Helping Young Children Decide What To Be When They Grow Up Starts Early

Mathematics: Helping Students Become Career and College Ready

Reading and the 21st Century Student
Helping Young Children Decide What To Be When They Grow Up Starts Early

At first glance, the connection between the experiences in an early childhood center or classroom and the eventual career or occupational choice of an adult seems like a bit of a stretch. It is hard to imagine that what happens during circle time, a read aloud, or playtime likely has a strong influence on what children decide to be when they grow up. Yet research indicates that early experiences play a major role in the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral trajectory of a child (Campbell, Pangello, Miller-Johnson, Burchinal, & Ramey, 2001; Campbell et al., 2012). This includes the decision about what they want to be and will be when they grow up (Watson & McIlvaine, 2005). This article presents an overview of the research on the development of career aspirations, why it is imperative that time and effort is devoted to the development of career aspirations in early childhood classrooms, and finally, strategies and ideas for you as a teacher or center director.

When you ask a child what s/he wants to be when grown up, some answers might include: a fire fighter, a police officer, or a mom and dad as they play with their children. Similarly, if you observe a group of children in your center or classroom, they often engage in dramatic play, taking on and acting out various roles such as a police officer, firefighter, doctor, or maybe a superhero. The common element in what children want to be when they grow up and role playing is that they have to have "seen" the career or role in order to name it or act it out. That is, they must have had a direct experience with such a career or occupation.

Marian Wright Edelman, founder of The Children's Defense Fund, once said, "You can't be what you can't see." A child "sees" various careers, occupations, and roles from many sources: the surrounding community (i.e., supermarket, hospital, or place of worship), home (i.e., interactions with parents/guardians, siblings, and extended family), media (i.e., television, radio, books, and video games), and most relevant to this article, their teachers and peers at school. Research strongly suggests that early career aspirations are highly predictive of a child's ultimate career choice (Trice, 1991; Trice & McClellan, 1993). What they aspire to be at age three is often associated with what they select as their career or occupation at age twenty-three. Therefore, it is imperative that early childhood educators provide a variety of opportunities for children to experience a wide range of careers and occupations.

The experiences that we should offer to children to enhance their awareness of careers and occupations are not all that different from the experiences we offer them in other content areas. Just as a child's knowledge and understanding of traditional school subjects (i.e., science and mathematics) develops over time, understanding of careers and occupations also develops from simple to complex and becomes more comprehensive and detailed (Edwards, Nafziger, & Holland, 1974; McCallion & Trew, 2000; Seligman, Weinstock, & HeXin, 1991; Seligman, Weinstock, & Owings, 1988; Goldstein & Oldham, 1979). Young children, just like the ones we interact with on a daily basis, most often describe careers in terms of activities and behaviors (Borgen & Young, 1982). In other words, a child may describe a police office as someone who "keeps us safe," a fire fighter as someone who "puts out fires," and a doctor as someone who "makes people feel better." A child may also engage in behaviors like "playing school" and imitate the behaviors of a teacher. Over time, this activity and behavior-based view of careers and occupations becomes more focused on personal interests, aptitudes, and abilities (Helwig, 2001; Helwig, 1998; Borgen & Young, 1982). However, in order for children to make this progression from activities and behaviors to personal interests, aptitudes, and abilities, the children in our classrooms must have exposure to many careers and occupations in such a way that allows them to "see" and experience the activities and behaviors associated with those careers and occupations.

How can we provide these experiences to students in early childhood classrooms? Here are a few ideas:
few suggestions that will fit right into developmentally appropriate practice while at the same time offering a wide range of experiences that help children develop their career and occupational aspirations.

Classroom Duties and Responsibilities.

Given that careers and occupations come with duties and responsibilities, one strategy is to align your classroom duties and responsibilities with authentic career options for your young students (Jensen, 2012). The line leader, pencil sharpener, chair stacker, and attendance monitor are not authentic occupations with real-world duties and responsibilities. Instead, assign names to the classroom duties and responsibilities that correspond with authentic career options. For example, make the line leader the tour director or chief executive officer, make the pencil sharpener or supply monitor the lumberjack or civil engineer, make the chair stacker the maintenance coordinator, and make the attendance monitor the human resources director. These new, real-life, and authentic duties and responsibilities will spark discussion and dialog about potential careers and occupations.

Children’s Books.

In an early childhood center or classroom books are everywhere. A slight tweaking of the types of books may make a significant difference in the career and occupational aspirations of the children. Select books that offer listeners and readers information about various careers. For example, What is a Scientist? by Barbara Lehn, Say ‘MIHH!: Dora Goes to the Doctor by Phoebe Stein and A & J Studios, or If I Were an Astronaut by Eric Bau and Sharon Hamner. Make sure that the books represent males, females, and different races and ethnicities. The goal here is to allow students to see themselves in these careers or occupations through the books.

Career Day and Birthdays: This strategy is one of my favorites. Celebrate the birthdays of prominent individuals by highlighting their jobs. For example, Dr. Ben Carson, September 18; Marian Wright Edelman, June 6; or Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, June 25. Much like the selection of children’s books, the goal here is to allow young students to see themselves in various careers and occupations. In addition, the celebration of birthdays should focus on the hard work and effort to reach prominence in each person’s field. The focus on effort rather than accomplishment encourages the development of intrinsic motivation (Medina, 2010). Using children’s books and the celebration of birthdays is particularly important for children from low socio-economic backgrounds and minorities. A significant body of research points out that students from low socio-economic backgrounds and minorities experience a much smaller range of career occupations and thus are more likely to be motivated by role models. This motivation starts in the early childhood center or classroom.

Providing young children with the opportunity to “see” a wide range of careers and occupations is important to the development of interest and motivation for these young learners. As far off in the future as it may seem, career exploration in the form of classroom duties and responsibilities, children’s books, career days, and the traditional forms of dramatic play are important components in the cognitive, emotional, and behavior trajectory of young children. The most exciting implication of the research on career and occupational interest is that early childhood educators can add this task to their already long list of ways they influence the growth and development of young children.

References


What Happens in Preschool to Make Children College and Career Ready?  
Cathy Cook, M.Ed., Coordinator, VDOE Region 5 T/TAC @ James Madison University

A preschool year “graduation” ceremony is the cutest thing ever to see! Little mortarboards and gowns on a four-year-old makes for an adorable celebration but, as any preschool teacher will tell you, the work that goes into preparing a child for kindergarten is more than pomp and circumstance. The majority of preschool children in the Commonwealth are in public preschool classrooms because of factors in their lives which put them at risk for failure in school. The risk factors that qualify a child for placement in public preschool vary depending on the funding sources, but these are our children who need early intervention and instruction the most. Frankly, I hold back tears more than once as I pray this preschool “diploma” would be the first of many more accomplishments in a child’s life.

Research indicates that quality preschool prepares children for future academic success and more. Education Secretary Arne Duncan was quoted by Education Northwest as saying, “A robust body of evidence and research shows that high-quality early learning programs help children arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed in school and in life.” (“What Research,” n.d.) In March 2010 the Virginia Department of Education published a report, “School Readiness Research Synthesis,” that highlights school readiness research. This document directly quotes the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) study document (2007) which states that “Virginia is one of 38 states supporting a preschool program which is focused on early learning to promote school readiness. Many states have implemented such a program because research indicates that a quality preschool program can improve the school-readiness and future educational and even life outcomes of at-risk children.”

Most recently, in February of this year, the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES) reviewed a report (2012) entitled “School-Based Early Childhood Education and Age-28 Well-Being: Effects by Timing, Dosage, and Subgroups.” The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) examined this study of 900 children who attended preschool at the Child-Parent Center (CPC) evaluated by the Chicago Effective Schools Project. Both groups completed kindergarten through the Child-Parent Center of Education Program as compared to 486 children who attended kindergarten through the Chicago Effective Schools Project. Both groups completed kindergarten in 1986. As reported, “The study found positive, statistically significant differences on four outcomes related to educational attainment. Intervention group members completed 0.27 years more schooling, on average, than comparison group members. In addition, intervention group members were more likely to complete high school (82% versus 79%), graduate on time from high school (44% versus 37%), and attend a four-year college than comparison group members (15% versus 11%).” Research will continue to provide evidence that supports the value of early childhood education in our schools.

Still, early childhood educators are very modest in their response to the question, “What do you do that helps prepare children for college or careers?” The question may seem too grandiose to someone who spends every school day with students who can’t quite reach the light switch on the wall by the door. If the teachers could just share the teaching objectives from their lesson plans, such as the child will “demonstrate positive approaches to learning” or “establish and sustain positive relationships,” as provided by the Teaching Strategies® for Early Childhood curriculum, then it might add perspective to what they do.

There are two areas of childhood development that are of paramount importance as we consider how the preschool experience is part of the equation for readiness for life - in and out of school. Brain development and social-emotional development are at the forefront in early childhood education. Both of these developmental processes rely on interactions and experience. A child’s environment and genetic make-up weave a complex and complicated web. Well-trained educators are keenly aware of the responsibility they have for supporting development of both cognition and emotional growth.

On the topic of brain development, information and evidence is being reported from research projects nationwide. A child is born with limited wiring, neurologically speaking, and the cerebellum stands alone until the network connects. We are always amazed when we hear that during the first three years of life 1,000 trillion synapses may form to fire the network and a child’s earliest experiences provide for “take off.” As axons and dendrites connect, the brain stores information in colonies of neurons. From the beginning, a child’s brain needs positive injections of love, comfort, and safe experiences for brain development because the time is right to begin learning as brain cells build and connect.

As child development research continues and the results are made available to preschool teachers, a time will come when their modesty will subside. It will be replaced with great pride and determination to continue with a quest for quality in their classrooms. They will answer the question, “What do you do to make children ready…” with a resounding, “EVERYTHING.”

Table 1. Windows of Opportunity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Window</th>
<th>Wiring Opportunity</th>
<th>Greatest Enhancement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Development</td>
<td>0-48 months</td>
<td>4 years to puberty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment</td>
<td>0-12 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>18-36 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>24-48 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Intelligence</td>
<td>0-48 months</td>
<td>4 years to puberty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>0-14 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impulse Control</td>
<td>16-48 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Development</td>
<td>0-24 months</td>
<td>2 years to puberty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>0-24 months</td>
<td>2 years to puberty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking Skills</td>
<td>0-48 months</td>
<td>4 years to puberty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause and Effect</td>
<td>16-48 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-Solving</td>
<td>0-16 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Skills</td>
<td>0-24 months</td>
<td>2-7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Sounds</td>
<td>0-24 months</td>
<td>8 months to puberty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>4-8 months</td>
<td>2-5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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If families and caregivers can provide quality early childhood development, their children will start school ready to learn.

If children start school ready to learn, they are more likely to read at grade level by third grade.

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Reading and the 21st Century Student
Kandy Grant, M.Ed., Coordinator, VDOE Region 5 TTAC © James Madison University

As we consider the demands on the 21st Century student, we recognize the necessity for effective reading skills. Students often make the assumption that reading is an automatic activity and that understanding will take place at the same time as the reading process (Peverly, Brobst, & Morris, 2002). However, the demand to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize written material makes the development of metacognitive skills imperative to student success. In order for information to be effectively ordered and processed, students have to be aware that a knowledge-gaining activity is occurring as they read. This process, the ability to think about your reading and self-monitor for comprehension, is referred to as metacognition. The term was defined in 1979 when John Flavell began investigating whether children were aware of components that governed their memories and cognitions. For example, knowing when an unknown word is essential and needs defined or when it is supplementary. A metacognitive reader recognizes when something read does not make sense or when it is supplementary. A word is essential and needs defined or built. This can be done by first establishing a purpose for reading. During the reading process, students need to be able to identify main ideas and supporting details. They need to be able to identify main ideas and supporting details. They need to be able to identify main ideas and supporting details.

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After reading, information can be summarized, analyzed and/or evaluated. Students can revisit and verify or change their predictions from before reading. They can connect new information to past learning and extend their understanding of concepts.

To be effective readers in the 21st Century, students have to be intentional about their effort to understand text. Through a scaffolded approach, teachers must teach strategies that students utilize on a consistent basis. They have to ensure that students not only understand what the strategies are, but also how, when, where, and why they are used (Borkowski & Muthukrishna, 1992; Jacobs & Paris, 1987). Repeated modeling, practice, assessment, and continued feedback are necessary. Exposure to the strategies must occur more than once with multiple opportunities to practice after their introduction (Simpson & Nist, 2003). As students understand their involvement in planning cognitive processes before fulfilling a task, learning, understanding, and observing their thinking during a task and evaluating their thinking at completion will come with automaticity.

The 21st Century scholar is challenged by text in many formats. In order to process this wealth of information with complete understanding, students have to have an arsenal of strategies available to them as well as knowing what to use when and how. Today’s teachers have the task of creating self-regulating readers who monitor and control their thinking processes as they analyze, evaluate, and synthesize written material.
Mathematics: Helping Students Become Career and College Ready

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Whether students choose to pursue a college-based career or a vocational career, they will need the mastery of core academic subjects as well as develop life skills. The life skills of thinking critically, problem solving, and effective communication are all around a solid understanding of core content academics. Virginia’s College and Career Ready Mathematics Performance Expectations can be viewed on the Virginia Department of Education Web site at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/mathematics/capstone_course/perf_expectations_math.pdf.

The component of developing life skills sometimes falls along the way due to some focus being placed on successful test scores that only measure discrete facts. The questions then become, how do we promote strong academics and at the same time make sure students are obtaining the life skills and the ability to apply knowledge they will need to be college and career ready? How do we as educators take the valuable content we teach in mathematics and extend it to the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills?

When observing typical math instruction in classrooms today, procedural processes and little questioning that promotes problem solving or critical thinking is often the norm. Below are two scenarios, one that demonstrates this norm found in today’s classrooms, and a second that demonstrates how a classroom instructor can go beyond procedural processes and utilize good questioning techniques in an effort to address skills needed for the 21st century.

First Scenario:
Teacher: “Class, I want you to take eight square tiles and build a rectangle with a base of two.” Teacher walks around the room and compliments the students for getting the right shape.

Second Scenario:
Teacher: “Class, I want you to use square tiles and build a rectangle with a base of two.” Teacher walks around the room and notices many different size rectangles, all with a base of two. She has students do a gallery walk.

Follow up questions:
Did all of you make the same rectangle? How many tiles did you use? How did you figure it out? What is the size of your rectangle? How would you build a rectangle that uses twenty-two tiles? Can you figure how high it will be without building it? If you know how many tiles are in a rectangle with a base of 2, can you figure out how high it is? If you know how high you want a rectangle to be, can you figure out how many tiles you will need? What kind of shape would you have if you kept a base of two and stacked other tiles on top?

In this second scenario, instead of focusing on helping the students “find an answer,” the teacher is prepared to see where the students’ observations and questions take them. Instead of providing solution strategies, the teacher encourages multiple approaches and allows time for communication and reflection. Instead of expecting specific responses, the teacher is ready to ask questions that uncover students’ thinking and press for the students’ reasoning behind the process.

Teachers need to facilitate students’ mathematical understanding through problem solving, communication, and reasoning. Teachers should ask students to communicate their mathematical thinking as they solve problems, and require students to analyze, interpret, and develop processes for solving mathematical tasks based on their prior knowledge and experiences. When students “get stuck” on a problem, they should be prompted with a question that will assist them in analyzing their own thinking rather than with a suggestion that leads them directly to an answer.

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills has developed an Outcomes for P21 Math Skills Map. It may be accessed at: http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/P21_Math_Map.pdf. The map addresses the following topics relating them to mathematics:

- Creativity and Innovation
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Communication and Collaboration
- Information Literacy
- Media Literacy
- Information, Communications, and Technology Literacy
- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Initiative and Self-Direction
- Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
- Productivity and Accountability
- Leadership and Responsibility

This resource, along with the document Foundations for Success: The Final Report of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel (2008) can help teachers keep abreast of the high expectations for mathematics instruction needed for students to become career and college ready.

References


Determining Individual Abilities of Students with Intellectual Disabilities to Assist Them to be College and Career Ready

Teressa Cogar, M.Ed., Coordinator, VDOE Region 5 TTAC @ James Madison University

The “buzz” lately has been, “How do we help our students with intellectual disabilities in Virginia close the achievement gap and assist them to be college and career ready?” Aligned Standards of Learning, evidence-based assessments, learning inventories, transition plans, and quality differentiated instruction are just a few pieces of the larger puzzle.

First, we must have the belief that our students with intellectual disabilities will be able to be an integral part of our workforce, colleges, and community infrastructures. We must believe that there is a place in society for their unique abilities and talents. Furthermore, we must prepare our students, staff, parents, administrators, community members, college professors, as well as community business partners, that our students do possess these unique abilities. It is our job, and more importantly our responsibility, to set the expectations that our students will succeed.

Second, we must assist students in determining their individual abilities. Many of our assessment procedures in education target the deficits of the students (Downing, 2002). We must accentuate on what we want students to do and what they can do within the context of the natural environment. We need to provide our students with assessments that include information regarding what the student actually needs to learn and/or wants to learn (Downing, 2002). Downing suggests a person-centered approach as being the first in the assessment process in identifying what the individual can do, enjoys doing, and needs to do as determined by individual and family preferences as well as environmental demands. Many educators are familiar with the terms MAPS (Making Action Plans), PPP (Personal Futures Planning), and ELP (Essential Lifestyles Planning). These are just a few of the great resources available to assist educators, IEP teams, and community-based partners. Individuals need to realize their abilities through identifying preferences, identifying hopes and dreams, mapping out future plans on where to live, ideas about what they would like to do for leisure, and where they would like to work. Personally identifying specific and educating the person needing assistance are essential to effective programming and instruction. The goal is to close the gap for our students and provide the same opportunities to experience quality of life as their peers.

Lastly, we must decide how to best support students in their individual abilities so that they may be ready for the world they will face. How do we help them access what they need to communicate to educators, teams, peers, and community members what they need, like, don’t like, etc.? Do our students need pictures to help make choices? Do our students need assistive technology such as switches or Big Mac switches to touch with their hands or knees to assist them in choice making? Do our students use eye gaze to determine choices, preferences, and demonstrate abilities? Do our students need a scribe or peer to assist them in communicating their likes and dislikes or what they do well in the context of the natural environment? There are so many ways that we can support students to communicate their individual abilities. We must be willing to “listen,” provide the necessary supports needed, and give them every opportunity to develop their abilities in order to start to close the gap to be “College and Career Ready” someday.

Reference


Will Your Students Win the Race? How Being an Inclusive School May Help!

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As a 20-year veteran of middle level education, I’ve always believed that the middle school years are a pivotal point in any child’s school success. It is a time when students need to feel like they belong, that their contributions are important, and that they can be successful. The following two research studies identify red flag indicators, as well as support strategies that can be put in place during these critical years, so that we make sure our students will not only finish but actually win the race toward graduation and beyond.

According to a recent study, done by Robert Balfanz, Putting Middle Grades Students on the Graduation Path (2009), there are glaring indicators of a student’s risk of not graduating on time. Indicators that are so strong that having even one may knock a 6th grade student off track for on-time graduation. They may even be powerful enough to cause them to drop out, especially in high-poverty environments. Balfanz’s research is based on more than a decade of work from the Center for the Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University. More than 30 middle level schools in the Philadelphia area were involved in the study. After following many cohorts of students from 6th grade to one year past on-time graduation, they were able to identify three important indicators for possible school failure.

The three red flag indicators are:

- Attendance – having less than an 80% or even 90% attendance rate
- A course failure – in either math or English
- Behavior – multiple referrals

If a 6th grade student displays even one of these indicators, and no interventions are put into place, s/he has “only a 10% to 20% chance of graduating on time” (Balfanz, 2009). The earlier a problem develops in any of these areas, the lower the odds of on-time graduation.

As this study points out, the middle level years are extremely important to the success of our students. The study also helps us be aware of the red flag areas that we need to be looking for in students. It reminds us how important it is to intervene and provide the support needed to help our students be successful. “The middle grades need to be seen as the launching pad for a secondary and post-secondary education system that enables all students to obtain the schooling and/or career training they will need to fully experience the opportunities of 21st century America” (Balfanz, 2009).

So bearing those indicators in mind, what interventions can we put in place to ensure our middle level students learn and grow, instead of becoming more gloomy statistics?

According to the “This We Believe” report by the Association of Middle Level Education (2010), successful schools for young adolescents need to provide inviting, supportive, and safe environments. They must have high expectations for everyone and make sure that students are engaged in active learning. They need to have teachers who use multiple teaching approaches that respond to diverse learners. School, family, and community partnerships need to be in place, as well as adult advocates for every student.

Not only is being a strong middle school important, it’s also important to be an inclusive one. What does inclusive education look like? According to the Nevada Partnership for Inclusive Education, “Inclusion is an effort to make sure that diverse learners – those with disabilities, different languages and cultures, different homes and family lives, different interests and ways of learning – are exposed to teaching strategies that reach them as individual learners.”

Another research study, by Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas (2002), investigated the relationship between placement in inclusive and pullout special education programs for several factors. In this comprehensive study, middle school students with learning disabilities, from two different middle schools, were studied to find out which special education model – inclusive practices or pullout programs, had the most successful outcomes. The three specific indicators...
Today’s Keys to Success

According to recent studies on the readiness of new entrants to the workforce, the following skills are the most needed in today’s newest employees:

• Effective oral and written communication
• Critical thinking/analytical reasoning
• Problem-solving
• Professionalism/work ethic
• Teamwork/collaboration


Another study found that mathematics and reading skills required to work as an electrician, plumber, or upholsterer were found to be comparable to those needed to succeed in college (McLaughlin, 2009). This research should guide us as we set our goals and plan our lessons for the new school year. Embedding activities that require these skills into our plans will help our students be more prepared for the future they choose.

Guiding the development of these skills is not solely the responsibility of twelfth grade teachers sending students out into the world. These skills can be encouraged and scaffolded at every grade from the day students enter our schools. Just as we begin to teach the foundations of reading in preschool and kindergarten, and subsequently develop and build on the components of reading and use it as a tool for learning, these work skills need to be broken into their foundational parts, modeled and practiced with explicit methods, and applied to new learning and real-life situations.

Here are a few suggestions to get you and your students off on the right foot to learning the content to a deeper level and developing the required skills for future success. If similar activities haven’t provided the results you hoped for in the past, realize that new practices take just that: PRACTICE. We improve as we reflect about and adjust our process and focus, whether we are training for the Olympics or learning to work in a group, ask questions, problem-solve, and reflect about a given topic. As a teacher, it will be important to provide explicit instruction and specific feedback to students on their effective use of the process that you are helping them develop, as well as the content they are learning by utilizing this process. Providing a structure such as checklists, rubrics, and color-coded charts will create a more successful process.

1. Promote discussion that requires high level thinking skills. Select engaging materials and prepare stimulating questions. Prepare follow-up questions that guide the discussion to a deeper level. Provide a format for students to follow when they discuss text in small groups (Scammacca, N., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Edmonds, M., Werder, J., Reutebuch, C. K., & Torgesen, J. K., 2007).

2. Provide real-life problem-solving activities, with ample time to develop their solutions. Provide a structure for the students to follow. This may include time for brainstorming, dialogue, researching, writing responses, creating solutions, and presenting the final product or ideas to the class. Students can learn that there are many ways to problem-solve and many solutions to a problem.

3. Recognize that your students need to apply the skills you are teaching outside of your class. Provide real-life simulations or monitor application of your content/skills in other settings. These settings can be at school, home, or in the community.

4. Instruct and encourage writing. According to the research conducted by Steve Graham and Michael Hebert (2010), “Students’ reading abilities are improved by writing about texts they have read; by receiving explicit instruction in spelling, in writing sentences, in writing paragraphs, in text structure, and in the basic processes of composition; and by increasing how much and how frequently they write. Our evidence shows that these writing activities improved students’ comprehension of text over and above the improvements gained from traditional reading activities such as reading text, reading and rereading text, reading and discussing text, and receiving explicit instruction” (p.29). Written assignments can include personal responses to text, analyzing and interpreting text, summarizing text, writing notes about the text, and creating and answering questions. Providing a structure for various formats is helpful.

5. Encourage students to share related information from outside sources, linking school learning to real life.

6. Deepen your own knowledge.
• Access professional development in a research-based reading or writing strategy that will be appropriate for your students.
• Arrange time with colleagues to share successful practices.
• Visit other classes to see how colleagues are implementing creative successful practices.

For additional information about the Virginia State Literacy Plan and a description of existing literacy initiatives and programs go to: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/english/literacy/literacy_plan.pdf

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Graham and Michael Hebert (2010), “Students’ reading abilities are improved by writing about texts they have read; by receiving explicit instruction in spelling, in writing sentences, in writing paragraphs, in text structure, and in the basic processes of composition; and by increasing how much and how frequently they write. Our evidence shows that these writing activities improved students’ comprehension of text over and above the improvements gained from traditional reading activities such as reading text, reading and rereading text, reading and discussing text, and receiving explicit instruction” (p.29). Written assignments can include personal responses to text, analyzing and interpreting text, summarizing text, writing notes about the text, and creating and answering questions. Providing a structure for various formats is helpful.

5. Encourage students to share related information from outside sources, linking school learning to real life.

6. Deepen your own knowledge.
• Access professional development in a research-based reading or writing strategy that will be appropriate for your students.
• Arrange time with colleagues to share successful practices.
• Visit other classes to see how colleagues are implementing creative successful practices.

For additional information about the Virginia State Literacy Plan and a description of existing literacy initiatives and programs go to: http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/english/literacy/literacy_plan.pdf

References:

Managing Through Motivation: Catch ‘Em If You Can!

The Virginia CEC invites you to join us on November 2, 2012 for the annual Virginia CEC Conference at The Hilton Garden Inn in Lynchburg, VA. This conference offers the special education community the opportunity to learn the latest in evidence-based practices and network with other professionals working with children with exceptionalities and their families.

We hope that you will join us for this outstanding event!

Keynote Speaker

Known to many as "America’s Educator," Ron Clark is the 2000 Disney American Teacher of the Year, a two time New York Times Bestselling author, the subject of a television movie and the founder of The Ron Clark Academy. Ron is regularly featured on network and cable television (The Today Show, CNN and Oprah,) and was dubbed by Ms. Winfrey as her first "Phenomenal Man."

Ron Clark brings charisma, energy and devotion to the education profession. Ron pioneered innovative projects in rural North Carolina working with minority students in a low wealth area. His highly effective programs garnered national attention and led to a White House invitation to be honored by the President of the United States. Hear more about Ron Clark at our upcoming Fall Conference!

Save the Date!

TRANSITION PRACTITIONERS' COUNCIL (TPC) WEST - Fall 2012 Meeting

When: Thursday, November 29, 2012
Time: 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Where: GMU Manassas Campus
Pre-registration will be available soon.

Mental Health 101
Real Life Stories - In Our Own Voice
Lunch
Presentation - Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS)
Group Activity
Wrap up and Evaluation

TPC provides a forum for transition practitioners and other interested stakeholders from school divisions and adult agencies to engage in professional development activities, networking opportunities, and collaborative efforts that enhance the implementation of quality transition services for secondary students with disabilities throughout Eastern Virginia.

If you have questions, please contact:

Kristi Lockhart, DRS Transition Services Coordinator
kristi.lockhart@drs.virginia.gov
Diane Loomis, Region 4 VDOE TTAC
dloomis@gmu.edu
Sally Chappel, Region 5 VDOE TTAC
chappesl@jmu.edu


Virginia Council for Exceptional Children 2012 Fall Conference

November 2, 2012
8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Hilton Garden Inn
Lynchburg, VA

Registration:
Early bird registration by October 1, 2012
For More Conference Information Visit:
www.virginiacec.org
Online Course Opportunity – Autism Spectrum Disorders for Paraprofessionals: Providing Effective Instruction and Supports

The Virginia Commonwealth University Autism Center for Excellence (VCU-ACE) website provides access to a variety of online courses which offer high-quality, intensive training on aspects related to Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Participating in these courses offers an opportunity to expand knowledge on autism spectrum disorders.

As many school administrators, teachers, and parents have heard, the Virginia House and Senate passed House Bill 325 during the 2012 General Assembly session. This Bill requires school divisions to ensure that paraprofessionals assigned to work with teachers who have primary oversight of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) receive training in behavior support strategies. The legislation also directs the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to outline standards to meet this mandate.

In an effort to comply with this new legislation, as well as meet its mission of improving the knowledge and skills of educators who support someone with ASD, VCU-ACE now offers an online course for paraprofessionals.

The course, Autism Spectrum Disorders for Paraprofessionals: Providing Effective Instruction and Supports, is designed to provide paraprofessionals with skills and knowledge needed to support students with an ASD in the school setting. The course provides an overview of the potential roles and responsibilities the paraprofessional may be asked to deliver. Participants will learn how to carry out their responsibilities while maintaining respect for the students and exhibiting sensitivity to beliefs, values, and cultures. Teaming and communication with professionals and parents will also be highlighted. The course will provide participants with an overview of ASD including primary and secondary characteristics. Information regarding the development and implementation of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be discussed. Participants will gain knowledge of educational modifications, accommodations and educational strategies used to support students with ASD. A focus of the course will be on understanding interfering behaviors which students with ASD may demonstrate and effectively supporting the student to reduce these behaviors and increase positive skills.

The month-long course consists of 5 modules and is self-paced. Each module varies in length; it should take approximately 15 hours to complete the entire course. The module topics are:

Module One: Overview of Autism Spectrum Disorder
Module Two: Responsibilities of the Paraprofessional and Description of the Educational Process
Module Three: Instructional Strategies and Considerations
Module Four: Social and Communication Strategies
Module Five: Behavioral Support

Participants can receive a Certificate of Completion if they meet all of the course requirements.

For course information and registration, visit: http://www.vcuautismcenter.org/training/paraprofessionals.cfm

Welcome back to school! It’s amazing to me that the cooler weather is already here signaling that change is upon us. As I watch the leaves on the trees transform from green to vibrant reds, oranges, and yellows, I am reminded of how change can hold the promise of possibilities, of new and exciting ways of looking at things. Change can offer a chance for reflection and a time to consider new and different paradigms.

Changes at the TTAC at GMU

This year, the TTAC staff will be changing how we offer our services. We will be focusing much of our efforts on targeted technical assistance for schools who need to improve academic and behavioral outcomes for students with disabilities based on their school data. We have been tasked by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Division of Special Education and Student Services (SESS) to support them in targeting improvement activities in specific divisions and schools. The VDOE will lead teams that will help these schools gain knowledge on the use of data to make decisions, the self-assessment process, and the targeting of key outcomes indicators. Most importantly, the work will focus on an improvement process that emphasizes strengthening or adopting a research-based, tiered intervention model. The TTAC staff currently support tiered intervention processes in Region 4 schools with models such as Effective School-wide Discipline (ESD) and Content Literacy Continuum® (CLC). The targeted technical assistance that TTAC will help provide this year will facilitate the ability of school personnel to close the achievement and outcomes gaps that exist between students with disabilities and students without disabilities.

Professional Development (PD) Services

While our intensive efforts will focus on targeted schools, the TTAC at GMU will continue to provide professional development resources to non-target schools. The primary vehicle for distribution of these research-based resources will be web-based formats, such as TTAC Online and the VDOE web site. In response to a request from a school, we might provide you with materials to use to conduct your own trainings. As appropriate, we might suggest specific web trainings, relevant library materials, targeted professional resources, and/or capacity-building communities of learning. We will collect, develop and make available new resources such as book guides, training packets and other teaching tools, as well as research and identify new sources and models of support for schools in Region 4.

Please continue to call us for support. We welcome the opportunity to brainstorm PD options with you, particularly in terms of data-based problem solving and resource mapping. The TTAC at GMU will work diligently this year to ensure that you have the materials you need to improve academic and behavioral outcomes for students with disabilities. Our TTAC staff contact information and individual areas of content focus can be found on the inside front cover of this newsletter. Working together with you, we are sure that this school year holds many, many possibilities for positive change!

A Staff Change at the TTAC at GMU

In May, we bid a fond farewell to Estela Landeros, who has long been one of the assistive technology coordinators on our team. Estela accepted the job of Associate Professor and Director of Disability Services at Northern Virginia Community College. She reports that, although she misses the work she did with Region 4 school personnel, she enjoys her new job immensely. We will miss her enthusiasm, boundless energy, and steadfast commitment to enhancing accessibility and opportunities for students with disabilities through the use of assistive technology. Good luck and best wishes in your new position, Estela!
What’s in YOUR library at VDOE’s TTAC at GMU?

September/October 2012

Featuring some of our Most Wanted resources . . .

Assess For Success: A Practitioner’s Handbook on Transition Assessment
Patricia Sitlington, Debra Neubert, Wynne Begun, & Richard C. Lombard; Call number: 362.408 SIT 2007

This updated resource helps school teams define students’ transition goals for adult life, including post-secondary education and employment choices.

The Autism Transition Guide: Planning the Journey from School to Adult Life
Carolyn T. Bruey & Mary B. Urban; Call number: 371.94 BRU 2009

Part of the Topics in Autism series, this book provides ideas and strategies that can be applied to a broad range of individuals on the autism spectrum. It covers the transition from high school to adult life, including residential choices, postsecondary education, employment and more.

Going to College: Expanding Opportunities for People with Disabilities
Elizabeth Evans Getzel & Paul Webman; Call number: 371.904 GOI 2005

Filled with case studies, best practices, program guidelines, and strategies, this book is a resource for anyone who educates or coordinates services for individuals with disabilities.

Teach Like a Champion: 49 Techniques that Put Students on the Path to College
Doug Lemov; Call number: 371.3 LEM 2010

This book offers the essential tools of the teaching craft so that you can unlock the talent and skill waiting in your students. It includes concrete, specific, and actionable classroom teaching techniques.

College Success for Students with Learning Disabilities: Strategies and Tips to Make the Most of Your College Experience
Cynthia G. Simpson & Vicky G. Spencer; Call number: 317.91 SIM 2009

A complete handbook for college-bound kids with learning disabilities, this book covers pertinent topics such as understanding the rights and responsibilities of students with special needs and talking to professors and peers. It includes advice from current college students with disabilities to empower future students and provide them with hope for success.

Creating a Transition Program For Teens: How DO-IT Does It and How You Can Do It, Too
Sheryl Burgstahler, Sara López, & Tracey Jiriková; Call number: 371.904 BUR 2007

Do you want to begin or enhance a program to help young people successfully transition to college and careers? Do you want to reduce preparation time by starting with materials and forms that have been created by a successful program? This book was written for you!

Going to College: Expanding Opportunities for People with Disabilities
Elizabeth Evans Getzel & Paul Webman; Call number: 371.904 GOI 2005

Filled with case studies, best practices, program guidelines, and strategies, this book is a resource for anyone who educates or coordinates services for individuals with disabilities.

Teach Like a Champion: 49 Techniques that Put Students on the Path to College
Doug Lemov; Call number: 371.3 LEM 2010

This book offers the essential tools of the teaching craft so that you can unlock the talent and skill waiting in your students. It includes concrete, specific, and actionable classroom teaching techniques.

Self-Advocacy Skills for Students with Learning Disabilities: Making It Happen in College and Beyond – A Resource for Students, Parents, and Guidance
Henry B. Reiff; Call number: 371.926 REI 2007

Full of practical and useful information, this book promotes self-advocacy.

Teach Like a Champion: 49 Techniques that Put Students on the Path to College
Doug Lemov; Call number: 371.3 LEM 2010

This book offers the essential tools of the teaching craft so that you can unlock the talent and skill waiting in your students. It includes concrete, specific, and actionable classroom teaching techniques.

If you like these, search our catalog for more @ http://kihd.gmu.edu/library

To request one of the items above or any other materials available for checkout, please contact Region 4 TTAC Librarian Jackie Petersen, jpetersk@gmu.edu or 703.993.3672

New library location: Finley Hall, Room 116, GMU Fairfax Campus

No time to come to the library? No problem! Most items can be mailed to your school or home address.

Think College: Postsecondary Education Options for Students with Intellectual Disabilities
Meg Grigal & Debra Hart; Call number: 371.904 GRI 2010

A resource for educational professionals to read and share with families of students with intellectual disabilities (ID), this book provides an overview of postsecondary education options for students with ID.

Transition to Postsecondary Education: Strategies for Students with Disabilities
Kristine W. Webb; Call number: 371.9 WEB 2000

This book provides a step by step framework to promote participation in postsecondary settings.

No time to come to the library? No problem! Most items can be mailed to your school or home address.

If you like these, search our catalog for more @ http://kihd.gmu.edu/library
OCTOBER


The Learning Disabilities Association of Virginia (LDAV), Marymount University Department of Education, Student Access Services & Graduate Admission present a conference full of information for students with learning disabilities, families and professionals, on making a successful transition to higher education.

Cost: $25 LDAV members; $35 conference and registration only; $40 Registration & 1 year LDVA membership

Location: Marymount University, Reinsch Library; Arlington, VA

Contact: Northern VA: Doug Ball at douglas.ball@marymount.edu or 703.284.3837
Central & Southern VA: Mary Webster at mbwebster@hotmail.com

For Information and Registration, visit: http://www.ttaconline.org/staff/s_events/s_event_detail.asp?cid=2078

October 14-16, 2012: I’m Determined Fall 2012 Middle School Training - In the Middle: I’m Determined to Move Forward

For Middle School Leadership Teams composed of: one general education teacher, one special education teacher, one administrator and one school counselor. Open to first 40 teams that apply.

Cost: Funding available.

Location: Stonewall Jackson Hotel; Staunton, VA

Contact: Susan Bowman at bowmansp@jmu.edu or 540.568.8843

For Information and Registration, visit: http://www.ttaconline.org/staff/s_events/s_event_detail.asp?cid=2014

October 16, 2012: Webinar - From School to Workforce: Information Literacy, Critical Thinking, and Problem-Solving Skills

This webinar will explore how the essential habits of information literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving might be embedded in the transition from secondary schools, vocational and technical schools, community colleges, colleges, and universities to the world of work.

Cost: Free

For Information and Registration, visit: https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/349358304

October 19 & 20, 2012: Insight 2012: Topics in Autism

Featuring: Brenda Smith Myles, Ph.D., who will be speaking in-depth regarding strategies for teaching the hidden curriculum as well as strategies for addressing difficult behavior moments. Friday is open to all audiences, including special educators, general educators, related service providers and family members. Friday evening and Saturday sessions will be specifically geared towards parents and families.

Location: Hilton Garden Inn-Richmond Downtown (501 E. Broad Street, Richmond, VA) and River Road United Methodist Church (8800 River Road, Richmond, VA)

Sponsored by: VDOE’s Training and Technical Assistance Center at VCU, Autism Society Central Virginia, and the VCU Autism Center for Excellence.

Contact: Krystle McCabe at aidifkm@vcu.edu or 804.827.0108

For Information and Registration, visit: http://www.ttaconline.org/staff/s_events/s_event_detail.asp?cid=2062

October 22, 2012: Conference on Brain Injury in Children & Adolescents

This conference will include presentations on sports concussions, childhood seizures, assistive technology, neuropsychological recovery, as well as, a discussion by a panel of survivors.

Cost: $40 for college/graduate students, survivors and family members; $75 for professionals

Location: Floris United Methodist Church, Herndon, VA

Contact: Betsy Zeigler, Jo Thompson, or Brooke Annessa at 703.451.8881

For Information and Registration, visit: http://www.ttaconline.org/staff/s_events/s_event_detail.asp?cid=2079


The Arc and Inclusion International partner for a global perspective of best practices and innovations in services and supports for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities to facilitate living and being included in the community.

Location: Grand Hyatt Washington; Washington, DC

Sponsored by: The Arc and Inclusion International

For Information and Registration, visit: http://www.ttaconline.org/staff/s_events/s_event_detail.asp?cid=2075
November 29, 2012: Transition Practitioners' Council (TPC) West Fall 2012 Meeting

TPC provides a forum for transition practitioners and other interested stakeholders from school divisions and adult agencies to engage in professional development activities, networking opportunities, and collaborative efforts that enhance the implementation of quality transition services for secondary students with disabilities throughout Eastern Virginia.

Location: George Mason University Manassas Campus

Pre-registration will be available soon.

Questions: Contact Kristi Lockhart, DRS Transition Services Coordinator at Kristi.lockhart@drs.virginia.gov; Diane Loomis, Region 4 VDOE TTAC at dloomis@gmu.edu; or Sally Chappell, Region 5 VDOE TTAC at chappesl@jmu.edu


This conference offers the special education community the opportunity to learn the latest in evidence-based practices and network with other professionals. Keynote speaker: Ron Clark.

Location: Hilton Garden Inn; Lynchburg, VA

Registration deadline: Early bird registration by October 1, 2012

For Information, visit: http://www.ttaconline.org/staff/s_events/s_event_detail.asp?cid=2076


Featuring a keynote by Dr. Paula Kluth, “The Problem with Behavior Problems: Supporting Individuals with Autism & Other Disabilities”, and workshops on: Access to Literacy, Educating Students with Autism, File Folder Games, and many more.

Cost: $25 for self-advocates and full-time students, $50 for parents, $75 for professionals (Special early bird registration is available for registrations received by October 1)

Location: Hylton High School; 14051 Spriggs Road, Woodbridge, VA 22193

Sponsored by: The Arc of Greater Prince William/INSIGHT, Inc.

For Information and Registration, visit: http://www.ttaconline.org/staff/s_events/s_event_detail.asp?cid=2057

November 8, 2012: STEM Connect Summit

Professional Development Conference for science, mathematics, technology and engineering teachers K-12; Participants attend a keynote session and then four sessions of their choice. Keynote: Dr. Mark Sanders, Professor Emeritus, Virginia Tech. Sessions will include exemplar lessons that address the Virginia Mathematics and Science Standards of Learning. Hosted by the College of William & Mary.

Cost: FREE includes lunch and snacks but you MUST register.

Location: The Williamsburg Hotel and Conference Center, Kingsmill Road, Williamsburg, VA 23187

Sponsored by: A Mathematics and Science Partnership Grant from the Virginia Department of Education

For Information and Registration, visit (after September 20th): http://www.ttaconline.org/staff/s_events/s_event_detail.asp?cid=2077

Questions: Contact Lois Williams at bichon3@comcast.net or 434.962.2069

The TTAC Telegram has gone electronic. If you would like to receive our quarterly newsletter, please sign up on our website at: http://ttac.gmu.edu/newsletters. You will receive each new issue of our newsletter delivered right to your inbox.