Teacher-Friendly Data Collection

Melinda Bright, M.Ed, Co-Director
VDOE Region 5 T/TAC @ James Madison University

Why did you become a teacher? Whatever the reason was, the undeniable reward that keeps many of us motivated once we enter the profession is the heartfelt fulfillment we experience when a child’s face displays understanding. But, what about the struggling student whose face displays frustration? Once upon a time, well-meaning teachers immediately referred struggling students for an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services. Feelings of inadequacy to meet each and every student’s needs in the general education classroom were abated by choosing this course of action. If a student was indeed found eligible for services, the general educator was often not involved to a great degree in providing for individual needs in the general education classroom. Self-contained classrooms and resource rooms were the places to go for adaptations to the curriculum.

Reform initiatives have demanded a paradigm shift in how schools operate, with emphasis on the achievement of results rather than process and delivery in the classroom. While accountability has always been around, educators are truly being held accountable for student progress at individual and aggregate levels. Many schools across the country are realizing improvement in student learning by using data-driven practices. “Teachers in these schools are finding that intelligent and pervasive uses of data can improve their instructional interventions for students, re-energize their enthusiasm for teaching, and increase their feelings of professional fulfillment and job satisfaction” (McLeod, 2005, p. 1).

Now when a student struggles, teachers are expected to: 1) gather data about skills and levels of performance, 2) study the data to identify the concern, 3) develop a measurable objective, 4) develop and implement an intervention plan, and 5) monitor progress. One of the resulting positive implications of this shift is the necessity to collaborate with others on how to best meet individual student needs. “No educator, no matter how experienced or skilled, is able to meet all the unique instructional needs of every child without the assistance of colleagues” (Ralabate, 2003, p. 14). To enrich collaborative efforts, many schools have teams in place to assist the teacher with this process. These teams are known by different names (e.g., teacher assistance teams, instructional consultation teams, instructional support teams, early intervention teams, etc.), but the purpose is the same — to suggest alternative general education (Continued on next page)
strategies and to help analyze and record observations and assessment data. Realistically, this data will be useful should a referral for special education services be deemed necessary. But, more importantly, this process will often afford the struggling student optimal learning conditions with understanding more likely to occur.

Collect Baseline Data
Excellent teachers find it very motivating to have enough information to make the best decisions for the students in their charge. Data from summative yearly assessments inform teachers about areas of need for improved instructional practice, but teachers must also consider formative assessments and their value in driving instruction. Collection of data should begin with baseline to indicate what the student is able to do without the intervention. Baseline data might be collected through classroom-based assessments (e.g., quizzes, tests, rubrics, checklists, portfolios) and observations regarding student learning (Ralabate, 2003). Collecting and analyzing data, seeking input and assistance from other professionals, and collaboratively making decisions about instruction are evidence of a professional learning community.

Identify the Concern
Baseline data will either confirm or deny initial concerns about the struggling student and direct goal-setting. Guidelines for analyzing data to create a specific picture of the concern and state goals in observable terms include:

- visually represent your data,
- look for obvious gaps,
- look for patterns,
- look for gains, and
- recognize competence.

Develop a Measurable Objective
Once the baseline data has been used to more specifically identify the concern, goals can be established for the student, which are relevant to the concern, baseline data, and academic achievement. The acronym SMART reminds us of the essential components of well-defined goals.

- S = specific
- M = measurable
- A = attainable
- R = results-oriented
- T = time-bound

Develop & Implement an Intervention Plan
This information is used to determine an intervention that addresses what appears to be the main concern (see the Intervention Strategies Menu insert). If you are working with a team, decide who will be responsible for implementation of the intervention and consistently document your student’s performance. Be patient. It normally takes at least two weeks to see if an intervention is effective.

Monitor Progress
The data will inform you as to whether or not the objective has been achieved (see the Intervention Progress Sheet insert). If so, decide whether to maintain the intervention, stop it, or move to another concern. If the objective is not met, at least you know more about the needs of your student and can choose a different intervention or refer the student for an evaluation for special education services.

McLeod’s (2005) diagram below delineates these essential elements of effective data-driven education.

The current demands on educators are unavoidable, but the attitude with which they are met is a choice. We can complain about legislation that constitutes accountability, the students we work with, the parents and home environment, or we can professionally collaborate to make informed decisions about instruction to positively impact student learning. Educators who choose the latter are experiencing success in closing achievement gaps.

References:


The following are tools that may be helpful in providing successful experiences as you teach and support persons who are on the autism spectrum.

**Subscribe to Autism E-news**

This quarterly e-newsletter focuses on educational topics for children and youth with autism. You will also receive monthly announcements on local workshops and conferences about autism. Sign up at the following address: www.ttac.odu.edu/esubs/forms/autism.htm. To check out past issues, visit: http://ttac.odu.edu/ENewsArchives/Autism/autism_archives_toc.htm.

**Learn new information through a Webshop**

A Webshop is online training that includes self-paced workshops designed by specialists across Virginia. Training certificates are awarded upon the successful completion of the Webshop and training requirements. Visit T/TAC Online, a Web-based community linking people and resources to help children and youth with disabilities, at http://ttaconline.org. Go to your region and click “Online Training” on the tab at the top of the page. Choose “Disability Characteristics” and then “Autism” on the side bar. You’re just a click away from learning more about:

- **Asperger’s Syndrome Overview**: This Webshop provides an overview of Asperger’s Syndrome, including a brief history, prevalence data, diagnostic information, and learner characteristics.

- **Augmentative and Alternative Communication – Introduction**: This Webshop introduces the basics of communicating and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).

- **Overview of Autism**: This Webshop provides a general overview of the characteristics of autism and references to screening and assessment tools that can be used to determine if autism is present. Keep checking back. New Webshops continue to be posted.

**Take a free on-line course**

This online course, *Fundamentals of Autism*, is a Web-based course offered by George Mason University, available through the Virginia Autism Council. The purpose of this training program is to provide a broad spectrum of audiences with evidence-based, up-to-date information on important issues related to Pervasive Developmental Disabilities (PDD), with a special focus on autism. This online course consists of study material, quizzes for self-evaluations, and a final exam. In addition, participants will communicate electronically with the instructor and with all other participants through discussions of specific topics. The Web site is accessible to enrolled students for eight consecutive days (Monday 6:00 a.m. until the following Monday 11:55 p.m.), 24 hours per day. The online format is easy-to-use and highly flexible. The training is offered once per month, typically during the last week of the month. See the registration page for the schedule. Stipends are available for Virginia public school teachers and school staff (approved for a stipend from the VA Department of Education), staff members of Community Service Boards, community private providers, or facility/training centers (approved for a stipend from the VA Dept. of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Substance Abuse Services), and rehab counselors (approved for a stipend from the VA Dept. of Rehabilitative Services). To access the course go to the Virginia Autism Council Web site at www.autismtrainingva.org. Click on “Online course: *Fundamentals in Autism*.” Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on “Register Here!” Complete and submit the registration form.

**Download the Skill Competencies for Professionals and ParaProfessionals in Virginia Supporting Individuals with Autism across the Lifespan**

This document guides best practice in supporting individuals with autism across the state. The Virginia Autism Council is a state-supported council of autism experts seeking to define needed skill competencies and to advance higher education, training, and educational opportunities for personnel and caregivers supporting individuals with autism. The Council developed the list of competencies for professional and paraprofessional staff in all fields of service delivery that provides information for the attainment of essential knowledge, skills, and abilities when teaching students with ASD. These competencies were described in the last T/TAC Telegram newsletter (November/December 2006). You can obtain a copy of the competencies at www.autismtrainingva.org. They are listed under “Forms and Documents” located on the side bar.

(Continued on next page)
Check out a video from your T-TAC library
Each T/TAC has a variety of materials relating to the autism spectrum. In Region 5, go to http://ttac.cisat.jmu.edu. Click “Lending Library” on the side bar. You can search by key word or author; be sure to check the correct box before clicking “search.” Finally complete the library request form and wait for your materials to arrive. In Region 4, go to http://ttac.gmu.edu. Click on “online library” on the side bar; complete your search. Highlight the item requested and click to add it to your cart. When finished, click “view your cart” at the bottom of the page. Proceed to checkout, complete the request form, and wait for your materials to arrive.

Attend a local, regional, or statewide training event

• Look on your local T/TAC Web site.

• Go to the Virginia Autism Council Web site at www.autismtrainingva.org. This Web site is Virginia’s clearinghouse on best practices and research-based education and training opportunities to advance personnel development and knowledge regarding autism in Virginia. Click on the calendar of training or use the side bar that is titled “Training courses.” It also lists the events.

• Visit T/TAC Online, a Web-based community linking people and resources to help children and youth with disabilities at http://ttaconline.org. Go to your region and click on “Events” on the tab at the top of the page; choose “Disability Characteristics” and then “Autism” on the side bar.

In Virginia and across the nation, preschoolers with disabilities are increasingly receiving services in settings with peers who are typically developing (Grisham-Brown, Pretti-Frontczak, Hemmeter, & Ridgley, 2002; US Department of Education, 2005). As a result, there is a need to design intervention and data collection that can be implemented in early childhood settings such as community child care programs, Head Start classrooms, Virginia Preschool Initiative classrooms, etc. Generally it is not appropriate to pull a preschooler with disabilities into a segregated setting to provide intervention and take data. Intervention should be, whenever possible, embedded into the natural environment and flow of the day. Embedded intervention is defined as “…using regular classroom routines as the settings for addressing individualized goals and objectives (as found on an IEP, for example). This provides children with multiple opportunities to practice new skills in practical and purposeful ways, they are encouraged to gain independence, and they become engaged, fully functioning members of the classroom” (McWilliam, 2005).

An intervention matrix has been discussed by a number of researchers and authors as one tool for planning to address IEP objectives throughout the day (Grisham-Brown et al., 2002; McWilliam, 2005; Pretti-Frontczak & Bricker, 2004). In 2003, Pretti-Frontczak, Barr, Macy, & Carter conducted a literature review and located 16 studies and 14 articles translating research to practice related to intervention in the natural environment (called embedded intervention, activity-based intervention, or routines-based instruction). Overall, these results confirm that the skills of preschoolers with disabilities were improved when given frequent and various opportunities to practice the identified skill(s) across activities, settings, and people.

Sharon Raver (2003; 2004) has presented a useful format for using the intervention matrix to collect data on IEP objectives. Dr. Raver added data boxes to each objective (see the smaller box in the lower right corner of the objectives boxes in Figure 1). Each student with an IEP is listed down the left column of the page. One or more of each child’s IEP objectives are highlighted in each box. This one page format gives the classroom staff a quick snapshot of the objectives to monitor throughout the
day. This chart can be posted in different areas around the room, allowing for a quick way to record a child’s performance during ongoing activities when skills are typically used (Raver, 2003). The teacher should use whatever recording system that makes sense to her (e.g., checks, minuses, number of responses, or prompts needed such as illustrated in Figure 1). The key to naturalistic data collection is to make it as easy to use as possible!

Monitoring children’s progress in the natural ebb and flow of the day allows classroom staff to use many of the recommended practices suggested by the Division for Early Childhood’s DEC Recommended Practices (Sandall, Hemmeter, Smith, & McLean, 2005). The book, workbook, and videotape are available from the T/TAC library.

References:


**Is the Data You’re Collecting Countable and Does it Count?**

Deborah M. Yancey, M.Ed *Coordinator VDOE Region 5 T/TAC @ JMU*

“Not everything that’s countable counts and not everything that counts is countable.”
-Albert Einstein

What exactly does the word *data* mean? According to the *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language* *(4th ed.)*, the following is the definition of *data*:

**da·ta** (dā’tə, dāt’e, dä’tə): pl.n. *(used with a sing. or pl. verb)*

1. Factual information, especially information organized for analysis or used to reason or make decisions.

**Usage Note:** The word *data* is the plural of Latin *datum*, “something given,” but it is not always treated as a plural noun in English.

Looking at this definition and the quote by Albert Einstein, a speech language pathologist (SLP) can make the determination if the data being collected is countable and does indeed count for making decisions about speech services.

In the special education arena, teachers and speech language pathologists are familiar with how essential it is to have data to review to make appropriate eligibility and placement decisions. The team of professionals interpreting data studies the data with the strengths and needs of student considered and then determines how to individualize the student’s educational program to enhance his or her learning.

Once the student’s IEP is written, signed, and speech services begun, data can be collected for a variety of reasons, including determining if the speech service is changing the student’s speech, recording student progress and generalization across environments, and, finally, determining if the services should be continued. It is during the instructional year that somehow collecting data can become tedious, monotonous, and not used for reasons to make decisions. It is during these times that the team must stop and ask the question “Is the data countable and does it count?” To collect data just to collect data makes no sense and takes too much energy.

*(Continued on next page)*
(Continued from previous page)

Data gathered to make decisions about speech services would include both quantitative and qualitative data according to Olswang & Bain (1994). As stated in their article, quantitative data refers to objective data, where targeted speech goals can be operationally defined for observation and measurement. Simple tally charting and percentages of correct speech productions would be an example of quantitative data tools that could indicate the student's progress in the therapy setting. The SLP's use of check/plus and minus tally marks for production of targeted sounds in isolation, syllables, words, phrases, sentences, and conversation are examples of quantitative data gathered during therapy. These tallies can be converted to percentages using the Speech Percentage Finder wheel, available from Super Duper Publications at www.superduperinc.com.

Olswang & Bain (1994) define qualitative data as subjective data from observation, interviews, and other sources such as diaries, official documents, recordings, etc. The speech language pathologist's responsibility is to clearly define the acceptable targeted speech to observers across environments BEFORE the collection of data begins. The fact that the data is recorded by others in a different context from the therapy session must be recognized. For example, the SLP may have a different view of the acceptable social language skill of initiating conversation than a classroom teacher, so it's important for the SLP to define and perhaps demonstrate how the student has practiced and learned initiating conversation. In qualitative data collection, cueing, prompting, and supports must be listed by the observer as the student's speech is observed. Without listing the cueing, prompting, and supports given, the data may not truly reflect the student's performance. It's important to remember that for some students, cueing, prompting, and supports will always be needed, but the degree to which they are offered can be monitored with good qualitative data collection. Forms for collecting qualitative data can be simple with space available for describing what is being measured, how to measure it, and when to measure it. The observer can make notes for cueing, prompting, and supports across each observance or collectively on the form.

The SLP has to determine why qualitative data is being collected and how practical the collecting will be across the student's environments before asking team members to observe and record data. Periodic review of the data with all team members helps to answer the questions of whether the speech sessions are changing the student's speech, if the student is progressing, if generalization across environments is occurring, and whether speech services should be continued.

References:
As a classroom teacher, I remember many times when I assigned a list of 25 spelling words and expected students to learn them for Friday’s test. Even when I gave a pretest, there were often students who needed to learn 15 to 20 words by Friday. My “words of wisdom” were to study by practicing orally, doing repeated writings, and creating sentences using the words. There was no reference to breaking the list of unknowns into smaller, more workable chunks. I was unaware of the importance of honoring working memory.

The term “working memory” was defined by Baddeley and Hitch in the 1980s as “the ability to hold several facts or thoughts in memory temporarily while solving a problem or performing a task.” In Virginia’s Instructional Support Team initiative, an instructional match is made when optimal conditions exist between the student, instruction, and task. Instructional level is when content is presented at an appropriate level of academic challenge neither too difficult nor too easy.

Honoring the limits of working memory is a key feature in determining the instructional level for a student. A child can only hold a certain amount of new information in his/her mind at once.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Pieces of New Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17+</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For students who are struggling academically, it becomes imperative for teachers to determine a student’s instructional level. Identifying prior knowledge, linking new information to known facts, and honoring the limits of working memory, while maintaining a comfort zone, are important components for the progress from instructional level to grade level expectations.

A tool that teachers may use to help honor working memory is a strategy known as Pocket Words. This strategy is primarily used for building word recognition in struggling readers. However, it can also be applied to spelling, math facts, and key vocabulary terms in content areas. Data can easily be collected to monitor student progress and make adjustments as necessary to provide optimum success.

The strategy consists of making a set of four small flashcards with one new word or fact written on each. The student carries them in his/her pocket and is periodically asked to read them for the teacher, a paraprofessional, other students, etc. In this way, repetition and practice are built into the student’s day. Perhaps every time the student lines up to leave the classroom the words are read. When automaticity develops for the current words, the student is given new cards.

Data can be collected weekly to record progress. For example, a graph can be created to track the progress of a student working on a list of 30 high frequency words.

- **After three trials reading all 30 words, an average can be recorded as the baseline**

- **Each week the student reads the entire list and the number correctly read is graphed**

This allows the student to see a visual representation of progress and the teacher can use the information to gauge the implementation of the Pocket Word strategy. Perhaps a student needs more repetition and should keep some cards longer or is moving more quickly and can master five cards at a time. Adjustments can easily be made and monitored.

A tool for creating graphs can be found at [http://ness.ed.gov/nces/createagraph](http://ness.ed.gov/nces/createagraph). This Web site is very user-friendly and older students could easily input their own information to create a variety of graphs.

In the mathematics curriculum, students are expected to learn numerous math computation facts with automaticity. Adapting the Pocket Words strategy for
mathematics, specifically multiplication facts, illustrates another means for individualizing instruction that matches student instructional level and learning task. This strategy consists of compiling a sheet of 100, single digit, multiplication problems as seen in the illustration from the Instructional Consultation Teams Training Manual. Students are given a set amount of time (two minutes) to answer as many problems as possible. Using the Multiplication Conversion Table (see figure 1), students can color the multiplication facts they answered correctly. The average of three trials will give a baseline data score.

For multiplication facts not yet learned, students make four or five pocket math problem cards from which they can study and learn until the next timed activity sheet. Each timed activity sheet is followed by recreating pocket cards needed for further study and practice.

As students color more and more of the Multiplication Conversion Table they can observe their learning progress. This data can also be tracked in chart or graph form as mentioned in the vocabulary activity, giving the student and the teacher documentation of student success.

The research into working memory affords teachers insight to the amount of new information students can be expected to learn. Adhering to its capacity will help maintain instructional level for a student with a match between the child, the task, and the instruction. The Pocket Words strategy is a tool that can be easily used with one or more students within a variety of content. The progress of implementation can be monitored and the information used to evaluate the success of the intervention.

References:

Strategic Instruction Model: Addressing Adolescent Literacy

Gina Massengill, M.Ed., Coordinator and Ed Kelliher, M.Ed., Coordinator VDOE Region 5 T/TAC @ JMU

It is common practice in today’s schools that learning to read is taught through the third grade and that reading to learn is emphasized through the middle school grades. Our assumption is that by the time students enter high school, they have the reading and literacy skills to navigate and comprehend complex and challenging reading materials (Walker, 2005). However, as many as 13 million high school students do not read well enough to understand textbook materials or their teacher’s written directions. A quarter of them struggle to read local road signs and newspapers (Tollefson, 2003).

The Strategic Instruction Model (SIM), developed by the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, is a program for teaching adolescents who struggle with becoming good readers, writers, and learners. It is based on the reality that to meet high standards, adolescents must be able to read and understand complex reading materials. Additionally, they must acquire the skills to express themselves effectively in writing.

SIM encompasses two kinds of interventions:

1. Teacher-focused interventions (Content Enhancement Routines) are directed at how teachers think about, adapt, and present their critical content in a “learner-friendly” fashion. These interventions are designed for use during group instruction in core curriculum classes.

2. Student-focused interventions (Learning Strategies Curriculum) are designed to provide the skills and strategies students need to learn and apply the content. These interventions are designed for use in core curriculum classes and in classes targeting reading, writing, and other study skills.

Several teaching routines and strategies are outlined below. Each is research-validated; the research took place in public schools, primarily in middle and high school settings, and the routines and strategies were field tested for success by teachers. Professional development on SIM Content Enhancement Routines and Learning Strategies is available through your regional T/TAC office.

Content Enhancement Routines

The Course Organizer Routine is used to plan courses around essential learning and critical concepts. The teacher uses the routine to introduce the course and the rituals that will be used throughout the course. Research showed that the use of the Course Organizer Routine helps teachers and students keep the big ideas in mind and focus their attention to understand important relationships. (www.ku-crl.org/trainers/articles/index.html)

The Unit Organizer Routine is used to plan units and then introduce and maintain the big ideas in units and show how units, critical information and concepts are related. Students using the Unit Organizer Routine scored an average of 15 percentage points higher on unit tests than students of teachers who used it only irregularly (www.ku-crl.org/trainers/articles/index.html).

The Lesson Organizer Routine is used to plan lessons and then introduce and connect ideas to the unit and the course. With this routine, students scored an average of 15 percentage points higher on unit tests than students of teachers who used it irregularly. (www.ku-crl.org/trainers/articles/index.html)

The Clarifying Routine is used to focus on a topic and then explore related details and its importance to the critical ideas and concepts. Using this routine, teachers can help students master the meaning of targeted words and phrases. High socioeconomic level students improved their number of correct answers by an average of 14% percentage points, middle socioeconomic level students by (Continued on next page)
The Framing Routine is used to transform abstract main ideas and key topics into a concrete representation that helps students think and talk about the key topic and essential related information. The Framing Routine can effectively facilitate subject-matter learning as well as the development of literacy and thinking skills.

The Survey Routine provides an overview of a reading assignment when students are having difficulty reading and sorting out information from inconsiderate text.

The Concept Anchoring Routine is used to introduce and anchor a new concept to a concept that is already familiar to students. Students with LD scored an average of 25 percentage points higher than those who were not taught with the routine. Low-achieving, average-achieving, and high-achieving students taught with the Anchoring Routine scored averages of 27, 19, and 7 percentage points higher than their respective groups that were not taught with the routine.

The Concept Comparison Routine is used to help students compare and contrast key concepts. Students with LD and other low-achieving students correctly answered an average of 71.2% (LD) and 86.4% (NLD) respectively of the test questions associated with information presented through the use of the routine.

The Concept Mastery Routine is used to define, summarize, and explain a major concept and where it fits within a larger body of knowledge. Secondary teacher use of the routine causes students to score significantly better on tests designed to assess concept acquisition, score significantly better on regularly scheduled, teacher-made or commercial unit tests during the enhancement condition than during baseline, and take better notes during the enhancement condition than before using the routine.

The Quality Assignment Routine is used to plan, present, and engage students in quality assignments and then evaluate assignments with students. Characteristics of good assignments and the important elements for the routine were learned through surveys completed by teachers and students and from focus groups with teachers and students.

The Question Exploration Routine is a package of instructional methods that teachers can use to help a diverse student population understand a body of content information by carefully answering a “critical question” to arrive at a main idea answer. Students who were taught a lesson using the Question Exploration Routine earned an average test score of 70% while students who were taught the lesson with traditional methods scored an average of 48%.

The Recall Enhancement Routine focuses on procedures teachers can use to help students remember information. The recall performance of both the LD and the NLD students in the experimental group was higher by 29.10 and 20.5 points.

The Vocabulary LINCing Routine is designed to facilitate student use of two powerful tools, an auditory memory device and a visual memory device that will help them learn and remember the meaning of complex terms. Students,
including those with LD, improved their performance by an average of 19 percentage points on vocabulary tests. (www.ku-crl.org/trainers/articles/index.html)

Reading Strategies
The Word Identification Strategy helps challenged readers successfully decode and identify unknown words in their reading materials. The strategy is based on the premise that most words in the English language can be pronounced by identifying prefixes, suffixes, and stems, and by following three short syllabication rules. In a research study, students made an average of 20 errors in a passage of 400 words before learning this strategy. Having learned the Word Identification Strategy, students reduced their errors to an average of three per 400 words. Reading comprehension increases from 40 percent on the pretest to 70 percent on grade-level passages. (www.ku-crl.org/trainers/articles/index.html)

The Visual Imagery Strategy is a reading comprehension strategy for creating mental movies of narrative passages. Students visualize the scenery, characters, and action and describe the scenes to themselves. Research results showed that students who demonstrated a 35 percent comprehension and recall rate before learning the strategy improved to an 86 percent comprehension and recall rate after learning the strategy. (www.ku-crl.org/trainers/articles/index.html)

The Self-Questioning Strategy helps students create their own motivation for reading. Students create questions in their minds, predict the answers to those questions, search for the answers to those questions as they read, and paraphrase the answers to themselves. Research results have shown average gains of 40 percentage points in reading comprehension on grade-level materials after students have learned the strategy. (www.ku-crl.org/trainers/articles/index.html)

The Paraphrasing Strategy helps students focus on the most important information in a passage. Students read short passages of materials, identify the main idea and details, and rephrase the content in their own words. Using grade-level materials, students performed at a 48 percent comprehension rate before learning the strategy. During the posttest, these students comprehended 84 percent of the material (www.ku-crl.org/trainers/articles/index.html).

Writing Strategies
The FIRST-Letter Mnemonic Strategy is a strategy for studying large amounts of information. Students identify lists of information that are important to learn, generate an appropriate title or label for each set of information, select a mnemonic device for each set of information, create study cards, and use the study cards to learn the information. Research results showed that students who learned the FIRST-Letter Mnemonic Strategy received test grades that increased from an average of 51 percent to 85 percent (www.ku-crl.org/trainers/articles/index.html).

The Paragraph Writing Strategy is a strategy for organizing ideas related to a topic, planning the point of view and verb tense to be used in the paragraph, planning the sequence in which ideas will be expressed, and writing a variety of topic, detail, and clincher sentences. Research results showed that students earned an average of 40 percent of the points available when writing a paragraph on the pretest and an average of 71 percent of the points available when writing a paragraph on the posttest (www.ku-crl.org/trainers/articles/index.html).

The Theme Writing Strategy focuses on the fundamental skills associated with writing themes and provides learning sheets to accompany instruction.

The Error Monitoring Strategy can be used by students to detect and correct errors in their written work to increase the overall quality of their final product. Instruction stresses the importance of proofreading written work for content and mechanical errors and eliminating those errors before work is submitted. This strategy also includes the development of personal strategies to avoid future errors. Research results demonstrated that students who mastered this strategy dramatically increased their ability to find and correct errors in their written products. Before instruction, they were making one error in every four words. After instruction, they made only one error in every 20 words. (www.ku-crl.org/trainers/articles/index.html)

The InSPECT Strategy can be used by students to detect and correct spelling errors in their documents either by using a computerized spellchecker or a hand-held spelling device. Research results showed that students corrected 41 percent of the errors in their compositions before learning the InSPECT Strategy and corrected 75 percent of the errors in their composition after learning the strategy (www.ku-crl.org/trainers/articles/index.html). (Continued on next page)
(Continued from previous page)

References:


Links to Additional Resources:
Paper from the National Center for Learning Disabilities: www.ncld.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=841

Paper from the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition: www.ncset.org/publications/viewdesc.asp?id=274

SIM Article Archives: www.ku-crl.org/archives
SIM Products: www.ku-crl.org/products/index.html
SIMville – Professional Development Network: www.ku-crl.org/htmlfiles/trainer.html

SW Educational Development Laboratory Review: www.sedl.org/cgi-in/mysql/buildingreading.cgi?showrecord=14&1=effectiveness
The age of data collection is upon us and is steadily increasing. No Child Left Behind legislation, as well as IDEA 2004, has created an opportunity for educators to have higher expectations for students both academically and behaviorally. Higher student expectations have also created higher teacher expectations, as well as the demand for more and more teachers and administrators to provide specific evidence of student behaviors and behavioral interventions to parents and school intervention teams. How can this be done with busy schedules, huge paper trails, or without having to reinvent the wheel?

The Internet provides an avenue for teachers to access materials created for specific needs. The Web site, www.behaviornotes.com, is an informative site that offers teachers and administrators a program to collect and report data in an effective and efficient manner. This site provides its services for a fee of $25 for teachers per year. There is also a group user fee per student.

This site helps teachers and administrators compare and collect objective and meaningful data that reflect what types of behaviors are displayed, where the behavior(s) happened, who was involved, the time and place of a behavioral event and what type of intervention was used. It also provides charts that display incidents by behaviors as well as graphs that compare average incidents per student. This type of data becomes key when implementing appropriate interventions and positive behavioral supports at both a classroom and individual support level. Specific and objective data can be used as a vehicle for functional behavior assessments, child study meetings, and parent-teacher conferences, as well as for support in providing interventions across the curriculum to promote academic success.

On the right side of the page is an example from the Web site.

Another site for teachers and administrators who want to continue to focus on research-based practices related to student behavior is www.specialconnections.ku.edu. This site provides a complete section devoted to behavior plans with four subcategories: teacher tools, research, case studies, and an opportunity for online collaboration with other professionals.

The teacher tools portion provides numerous free documents pertaining to functional behavior assessment, positive support planning, positive support interventions, and classroom and group support. The documents from these categories are easily accessible and user friendly for teachers and administrators who are looking for a variety of formalized documents to promote data–based decision making within their school support teams.

This site also provides research based practices in the areas of instruction, collaboration, and assessment with the same four subcategories: teacher tools, research, case studies, and online collaboration. This site is definitely worth a visit and is a valuable tool to promote behavioral and academic success across the curriculum.

In promoting the success and support of students, it is important to remember to individualize student data. It is always best practice to record data in an objective manner and to avoid personalized statements about the student or the behavior. Keep your data organized and refer to it frequently to assess student and teacher performance. The best way to make sound decisions is based on objective and meaningful data.

References:
The SVRP Transition Portfolio: A FREE Resource for Your Transition Toolkit

With the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act in 2004 (IDEA 2004), new emphasis has been placed on student outcomes, data collection, and age appropriate transition assessments. The IEP must include a statement of appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments (Virginia Standards of Accreditation; IDEA 2004). The assessments must be related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills, and the transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the student in reaching those goals (Virginia Standards of Accreditation; IDEA 2004).

With the idea of working smarter not harder, the Shenandoah Valley Regional Program Transition Project created a comprehensive resource that allows teachers to meet the law, better serve the student, and create an organized individualized portfolio that students with a disability can take with them when they graduate or exit the public school system. The Special Education Transition Portfolio was one of the products created from the Shenandoah Valley Regional Program (SVRP) Transition Grant funded by the Virginia Department of Education. SVRP members included Augusta County, Harrisonburg City, Page County, Rockingham County, Shenandoah County, and Staunton City school divisions. The project created three products to be used in transition planning: a needs assessment, a transition portfolio, and a section of additional transition resources.

The needs assessment is a 38 question survey used to identify areas of need and is not meant to be used as compliance monitoring tool.

The Special Education Transition Needs Assessment is designed to assist transition team members in making decisions regarding current transition practices in their school. The team identifies the top priorities for making positive changes that will result in successful transition services for students with disabilities (The Shenandoah Valley Regional Program, 2005).

The transition portfolio is broken down by grade starting with grade 7 and culminating with grade 12. Numerous activities are listed under each grade level, with items in bold noted to be strongly suggested. Each item has an accompanying link to a either a printable pdf form or a Microsoft word version that students can type directly into and then print out.

The Special Education Transition Portfolio and accompanying Transition Portfolio Resource have been created for use with students and will enable educators to accomplish several things at once. First, by utilizing the transition activities in this portfolio, the door of communication between yourself and your students regarding transition services will open. Educators will be able to explain the importance of early transition planning and how these services will enable them to be successful adults once they graduate from school and are on their own.

Second, with each activity, teachers provide students an opportunity to identify their likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, goals, etc. In turn, this will foster within students a sense of independence and confidence concerning who they are now and what they want to do with their life after graduation.

In addition, this portfolio will provide the students’ parents a hands-on example of the transition activities their children have participated in each school year. This is a valuable tool for opening the lines of communication between school and home and a method to get meaningful input from parents regarding transition goals for their child.

John McNaught, M.Ed., Coordinator
VDOE Region 5 T/TAC at James Madison University
Finally, documentation is being created from age 14 (or younger if deemed appropriate) through 21 of all of the transition services a student has participated in while in school (SVRP, 2005).

The Transition Portfolio Resource is organized into nine sections: Introduction, General Assessment, Self-advocacy, Post-secondary Employment (2 sections), Career and Technical Education, Secondary and Postsecondary Education, Independent Living, Community Linkages, and Resources. Again, each item under the categories has links to either printable or downloadable documents.

Please note, this entire resource is FREE and available online at [www.rockingham.k12.va.us/rcps_spd/SVRP/svrp.htm](http://www.rockingham.k12.va.us/rcps_spd/SVRP/svrp.htm).

**Resources:**


Virginia Standards of Accreditation. 8 VAC 20-80-62 F.10
How do you know if the assistive technology tool that your student is using is effective?

Accountability is critical when making any decision about AT; whether you are considering AT as part of the IEP process, choosing an AT device or equipment, evaluating the student’s competence in using his AT, or determining if a change in AT is warranted. Having reliable and current data, collected over a set period of time, across the many environments where the student uses the AT will give the IEP team the information needed to make the best decisions.

Recording observable performance can be a simple system that documents the behavior by reflecting a length of time, how the student responded (prompt), the accuracy of the response, or the number of responses.

In your AT toolbox, you should have a data collection form that is easy to use and evaluate, appropriate to the task being recorded, and consistent over the time period that data is being collected. Consider the task and then the method. You might have forms that reflect frequency count, interval recording, task analysis, skill checklist, duration, antecedent-behavior-consequence, or environmental analysis. There needs to be a starting (baseline) and an ending (criteria) point. Remember to measure only one behavior or skill that you have clearly defined. Look at the examples to the right for ideas you might want to use or incorporate into your collection form.

After collecting accurate data, you will want to have resources to put into your toolkit that will guide you in finding solutions. The National Assistive Technology Research Institute (NATRI) has developed the Assistive Technology Planner-From IEP Consideration to Classroom Implementation (information is available at http://natri.uky.edu or check with your special education director for a copy). The planner has identified strategies for the effective use of AT.


Also available from this Web site is The AT Consideration Process, a flow chart to help guide you when considering AT for your student(s), available at http://olms.cte.jhu.edu/olms/output/page.php?id=35.

The Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative, http://www.wati.org, is an excellent resource to add to your toolkit for everything from Resource Guide, Best Practices, Curriculum, Training, Materials and a host of very user-friendly documents that will assist you in making data-driven choices for AT.

Finally, consider the Lottie Kits available through Onion Mountain Technology, http://onionmountaintech.com, for “ready made toolkits” in the area of early childhood, literacy, math, older students, and organization and a Web site full of ideas and information. The kits are chock full of “tools” to assist your school division, AT team, and IEP team with pragmatic ideas dedicated to supporting student independence.
Sixth Annual Raising the Bar: Improving Services for Individuals with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder across Virginia

James Madison University
Festival Conference and Student Center
March 22, 2007

Sponsored by Region 5 T/TAC @ JMU and The Alvin V. Baird Attention & Learning Disabilities Center @ JMU

Contact Susan Bowman at Region 5 T/TAC, bowmansp@jmu.edu or 540.568.8843, for registration information

Elementary Teacher Conference
James Madison University
April 20-21, 2007

Attend the inaugural Elementary Teacher Conference – a conference by and for all teachers, Pre-K through 6th grades, to be held at:
James Madison University on April 20-21, 2007.

The conference will host the exchange of curriculum ideas, highlight successful teaching strategies, and promote dialogue regarding current issues through workshops, inquiry/paper presentations, panels, and a keynote address. The conference celebrates teachers and those who have partnered in preparing new teachers. JMU welcomes the return of JMU alumni to renew old friendships and tour the JMU College of Education in its new Memorial Hall location (formerly Harrisonburg High School). Visit the College of Education Web site at http://welcome.coe.jmu.edu for information.

Content Teaching Academies
James Madison University, Harrisonburg
June 25-29, 2007

The goal of the Content Teaching Academies is to combine high-quality subject-area content with high-quality instruction in an intellectually rigorous and stimulating environment. The academies will be conducted during the week of June 25-29, 2007, on the campus of JMU and will be open to all educators. Scholars and master teachers from around the Commonwealth and across the nation will comprise the faculty of the academies. The planning group for the academies included university liberal arts and teacher education professors, school district administrators and teachers, and Department of Education specialists from across the state.


CORE Training
This year, the Virginia Department of Education is once again coordinating training throughout the state for special educators using the CORE (Consortium on Reading Excellence) reading program. Save the following dates; more information is forthcoming through a Superintendent’s Memo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Dates and Times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hampton area</td>
<td>Grades 4-12</td>
<td>March 20-21; June 19-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winchester area</td>
<td>Grades 4-12</td>
<td>March 27-28; June 26-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petersburg area</td>
<td>Grades 4-6</td>
<td>March 27-28; June 26-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Grades 7-12)</td>
<td>March 13-14; June 19-21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conferences & Trainings:

**February**

22nd-24th Virginia Association for Early Childhood Education
51st Annual Conference: The Wonder of It All
Norfolk Marriott Waterside, Norfolk, VA
Visit the VAECE Web site at www.vaece.org for information and additional details

25th-28th Virginia Society for Technology in Education (VSTE) Conference,
Virginia Beach Convention Center, Virginia Beach
For more information visit www.vste.org

28th Behavior Intervention Strategies for Students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders
Norfolk, VA Fee: $100.00
Contact Phyllis Kozakiewicz at Southeastern Cooperative Educational Programs (SECEP), 757.892.6100 or kozakiewicz.phyllis@secep.net

Using research-based approaches to identify and remediate problematic behaviors associated with ASD, this workshop will focus on children across a variety of cognitive and communicative functioning levels. Attendees will use Functional Behavior Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans to increase these children’s potential for success in their homes, school, and communities.

**March**

1st-3rd The Speech and Hearing Association of Virginia Annual Conference
Holiday Inn Koger Center South, Richmond, VA
There will also be a pre-conference on Dysphasia on Feb. 28. Visit the SHAV Web site for additional information: www.shav.org

7th-9th Commonwealth Autism Service’s 6th Annual Autism Conference
Crowne Plaza Richmond West, Richmond, VA
Keynote speakers: Robert Montgomery, Ph.D., Asperger Syndrome; Gena Barnhill, Ph.D., Hidden Curriculum; Herm Fishbein, Ph.D., Transition: No Adults Left Behind. Contact CAS for information: 800.649.8481, 804.355.0300, or www.autismva.org

12th-14th The Virginia Transition Forum 2007: Working Together to Achieve Results
Norfolk Waterside Marriott, Norfolk, VA
Contact Dale Matusevich at Radford University with questions, dmatusev@radford.edu or 540.831.5357
Register online at www.virginiatransitionforum.org

**Continued**

15th-17th Virginia State Reading Association
40th Annual Conference
The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center, Roanoke Civic Center, Roanoke, VA
For more information: www.vsra.org

This two-day workshop is designed for parents of young children with autism and for professionals working in early intervention. It provides an overview of basic skills that should be incorporated into a beginning ABA program and ideas on how to keep very young children engaged and motivated. This workshop focuses on the importance of combining naturalistic teaching across environments with traditional discrete trial instruction.

19th-20th Early Intervention in the Home.
Charlottesville, VA Fee: $190 for professionals, $150 for families
Contact The Virginia Institute of Autism, 434.923.8252 or www.viaschool.org for registration and additional information

20th-21st Project HOPE-Virginia Seminar. This Mission is Possible: Renewing Our Commitment to All Students
Williamsburg Marriott, Williamsburg, VA
Sponsored by Project HOPE, Virginia’s Program for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. For more information, visit the Web site at www.wm.edu/hope

21st Social Skill Strategies for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders
Norfolk, VA Fee: $100
Contact Phyllis Kozakiewicz at Southeastern Cooperative Educational Programs (SECEP), 757.892.6100 or kozakiewicz.phyllis@secep.net

Participants will examine a number of strategies for teaching social skills to students with ASD and assisting students with ASD in navigating the social demands of their environment.

Unlocking Creative Differentiation: The Key to Learning
The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center, Blacksburg, VA
For additional information, please visit the VCLD Web site at www.vcld.org or contact Carol Ann Cox at caco07@yahoo.com
March Continued
31st Tools for Success: Nuts & Bolts. How Does It All Fit?
Conference for families of children with learning needs with concurrent sessions focusing on preschool, school-age, and adolescents
Doubletree Hotel, Charlottesville, VA
Sponsored by UVA Children's Hospital. Contact Sandra Woodward or Vertie Wade, 1.866.596.9367

April
5th Transition Practitioners Council Biannual Meeting
Blue Ridge Community College, Weyers Cave, VA
Registration flyers will be forthcoming

25th Instructional Strategies for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders
Norfolk, VA Fee: $100
Contact Phyllis Kozakiewicz at Southeastern Cooperative Educational Programs (SECEP), 757.892.6100 or kozakiewicz.phyllis@secep.net

This is a practical, interactive workshop which addresses classroom concerns related to the unique learning style of students with ASD. A basic understanding of ASD is suggested as a prerequisite to the workshop.

28th 4th Annual Understanding the Spectrum and the Strategies that Work Conference
Presenter: Carol Schall, Director, Virginia Autism Resource Center
James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA
Contact Sally Chappel, VDOE Region 5 T/TAC @ JMU, 540.568.8095 or chappesl@jmu.edu

This conference will focus on the basic understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorders including Asperger’s Syndrome, Autism, Pervasive Developmental Disorders, and other related disabilities. Participants will use their knowledge of the characteristics associated with this spectrum and learn what strategies are the most effective when supporting the individual at school, at home, and in the community.

July
11th-13th Virginia’s 4th Annual Early Childhood Conference
Shining Stars: Charting the Future for Today’s Children
Ramada Plaza Resort Oceanfront, Virginia Beach, VA
Program and registration will be available on T/TAC Online www.ttaonline.org in April

This statewide summer conference will focus on strategies for assessment and instruction that provide positive outcomes in inclusive settings for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with and without disabilities.

July Continued
24th Autism Summer Institute on Literacy Instruction
Staunton, VA Presenter: Susan Norwell
More information will be available in the near future.
Contact Sally Chappel, VDOE Region 5 T/TAC @ JMU, 540.568.8095 or chappesl@jmu.edu

August
9th-10th Virginia Chapter, Division of Career Development and Transition Annual Summer Institute
Roslyn Center, Richmond, VA
Be on the lookout for the registration flyer

Virginia’s Transition Outcomes Project
VTOP is a Virginia Department of Education initiative designed to assist local school divisions in meeting the transition service requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) and improving post-school outcomes for students. There are currently 60 school divisions throughout the Commonwealth participating in VTOP. An additional benefit to participating in VTOP is the direct assistance from T/TAC in the data collection for Indicator 13 for the State Performance Plan. For more information, in Region 4 contact Dan Bublitz at 703.993.4496 or dbublitz@gmu.edu and in Region 5 contact John McNaught at 540.568.2641 or mcnaught@jmu.edu