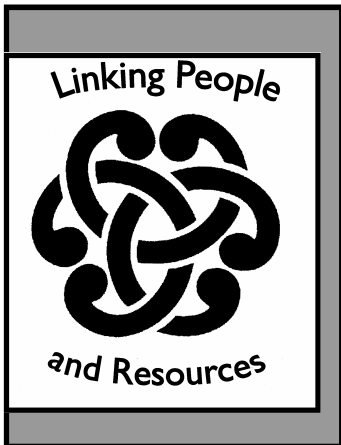


Regional Wrap-Up

Region 5 T/TAC @ JMU



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Welcome to T/TAC!

We would like to introduce the newest face in the Region 5 T/TAC. Linda Hickey joined our staff recently as a coordinator. She holds a bachelor's degree in math education from Madison College and a master's degree in administration and supervision from UVA. Her level of knowledge and expertise is a reflection of 23 years of experience as a high school math teacher and seven years as food service director for Augusta County Public Schools. Linda has maintained membership



and leadership positions in many professional organizations over the years and has been recognized professionally in several capacities, including Augusta County Teacher of the Year. At T/TAC, Linda serves on the SOL Enhanced Scope and Sequence Priority Project, directed by the Virginia Department of Education. Linda also provides technical assistance in the areas of math curriculum and instruction, inclusion, collaboration, and differentiation of instruction. You may reach her at (540) 568-8813 or <hickeylr@jmu.edu>.

ESD In The News!

Spotswood Elementary School, located in the city of Harrisonburg, was recently the focus of a community spotlight story on the local ABC affiliate WHSV TV-3. After a year of planning and staff training, Spotswood Elementary began their implementation of an Effective Schoolwide Discipline program. The kickoff of the initiative included a presentation to the Harrisonburg City School Board on Tuesday September 20. During that presentation, Chay Lee, a reporter from TV-3, inquired about the program and the possibility of reporting on the program's fundamentals and the reaction to implementation. Teachers and students were interviewed and asked to explain their perception of the initial implementation as well as describe communication efforts regarding the program's overall objective of creating a better school climate through training of established expectations and positive reinforcement to community stakeholders. Congratulations to Spotswood Elementary on promoting Effective Schoolwide Discipline!

For questions or further information about the VDOE Effective Schoolwide Discipline project, contact Region 5 T/TAC Coordinator Tony Tallent at (540) 568-3147 or <tallente@jmu.edu>.

Reform: Assessment and Accountability

by Melinda Bright, M.Ed.
VDOE T/TAC Region 5 at JMU

Two words that are prevalent within the current educational reform movement are *assessment* and *accountability*. While reform usually means a change for the better, educators often disagree on what practices should dominate the reform movement. "For some people, it is a lack of information about the definition of inclusive accountability and assessment that creates resistance" (Thurlow, Elliot, & Yssekdyke, 2003, p.159). Thurlow et al. offer the following interpretation:

Assessment is the process of measuring learning against a set of standards. Assessment and the notion of using new forms of assessment are integral parts of new legislation such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. One of the characteristics most apparent in current school reforms is a shift from documenting the process of educating students to measuring the results of the educational process.

Accountability is typically defined as a systematic means of assuring those inside and outside the educational system that schools are moving in desired directions. *Accountability* is a more encompassing term than *assessment*. It can include more than the collection of data via test, record review, and other performance assessments. Rather, a system is accountable for all students when it makes sure all students count or participate in the evaluation program of the educational system (pp. 264-265).

Additionally, one must acknowledge that current reform themes have significant implications for students with disabilities. The emphasis of special education legislation and practice has shifted over the years from placing students with disabilities in a public school setting to providing access to the general education curriculum; and most recently, the focus has shifted to improving performance and aligning services with national efforts that include standards, assessment, and accountability. IDEIA and NCLB provide specific requirements for how students with disabilities participate in state assessment and how their scores are reported (Nolet & McLaughlin, 2005).

Another question that often prevails is **why** must students with disabilities be included in the accountability system. Besides the necessity to meet legal requirements, Thurlow et al. provide some insight that supports this demand. First of all, in order to get an accurate picture of education on a national level, imagine this - the sum of the total populations of Idaho, Nevada, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming is equal to the number of students with disabilities nationwide! This significant portion of students cannot be excluded from assessment results considering the reality that policy and education reform decisions are made based on accountability results. Secondly, studies have demonstrated great variance among school districts across the country in rates of exclusion of students. In order for accurate comparisons to be made from division to division or state to state, all students must be included in the accountability system.

In addition, excluding students with disabilities from the accountability system often leads to powerful unintended consequences. Findings indicate that students are often retained in the grade prior to the testing year when the stakes are high and an increase in referrals to special education resulting from graduation requirements surrounding assessment. Another injustice exists if we lower standards for students with disabilities by excluding them from testing. And finally, inclusion in the accountability system promotes and improves access to the general curriculum for students with disabilities (Thurlow et al., 2003, chap. 1).

A concise summary: an inclusive accountability system demands an assessment system that tests and reports results for all students. This does not mean that all students take the same test; but that's another topic.

References:

Nolet, V., & McLaughlin, M.J. (2005). *Accessing the general curriculum: Including students with disabilities in standards-based reform*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Thurlow, M.L., Elliot, J.L., & Ysseldyke, J.E. (2003). *Testing students with disabilities: Practical strategies for complying with district and state requirements* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

The Sensory Profile

by Dianne Koontz Lowman, Ed.D.
VDOE T/TAC Region 5

In the last issue of the T/TAC Telegram, an article provided information about helping students with sensory processing disorders manage transitions with the classroom. This is a follow-up to that article.

Developed by Dr. Winnie Dunn, the Sensory Profile™ is a questionnaire designed to help determine how well students ages three to 10 years process sensory information from the world around them. The 125 questions on this questionnaire are grouped under sensory processing, modulation, or behavioral & emotional responses. In addition, scores can be calculated to determine how the student responds to sensory input including: sensory seeking, emotional reactive, low endurance/tone, oral sensory sensitivity, inattention/distractibility, poor registration, sensory sensitivity, sedentary, and fine motor perceptual.

The results of the Sensory Profile™, when considered with other evaluation tools/data and discussed with the student's occupational therapist, may help school personnel understand a student's sensory processing patterns. In addition to the original Sensory Profile™, The Adolescent/Adult Sensory Profile™ has been developed for use with students age 11 years and older.

For more information, talk with the occupational therapist in your school and go to the following Web sites:

<http://harcourtassessment.com/haiweb/Cultures/en-us/dotCom/SensoryProfile/Sensory%20Profile.htm>

http://classes.kumc.edu/sah/resources/sensory_processing/learning_opportunities/concepts/sp_concepts_main.htm

Check It Out!

A review of one transition assessment tool

Clark, G.M., Patton, J.R., & Moulton, L.R. (2000). *Informal assessments for transition planning*. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

This resource provides a comprehensive collection of informal assessment procedures for students, teachers, and parents that allow all parties involved to participate in and identify the transition service needs of the student. Section 2: Comprehensive Informal Inventory of Knowledge and Skills for Transition provides the teacher with a starting point for transition planning. It consists of 46 competency items across nine major transition planning areas with bulleted specific assessment points under each category. Section 3: Selected Informal Assessment Instruments for Transition covers nine major transition planning domains and incorporates data from teachers, parent/guardian, and student. The nine main domains selected by the authors include employment, further education/training, daily living, leisure activities, community participation, health, self-determination, communication, and interpersonal relationships.

The guide also contains an example case study that is extremely helpful in understanding how all of the various informal assessment information can be tied together to create an age-appropriate, results-oriented transition plan. In addition, the publisher grants permission for the user to create unlimited copies of Section 2 and Section 3 meaning you only have to buy one! For more information on this resource or other transition related resources contact Coordinator John McNaught at Region 5 T/TAC, (540) 568-2641 or <mcnaught@jmu.edu>.

Note: This resource can also be used in conjunction with the *Transition Planning Inventory* (Clark & Patton, 1997).

Program Choreography: The Fine Dance of Individualized Teaching and Learning

Brenda E. Fogus, M.T., Department of Exceptional Education, James Madison University

In the last issue of the T/TAC Telegram, Part One of this article appeared and provided information about classroom structure.

Choreography is simply defined as a system to establish where everyone in a program is, when they are doing what they need to do, and how they move about in relationship to each other. As well, it defines why everyone does what they do when they do it. The overall strategy is to coordinate the physical environment with varied curriculum and individual student schedules with staff schedules so that resources of materials, space, and people are evenly distributed. There are basically eight steps for planning the master schedule, thus the choreography of an entire classroom.

1. Structure the physical environment, individual schedules and teaching methods, teach students to participate in as independent a way as possible and ensure that everyone is comfortable with the areas of the room, how the room operates, and how they fit into the picture of the room. Of course this is a simplified statement of a very involved and pervasive classroom management and instructional approach. Please remember that this is article does not provide the specifics on this part of your program, but assumes your expertise at it.

2. Collect individual schedules and develop a grid of the day. Divide the hours of programming into short blocks of time that most closely aligns with the instructional blocks and transition times of the building.

3. Fill in times students are out of the room for other "non-negotiable" activities.

4. Fill in times that are "non-negotiable" for the classroom or class as a whole.

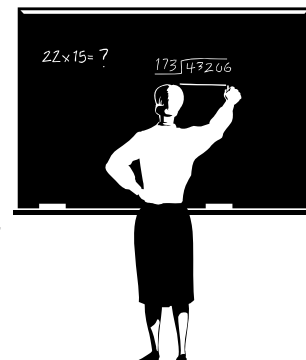
5. Pencil in "negotiable" times with other people such as speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, community outings, etc.

6. Plug in group times when groupings are in the classroom and can be grouped to work on similar goals (while these will likely have to shift some, try to negotiate with your related service providers to encourage them to be flexible so you can protect some larger group work).

7. Plug in individual work times when students are working independently and balance activities referring to the key concepts of TEACCH, previously summarized.

8. Plan for staff choreography within the structure of your large schedule. Plug in staff to work with students according to their (staff) strengths, but allowing for some element of rotation so students work to generalize skills across adults and everyone has a more complete perspective on each student.

Included is a sample one-day schedule for a classroom with seven students, one teacher, and one assistant. At first glance, the schedule might seem overwhelming, as it also can be when put into practice in the classroom. To see the sample, go to http://www.ttac.odu.edu/ENewsArchives/Autism/ttac_links.htm.



Another vexing issue for the classroom is how to balance the individual programming needs of one or two students who participate within the general classroom. This is a challenge that must be faced by teachers of students at all grades. The following are some suggestions for how to do this and an outline of procedures to use for effectively planning for inclusion that meets all the student's needs. As well, there is a sample schedule for the general education classroom reflecting the individual adjustments for a student with autism being fully included, but not necessarily with additional staff support. To see the sample, go to http://www.ttac.odu.edu/ENewsArchives/Autism/ttac_links.htm.

- Replicate some aspects of the self-contained setting, for instance use the same schedules, a work station that looks exactly the same, and definitely similar vocabulary.
- Consider having the student go from the self-contained room to the general education classroom for JUST his/her independent work time at first. This gives the student a chance to get used to the room while not having to deal with so much social interaction, which can be overwhelming and stressful. In this case, the student would walk in, go to the work station, complete work and immediately return to the self-contained classroom.
- Build a student's time in the general education classroom through small tasks, leaving those requiring more and more interaction until s/he is comfortable with the room and teacher.

For students in the general classroom needing to have more individualized planning:

- It is best to also take small steps. Change only one thing at a time if necessary. This, of course, depends on the student as some can handle several changes at once.
- If you make a change in every block of the day, try to do it at a consistent time of the block. For instance, make the change at the end of each block or at the beginning of each block rather than perhaps at the beginning of one, the end of one, and at varying times in the others.
- Try to make changes of a social nature after making and settling into other changes remembering that social interactions can be very challenging and quite stressful for students with a disability on the continuum.
- When you are making changes like adding an independent work time or movement in the room, first keep the focus on making the change and not on instruction. That is, use this time to help the students learn the new system by having their work be things they have mastered and are quite successful doing.

- Consider creating mini, simplified work systems and structure systems within the general classroom that replicate what we do in the self-contained rooms.
- Consult the schedule of the general education classroom for an organizer for how to integrate individual programming within a larger class.

As with any new approach or strategy, it is critical to give it time. Encourage everyone, including you, to give the new schedule at least two weeks unless there are glaring problems that cannot wait to be addressed.

If there are, address them right away by making changes in the schedule, but do not abandon the schedule. When the times work, let the schedule rest for at least two weeks before making any decisions about how things are going. Even two weeks will not be enough unless everyone has learned the system and can move about independently. This is a fabulous organization tool and can offer many rewards in the form of less boredom, increased student independence, and more focused and appropriate work toward individual student goals. Teaching that meets all of these goals can be very rewarding and, likewise, learning that does the same can be extremely reinforcing for your students!

Students feel successful, recognize the validity of their work, have less stress, tend to be more motivated, and are more productive. For more information, search the TEACCH Web site at <www.TEACCH.com> or contact the author at <fogusbe@jmu.edu>.



Mark Your Calendars!!!

*2006 Content Teaching Academies at
James Madison University
June 26-30, 2006*

The 2006 Academies will include strands in the following areas:

- K-5 Core
- 6-12 Mathematics
- 6-12 History and Social Studies
- 6-12 Science
- 6-12 English/Language Arts
- K-12 Special Education
- K-12 Special Education, Autism
- Early Childhood (Preschool) Special Education
- K-12 Gifted Education (two strands)
- K-12 Technology (two strands)
- K-12 Art
- K-12 Administrators

Participants may register for credit or non-credit. Sessions will run from 8:30 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 8:00 a.m. to noon on Friday. Additionally, evening social events are planned Monday through Thursday.

Further information and registration applications will be available on the Content Teaching Academy Web site after January 1, 2006.

For those who like to really plan ahead, the 2007 Content Teaching Academies will be held June 25-29, 2007!



Reading Resources.....

Reading A-Z offers thousands of printable teacher materials to teach guided reading, phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, reading fluency, alphabet, and vocabulary. The teaching resources include professionally developed downloadable leveled books, lesson plans, worksheets, and reading assessments.

Reading A-Z children's books and lessons are appropriate for all sorts of reading programs, including K-6, ESL/ELL, special education, and remedial reading. The reading program's downloadable books and lesson plans are standards based and results oriented.

If you are a curriculum planner at the school or district level, you may be eligible for a free 30-day trial to review the Web sites. Please E-mail <sales@readinga-z.com> or call (866) 889-3731 for further information.



For information on tuition assistance programs, special education preparation programs, and vacancies in Virginia school divisions, please visit

<http://www.teachvirginia.org/becomeone>



National Inclusive Schools Week

December 5-9 has been designated as National Inclusive Schools Week to highlight and celebrate the progress of our nation's schools in providing a supportive and quality education to all students, particularly those who have disabilities and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The week also provides an important opportunity for educators, students, and parents to discuss what else needs to be done in order to ensure that their schools continue to improve their ability to successfully educate all children and youth.

National Inclusive Schools Week is being organized by the Urban Special Education Special Education Leadership Collaborative and the Education Development Center, Inc. as a way of acknowledging the hard work and commitment of teachers, administrators, students, and parents in making their schools more inclusive, and, thereby, significantly contributing to the development of a more inclusive society. For further information or to order resource and celebration materials, visit www.cec.sped.org and scroll down to "Other Special Ed Events."

Early Childhood Project Update

The Shining Stars conference, held this past July and with a focus on inclusion, was very successful. Two nationally known speakers, Jan Moss and Mara Sapon-Shevin, along with many presenters from throughout Virginia demonstrated how inclusion can and will work for everyone.

The early childhood priority project is beginning to plan for next year's Shining Stars conference and plan to have this information available soon.

The current school year began with the Inclusive Placement Opportunities for Preschoolers (IPOP) initiative. Six school divisions are participating in this initiative to improve and expand the placement opportunities for preschool children with disabilities. The goal of the initiative is to increase the number of settings that children with disabilities have available to be included with their typically developing peers.

Curriculum development will also be a focus of the early childhood priority project. Use of *Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning: Guidelines for Literacy and Mathematics* (Virginia Department of Education, 2003) as a guide for the preschool classroom is being encouraged. The *Foundation Blocks* are available at www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Instruction/Elem_M/FoundationBlocks.pdf.

Program improvement is part of the federal government's new State Progress Plan and Annual Performance Report. There are new data reporting requirements that are specific to early childhood special education programs. The data reported to the state are to be used for local program improvements. Project members will share the information with local school divisions as it becomes available.

