
- Restricted vocabulary dominated by nouns. The majority of speech may be to make requests or rejections
- Perseveration on a topic or changes topics frequently
- Difficulty interpreting abstract concepts
- Difficulty initiating conversation, using rules, maintaining a topic, interrupting and /or rigidity
- Difficulty comprehending verbal information, remembering a sequence, or connecting ideas.
- Difficulty attending to relevant cues, sharing attention, or shifting attention from one stimulus to the next.
- May demonstrate strength in speech production and vocabulary but have significant difficulty carrying on a conversation or using speech for social interactive purposes [http://](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/k/pecs/se/pub.html)

www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/k/pecs/se/pub.html

Communication goals for students with ASD should be individualized and reflect the abilities and needs of the students. Individualized goals are formulated through the collaboration of the student, parents, teacher, and related service professionals. The implementation of the student's language goals should not be viewed as the sole responsibility of the speech and language pathologist but should be program-wide goals that are aimed at teaching functional language skills in a variety of social contexts.

Twenty Practical Classroom Tips for Teaching Language to Students with ASD

1. Develop interaction and communication within the environment the student actually communicates. Plan teaching around high-interest materials, activities and routines.
2. Use modeling, physical prompts, visual cues, and reinforcement to facilitate attention, imitation, and interaction. Remember that most students are primarily visual learners.
3. Set up communication opportunities to encourage expression. Create situations to encourage requests, negotiation, or protesting.
4. Provide choices. Making a choice is one of the earliest and most critical aspects of communication. Provide continuous opportunities for choice making throughout the student's day.
5. Use augmentative communication systems to support and enhance the student's ability to tell something. Such systems can be appropriate for both the student who is non-verbal or who has limited verbal expression.
6. Use language that is clear, simple and concise.
7. Remember that oral information is transient. Once it is said, the message is no longer available. Consider using visual supports as they can be examined for as long as needed.
8. Teach listening. Do not assume the student has this skill.
9. For some students, it may be necessary to talk more slowly or to pause between words to allow the student time to process the information.
10. Do not assume that a student's ability to repeat back information indicates that it has been comprehended. Avoid long strings of information, and check often for understanding.
11. Teach new vocabulary in a variety of contexts.
12. Teach appropriate opening comments.
13. Teach to seek assistance when needed.
14. Use a child's echolalia as a starting point for further communication. Functional language skills can be taught.

15. Model and teach the social use of language through comic strip conversations and/or social stories.
16. Encourage informal and formal social exchanges during the day.
17. Teach conversational skills in small group settings.
18. Teach rules and cues regarding turn taking, when to reply, interrupt, or change the topic.
19. Use audiotaped and vide-taped conversations to teach language skills.
20. Provide multiple opportunities across multiple settings and within the community to practice the language skills learned.

www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/k/pecs/sepub.html

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Website Resources

There are numerous websites that contain information about autism spectrum disorders. The following are offered as a starting point.

Association for Applied Behavior Analysis

<http://www.abainternational.org/>

Autism Society of America

<http://www.autism-society.org>

Center for the Study of Autism

<http://www.autism.org>

Division TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication handicapped Children) <http://www.unc.edu/depts/teacch>

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders

<http://www.kluweronline.com>

National Association for Autism Research

www.naar.org

Online Asperger Syndrome Information and Support (O.A.S.I.S.)

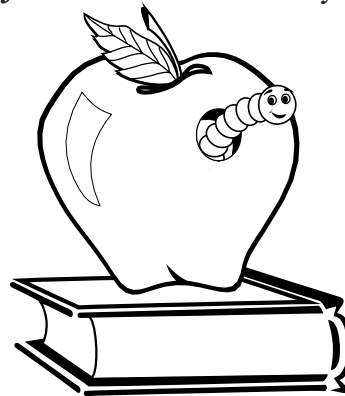
<http://www.udel.edu.bkirby/asperger/>

<http://www.simplifiedsigns.org/> A simplified system of 500 signs

is proposed to enhance the communication abilities of individuals who are hearing, but who are non-speaking, or who have autism, mental retardation, or aphasia, as well as their caregivers.

Virginia is Reading First!

Brenda M. Brady, M.Ed. & Cheryl Henderson, M.Ed., VDOE T/TAC Region 5 at James Madison University



To promote effective reading instruction, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is a participant in the national *Reading First* program which falls under the auspices of the No Child Left Behind legislation. *Reading First* is an ambitious national initiative to help every young child in every state become a successful reader by the end of his/her third grade year. The program provides assistance to states in selecting or developing effective instructional materials, programs, learning systems, and strategies to implement proven reading methods. Funds will also focus on providing increased teacher professional development to ensure that all teachers, including special education teachers, have the skills they need to teach these programs effectively.

The *Reading First* initiative builds on the findings of years of scientific research, which, at the request of Congress, were compiled by the National Reading Panel. Scientifically based reading research has identified five essential components of effective reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. *Reading First* seeks to embed these essential components of reading instruction into all elements of the primary, mainstream K-3 teaching structures of each state, and in turn, to each locality. To ensure that children learn to read well, explicit and systematic instruction must be provided in these five areas:

1. Phonemic Awareness-The ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds, or phonemes, in spoken words. Phonemic awareness is the understanding that the sounds of spoken language work together to make words.

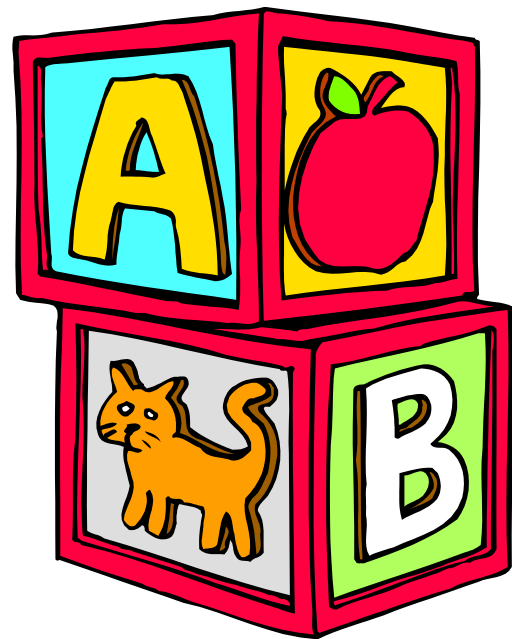
2. Phonics-The understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes, the sounds of spoken language, and graphemes, the letters and spellings that represent those sounds in written language. Readers use these relationships to recognize familiar words accurately and automatically and to decode unfamiliar words.
3. Vocabulary Development-The development of stored information about the meanings and pronunciation of words necessary for communication. There are four types of vocabulary:
 - Listening vocabulary-the words needed to understand what is heard
 - Speaking vocabulary-the words used when speaking
 - Reading vocabulary-the words needed to understand what is read
 - Writing vocabulary-the words used in writing
4. Reading Fluency, including oral reading skills-The ability to read text accurately and quickly. It provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Fluent readers recognize words and comprehend at the same time.
5. Reading Comprehension strategies-The strategies used for understanding, remembering, and communicating with others about what has been read. Comprehension strategies are sets of steps that purposeful, active readers use to make sense of text.

There are currently 76 schools in Virginia receiving *Reading First* funding. To be considered for the funding initiative, local school systems completed an application process to the VDOE. The program provides support to all K-3 teachers in the schools that are served. After the initial subgrant period, school systems that have shown strong reading gains and significantly increased student achievement will be eligible for renewal of their subgrant.

Additionally, the VDOE Office of Special Education Instructional Services' Reading Priority Project team in collaboration with the Division of Instruction will provide training and technical assistance in the schools that are implementing *Reading First* grants. The Reading Priority Project team will also provide reading technical assistance to K-12 special education teachers. For more information

about the Reading Priority Project, contact Vicky Spencer at Region 4 T/TAC at GMU or Brenda Brady at Region 5 T/TAC at JMU. For additional information about *Reading First* and effective reading instruction visit the following websites: <www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/Reading/readingfirst.html>, <www.ed.gov/nclb/methods/reading/edpicks.jhtml>, and <www.ed.gov/parents/read/resources/edpicks.jhtml>.

The T/TAC newsletters frequently identify instructional tools or modifications that a teacher might use to assist a child in developing skills. In the February-March *T/TAC Telegram*, an article entitled "Reading with Colors" generated discussion by a few people. As was stated in the article, the use of colored lenses or sheets is merely one tool that might work with some individuals to enhance their visual skills, thus allowing them to engage in the process of reading. The article neither stated, nor implied, that the use of colored lenses is a reading methodology or should be used to replace empirically based reading instruction or intervention strategies.





Summer 2004 Conferences

Carl Sunberg--"Teaching Language to Children with Autism or Other Developmental Disabilities"

When and Where: May 3-4 at the Sheraton Park South in Richmond, VA

Sponsor: Commonwealth Autism Service in Partnership with Virginia Department of Education's T/TACs at Old Dominion University, James Madison University, and Virginia Commonwealth University

Contact: www.autismva.org

Community Health Supports: Realizing the Vision AAMR's 128th Annual Meeting and Exhibit Show

When and Where: June 1-4 in Philadelphia Marriott, Philadelphia, PA

Sponsor: American Association on Mental Retardation

Contact: www.aamr.org

Fourth National Conference of the National Aphasia Association

When and Where: June 3-6 at the Hyatt Regency at Tampa City Center Tampa, FL

Sponsor: National Aphasia Association

Contact: www.aphasia.org

VSA Arts In Education Conference

When and Where: June 10-11 at the Hilton Washington Hotel & Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

Sponsor: VSA

Contact: <http://www.vsartsfestival.org/conference>

5th Annual Content/Teaching Academies Summer 2004

When and Where: June 21-25 at James Madison University

Sponsor: James Madison University Center for School Leadership and the Region 5 T/TAC at James Madison

Contact: 540-568-8043 or e-mail Bonnie Powell at powellbs@jmu.edu

World of Possibilities Disabilities Expo

When and Where: June 25-27 Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, MD

Sponsor: Caring Communities, Inc

Contact: www.caringcommunities.org

Access For All

When and Where: June 28-29 at the Holiday Inn Select in Lynchburg

Sponsor: VDOE, Statewide Training and Technical Assistance Centers, VA Deaf Blind Project, Together We Can Project

Contact: www.conted.vt.edu/AccessforAll/

ASA's 35th National Conference on Autism Spectrum Disorders: Soaring to New Heights

When and Where: July 7-10 at the Washington State Convention and Trade Center in Seattle, WA

Sponsor: Autism Society of America

Contact: www.autism-society.org

Shining Stars: Charting the Future for Today's Children

When and Where: July 13 at the Hotel Roanoke, Roanoke and July 15 at the Holiday Inn I-64 and West Broad Street, Richmond

Sponsor: VDOE, partnership for people with Disabilities, Child Development Resources, Statewide Training and Technical Assistance Centers

Contact: www.conted.vt.edu.shiningstars

2004 Virginia Department of Education Core Content Summer Academy

Content Areas include: Mathematics (Algebra), Science (Earth Science), Language Arts (Reading) and History and Social Science (Twentieth Century History)

When and Where: July 12-16 at James Madison University

Sponsor: VDOE

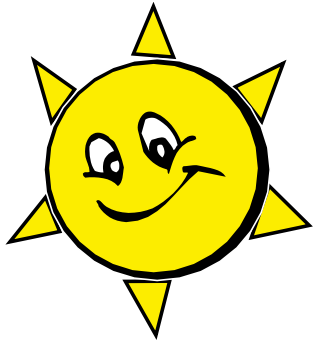
Contact: www.conted.vt.edu/ssl/doecore/ or contact Colleen Bryant at cbryant@mail.vak12ed.edu

2004 NDSS National Conference

When and Where: July 22-25 at the JW Marriott Hotel in Washington, DC

Sponsor: National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS)

Contact: www.ndss.org



Summer Conferences Continued

2004 Virginia Department of Education Instructional Strategies Summer Academy: Strategic Instructional Model (SIM) from the University of Kansas Center for Research and Learning Institute for Effective Instruction

When and Where: July 26-30 at James
Madison

University

Sponsor: VDOE

Contact: www.conted.vt.edu/ssl/doecore/

2004 Reading First Teacher Reading Academies (All Academies are for grades K, 1, 2, 3)

Richmond Area

When and Where: June 21-24 and June 28-
July 1 at St. Christopher's School, Richmond

Charlottesville Area

When and Where: June 21-24 and August 2-5
at Covenant Upper School, Charlottesville

Radford Area

When and Where: July 6-9 and July 12-15
at Radford University, Radford

Hampton Roads Area

When and Where: July 19-22 and July 26-29
at Thomas Nelson Community College/Old
Dominion University Center, Hampton

Sponsor: Virginia Department of Education

Contact: www.readingfirst.virginia.edu or call
Gail Barnes (804) 371-5378 or
gbarnes@mail.vak12ed.edu

Routine-Based Instruction and Monitoring in ECSE

*Sharon Raver-Lampman, Ph.D.,
Old Dominion University*

Routine-based instruction (aka Activity-Based Instruction) involves utilizing already occurring events and activities such as circle time, snack, and centers to teach skill acquisition (Bricker, Pretti-Frontczak, & McComas, 1998; Gargiulo & Kilgo, 2000). Teachers engineer the physical space and classroom activities to require a high level of engagement, encourage and support interactions, and minimize "wait time." The teaching of individual objectives is embedded into familiar routines so children learn needed skills as the skills are related to their play within tasks that already have the children's attention (Wolery, 2001; Horn, Lieber, Sandall, & Schwartz, 2001). In routine-based instruction, transitions are also used as an opportunity to teach individual objectives daily. To make routine-based instruction work, teachers need good planning skills. For example, teachers might use an Individual Activity-Objective Matrix (Raver, 2003), a single page list of a child's targeted objectives and how a teacher will adjust scheduled activities/routine events to teach that skill throughout the day. Another helpful planning tool is a Group Objective Matrix (Raver, 1999; in press). This is a single page table that identifies targeted skills/behaviors for each child by domains. Unlike the Individual Activity-Objective Matrix, a Group Objective Matrix does not list how teaching opportunities will be created for teaching each targeted objective. Both planning matrices aid teachers in structuring and increasing individualized instruction.

To embed the teaching of individual objectives within routines, teachers need to follow five steps: 1) identify the skill(s) to be taught, 2) identify the activities and/or routines events in which the skill(s) will be taught, 3) distribute teaching of the skill(s) throughout the day, 4) establish a monitoring system, and 5) take monitoring data frequently. In most cases, however, merely creating opportunities for learning an objective is not sufficient for young children with developmental delays. Teachers must also plan short, intensive instructional episodes within their routines to ensure each child is actually learning what that child needs to learn from an activity (Horn et. al., 2001).

In addition to routine-based instruction, teachers need to use routine-based monitoring strategies. That is, teachers take data on a child's performance of target skills/behaviors while a child is engaged in routine activities. In this way, teachers are monitoring whether a child can demonstrate a skill when that skill is needed.

Monitoring data should be taken throughout the day, in planned routines (e.g., centers, story time, circle) as well as unplanned routines (e.g., putting things in the cubby during morning arrival, walking to the bus). By tracking skill acquisition within routines, teachers are selecting a style and context for monitoring that is compatible, rather than at odds with, the behavior and interests of young children (Neisworth & Bagnato, 2000).

By systematically using routine-based instruction and monitoring, teachers are ensuring that opportunities for teaching a skill, practicing a skill, and monitoring a skill are structured into each busy school day for young children.

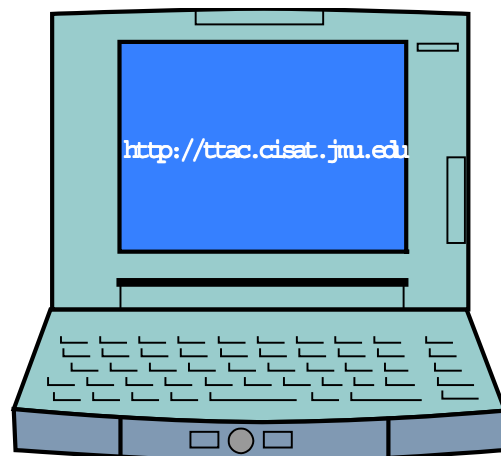
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“Banking” on Positive Relationships With Your Students

Volume 8, Issue 4, April/May 2004

By Lynn Wiley, Ph.D.



Students learn best when they are in an environment with positive, responsive adults who respect them as individuals (Webster-Stratton, 1999; Huffman et al., 2000). In order to create this type of situation, adults must first work diligently to build relationships with their students. This means finding out about each student: their family and culture, their interests and preferences, and any other information that gives you insight into who they are as individuals. As paraeducators, it is important to help the classroom teacher in her efforts to create the most optimal learning environment possible by getting to know the students in your room.

In describing how to build positive relationships in the classroom, Joseph and Strain (2003) use a piggy bank metaphor. When teachers and paraeducators work on relating to a student in a positive way, they are “making a deposit” into that student’s relationship piggy bank. When these adults make demands on, criticize, or treat the student with disrespect, they are “making a withdrawal” from the relationship piggy bank. Joseph and Strain suggest that when students have a piggy bank that has had little to no “deposits” made into it, demanding or criticizing can be compared to writing a bad check. In other words, the relationship between you and the student is in trouble.

When we are interacting with students, we should periodically be asking ourselves whether we are making a deposit into or a withdrawal out of a student’s relationship piggy bank. We may find that it is easy for us to deposit into certain student’s banks. On the other hand, we might realize that we often withdraw from a particular student’s bank, making very few deposits throughout the day. We should then consider how often “deposits” have been made by others into this student’s bank. Could it be that this student’s relationship account may be running a little low and we should be making a committed effort to build respect and trust?

Using this piggy bank metaphor, if no positive, value-affirming relationship deposits have been made, it is clear to see that there will be nothing to withdraw. A student who has little or nothing to give will certainly have difficulty responding to adults in a positive manner. Reflecting on this should help us remember to work on depositing into a student’s account more often than withdrawing.

Joseph and Strain (2003) offer some practical strategies for building positive relationships. A few are listed here although they are only some of the many ways for you to get started:

Greet every student at the door by name.
Listen to a student’s ideas and stories.
Share information about yourself, especially something you have in common with them.
Acknowledge a student’s effort.
Offer praise and encouragement.
When a student returns to school after an absence, let him know that he was missed.

Carefully monitor your deposits and withdrawals from each student’s relationship piggy bank.

By providing students with a learning environment that consists of positive, responsive interaction with adults, you are fostering positive relationships. In working to “deposit” into each student’s relationship account, you may notice that he is less likely to engage in challenging behaviors. This will, in turn, seem to be a “deposit” into YOUR piggy bank, since you will feel more positive about your skills as an effective paraeducator. Additionally, by modeling positive relationship building skills in the classroom and throughout the school, other adults may begin to appreciate the value of your efforts and begin to use them too. Finally, you can feel proud of the relationships you have with the students in your class, knowing that you have worked hard to earn their respect by taking the time to respect them.

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“Say Cheese”: Taking Digital Pictures For Classroom Use
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A digital camera can be a useful tool in the classroom. Although digital photography is quick and easy, it can sometimes be a challenge to capture good images. Before you begin, make sure you are familiar with your specific camera by carefully reading the manual. Next, experiment with the camera by taking test pictures that you are not concerned about keeping.

Here are just a few general guidelines to help you become a better photographer, although use of these tips will depend on your own purpose and artistic preference.

Frame your subject. You might want the subject of your picture to fill most of the photo. Don't be afraid to move in close if you want a close up shot.

Create contrast between your subject and the background. This helps your subject stand out. Make sure nothing is “growing” out of a person's head!

Watch the light in your pictures. Digital cameras can be very sensitive to bright light sources, which can result in a blurry or bright image. One way to change the lighting in your image is to move yourself or your subject. For landscapes, take pictures early in the morning or late in the day when light has an orange glow and shimmers across the viewscape.

Look your subject in the eye. Direct eye contact can be as engaging in pictures as it is in real life. Stoop down to a child's eye level and capture his gaze.

Move subject away from the middle. Experiment with your pictures. Move your subjects around in the background. Take vertical shots as well as horizontal ones. Be a director of your own images!

Use flash outdoors. Bright sun can create unattractive deep facial shadows. Eliminate the shadows by using your flash to lighten the face. When taking people pictures on sunny days, turn your flash on.

On cloudy days, the flash will brighten up people's faces and make them stand out. Also try taking a picture without the flash, because the soft light of overcast days sometimes gives quite pleasing results by itself.

Important Camera Tips:

Set the camera to the appropriate resolution. The 640 X 480 pixel resolution is probably the best for use in classroom visuals. If you want photo quality images, you can switch the image size to a higher pixel unit.

Be sure you have enough “film.” The “film” for a digital camera is usually a floppy disk, memory card, or a memory stick. If you are using floppy disks, be sure to have enough on hand. Some people use a disk wallet with disks and sticky notes. When a disk is full, a sticky note is used to write info about the images contained on it. Both are then put in the wallet until the images can be downloaded on to a computer with the appropriate details and into the appropriate file. If different classrooms share the same camera, each classroom may want to have its own memory stick. This way, you can remove your memory stick when you are not in possession of the camera. This will prevent having your images deleted by another person who wants to use the camera and didn't realize you had not downloaded your pictures.

Be sure you have enough battery power. It is good to carry an extra camera battery. Digital cameras use a lot of power for the image sensor, the LCD panel, flash, etc. You will have to experiment with your camera battery in order to see how long it will last when you use it under different conditions.

Here are a few online resources for more tips on using digital cameras in the classroom:

<http://www.mayer-johnson.com/tipstuts/digtutor.html>

<http://www.forsyth.k12ga.us/sbeck/digital/goingdital.htm>

Last, but not least, enjoy documenting class activities through digital images! Be creative and experiment with a variety of subjects, backgrounds, light sources, etc. As you learn more and more about digital photography, you will realize there are many different ways to highlight and capture your student's classroom experiences! So “Say Cheese” and have a great time!

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Linking People and Resources