



VIRGINIA  
INSTITUTE FOR  
DEVELOPMENTAL  
DISABILITIES



# Update

Virginia Commonwealth University  
Training & Technical Assistance Center  
(VCU T/TAC)

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## High School and Beyond Questions & Answers Regarding the Modified Standard Diploma

Kathe Wittig, M.Ed.  
VCU T/TAC Program Specialist

During the spring and summer the VCU T/TAC received many questions about the Modified Standard Diploma option for students with disabilities. The information that follows may provide answers, clear up confusion, and offer resources from the Virginia Department of Education Website. Perhaps the most important piece of information that one may glean from this article is that the Modified Standard Diploma is a special education diploma. It is not equivalent to a standard diploma. My advice to students, teachers, administrators and parents is for the student to participate in general education classes and the corresponding Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments with accommodations. It's a good idea to consider this diploma option during the 9<sup>th</sup> grade depending on the student's progress in the general curriculum.

### 1. What is a Modified Standard Diploma?

*The Modified Standard Diploma is an option for students with disabilities. Students must earn 20 standard units of credit and pass 8<sup>th</sup> grade SOL literacy and numeracy tests.*

### 2. Is this diploma the same thing as a standard diploma?

*The modified standard diploma is a special diploma. Students participating in the Modified Standard Diploma option must participate in end or course SOL assessments if they participate in the course. However, students are not required to pass SOL assessments to receive their standard unit of credit. Students who were freshmen in the 2000-2001 school year must earn 6 verified units of credit by passing the SOL assessments in certain courses in order to earn a Standard Diploma. Go to the Virginia Department of Education's website for more information regarding course requirements for all diploma options:  
<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/soastude.html>*

see DIPLOMA on page 7

## Weaving Opportunities for Success 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Tapestry for Learning Conference: A Focus on Literacy!

The training and Technical Assistance Centers (T/TACs) at Old Dominion University, William & Mary, Virginia Commonwealth University, Together We Can: The Virginia Deaf-Blind Project, Virginia Institute for Developmental Disabilities-VCU will sponsor its fifth annual **Tapestry for Learning Conference: A Focus on Literacy** on the campus of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, on January 11, 2002.

The day-long conference is an opportunity for educators, counselors, paraprofessionals, school administrators, and school psychologists to focus on effective practices for educating children and youth with disabilities and students at-risk for school failure.

A variety of presentations will be explored on the topics of literacy, positive behavioral supports, instructional strategies, SOL's, curriculum issues, and technology. Some of the presentations are geared toward particular age groups such as early childhood or infants, while others address issues that are appropriate for individuals who support children of any age. Whatever your interest, we have something for you.

Our keynote speaker will be Dr. Bart Pisha, Research Director at the Center for Applied Special Technology in Peabody, MA. Dr Pisha's professional experiences include a unique combination of scholarly research, teaching of children, and extensive experience developing applications of computer hardware and software for reading and written language instruction.

This will be a wonderful opportunity for professional development and collaboration with others in the field. The registration deadline of December 11, 2001 will soon be here, so please register early! For additional content information, please contact Phyllis Haynes at 804-827-1408. We hope you can make this event in Williamsburg, See you there!

- Phyllis L. M. Haynes, M.S.Ed.  
VCU T/TAC Program Specialist

## How Can We Teach For SOL Success When Johnny Still Can't Read and Write: The Ideal of Universal Design for Learning

Jane Middleton, M.Ed.  
VCU T/TAC Program Specialist

This question torments teachers. We want our students to be all they can be, but we have not found the instructional tools and methods needed for those struggling to develop the basic skills needed to master higher-level content. While remedial programs are underway to develop reading skills, the instructional mismatch between the student's command of the tools of learning and the presentation of higher-level instructional content erodes the student's confidence and motivation. Certainly it is unlikely that students significantly behind in basic skills will manage to develop

them while also mastering content on grade level if they use only traditional tools and methods prevalent in classrooms today. However, there are powerful, sophisticated tools and instructional methods emerging that can produce an instructional match, while complementing and supporting basic skills development. In recognition of this need, the National Center for Accessing the General Curriculum (NCAC) was formed. NCAC is made up of five prominent agencies. The lead agency is CAST, the Center for Applied Special Technology, joined by Boston College and its School of Education, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), Harvard Children's Initiative and the Harvard Law School. The charge from the United States Department of Education is to provide leadership in developing and promoting tools and instructional materials to enable all students to access the general curriculum

NCAC is promoting the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), "a new paradigm for teaching, learning, and assessment that draws on new brain research and new media technologies to respond to individual learner differences (NCAC, 2001). This paradigm shifts our basic assumptions about teaching and learning in four fundamental ways:

- Variation of our physical and intellectual abilities is not a special condition of a few, but characteristic of

see UNIVERSAL on page 6

## Autism Websites

*Go Forth & Find!*

Linda Oggel, M.A., CCC-SLP  
VCU T/TAC Program Specialist

Is Autism on the rise? Yes, the incidence of autism seems to be increasing. Only 10 years ago, it was estimated that autism affected one out of 10,000 children. In the November-December 2000 *Advocate*, a publication of the Autism Society of America, it was estimated that autism affects one out of 500 children. In some areas of the country, the rate is even lower. Many people are asking why and researchers are debating. One fact is true: Websites related to autism have increased significantly in the last few years. They offer valuable information to families and educators who live with and teach students with a diagnosis on the autism spectrum. The website addresses are listed at the end of this article.

Just where do you begin when "surfing the net" on autism? One helpful place to start is with the VCU T/TAC website. On the VCU T/TAC site you can view up-coming training and conferences related to autism, read newsletter articles pertaining to autism, and look at the on-line library to see what books and other materials on autism are available for checkout. This past summer our address was changed so you will want to bookmark our new address: [www.soe.vcu.edu/ttac](http://www.soe.vcu.edu/ttac). Another place to begin is at the **Autism Society of America** site. This site is a leading source of information and referral on

autism as it discusses what autism is, some related disorders, possible causes of autism, how autism is diagnosed, learning styles of people with autism, and various approaches to helping people with autism. Within this site are links to other organizations. By contacting the Autism Society of America, you can obtain information packets about autism and locate chapters throughout this country. In addition, this site links to the Autism Society of America Marketplace where you can purchase books and other materials related to autism. A clearinghouse of information about autism spectrum disorders can be found at the **Autism Resources** site. Not only does it contain many links to other autism sites, but it reviews books and it gives web links to resources in these languages: English, Arabic, Chinese, Danish, Dutch, German, Finnish, French, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swedish. Committed to providing resources to parents and professionals, the **Center for the Study of Autism** in Oregon also conducts research on the efficacy of various treatments as it is affiliated with the Autism Research Institute in San Diego, CA. The articles on the site are translated into six languages. **Autism Connect** provides news, events, and access to websites worldwide in an interactive forum.

In addition to those organizations that give many links and general information, there are other state, national and international organizations that are valuable resources. Close to Virginia is the **Autism Society of North Carolina**. It has been in existence for several years and now is well-known for its large bookstore of materials related to autism. You can purchase materials from the society on-line. Further away is the **Indiana Resource Center for Autism**, an early disseminator of information about autism and related disorders. At the

site you can click on the resources pages to obtain articles on communication, behavior, social/leisure skills, as well as their publications. The resources for both professionals and families are available in Spanish. The **Autism Society of Wisconsin** gives good information about the impact of autism on that state and displays other valuable information and links. The **ASSET (Autism Support Services Education Team)** site of New Orleans, LA, lists a variety of favorite web sites to support families and professionals. While **FEAT (Families for Early Autism Treatment)** is primarily a source for families, professionals also may obtain access to the latest research articles posted there. Because of the increase in the diagnosis of autism, **Unlocking Autism** displays information to aid autism awareness and works to help families and professionals develop networks to support each other. The **National Autistic Society (United Kingdom)** is an active organization that supports families and professions. Also in the United Kingdom is **Autism Independent UK** (formerly the Society for the Autistically Handicapped). Its purpose is to increase an awareness of autism and to improve the life of those with autism by disseminating information about diagnosis and new approaches to education and treatment.

At one end of the spectrum of autism disorders is the type known as Asperger Syndrome, named after an Austrian physician named Hans Asperger. Several sites have sprung up that relate information pertinent to this syndrome. Among those sites are **O.A.S.I.S. (Online Asperger Syndrome Information and Support)** where Asperger Syndrome is described and where articles about A.S. are available on Spanish, French and Portuguese.

*see AUTISM on page 6*

## The "Scoop" on Assistive Technology Websites

Sharon Jones, M.Ed.  
VCU T/TAC Program Specialist

Closing the Gap is well-known in the assistive technology (AT) community as a leading source of information on effective practices and innovative applications of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities. Closing the Gap has recently revised its list of the "best of the very best" Web sites related to technology and disabilities specifically organized to support the needs of assistive technology coordinators and teams. This bookmark collection is available in print, as a Web page, and as downloadable files to be installed as a Web browser at [www.closingthegap.com](http://www.closingthegap.com). Listed below is the print version of this guide. Check out these sites and get the "scoop" on AT.

### Exchange Info

*Closing the Gap Question and Answer*  
<http://www.closingthegap.com/cgi-bin/chat/questAns.pl>  
*LD Online Bulletin Boards and Chat*  
[http://www.ldonline.org/bulletin\\_boards/index.html](http://www.ldonline.org/bulletin_boards/index.html)  
*Collegial Conversations dedicated to the Identification and Dissemination of Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology Services*  
<http://sac.uky.edu/~jszaba0/QIAT.html>

### Disability Info

*The Complete Disability Network*  
<http://members.aol.com/disablenet/Main/DisableNet.htm>  
*National Organization for Rare Diseases (NORD)*  
<http://www.rarediseases.org/>  
*MedWeb*  
<http://www.medweb.emory.edu/MedWeb/>  
*The Council for Exceptional Children*  
<http://www.cec.sped.org/>  
*The National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities*

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

### Parent & Family Info

*Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER)*  
<http://www.pacer.org/>  
*Family Village*  
<http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/>  
*The Sibling Support Project*  
<http://www.chmc.org/departmt/sibsupp/>

### Success Stories

*Student Success Stories*  
<http://www.setbc.org/success/>  
*Tech Act Accomplishment Series*  
<http://www.resna.org/taproject/library/accomplish/acomp99.html>  
*Apple Learning Interchange*  
<http://ali.apple.com>

### Marketplace Solutions

*ABLEDATA*  
<http://www.abledata.com>  
*Educational Software Institute Online*  
<http://www.edsoft.com/>

### Product Comparison Solutions

*Speech Systems, Royal National Institute for the Blind*  
<http://www.rnib.org.uk/technology/speech.htm>  
*Continuous speech: A chart on the features*  
<http://www.out-loud.com/features.html>

### Assessment & Decision-making Solutions

*Joy Zabala's Resources for Assistive Technology in Education*  
<http://sac.uky.edu/~jszaba0/JoyZabala.html>  
*The Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative (WATI)*  
<http://www.wati.org/>  
*Has technology been considered?*  
<http://www.assistivetechology.com>

### Accessibility Solutions

*Microsoft Accessibility*  
<http://www.microsoft.com/enable/>

*see SCOOP on page 5*

## We're Still Open!

We would like to reassure all of our consumers in Region 8 that our T/TAC office located at Pickett Park in Blackstone is open and welcomes visitors. Since the events of September 11, Fort Pickett has heightened its level of security and increased the military presence. This means all visitors to Pickett Park must now present identification when entering. Outside of this requirement, we have been assured that access to the office will not be hampered. As before, we encourage patronage of our library and technology lab there.

### Child-Focused Interventions How is Your Program Doing?

Linda Ingleson, Ed.S.  
VCU T/TAC Program Specialist

On October 29, Jaye Harvey of Radford University was welcomed to the VCU Student Commons to address a group of infant and toddler educators on the Division of Early Childhood's Recommended Practices for early intervention and early childhood special education. Her workshop reviewed the origin of practices and helped participants to identify what specifically could be looked at in order to determine whether or not programs were meeting recommended practices.

In the last issue of *Innovations and Perspectives* the recommended practices were described as they related to assessment. As a follow-up to that, we are including in this edition of the Update a self-assessment that has been developed by DEC on "Child-Focused Interventions." The checklist is comprised of three broad areas that address environments, individualized practices, and practices that promote learning. Under each general area are specific standards for programs to look at in order to assess how well they are doing in delivering services to young children with disabilities. Programs are encouraged to use this self-assessment as DEC promotes distribution of this document. Look for an expanded, field-tested version of this assessment that will cross-reference the NAEYC guidelines and the Head Start Performance Standards to be disseminated by DEC in the future. Why not take a look and see how you are doing? If the VCU T/TAC can be of assistance as you look at areas of strengths and needs, please call us.

#### Adults design environments to promote children's safety, active engagement, learning, participation, and membership.

- ❑ Learning environments meet accepted standards of quality including curriculum, child-staff ratios, group size, and physical design of the classroom.
- ❑ Interventionists ensure the physical and emotional safety and security of children while children are in their care.
- ❑ A variety of appropriate settings and naturally occurring activities are used to facilitate children's learning and development.
- ❑ Services are provided in natural learning environments as appropriate. These include places where typical children participate, such as home or community settings.
- ❑ Physical space and materials are structured and

adapted to promote engagement, play, interaction, and learning by attending to children's preferences and interests, using novelty, using responsive toys, providing adequate amounts of materials, and using defined spaces.

- ❑ The social environment is structured to promote engagement, interaction, communication, and learning by providing peer models, peer proximity, responsive adults, imitative adults, and expanding children's play and behavior.
- ❑ Routines and transitions are structured to promote interaction, communication, and learning by defining roles for dramatic play, prompting engaging, group friendship, activities, and using specialized props.
- ❑ Environments are designed and activities are conducted so that children learn about or are exposed to multiple cultures, languages, and other practices, allowing children and families to share their cultures and languages with others to the extent they desire.
- ❑ Interventionists facilitate children's engagement with their environment to encourage child-initiated learning that is not dependent on the adult's presence.
- ❑ Adults provide environments that foster positive relationships including peer-peer, parent/caregiver-child, and parent-caregiver relationships.

#### Adults individualize and adapt practices for each child based on on-going data to meet children's changing needs.

- ❑ Practices and goals are individualized for each child based on: (a) the child's current behavior and abilities across relevant domains instead of the child's diagnostic category; (b) the family's view of what the child needs to learn; (c) interventionists' and specialists' views of what the child needs to learn; and (d) the demands, expectations, and requirements of the child's current environment.
- ❑ Practices target meaningful outcomes for the child that build upon the child's current skills and behaviors and promote membership with others.
- ❑ Data-based decisions are used to make modifications in practices. Child performance is monitored and data are collected to determine the impact of the practices on the child's progress and to make modifications in the intervention if needed. The ongoing monitoring must be feasible and useful within the child's environment.
- ❑ Recommended practices are used to teach/promote whatever skills are necessary for children to function more completely, competently, adaptively, and independently in the child's natural environments. These skills should be those that maximize participation and membership in home, school, and community environments, including those that are typical or similar to other persons in those environments. Attention should be given to the breadth and sophistication of the child's skills.
- ❑ Children's behavior is recognized, interpreted in context, responded to contingently, and opportunities are provided for expansion or elaboration of child behavior by imitating the behavior, waiting for the child's responses, modeling, and prompting.

#### Adults use systematic procedures within and across environments, activities, and routines to promote children's learning and participation.

- ❑ Interventionists are agents of change to promote and accelerate learning, and that learning should be viewed in different phases (i.e., acquisition, fluency, maintenance, generalization) that require different types of practices.
- ❑ Practices are used systematically, frequently, and consistently within and across environments (e.g., home, center, community) and across people (i.e., those who care for and interact regularly with the child).
- ❑ Planning that considers the situation (e.g., class, home, etc.) in which the intervention will be applied occurs prior to the implementation.
- ❑ Practices that are used are validated, normalized, useful across environments, respectful, and not stigmatizing of the child and family and are sensitive to linguistic and cultural issues.
- ❑ Systematic naturalistic teaching procedures, such as models, expansions, incidental teaching, Mand model, and naturalistic time delay are used to promote acquisition and use of communication and social skills.
- ❑ Peer-mediated strategies are used to promote social and communicative behavior.
- ❑ Prompting and facing procedures (e.g., modeling, graduated guidance, increasing assistance, time delay) are used to ensure acquisition and use of communicative, self-care, cognitive, and social skills.
- ❑ Instructional strategies such as those described above are embedded and distributed within and across activities.
- ❑ Recommended instructional strategies are used with sufficient fidelity, consistency, frequency, and intensity to ensure high levels of behavior occurring frequently.
- ❑ Consequences for children's behavior are structured to increase the complexity and duration of children's play, engagement, appropriate behavior, and learning by using differential reinforcement, response shaping, high-probability procedures (i.e., behavioral momentum), and correspondence training.
- ❑ For problem behaviors, interventionists should assess the behavior in context to identify its function and then devise interventions that are comprehensive in that they make the behavior irrelevant (i.e., the child's environment is modified so that problem behavior is unnecessary or precluded) inefficient (i.e., a more efficient replacement behavior is taught), and ineffective (i.e., reinforcement and other consequent events are used).

#### Reference

Sandall, S., McLean, M.E., & Smith, B.J. (2000). *DEC Recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

## Connecting Home & School

Chris Frawley, M.Ed.  
VCU T/TAC Program Specialist

Joanne Gutkin, M.A.  
VCU T/TAC Program Specialist

The partnership between home and school is a powerful one. Parents and teachers who work together can accomplish a great deal for children. A parent who takes part in his or her child's education is sending a message to the child that school is important and that learning is valued. How can we foster more connections to the families we serve?

We can start by communicating effectively with parents. That means we need to recognize factors that influence effective communication. As we communicate with parents, we need to actively listen while we connect in a professional, positive, and sincere manner.

Knowing our parents and establishing a positive relationship early in the school year will pay dividends. Since communication is an ongoing process, it is often our reputation that precedes our interactions with the community. Sending home weekly newsletters will keep parents informed and connected to the classroom. Making

positive telephone calls home will strengthen the bonds between home and school. Reaching out and connecting to others can help create a strong, positive rapport. Preparing for parent conferences is another important element. Pre-planning takes time; and it is well worth the effort. We can create a careful plan for a sensitive discussion. Many times it's not what you say, but how you say it. It is advisable to choose one's words carefully in these situations.

Keeping the information flowing back and forth continuously will keep issues clear. Whether it is through notes, phone calls, e-mail messages, or conferences, information needs to be timely. If there has been a good level of shared communication between home and school, there should not be any surprises during a conference or on a report card.

Inviting parents to the school and to your classroom is a positive approach. Since parents are their child's first teacher, they feel comfortable when they are included in the school setting. Even if they cannot attend during the school day, they will feel pleased to know they would be welcomed at such events.

Encouraging parents to volunteer for specific school projects or classroom events is recommended. When parents connect to the classroom and to the school, everyone benefits from the effort involved. When we make sure our parents are comfortable and appreciated for their involvement, our children will notice. Everyone becomes part of the team resulting in more accomplishments.

Parents and teachers can share visions and decisions for children. We can reach out to help develop an understanding of issues while we work towards collaboration involving information. Working together can make all the difference!

## Upcoming Non-T/TAC Events

### ***Being a Pro:***

#### ***A Half-Day Workshop for Instructional Assistants Who Support Students with Autism and Related Disorders***

December 1, 2001, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Innsbrook, Richmond, VA

Contact: (804) 257-0192

### ***Virginia ASCD 2001 Annual Conference:***

#### ***Searching for Balance***

December 5, 2001 (pre-conference)

December 6-7, 2001 (conference)

Williamsburg Marriott, Williamsburg, VA

Contact: Virginia ASCD, 757-898-4434 or e-mail:

vascd@peoplepc.com

### ***ATIA 2002 (Assistive Technology Industry Association)***

This conference will showcase excellence in assistive technology through professional and vendor presentations.

January 16-19, 2002

Orlando, FL

Contact: www.ATIA.org or call 1-877-OUR-ATIA

(877-687-2842)

### ***Circle of Friends***

Commonwealth Coalition for Community (CCC),  
Greater Richmond Area

February 1, 2002, 7:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

River Road United Methodist Church

8800 River Road, Richmond, VA

Contact: Connie Kvarfordt, clkvarfo@vcu.edu

### ***Test Making-Test Taking***

Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum  
Development

February 5, 2002

Ramada Inn South, Fredericksburg, VA

Contact: VASCD (757) 898-4434 or e-mail:

vascd@peoplepc.com

### ***Leave No Child Behind: Teach with the Brain in Mind***

Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum  
Development

February 15, 2002

Hampton Holiday Inn

Contact: VASCD (757) 898-4434 or e-mail:

vascd@peoplepc.com

### ***Brain-Based Teaching Strategies for All Learners***

Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum  
Development

February 21, 2002

Ramada Inn South, Fredericksburg, VA

Contact: VASCD (757) 898-4434 or e-mail:

vascd@peoplepc.com

### ***Circles of Support Futures Planning:***

#### ***Helping Communities to Welcome People with Disabilities***

VIDD, Commonwealth Coalition for Community (CCC),

Greater Richmond Area

March 9, 2002, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Contact: Connie Kvarfordt, clkvarfo@vcu.edu

### ***Dyslexia: A Challenge for Champions***

March 22-23, 2002

Holiday Inn Koger Center South, Richmond, VA

Contact: 1-800-988-8336 or

e-mail: cdruss1@mindspring.com

**SCOOP continued from page 2****WebABLE!**

<http://www.webable.com/>  
 AWARE Center, HTML Writers Guild  
<http://aware.hwg.org/>

**Troubleshooting Solutions**

**Norton Utilities**  
<http://www.symantec.com>  
*Troubleshooting, Utilities, & Archives*  
<http://ipserv2.aea14.kl2.ia.us/Techies/tua.html>

**Policy Resources**

*IDEA '97 Home Page*  
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/IDEA/>  
*The Policymaker Partnership for Implementing IDEA*  
<http://www.ideapolicy.org/home.htm>  
*Assistive and Adaptive Computing Technology in Special Education*  
<http://at-advocacy.phillynews.com/index.html>  
*RESNA Technical Assistance Project Policy Information Pipeline*  
<http://www.resna.org/taproject/policy/policypipe.html>

**Legal Resources**

*The EdLaw Center*  
<http://www.edlaw.net/>  
*Legal and Advocacy Resources*  
<http://www.eskimo.com/~jlubin/disabled/legal.htm>

**Reproducible Resources**

*Intellitools Activity Exchange*  
<http://www.intellitools.com/>  
*Make N' Take, Colorado Assistive Technology Project*  
<http://www.uchsc.edu/catp/Resources/resrcmain1.htm>  
*AAC Intervention.com Tips, Tricks, & Cheat Sheets*  
<http://aacintervention.com/tipstricks.htm>

**Universal Design Resources**

*Universal Design for Learning*

<http://www.cast.org/udl/>  
*Introduction to Web Accessibility*  
<http://webaim.org/info/intro>  
*Bobby*  
<http://www.cast.org/bobby/>

**Materials Development**

*BoardMaker*  
<http://www.mayer-johnson.com/>  
*TrackStar*  
<http://scartec.org/track/>

**Professional Development**

*Family Guide to Assistive Technology*  
<http://www.pluk.org/AT1.html>  
*Fact's and FAQs about the Assistive Technology Applications Certificate Program (ATACP)*  
<http://www.csun.edu/cod/atacp2000/atacpfaqs00.html>  
*RESNA Credentialing Program*  
[http://www.resna.org/certify/cib\\_rev5.html](http://www.resna.org/certify/cib_rev5.html)

**Technology Integration**

*The Milken Family Foundation Education Technology*  
<http://www.mff.org/edtech/>  
*Technology: Indicators of Quality Information Technology Systems in K-12 Schools*  
<http://www.nsse.org/ioq4.html>  
*Toolbox for Accountability*  
<http://www.annenberginstitute.org/accountability/toolbox/default/html>

**Research**

*Journal of Special Education Technology*  
<http://jset.univ.edu/>  
*National Assistive Technology Research Institute*  
<http://natri.uky.edu/>  
*2000 in review: A synthesis of the special education technology literature*  
<http://jset.univ.edu/16.2/teyburn/first.html>

## ***New Early Childhood Education Materials***

We are excited to have some new Early Intervention and Early Childhood materials in the T/TAC libraries. Please stop in and take a look or give us a call at either office to have any of these materials sent to you for review.

*Denver Articulation Screening Exam (manual, workbook, and video)*

*Denver Eye Screening Test (manual, workbook, and video)*

*Denver Audiometric Screening Test (manual, workbook, and video)*

*Developmental Observation Checklist (DOC)*

*Infant Toddler Sensory Profile (ITSP)*

*Temperament and Atypical Behavior Scale (TABS)*

*Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP at Home) Activity Sheet for Parents*

*DEC Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education*

*Helping Babies Learn: Developmental Profiles and Actions for Infants and Toddlers Collaboration with Parents*

*Successfully Parenting your Baby with Special Needs (Video)*

*Young Exceptional Children (Monograph Series No. 2, National Environments and Inclusion)*

*IDEA Requirements for Preschoolers with Disabilities (Challenging Behaviors)*

*IDEA Requirements for Preschoolers with Disabilities (Policy and Practice Guidelines)*

## UNIVERSAL continued from page 1

all individuals, continuing throughout our life spans. Learners with disabilities exhibit learning differences falling along the overall continuum; they do not constitute a separate category of learners.

- If a design works well for individuals with disabilities, it makes life easier for everyone. Instructional methods and materials should be adjusted to accommodate learner differences for everyone, not just those students with identified “disabilities.”
- Flexible curriculum to accommodate learner differences is preferable to relying solely on remediation that seeks to enable students to learn from a set curriculum.
- Curricula materials should be flexible and diverse, including digital and on-line resources, instead of centering on a single textbook.

Essential elements are coming into place to make universal access to the general curriculum a possibility. First, we are approaching a national curriculum in which specific standards will be articulated. Systems of electronic storage, retrieval and transmission of files make it conceivable that instructional materials, designed for maximum accessibility, could be available for every subject, in every classroom, every day and even outside class time.

Next, we have a new understanding of how our brains work and the way learning takes place. Using powerful new medical technology, scientists have been able to observe the functioning of human brains actively involved in different kinds of learning activities (Rose & Meyer, 2001). We have been able to confirm differences in the way our brains respond to different kinds of sensory stimulation, and we have learned that the way each individual brain processes information is as unique as fingerprints. In addition, individuals exhibiting characteristics of various disability categories previously hidden (such as learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder), have characteristic patterns of brain activity which are observable and identifiable when using this new technology. Therefore, learning differences exist along a continuum in all of us, and must be accommodated to produce optimal learning.

Third, universal design for learning relies on flexible, digital technology. Digital technology can be customized to meet the needs of the user (Hitchcock, 2001). The user has the opportunity to create a personalized optimal learning experience by modifying text, using text to speech or other assistive technologies, and to create personal notes and concept maps while engaged in a learning activity. The widespread availability of computers and the Internet brings the opportunity for engaging, multimedia lessons to be developed and made available everywhere, every day. Students who have access to technology can access these materials outside scheduled class time, or repeat materials independently if further reinforcement is needed for mastery. Hyperlinks to instructional modules can be created so that alternate presentations using audio, video, anchored instruction, manipulatives, virtual reality, simulations, or models, are only a click away. On-line libraries and repositories of digital texts are developing at a rapid pace. There is even the option for a user to select the preferred language for presentation of instructional materials that may be available in more than one language.

Fourth, assistive technologies are available to support individuals in accessing general curricula. Written text may be “read” aloud thus supporting individuals who need assistance reading the printed word with the fluency required for comprehension, while offering an auditory component to all who might benefit from the multisensory input. Written language supports include built-in dictionaries, thesauri, spelling and grammar checks, word prediction capability, and voice input. For those who communicate using American Sign Language (ASL), there is software available to supplement the written word with the appropriate signs. Specialized technology exists to produce Braille output for those who need this communication option. In addition, a variety of note-taking, organization and presentation options are available to accommodate individual learning styles and preferences. These are only a few of the tools currently available as “aftermarket” modifications to digital instructional materials, but they can make a tremendous difference for our students who struggle.

Finally, policy changes are in place to support universal access. Modification of copyright laws permits conversion of material to digital format to ensure access by individuals with disabilities. Publishers are finding that instructional material must be available in digital formats if they are to meet the criteria for textbook adoption in a growing number of states. State standards of instruction are being reviewed to ensure that the wording of the standard does not prove discriminatory for individuals with specific disabilities.

Repositories of digital texts, accessible via the Internet, are being established. At the same time that our schools have adopted high standards and high stakes tests, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 1997 has developed new requirements that mandate that students with disabilities learn and be evaluated with their peers, and that schools must provide the greatest possible access to the general curriculum. To meet these requirements, the focus has changed from the specialized list of services a student would be provided to what teachers and schools have to do and the supports needed to help the student be involved in and progress in the general curriculum. The emphasis is on the student’s successes in the general curriculum rather than on services required in a special education setting.

**If you would like to explore the concept and tools of Universal Design for Learning, register for our Tapestry for Learning Conference: Moving Toward Universal Design on January 11<sup>th</sup> in Williamsburg. Technical assistance and a wide array of assistive technologies are available for preview (and some for checkout) by contacting our T/TAC center.**

The ideal of a Universal Design for Learning is evolving. At present, we lack the ability to make everything accessible and seamless for everyone, but we are making rapid advances. The essential elements and tools to create well-designed, barrier-free lessons are available. Like architectural modifications made after a structure is built, instructional modifications are likely to be obtained at higher cost, be somewhat cumbersome and less efficient than modifications incorporated in a lesson developed using the principles of UDL. Even so, current technology can improve significantly the learning experiences of most students who struggle while professionals develop knowledge and expertise to apply the principles of UDL in our design of instructional units.

### References:

Hitchcock, C. (2001). Balanced Instructional Support and Challenge in Universally Designed Learning Environments. Paper presented at the CAST Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Summer Institute 2001.

National Center for Accessing Curricula (2001). Retrieved from <http://www.cast.org/ncac> Orkwis, R. (1999) Curriculum access and universal design for learning.

(Report No. ED437767) Reston, VA: ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities & Gifted Education.

Rose, D. & Meyer, A. (2001) The Future is in the Margins: The Role of Technology & Disability in Educational Reform. (Paper presented at the CAST Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Summer Institute, 2001).

## AUTISM continued from page 2

The site is a support for individuals with A.S. as well as for educators and families. The (M.A.A.P.) organization is a global information and support network for families and professionals for **More** advanced individuals with Autism, Asperger Syndrome and Pervasive developmental disorders. The **ASPEN of America** (Asperger Education Network) site describes A.S. and gives content regarding the disorder as well as specific links. **Tony Attwood’s** site is a guide for parents and professionals about Asperger Syndrome and shows his presentation schedule and the papers he has written.

Because autism is a spectrum disorder and no two people with autism are the same, educators and researchers have employed a variety of educational approaches and interventions (medical, communication, social, dietary, etc.). One intervention does not fit all and sometimes a combination of approaches must be employed to help the person on the autism spectrum. One of the oldest (early 1970s) organizations dealing with autism is Division **TEACCH** (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped **Children**) in Chapel Hill, NC. Their website holds a wealth of information about autism, about their educational approach (Structured Teaching), training opportunities throughout the year, publications, their supported employment program, and their demonstration preschool. Founded in 1975 to meet the life-span needs of these with autism, The **Eden Institute** in NJ continues to offer a continuum of services to help individuals and their families. **The Lovaas Institute for Early Intervention** is a research-based Institute that specializes in teaching preschool aged children with autism, pervasive developmental disorders, and related developmental disabilities. The behavioral intervention program was developed in the Psychology Department of UCLA under the direction of Dr. O. Ivar Lovaas.

**Trainland (Beyond Autism)** offers a treasure trove of resources on autism, especially those related to communication. One of the approaches used to assist students with communication is the **Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)**, developed by Pyramid Educational Consultants. PECS is described and all of the workshop and training products are listed. For those who see the world a different way, the **Do To Learn** website provides free pictures cards, games, visual schedules and other helpful information and special learning tools for those with autism and related disorders. Closely related to this is Linda Hodgdon’s **Use Visual Strategies** site from which one can download pictures and learn more about the benefits of using visual strategies to solve communication and behavior problems. Another wonderful resource comes from one of the **Wisconsin Cooperative Educational Service Agencies, CESA 7** where there are several articles about autism interventions and strategies accompanied by pictorial displays of various tools and strategies. To learn about Social Stories and how to write them look to the **Gray Center** where Carol Gray gives suggestions for writing them effectively. To help those with Asperger Syndrome and High Functioning Autism learn to recognize facial

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expressions, you can go to the **GainingFace** site. The **Sensory Integration** website provides knowledge about Sensory Integration's impact on people with autism and other disorders. For those who want information about gluten free/casein free diets for those with autism, the **Living Sensibly** site offers information about those diets and other nutritional concerns. The **Georianna Institute** offers information about **Auditory Integration Training**, a way to improve auditory discrimination as a form of music therapy. Facilitated Communication was developed in the early 1990s as an alternative means of communication for those who cannot speak or whose speech is very limited, and cannot point reliably. The **Facilitation Institute** describes their research and seminars.

In addition to the bookstores mentioned in this article, one can also find valuable resources at **Future Horizons** and at the **Special Needs Store**. **Centering on Children** provides learning materials for children with special needs. The **Autism Asperger Publishing Company** offers books and materials for professionals and families especially regarding Asperger Syndrome.

While you have just read through many autism websites, you need to know that there are at least five additional websites for each one mentioned in this article! It may take you awhile to surf through all of these sites, but your effort to do so will be well worth it. These sites will advance your understanding of ASD so that you are prepared to improve the education of students with autism spectrum disorders. Go forth and find—happy surfing!

#### **LET'S GET STARTED and GENERAL INFORMATION**

*Virginia Commonwealth University Training & Technical Assistance Center*  
[www.soe.vcu.edu/ttac/](http://www.soe.vcu.edu/ttac/)  
*Autism Society of America*  
[www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org)  
*Autism Resources*  
[www.autism-resources.com/](http://www.autism-resources.com/)  
*Center for the Study of Autism*  
[www.autism.org/](http://www.autism.org/)  
*Autism Connect*  
[www.autismconnect.com/](http://www.autismconnect.com/)

#### **NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

*Autism Society of North Carolina*  
[www.autismsociety-nc.org](http://www.autismsociety-nc.org)  
*Indiana Resource Center for Autism*  
[www.iidc.indiana.edu/~irca/](http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/~irca/)  
*Autism Society of Wisconsin*  
[www.asw4autism.org](http://www.asw4autism.org)  
*ASSET (Autism Support Services Education Team)*  
[www.asset-autism.org](http://www.asset-autism.org)  
*FEAT (Families for Early Autism Treatment)*  
[www.feat.org](http://www.feat.org)  
*Unlocking Autism*  
[www.unlockingautism.org/index2.html](http://www.unlockingautism.org/index2.html)  
*The National Autistic Society*  
[www.oneworld.org/autism\\_uk/](http://www.oneworld.org/autism_uk/)  
*Autism Independent UK*  
[www.autismuk.com/](http://www.autismuk.com/)

#### **ASPERGER SYNDROME**

*OASIS (Online Asperger Syndrome Information and Support)*  
[www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/](http://www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/)  
*More advanced individuals with Autism, Asperger Syndrome & Pervasive Developmental Disorders*  
[www.maapservices.org/index.html](http://www.maapservices.org/index.html)  
*ASPEN of America (Asperger Education Network)*  
[www.asperger.org/index\\_asc.html](http://www.asperger.org/index_asc.html)  
*Asperger Syndrome*  
[www.aspergers.com/](http://www.aspergers.com/)

#### **EDUCATION & INTERVENTIONS**

*TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children)*  
[www.TEACCH.com/](http://www.TEACCH.com/)  
*The Eden Institute*  
[www.edenservices.org/index.jsp](http://www.edenservices.org/index.jsp)  
*Lovaas Institute for Early Intervention*  
[www.lovaas.com/](http://www.lovaas.com/)  
*Beyond Autism*  
<http://trainland.tripod.com/>  
*The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)*  
[www.PECS.com/](http://www.PECS.com/)  
*Do 2 Learn*  
[www.dotolearn.com/](http://www.dotolearn.com/)  
*Use Visual Strategies*  
[www.usevisualstrategies.com/](http://www.usevisualstrategies.com/)  
*Wisconsin Cooperative Educational Service Agency 7*  
[www.cesa7.k12.wi.us](http://www.cesa7.k12.wi.us)  
*The Gray Center for Learning and Understanding Social Stories*  
[www.thegraycenter.org/social.htm](http://www.thegraycenter.org/social.htm)

*Gaining Face*

[www.ccoder.com/GainingFace/index.html](http://www.ccoder.com/GainingFace/index.html)  
*Sensory Integration Training*  
[www.sensoryint.com/](http://www.sensoryint.com/)  
*Living Sensibly*  
[www.livingsensibly.com/](http://www.livingsensibly.com/)  
*The Facilitation Institute*  
<http://soeweb.syr.edu/thefci/>  
*The Georianna Institute*  
[www.georgianainstitute.org/sitemap.htm](http://www.georgianainstitute.org/sitemap.htm)  
*Ideas About Autism*  
[www.ideasaboutautism.com/read.html](http://www.ideasaboutautism.com/read.html)

#### **BOOKS & MATERIALS**

*Special Needs Project*  
[www.specialneeds.com/store/](http://www.specialneeds.com/store/)  
*Future Horizons*  
[www.futurehorizons-autism.com/](http://www.futurehorizons-autism.com/)  
*Centering on Children*  
[www.shoebtasks.com/](http://www.shoebtasks.com/)  
*Autism Asperger Publishing Company*  
[www.asperger.net/](http://www.asperger.net/)

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### **DIPLOMA continued from page 1**

#### **3 When do we make a decision about the type of diploma?**

*The decision about a diploma option is made after the student's 8<sup>th</sup> grade year.*

#### **4 Who makes the diploma option decision?**

*The Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia state "eligibility and participation in the Modified Standard Diploma shall be determined by the IEP Team and the student, where appropriate, after the student's eighth grade year."*

#### **5 Which accommodations are allowed on the SOL assessment?**

*The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) website has a comprehensive list of accommodations:*  
<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Assessment/SWDSol.html>

#### **6 How do we document the need for accommodations?**

*All testing accommodations must be documented on the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Decisions as to the participation in each of the SOL assessments and the need for and selection of accommodations are the responsibility of the IEP committee.*

#### **7 When do we document the need for accommodations?**

*These decisions should be made during the IEP committee meeting which precedes the SOL assessment administration. The IEP must specify the student's participation in each of the SOL assessments*

- with no accommodations
- with accommodations which maintain standard conditions
- with accommodations which are permissible but do not maintain standard conditions
- not participating in testing with an explanation of how the student will be assessed.

#### **8 Can a student continue to take the numeracy and literacy 8<sup>th</sup> grade SOL test throughout high school as part of the testing requirement?**

*Yes, students may continue to retake the 8<sup>th</sup> grade SOL tests if they have not passed them.*

#### **9 What does the course content look like for the Modified Standard Diploma option? Does a teacher have to be endorsed in the content area to teach the courses?**

*Course content is not driven by the requirements for the Modified Standard Diploma. Secondary schools develop their courses based on the needs of all students. Transition planning is integral to the development of the student's course of study. It is not recommended that parallel curricula be developed. Special education teachers are not currently required to be endorsed in course content areas. However, it is preferred that special education teachers hold endorsements in all content area courses that they teach.*

#### **10. How do you assess a high school student who is not taking any courses with an end-of-course SOL assessment?**

*The IEP Team must determine an alternative method of assessment for students who do not participate in the SOL or Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP).*

## Get on the VCU T/TAC Mailing List

For those of you who were receiving our publications, but haven't in a while, please provide this information so we can place your name to our new mailing list. Or, if you're a first time consumer and would like to start receiving VCU T/TAC publications on a regular basis, please provide your information. In our efforts to reach the greatest number of patrons in the most cost and time effective manner, we ask that you bear with us as we work through this new endeavor. Multiple copies of our publication will continue to be mailed to each school.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Age group served: \_\_\_\_\_

School/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred delivery:  Home  Work

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

***Please send this information to Paul Robertson at  
(804) 828-7495 (FAX) or plrobert@vcu.edu (E-mail).***