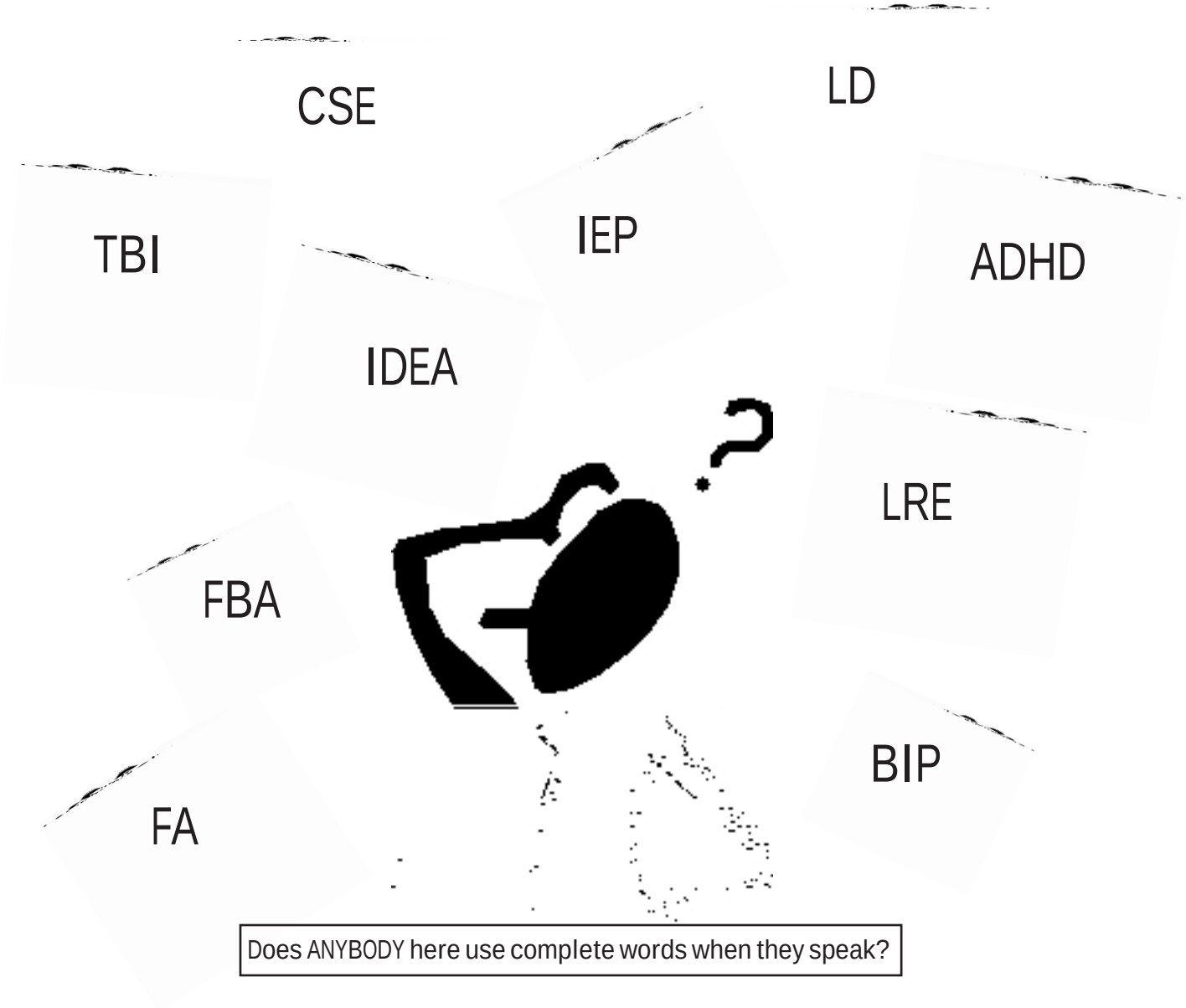
Welcome to the World of

SPECIAL EDUCATION

A TRAINING GUIDE FOR TAs



Developed through Silver Grant 3 & 4
Coordinated by Nassau BOCES
2001-02

Welcome to the World of Special Education

A Training Guide for TAs

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Mary Beth Doyle for inspiring us to pursue this project.

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for their input and recommendations.

Developed through Sliver Grant 3 & 4

Coordinated by Nassau BOCES

September 2002

Forward

To the Directors of Special Education and Trainers

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

The purpose of this manual is to provide introductory information that is needed for TAs to better understand their role and the special education process. The manual also provides general suggestions concerning curriculum modiþcations and behavioral interventions. As TAs work directly with general and special educators who have the primary responsibility for addressing students' needs, it is recommended that all members of the team familiarize themselves with the information contained herein.

Please feel free to customize any portion of this manual to meet the needs of your district, however appropriate citations must be indicated. We estimate that training in the entire contents of the manual will take at least a day and a half. For some chapters several participatory activities have been provided to allow you a selection that would best meet the needs of your group.

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Section 1
For Teachers and Administrators only

The purpose of this manual is to provide introductory information that is needed for TAs to better understand their role and the special education process. It also provides general suggestions concerning curriculum modiþcations and behavioral interventions. As the TA works directly with general and special educators who have the primary responsibility for addressing each student's needs, it is recommended that all members of the team-familiarize-themselves with the information contained herein. There may be sections that you will need to modify, add to or delete, based on the needs of your individual district.

The manual is meant to provide an overview only, with the presentation taking approximately one-full day or several shorter sessions. If more extensive training is desired, you will need to supplement the modules contained herein. A list of resources that may be helpful in this regard is included in the appendix.

In addition, we have included some suggestions for teachers and administrators that you may want to consider in working with the TA in your school.

CREATING A TEAM

To create a successful team, all educators and administrators must be "on board" (Giangreco et al, 1999). For each professional to carry out his or her responsibilities, all personnel must be knowledgeable and agree on those speciþc responsibilities. The school must create and live by a shared understanding. The understanding provides the structure for the teacher, TA, principal and central administration to attain their goals.

6. Review TAs' Activities

Å TAsð activities should be reviewed regularly for appropriateness and effectiveness. They should receive direct feedback as well as provide self-evaluation. Are they offering enough assistance without providing too much? Are the students given opportunities to learn from their mistakes as well as their successes?
Å Suggest alternate activities and modiþcations that can be used to enhance learning.
Å Make sure the strategies they use are not constantly repetitive but have variety and creativity.

With ongoing discussion, you both remain informed about changes that need to be made before a situation becomes ineffective. This evaluative communication will place everyone's energies on a positive note.

7. Establish Procedures for Unexpected Situations

Daily school activities are continually changing due to schedules, absences, þeld trips, special events and test days. It is important to share with TAs how they are to handle these ÿexible situations. Share a copy of a weekly routine and provide the necessary training, support and expectations for the type of schedule changes. It is important to explain their role when:

Å The teacher is absent
Å Students are engaged in testing
Å Unexpected changes need to be made in the plans for the day

8. Ensure TAs Promote Student Responsibility

Å Successful learners take risks that result in either success or failure
Å The teacher can assist the TA in understanding how to create a safe environment in the classroom that allows students to take risks
Å Discuss the value of making a mistake

9. Establish Times and Ways to Communicate

Å Communication should occur regularly. If possible, identify .a time for sharing during the day (10-15 minutes) or at a weekly meeting. If this is not feasible, then work within what is realistic, but try to ensure meeting time!
Å You may want to develop a system that addresses what you need to communicate as well as how and when you will communicate.

A list of topics to be discussed may include:

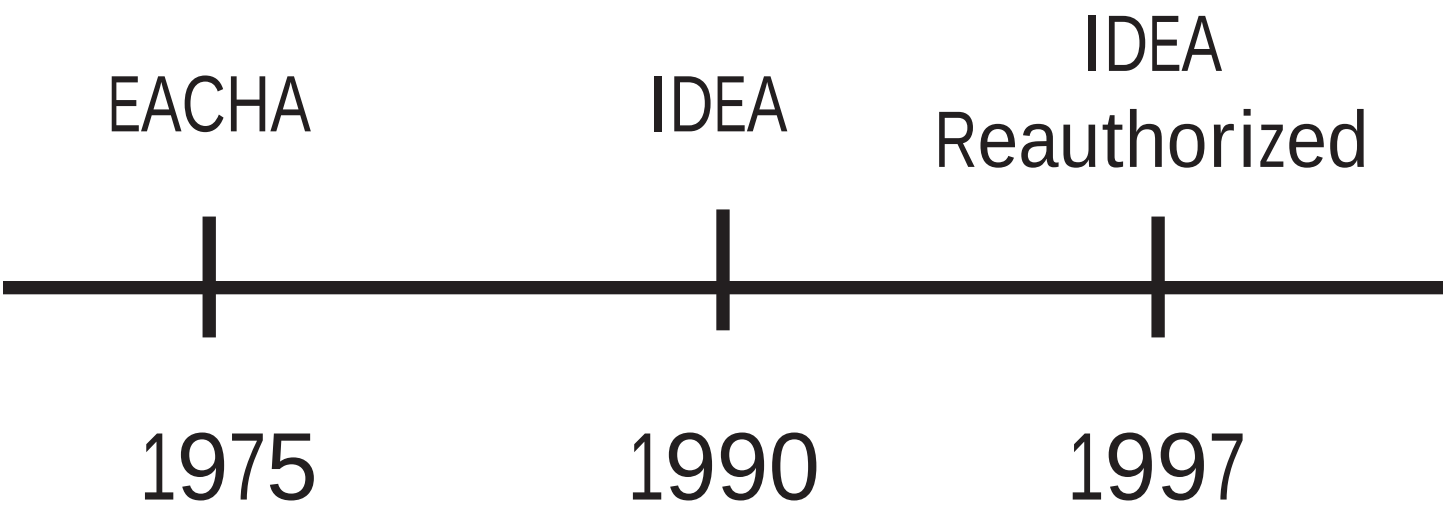
_ Upcoming events
_ Lesson plans
_ Modiþcations
_ Preparation of classroom materials
_ Contact with parents
_ Development of student independence
_ Student progress
_ Personal concerns
_ TA and teacher interactions
_ Teaching models

When communication between TAs and teachers is poor TAs are unclear of their responsibilities and how to judge their effectiveness. Too much important information is left to chance. The possibility of overlooking important instructional support techniques is increased.

Section 2

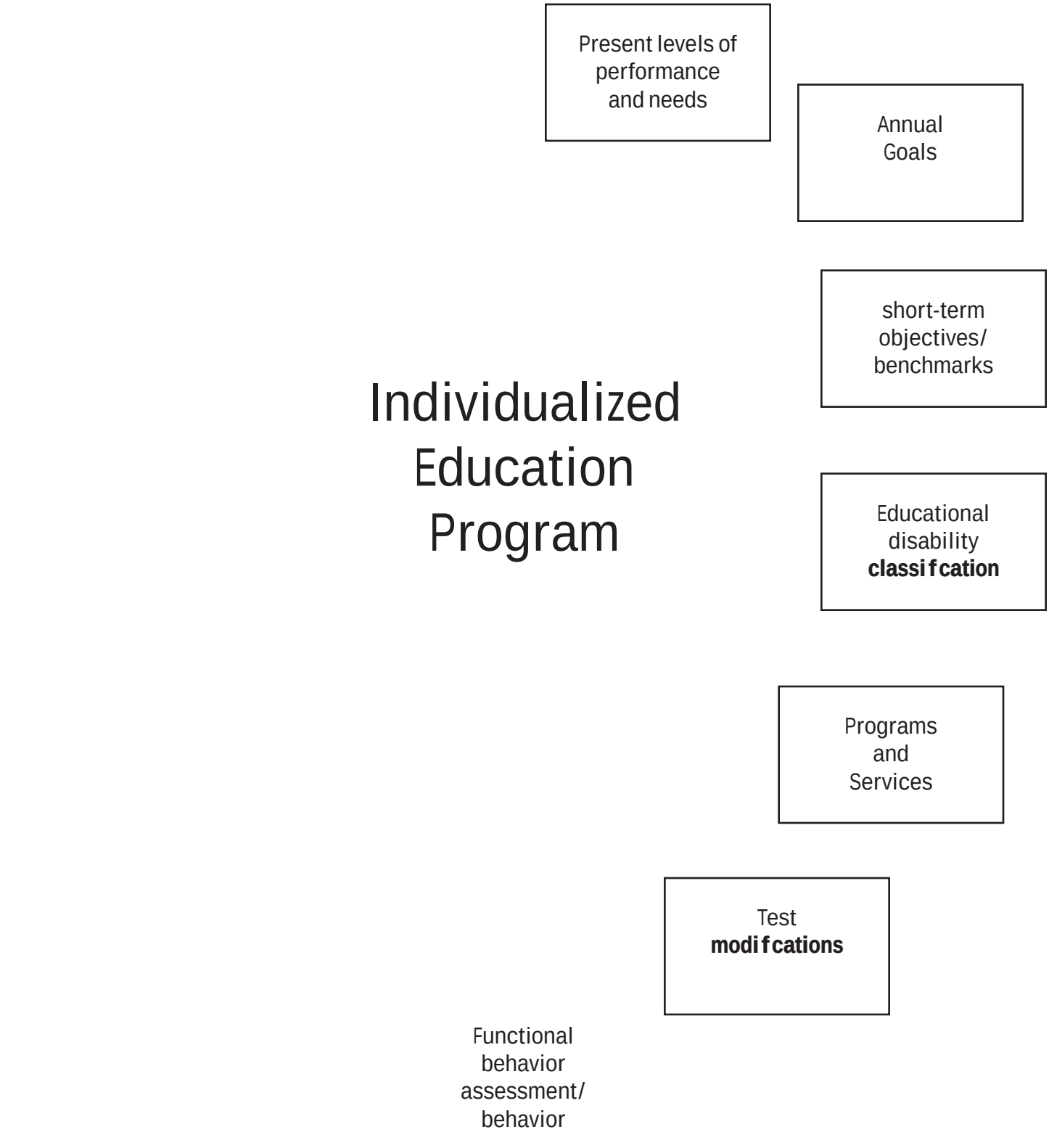
What is Special Education?

Timeline



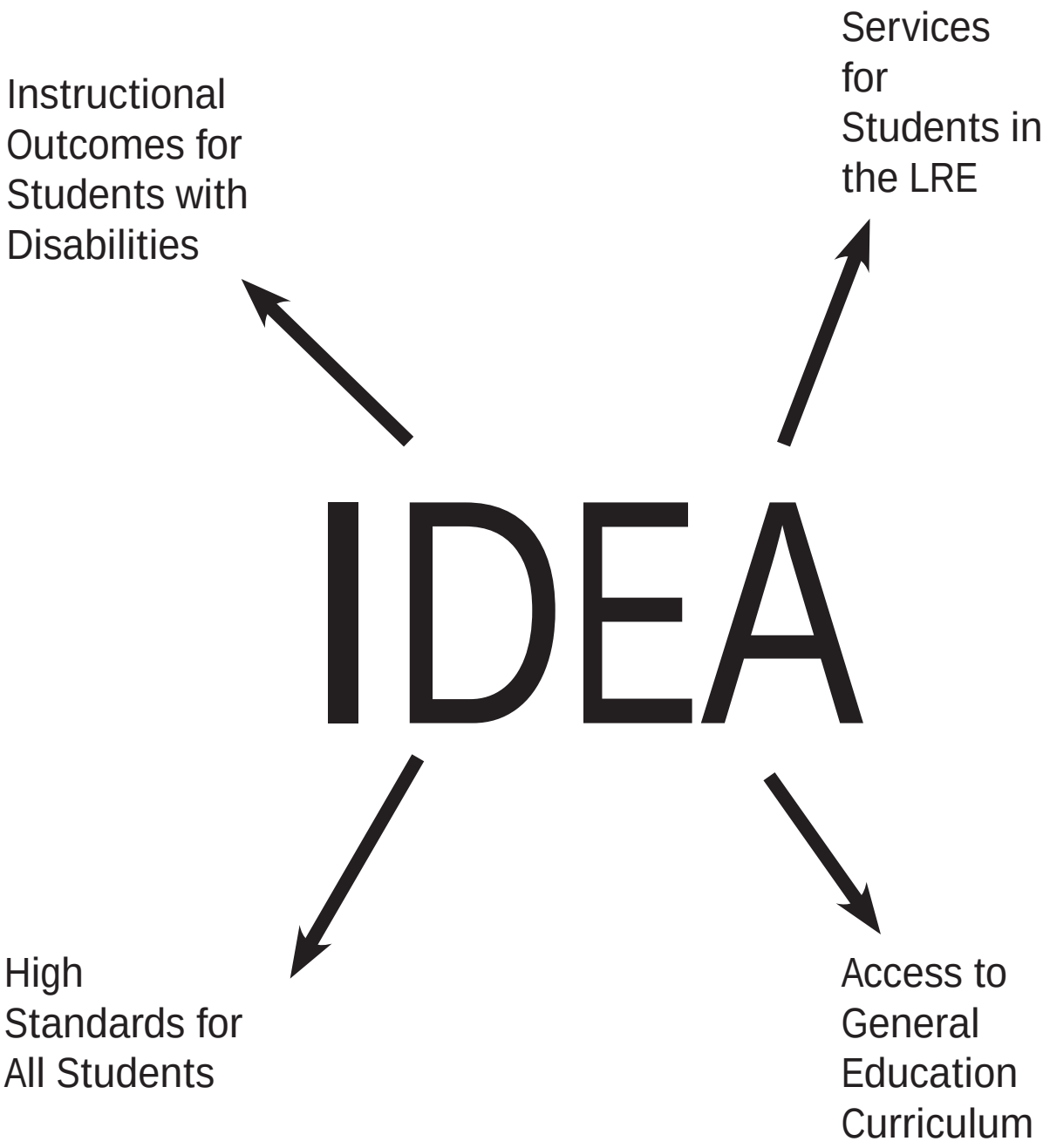
Education of All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142)	Individuals with Disabilities Act (PK 101-476)	Individuals with Disabilities Act (PK 105-17)
Focus: Access to Public Education	→	Focus: Improved Student Outcomes

From NYC SETRC


Present levels of performance and needs
Annual Goals
short-term objectives/ benchmarks
Individualized Education Program
Educational disability **classification**
Programs and Services
Test **modifications**
Functional behavior assessment/ behavior

IDEA ⟶ KEY COMPONENTS

- **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**
- **Appropriate Evaluation**
- **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**
- **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**
- **Parent, teacher and**
  student-participation in decision-making
- **Procedural safeguards**


Instructional Outcomes for Students with Disabilities
Services for Students in the LRE
IDEA
High Standards for All Students
Access to General Education Curriculum

Special Education Process: Step by Step

Step 1: Initial Referral for Special Education Services

Students suspected of having a disability are referred to the Committee on Special Education (CSE). A referral is a written statement and may be initiated by the parent of the student (or a person in parental relationship), teacher (or other school personnel), doctor, judicial ofþcer, a designated person in a public agency, or the student (over 18 years of age). When initiated by school personnel, the referral must indicate the interventions (pre-referral strategies) implemented prior to referral, describe the nature of contacts with the parent/guardian and state the reason for the referral. Upon receipt of the referral, the CSE informs the parents/guardians of their due process rights and obtains written consent for an evaluation of the student.

Step 2: Individual Evaluation Process

The CSE arranges for an appropriate evaluation of the student's abilities and needs. The evaluation is based on information from a variety of sources, including a physical examination, a psychological evaluation, a social history, formal and informal educational assessments, observations, teacher progress reports and information from the parent/guardian.

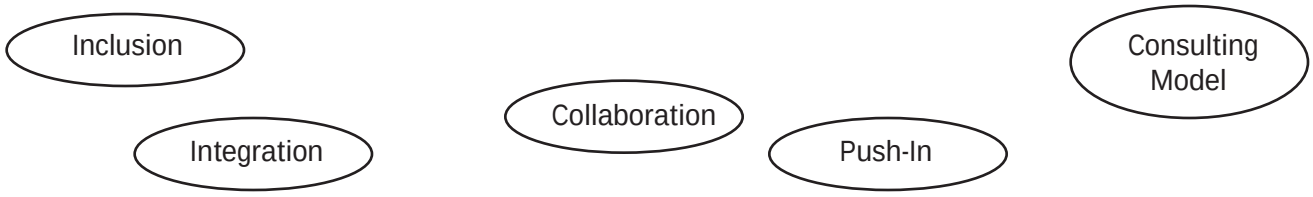
Step 3: Determining Eligibility for Special Education Services

Least Restrictive Environment and Models for Inclusion

Regulations require that special education students be provided with services in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). This means that òplacement of students with disabilities in special classes, separate schools or other removal from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that even with the use of supplementary aids and services, education cannot be satisfactorily achieved.ó LRE placement will:

- Å provide the special education needed by the student;
- Å provide for education of the student to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the student with other students who do not have disabilities; and
- Å be as close as possible to the studentûs home.

Given the requirement for LRE, many school districts are developing new instructional models to serve students with disabilities in general education settings by bringing the appropriate supports and services to the student, rather than having the student leave the classroom to receive those supports and services. These instructional models may be referred to in different terms, including:



The implementation plan for these new models may differ from district to district. -However, it is important to remember that, whatever the model, the purpose is clear...

L R E

Island in the Mainstream

from: Giangreco, Michael

Ants in His Pants — Page 27

Directions: Several situations related to confidentiality that require a decision to be made are presented below. Read each of the situations and apply your school's policies in order to make a decision for each scenario. Then discuss your response with other team members.

Student To Student

Sue is a new TA at Smith High School. She is 20 years old. Sue went to Smith High School as a student, so she

Grapevine

from: Giangreco, Michael

Flying By the Seat of Your Pants – Page 42

The above cartoon is suggested for use for training sessions. However we are unable to include a copy of the cartoon, due to copyright restrictions. Information regarding purchasing the book can be found in the bibliography in chapter 9.

Purchasing the book would allow you to use the cartoon for training in accordance with the following, as stated in the publication:

"Permission is granted to the purchaser to make overhead transparencies of the cartoons for workshops, classes, inservice training, or other educational purposes. Photocopying or other reproduction of this material for entire school districts, workshop participants, classes or inservice training is strictly prohibited."

Directions: Members of the education team need to meet to discuss the policies and procedures related to conþdentiality as they apply to both students with and without disabilities, as well as their families.

1. How is òconþdentialityó deþned in our school policies?

2. What are the policies and procedures in this school related to conþdentiality?

3. What are the expectations of the members of our team regarding conþdentiality? How can our team support one another in maintaining respectful interactions and conþdentiality in relation to the students and their families with whom we work?

4. How will we ensure that conþdentiality is maintained in our daily work with students and their families?

5. What do we do when we are in situations in which we believe conþdentiality is being breached? What are some phrases that we might use to remind another person of this issue?

From: The Paraprofessional's Guide to the Inclusive Classroom: Working as a Team
©1997 by Maly Beth Doyle, Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), often referred to as the “Buckley Amendment,ó was passed by Congress in 1974. The Act grants speciþc rights to protect the ~ ×

Eligibility for Special Education

Eligibility for special education is based on whether a student has a disability that affects his or her ability to learn. The Committee on Special Education (CSE) is responsible for determining the eligibility for

speech or language impairment: a disability that affects expressive language (e.g., speaking) or receptive language (e.g., understanding) and is characterized by problems organizing thoughts and ideas, rapid or disorganized language, voice disorders related to pitch, sound or the quality of the sounds produced

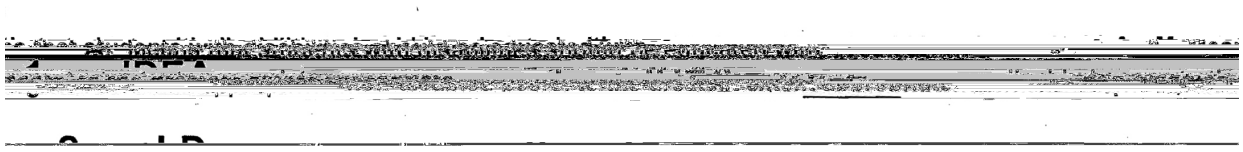
traumatic brain injury: an injury to the brain caused by an external force (e.g., in an accident) or by a medical condition, such as a stroke or brain tumor that impacts on the student's functioning

visual impairment (including blindness): impaired vision, even with correction, that results in partial sight or blindness

When Congress reauthorized IDEA 1997, there was a great deal of concern that some students may have been classiþed as disabled when their learning problems were related to bilingualism or limited instruction, rather than an educational disability. In an effort to ensure that these students would not be classiþed as disabled, federal and state regulations speciþcally prohibit the classiþcation of students whose learning difþculties are due to limited edu-

ATSEA*

***A** **T**est of **S**pecial **E**ducation **A**cronyms



Learning Standards and Test Access

The Learning Standards set by the NYS Education Department are for all students, including students with disabilities. In order to demonstrate progress toward and mastery of those standards, students with disabilities will participate in assessments - either the regular assessment program or, for severely disabled students, in an alternate assessment. The following information outlines the provisions that are made for students with disabilities to participate in the assessment process.

Most students with disabilities will participate in the regular assessment program alongside their non-disabled peers. In order to demonstrate their skills and knowledge, some students with disabilities will require test modiþcations, which are intended to enable these students to participate on an equal basis with their non-disabled peers. Test modiþcations are not intended to provide students with an unfair advantage or to substitute for knowledge and skills that have not been achieved.

The Committee on Special Education is responsible to consider the need for test modiþcations based on individual student needs and educational characteristics. If it is determined that a student requires test modiþcations, these must be indicated on the studentõs Individualized Education Program (IEP). Recommended test modiþcations must be consistently and uniformly applied throughout the student's program. This includes tests, quizzes and examinations administered either in special education class settings or in general education class settings, as well as for district and State examinations. There are only two situations when test modiþcations would not apply: when a student refuses and when restrictions are required by the test authorities. When a student refuses, school personnel should make every effort to effectuate full implementation. If the student continues to refuse, the situation should

Å To enable students with disabilities to participate in test programs on an equal basis with their non-disabled peers.
Å To provide an opportunity for students with disabilities to demonstrate mastery of skills and attainment of knowledge, without being unfairly restricted due to the effect of a disability.
Å In determining eligibility, emphasis must be placed on the necessity for modiþcation, not merely the potential-beneþt from modiþcation.
Å Modiþcations are intended to address a disability and, to the extent possible, to minimize the impact of a student's disability.

Å intended to substitute for knowledge and abilities that the student has not achieved.
Å intended to provide an unfair advantage over students taking tests and examinations under standardized [illegible] /Spa ET EMC /SpaeID 8xaminations for which the E2_cation Department has establis
Å intended to be recommended sohib

Getting Started

Note to Trainer:
This chapter contains multiple activities; you should select those that are most appropriate for your district. Since the activities used will vary, you will also need to determine when they should be presented.

Suggested Overhead for use by Trainers

Flexibility

from: Giangreco, Michael

Ants in His Pants – Page 81
(see cartoon on reverse side)

Due to copyright restrictions, we are only able to include copies of four cartoons in this

Getting Started

Facts:

1. Para-educators are one of the fastest growing positions in public education.
2. In the early 1960ís there were approximately 10,000 Para-educators; currently there are more than 500,000.

Some Basic Questions When Getting Started

When you start In a classroom, it is important to have some basic information. Knowing the protocols of the building is important Ļ t ∧ ing starm

Classroom Orientation Checklist

This list will help to organize the TA when beginning in a new school or orientation.

1. Personal Information

__Workday responsibilities/ Prepared for a substitute
__VVork schedule
__Breaks
__Salary and beneþts
__Lunch time and location
__Sick and personal days
__School calendar and holidays
__Review any school standard forms

2. School Information

__School Policies (i.e.: gifts to employees)
__Programs operated by the school
__Location and use of equipment and supplies
__Where to park, eat, etc.
__Hours of teachers' school day
__Building layout (i.e.: gym, cafeteria, playground, specials, bathrooms)
__TA evaluation procedures

__Review any written policy
__Review policy with teacher or administrator

4. Classroom Orientation and School Policies

__Student characteristics
__Classroom rules
__Physical arrangement of classroom
__Work assignment
__Job expectations / role in the classroom
__Daily routines
__Discipline strategies
__Location of classroom materials

Becoming A Chameleon

As a TA one must wear many hats and communicate with varied people on various levels. When working with different professionals a TA may be expected to change his/her style, manner, responses, responsibilities and communi-

Your role in the classroom

When working in the classroom the TA can enhance instruction, under the supervision of the special education and general education teacher, by supporting students as follows:

- ÅReinforcing previously instructed concepts
- ÅObserving and documenting student progress
- ÅAssisting students in carrying out daily routines more independently
- ÅHelping students to initiate tasks
- ÅAdapting tasks and assignments
- ÅImplementing teacher modiþcations
- ÅPromoting student independence, not interdependence
- ÅProviding individual or small group supplementary instruction
- ÅImplementing behavior management programs Implementing testing modiþcations
- ÅHelping children with transitions
- ÅSupporting the integration of students into the mainstream
- ÅCommunicating with teachers about student needs
- ÅHelping the teacher monitor, record and chart behaviors
- ÅWorking with the teacher to develop classroom routines and rules
- ÅKeeping students focused on tasks
- ÅResponding to social/emotional needs as per the teacherõs protocol
- ÅSupervising in the lunchroom, during recess and at arrival / dismissal (bus duty)
- ÅKeeping appropriate records for the teacher
- ÅHelping organize and supervise for class trips

Project PARA - University of Nebraska at Lincoln - Available at http://www.para.unl.edu

The duties of the TA are as varied as the students they support and the environments in which they work. Some common qualities that would be helpful are:

- Å Dedicated to helping children
- Å Ability to adapt to various teaching styles
- Å Flexible to different needs
- Å Resourceful
- Å Able to collaborate with many people
- Å Good at solving conÿicts
- Å Open-mindedness
- Å An effective communicator
- ÅAble to understand and accept the role expectations of the position with regards to teachers, administrators, parents and students
- ÅAbility to discipline effectively and use management strategies
- ÅAbility to organize and use instructional materials and strategies
- ÅUnderstands (or is willing to ask about and learn) characteristics of disabilities
- ÅRespects conþdentiality regarding students and teachers

From: www.cec.spec.org.careerproþle:paraeducators

Activity

Roles and Responsibilities

Trainer:
Create a Venn diagram on a large paper or individual papers depending on if you choose to do this activity as one large group, smaller groups, or individually.

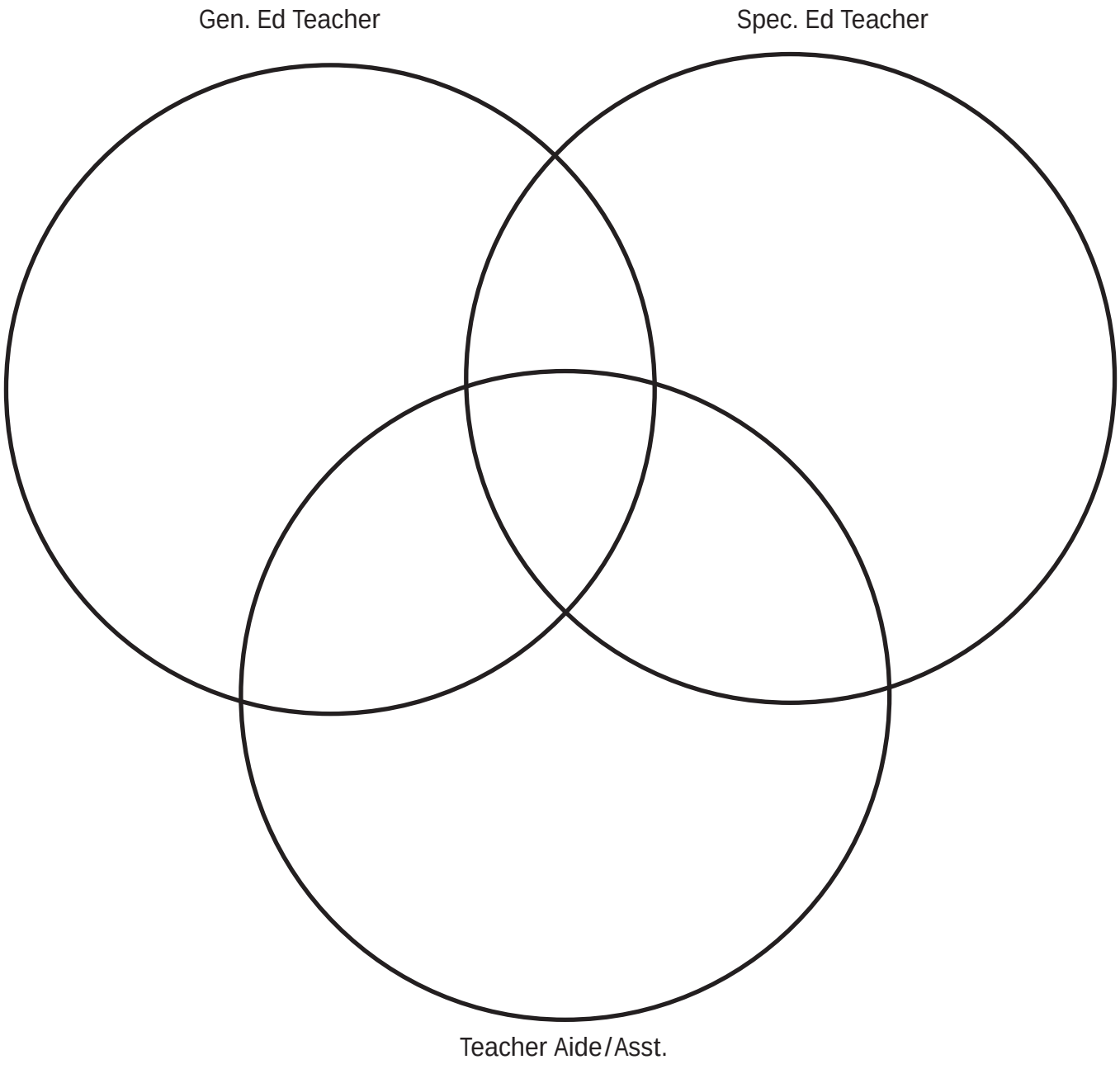
Given the following list of responsibilities, have the participants fll in the Venn diagram indicating which person is responsible or whether the responsibility is shared.

You can print each of the responsibilities on individual post-its or labels, so they can be readily placed in the appropriate space to save rewriting. If doing as individual groups, without a whole group review at the end, it may be suffcient to write the numbers in the appropriate space.

Who is responsible for the following? Check ALL that you believe apply for each item.	**Gen. Ed Teacher**	**Spec. Ed Teacher**	**TA**
1. Provide initial instruction for new learning			
2. Demonstrate instructional strategies or approaches			
3. Gather materials and resources			
4. Use role playing to help student improve social skills			
5. Create large group lessons to present curriculum to all			
6. Reinforce previously instructed concepts			
7. Create innovative, high interest material for the students			

Activity

Roles and Responsibilities - page 2



From: www.cac.spec.org.careerproþle: paraeducators

Activity

Activity

Create A Job Ad

Working in small groups, create a fun newspaper ad for the position of TA

Position Title:

Setting:

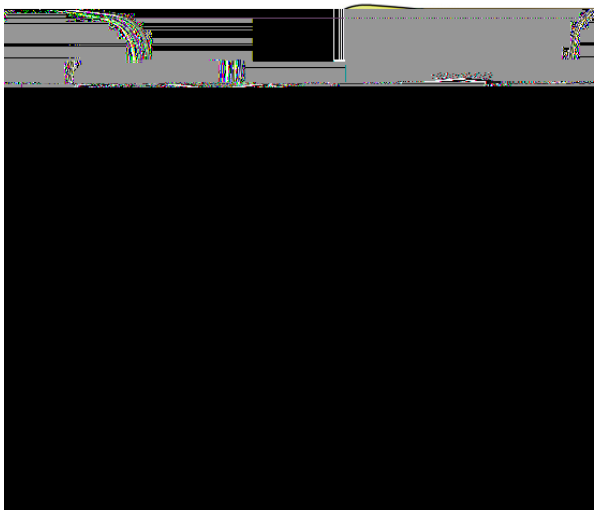
Purpose:

Duties / Responsibilities:

Time / Hours:

Section 4

In the Classroom



Note to Trainer:
This chapter contains multiple activities; you should select those that are most appropriate for your district.

In the classroom

Becoming a Team:

In order to create an optimal learning environment for the students, the teacher and TA need to become a working team. The responsibility for creating this team lies with both the teacher and the TA. Both need to develop a sense

Giangreco, Michael, *Teaching Old Logs New Tricks*, Peytral Publications

May Not Be Further Reproduced

There are other personnel in the school who provide-services and support to students with disabilities. Below is an overview of some of their responsibilities. Please be aware that their role may vary from district to district.

Psychologist

- Mandated member of the CSE
- Conducts observations of students
- Administers and interprets standardized testing (IQ, achievement and personality)
- Provides counseling
- Designs/implements behavior plans

Social Worker

- Provides counseling to students
- Completes social histories (i.e.: information concerning student's birth, developmental and school history, family information)
- May act as liaison between the home and school

Occupational Therapist

Evaluates and treats:

- Fine Motor Skills (e.g.: handwriting, sciS-

Giangreco, Michael, F. *Flying By The Seat of Your Pants, Minnetonka, Minnesota*, Peytral Publications, 1999

May Not Be Further Reproduced

Communicating with Students

Communication with students is multifaceted. This section will provide suggestions for the following:

Å Establishing relationships with students
Å Talking with students
Å Effective listening
Å Asking questions

Establishing Relationships with Students

Self-esteem is often an issue for special education students. This may be a result of feeling a lack of success. Part of your job, along with the teachers, is to build self-esteem. There are various ways to do this.

Å Listen to what the students are saying. Take their conversations seriously and respond positively.

Å Do not be judgmental. You should not pass judgment on how the student perceives a problem.

Å Show a genuine interest in each student. Accept each student despite his/her personality, disability, or background.

Å Remember what the student tells you. This shows caring and interest.

Å Ask if you can help. It you sense the student has a problem, ask him/her quietly if you can help. Do this privately as not to embarrass the student.

Å Praise; donût criticize. Think about what you are going to say. Compliment students often and sincerely.

Å Nevers - Never compare students! Never make fun of a student! Never do in public what you can handle in private!

ÅAlways keep your sense of humor.

Talking with Students

When speaking with students, it is the TA's major goal to have them listen, understand, and use the information. To do this the TA should incorporate techniques that encourage openness and acceptance. The older the students are, the more essential the concept of acceptance becomes important to remember that, at times, you may not be able to understand their thought processes, especially when dealing with inappropriate behaviors, but confrontation is rarely a positive action. It is more advantageous to work with the student in a positive, supportive manner.

The following are helpful hints to promote positive communication:

Å First establish positive relationships with students.

Techniques that promote positive supportive communication:

Å Posture. Speak with the student face to face, making sure you are on or about the same height level.
Å Eye Contact. Eye contact reveals your interest in the communication.
Å Facial Expression. Your facial expression should match the childõs expression and the emotion of the message.
Å Distance. Physical distance impacts comfort level. Allow some space between you and the student
Å Voice Quality. Your vocal tone and volume should match that of the studentõs.

Effective Listening

Effective communication is a major factor when working with students of all ages. Being aware of the different processes that impact communication will help the development of effective communication. Listening is also a major factor with regard to communication. We need to model good listening to encourage children to develop appropriate attending skills.

Some factors that impact listening:

1. Listening - Actively hearing what is being said and attending to the message. By empathic listening we show concern and interest in the other person.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I approach the classroom teacher with a concern or suggestion?

Classroom Organization

Å have students keep a c ø ` . τ T m M A ä M ' ' y need · o take ho % Ä .

Room Arrangements and Routines

Routines are part of the general and special education classrooms. The general education teacher usually establishes these routines. However, since the increase of inclusion and team teaching general and special education teachers often establish these routines jointly. In addition, therapists and special subject teachers frequently either push-in or pullout students from the classes. This results in a need to coordinate schedules and develop blocks of teaching time to make lessons less fragmented and more meaningful. It is important that the TA be aware of these routines, so the classroom runs smoothly. This information can be obtained through discussion with the teacher, observation of the class, and/or review of the weekly schedule.

The physical arrangements of the room also impact the student learning. Generally the teacher determines room arrangements. However, the following list contains some suggestions that will enable you to be of assistance in this regard:

– Children should be seated so that attention is towards the teacher.
– Make sure there are no objects interfering with the view of the chalkboard, screens or other displays that are being utilized.
ð High trafþc areas should be free of congestion.
– Post schedules on the board, or on the desk (if necessary).
– Make sure you can readily view the student(s) from where you are standing or sitting.
ð Students should have easy access to well organized materials and information:
Å Books, supplies and other materials used can be kept in several locations, however each
Å item should be maintained consistently in the same location.
Å Teach students to use folders or other systems to organize themselves.

Activity

Communication Problem Solving: Pass the Envelope

This activity should be modified based on the number of workshop participants.

1. Divide participants into small groups. Provide each group with a package of index cards.
2. Give each group an envelope with an index card taped to the front. Participants at each table should write a concern regarding communication with one of the following: a teacher, another TA or administrator. (Give a 5-minute time limit)
3. Pass the envelope clockwise to the next table. At that table one person will read aloud the communication concern. Given 2-3 minutes, each person will jot down his/her solution to the problem on an index card and place it in the envelope.
4. The envelope will them be passed to the next table and each member of the group will generate solutions for the concern written on that envelope.
5. Continue this until each group has seen all of the envelopes.
6. Review solutions with all participants.

- You may need to modify the activity depending on the amount of time and the number of participants.

Å If there are many participants, this activity can be done before lunch. The facilitator can choose a

Activity

Communication Case Study

This activity should be modified based on the number of workshop participants.

Sharon, a TA at an elementary school, receives a note from Carol, one of the teachers she works with. The note asks her to come to Carol's room, which is across from the cafeteria, at 12:00 to talk about the lesson plans for the following day. When Sharon arrives at Carol's office, she is hoping Carol has decided to let her take a more active role in the classroom.

When she steps into the office Carol is sitting at her desk, eating and talking on the phone. Sharon enters the room, sits down, and waits for Carol to complete her phone call. When finished, Carol resumes eating, while telling Sharon about the following day's plans and how many copies she needs of materials. Sharon waits for a break in the conversation so she can discuss her concerns. However the noise in the cafeteria and the distraction of Carol eating makes Sharon drift off and not pay close attention to the conversation. After one more interruption Carol is ready to end the conversation. Sharon stands up, frustrated that she was unable to discuss her concerns. She decided to reschedule another meeting.

What were barriers to communication?

List 3 possible solutions?

1.

2.

3.

What would have you done in these circumstances?

Adapted from Project PARA University of Nebraska at Lincoln - Available at http:// www.para.unLedu

Activity

Open Communication Channels

1. Identify 2 strategies which would encourage communicating with staff and students

2. What are 3 ways that a TA can promote a team approach?

3. If Susie tells you she hates school and all teachers, how would you respond?

4. Sometimes teachers and the TA have different perspectives. What are 2 strategies that can be used to resolve a conÿict?

5. List 3 ways you could encourage students to use good listening skills.

6. Good communication is often more than a one-time event. It is built on trust and good relationships. What are 2-3 ways that teachers and TAs can work together to establish these relationships?

Adapted from Project PARA University of Nebraska at Lincoln - Available at http:// www.para.unLedu

Activity

Classroom Routines: This activity is to generate thoughts about how the room arrangement may impact performance and behavior.

SITUATION: Jonathan is a 5th grade child who is extremely distractible. He þdgets with any object he can

ACTIVITY

Adapted from Project PARA University of Nebraska at Lincoln - Available at http:// www.para.unLedu

Section 5

Different Strokes for Special Folks

Swimming Lessons

from: Giangreco, Michael

Flying by the Seat of Your Pants - page 20

The referenced cartoon is suggested for use for training sessions. However we are unable to include a copy of the cartoon, due to copyright restrictions. Information regarding purchasing the book can be found in the bibliography in chapter 9.

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Supporting Individual Student Needs

Guidelines in Making Adaptations

Adaptations are deþned as òany adjustment or modiþcation in the curriculum, instruction, environment or materials in order to enhance the participation of a member of the classroom community.” (Udvari-Solner, 1992)

General Categories of Adaptations:

1. Adaptations That Are Constant Over Time

Å Each member of the team needs to be acquainted with student speciþc adaptations, including how the student is supposed to use them and the type of support needed.

Å Although the TA may be asked to assist in the development or acquisition, it is generally the responsibility of a certiþed team member to acquire or design them.

Å Wheelchairs, computers, communication systems, individualized picture schedules, calculators.

2. Adaptations That Are Short Term and Preplanned

Å General and special educators are typically responsible for the designing; however TAs are often asked to assist in the development or reþnement.

Å These are usually speciþc to a given instructional unit or activity.

Å An example is a worksheet that requires fewer responses.

3. Adaptations That Need To Be Developed on the Spot

Å These are adaptations that are not planned in advance.

Å They are developed or acquired in response to an activity that is about to occur or is in the process of occurring.

Å If the preplanned adaptation does not work, the TA may need to quickly develop a new adaptation.

Adaptations Should:

Promote active participation
Build on the student’s strengths
Not be overly intrusive

Generating on-the-spot adaptations is an appropriate and necessary component of many activities. The support of the TA in this regard is very important.

From: ©Dr. Mary Beth Doyle: The Paraprofessional’s Guide to the Inclusive Classroom
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Deviating from the Lesson Plan

Brainstorming Activity

First: Break into groups of approximately four people.
Instructions: Explain the rules of brainstorming:

Each group will be given a scenario describing a student. The group will have two minutes to “brainstorm” strategies for curriculum adaptations to address the studentõs identiþed area(s) of need.

Select a recorder to write down the ideas as each one is raised.

In brainstorming, there may be **NO DISCUSSION** as to the appropriateness or value of the ideas raised. The goal is **QUANTITY.** Select a ògatekeeperó to signal (i.e.: tap on glass or table) when opinions or reactions are given about an idea. (A reaction can be non-verbal, e.g., a facial expression indicating a person’s feelings.)

At the end:
Do a quick count of how many strategies each group came up with. You may want to have each group present brieÿy. **However the main point is for the groups to generate ideas and to see how the quantity of ideas generated in-**
Some of the ideas may be helpful for this student, while some may be applicable to other students.

Scenarios: Cut and paste on to index cards.

Allison cannot attend to a lesson for more than þve minutes. She has difþculty organizing her supplies, carrying out simple tasks and shows lime

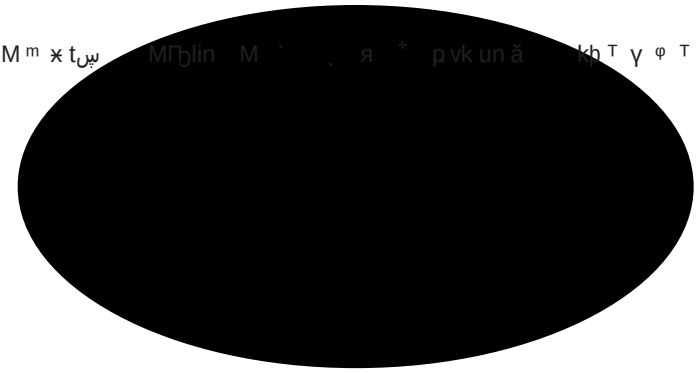
Curriculum Adaptations

As discussed, there are situations in which a TA may need to make immediate modiþcations during an instructional activity. There may not be the opportunity during the course of a lesson to discuss chanes that are needed “on-the-spot” with the teacher. Following are some suggestions for possible adaptations. In reviewing this list consider only those modiþcations that are appropriate for the age and functioning level of the students with whom you work. **In addition, please review this with the**

The modifcations below are basic and are by no mean exhaustive. This is meant as a resource tool for TAs who are receiving initial training. You may have already successfully implemented more sophisticated strategies. In addition, the modifcations used should be appropriate to the age and functioning level of the student.

Reading Decoding
Å Help breakdown words into part s and sound out each section
Å Show the student a picture or cards with a vowel sound and a corresponding word
Å Provide the decoding rule
Å Read aloud to a small group
Å Use taped materials (check with teacher þrst)
Å Make a picture frame so the student can see only one or two lines, of text

Reading Comprehension
Å Teach new words / meanings prior to the reading task
Å Provide an outline or web prior to the reading task
Å Have the student paraphrase short passages of text
Å Have student mark unclear text with a sticky note
Å Underline or highlight important text
Å Have the student sequence story strips
Å Have the student generate questions about the text
Å After reading, partner the student reading to discuss the



Study Guides / Worksheets

- Provide page numbers referenced to the readings
- Make sure questions are in the same order as the reading material
- Select or mark materials
- Provide a word bank
- Break material into smaller parts
- Allow student to work with a buddy
- Remove an individual page from a workbook or packet

Completing 'Work on Time

- Reduce amount of work
- Periodically remind student of the time
- Help the student plan the use of time (schedules)
- Specify exactly what needs to be done for the task to be complete
- Develop checklists
- Use a timer
- Assist student in prioritizing tasks
- Help the student keep a calendar

Getting Started

- Relate the lesson to things the student already knows or has experienced
- Use cues to begin work
- Give work in smaller amounts
- Provide encouragement
- Sequence work with easier tasks þrst
- Make sure student knows exactly-what is expected
- Check progress often in the þrst few minutes
- Give clear directions
- Provide a checklist of the steps involved
- Encourage peer buddies
- Ask the student to help someone else
- Use material the student þnds relevant or interesting
- Provide questions prior to beginning reading

Keeping an Organized Notebook

- Assign a notebook buddy from the class
- Check the notebook frequently
- Have the student number all the pages
- Require the student to keep one notebook for each subject; or use one large ring-binder with a divider for each subject
- Color code pages or notebooks by subject or area. Try to link a meaningful association for each color.
- Have student immediately þle pages
- Have student keep a hole punch device

Keeping Track of Assignments / Materials

- Have materials in the same place all of the time. Teach students to do the same
- Help student keep a calendar in the homework folder to remind them of upcoming projects. Break the project down into tasks with due dates.
- Provide a checklist of the items that need to be taken home each day. This can be on a laminated card for reuse.
- Use a color-coding system for organizing different subjects. The notebooks and folders should be the corresponding color. Try to make the colors meaningful; let the student help in determining the association. (i.e.: social studies is blue because it is the color of the oceans.
- Help student develop a self-checklist monitoring tasks required
- Require an envelope for a big project or one with parts
- Provide nonverbal cues to remind the student to self-check
- Keep extra supplies available
- Ask the student what materials are needed
- Make sure all returned papers are immediately put in the notebook
- Use Post-It notes to mark assignments in textbooks

This page was adapted from: The Paraeducator's Guide to Instructional and Curricular Modifcations, by Wendy Dover. © The MASTER Teacher, Inc., 2001
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Be Prepared!

You might want to have the following items available for use when implementing on-the-spot adaptations:

High lighting Pens

Colored Markers - *color color coding*

Red markers or Pens

File Folders - *use to make frames or strips for tracing when reading*

Black Thick Tip Markers

Pencils

Index Cards

Hole Puncher

Assorted Lined Paper

Highlighting Tape

Post It Notes

Post It Flags

Erasers

Ruler

Maintaining Learner Involvement

Avoiding Boredom

Maintaining student interest in learning activities is a key factor in learning involvement. Students may tire of activities before they have mastered the skill. To avoid students loosing interest in learning activities:

1. Provide a Feeling of Progress:

Giving Directions

You need to provide clear, concise verbal directions that are appropriate for the individual student.

Techniques to keep in mind include:

- Ensure that the student is attending.
- Select vocabulary that is appropriate for the student.
- Explain the purpose of the lesson.
- Present only one step of the assignment at a time.
- Ask questions or have the student repeat what s/he has been told as a check for understanding.

Modeling

The objective of modeling is to demonstrate to the students what they are expected to do in the lesson. For example, if a student is expected to fold and number her/his paper a specific way, then the TA may model this to the student by doing it as s/he gives the directions.

Requests for Help

The way in which "Requests for Help" are dealt with can enhance rapport with students and affect learning outcomes. Helping at the appropriate time prevents a student from becoming frustrated with the activity, but additional direction sometimes distracts the student from the task. The TA needs to understand the difference between providing the answer for the student and effectively guiding the student to find the answer independently.

Questioning Procedures

- The purpose of questioning is to determine the student's level of mastery in order to proceed with new instructional activities. Good questioning practices involve:
- Asking open-ended questions that require more than a "yes" or "no" answer
- Ordering questions sequentially to guide a student toward the conclusion
- Varying the levels of questions
- Helping organize ideas into generalizations

There are different levels of questioning which may be used in determining a child's understanding of materials.

- *Literal questions ask for specific information*
- *Interpretative questions require a student to use his/her own opinions and thoughts.*
- *Analytical questions are the highest level, and require a student synthesize and apply information in an abstract way.*

Questioning for Quality

Following are different ways to ask questions of students. These can be used as on-the-spot modifcations, to direct attention to the important details, to increase understanding and to develop critical thinking skills.

Recalling	**Who, what, where, when, how**
Comparing	**How is ... similar/different from ...**
Identifying Attributes	**What are the characteristics of**
Ordering	**Arrange... Into sequence according to...**
Representing	**In what other ways might we show / illustrate_**
Identifying Main Idea	**What is the main issue in ...**
	Retell the main idea in your own words
Identifying Errors	**What is wrong with ...**
Inferring	**What might we conclude from ...**
	What do you think will happen and why?
Predicting	**What might happen if ...**
Elaborating	**Give an example of...**
Summarizing	**Can you summarize ...**
Verifying	**What information supports...**
	How might we prove ...

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Questions That Help Get YOU Going with the Lesson

Å What is the topic?
Å What activities will the students be involved in?
Å What instructions were given before the activity?
Å What key words and concepts are important for the instruction or activity?

Adapted from the TA's Guide to Instructional and Curricular Modifcations.

Making the Language of Instruction Accessible to Students

1. Tell students what you expect them to learn.

Reinforcing Students

Reinforcing students during instructional activities is an important component of your interactions with the student. The reinforcement should focus on the studentûs demonstration of appropriate behavior or completion of a speciþc task. Depending on the age and skill level of the student, various techniques can be used. Often verbal reinforcement is appropriate, while other students respond better to stickers, free time, or edible rewards.

Reasons for Utilizing Reinforcement:

- Provides clear feedback on correct responses
- Provides immediate feedback
- Redirects incorrect responses through questions in a positive manner
- Praises learner for working independently
- Supports and encourages learner throughout the tutoring process

The teacher should explain and demonstrate the method of reinforcement that has been selected for each student. Some students may have speciþc behavior plans that state when and what types of reinforcement should be used. Be sure to check with your supervising teacher about these types of plans.

Characteristics of Effective Praise:

Praise can be made more effective by observing the following:

1. Praise must follow the . Praise students only if they are doing what you want them to be doing.
2. Include the **student name** in your praise. It helps to be speciþc.
3. The praise should be **descriptive**. it should let the students know what they are doing correctly.
4. The praise must be **convincing**. You should use a tone of voice and body language that convey that the praise is genuine.
5. The praise must also be **appropriate for the age and grade** level of the student.
6. The praise is more effective if it is **varied**.
7. The praise **should not disrupt** the class or the lesson.

Strategies for Praising Students

- Acknowledge and attend to positive behavior while ignoring minor problems.
- Move among students so that you can monitor their work and behavior. Movement should be at random and should include all students.

Suggested Overhead for use by Trainers

Different Values and Eras

from: Giangreco, Michael

Teaching Old Logs New Tricks - page 91

(see cartoon on next page)

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Purchasing the book would allow you to use the cartoon for training in accordance with the following, as stated in the publication:

Giangreco, Michael, F. *Old Logs, New Tricks,* Minnetonka, Minnesota, Peytral Publications, 2000

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Guidelines for Effective Praise

One of the most powerful strategies is providing praise for appropriate behavior. Although the planning of how and when to use praise is the teacher's responsibility, this is a strategy that either the teacher or TA may implement.

Be speciþc about the positive behavior that the student displays.
Comments about behavior should focus on what the student did right.
The praise should include exactly which part of the student's behavior is acceptable. This serves to clearly communicate to the student what was good. The probability of any misunderstanding of which behavior meets with approval is then lessened.
Situation:

Praise vs. Punishment

Why Praise Works

Å Praise is readily available as reinforcement for positive behaviors. Å
Å Praise can be administered immediately after the desired behavior.
Å Praise can be used over and over again if praise statements are varied.
Å Praise may be used in combination with other strategies to increase behaviors.
Å Praise can be tailored to a variety of behaviors by being speciþc about the activity.
Å Praise works if the relationship between the student and the person giving the praise is a positive relationship.

Why Punishment Does Not Work

Å Punishment is a less effective means of dealing with unacceptable student behavior.
Å Punishment gives attention to the wrong behavior.
Å When the TA or teacher pays attention to inappropriate behaviors, those behaviors frequently increase. The student may repeat the behavior just to get attention. For some students, attention of any kind is desirable.

How to avoid power struggles

- Å Avoid arguing with a student
- Å Avoid insisting you are right
- Å Avoid having the last word
- Å Avoid getting side-tracked
- Å Avoid asking questions
- Å Avoid cornering a child
- Å Give the student time and space
- Å Focus more on what the child is doing appropriately
- Å State the appropriate behavior þrst

These may work for the day...but we lose tomorrow!

Yelling

Physical force

Degrading comments

Insulting comments

Humiliation

Put downs

Use of sarcasm

Threats

More negative interactions than positive

Non-Intrusive Support Strategies

Strategy	Example
State the Expectations	Remember to tell the student what to do and how you want him/her to do it.
Proximity	Stand closer to the student who is engaged in inappropriate behavior. Do not look at the student; rather keep your focus on the teaching at hand.
Gentle, Kind Touc	Touch the student's shoulder while maintaining focus on the instruction.
Non-Verbal Cues	Smile, nod, make a thumbs-up sign to reinforce inappropriate or appropriate behaviors.
Indirect Verbal Cues	"I like the way Sue is raising her hand."
Direct Verbal Cues	

©Doyle, Mary Beth, Paraprofessional Roles in Supporting Students who Experience Challenging Behavior

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Some Final Thoughts.....

Behavior management should be viewed as an opportunity for teaching and not as an opportunity for punishment.

The teacher and TA should attempt to use similar management criteria and techniques.

Consider the impact on the student's best interests.

Avoid embarrassing students.

Suggestions should be in the form of constructive criticism, given in private.

Never engage in a power struggle. Strive for win/win.

Thank students when they are trying to improve. Use praise immediately, consistently and sincerely.

Do not touch a student who is upset

Keep teachers informed.

Documentation should be objective and free of emotion.

Recognize your own feelings and frustrations about tough students. Try not to take their behavior personally.

"Catching" kids being good can make a big difference. Think about how nice it is to get some praise for something youõve done; nice, isnõt it!

Adapted from Project PARA - University of Nebraska at Lincoln - Available at http://www.para.unl.edu

Suggested Overhead for use by Trainers

Terrorless Learning

from: Giangreco, Michael

Flying By The Seat of Your Pants - page 81

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Functional Behavioral Assessments for

Purposes of Data Collection and Behavior Observation

Data collection and behavior observation are important activities in the special education classroom. One of the ways in which special education programs provide more intensive services to students with learning difþculties is by more carefully monitoring and adjusting the learning teaching process. The TA can play an important role in gathering and organizing information about student progress. This information is particularly important when the TA is

Activity

For each statement listed below, indicate whether it is observable and/or measurable or neither. You may work as a group.

Observable Behavior - Can be noted through one of the senses (seen, heard, tasted, smelled, or felt) and are usually described by action words such as touching, walking, saying, or writing.

Measurable Behavior - In order to be measurable a behavior must þrst be observable. An observer must be able to clearly determine whether the behavior is occurring, count the occurrences of the behavior — and/or time of the behavior.

Antecedent – The event that happens before the behavior or response occurs.
Behavior – Any observable or measurable act of the student.
Consequence –The event that happens to the student after the behavior/response has occurred.
Target behavior –A desired behavior that does not occur or that occurs infrequently, which we wish to establish or increase. In a behavioral reduction program, it is the inappropriate behavior that is to be decreased or eliminated.

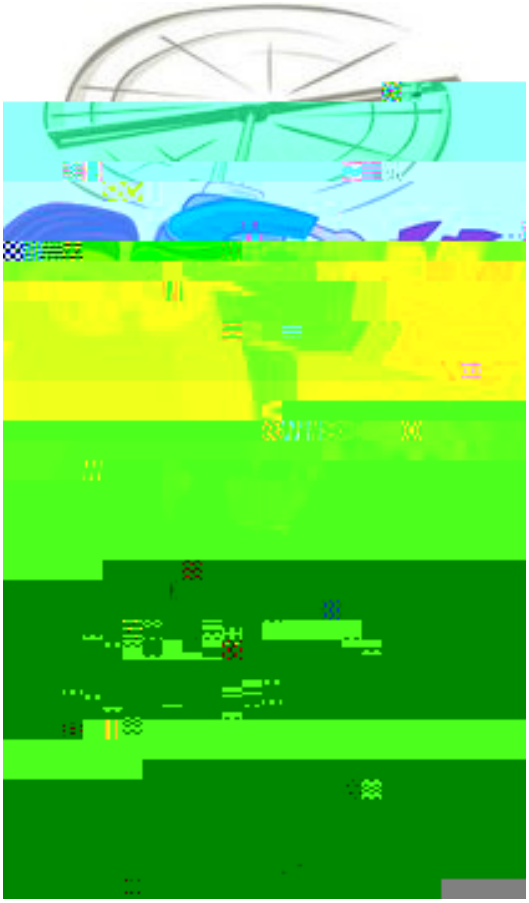
ANTECEDENT	BEHAVIOR
What happened before? Who was there? When did it occur?	*Describe the behavior.*

CONSEQUENCE
What was the consequence? How did the adults and children respond?

Some Possible Triggers/Antecedents*		Some Possible Consequences*	
Difþcult Task	Noise Temperature, space	Behavior ignored	Time out
Directive or request to...	Interruption in routine	Reprimand/warning	Peer attention
Unstructured activity	In close proximity to....	Adult attention from...	Communication with the home
Transistioning	Health/Medical (allergies, fatigue, etc.)	Loss of privilege (specify)	In-school suspension
Unstructured setting	Negative social interactions	Removal from class	Out-of-school suspension
Instructional Pace			

**You may indicate other antecedents or consequences that are not listed above.*

Helping or Hovering



Title from: Giangreco, M.F., Edelman, S., Luiselli, T.E., & MacFarland, S.Z. (1997). Helping or hovering?

Helping or Hovering

from: Giangreco, Michael

Ants in His Pants - Page 74

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Activity

- How many of you are parents?
- Has there ever been an instance where you “hovered” over your own children?
- Parents sometimes hover...Teachers sometimes hover... TAs sometimes hover.
- Our goal is to recognize those responses in ourselves, even if it is after the fact, and think of ways that we could make the student more independent.

Instructor should:

Activity

Listen to the scenarios, and think about the following questions. (You can either do this as a whole group or hand out different scenarios to the groups at each table.)

What is your initial reaction to the situation as described? Are the TA's actions appropriate?
What else would you want to know in order to decide?
Why is this helpful or not helpful to the student?
What could be done to promote student independence?

1. The teacher is reading a story out loud. The TA is simultaneously reading the story into Sam's ear, in a loud voice. When it comes time for the students to answer questions on a worksheet, the TA reads the questions and helps Sam þnd the answers.

2. The class is starting a writing activity. Mary's area of weakness is written expression. As the teacher is explaining the directions, the TA immediately starts jotting down notes on her pad about what Mary could be writing. When the assignment is given out to the class, Mary looks to the TA for direction. The TA reads the assignment to her and suggests, from his/her notes, what the student could write. Mary then paraphrases what the TA has said, while the TA scribes what Mary is saying.

3. The teacher writes the homework assignment on the board. The TA immediately begins copying the assignment onto a paper for Susan. Susan takes the paper and shoves it into her backpack.

4. The students arrive in the class. Johnny goes with Mrs. Jones (the TA) to the back of the room. Mrs. Jones unpacks his backpack, puts his homework and lunch in the appropriate bins and hangs up his jacket.

5. Steven is a ten year old with an attention deþcit disorder. The teacher hands out worksheets to the students. As

Promoting Independence - Task Analysis

Monitor your interactions with a student over a period of several days. Describe all support provided to the student, recording your actions as speciþcally as possible. Then brainstorm alternatives that could be tried to encourage more independence. You may want to try this again several times during the course of the school year. An increase in student independence is a reÿection of the success of the teamûs efforts in this regard.

EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETED FORM.
A BLANK CAN BE FOUND ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE.

STUDENT: JOHN DATE: _____

Task	Describe actual support provided	What is the next step for the student to be more independent? What else could be tried?
Arrival Routine	Accompanied John from the bus to the classroom. Physically assisted him in taking off his coat while giving him verbal cues.	1. Peer buddy to accompany him from the bus, with aide in the vicinity. 2. Model taking coat off and give verbal prompts.
Homework Assignments	Provided him with a written copy of his homework. Checked folder to make sure all homework from the day before had been completed.	1. Provide an outline format on which he can write the assignment. 2. Color - code books and folders and work .with him to check that all items are completed.
Classroom Routines	John Is verbally prompted for each transition.	1. Picture of schedule /visual prompts 2. Encourage him to watch what his peers are doing. 3. Allow wait time for him to follow or respond.
Reading	Sitting next to him while the teacher is reading. Pointing him to the location on the page. Pointing to pictures that will help in his answering questions.	1. Peer buddy. 2. Move around the room, checking on him periodically. 3. Show him pictures and provide key questions prior to reading.
Mathematics	Class is working on addition and subtraction of double digit numbers. Student is asking for help and will not work independently.	1. Color code operation signs. Complete alt problems of one operation þrst. 2. Decrease the number of problems. 3. Provide manipulatives or simplify so student can have some initial success.
Writing	John generates his ideas for writing verbally, while the adult scribes.	1. Provide a graphic organizer. 2. Have him work in a small group. 3. Have him generate ideas. TA writes down key words for him to use in writing simple sentences.
Departure Routines	Adult packs up backpack	1. Provide a pictorial list of items needed. 2. Provide verbal prompts of the sequence.
Other	Lunch ñ He asked for his milk container to be opened for him and his orange cut.	1. Ask his OT what he is capable of doing independently and also for suggestions. 2. Screw top milk ñ Loosen the top; then have him þnish

Promoting Independence - Task Analysis

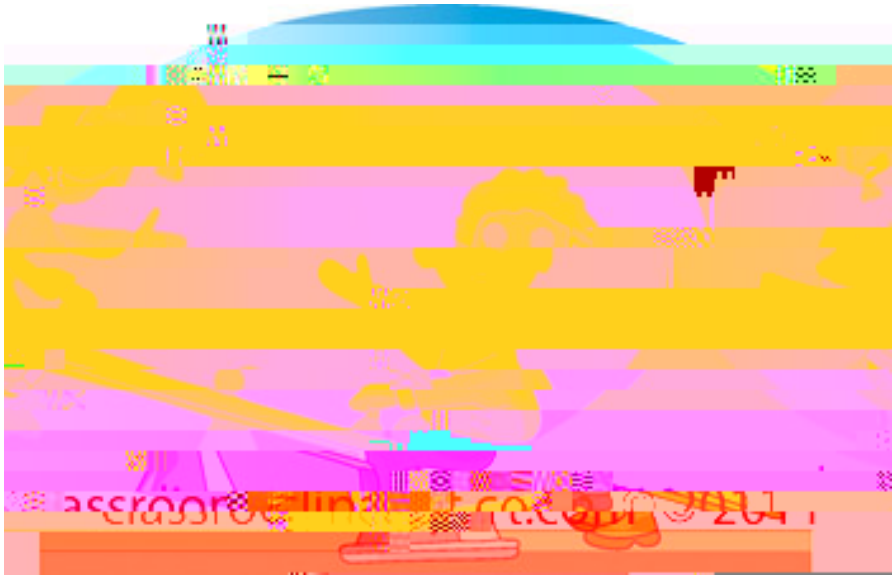
Monitor your interactions with a student over a period of several days. Describe all support provided to the student, recording your actions as speciþcally as possible. Then brainstorm alternatives that could be tried to encourage more independence. You may want to try this again several times during the course of the school year. An increase in student independence is a reÿection of the success of the teamûs efforts.

STUDENT: _____ DATE: _____

Task	Describe actual support provided	What is the next step for the student to be more independent? What else could be tried?
Arrival Routine		
Homework Assignments		
Classroom Routines		
Reading		
Mathematics		
Writing		
Departure Routines		
Other		

This should help in making a student becoming as independent as possible.

Outside the Classroom



1, 2, 3, 4, 5.....

Dealing with Cafeteria Problems

- Work the cafeteria line to avoid pushing and poking.
- Separate students who are having problems arguing or pushing by creating bigger spaces or sending one of them to the end of the line.
- Talk to them about their lunch choices for the day to distract them and to move the line faster.
- Establish a signal for silence or immediate attention.
- Encourage the use of polite terminology such as please and thank you and compliment those who do.
- Follow the procedures for dismissal from the cafeteria and allow those who comply to leave þrst.
- Know where students are to go in bad weather.
- Get training in dealing with students who are choking.

Playground Supervision

Playground supervision can be the most difþcult task a para-professional is asked to fulþll because of its potential for safety problems. This type of duty, however, enables the TA to observe students in a more relaxed setting and to witness social skills, athletic ability and peer acceptance. The following management tips will assist the TA in maintaining safety and compliance on the playground:

- Be aware of playground boundaries and be prepared to stop students from going into off-limits areas
- Know the rules for games and equipment and keep a written list of rules.
- Report any suspicious strangers to the ofþce as soon as possible.

- After dismissal walk with the stragglers and model for them how to get back to the building quickly.

Final Words of Advice

- Be sure to check with your supervisor regarding speciþc procedures for handling emergency situations.
- Keep calm and never leave the students unattended. In an emergency, send some students to get the nurse or an administrator.
- Don’t try to move a student who appears badly hurt.
- Act the way you expect your students to behave.
- When students are highly agitated speak in a lower voice in order to de-escalate their anger.
- Wear comfortable walking shoes when supervising large areas because you are expected to circulate frequently.
- Treat the students the way you expect them to treat you — with respect.

Best Advice...

In ending, we would like you to think about the “best advice” you would give someone who is just beginning his or her journey as a TA in a classroom. This list of “Best Advice” was developed by TAs working at Nassau BOCES.

- Learn to be ÿexible. Donût take anything personally.
- Treat all students as individuals.
- Be kind and consistent.
- Never back a student into a corner.
- Be a good listener.
- Be prepared for everything and anything.
- Always have good sense and a good attitude about your job.
- Tender loving care is more important than frigid discipline.
- If you know a student has a history of being abused, do not touch him or her physically.
- Show the students that you care about them and you will gain their conÞdence.
- Keep your sense of humor and maintain a good perspective on everything.
- Use common sense in all situations.
- Always be yourself and be honest with the students.
- Have as much patience as possible.
- Give the students much encouragement and praise.
- Don’t say anything that you are not prepared to follow-up on.
- Think carefully before you act.
- Keep your eyes and ears open; donût be afraid to report whatûs happening if you think it is necessary.
- Know where all students in your class are and what they are doing.
- Try to understand the background of each student. When needed, be compassionate.
- An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.
- Look for the good in each student.
- Keep open good lines of communication with your teacher.
- Remember to call for help when you need it and to answer a call for help when you can.
- Always ask for help if you are unsure what to do.
- Know as much about a student as possible, particularly if s/he has any health problems.
- Always leave a student a way out of a situation.

Nassau BOCES “Teacher Aide Handbook”

Clearing A Path

from: Giangreco, Michael

Teaching Old Logs New Tricks - page 100

The above, referenced, cartoon is suggested for use for training sessions. However we are unable to include a copy of the cartoon, due to copyright restraictions. Information regarding purchasing the book can be found in the bibliography in chapter 9.

Purchasing the book would allow you to use the cartoon for training in accordance with the following, as stated in the publication:

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Bibliography

* - Indicates resources that were used for this manual

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