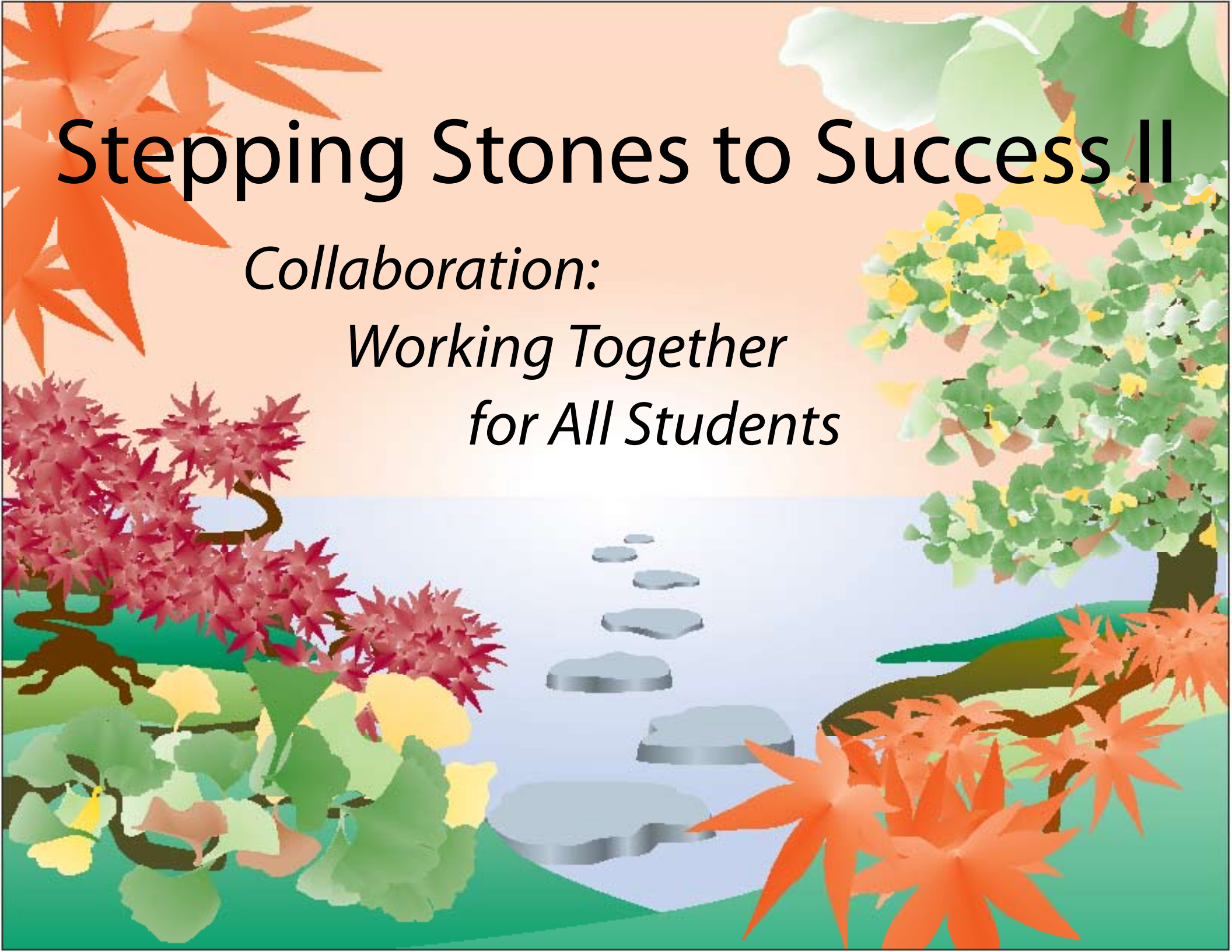


# Stepping Stones to Success II

*Collaboration:  
Working Together  
for All Students*





# Stepping Stones to Success II

## Collaboration: Working Together for All Students

**Developed by**

Collaboration Writing Team  
and the  
CTE Resource Center

**Developed for**

Virginia Department of Education  
Richmond, Virginia

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# Introduction

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The beginning of each new school year brings both excitement and anxiety to students and teachers alike. This is especially true for teachers new to the profession. *Stepping Stones to Success II Collaboration: Working Together for All Students* is a companion document to *Stepping Stones to Success*, which was published in 2006 as a guide for new teachers.

All new teachers have very full plates! This guide is intended to show you some “stepping stones” that may help make your first year a little easier. One of the most challenging tasks for all teachers, both new and experienced, is knowing and practicing teaching strategies that will engage all students in the learning process so they experience success.

Woven throughout this guide is the concept of collaboration—a style of interaction between licensed teachers voluntarily engaged in shared decision-making as they work toward a common goal (Friend, 2007). This concept is particularly pertinent as teachers work together to meet the unique needs of each student. General educators, and special educators in particular, must be flexible and knowledgeable in their efforts to develop ways to co-teach and to create inclusive classrooms.

It is hoped that this guide will be useful in practical ways and that it will also give you access to resources that will help make the task of finding collaborative ways to teach less daunting. Use it to spark your own creative ideas. Dare to step up to the challenge of reaching every child and, most of all, enjoy being a part of the noble profession of teaching.





# Teach One, Teach All: What We Do First

**“Teachers are, without question, the heartbeat of a successful school.”—Ernest Boyer**



# What are some terms I need to know?

---

For the purpose of this document, the term *students with disabilities* is used to describe students identified as having a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). A list of disabilities that can be served within the classroom under IDEA 2004 is covered on pages 8 and 9. However, the techniques in this document are also effective with students from special populations and general education students or those served under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, commonly referred to as having a “504 Plan.”

## **Collaboration**

a style of interaction between licensed teachers voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal (Friend, 2007).

## **Co-Teaching**

a common service delivery option where two or more licensed professionals jointly plan and deliver instruction in a shared space with a diverse group of students (Friend and Cook, 2007).

## **Inclusion**

a set of beliefs based on the idea that students with disabilities have the right to be members of classroom communities with nondisabled peers, whether or not they can meet the traditional expectations of those classrooms (Friend, 2007).

## **Special Populations**

Students with special needs should benefit from the same high-quality schooling as all students, with the addition of extra supports to help them succeed. These children may include students in high-poverty schools, students with limited-English proficiency, students with disabilities, migrant students, and homeless students (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

---

*NOTES:*

# What is the rationale for collaborative relationships?

---

- **Teacher to Teacher**  
When teachers work together, they share their expertise, their resources, and their support for the students.
- **Student to Student**  
When students work together, they learn from each other, they learn to cooperate with each other, and they share the responsibilities for assignments.
- **Teacher to Student**  
When a teacher is accommodating special needs students, either as individuals, in a small group, or whole class setting, many benefits can be obtained.
  - When a teacher works with an **individual student**, special needs can be accommodated, questions can be clarified, and the student's understanding of the content can be demonstrated and documented.
  - When a teacher works with a **small group**, gaps that the group share can be filled, special needs can be balanced, and leadership can be fostered.
  - When a teacher works with the **whole class**, general information can be shared, modeling of new processes can be practiced, and debriefing of new learning can be shared through class discussion.
- **Administrator to Teacher**  
When an administrator works with a teacher, supportive relationships are built, information is shared, and policies are clarified.
- **Teacher to Parent/Guardian**  
When a teacher works with the parent/guardian, learning styles are shared, needs are revealed, resources are provided, and **relationships are developed.**

## *Suggestions*

In a collaborative relationship:

- Everyone has the right to be heard and the responsibility to listen.
- Students are given guidelines/expectations for positive behavior, according to the local discipline/referral policy of the school.
- Communication regarding students is documented.
- The administrator should always be kept informed.
- You are a professional.

---

**NOTES:**

# What do I do if I find myself in a non-collaborative setting?

---

## **Learn more about collaboration.**

- Go back to your university and ask the experts, or conduct research online.
- Talk with your mentor or special education chairperson about options for collaboration.
- Ask advice about what might be possible in your school.
- Take a field trip to visit another school to observe effective collaboration. It could be a virtual field trip.
- Join a discussion board.
- Contact your regional T/TAC (Training and Technical Assistance Center).

## **Take the initiative.**

- Begin with baby steps.
- Seek out an ally and develop a partnership.
- Request to observe a veteran teacher modeling a lesson for you. Incorporate what you have observed and learned and move forward from there.

## **Get organized.**

To have a collaborative and inclusive classroom, it is a best practice to get organized first. Refer to the “Resources: What We Need to Know” at the end of this publication for information on how to get organized.

---

*NOTES:*

## Can all students be served in a general education classroom?

---

There must be a continuum of placement options available in the school system for students with disabilities. However, based on the Individualized Education Program (IEP), students with disabilities are more often than not appropriately served in general education classrooms and settings with supports and accommodations. IDEA lists the following disability categories:

- **Autism:** a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
- **Deafness:** a hearing disability that is so severe that the child is weakened in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects the child's educational performance.
- **Deaf-blindness:** hearing and visual impairments occurring at the same time, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.
- **Developmental Delay (DD):** a disability affecting children between the ages of two and eight who are not learning at their expected level and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services.
- **Emotional Disturbance (ED) or Emotional Disability:** a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time that adversely affects a child's educational performance:
  - an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors;
  - an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;
  - inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;
  - a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; and/or
  - a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. This category includes schizophrenia.
- **Hearing Impairment (HI):** a milder form of deafness that may adversely affect a child's educational performance.
- **Mental Retardation (MR):** (intellectual disabilities) a significantly below average general intellectual functioning as determined by IQ tests, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

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*NOTES:*



# Can all students be served in a general education classroom?

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- **Other Health Impairment (OHI):** having limited strength, vitality or alertness, or a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
- **Severe disability:** a primary disability that
  - Severely impairs cognitive abilities, adaptive skills, and life functioning;
  - May have severe behavior problems;
  - Has the high probability of additional physical or sensory disabilities; and/or
  - Requires significantly more educational resources than are provided for the children with mild and moderate disabilities in special education programs.
- **Specific Learning Disability (SLD):** a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations.
- **Speech or Language Impairment (SLI):** a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language or voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
- **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI):** an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
- **Visual Impairment including blindness (VI):** an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes partial sight and blindness.

## *Suggestions*

Be mindful of using "People First" language, rather than using labels that have negative connotations or devalue the person they attempt to describe.

- people with disabilities or people who have disabilities
- he/she uses a wheelchair
- he/she has a congenital disability
- he/she has mental retardation
- he/she has a need for... or he/she needs...

(West Virginia Developmental Disabilities Council, 2001)

(Virginia Department of Education, 2001)

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**NOTES:**





# Philosophy of Inclusion: What We Believe

**"A child miseducated is a child lost."—John F. Kennedy**



# What does an inclusive school look like?

---

## 1. Physically Integrated

- All students attend school according to the local attendance zone.
- Students with all ranges of disabilities—mild, moderate, and significant—attend the school.
- All classrooms may serve general education and special populations.

## 2. Instructionally Integrated

- All students work toward the same educational outcomes based on high standards.
- Special and general education teachers collaborate
  - to plan and to modify instruction and assessments
  - to resolve day-to-day problems
  - to share successes.
- Students receive instruction at an appropriate social and/or academic level within the general education classroom (Friend, 2007). For students in Virginia, the general education curriculum is mandated by the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments. However, based on a student's needs, he or she may take modified versions or alternative assessments; for example, Virginia Grade Level Alternative (VGLA), Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP), and Virginia Substitution Evaluation Program (VSEP).

## 3. Socially Integrated

- Students with disabilities are not conditional members of their classes.
- There is a sense of belonging and being a part of the school community in which everyone is accepted and is supported by all members of the community.

(Adapted from Friend, 2007)

---

**NOTES:**

# How do you know if you are teaching in an inclusive school?

---

## **Inclusive schools share the following characteristics:**

- Sense of community
- Common vision or mission
- Problem-solving teams
- Partnerships with parents, other teachers, paraprofessionals, students, and community
- Common vocabulary
- Common planning time
- Services provided for students
- Flexible scheduling
- Co-teaching

### ***Reflections***

Take some time to think about your personal beliefs about inclusive practices.

---

**NOTES:**

# What are the benefits of effective inclusive practices?

---

## **Benefits of Effective Inclusive Practices for Students without Disabilities**

- Exposure to review, clarity, and feedback from effective instruction
- Greater acceptance and valuing of human differences
- Development of warm and caring friendships
- Differentiation of instruction (ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education, 1998)

## **Benefits of Effective Inclusive Practices for Students with Disabilities**

- Improved standardized tests scores (Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002)
- Higher level of social acceptance in the general education setting (Cawley, Hayden, Cade, & Baker-Kroczyński, 2002)
- Achievement of IEP goals
- Greater access to the core content curriculum
- Preparation of students for post-school experiences (ERIC Clearinghouse, 1998)

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*NOTES:*

# What are the benefits of effective inclusive practices?

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## Benefits of Effective Inclusive Practices for Teachers

- Increases opportunities to develop professional learning communities through growth in knowledge-sharing and skill development
- Increases confidence in teaching students with diverse academic and social needs (Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000)
- Creates opportunities for better understanding of students with disabilities
- Enhances knowledge about effective teaching and learning strategies
- Increases level of content knowledge
- Promotes understanding of the IEP process, content, and implementation
- Provides support systems among teachers
- Provides opportunities to problem-solve with another professional and receive additional support within the classroom (Gerber & Popp, 1999)

---

*NOTES:*



# How do administrators create and maintain inclusive practices in their schools?

---

- Be clear and unwavering in his/her own beliefs.
- Have a clear plan for moving into inclusive practices.
- Provide professional development for the staff on inclusive practices.
- Recognize that physically placing students in classrooms is necessary, but not enough to be effective. Differentiated instruction and positive behavior supports must be implemented.
- Place inclusive practices in the context of creating schools for every learner. Include these practices in the school improvement plan.
- Be aware of balancing student placements when creating master schedules.
- Provide common planning time as part of the master schedule.
- Involve all stakeholders in the development of a collaborative culture.
- Be a good listener and be willing to participate in problem solving.

(Adapted from Friend, 2007)

## *Suggestions*

Have a conversation with your administrator about his/her vision for inclusive practices. The administrator's decisions may be based on information of which you are not aware.

---

**NOTES:**

# What should I believe?

---

## Myth

*Inclusive practices only benefit students with disabilities.*

*Teachers prefer to teach by themselves.*

*Students with disabilities are more successful in self-contained classes.*

*More teachers in the classroom create a better educational setting.*

*Special needs students will slow down the class.*

## Real Life in the Classroom

All students benefit because inclusive practices encourage collaboration among teachers. This leads to better instruction for all students.

Most teachers value opportunities to learn from each other. Research and personal experiences have shown that job satisfaction is greatly improved as a result of collaboration in the classroom.

On the contrary, students who are included in general education classes have access to the curriculum and content area specialists, as well as opportunities to develop positive peer friendships. These experiences provide a richer foundation for learning.

More does not always mean better. Teachers in effective collaborative relationships should intentionally plan to define roles, share responsibilities, and stay focused on meeting the needs of all students.

Differentiated instructional strategies that will meet individual student needs should be in every teacher's tool kit. Ability levels in all classrooms vary on a continuum. Therefore, it is imperative that all teachers develop skills that will effectively reach all students on the continuum.

---

**NOTES:**

# What should I believe?

---

## Myth

*Special education students cannot receive an "A" unless they are working on grade level.*

*Collaborative planning time is always available in my teaching schedule.*

*Both teachers must be trained to co-teach in a general education classroom.*

*I co-teach by consulting with my special education partner when developing lessons.*

## Real Life in the Classroom

When a student fulfills the requirements of the assignment, which may or may not be modified, the grade should be based on the goals of the IEP and the student's performance or product.

In a perfect world, time is built into the co-teachers' schedules. This is not always the case. Teachers must use their creativity in finding time, technology, and other ways to plan. Use the time effectively to discuss roles and responsibilities, and always stay focused on the individual needs of all students.

Not necessarily. Both teachers must be flexible, open, and willing to learn from each other in order to meet the needs of all students. Training in the process of collaboration is the ideal. However, the special educator brings expertise in working with the individual needs of students while the general education teacher brings content knowledge. They learn from each other.

No, what you are doing is collaborating. Co-teaching involves two licensed professionals sharing instructional responsibilities in the classroom.

---

## NOTES:





# Culture of Collaboration: What It Looks Like and How We Do It

**“Skill to do comes of doing.” —Ralph Waldo Emerson**



# What are the defining characteristics of collaboration?

---

## **Style/Approach**

As a style or approach to interaction, collaboration can only exist when attached to a process or activity such as problem solving or planning.

## **Voluntary**

Collaborative relationships are entered into freely and exist by choice.

## **Parity**

Each participant's contribution is equally valued and participants have equality in decision making.

## **Mutual problem/goal**

Collaboration occurs in response to a goal, problem, or need that is jointly shared by the participants. They must share at least one specific goal although they may individually hold many different goals.

## **Shared responsibility**

Participants in a collaborative activity share responsibility for participating in the activity and in the decision making it entails.

## **Shared accountability**

Participants in a collaborative activity have equal accountability for the outcome of that activity.

## **Shared resources**

Participants in a collaborative activity share material and human resources. This dimension of collaboration is one of fostering shared ownership of the target for collaboration.

(Adapted from Friend & Cook, 2007)

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*NOTES:*

# What do I need to do to begin a partnership with my co-teacher?

---

- Remain open minded and flexible while building collaborative relationships.
- Determine the roles of both teachers ahead of time:
  - both teachers in the classroom all period or class
  - special education teacher only in the classroom for part of the period or class.
- Use effective, private communication to resolve conflicts immediately.

## Getting Acquainted: Questions for Co-Teachers to Consider

Co-teaching partners need to discuss their responses to each of the questions and statements below during an initial planning session. These discussion starters can assist teams in getting to know each partner's teaching style.

1. What do you see as your greatest strengths as a teacher?
2. What are your classroom expectations? Positive results when followed?  
Negative consequences when not followed?
3. What are your daily routines for
  - Checking homework
  - Sharpening pencils
  - Students coming to class without materials or homework
  - Dismissing for restroom, nurse, guidance counselor
  - Students requesting help
  - Starting class
  - Ending class
4. Describe a typical lesson.
5. How do you plan lessons, units, field trips, tests, etc.?
6. How closely do you follow your plans?

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*NOTES:*



## What do I need to do to begin a partnership with my co-teacher?

---

7. How do you provide for varied student needs during a lesson?
8. Describe practice activities that you use.
9. What noise levels do you permit in your room?
10. How do you monitor and evaluate progress?
  - Tests
  - Quizzes
  - Homework assignments
  - Projects
  - Oral reports
  - Research papers
  - Sharing progress with students
  - Other: specify
11. How do you grade?
  - Homework
  - Assessments
  - Projects
  - Participation
  - Other: specify
12. How do you maintain records of grades and progress?
  - Grade book procedures
  - Computer grade book
  - Written feedback to students
  - Other: specify

---

*NOTES:*

## What do I need to do to begin a partnership with my co-teacher?

---

13. How do you calculate grading period, semester, and yearly grades?
14. What assistance do you allow students to receive during tests, etc.?
15. How do you communicate with families? When?
16. What disciplinary action do you take without assistance from administrators, guidance personnel, or specialist? When do you request assistance? How do you involve families in discipline?
17. How will we find time to plan for co-teaching?
18. How will we share planning, preparing, teaching, evaluating, and reporting responsibilities?
19. What are some of your "pet peeves" in the classroom?
20. How will we build trust and maintain confidentiality in our classrooms?

(Adapted from Walther-Thomas, Bryant, & Land, 1996)

To be a good co-teaching partner, remember to:

**P**lan together weekly  
**A**ddress classroom concerns proactively  
**R**ecieve ongoing administrative support  
**T**hrive on challenges  
**N**urture a sense of classroom community  
**E**valuate student performance  
**R**eflect on practice and strive for improvement  
**S**upport each other

(Walther-Thomas, Korinek, et.al., 2000)

---

**NOTES:**

# What are my responsibilities in a co-taught class?

---

As you begin working with a new co-teaching partner and are determining individual responsibilities, it is helpful to think about the skills, talents, knowledge, and experiences that you both bring to the partnership. The chart below is a starting point for determining the major responsibilities of co-teachers. Over time the lines will blur between distinct responsibilities for each teacher.

## **Special Educator**

- Maintain the student's confidential records (related to IEP), and record daily or weekly achievements.
- Educate teaching partner on specialized teaching methods, materials, and technology.
- Analyze individual student behavior and create behavior plans.
- Include the student with a disability by scheduling varied people in the support network.
- Take part in the instruction of the student through direct instruction or consultation.
- Create, monitor, and evaluate IEP and attend IEP meetings.
- Create and administer daily classroom and testing accommodations.
- Plan lessons for instruction.
- Teach learning strategies.
- Collaborate with parents, related service personnel, and others.
- Assign responsibilities for and supervise paraeducator.

## **General Educator**

- Maintain the student's cumulative records (related to general education), and record daily/weekly achievements.
- Educate teaching partner on grade level and subject area curricula and general education teaching approaches.
- Use whole group and small group management techniques.
- Consider the student with a disability when deciding on a classroom activity.
- Take part in the direct instruction of the student.
- Monitor and evaluate IEP and attend IEP meetings.
- Administer daily classroom and testing accommodations.
- Plan lessons for instruction.
- Teach Standards of Learning (SOL) curriculum.
- Collaborate with parents, related service personnel, and others.
- Assign responsibilities for and supervise paraeducator.

---

**NOTES:**

# What would an observer see and hear in a classroom if instruction is meeting the needs of all students?

---

- All students are equal members of the class and valued for their contributions.
- Students are actively involved and engaged in various learning activities.
- Students' learning needs are met in a variety of ways.
- Specific behavioral goals are being addressed.
- Student attendance remains the same or shows improvement.
- More student talk is heard than teacher talk.
- Students are interacting with each other and learning together.
- Student achievement is maintained or showing improvement.
- There may or may not be a co-teacher in the class.
- If there are two teachers, they share responsibilities and duties.
- Every student has the opportunity to display his/her work.
- Student work is valued.
- Stakeholders' perceptions regarding the collaborative experience have improved due to the co-taught classroom.

## *Suggestions*

- Know your local division's child study referral process.
- Don't wait until the child is failing academically.
- Identify some people in your school who can help.

---

**NOTES:**

# What factors contribute to effective co-teaching?

---

- Common planning time
- Opportunity to collaborate
- Structured process for planning
- Effective instructional strategies that teach content
- Good communication skills between co-teachers
- Shared responsibilities
- Adequate supplies and materials
- Administrative support
  - Creating a balanced classroom roster (e.g., number and degree of severity of students with disabilities and the total number of students in each class)
  - Recognizing the added responsibilities beyond classroom duties for the purpose of planning
  - Providing opportunities to attend professional development for collaboration purposes
  - Honoring the importance of both teachers being in the classroom at the same time
- Consistent family contact
- Knowledge of students and their IEPs
- Knowledge of federal and state regulations

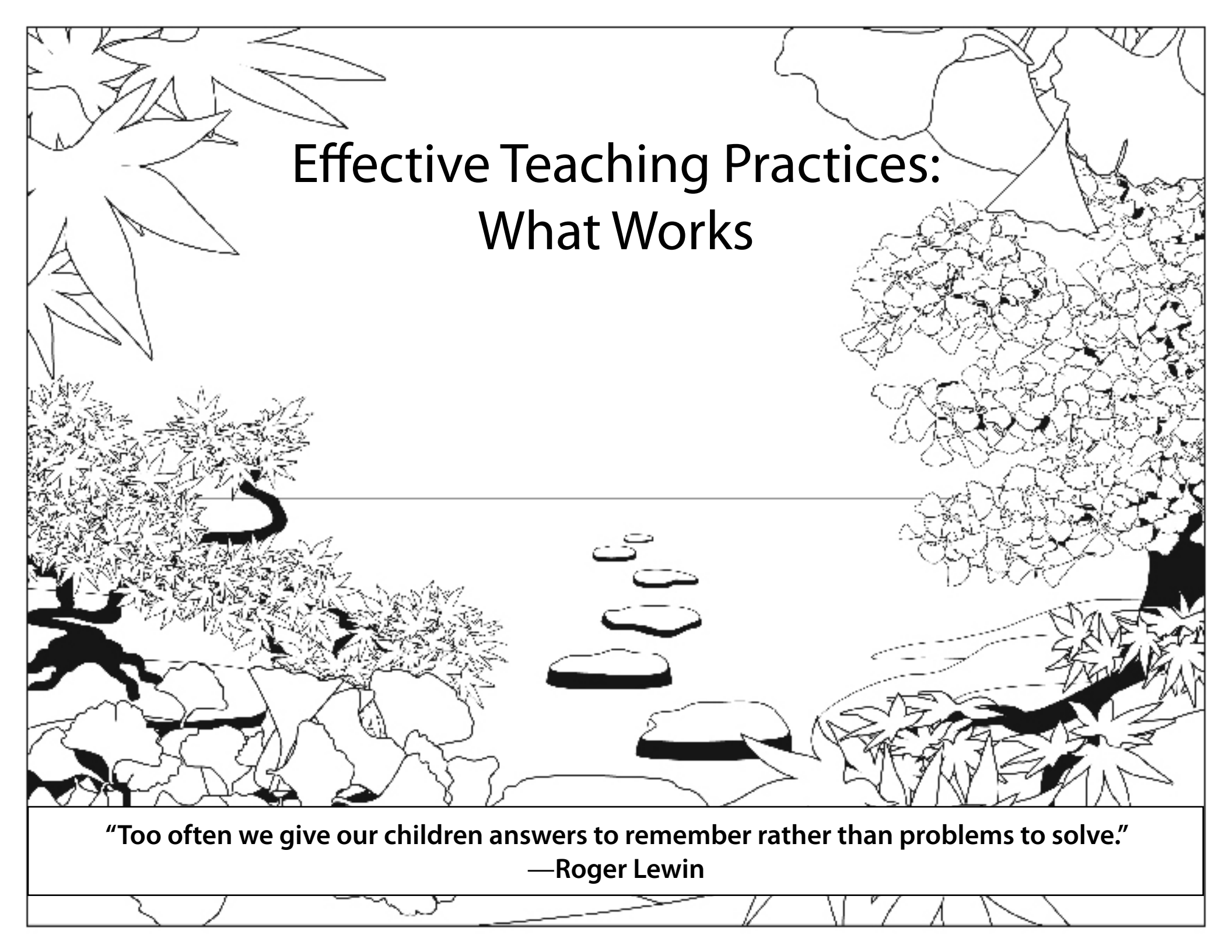
## *Reflections*

- Think about opportunities, other than co-teaching, for collaboration in your school.
- Why do these factors contribute to increased student achievement?

---

**NOTES:**





# Effective Teaching Practices: What Works

**“Too often we give our children answers to remember rather than problems to solve.”  
—Roger Lewin**





# What are special education instructional accommodations?

---

You must know each student's testing status contained in the IEP before making instructional accommodations. Teachers are required by law to adhere to and implement all accommodations and modifications written in a student's IEP.

**Note:** These accommodations should be used during instruction for those students who truly need them based on their IEP present level of performance. If these accommodations are legally used in the classroom, then the student should also have the benefit of using them on classroom assessments and standardized tests.

**Instructional Accommodation**—Instructional tools that enable a student with special needs to access curricular content more readily or to demonstrate understanding of that content more easily (Friend, 2007). These tools reduce the impact that the disability has on learning or expressing knowledge without substantially changing the process or the product.

## **Some examples of Instructional Accommodations:**

- Change the demands of writing rate
  1. Allow more time for written tasks including note-taking, copying, and tests.
  2. Allow students to begin projects or assignments early.
  3. Include time in the student's schedule for being a 'library assistant' or 'office assistant' that could also be used for catching up or getting ahead on written work or doing alternative activities related to the material being learned.
  4. Encourage learning of keyboarding skills to increase the speed and legibility of written work.
  5. Have the student prepare assignment papers in advance with required headings (name, date, etc.), possibly using the template described under 'changes in complexity.'

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*NOTES:*

## What are special education instructional accommodations?

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- Change the complexity
  1. Have a 'writing binder' option. This three-ring binder could include:
    - A model of cursive or print letters on the inside cover (This is easier to refer to than one on the wall or blackboard.)
    - A laminated template of the required format for written work. Make a cutout where the name, date, and assignment would go and model it next to the cutout. Three-hole punch it and put it into the binder on top of the student's writing paper. Then the student can set up his/her paper and copy the heading information in the holes, then flip the template out of the way to finish the assignment. He/She can also do this with worksheets.
  2. Break writing into stages and teach students to do the same. Teach the stages of the writing process (brainstorming, drafting, editing, and proofreading, etc.). Consider grading these stages even on some 'one-sitting' written exercises, so that points are awarded on a short essay for brainstorming and a rough draft, as well as the final product. If writing is laborious, allow the student to make some editing marks rather than recopying the whole thing. On a computer, a student can make a rough draft, copy it, and then revise the copy, so that both the rough draft and final product can be evaluated without extra typing.
  3. Do not count spelling on rough drafts or one-sitting assignments.
  4. Encourage the student to use a spellchecker and to have someone else proofread his/her work. Speaking spellcheckers are recommended, especially if the student may not be able to recognize the correct word (headphones are usually included).

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*NOTES:*

# What are special education instructional accommodations?

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- Change the tools
  1. Allow student to use cursive or manuscript, whichever is most legible.
  2. Consider teaching cursive earlier than would be expected, as some students find cursive easier to manage, and this will allow the student more time to learn it.
  3. Encourage primary students to use paper with the raised lines to keep writing on the line.
  4. Allow older students to use the line width of their choice. Keep in mind that some students use small writing to disguise its messiness or spelling.
  5. Allow students to use paper or writing instruments of different colors.
  6. Allow students to use graph paper for math, or to turn lined paper sideways, to help with lining up columns of numbers.
  7. Allow the student to use the writing instrument that is most comfortable. Many students have difficulty writing with ballpoint pens, preferring pencils or pens which have more friction in contact with the paper. Mechanical pencils are popular. Let the student find a 'favorite pen' or pencil.
  8. Have some fun grips available for everybody, no matter what the grade.
  9. Word processing should be an option for many reasons. Bear in mind that for many of these students, learning to use a word processor will be difficult for the same reasons that handwriting is difficult. There are some keyboarding instructional programs that address the needs of learning disabled students.
  10. Consider whether use of speech recognition software will be helpful.

(Jones, 1999)

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**NOTES:**

# What are special education instructional modifications?

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**Instructional Modifications**—Significant changes made to the curriculum that enable a student to be successful in a general or special education environment.

**Some examples of Instructional Modifications:**

- Adjust the volume
  1. Reduce the copying elements of assignments and tests. For example, if students are expected to ‘answer in complete sentences that reflect the question,’ have the student do this for three questions that you select, then answer the rest in phrases or words (or drawings). If students are expected to copy definitions, allow the student to shorten them or give the student the definitions and have him/her highlight the important words or phrases. The student could also draw a picture to represent the word.
  2. Reduce the length requirements on written assignments. Make sure you stress quality over quantity.
- Change the complexity
  1. Grade different assignments on individual parts of the writing process, so that for some assignments ‘spelling doesn’t count,’ for others, grammar, etc.
  2. Develop cooperative writing projects where different students can take on roles such as the ‘brainstormer,’ ‘organizer of information,’ ‘writer,’ ‘proofreader,’ and ‘illustrator.’
  3. Provide extra structure and intermittent deadlines for long-term assignments. Help the student arrange for someone to help him/her through the stages of the assignment. Discuss with the student and parent(s) the possibility of enforcing the due dates by working after school with the teacher in the event a deadline arrives and the work has not been completed.

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*NOTES:*

## What are special education instructional modifications?

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- Change the format
  1. Offer the student an alternative project such as an oral report or visual project. Establish a rubric to define what you want the student to include. For instance, if the original assignment was a three-page description of one aspect of the Roaring Twenties (record-breaking feats, the Harlem Renaissance, Prohibition, etc.) you may want the written assignment to include:
    - A general description of that 'aspect' (with at least two details)
    - Four important people and their accomplishments
    - Four important events—when, where, who, and what
    - Three good things and three bad things about the Roaring Twenties
  2. You can evaluate the student's visual or oral presentation of that same information, in the alternative format.

(Jones, 1999)

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*NOTES:*

## Why is confidentiality essential?

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Parents have the right to be fully notified and must consent to the disclosure of their child's record(s) to anyone other than employees of the school district for educational purposes, except for referrals to or actions by law enforcement and judicial authorities (Virginia Bar Association, 2002).

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 123g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

Some ways to implement confidentiality are:

- Protect all written material (e.g., IEP, student's medical records, and specific diagnoses).
- Conduct discussions with other professionals, students, and parents regarding students in a private setting.
- Remember to use professionalism when discussing anything related to students and colleagues. This includes respecting the dignity of the students in class by not making comments that can be overheard by others.
- Be discreet when meeting the testing and class assignment accommodations of students.
- Share with parents information only about their child.
- Keep confidential anything that the parents share with you.
- Be mindful of sensitive content that you include in e-mails, faxes, and other written correspondence. (These forms of communication are not always secure.)
- Consult with your administrator to determine local policy regarding specific confidentiality issues.

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*NOTES:*

# Who develops the IEP?

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The IEP team for each student with a disability includes

- The parent(s)
- At least one of the student's regular education teachers if the student is participating in regular classes
- At least one special education teacher or related service provider of the student (This person must be serving the student if the student is participating in special education. If the student's only disability is speech-language impairment, the special education provider must be the speech-language pathologist.)
- A person from the school who is qualified to provide or supervise the provision of special education and knows about the general curriculum and about available resources (This person may be another member of the team.)
- A person who can interpret the tests for the student (This person may be another member of the team, other than the parent or the student.)
- Other people who are invited at the parents' or the school's discretion and who have knowledge or special expertise about the student, including related services personnel, as appropriate (The person inviting another individual makes the decision that the invited individual has knowledge or special expertise about the student.)
- The student, if appropriate

Parents must consent to sharing educational information about their child with a person not employed by the school before the person's participation in the meeting.

There may be other participants:

- If the meeting concerns transition services for the student, then the school must invite the student and representatives from agencies likely to be responsible for providing or paying for the transition services.
- If any accommodations or modifications are written into the IEP for the student to participate in transportation, someone from transportation may be invited or consulted before the IEP is written.

Working together, the team will develop the student's IEP.

(Virginia Department of Education, 2001)

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*NOTES:*

# How can a paraprofessional be effective in the classroom?

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- Provide instructional support to students by assisting a student one-on-one or in a small group based on a planned activity by the teacher.
- Collect data on students and communicate information from observations to the teacher.
- Assist general and special education teachers in the collection of students' work samples for assessment purposes.
- Participate in planning and preparing classroom materials.
- Offer practice and review opportunities.
- Implement behavior-management plans.
- Implement program changes as directed by the teacher.
- Follow directions given by the supervisor.
- Accept or respond to supervisor's feedback.

## How can I effectively supervise a paraprofessional in the classroom?

- Provide clear directions for instructional procedures.
- Provide regular constructive feedback.
- Assist in developing paraprofessional's skills.
- Be open to questions.

(Virginia Department of Education, 2005)

### *Terms*

#### **Paraprofessional**

An appropriately trained employee who assists and is supervised by qualified professional staff in meeting the requirements to provide instruction and other services to children, youth, and their families (Virginia Department of Education, 2001).

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**NOTES:**



# What is differentiation of instruction and why use it?

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**Differentiation**—Differentiated instruction is a teaching and learning process that accounts for diverse abilities and learning styles within each classroom. The intent of differentiating instruction is to maximize each student’s growth and individual success by meeting each student where he or she is and assisting in the learning process.

The purpose of differentiation of instruction is to balance the needs of students with the requirements of the curriculum and to provide each student with what he/she needs to be successful.

## How do I plan for successful differentiation to meet all my students’ needs?

Know the learning characteristics of each of your students.

- Rate of learning
- Prior knowledge
- Life experiences
- Reading level
- Behavioral needs
- Learning styles
- Physical needs
- Interests

Some examples of differentiated instruction:

- More/less time to complete the assignment
- Menu of assignment choices for students
- Appropriate seating in the classroom
- Smaller/larger number of practice items
- Smaller/larger chunks of content
- Scaffolding assignments (e.g., providing additional support to allow students to reach the required level of achievement, such as providing a word bank)
- Collaborating with a student partner
- Assistance with organization
- Ongoing assessment and use of data for guiding instruction
- Presenting information for both auditory and visual learners
- Variety of levels of reading materials in class
- Use of technology

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**NOTES:**



A black and white line drawing of a landscape. In the center, a path of several flat, rounded stones leads from the foreground towards the background. To the left, there is a large, leafy tree with a thick trunk. To the right, there is a smaller, bushier tree with many small leaves. The background shows more foliage and a simple horizon line.

# Questions and Solutions: What We Want to Know

**“The ability to ask the right question is more than half the battle of finding the answer.”  
— Thomas J. Watson**



# What do I need to know?

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## Question

## Answer

*What does it mean to be “highly qualified”?*

The specific meaning of “highly qualified” depends on the role and course assignment for each teacher. Consult your building level administrator or your division administrators for assistance in this area. The NCLB Act requires that all teachers of core academic subjects in the classroom be highly qualified. This is determined by three essential criteria:

- attaining a bachelor’s degree in the subject taught,
- obtaining full state teacher certification; and
- demonstrating knowledge in the subject taught.

(U.S. Department of Education, 2004)

*As a general education teacher, am I qualified to teach students with disabilities?*

Yes, you are qualified to teach students with disabilities because you are licensed in your content area. The combination of the content knowledge from the general education teacher with the teaching strategies from the special education teacher allows for true collaboration to benefit all students and teachers. The needs and learning styles of students with disabilities are more similar than different from general education students, and all students benefit from the same effective strategies.

*What are the possible service delivery systems for special education students?*

Federal law mandates that a continuum of service delivery options be available to students with disabilities. Some examples of collaborative service delivery models are support in classroom, consultation, teaming, co-teaching, informal problem solving, and instruction in a separate setting (Friend, 2007).

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**NOTES:**

## What do I need to know?

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### Question

*What does access to the general education curriculum mean for students with significant disabilities?*

### Answer

The IDEA states that students with disabilities must have access to the general education curriculum. Recognition that students with significant cognitive disabilities have instructional needs that are beyond the regular standards adopted for the general population is an accepted fact by researchers in the field of significant disabilities. However, NCLB and IDEA require that general grade level state standards be accessible for all students, including those with the most significant cognitive disabilities. This has been problematic for some states with high academic standards. NCLB guidance has allowed states to address instruction in grade level state standards that have been 'reduced in complexity and/or modified.' This concept has been referred to as aligning content level standards. The concept of aligned content level standards for students with significant cognitive disabilities has been addressed in the design and implementation of the revised assessment component of the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP).

(Virginia Department of Education, Virginia Alternate Assessment Program, 2006-2007)

*What is IEP At-A-Glance?*

The Confidential IEP At-A-Glance form delivers just what its name suggests. Special education teachers are charged with ensuring that their caseload of students receives accommodations and modifications to succeed in the least restrictive environment. The special education teacher uses this form to briefly communicate with general education teachers. A form is created for each student and disseminated to all of the student's general and special education teachers before the student enters the classroom. The student's teachers must keep the form in a safe, confidential location, and should use the information in planning daily lessons in an effort to meet the student's needs.

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**NOTES:**

## What do I need to know?

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### Question

*What is the difference between instructional accommodations and modifications?*

### Answer

Instructional accommodations are instructional tools that enable a student with special needs to access curricular content more readily or to demonstrate understanding of that content more easily (Friend, 2007). See examples in this document on pages 33-35.

Instructional modifications are significant changes made to the curriculum that enable a student to be successful in a general or special education environment (Friend, 2007). See examples in this document on pages 36-37.

*What is RTI?*

Response to Intervention (RTI) is the practice of using data to guide high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying child response data to critical educational decisions.

*Why do we need RTI?*

Under the reauthorization of IDEA, the law about identifying students with specific learning disabilities changed. Traditionally, to be identified with specific learning disabilities and eligible for special education services, a student had to demonstrate a significant discrepancy between intellectual ability and academic achievement. However, with RTI, students are provided scientifically based interventions and progress monitoring to determine if more intensive services are needed.

On December 3, 2004, President Bush signed into law the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, reauthorizing IDEA and aligning the law with the goals and purpose of No Child Left Behind.

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**NOTES:**

## What do I need to know?

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### Question

*Why do we need RTI? (continued)*

### Answer

These two historic laws are now working together to ensure that high standards are set for all students with disabilities and that every child receives a quality education.

As a result of the changes to the legislation, a school may use the student's failure to *respond to intervention* as evidence of a specific learning disability. Talk with your building and division administrators about how RTI works in your school and division.

*What are the components of RTI?*

In Virginia, there are three essential components of RTI—universal screening, a tiered service-delivery model, and student progress monitoring.

- Universal screening is a process that uses short and quick assessments that are aligned with the curriculum and designed to measure specific skills or learning.
- Tiered interventions are targeted instruction based on a student's need. They are designed to be coordinated with the general education curriculum. Typically, RTI provides three tiers of intervention ranging from
  - support provided within the classroom
  - support provided in a small group setting
  - individualized support in a pull-out setting.
- Progress monitoring is an ongoing systematic process for collecting data to determine the academic, social, or behavioral performance of a student.

Although the concepts of RTI are well documented and in use in schools across the commonwealth, the systematic implementation of RTI is a new endeavor in many schools.

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**NOTES:**





# Resources: What We Need to Know

**“Research serves to make building stones out of stumbling blocks.” —Arthur D. Little**



# Glossary of Terms

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<b>Access to the General Education Curriculum</b>	Students with disabilities <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) have access to the general education curriculum just as delivered to non-disabled peers</li><li>2) are involved with the general education curriculum just as delivered to non-disabled peers</li><li>3) progress in the general education curriculum just as delivered to non-disabled peers</li></ol>
<b>Accommodations</b>	Instructional tools, teaching supports, and services that enable a student with special needs to more readily access curricular content or to more easily demonstrate understanding of that content (Friend, 2007).
<b>Active Learning</b>	Type of instruction to involve students in the learning process (e.g., discovery learning, experiential learning).
<b>Assistive Technology</b>	Products, devices, or equipment that are used to maintain, increase, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities (Gerard, 2001).
<b>Adequate Yearly Progress</b>	Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) represents the minimum level of improvement that schools and school divisions must achieve each year as determined by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.
<b>Behavioral Intervention Plan</b>	Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP) is a formalized plan for managing student behavior based on observations made in a functional behavior assessment.
<b>Collaboration</b>	A style of interaction between licensed teachers voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal. (Adapted from Friend, 2007)
<b>Cooperative or Co-teaching</b>	A common service delivery option: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• two or more licensed professionals</li><li>• jointly planned and delivered instruction</li><li>• diverse group of students</li><li>• shared space (Friend &amp; Cook, 2007)</li></ul>

# Glossary of Terms

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<b>Curriculum</b>	The courses offered by an educational institution in Virginia that are aligned with the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) and/or meet graduation requirements. This could also include non-SOL classes.
<b>Differentiation</b>	Differentiated instruction is a teaching and learning process that accounts for diverse abilities and learning styles within each classroom. The intent of differentiating instruction is to maximize each student's growth and individual success by meeting each student where he or she is and assisting in the learning process.
<b>Effective Inclusive Practices</b>	Practices that provide students from special populations appropriate education within general education classrooms of their neighborhood school, with the supports that promote success.
<b>English as a Second Language</b>	English as a Second Language (ESL) is the teaching of English to speakers of other languages through a wide variety of methods.
<b>English for Speakers of Other Languages</b>	English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is also referred to as ESL.
<b>Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act</b>	The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U. S. Department of Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).
<b>Functional Behavioral Assessment</b>	Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) is a problem-solving process for addressing student problem behavior. It looks beyond the behavior itself and focuses on identifying significant, pupil-specific social, affective, cognitive, and/or environmental factors associated with the occurrence (and non-occurrence) of specific behaviors. This broader perspective offers a better understanding of the function or purpose behind student behavior (Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, 2001).

# Glossary of Terms

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<b>Higher-Order Questions</b>	“Questions that ask for analysis, synthesis, or evaluation, the last three categories of Bloom’s taxonomy. According to the taxonomy, these demand more complex and thus higher levels of thinking. For example: <i>Analysis</i> : ‘Why is it so important for different cultural groups in our society to maintain their cultural heritage?’ <i>Synthesis</i> : ‘For the end-of-the-year concert, what theme could we look at that would best express the wide variety of cultures in our school?’ <i>Evaluation</i> : ‘What significance has the government’s decision to opt for the concept of the <i>cultural mosaic</i> over that of the <i>melting pot</i> for today’s society?’” (Morgan & Saxon, 2006)
<b>High, Objective, Uniform State Standard of Evaluation</b>	High, Objective, Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE): NCLB allows states to develop an additional way for current teachers to demonstrate subject-matter competency and meet highly qualified teacher requirements. Proof may consist of a combination of teaching experience, professional development, and knowledge in the subject garnered over time in the profession (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).
<b>Highly Qualified</b>	The specific meaning of “highly qualified” depends on the role and course assignment for each teacher. Consult your building level administrator or your division administrators for assistance in this area. Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT)—NCLB requires that all teachers of core academic subjects in the classroom be highly qualified. This is determined by three essential criteria: (1) attaining a bachelor’s degree in the subject taught, (2) obtaining full state teacher certification; and (3) demonstrating knowledge in the subject taught.
<b>Individualized Education Program</b>	Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document articulating the pupil’s present educational level, specific services to be provided, behavioral interventions to be employed, language and communication needs of the child, and the child’s need for assistive technology. The IEP also sets out goals to be attained and specifies how the goals will be evaluated. The IEP must ensure, to the greatest extent possible, student access to the general curriculum.
<b>Inclusion</b>	A set of beliefs based on the idea that students with disabilities have the right to be members of classroom communities with non-disabled peers, whether or not they can meet the traditional expectations of those classrooms (Friend, 2007).

## Glossary of Terms

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### **Instructional Support Team**

An Instructional Support Team (IST) is a school improvement tool designed to improve instruction through increased professional collaboration, problem solving, reflection, and support among school personnel. The focus of an IST is the instructional match between students and teachers and student and the curriculum (Virginia Department of Education, 2006).

### **Limited-English Proficient**

Limited-English Proficient (LEP) is used to describe students whose first language is not English and whose English language skills are not equal to those of their peer group (Virginia Department of Education, 2001). As students progress, they may be referred to as English Language Learners (ELL).

### **Licensure**

The Virginia licensure regulations stipulate three routes for individuals to become licensed in Virginia:

- **Approved Program:** a Virginia state-approved teacher preparation program or an alternative state-approved program. (For more information relative to this method of licensure, please contact the Virginia college or university where you wish to enroll.)\*
- **Reciprocity:** an individual coming into Virginia from any state may qualify for a Virginia license with comparable endorsement areas if the individual has completed a state-approved teacher training program through a regionally accredited four-year college or university or if the individual holds a valid out-of-state teaching license, which must be in force at the time the application for a Virginia license is made. An emergency or temporary certificate/license is not acceptable.\*
- **Alternative Licensure:** an alternative route to licensure is available through the recommendation of the individual's employing Virginia school division or nonpublic school.\* (Virginia Department of Education, 1998)

\* Please refer to the Web site, Professional Teacher's Assessment (<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/newvdoe/praxis.pdf>), describing the assessment requirements in Virginia.

# Glossary of Terms

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<b>Lower-Order Questions</b>	<p>“Questions that ask for knowledge, comprehension, and application, the first three categories of Bloom’s taxonomy. According to the taxonomy, these demand less complex and thus lower levels of thinking. For example: <i>Knowledge</i>: ‘How many different cultural groups are represented in our classroom?’ <i>Comprehension</i>: ‘What do we mean by the <i>cultural mosaic</i>?’ <i>Application</i>: ‘What other examples of cultural policy promote social ghettoization?’” (Morgan &amp; Saxon, 2006)</p>
<b>Least Restrictive Environment</b>	<p>A student’s Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is determined based on the continuum of services offered to students with disabilities by federal law and is the setting most like that for same-age peers without disabilities in which a student can succeed with appropriate supports and services. (Adapted from Friend, 2007)</p>
<b>Modifications</b>	<p>Significant changes made to the curriculum that enable a student to be successful in a general education environment. It is important to realize that modifications pertain to changing curricular objects (Friend, 2007).</p>
<b>No Child Left Behind Act</b>	<p>The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) is also known as The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. It is federal legislation requiring states to demonstrate progress from year to year in raising the percentage of students who are proficient in reading, mathematics, science, and history and social sciences and narrowing the achievement gap.</p>
<b>Other Health Impairment</b>	<p>Other Health Impairment (OHI) means having limited strength, vitality or alertness, or a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment that adversely affects a child’s educational performance (Virginia Department of Education, 2001).</p>
<b>Paraprofessional</b>	<p>An appropriately trained employee who assists and is supervised by qualified professional staff in meeting the requirements to provide instruction and other services to children, youth, and their families (Virginia Department of Education, 2001).</p>

## Glossary of Terms

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<b>Pull Out</b>	A student is placed in a separate setting away from the general education classroom, away from general education peers, as deemed appropriate to meet the needs of the student according to the IEP.
<b>Research-based</b>	A concept or body of information that has been thoroughly tested and evaluated according to the parameters of academic research.
<b>Self-contained</b>	A setting where students receive instruction or services solely with other students with disabilities.
<b>Service Delivery</b>	Services and supports are delivered based on a continuum of services. Inclusive settings may include the following continuum of services: consultation (indirect), instruction (direct), and instructional support (direct).
<b>Strategic Instructional Model</b>	Strategic Instructional Model (SIM) is a variety of evidence-based interventions that promote effective teaching and learning of critical content. The Learning Strategies are used by students to help them understand information and solve problems. The Learning Strategies Curriculum has the necessary breadth and depth to provide a well-designed scope and sequence of strategy instruction. Content Enhancement Routines are used by teachers to teach curriculum content to academically diverse classes in ways that all students can understand and remember key information. All of the routines promote direct, explicit instruction. This type of instruction helps students who are struggling, but it also facilitates problem-solving and critical thinking skills for students who are doing well in class. Additional information can be found by visiting the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning Web site <a href="http://www.ku-crl.org">www.ku-crl.org</a> .
<b>Special Populations</b>	Students with special needs should benefit from the same high-quality schooling as all students, plus extra supports to help them succeed. These children may include students in high-poverty schools, students with limited-English proficiency or disabilities, migrant students, and homeless students (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).
<b>Special or Related Service Providers</b>	Individuals or programs, other than instructional, that provide specific services to students.



# Glossary of Terms

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## **Students with Disabilities**

Students with Disabilities (SWD) in the Commonwealth of Virginia include identified students under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 [IDEA '04] P. L. 108-446 and under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973), as amended (Virginia Department of Education, 2007).

## **Team Teaching**

An educational setting in which two general education teachers share instructional delivery.

## **Universal Design for Learning**

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an approach that is accessible and appropriate for individuals with different needs. It reflects an awareness of the uniqueness of each learner and the need to accommodate differences.

## **Virginia Alternate Assessment Program**

The authority for the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA). Under IDEA, students with the most significant cognitive disabilities may be assessed on state-established content standards through an alternate assessment. Only students having significant cognitive disabilities and working knowledge and/or skills different from the general knowledge and skills expressed in Virginia's Standards of Learning on the grade level in which the student is enrolled may be considered appropriate participants in the VAAP. Identification of students eligible to participate in Virginia's Alternate Assessment program, participation criteria, learner characteristics, and other instructional programming information may be found in the *Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) Instructional Manual: A Teaching Resource* available from the Virginia Department of Education Division of Special Education Instructional Services. (Virginia Department of Education, VAAP, 2006)

## **Virginia Grade Level Alternative (VGLA)**

In Virginia, students with disabilities have several options for participating in the state accountability assessments. They may participate in the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments in the same manner that non-disabled students participate, or they may participate in the SOL assessments with accommodations. Students with disabilities that prevent them from accessing the SOL test(s) in a content area, even with accommodations, may participate in VGLA.

## Glossary of Terms

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### **Virginia Grade Level Alternative (VGLA)**

(continued)

The VGLA is available for students in grades 3-8 as an alternative assessment for SOL testing. Students who qualify to participate in the VGLA will be required to demonstrate performance on grade-level SOL in which they are being assessed. Students will compile a collection of work samples to demonstrate performance on grade-level SOL in which they have received instruction.

(Virginia Department of Education, *VGLA Questions & Answers for Administrators*, 2006)

### **Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program (VSEP)**

The IDEA Amendments of 1997 require states to develop an alternate assessment for students with disabilities who cannot participate in the statewide assessment program. The Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program (VSEP) enables certain students whose unique disabilities cannot be accommodated on the Standards of Learning tests to earn verified credits toward the Standard and Advanced Studies Diplomas or to meet the literacy and numeracy requirements of the Modified Standard Diploma through another process.

(Virginia Department of Education, 2007).

# Getting Organized

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As a beginning teacher, you may have many questions. A key point to remember is to have the courage to ask for help. There are many people in your school who can guide you to resources. You have something in common with your students—you are both going to learn many new concepts this year.

Your preparation at the beginning of the year will affect your classroom atmosphere. Here are some suggestions to help get organized.

## *Before the School Year Begins:*

- As soon as you have been given your teaching assignment, get the textbooks and other curriculum materials to start planning. Remember, there are valuable resources already available; you do not have to “reinvent the wheel.”
- Ask your principal if you can come in early to set up your room. It will make your first week easier. If you are co-teaching, invite your partner to assist in the classroom setup.
- Get to know other teachers and support staff in your school. Don’t forget that secretaries and custodians are very valuable to the school and to you.
- Take time to locate essential areas in your school (e.g., office, bathrooms, gym, cafeteria, media center, nurse’s office).
- Find out about the procedures for attendance, emergency drills, crisis plans, lunches, and dismissals. Review the staff handbook before the school year starts. Then review it often throughout the year.
- Acquire your students’ information as soon as it is available. If you are co-teaching, your special education co-teacher can help you interpret the IEP content for your special population students.

## *Suggestions*

Have an emergency box or bag that is easily accessible. Place extra classroom rolls and keys in the box or bag.

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**NOTES:**

## Getting Organized

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- Gather the personal information of each student to make a call welcoming him or her to school.
- Talk with the specialists (e.g., ESL or ESOL, Special Education, guidance) and your mentor if you have questions about students who have special needs.

### *Preparing Your Room:*

- Check with the guidance counselor or your mentoring teacher to see if you have students with disabilities or other special needs.
- Check with the administrator or your mentoring teacher to see if you are sharing your classroom with another teacher or if you have a co-teacher in your classroom.
- Arrange your desk and your students' desks so that you can move freely throughout the room. If co-teaching, arrange adequate work space for both teachers. Setting up the physical arrangement of the classroom is important for academic focus and behavior management.
- Set up learning centers, display tables, and student work areas, as appropriate.
- Set up your desk with needed supplies. Before you purchase materials and supplies, find out what your school will provide.
- Prepare your bulletin board. If you have more than one bulletin board, use one for displaying students' work. Also designate a section on your bulletin board for important school information for the students (e.g., sports schedules, lunch schedules, school calendar).
- Display a classroom welcome sign for the first week of school.
- Post your name, room number, and the grade or class you teach, both inside the classroom and outside the classroom door.
- Make sure you have enough desks for the co-teacher and your students.
- Make a seating chart according to the class roll you have been given. Most initial seating charts are arranged in alphabetical order. This will help you to learn the students' names quickly. Remember to double check to see if students have any special needs (e.g., must sit close to the front of the room, in a wheelchair) so you can adjust the chart before the students arrive. Keep in mind that the class roll can be changed at the last minute, so try to be as flexible as possible. If teaching elementary school, make sure every child has an assigned seat.

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### *NOTES:*

# Getting Organized

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- If you are co-teaching, all students should be listed on one roster and both teachers' names should be noted on class documents (e.g., on the door, newsletter, blackboard, report card, etc.).

## *Getting Ready for Your First Day:*

- Organize first-day materials to be sent home with the students (e.g., parent letter, classroom rules, school rules, class schedule, emergency information, bus information).
- Write the bell schedule, date, and your name(s) on the board.
- Develop class expectations. Remember, other teachers can be valuable resources. Keep the list of expectations short. Adjust the expectations later, using student input.
- Be consistent with rules and routines. Practice them every day.
- Write lesson plans for the first week of school. Include getting to know your students (e.g., ice-breaking activities, interest surveys, learning styles tests, academic pretests, etc.). It is better to plan extra than to run short of material.
- If you are co-teaching, make time to plan together. (It is always good to plan a week ahead and to anticipate unforeseen situations.)
- Allow some time to go over classroom expectations.
- Copy materials for the first week. It is good practice to stay several days ahead because many people use the copiers on a daily basis and copy machines break down unexpectedly.
- Prepare files for parent correspondence, school bulletins, and emergency substitute plans.

## *The First Day:*

- First impressions are important. Dress professionally—you are establishing your classroom expectations and environment.
- Arrive early. Look over your classroom before the students arrive. Remember why you are here. Relax, breathe, and enjoy your students.

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## NOTES:

## Getting Organized

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- Greet students at the door. Introduce yourself, and welcome them with a smile. Remember, most of them are as nervous as you.
- Let the students know that this may not be a permanent seating chart. (Once you determine the students' skill levels and learning styles, you might want to put them into groups.)
- Discuss school rules and procedures. Be aware of any required special procedures written in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP).
- Provide the students with a list of your classroom expectations and the consequences for not meeting those expectations.
- Plan some time for an icebreaker or getting-to-know-each-other activities.

### *The Rest of the Year:*

- Divide students into learning groups where learning styles should be similar, and the skill level should vary. Use flexible grouping throughout the year.
- Be flexible with style and management techniques (e.g., changing activities, changing room arrangement, etc.).
- Be willing to change if things are not working well. Monitor and adjust! It demonstrates your ability to be flexible; this is not a sign of failure.

Teaching can be the most rewarding and challenging career in the world. As a teacher, you are constantly learning. Remember to surround yourself with other professionals and resources that can help you during this process.

### Resources:

- *A New Teacher's Survival Guide: A New Teacher's Guide* (<http://hannahmeans.bizland.com>)
- *Classroom Management* (<http://www.pacificnet.net/~mandel/ClassroomManagement.html>)
- *Education World* (<http://www.educationworld.com>)
- *Stepping Stones to Success: Teacher to Teacher* (<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/SchoolImprovement/steppingstones.pdf>)
- Wong, H., and Wong, R. (2004). *The first days of school*. Mountain View, CA: Harry K. Wong Publications, Inc.

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### NOTES:

# Confidential IEP At-A-Glance

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

IEP Objectives

Accommodations

Academic/Social Management

Comments/Other Needs

## T/TAC Resources

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A resource that can guide you each day with lesson plans, activities, assessments, accommodations, and professional development opportunities is Virginia's Training and Technical Assistance Centers (T/TAC). Located in colleges and universities across the Commonwealth of Virginia, T/TAC has a collegial Web site: <http://www.ttaonline.org>. Housed on this Web site is the SOL Enhanced Scope and Sequence PLUS (ESS+), which includes the Standards of Learning (SOL) for each subject and each grade level. Lesson plans are also included for each SOL strand.

The Virginia Department of Education produced the lesson plans that are aligned with the SOL for each subject. These instructional lesson plans are differentiated to meet a wide variety of students' needs (e.g., vocabulary, small group learning, technology, multi-sensory, community connections, student organization of content). Accommodations are listed under each content area at the top of the content area page (e.g., English, mathematics, science, history and social sciences), above the lesson plans and SOL.

Steps for using T/TAC Online (<http://www.ttaonline.org>):

1. Click on your region of the Virginia map or select your county or school from the regions listed below the map.
2. Click on *SOL Enhanced* tab at the top of the page.
3. Click on *Search SOL + Lessons* (left margin)
4. At Option 1, choose a subject area and choose a grade/course. Click *Go*.
5. Click on any SOL standard and click *Submit* (at bottom of page).
6. Choose from among the lessons listed for the standard.
7. Click on Word or PDF format to download lesson.

To review the accommodations on this site, follow the first four steps above, then: select:

- "Instructional Strategies for all learners who have difficulties with:"
- "Instructional and environmental strategies..."

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**NOTES:**



## T/TAC Resources

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VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY T/TAC: **REGION 1** (Web site: <http://www.vcu.edu/ttac>)

Charles City	Chesterfield	Colonial Heights	Dinwiddie
Goochland	Hanover	Henrico	Hopewell
New Kent	Petersburg	Powhatan	Prince George
Richmond	Surry	Sussex	

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY & THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM & MARY: **REGION 2** (Web sites: <http://www.ttac.odu.edu> and <http://www.wm.edu/ttac>)

Accomack	Chesapeake	Franklin	Hampton
Isle of Wight	Newport News	Norfolk	Northampton
Poquoson	Portsmouth	Southampton	Suffolk
Virginia Beach	Williamsburg/James City	York	

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY & THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM & MARY: **REGION 3** (Web sites: <http://www.ttac.odu.edu> and <http://www.wm.edu/ttac>)

Caroline	Colonial Beach	Essex	Fredericksburg
Gloucester	King & Queen	King George	King William
Lancaster	Matthews	Middlesex	Northern Neck
Northumberland	Richmond	Spotsylvania	Stafford
West Point	Westmoreland		

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## T/TAC Resources

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GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY: **REGION 4** (Web site: <http://ttac.gmu.edu>)

Alexandria	Arlington	Clarke	Culpeper
Fairfax City	Fairfax County	Falls Church	Fauquier
Frederick	Loudoun	Madison	Manassas
Manassas Park	Orange	Page	Prince William
Rappahannock	Shenandoah	Warren	Winchester

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY: **REGION 5** (Web site: <http://www.ttac.cisat.jmu.edu>)

Albemarle	Amherst	Augusta	Bath
Bedford City	Bedford County	Buena Vista	Campbell
Charlottesville	Fluvanna	Greene	Harrisonburg
Highland	Lexington	Louisa	Lynchburg
Nelson	Rockbridge	Rockingham	Staunton
Waynesboro			

VIRGINIA TECH & RADFORD UNIVERSITY: **REGION 6** (Web sites: <http://www.ttac.vt.edu> and <http://www.eduweb.education.radford.edu/ttac>)

Alleghany Highlands	Botetourt	Covington	Craig
Danville	Floyd	Franklin	Henry
Martinsville	Montgomery	Patrick	Pittsylvania
Roanoke City	Roanoke County	Salem	

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## T/TAC Resources

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VIRGINIA TECH & RADFORD UNIVERSITY: **REGION 7** (Web sites: <http://www.ttac.vt.edu> and <http://www.eduweb.education.radford.edu/ttac>)

Bland	Bristol	Buchanan	Carroll
Dickenson	Galax	Giles	Grayson
Lee	Norton	Pulaski	Radford
Russell	Scott	Smyth	Tazewell
Washington	Wise	Wythe	

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY: **REGION 8** (Web site: <http://www.vcu.edu/ttac>)

Amelia	Appomattox	Brunswick	Buckingham
Charlotte	Cumberland	Greensville/Emporia	Halifax/South Boston
Lunenburg	Mecklenburg	Nottoway	Prince Edward

(Virginia Department of Education T/TAC)

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**“It must be borne in mind that the tragedy of life doesn’t lie in not reaching your goal.**

**The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach.**

**It isn’t a calamity not to dream.**

**It is not a disaster to be unable to capture your ideal, but it is a disaster to have  
no ideal to capture.**

**It is not a disgrace not to reach the stars,  
but it is a disgrace to have no stars to reach for.**

**Not failure, but aim is sin.”**

**—Benjamin E. Mays**

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