

Innovations and Perspectives

Innovations and Perspectives



Linking People and Resources

Newsletter of the Virginia Commonwealth University Training and Technical Assistance Center (VCU T/TAC) for School Personnel Serving Children and Youth with Disabilities and Children At-Risk for Academic Failure

Vol. 3, No. 3
March/April 1999

Inside This Issue.....	
Lead Article.....	1-3
High School and Beyond.....	3-4
Technology Tidbits.....	5
Teamwork.....	6
Functionally Speaking.....	6-7
Five and Under.....	8-9
Birth to Two.....	9-10
Practical Solutions.....	10
It's Academic.....	11
Risky Business.....	12
T/TAC Sponsored Workshops.....	13
Professional Development Opportunities.....	13

A note from the Editor: This issue of *Innovations and Perspectives* includes several articles focused on the process of change. The article that follows includes background information about the change process itself. Other articles include information about the role of teamwork in change, change in services for students, and technology and change.

“Something Has to Change!”

Since the results of last spring’s administration of the SOL Assessments were released in January, a chorus of “Something has to change!” has been sung in schools and school divisions across the Commonwealth. If the decision to accredit public schools had been made based on the scores obtained by students who took the SOL Assessments last year, only 39, or two per cent of the public schools in Virginia would be accredited now (Virginia Department of Education, 1999).

The SOLs have raised the stakes for everyone who participates in the process of public education. Individual students, including those who have disabilities and those with disadvantages or who are at risk for school failure, must pass all of the required SOL Assessments in order to earn a diploma. Teachers must present complex material to students in a way that allows them to be successful. Schools must post 70 percent pass rates on the assessments in order to achieve state accreditation. Local school boards must demonstrate the ability to put policies, funding structures, and personnel in place that can assure the success of their students. Given the weak showing of many schools on the SOL Assessments, there is overwhelming consensus that **something** needs to change.

The changes advocated by many Virginia educators are not as simple as adopting a new program or training teachers in remediation strategies. The current situation calls for significant, system-wide change. The change of a system, such as a school, to bring about improved student achievement is known by several terms, including systems change, systemic change, and education reform. Regardless of what it is called, it is a process that takes from three to five years to accomplish, and it represents the collaborative work of many people. When change efforts are successful, you can be sure that those involved learned to work and communicate differently with each other and the organization’s stakeholders (everyone with a stake in the organization and its work) have had meaningful opportunities to shape the process.

The thrust for successful change must come from both the top down and the bottom up (Fullan & Miles, 1992). Organizations that have authority over others, such as state departments of education, must “help formulate ‘general direction’...provide resources and opportunities for continuous staff development, and the like.” The role of the local organization “...is to take actions, work on

(continued on page 2)



VIRGINIA
INSTITUTE FOR
DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES

(continued from page 1)

shared vision, develop collaborative cultures, monitor and problem solve vis-à-vis desired directions, respond and be proactive with external agencies and events, and basically to develop the habits and skills of learning organizations" (Fullan, 1994, on-line).

Considering this top-down and bottom-up notion in the context of the changes needed in Virginia, half of the equation seems to be in place. The Virginia Board of Education and the Department of Education have certainly provided the general direction for change. Funds have been awarded to local school divisions for professional development, and resources for remediation have been provided to localities.

It is more difficult to identify what local school divisions and individual schools are bringing to the equation. In some systems, change is approached by quickly adopting an assortment of strategies such as implementing new curricula, offering workshops to teachers, and waving a large stick labeled "accountability" at everyone on the staff, from the superintendent to paraprofessionals. In other places, however, the current environment is viewed as an unprecedented opportunity to improve the schools. People in these forward-looking systems are poised to capitalize on this opportunity if they pay attention to what is known about how to change systems successfully.

So what does the research tell us about how local organizations succeed in their efforts to change? The literature on school change offers guidance in three areas: the importance of people, a way to view change as a process, and the introduction of new practices to teachers (Stiegelbauer, 1994).

People are the most important ingredient in change. Collaborative planning that incorporates the perspectives of all stakeholders who will be affected by change is the single most important element. A core team of planners must keep the big picture in focus, complete tasks, and monitor the process. This team assesses where the organization is relative to where it wants to be, formulates the potential direction for change activities, and continuously shuttles information back and forth between the planning team and the stakeholder group each member represents. Planning teams in schools should include representation from parents, students, the faculty and paraprofessional staff, the administration, support personnel, and other groups as necessary.

Despite the central role of this team, the planning team members are not the only, nor are they the most important people in the process. Each individual in the organization will react to change in his or her own individual way. Some will embrace the process with enthusiasm and energy that fuels the organization's forward momentum. Others will view change suspiciously, remembering that as a field, education

is vulnerable to adopting so-called wonder cures that are expensive, short lived, and ultimately unproductive. In order to achieve the best result, everyone's concerns and needs must be validated; each opinion must be respected; and all points of view must be considered carefully. All of the planning team's work must be thought of as draft recommendations that will be considered by the wider group. Procedures should be adopted early in the process for how stakeholder input will be gathered and used to keep the planning team's work on the right track. For example, teachers on the planning team could schedule monthly dialogues with other teachers to give and receive information, or parents could generate a brief update that goes home in book bags periodically with invitations for other parents to provide input in writing or by telephone.

Change is a process, not an event. The process of change can be viewed as including three phases; planning, implementation, and continuation. The planning team must keep each phase in mind from the beginning of their work. If the organization has adopted a vision and a mission, they should be reviewed carefully and serve as guides for all of their work. If a vision and a mission are not in place, the first order of business should be to develop them. A vision will lay out where the organization wants to be over a long period of time. The mission describes its work.

In the planning phase, a blueprint for change should be developed. It should address who will be involved, what strengths will be capitalized on, what challenges will be addressed, goals of the change, and strategies for reaching those goals. The plan should be circulated widely as a draft, and the planning team should welcome both questions and recommendations to modify it from stakeholders. Once the plan has gained widespread acceptance, it may be implemented.

In the implementation phase, time lines for completing steps described in the plan are established, and people who are responsible for completing them are identified. Teams may be formed to implement and evaluate specific strategies. This phase will be lengthy, and it can be expected to extend through much of the three to five years it takes to accomplish systems change. Patience is a virtue during the implementation phase, because the promise of most strategies will not become clearly visible until they have been implemented for some time. For example, the effects of a new effort to improve parent involvement might not become apparent until several months or a year after their introduction. Similarly, the benefits of new approaches to supporting the learning and behavior needs of students may not become widely apparent in classroom performance until they have been implemented for two or more years.

Continuation is what determines whether a change becomes systems change or whether it was a flash in the pan. Every decision and step that is taken along the way should be shaped by intentional consideration of what will be necessary

to sustain in the benefits it will produce. One way to build in sustainability of an innovation is to make sure all of the stakeholders it affects support it and view it as beneficial. A second and crucial method is for the organization to review its policies and modify them as needed. If the change is to be sustained, policies must be in place that reward innovation and steer the organization away from knee-jerk reactions to challenges.

Introducing new strategies to teachers must be well thought out and purposeful. The importance of ensuring that stakeholders have had significant opportunities to shape the plan will become crystal clear whenever individuals are asked to change the way they do their jobs. In the course of school change, teachers are inevitably asked to use new instructional, planning, and classroom management strategies. Unless they are already invested in the change process and feel ownership for the direction it is taking, some teachers may view the need to learn new things as an attack on their existing knowledge, skills, and abilities. The principles of good professional development must be implemented in order for teachers to develop and use new strategies in their classrooms. They must have a voice in what kinds of training are offered, when it is offered, and how support and follow up will be available to them as they work to try new things. When training is not provided during contract hours, incentives, which could include stipends, foods, or points for license renewal, must be available.

Yes, something does need to change. Maybe what needs to change first, however, is how we view change itself. For educators, deciding that something has to change is the easy part. Staying on course long enough to develop and implement a well-thought-out collaborative plan is the challenge.



Jo Smith Read

References

Fullan, M.G., & Miles, M.B. (1992). Getting reform right: What works and what doesn't. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 73(10), 744-752.

Fullan, M.G. (1994). Coordinating top-down and bottom-up strategies for educational reform. In R.J. Anson (Ed.), *Systemic reform: Perspectives on personalizing education* [On-line]. Available: www.ed.gov/pubs/EdReformStudies/index.html

Stiegelbauer, S.M. (1994). Change has changed: Implications for implementation of assessments from the organizational change literature. In R.J. Anson (Ed.), *Systemic reform: Perspectives on personalizing education* [On-line]. Available: www.ed.gov/pubs/EdReformStudies/index.html

Virginia Department of Education (1999, January 8). Virginia department releases results from first SOL test administration [on-line]. www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/NewHome/pressreleases/jan899

High School and Beyond

Oh! That's What It Means To Collaborate!

(Second in a series of two)

You probably remember Pete from the last edition of *Innovations and Perspectives*. You may recall how planning for his education was done around him and not with him, therefore not really meeting his interests or needs. In this issue you will have an opportunity to meet Re-Pete, Pete's cousin. In Re-Pete's story you will see some situations similar to Pete's, but the outcomes are quite different. See if you can identify what role collaboration plays in Re-Pete's story.

Re-Pete is completing the 10th grade at Progressville High School. He is identified as having a severe auditory processing disability. Re-Pete has been successful in his general education classes because of the accommodations made for him. He uses a tape recorder during class lectures, and he gets copies of another student's notes to supplement his own. His special education teacher has worked with him on how to inform his general education teachers of his accommodation needs. They also set up a system where Re-Pete, his special education teacher, and general education teachers can discuss any concerns regarding his school work whenever they need to. During his last IEP meeting his mom agreed to sit down at the beginning of each week and review his assignment notebook and work on a study schedule with Re-Pete. This was done so that Re-Pete could go to his employer at his part-time job and discuss any conflicts with scheduled work times.

Re-Pete would like to enroll in carpentry at the vocational-technical center next year. He made an appointment with his guidance counselor and they reviewed his vocational evaluation. She asked Re-Pete to tell her what he learned from the evaluation. He told her that carpentry was one of his areas of interest and strength. He also told her that he enjoyed building things and would watch and talk to the carpenters who were building new homes in his neighborhood. Sometimes he helped them get things off their trucks. His guidance counselor contacted the vocational guidance counselor to arrange a time for Re-Pete to visit the center and observe the carpentry class. Re-Pete and his special education teacher worked together to prepare some questions for the day of his visit.

When he arrived at the vocational-technical center, Re-Pete met with the vocational guidance counselor and they discussed his interests and questions about the carpentry program. When he got to the carpentry class he was surprised

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

to see that students were learning fractions. After the classroom session was over, Re-Pete met with the carpentry instructor who showed him around the shop area and discussed the things he would be responsible for if he enrolled in the program.

When Re-Pete returned to the high school he discussed his visit with his special education teacher, who asked if he wanted to attend the carpentry program or explore other options. They decided he should meet with the vocational rehabilitation counselor to discuss his situation and explore possible services. His teacher said she would need his mother's permission before she could talk with the rehabilitation counselor, so she contacted her and sent the release home with Re-Pete. Permission was returned the next day and Re-Pete soon met with the rehabilitation counselor. Re-Pete asked his teacher to attend to assist with some of the information. The three of them discussed his vocational evaluation, current interests, desires, and goals. They explored the possibility of his performing a situational assessment working with a carpenter over the summer. The counselor and his teacher explained how this could help Re-Pete make a more informed decision.

Later, at his IEP meeting, Re-Pete was surprised to see all the people there whom he had invited. Present were his mom, his special education teacher, one of his general education teachers, the guidance counselor, the vocational guidance counselor, the carpentry instructor, and the vocational rehabilitation counselor. They discussed the modifications and accommodations he needed in his vocational and general education classes. He was told that many students with learning disabilities attend the vocational programs, and the instructors work with the special education teachers and the students to provide what is needed. His special education teacher told him that she would keep in contact with everyone regarding his progress, but it was also necessary for Re-Pete to monitor his own progress and inform the instructors of his needs.

When they left, Re-Pete was pleased with the outcome. This was going to be a busy summer working with a carpenter to learn some of the basic skills and meeting with his rehabilitation counselor every other week to discuss his progress. Re-Pete had already talked with his employer about reducing his hours this summer so he could complete the situational assessment. Re-Pete was in a hurry to go home and call his cousin Pete to tell him all the great things that were going on.

Some readers may be saying "Yeah, right! This is great if you have the ideal situation." What is the ideal situation? What do you need? You have students, teachers, and parents, so what else do you need for true collaboration? Is willingness to empower your students to be involved in their planning all you need? Giving them opportunities to

to self-advocate, and to be self-determined may be the first steps in creating a true collaborative environment. Making general education teachers aware of their importance in the planning process, identifying and creating experiences for students, building relationships with school and community resources are all important components of a collaborative environment. Maybe the main component is that all those involved are doing so with the expectation of student success. Think about it!

Doug Russell



Technology Assistance is Available in Your Program or School!

The VCU T/TAC has been supporting infant programs and school systems in planning and providing assistive technology through consultations, workshops, long-term technical assistance, and the Technology Network (TechNet). Each infant program and school system in Superintendent's Regions 1 and 8 has a representative in the TechNet. These representatives attend several workshops each year that focus on awareness of new technology, training in the how-to of technology use, developing assistive technology policies and identifying funding sources, and networking with other professionals with similar interests. Because this is a train-the-trainers model, your TechNet representative is a resource to your program and can help you plan for and implement assistive technology services. Contact your program director or director of special education to identify your TechNet member.

TECHNOLOGY TIDBITS

VISUAL WHAT?

(Second in a series of two)

Since the last newsletter, have you worked with any of your students to develop a visual schedule? If so, have you noticed increased independence and participation? This form of visual support can help you make beneficial classroom changes that are easy and can be implemented year after year. Sometimes, however, students need additional visual supports, especially when there is an unexpected change such as a snow day or an early dismissal day.

Another way to make a long lasting change for your students is to use something you probably already have in your room: a **calendar**. To make a change, however, you will need to use the calendar not only to recite the days of the week or the months but also to help students understand what is happening in their lives. Make a large calendar for the class to let them know which days are school days and which are early dismissal days, when field trips will occur, when to bring money for special events, when to bring particular items to school, etc. Also, some of your students will benefit from the use of an individual calendar—a daily planner. Help those students develop a calendar to go back and forth between school and home. Use pictures, words or symbols to help the students know when to bring a cold lunch, who will be home after school, etc. Calendars and planners are great ways to teach the concepts of before and after, to answer questions, to improve organization and sequencing, to decrease problem behaviors, and to help students understand and deal with change. In one of the classes at Evergreen Elementary School (Chesterfield County), some of the students carry daily planners with them. These planners contain their daily schedule, a monthly calendar, and pages for notes between school and home; also, many of the planners include the students' visual communication systems.

Labeling the environment is another visual support that can help you make significant changes. What if library shelves had no letters or numbers on them so we didn't know exactly where to return a book? Imagine how much easier life would be for your students if the areas of the room were labeled with pictures and words so they know what items belong where as well as the purpose of various areas of the room (e.g., book area, game area, puzzle area, etc.). This should also help improve communication and make them more independent.

Choice boards are another visual support. For example, set up choices of jobs students can do, games they can play

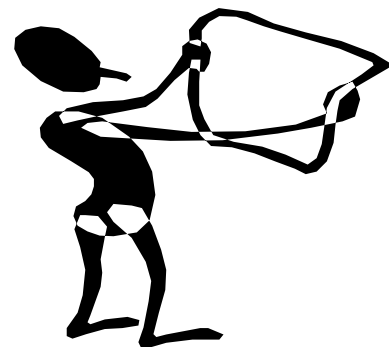
on a rainy day, who they want to work with on a project, or what they want to eat for lunch that day. Giving students choices makes them feel more in control and thus, more cooperative.

Changing from one activity to the next can be upsetting for some students because they don't understand what is happening or may be resistant to change. Using **transition** supports can make the changes easier. Prepare them in the following ways: alert them to the upcoming change by using visual along with brief auditory cues (e.g., touch the schedule, refer to the clock or timer, show a picture cue); use cleaning up or putting things away as part of the routine; give them a picture card, schedule, or object to carry with them to the next activity. Also, let them know they can do a desirable activity again, then show on the schedule when that will occur.

Using visual supports is a way of teaching receptive language to students since we assume they understand more than they actually do. By using visual cues we not only help them understand language, but we also help them make sense of what is happening in their lives. Improved behavior should be the pleasant result in all settings, and it should have long-lasting classroom effects.

Think about the importance of visual supports the next time you arrive home from work, listen to your answering machine, and have to play back the messages one or more times to understand all of the transient auditory information. Or, recall when a waiter at a restaurant listed the choices of salad dressings, and you had to ask him to repeat the list (whereas if the choices had been written down, you could have reviewed them a number of times to decide the one you wanted!) As you plan and teach, **think visually!**

Linda Oggel



Reference

Burkhart, L. (1998, November). "What have we learned about augmentative communication and children functioning at young levels". Presentation at TechKnowledge '98 Conference, Richmond, VA.

Hodgdon, L (1996) Visual strategies for improving communication. Troy, MI: QuirkRoberts Publishing.

TEAMWORK

Teams and the Change Process

Do you see a need for change in your school or program? Most people would answer “yes” to this question. Are the changes that are needed small and simple or are they large and complex? Some of each, you say. Would your proposed changes involve only a few people or would they affect the whole faculty? It all depends, you say. How many students and families would benefit from the changes you envision? Hopefully many, you say.

In schools and programs today, professionals and parents are aware of the need for significant changes to improve the quality of education, supports, and services for all children and youth. Change is clearly needed to improve the quality of instruction, to offer more choices and alternatives, to promote and support positive student behavior, and to include all children in their neighborhood schools and communities. “Change is needed.” That’s easy to say. The hard part is starting and sustaining the change process.

The initiative for change can come down from the top or up from the bottom. “Top-down” initiatives in schools may derive from federal and state mandates, from school board decisions, or from the office of the superintendent or principal.

“Top down” changes frequently are resisted. Those at the bottom, who must implement the changes and suffer the pain of the change process, often question the motives of the leaders, disagree with the priorities that have been set, and challenge the methods used to implement the change. The current resistance to and criticism of Virginia’s Standards of Learning by some educators are examples of this phenomenon.

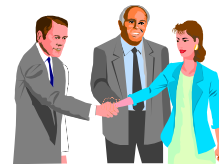
“Bottom up” change on the other hand, is initiated by those who are most directly affected by the inadequacies and failings of the status quo. Teachers, parents, related service professionals, and students are aware that the current way of doing business is not working. These people know when the school or program is not achieving its goals or fulfilling its highest potential. Those closest to “the action” see the need for change. However, they do not usually feel empowered to do anything about the problems—other than to complain or withdraw.

There are advantages to both top-down and bottom-up change initiatives. For example, the federal mandate for schools to provide a free and appropriate education to all children and youth with disabilities is viewed by most educators as a positive example of top-down change. An example of bottom-up change is the development of

inclusion options for students with disabilities in schools by teams of teachers, parents, and related services personnel.

Schools and programs that follow the team approach have an advantage when it comes to the change process. Teams are organized based on the belief that those who will have to carry out and live with change initiatives also play an important role in identifying the need for change and choosing change strategies. When an organization empowers those at the bottom to meet regularly, assess the need for change and develop plans for ongoing improvement, the resistance to change disappears.

None of us likes to be told what to do. Something in the human spirit seems to resist being controlled. There is also something in the human spirit that is ready and eager to join with others in making changes and solving problems when we are included as equal partners in the process. We need to apply these insights to the changes we hope to implement in our schools and community programs serving infants and young children.



Howard Garner

Reference

Garner, H. (1995). *Teamwork models and experience in education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

FUNCTIONALLY SPEAKING

FOCUS ON CHANGE: WHERE TO BEGIN?

Change is all around us. It permeates every nook and cranny of our lives, especially in the fast paced technological society in which we live. How do we know when and where to begin a journey of change? Do we just go by our gut feelings? What happened to being proactive? Many times change may be difficult because we are not even aware that there is a need for it. We go along under the assumption “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”. We continue to do business as usual, putting Band-Aids on problems as they arise. Sometimes change is thrust upon us when a crisis occurs that brings us to an “AH-HA” moment. AH-HA! Things are not going the way we thought or desired! AH-HA! Maybe the Band-Aids aren’t working! Other times we try to pull together needs assessment information that will paint a picture of our organization – where we have been, where we are now, what has been working, and what has not given us outcomes we desire. It is at this point that many teams and individuals realize that a new way of doing business is in order.

T/TAC is involved in long-term technical assistance with five schools to create systems change in the area of positive behavioral supports. It was because of an "AH-HA" moment that they entered this relationship with T/TAC. The school teams had an idea that their school environments were not fostering the types of behaviors from students that they desired. As part of the long-term assistance these teams are following a process that involves taking an in-depth look at current information that supports their concerns around behavior. For example, school teams have examined multiple sources of information including the number of office referrals generated within a year's time, staff surveys regarding the school environment, consistency of discipline policy procedure implementation, and academic/instructional indicators. Additional sources that could be utilized in conducting a comprehensive needs assessment include: learning styles inventories, staff turn-over data, Accelerated Reader reports, parent and student surveys, standardized test results, staff evaluation data, and reading inventories.

After collecting all of the information about their schools, the teams were guided through a process to help them analyze their findings and determine the most appropriate strategy for addressing their school-wide behavior concerns. This process encouraged schools to look for trends and patterns of strengths and weaknesses in the areas of problem-solving, social skills, instruction/curriculum restructuring, and behavioral interventions. In the next step of the process teams will determine priorities that emerged from this data probe. Teams will be better equipped to make informed decisions about specific programs, strategies, and/or techniques that will specify exactly what the school expects from students and staff. For example, a team that may have felt their behavior concerns were directly related to lack of parent involvement, high rates of students at risk, or students with disabilities, discovers that the majority of their concerns point to a possible need for social skills training throughout the school.

As these teams continue their journey to create systemic change within their schools, they can feel confident that the foundation of this change is rooted in more than the initial "AH-HA" revelation!



Jayne Bradley
Sandy Wilberger

PLEASE REMEMBER.....

RETURN LIBRARY MATERIALS PROMPTLY SO THAT ALL MAY HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BENEFIT FROM THE RESOURCES PROVIDED BY THE T/TAC OFFICES.



Cooperation, Coordination, and Collaboration... Aren't they Interchangeable?

Any time a system takes on an effort to make significant changes, the people in the organization learn to work together differently. Some people use the words cooperation, coordination, and collaboration as if they are interchangeable. See if you know what each one means by matching the words on the left with the definitions on right. Answers are on page 11.

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 1. cooperation | a. This is the most complex of the three "c" relationships. People in these kinds of relationships have common goals for their work together. They willingly share decision making authority and resources to accomplish their goals, and they routinely plan and work together. Colleagues become knowledgeable about each other's strengths and weaknesses, and they encourage each other to release and reverse roles so that they can learn from each other. |
| 2. coordination | b. This is a good informal working relationship between two or more people. People in these kinds of relationships are willing to help each other out, share information that might be beneficial, and support each other. This is the least complex of the three "c" relationships. |
| 3. collaboration | c. This is the second most complex of the "c" relationships. People in this type of relationship purposefully plan together, and they systematically share information and resources. Each one remains completely autonomous, but they make efforts to work in ways that complement each other and they may work together on projects. |

FIVE AND UNDER

The Power of One in Initiating Change

You are an early childhood special education (ECSE) teacher working in a self-contained class teaching eight children with developmental delays. Your school division relies primarily on a self-contained service delivery model for providing services to preschoolers with disabilities. You have worked hard to forge a relationship with the general education early childhood (ECE) teacher next door. You both have seen the many advantages that integrating children with and children without disabilities can bring, and would like to see more ECSE and ECE classes in your school division engaging in this type of collaboration. It would be nice if there was a school or division-wide program to promote integration opportunities between early childhood programs such as the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI), Head Start, Homeless, Migrant and Occupational Childcare programs. This would make it easier for so many more children and teachers to reap the many benefits that you have experienced. You are but one, already overworked, underpaid teacher. What can you possibly do to promote such a change?

1. Gain the support of others who share the same philosophy and belief about integration and form a planning team

Talk with other teachers, related service staff, parents, paraprofessionals and others who share your beliefs and values. Form a team and develop a vision and goals for the new program. Determine what activities need to be accomplished in order to reach the goal.

2. Develop a proposal to add an integration program in the system

The proposal should include a program description, development activities, and timelines. Many proposals suggest beginning the new program in several phases starting with a pilot (one school, one class) prior to implementing a new program. Different methods of service delivery should be considered. These may include combining classes (full inclusion-team teaching); part-time mainstreaming, reverse mainstreaming, and partnerships with community child care programs.

3. Gain the support of administrators for the proposed integration program

Plan a meeting with the school or school division's administrators to present the proposal. Identify the key administrators in your division. In some divisions this may be the building principal. In others, the Director of Special Education, Director of Early Childhood Education, Superintendent or members of the school board might be key players. Actively seek their concerns about the proposal during the presentation. Explain that the planning committee

will address their concerns prior to beginning the new program. It is recommended that an administrator or several administrators serve as members on the planning team. Their involvement and support will be crucial in beginning and maintaining the program.

4. Identify barriers and solutions to initiating the new program

Members of the planning team share all concerns including minor ones about initiating the new program. The team systematically addresses each concern and brainstorms possible solutions. Typical concerns are related to teacher attitudes, support services, transportation, scheduling, training, teaming and financial issues.

5. Share information about the proposed integration program, elicit concerns, and gain support from all stakeholders

Members of the planning team prepare and present a presentation to all that will be directly affected by the proposed changes. In some cases this may be the entire school staff. At other times a smaller group may be involved. During the presentation, people are encouraged to share their concerns about initiating the new program. Again, the planning team must systematically address each concern.

6. Visit quality integration programs

Representatives from the planning team visit a variety of programs that have initiated integration placement options. Members gain information about the pros and cons, roles of staff, and gain valuable insights into the process used by another team. This information is shared with all the planning team members.

7. Develop policies to support the new program

The team identifies the procedures within their system for developing policies to support the integration program. Depending on the type of integration options being considered, policies will be needed to address staffing issues (job revisions, roles and responsibilities), operating procedures, referral processes, methods of service delivery, parent involvement, financial, transportation, and other issues.

8. Plan for and conduct a series of inservice training sessions

The planning team plans and provides appropriate inservice training to support integration options. Topics may include collaborative teaming, providing support services, embedding IEP goals in daily routines and planning follow up and support for all training that is provided.

9. Plan for the program to become a visible and on-going part of the school system

The planning team finds office space for the new program, offers resources, and develops and distributes a brochure, video or handouts describing the new program.

10. Plan for and conduct ongoing evaluations of the program.

The team develops and conducts on-going program evaluations. This information can be used to make improvements and in some cases recommendations for the program's continuation. Information should be collected on student progress, teacher and family satisfaction, and costs.

Although the steps described may seem an impossible task, many schools or school divisions have initiated such changes in their program, and the change began with one person or a small group of people. Change can occur from the grass roots efforts of one passionate person, so, don't give up! Contact the T/TAC for information about schools that have developed integration programs or for help from our team in making a change within your program.



Sandy Wilberger

Adapted from:

Voorhees, M.D., Landon, T., & Harvey, J. (1995) Integrated placement options for preschoolers: A planning guide. Richmond, VA: Virginia Department of Education.

BIRTH TO TWO

Changing Services in Response to Family Needs

You have been reading about change in this newsletter—changing systems, changing policies, and changing practices. Often systems change because the needs of consumers change. In the area of early intervention, families determine their own needs and play a critical role in deciding how and where services will be provided. The needs of families have clearly changed over the years and in response to the changing needs of families, early intervention services need to continue to change. A recent article in *Infant-Toddler Intervention* by Cheryl Beverly of James Madison University offers insight into some types of families (Beverly, 1998). Highlights from her article follow.

The traditional view of "family" as a social unit made up of a mother, father and their children no longer holds true for much of society. The reality of today's family consists of a multiplicity of family and household arrangements involving people with and without biological connections. Over 3.75 million children are being raised in a household headed by a grandparent. Many of these children are in grandparent households without parents, while others are being raised in three generation households headed by grandparents with at least one parent living in the home. In order to closely collaborate with custodial grandparents of children with

disabilities or who are at-risk for disabilities we need to develop more understanding about custodial grandparent household structures, interactions, functions and life cycles. Acknowledging this will help service providers to value the custodial grandparents' voice in planning, implementing and evaluating early intervention policies and practices.

Often custodial grandparents assume a guardianship role without addressing the issue of securing legal custody. This may impact policy decisions in early intervention programs. Can custodial grandparents without legal custody enroll their grandchildren in early intervention programs? Can they gain access to their grandchildren's records? Can they sign legal and educational documents such as confidential release forms and IFSPs pertaining to their grandchildren? Early interventionists can guide custodial grandparents in seeking legal counseling regarding guardianship and foster care issues. They can also connect them with support groups to help them understand the circumstances that led to their having custody of their grandchildren such as, substance use and abuse, child abuse and neglect, poverty, and teenage parents.

The majority of custodial grandparent households have an annual income of less than \$20,000. Custodial grandparents report difficulty providing for the basic needs of their family. Because of limited income, inadequate government assistance, and increased costs of raising a child, many of these grandparents draw from their retirements, deplete their savings accounts, and are forced to return to work.

It is not unusual for custodial grandparents to perform multiple roles. They may have the role of parent, spouse or partner, caregiving child to an older parent, and caregiver to an elderly or ill spouse. Multiple caregiving roles consume time and energy and create confusion within the family. This can easily lead to stress, anxiety, and depression. The custodial grandparents' limited income, time, energy, and physical ability to care for their grandchildren must be considered in child and family assessment, eligibility for services, and the development, implementation, and attainment of IFSP goals. Early interventionists can help these families locate support to seek financial aid, health and life insurance, and protect their retirement accounts. Job counseling may help custodial grandparents locate employment opportunities. Mental health services can help with management of stress, depression, and anxiety. Transportation and respite care can also be valuable services. In fact, a coordinated system of service delivery will decrease the need for families to go to multiple agencies for services.

An increase in nonparental households, especially custodial grandparent households, is reason to reflect on how we collaborate with families. When we develop an understanding of the custodial grandparents' familial context, we can be more responsive to their needs in the development and provision of local services. This understanding further allows

(continued on page 10)

(continued from page 9)

us to advocate for legislation and public benefit programs to support this unique family group.



Sharon Jones

Reference

Beverly, C.L. (1998). Custodial grandparents: familial contexts for early intervention and special education. Infant Toddler Intervention. pp. 135-147.

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

Software -- Thinking Out of the Box!

In keeping with the theme "Practical Solutions", one of great things about technology is that it offers some very practical solutions to one of the most challenging issues in education -- how to teach reading to diverse learners. Technology in special education has focused much of its effort on developing equipment and software to meet the needs of students with communication disabilities, physical disabilities, and learning disabilities. General educators often use educational software that emphasizes concept development in elementary school. Unfortunately, special education and general education remain largely segregated when it comes to sharing technology expertise and resources.

One of the problems facing many general education teachers is the question of how to help the large numbers of academically at-risk children in the area of reading. Fortunately, there are already some technology materials used primarily in special education, that can be helpful to general educators in teaching reading. **Boardmaker** software, for example, was originally developed to assist special educators in designing on augmentative communication displays for students with communication disabilities. **Picture It** and **PixWriter** were developed primarily to increase language and literacy opportunities for students with moderate to severe disabilities. All of these programs can do so much more. Each of these programs has an extensive clip art library and the capability of printing text to matching pictures in "task" card form. They can also be used to create graphic, sight word cards for weak readers. Sight word cards can be made for any reading story and content chapter or for sight word lists like the Dolch Word List or 100 Most Frequently Used Words list. Students working with cards that contain both pictures and text usually make rapid gains in their sight word vocabularies. But wait, there is even more! **Boardmaker** has the capacity of printing the text in English and/or a second language. This can be a real plus when working with ESL students who can already read in their native language.

Another added benefit of these programs is the support they can offer special needs students in general education settings. Students with reading disabilities often receive help from a special education teacher for language arts, but they are mainstreamed for science and social studies. Since these content areas require a great deal of reading, matching picture and word cards would be very beneficial in learning to read key concept words.

Another way to help academically at-risk and mainstreamed students with word recognition is by "borrowing" another piece of technology typically found in special education classrooms. It is easy to see the advantage of students having cards with both pictures and text, but how about adding the auditory component so students can actually "hear" the words? With a **Cheap Talk** device, words can be programmed into the device and labeled with matching picture and text cards. Students simply press the card to hear the word being read to them. After students have ample practice with the cards, they can complete follow-up activities such as matching pictures and words or reading the words out loud to a teacher, a volunteer, or another student. Better yet, they can use **PixWriter** to create sentences and stories using the targeted vocabulary words. After the student writes a story using **PixWriter**, **PixReader** reads the story providing an opportunity for self-correction, resulting in increased concept development and comprehension skills, all while reinforcing language activities.

These are just a few examples of using technology materials that cross the boundaries of general and special education. There are many, many more ways special educators and general educators can share both information and creative ideas to best meet the needs of today's students. If you want additional ideas, visit in your colleagues' classrooms, learn about the technology they are using, and let your imagination flow. If there isn't a system for information sharing already in place in your school, talk to other teachers and get one started.

Sharon Jones
Debby Wesson

Additional information about these programs can be found by contacting:

Boardmaker
Mayer-Johnson
(615)550-0084
www.mayer-johnson.com

Cheap Talk
Toys for Special Children
1-800-832-8697

Picture It, PixReader, PixWriter
Slater Software, Inc.
(719) 479-225
www.slatersoftware.com



IT'S ACADEMIC

Are We Changing Technology or is Technology Changing Us?

Technology is everywhere, and sometimes it causes us to ask questions such as:

Sally was just assigned to my classroom. She has an expensive looking communication device. I don't know how to use it. Who do I call to learn to use this thing?

Joey has very weak muscles. He is having trouble writing and can't keep up with his school work. Who can I call for a comprehensive technology assessment?

I'm not sure how to add technology needs to my student's IEP. Who can help me with this? If I put it in the IEP, does my school system have to buy it?

The school bought Sharde an AlphaSmart to use at school. Can she take it home to help her with homework assignments?

I need a few simple technology devices to use with my students. Do we have a technology library from which I can borrow equipment? Who will repair my broken equipment?

I need to talk with my student's family about purchasing some switches and toys for use at home, but I don't know the latest equipment on the market? Do we have an assistive technology specialist who can help me?

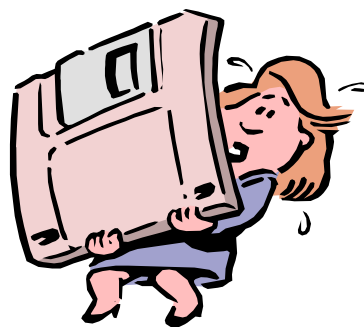
Do these questions sound at all familiar to you? These questions are being addressed by educators across the country. School and community programs are struggling to develop policies that meet the letter of the law and address the need for assistive technology while facing limited fiscal resources. There is no doubt that assistive technology provides creative solutions that enable individuals with disabilities to be more independent, more productive, and integrated into the mainstream of educational and community life, but assistive technology is not just an educational frill. IDEA requires assistive technology to be considered as part of a free appropriate public education guaranteed to students with disabilities. The big question is "how are we going to assess our needs and provide assistive technology to all students who need it?"

Changes in policy and implementation require vision, commitment, and long-range planning. Ideally this planning should involve teams that include system-wide and local administrators, educators, related service providers, professionals specifically trained in the area of technology,

and family members. Some of the areas assistive technology planning should address include:

- A common definition of assistive technology devices and services.
- A plan to assess the technology needs of individuals, schools/programs, and the school system.
- A referral and technology assessment procedure.
- A plan to address training or technical assistance for teams providing assessment and technology services.
- System wide training for all professionals using assistive technology.
- An assistive technology resource library that includes a selection of commonly used low and high tech devices, training in how to use the equipment, strategies for using technology in the classroom and at home, policies about the use of equipment by families, and information on how to select and purchase other appropriate equipment.
- A discussion about the need for a technology specialist.
- A process for customizing, maintaining, repairing, replacing, and buying new equipment on a regular basis.
- Identifying potential funding resources.
- Networking opportunities for individuals involved in assistive technology.

Efforts to change the way systems approach the delivery of assistive technology services might begin at an administrative level or a grassroots effort by service providers. Regardless of who initiates the discussion, in order to create lasting change, planning must be systematic and thorough. It also must include input from everyone who is expected to deliver assistive technology services.



Sharon Jones



ANSWER KEY

Cooperation: **b**
Coordination: **c**
Collaboration: **a**

RISKY BUSINESS

How Can We Get These Students to Pass the SOL Tests?

This seems to be the number one question in the minds of teachers and administrators this spring. There seems to be an almost *frenzied* level around this question. Of course, there is no single answer. Most educators would agree, however that reading comprehension is the single most important skill a student can have. Being able to read for understanding is vital for all subject areas, including "content" areas such as science, social studies, and math. Here are two "Golden Rules" that will help students develop good comprehension skills. The first Rule is: ***Think of reading as having three phases and spend equal amounts of time on each phase.*** The second Rule is: ***Teach comprehension and metacognitive skills.***

Prereading is the first *phase* of the reading cycle. Research has proven that the single most important factor in reading success is activation of prior knowledge and linking that knowledge to what is being read. This is one reason prereading activities are so important. Before you begin, introduce the story, provide a brief description, and a *hook* to capture students' interest. An activity as simple as *brainstorming* can activate students' prior knowledge and give the teacher a good idea of how much knowledge students have. After students have exhausted their ideas, you may want to add some words to the list. If you know the text contains unusual or unfamiliar vocabulary, introduce them at this time. You could do this as a mini-lesson in word recognition skills and vocabulary.

You can take brainstorming a step further with *semantic mapping* activities. Semantic mapping provides a visual guide that helps students classify, compare, and contrast the information generated during the brainstorm. These skills are generally introduced on the chalkboard. Later, as students develop thinking and organizational skills, they can work in groups on the semantic maps. This kind of graphic organizer is very helpful to students who have little background knowledge or lack organizational skills.

Before you begin the second phase, the **reading phase**, read the title and have students look at the picture on the cover or first page, then help students relate this to the brainstormed or mapped lists. You may want to let students add new words at this point. If you are going to do a directed reading activity, have students make predictions about what might happen. You can record these predictions to review at the next stopping point. Now you are ready to start reading. You can have students read or you can read to them. Stop at pertinent places to go back and review

predictions, relate to semantic maps and/or brainstormed lists and make new predictions. As you continue through the story in this fashion, you are modeling good metacognitive strategies students can use when they are reading independently. Be sure to include thinking questions on different levels and model good thinking skills by thinking aloud.

Once the reading is finished you move to the final *phase*, **post-reading or follow-up**. During this stage, students have a chance to go back and think about what they knew before and what they know now. Students should have an opportunity to add to their lists or maps and discuss predictions. No prediction should be considered right or wrong; each one should be scrutinized for how it might or might not have fit logically or creatively into the story. This is also a good time to go back and review vocabulary for meaning and how they were used in the story. This is also a good time for journal and other writing activities that give students an opportunity to link old and new knowledge. This phase is just as important as the first two and should not be rushed.

While reading comprehension alone will not solve every SOL testing woe, it can certainly make students more successful learners. Given time, students who are successful learners can become successful test takers.



Debby Wesson

References

Maria, K.(1990).Reading comprehension instruction: Issues and strategies. Parkton, Maryland: York Press.

Miller, W. (1995). Alternative assessment techniques for reading and writing. West Nyack, New York: Simon and Schuster.

HAVE YOU HAD A CHANCE TO VISIT US ON THE WEB?...

If you haven't, please do! You can find us at:

www.vcu.edu/eduweb/ttac.htm

On our Home Page you can....



Access T/TAC Services

Read our newsletter

Learn about upcoming workshops and conferences

Find other educational resources

Look up library materials for loan

E-mail us.

T/TAC SPONSORED WORKSHOPS

Simplifying the Assessment Process for Students with Severe Disabilities

Presented by: Tracy Landon Ed.D., Angela Levorse M.Ed.,
and Anne Malatchi M.A.
Date: April 29, 1999
Time: 4:30-8:30 p.m.
Location: Williamsburg Ramada Inn Historic;
Williamsburg, VA
Cost: \$22.00 (includes dinner)

(Register with Cecial Patrick in the Region 1 Office)

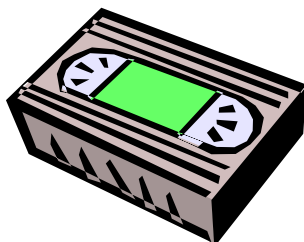
**(This workshop is for the VCU T/TAC and ODU
T/TAC catchment areas)**

AVAILABLE ON VIDEO

If you were not able to attend the video
conferences sponsored by the T/TAC
titled:

Teaching Young Children With Autism
and
Enhancing Emerging Literacy Skills,
and ESL

but you'd like to view them on video
tape, you are in luck! Videocassettes are
now available for checkout at the T/TAC
libraries in Regions 1 & 8. Call either
office for information.



Professional Development Opportunities

Asperger's/High Functioning Autism

Presented By: Dr. Tony Attwood
Date: Friday, April 23, 1999
Location: Baltimore, MD
Contact: Future Horizons
(800) 489-0727

The Role of the Speech-Language Pathologist in Facilitating Emergent Literacy Skills

(Telephone seminar)

Date: April 22, 1999
Contact: ASHA
(800) 498-2071, ext. 4236

20th Annual TEACCH Conference: Evaluating Intervention Approaches and Treatment Effectiveness

Date: May 20-21, 1999
Location: Chapel Hill, NC
Contact: FAX name and address to:
(919) 966-4127 (in order to receive
information)

Summer TEACCH Trainings

Dates: July 12-16, 1999
July 19-23, 1999
July 26-30, 1999
August 2-6, 1999
Locations: Chapel Hill, NC
Asheville, NC
Greenville, NC
Contact: Roger Cox
(919) 966-6636



Wilson Language Training Workshop

Presented by: Barbara Wilson
Date: June 23,24,25, 1999
Location: Holiday Inn Executive Center;
Virginia Beach, VA
Contact: Wilson Language Training
(800) 899-8454
Scholarship Information:
Harley Tomey
(804)355-7470

14th Annual Early Intervention/Early Childhood Summer Institute

Sponsor: Child Development Resources and
The College of William and Mary,
School of Education
Date: August 2-6, 1999
Location: Williamsburg, VA
Contact: Lisa McKean
(757) 556-3300

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Early Childhood Partnership Conference: Developing Relationships to Better Serve Children in Preschool Programs

Williamsburg
July 15 – 16, 1999
Fort Magruder Inn

Blacksburg
July 26 – 27, 1999
**Donaldson Brown Hotel
and Conference Center**

Target Audience: **General and special education early childhood teachers
and paraprofessionals**

Head Start teachers and paraprofessionals

Early intervention service providers



**General education and special education early childhood
program administrators**

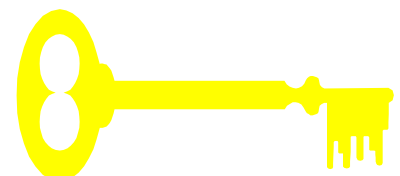
Related service providers

**Families of ECE/ECSE children, as part of a school based or
child centered team**

Conference Strands: **Family Involvement◆Emerging Literacy◆Transitions
◆Behavior◆Administration◆Curriculum Alignment and SOLs**

This conference is sponsored by the Virginia Department of Education, Head Start, and the T/TACs at VCU and Virginia Tech.

**LOOK for registration information
in your mailbox soon!!**



Long Term Technical Assistance Applications Available

Applications for local school divisions, schools, school-based programs and Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICC) to participate in the VCU T/TAC Long-Term Technical Assistance program have been mailed to each school division and LICC. Interested teams are encouraged to submit applications to initiate major systemic change that will enhance the learning of infants, toddlers, children, and young adults with disabilities or who are at-risk. The deadline for applications is April 30. For more information, please call either T/TAC office.

PLEASE SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER

The T/TAC does not have resources to provide a copy of this newsletter to all school personnel in Regions 1 and 8. Please share it with others in your school. You may make unlimited copies for professional use.



Tell Us What You Need!

The T/TAC staff is gearing up to plan for training strands and workshops to be offered in 1999-2000. As part of our planning, we will be asking our Region 1 and Region 8 Planning and Management Teams (PMT) to help identify training needs. Please take the time to contact your LICC or school division PMT representative and tell him or her what kind of training you would like to see the T/TAC offer next year. Names and telephone numbers of PMT members may be found in the January/February issue of *Innovations and Perspectives*, or on our website.

Is Your Schedule Contributing to Challenging Behavior?

Answer yes or no to these questions to review how your classroom schedule is working.

1. Does the schedule always have different activity types following each other (e.g., no two teacher-initiated or guided, and no two student-initiated activities are back to back)? Is the schedule balanced? (e.g., Do quiet activities follow loud activities? Are there activities involving large muscle movement after activities involving small muscle movement?)
2. Are students in large groups for short time periods of 10 minutes or less? Is most of their time in cooperative groups, small group activities or learning centers with hands-on materials? Are there opportunities for students to work independently during small group time? Is there minimal time in independent work?
3. When materials need to be set up for the next activity such as small group work, are materials set up in advance? Is this done in advance or do you assign a student to prepare materials in advance?
4. Are activities scheduled so that when students leave one activity at different times they may enter the next activity at different times (e.g., a transition activity to begin large group, independent seat work with assignments prepared in advance, learning centers with materials set up in advance)? Do large group activities start as soon as some of the students have arrived?
5. Does clean up last three or fewer minutes? Is each student putting something away?
6. Following clean up, do you start the next activity with the ones that have finished cleaning up? Do you signal to the rest to come to the large group without interrupting the group in progress?
7. Do students hear what is expected in the next activity before each transition? Can students tell you what the next activity will be during each activity of the class period or day?
8. Are the steps in a transition reviewed with clear directions regarding what to do during the transition?
9. Does the schedule stay the same daily? Or, if changes occur such as an assembly or field trip, do the students have advance visual and auditory warning about the change in schedule? When students have different schedules, is each student's daily schedule posted and is each student's weekly schedule accessible to each student?
10. Are the activities within the schedule flexible for individual students? Can students go to designated places to do independent work if they are having difficulty staying focused in the large group activity? Can students stand up during large group instruction? Does the schedule communicate this to students?
11. If there is more than one teacher, are the roles of teachers defined in each activity? (Meaning, have teachers agreed to what each one will be doing in each activity across the class period or day?) Is this information on a separate teacher schedule?

If you answered no to any of these questions you probably have a schedule problem and not a behavior problem. Try making adjustments and see if your students respond favorably!



T/TAC Region 1
 School of Education
 VCU Box 842020
 Richmond, VA 23284

T/TAC Region 8
 Learning Center Campus
 P.O. Box 309
 Lawrenceville, VA 23868

**Innovations & Perspective
 Production Team**

Jo Smith Read and Howard Garner, Editors
 Sarah Clevinger, layout and production
 Printed by Edmonds Printing Company,
 Lawrenceville, VA

The T/TAC Staff

Project Director	Howard Garner
Program Specialist	Jayne Bradley
Program Specialist	Sharon Jones
Program Specialist	Pam Kinney
Program Specialist	Tracy Landon
Program Specialist	Linda Oggel
Program Specialist	Jo Read
Program Specialist	Doug Russell
Program Specialist	Debby Wesson
Program Specialist	Sandy Wilberger
Teacher-in-Residence	Deb Stanley
Program Support Technician	Sarah Clevinger
Office Services Specialist	Cecial Patrick
Office Services Specialist	Paul Robertson
Graduate Assistant	Rebecca Dawson

T/TAC Office in Region 1

School of Education
 VCU Box 842020
 Richmond, VA 23284-2020
 (804) 828-6947
 TDD (800) 828-1120
 FAX (804) 828-7495

T/TAC Office in Region 8

Learning Center Campus
 P.O. Box 309
 Lawrenceville, VA 23868
 (804) 848-6339
 FAX (804) 848-6333



**Spring
 is
 Coming!**

The Training and Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC) at Virginia Commonwealth University is one of a network of regional T/TACs funded by the Virginia Department of Education.