CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SAN MARCOS

THESIS SIGNATURE PAGE

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

EDUCATION

THESIS TITLE: Supporting Instructional Assistants in an Elementary Learning Center Model: A Resource Handbook and Training Guide

AUTHOR: Mandy Geminert

DATE OF SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE: November 27, 2012

THE THESIS HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE THESIS COMMITTEE IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION.

Jodi Robledo, Ph.D
THESIS COMMITTEE CHAIR

Julie Thompson, M.A.
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

Jodi Robledo, Ph.D
SIGNATURE
1/27/12

Julie Thompson, M.A.
SIGNATURE
12/14/12

THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER
SIGNATURE
DATE
Supporting Instructional Assistants in an Elementary Learning Center Model:

A Resource Handbook and Training Guide

By

Mandy Geminert

A Project Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree in
Special Education

California State University San Marcos
Fall 2012
Project Abstract

Instructional assistants in special education classrooms fulfill a vital need to successfully support students with special needs. The problem with utilizing instructional assistants in the school setting is the lack of training and resources provided to instructional assistants. Instructional assistants do not currently possess the necessary understanding of core educational concepts and are therefore unable to provide the best practices when supporting students. Based on the common themes presented in the literature review and relevant teaching experiences from a Learning Center Model classroom, a resource handbook was developed as an effective option to alleviate the above-mentioned problem. The focus of the project contains a comprehensive handbook guide for instructional assistants to draw from and apply in their everyday assignments. Ultimately, the project was designed to be a guide to develop focused professional development trainings for instructional assistants led by the special education teacher. With regards to the greater education field, this handbook directly provides special education classrooms with best practices of instructional and behavioral strategies to be implemented in special and general education environments.

Keywords: General education, inclusion, instructional aides, instructional assistants, Learning Center Model, paraprofessionals, resource handbook for instructional assistants, special education
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Definition of Problem</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Literature Review</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Methodology</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Project</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Discussion</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter I

There is a common theme in which many school districts fail to deliver clarified roles and responsibilities for instructional assistants and do not provide them adequate training and resources (Carroll, 2001; Keller, Bucholz & Brady, 2007; McVittie, 2005). While school districts are focused on implementing programs to support students with special needs, there is an even more daunting situation occurring within school systems. In recent years, it has become very common for instructional assistants to work closely with students who receive special education support in general and special education classrooms. Many schools are now moving towards a Learning Center Model, which encompasses a traditional Resource Specialist Program (RSP) and a Special Day Class (SDC) for mild to moderate students with special needs. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) does not officially have a definition of inclusion and how it relates to a Learning Center Model, however, Learning Centers are designed to meet diverse learners’ needs in special education. Students are included in both special and general education settings and serviced through repeated exposure and practice to core curriculum often through small group instruction. Learning Centers require a great deal of focus and organization of all educators and instructional assistants (King-Sears, 2007). Fallbrook Union Elementary School District recently implemented the Learning Center Models in all Kindergarten through sixth grade elementary school.

With such increases in the number of students being identified and eligible for special education services in public schools, there has been an increasing demand for the use of instructional assistants to work in collaboration with special and general educators. The problem is that many instructional assistants are unprepared, under trained and insufficiently provided with proper resources and materials to perform the duties of their positions (Breton, 2010; Caroll,
All students require and deserve the utmost attention from teachers and instructional assistants who are qualified and more than capable of fulfilling their needs. Students with special needs require specialized services to reach their full potential and in order to make that possible, assistants need to be prepared and have access to the best practices and strategies (Blatchford, Bassett, Brown, & Webster, 2009; Breton, 2010; Carroll, 2001; Keller et al., 2007; McKenzie, 2011).

This chapter will establish the purpose of this project and provide the reader with a preview to the literature. Following these two sections, the reader will be guided through the methodology and significance of this project as well as the project’s limitations. This chapter will conclude with a list of noteworthy terms, which are key to understanding the involvedness of the project prior to a final summary of Chapter One.

**Purpose of Project**

The purpose of this project is to research and develop a resource handbook for instructional assistants to easily access within the classroom at any given time and locate information about a question or concern. To put it simply the research question that will guide this project is: What materials, resources and information would be most beneficial to be included within a resource handbook for instructional assistants at Fallbrook Street School to use for training purposes and ongoing understanding and growth through the academic year while working with students with special needs?

It is vitally important for instructional assistants to have the same access to materials and resources as the special educators themselves for the benefit of the students. Since special education caseloads are often large, it is difficult for special educators to meet all the needs of the students. Therefore, there is a huge dependence on instructional assistants to fulfill each
student’s unique needs under the direction of the special educator. This project will allow special educators to provide instructional assistants with a resource to consult whenever necessary, as well as provide the instructional assistants a sense of autonomy to implement a variety of strategies with the help of the handbook. Ultimately, the most important outcome of the handbook is to improve student participation and learning as assistants would be better able to meet the needs of all students and teach core curriculum.

**Preview Literature**

Schools across the country are turning towards a new model of instruction, which is more accessible and inclusive of all students from general education to classrooms support students with moderate/severe disabilities (U.S. Bureau, 2011). The Learning Center Model has potential to be an effective approach to further develop students’ academic, social and behavioral needs (special or typical). However, Learning Centers cannot function to their highest potential without the implementation of instructional assistants both in general education classrooms and the special education environments (King-Sears, 2007). Literature focusing on special education and the increasing number of instructional assistants emphasizes not only the growing amount of time they work with students with special needs, but the amount of actual instruction assistants are expected to provide to students (Giangreco & Broer, 2007; Giangreco, Edelman, Broer & Doyle, 2001). Overall, the literature described several areas to be further developed for instructional assistants starting with clearly identified roles and responsibilities, followed by areas of training and resources to provide support in a easily accessible manner and location (Carroll, 2001; Keller et al. 2007; McVittie, 2005).
Preview of Methodology

In 2011, I was hired into Fallbrook Union Elementary School District as an Education Specialist and assigned to a Learning Center at a Kindergarten through sixth school where I would work with students in fourth through sixth grade. I was assigned four instructional assistants to support my Learning Center in servicing a caseload of 28 students with a wide range of special needs. Throughout the year I was presented with difficult situations and also found myself repeating instructions, explaining routines and constantly concerned with making sure all four instructional assistants received the same instructions and information. With this project, my goal is to develop a handbook, which instructional assistants can refer to in order to refresh their memory or understanding of specific procedures and strategies or find clarity or answers to questions efficiently and effectively especially if the special educator is unavailable to assist in the matter. The focus of this project is to include information, resources and electronic links about defined roles and responsibilities as outlined by the district and union, specific routines and procedures which must be followed according to special education laws and regulations as well as best practices for academic, social skills and supporting positive behavior both in the general and special education classroom environments. Themes presented in the literature will be used as guidelines for information and resources to include within the handbook as well as personal experience.

Significance of Study

Any special educator who is passionate and dedicated to the well-being and development of their students in all areas, both academically and developmentally, strives to maintain informed, capable and supportive assistants that possess the knowledge and skills required to effectively work with students with special needs. Having better-trained and supported assistants
will most certainly increase student outcomes in their development and learning. It is imperative to continue to refresh and build upon knowledge and skills in order to evolve and develop with the students and current best practices.

On a personal level, working with four instructional assistants as a first year teacher was incredibly challenging and has driven me to find a more productive way to manage and support my instructional assistants that is accessible to all four assistants and easily understandable. My instructional assistants vary widely in their abilities and understanding of instructional and behavioral strategies when working with students. I want to be more supportive and provide resources for my instructional assistants to feel more prepared and able to successfully work with all students in our Learning Center. A Learning Center Model cannot function to its highest capacity and successfully meet all student needs without the help of instructional assistants. There needs to be consistency for all assistants and a central resource handbook for all to consult in order to facilitate an organized and effective learning environment for students.

**Limitations of Project**

There are several limitations to this project. This project is being designed for one specific classroom in one school district and therefore may not be generalized to all schools. There will also be no time to test this project by actually implementing it in a classroom setting. Without being able to implement the project the effectiveness and successfulness of the project will be unknown.

**Definitions**

Although the literature review presents a variety of interchangeable terms to describe a specific group of employees, the term *instructional assistant* will be used throughout the literature review to identify the specific group of paraprofessionals who work in a school setting
under the supervision of a certificated special education teacher for two reasons. First, most instructional assistants engage in some sort of teaching or providing instruction to students. Second, instructional assistant is the title of the paraprofessionals whom the following chapters will address. The words paraprofessional, paraeducator, classroom aide, educational assistant or teacher’s aide all refer to the same people whose job titles include important roles in education (French, 2004). The federal government defines this group of people as “any person who works under the direct supervision of a classroom teacher in early childhood, elementary or secondary school” (Burbank, Bates & Schrum, 2009).

**Inclusion**

There is no legal definition of *inclusion* or *inclusive education*, however, at its most basic definition, inclusion means that students with special needs are supported in their age appropriate general education with their neighborhood peers and friends through Specialized Academic Instruction (SAI) as mandated by their Individual Educational Program (IEP) within the context of the core curriculum and general education activities (Halvorsen & Neary, 2001; “National Study,” 2005).

**Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

A special program designed to provide supports and services to students with identified delays and/or disabilities free of charge in a public educational school system. An IEP team consisting of parents/guardians, educators, other related professionals and sometimes the student, come together to discuss the needs of the student and develop goals to further the student’s development into a written document (Bachrach, 2011).
Learning Center Model

Like Inclusion, there is no legal definition of a Learning Center. However, according to King-Sears (2007), Learning Centers are an organized method for providing services in general and special education environments to students with special needs. Learning Centers often support students in special education in a small group environment through appropriately leveled instruction. Learning Centers meet the need of a widely diverse population of students with Individualized Education Programs.

Resource Specialist Program (RSP)

A program that provides support and services to students with special needs who are included in a general education classroom for more than 50% of their school day (Handcock, 2009).

Special Day Class (SDC)

A self-contained special education classroom that provides supports and services to students with more intensive needs that cannot be met by general education or a RSP environment and consists of more than 50% of a student’s school day (Handcock, 2009).

Special Education

Special Education is defined as specific instruction that is specially designed to meet the needs of a child with special needs. “Specially designed instruction means adapting the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction.” This instruction can be implemented at school, in home, in a hospital and other locations and can encompass academic, development, behavioral and physical needs as well (“Individuals with Disabilities,” 2004).
Summary

Instructional assistants play a vital role in a student with special needs’ education both in general and special education classrooms (Carroll, 2001; Giangreco et al., 2001; Keller et al., 2007). A handbook for instructional assistants at Fallbrook Street Elementary School must include information, materials and resources from the professional literature and personal experience. There is a need to train and/or provide support to instructional assistants in order to increase students’ educational and developmental progress (Carroll, 2001; McKenzie, 2011). The development of this project, a resource handbook for instructional assistants, will lead to increased knowledge, understanding and the ability to better support students with special needs in general and special education classroom environments.
Chapter II

The landscape of education in public schools is changing. Instructional assistant positions were created so schools in the United States could meet federal laws for education of special needs students (Conley, Gould, & Levine, 2009). In 2004, approximately 1.3 million instructional assistants were employed in public schools. Seventy-five percent were employed at a school where over half of the assistants worked with students who received special education support (Burbank, Bates & Schrum, 2009). With such an increasing number of students being identified and receiving special education services, there is a need for more paraprofessionals or instructional assistants to work alongside special and general educators in the classroom. School districts today are more reliant on the services of instructional assistants to provide supports to students with special needs both in special and general education classrooms. With the increase in individuals being hired as instructional assistants, there is a general concern of how capable or to what extent are these individuals qualified to fulfill the duties of an instructional assistant, especially with the implementation of a Learning Center Model. Learning Center Models function through the organization of small group instruction in a special education environment and specialized academic instruction services within the general education classroom when used as the primary model for special education services (King-Sears, 2007). The area of concern and problem schools are facing is the task of determining what areas instructional assistants are in need of training or access to resources provided by educators or districts to be considered highly qualified (Breton, 2010).

The following literature review will highlight the areas of strengths and weaknesses already identified in the education field in order to develop a training manual in the form of a resource handbook for the use of instructional assistants at Fallbrook Street School in Fallbrook,
California. Specifically this resource manual will focus on English Language Arts to address the recent English Language Arts curriculum adoption at Fallbrook Union Elementary School District as well as general strategies to use across various content areas in general and special education environments. Having convenient access to the materials and resources necessary to fulfill the responsibilities of the curriculum will ensure the likelihood of students demonstrating a more solidified understanding of the California State Standards. Without the appropriate and necessary teaching resources, including instructional strategies, student activities and assessments procedures, instructional assistants cannot be expected to perform their role in students’ education properly or effectively.

As the literature review unfolds, common themes are presented and discussed in further detail. Following an overview of the context of literature, the history of instructional assistants in education will reveal the significance and impact of their presence since the 1940s. Given the length of years in which assistants have been involved in education, the roles and responsibilities are ever evolving and discussed within the literature. The importance of instructional assistants in classrooms throughout the decades has increased due to federal laws and the needs of students (Conley et al., 2009). The majority of the literature focuses on the training materials or resources necessary for instructional assistants to have access to during their daily routines in the classroom. The literature also points out where significant areas have been overlooked and therefore require immediate attention to ensure student success. Prior to the summary of the literature review, connections to the literature will be discussed in length due to their importance and relevance to the question of determining the necessary compiled resource materials to provide to instructional assistants.
According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011), many instructional assistants work extensively with special education students in both special and general education settings. As schools are becoming more inclusive in nature, the need for instructional assistants is dramatically increasing (U.S. Bureau, 2011). Literature regarding special education and instructional assistants emphasizes not only the increasing number of assistants working with students with special needs, but the amount of instruction assistants have a role in (Giangreco & Broer, 2007). The literature to date emits a common theme of the lack of clarified roles and training there is available to enhance the abilities of instructional assistants. Better training would lead to more beneficial results in the classroom and with student learning. However, there is a common consensus that the least qualified employees (instructional assistants) have a significant role and responsibility in providing primary instruction to special education students (Giangreco, Edelman, Broer & Doyle, 2001).

**History of Instructional Assistants in Education**

In order to develop a true understanding of the role and needs of the instructional assistants in current education, it is important to review the similarities and differences in the background, history and importance of instructional assistants in the past. *Teacher’s helpers* were introduced into the classroom in the 1940’s in response to the increase in students in classrooms from immigration (Lewis, 2005). Typically teachers’ helpers would perform clerical and “housekeeping” duties such as grading, cleaning, and copying so the classroom teacher could dedicate more time to lesson planning and instruction (Giangreco & Doyle, 2007; Lewis, 2005; McVitte 2005).

However, over 50 years ago, during the 1960’s instructional assistants were introduced into special education school classrooms nationwide with the understanding that these employees
were there to assist the teacher by performing clerical duties in addition to providing educational services to the students with special needs (Giangreco & Doyle, 2007; Lewis, 2005). This profession grew and evolved over the following decades due to a series of national events occurring during 1960s and 1970s. Most notably, the Education Professions Development Act of 1967 introduced and mandated the idea of professional development and training for instructional assistants. The passage of Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, which necessitated schools to provide a free and appropriate education to all students with special needs also played a key role in the changes in education. From this, the act specified schools must provide training to all instructional assistants, thereby invoking the change from assistants working as clerical assistants to instructional assistants providing instruction and services to students with special education (Lewis, 2005).

**Defined Roles and Responsibilities**

The passage of Public Law 42-142 further developed and expanded the role and duties of instructional assistants and consequently led to complicated issues surrounding the new expected roles and duties of instructional assistants working with students with special needs. The goal of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act 1975 was to eliminate the exclusion of children with special needs in schools, and because of this, instructional assistants were assigned to work in a variety of roles with students from one-on-one instruction in a special or general education classroom, to working with groups of students in a special or general education class or a combination of all situations through the school year (Burbank et al., 2009; Lewis, 2005). In recent years, instructional assistants have been expected to perform multiple roles in the educational setting, which has lead to assistants being stretched to roles where there is an overreliance on their services.
Responsibilities of instructional assistants have significantly evolved over the years from clerical tasks to providing primary instruction to students on behalf of a certificated teacher. It is highly important to consider the new job description that reflects the current roles of instructional assistants (Carroll, 2001; McVittie, 2005). Responsibilities of assistants now generally include inclusion skills, facilitating interpersonal and social skills, daily living skills, community skills, and domestic skills, which encompass related responsibilities of discipline, communication skills and providing accommodations/modifications. Assistants may have time to prepare which strategies or accommodations to implement, but often times, assistants must put these skills to use on the spot, especially when adapting curriculum or accommodating student needs in general education and on the playground (Carroll, 2001; Conley et al. 2009). The roles and responsibilities are changing not only across the nation, but in other countries as well and many in a similar manner as in the United States. The literature indicates several benefits associated with assistants being present in general education classrooms by increasing the attention, participation and engagement of the students with special needs (Blachford, Bassett, Brown & Webster, 2009).

Considering the conversation of the roles and responsibilities of the instructional assistants comes the issue of whether or not instructional assistants are being used appropriately and effectively (Giargreco & Broer, 2005). Questions and concerns arise with the understanding that instructional assistants report spending much of their day without supervision and implementing instruction as an autonomous entity separate from special or general education, which the literature expresses is a consequence of the blurred and inconsistent or flat out lack of clear roles and responsibilities expected of an instructional assistant (Giargreco & Broer, 2005; Giargreco & Doyle, 2007; Miramontes, 1990). The literature is consistent in identifying a
common theme in the lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities of the instructional
assistants, however the literature itself does not deliver a concise or agreed upon description of
the roles and responsibilities of the instructional assistants. There is a call for such language to be
written down as contractual, but there is no set of rules to follow, only guidelines and the notion
that it is up to the individual districts to determine clarity. With that notion, lies the some
responsibility of the problem in the first place.

**Importance of the Need for Training**

The importance of the instructional assistants in special education and their roles to work
with students with special needs is not in question, however the extent to which instructional
assistants are properly and adequately trained in the field is an area of concern (Conley et al.;
Giangreco & Broer, 2005; Giangreco & Doyle, 2007; Lewis, 2005; McKenzie, 2011). The
instructional assistants working with special education students has been increasing over the past
30 years as common practice due to increases in the students in special education. However, the
problem lies with the notion that the least qualified personnel are being assigned to classrooms
and expected to provide the primary service to the most complicated and complex group of youth
in the education system (Giangreco & Broer, 2005; Giangreco & Doyle, 2007). Assistant’s jobs
are reflecting similar roles as a certificated teacher and too many instructional assistants are
performing duties and teacher type roles without the training or supervision required of a
certificated teacher (Keller et al., 2007).

Untrained and unsupervised assistants are delivering primary instruction to students, who
undoubtedly, require the most highly qualified assistants to provide the effective and appropriate
instruction (Giangreco & Doyle, 2007). Instructional assistants actually spend more time
providing instruction to special education students than do special education teachers. On
average, there are four times as many instructional assistants than special education teachers, therefore concluding that students are being serviced by instructional assistants that are most likely, according to the literature, less qualified and untrained (Breton, 2010; Giangreco & Broer, 2005; Giangreco & Doyle, 2007; Lewis, 2005; McKenzie, 2011). Research supports a lack of effective methods and resources for instructional assistants to provide the best support to students in the classrooms, especially special education (Conley et al., 2009; Lewis, 2005).

Research indicates school districts are beginning to show a focus on training and providing resources to instructional assistants because of the fact that the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 mandates assistants to be “highly qualified” (Conley et al., 2009; Keller et al., 2007). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires that, upon entering the field or being hired, instructional assistants are required to have a high school diploma, some higher education credits or have passed a competency exam administered by the hiring district (McKenzie, 2011). However, when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 was enacted, there was no clause or statement that specified the amount of training districts must provide (Giangreco & Broer, 2005) until IDEA 2004 was put into place, which requires states to ensure all personnel are adequately prepared and trained (Breton, 2010). The oversight from NCLB Act 2001 and IDEA 2004 was a lack of direction as to how this requirement was going to be met in practice. It is essentially left up to districts to implement this requirement (Breton, 2010), however, according to Picket (1999), most states have not correctly or adequately fulfilled this requirement. Most instructional assistants receive on-the-job training often limited to a brief introduction, a few handouts, and shadowing another instructional assistant (Carroll, 2001). The literature identifies the most significant problem facing the use of instructional assistants in the classroom with students with special needs as the lack of available resources and/or training.
However, the literature does not demonstrate a clear picture of how to support instructional assistants in a simple step-by-step procedure, rather the literature does agree upon what should be included in such resources or trainings for instructional assistants. The literature seems to always fall back on the fact that IDEA 2004 left decisions about supporting and creating “highly qualified” assistants up to individual districts throughout the country.

**Training/Resources Necessary for Instructional Assistants**

Training programs and/or materials are needed to prepare instructional assistants to have an understanding and ability to carry out academic standards and other mandates to successfully and appropriately educate students (Lewis, 2005). The successful delivery of a continuum of educational services requires the use and implementation of well trained or highly qualified instructional assistants to work under certificated teachers and service providers (McKenzie, 2011). As responsibilities of special education teachers become more complex and time consuming, it is inevitable educators will be more dependent on instructional assistants in the classroom to implement services and instruction to students and this upcoming situation only further emphasizes the need for more, better and effective training for instructional assistants (Breton, 2010; French, 2004). The issue of the lack of training is a fundamental issue that needs to be proactively handled by districts to support not only the instructional assistants, but also ultimately the students whom the instructional assistants are working with (Breton, 2010). Opposition to further or better training of instructional assistants stems from a lack of finances or a willingness to spend the funds to provide the training, however, Breton (2010) argued the lasting benefits that will come from the training will actually prove to be financially supported.

In addition to the identification of the need for training for instructional assistants, the theme of incorporating clear and explained roles and duties of an instructional assistant are also
necessary. These clear roles and descriptions of duties should be included within the training to prevent confusion and an overreliance on instructional assistants (Giangreco & Broer, 2005; Giangreco & Doyle, 2007). Too much dependency on instructional assistants, due to a lack of clarified job descriptions and training, has led to unintended detrimental effects on the student population. Such negative effects noted in the literature are instructional assistants having blurred ideas of their expected roles and possibly taking on too much autonomy in the classroom, students becoming too dependent on instructional assistants for protection and friendship, and students in special education being taught by under qualified assistants (Giangreco & Broer, 2005; Giangreco & Doyle, 2007). Without clear roles and training, instructional assistants are left to use their own personal knowledge and understanding of education, social aspects and on the spot decision-making. While assistants may be effectively utilized to facilitate social interactions between students in general and special education, the lack of training can actually have the opposite effect and negatively impact the socialization among peers (Blatchford et al., 2009; Giangreco & Doyle, 2007).

When it comes to training matters, content and materials that should be present within the training of instructional assistants, content should consist of depth and not necessarily breadth. Keeping in mind their increasing responsibility in the school system, instructional assistants should be introduced and trained with clear focuses and topics of relevance (Carroll, 2001; McKenzie, 2011). Once appropriate roles and responsibilities have been developed and agreed upon, the next step is to plan how and when instructional assistants will be trained to carry out the roles and responsibilities. Resources to consider could be, but are not limited to internet courses, manuals, written plans, modeling, courses or workshops and be combined or used in conjunction with supervision, ongoing instruction and feedback (Giangreco et al., 2001).
Since the instructional assistants role has become so important and vital to the successful execution of providing special education services, the literature examines and agrees upon a handful of specific areas to be addressed with instructional assistants (Keller et al., 2007). The Council for Exceptional Children (“What every special,” 2003) developed standards to guide the training of instructional assistants and identified ten skill areas that were necessary to be addressed. Of these ten areas, research from the literature review also repeated the same ten areas of need (see Table 1, “Considerations for Instructional Assistant Training/Handbook Development”).

**Connection to Special Education**

With regards to special education, providing information and developing an understanding of the foundations of special education in terms of the IEP itself and the IEP process are essential for the instructional assistants to be a successful part of the instructional team. It requires a team of assistants to work with students with special needs. Instructional assistants are a vitally important part of this team. Without clear expectations and guidance in the proper direction, the team is unable to successfully function in the best interest of the students. The effectiveness of the team is highly affected by the resources and communication between team members (Carroll, 2001; Keller et al., 2007; McKenzie, 2011; Miramontes, 1990; “What every special,” 2003).

As previously mentioned, since the responsibilities of instructional assistants have changed and evolved, training based on the current responsibilities should also be included. Characteristics and development of the learners and cultural diversity should also be attended to at some point in the training. Data collection and assessments are another important area identified to be included due to the importance of having records that prove or rather objectively
demonstrate student progress. Behavioral, social and instructional strategies should be introduced and broken down so instructional assistants can easily understand them. Health and safety regulations, issues and processes should also be outlined and discussed for consistency purposes and the safety of students and assistants. Finally, collaboration, communication, evaluation and supervision are essential areas to be knowledgeable in and able to perform and utilize (Breton, 2010; Carroll, 2001; Keller et al., 2007; McVittie, 2005; “What every special,” 2003).
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Considerations for Instructional Assistant Training/Handbook Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Characteristics and development of learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cultural diversity aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Data Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Instructional, Social and Behavioral Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Health and Safety Rules and Regulations for students and assistants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Roles and Responsibilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The importance of training instructional assistants is paramount because their service is considered *indirect* as opposed to a teacher’s instruction being *direct*. Indirect instruction refers to any instruction delivered from an individual working under a qualified or certificated individual. Direct instruction is any instruction provided directly from the qualified or certificated individual (Giangreco et al., 2001). With a primary use of ‘indirect’ instruction becoming more and more common in special education classrooms and inclusive settings, it is imperative to ensure their abilities are considered ‘highly qualified’ as mandated by NCLB of 2001 and IDEA of 2004 and establish a support system through available resources and communication (Giangreco et al., 2001; Miramontes, 1990). Providing appropriate and effective resources for instructional assistants will inevitably open the door for a smoother and more effective classroom environment, which will in turn, positively affect the students. After all, the goal of schools and education as mandated by NCLB of 2001 is to further promote the learning and development of all students by placing an importance on using differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students (Carroll 2001; Keller et al., 2007).

**Summary**

Schools are constantly faced with the expectations of maintaining current, relevant and best practices with how students are taught and engaged in school instructional and extracurricular activities. There is an additional set of rules, laws and considerations to take into account with special education to ensure their unique needs are being met to their full potential. These unique needs must be met through current, relevant and best practices as deemed by research and ongoing practice. With the development and application of Learning Centers in elementary school as the method of special education service deliver for students with special
needs, it is important to understand the outstanding factors affecting the success of such programs. It takes a team of educators and instructional assistants to work fluidly together to create an environment where student development and acquisition of academics is mastered.

Instructional assistants play a key and vital role in the instructional team for students with special needs. Few would argue that special education instructional assistants are not being used as an important role in delivering key instruction to students (Blatchford et al., 2009; Breton, 2010; Carroll, 2001; Keller et al., 2007; McKenzie, 2011). Now more than ever, it is essential to provide instructional assistants with key resources and information pertaining to the roles and responsibilities they hold when working in a Learning Center with students with special needs. However, although the responsibility exists, there are little resources available or provided to establish preparedness and ongoing training/understanding among instructional assistants (Kim, 2011). The following chapter informs the reader of the methodology used to develop the project, a resource handbook for instructional assistants, describing the steps taken and the information considered for the development. The reader will then be presented with the completed project and conclude with a final evaluative chapter.
Chapter III

In realizing the impact instructional assistants have on students with special needs, the Council for Exceptional Children (“What every special,” 2003) stated, “quality of educational services for children and youth with exceptionalities resides in the abilities, qualifications and competencies of the personnel who provide the services,” (p. 182). Districts are looking towards the use of instructional assistants to alleviate the demands associated with increasing number of students qualifying for special education services, however, as previously mentioned in the literature review, there is a lack of direction in which districts should train and support assistants in the classroom (Giangreco & Broer, 2005; IDEA, 2004; McKenzie, 2011). The need for instructional assistants to have better training and support in the classroom is not new (Giangreco & Broer, 2005), however, the recent push for schools to comply with standards-based curriculum has placed a spotlight on the quality of instruction students with special needs receive to ensure their access to the general education curriculum (Carter, O’Rourke, Sisco & Pelsue, 2012).

Instructional assistants need to have access on a daily basis to an instructional resource handbook in the classroom where information about various strategies and procedures can easily be understood and implemented. The focus of this project was to develop a resource handbook to be used in the Learning Center for the seven instructional assistants assigned to our classroom. The Learning Center supports students with a wide range of mild to moderate disabilities and requires assistants to become familiar and comfortable with a variety of support strategies and techniques to successfully meet the needs of the students.
Design

This project was designed to meet the needs of the assistants so that they will be better prepared to meet the needs of the students. The resource handbook was divided into chapters that break down information into smaller chunks so that assistants can easily access information. I took the time constraints of the assistants’ schedules into consideration when writing the handbook so assistants would be able to read through a particular chapter or section in a chapter between groups, before or after the work hours or prior to infrequent occasions such as state or district wide assessments. This project included information, additional resources and electronic links throughout the chapters. Chapters provided specific information about their roles and responsibilities, specific routines and procedures in compliance with regulations and legalities as well as strategies and techniques for academics, social skills and supporting positive behavior both in the general and special education classroom environments. This handbook directly addressed the concerns raised in my initial project question by providing assistants with useful resources and information that pertained to their everyday duties in the classroom. It also opened a door to possible future uses of this handbook to guide in person trainings and professional development to further develop an even better understanding of how to support students.

Setting

This handbook was developed with seven instructional assistants in mind who work in the Learning Center at my school as well as our students and their needs currently being supported through the Learning Center. The audience this handbook was intended for were the instructional assistants. The demographics of the students in this school are primarily of Hispanic or Latino students (76%) followed by a White population of students (22%). The school has less than one percent of students who are Filipino, African American, American Indian or Alaska
Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Unique to the location of the school, over three-fourths of the school’s families are socioeconomically disadvantaged (79.4%) and more than half the students in this school are English Language Learners (61.7%). Students with disabilities make up just over eight percent of the whole student population; the Learning Center reflects the same demographic percentages as the school with the students being supported through special education.

When I developed this resource handbook, I took into consideration my experience from last year working in the Learning Center and managing the assistants and supporting the students. After reflecting back on specific moments of challenges and reoccurring issues throughout the year, I developed the handbook to be a stepping-stone to minimize the challenges and issues for future years in the Learning Center. For example, throughout last year, one assistant in particular was unable to remain consistent when providing accommodations to students during assessments. I spoke with her and demonstrated correct procedures several times however, this proved to be ineffective. I learned she responds best when given written instructions that provided her with an explanation of the why and how. I incorporated her learning style along with observations of how others best understood information with the development of this handbook.

**Prospective Audience**

Currently, this resource handbook is intended for the four instructional assistants supporting my classroom with fourth through sixth graders and the three assistants supporting my colleague with students in Kindergarten through third grade. Every Wednesday is early release for students and therefore provides opportunities for staff development and professional learning communities to take place. One Wednesday every month, I plan to use this handbook as
a guide to providing hands on training with my assistants. One chapter or a section of a chapter each month would be selected to provide even more depth and solidify understandings, such as the standardized assessment portion right before state testing in the spring.

The Learning Center is meant to be an extension of the school that supports students with different learning challenges; therefore I want the Learning Center to reflect school wide procedures, strategies and techniques with consistency as appropriate to the special education environment. As new laws and district regulations are put into place and techniques and strategies are introduced and accepted as best practices in education, I will add to the handbook in order to keep it up to date. When changes and updates are made to the handbook, I will inform all the assistants through a common message board each assistant “checks” everyday, so there will be no gaps in knowledge.

In the future, this handbook could be shared among the other four in-town schools with Learning Centers in our district. Since it is developed around the unique characteristics of a Learning Center, it would easily be transferable and personalized to other Learning Centers. Ideally, I plan to use this handbook to its fullest potential within my own Learning Center for a school year to work out any necessary changes prior to having it implemented in other classrooms.

**Procedures**

Once I completed the research necessary to fully understand the impact of instructional assistants being under supported in the classroom, I developed a comprehensive literature review. From the literature review, several themes emerged in terms of topics to be expanded upon in order to support assistants in the classroom. I selected several topics, which held extreme value in my own classroom and were an area of need for my assistants. I used my own
experiences from last year to add specifics to the handbook to personalize the handbook to our classroom and overall school environment. To develop the first chapter on instructional assistant roles and responsibilities, I consulted my district’s contractual definition and job description for classified personnel working as instructional assistants. As I wrote each subsequent section in each chapter, I selected specific examples and additional resources to support the handbook and further develop the assistants’ understanding of the topic. Some examples are embedded within the chapters, while any additional materials are found in the appendix.

**Summary**

The development of this resource handbook is intended to bridge a gap between educators and instructional assistants in providing a clear understanding of responsibilities and strategies/techniques for supporting students successfully. There is a need to develop ways to support assistants in the classroom both in special education settings and in the general education classroom. The resource handbook I developed focused on major themes from the literature review as well as my own experiences and perceived needs within my own classroom. In the following chapter, the handbook is presented and the reader will be guided through the chapters and topics. Previously discussed topics, such as assistant responsibilities, communication, instructional strategies, behavioral and social skills and specific school wide techniques, are discussed in further detail and broken into manageable chunks of information.
Chapter IV

In response to the identified problem in the education system regarding the lack of effective trainings and resources for instructional assistants, a resource handbook was developed. The following handbook is designed as a guide for instructional assistants to utilize during their everyday assignments. Information and explanations are provided to develop a better understanding of a particular situation and to then select various strategies to implement with the students that the assistants have been are assigned to support. The handbook was written in chapters and followed a simple format of providing information and examples or ideas. Each chapter focused on one particular area necessary to maintain implementing best practices while supporting students with special needs. The chapters built on each other, starting out with ‘housekeeping’ items and role responsibilities and then progressed through delivering instructional routines and facilitating positive student behaviors. The chapters also made specific references to previous or future chapters or sections as a means of demonstrating how each area was connected and relevant when fulfilling duties. See Appendix for completed project, Instructional assistant handbook: A guide to an effective learning center.
Chapter V

The lack of resources and trainings available to instructional assistants in special education environments is hindering the learning and development of students being supported. An increase in the number of students being identified and supported by the Learning Center requires the implementation and use of more instructional assistants. However, assistants are not being properly trained, if at all, and certainly are not provided with any means of resources to access for on-going support in their position (Carroll, 2001; Keller et al., 2007; McVittie, 2005). Gaps in the legislature have led to districts failing to adequately support instructional assistants in the school environment when working with children with special needs (Giangreco et al., 2001; Miramontes, 1990). The problem of instructional assistants not having access to resources and trainings to prepare them for their position is a situation that must be addressed for the success of students with special needs. As this chapter unfolds, I will discuss the lessons I have learned as a result of this project as well as describe in detail the plans I have for this project. I will also provide my recommendations to other educators in terms of its use and implementation based on what I have learned. Following will be the limitations of this project and future research before a final summary and conclusion of the entire project.

Lessons Learned

Two major lessons were learned after the completion of this project. The first lesson I learned was just how much this type of resource in needed within the special education setting. The second lesson learned is the amount of effort and planning involved in developing a comprehensive document that encompasses the needs the classroom environment.

During the development of this project, I used my own experiences from my first year of teaching as well as situations and events that happened presently to drive the content in the
project. I often found myself in situations where this handbook, had it been completed, would have been especially beneficial to the assistants in my classroom. Frequently, I am in a situation where I need to explain and re-explain several of the concepts I have included in the handbook. I have realized that if this handbook were implemented into my classroom, it would eliminate many of the disruptions I have to tend to with another group being led by an assistant. The need for this type of resource in a Learning Center Model is crucial. I fully understand now the impact of having a lack of resources and training for instructional assistants has on the classroom, but more importantly, the students. The interruptions, delays and minor mistakes caused by the lack of resources for assistants takes away from the instructional minutes intended for students. Every instructional minute that is lost cannot be redeemed and results in students missing out on valuable instruction.

The second lesson I learned was with my underestimation of how much effort would be spent in the development of a handbook for instructional assistants. I learned the research and gathering of additional resources are endless. I knew there were certain concepts I wanted to touch on within the handbook, but what I truly learned was in order to develop an easily understood chapter, I had to scaffold and build upon previously covered material. Towards the end of the development of the project, I realized just how much I had treated this project just I would have developed a lesson for my students in the Learning Center. I thought about what the assistants may know or may not have already known, defined key vocabulary, let my experiences and the research drive my instruction and always concluded with a summary of the main ideas. The effort in this project went far beyond the planning of a lesson though, because it required that I plan far in advance. I had to anticipate how, what and when the assistants will teach and with whom in order to provide resources on how to be proactive and reactive both in the midst of
the lesson and throughout the necessary duties each week. From the lessons I learned, I also developed an understanding of how this project will best be implemented into my classroom.

**Project Implementation Plans**

I plan to implement this handbook into my classroom at the start of the new calendar year and treat it as a pilot program before sharing with the other Learning Center classroom on my campus. At the end of the school year, my hope is to have a better understanding of how to best implement this handbook into the classroom and recruit the other Learning Center teacher on campus to implement it. In the following year, at monthly district wide special education professional development meetings, I plan to share out with colleagues what I have developed and how it is working at my site between the two classrooms. My purpose in this would be to ultimately recruit more Learning Center teachers to adopt this handbook in an effort to create consistency in supporting instructional assistants district wide.

Starting at the beginning of the coming calendar year, this resource handbook will be implemented with the four instructional assistants currently supporting my classroom with fourth through sixth graders. Within my own classroom, I plan to hold monthly after school professional development sessions with my instructional assistants. Wednesdays are the perfect opportunity to hold professional development sessions because it is early release for students and therefore assistants are already on campus as per their contracted hours. As I developed this handbook, I kept in mind how I planned to use each chapter or a section of a chapter as the foundation of each training session. The chapters build upon each other and refer back to various sections throughout the book, but each chapter can be isolated during these in-person professional development trainings.
As new school wide procedures, strategies and techniques are adopted into our school, the Wednesday professional development sessions are the most appropriate and effective times to discuss the additions and make the changes in the handbook. At this time, questions can be asked and discussed in further detail to help solidify understanding. It is also likely for minor changes to occur throughout the month that need to be communicated prior to the monthly meetings. In this case, I will use the common message board to inform the assistants of the changes or additions and request their attention to the handbook for further details of the additional expectations on their part.

**Educational Implications**

What I can recommend to other educators will develop over time after I am able to fully implement and live through the project in practice. As previously mentioned, my future thoughts for this project would be to eventually implement this project into other Learning Center classrooms within my district. When this time comes, I would recommend to teachers to adapt the handbook to their own personal classroom. I believe the handbook is most beneficial when it is tailored to the classroom environment it is intended for. Teachers should develop their own methods for using the handbook for training purposes and how they find it most effective to add new information. While having the handbook specified to one classroom can be a benefit, it can also be a limitation, as I will describe in further detail in the following section.

**Limitations of Project**

With the completion of the project, the original limitations remain. The completed project will not be implemented in a classroom prior to the completion of this thesis project. The handbook was also developed with a single classroom environment in mind, diminishing the possibility of generalization across a variety of classrooms. In the event I had unlimited
resources, there are several things I would have done differently during the development of this project. The development of the project was not based upon the personal experiences and opinions of the audience the handbook is intended for. If I had more time, I would have developed a survey to have each assistant complete and follow up with an interview based on the survey findings. With more time, I also would have implemented the project in the classroom as a trial basis with an on-going and post evaluative survey to be completed by the assistants at six months and one year.

**Future Research**

Based on the literature review and the completion of this project, I would suggest future research in the initial training of instructional assistants. My project focused on the necessary on-going resources needed by instructional assistants, however, districts need to have a focus on initial training prior to employment. One major flaw the literature review revealed was the lack of legal obligations or guidelines for school districts to be held accountable. Legislature does state instructional assistants must be highly qualified, however, the process in which individuals become highly qualified is broadly left up to districts. Further research needs to continue to expose the necessity of initial training and suggest best practices for districts to implement this type of training.

**Summary/Conclusion**

Instructional assistants are an essential key to successfully delivering specialized academic instruction and individualized support to students with special needs in a school environment (Carroll, 2001; Giangreco et al., 2001; Keller et al., 2007). Research revealed a need to train and provide on-going support to instructional assistants in order to increase students’ educational and developmental progress. The literature review also developed a
common theme of what types of resources and supports should be included in the framework of training materials (Blatchford et al., 2009; Breton, 2010; Carroll, 2001; Keller et al., 2007; McKenzie, 2011). The actual project, a resource handbook for instructional assistants, was developed to increase understanding of specific areas of emphasis and provide resources to assistants to support students in general and special education classroom environments. Based on my experiences and research findings, the handbook consists of defined roles and responsibilities, communication factors, key concepts of the IEP, progress monitoring and assessment procedures, support of the educational environment, instructional strategies and facilitating positive student behavior interactions and social skills. As the project is implemented into practice, it will be used as a guideline to lead in-person professional development trainings for the assistants.

My aspirations for this project are optimistically to be implemented district-wide among all the Learning Centers. Recently with the new administration at the district level, there is a huge push for consistency and the use of best practices throughout the district’s schools. I believe all Learning Centers in my district can benefit from this project in several ways, but the most crucial factor would be developing a common front in how we as special education teachers support the assistants who are responsible for implementing instruction to our students.
References


The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA),


McVittie, E. (2005). The role of the teaching assistant: An investigative study to discover if teaching assistants are being used effectively to support children with special educational needs in mainstream schools. *Education 3*(13), 26-31.


Pickett, A. L., Faison, K., & Formanek, J. (1999). A core curriculum & training program to prepare paraeducators to work in inclusive classrooms serving school age students with disabilities. *Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services.*


Appendix
Instructional Assistant Handbook:

A Guide to an Effective Learning Center
Welcome!

This position is going to be an adventure with unique challenges and rewards that no other opportunity can provide. No two days will be alike. I would like to take a moment to thank you for your desire to work in special education; it is a wonderful position where you will have an impact on students’ lives. You will be a valuable team member and please keep in mind your positive interactions will only make this team stronger.

In order to successfully support students with special needs, instructional assistants need to be consistent with continuing to keep up with new and changing strategies and techniques to implement in the educational setting. This handbook was developed to provide a consolidated source of pertinent information for your use and encourage you to participate in further trainings offered in areas you wish to learn more about. The handbook is a dynamic resource you can use to continue to develop your skills as an instructional assistant.

It is intended to be a reference tool and a place to maintain district and instructional information on a regular basis. It is not meant to replace any training or professional development you have already received by the district, rather it is meant to enhance your understanding. I want this handbook to support you in the best ways possible. My vision is for this handbook to act as a source of communication and create opportunities of learning effective ways to support our students.

Remember, you are here to support the youth of our school. We support a wide range of abilities of students; provide them with warmth, patience and most of all, the best educational practices to foster their development and growth both in academics and as an individual. Students will face challenges and difficulties and it is your responsibility to help them understand their mistakes and teach during every teachable moment. Make every moment count!

Sincerely,

Mandy Geminert
Education Specialist
Fallbrook Union ESD
# Table of Contents

## Introduction

Chapter 1  
**Roles and Responsibilities**  
Job Description  
What Will Be Expected of You  
Qualifications  
Roles and Responsibilities at a Glance  
Special Responsibilities

Chapter 2  
**Confidentiality and Housekeeping**

Chapter 3  
**Communication**  
Types of Communication  
Effective Communicators  
Relationships With…

Chapter 4  
**Understanding Key Components of an IEP**  
IEP at a Glance

Chapter 5  
**Progress Monitoring and Assessment**  
What is Objective Observation in a School Setting  
Recording and Collecting Data  
Quick Reminders with Progress Monitoring  
Assessment Procedures  
Remember!...

Chapter 6  
**Supporting the Educational Environment**  
School-Wide Techniques  
Re-Cap…  
Motivation!

Chapter 7  
**Instructional Strategies**  
Learning Center – Small Group Environment  
Lesson Structure and Sequence  
Explicit Feedback  
Don’t Forget…  
Now What?  
General Education Classroom
Chapter 8

**Facilitating Positive Student Behavior and Social Skills**

- Giving Effective Directions
- Precision Commands
- Redirection
- Toolbox of Consequences
- Easy as ABC
- Facilitating Social Skills
- Please! Keep in mind…

**Appendix**

- Characteristics of Learners: Description of 13 Disability Categories

**Glossary**

- Abbreviations and Acronyms

**Questions and Answers**
Introduction

District Core Beliefs

All students can learn.

Success breeds success.

We control the conditions of success
Chapter 1

Roles and Responsibilities

“I cannot emphasize enough the importance of a good teacher.”

-Temple Grandin

Job Description

“Under general supervision, to perform paraprofessional instructional activities in specialized programs; to provide intensified learning experience for students in specialized programs; to provide a variety of clerical and supportive tasks for instructional personnel; and to do related work as required” (“Special education,” 2005).

What Will Be Expected Of You...

• Engage in the delivery of instructional lessons and learning materials
• Assist in creating and developing instructional lessons and learning materials
• Deliver instruction to small groups and individually to re-teach and reinforce academic concepts
• Monitor students during direct instruction and through guided practice and independent practice
• Engage in supporting students in general education
• Monitor students on field trips, on the playground and before or after school
• Be involved in the development of student behavior through the use of positive reinforcement strategies
• Maintain a variety of progress monitoring records and reports (academically and behaviorally)
• Assist students in their personal hygiene care
• Perform general clerical duties for instructional uses
• Engage in maintaining student discipline
• Assist in maintaining an orderly, attractive and organized learning environment
• Perform other related duties as assigned (“Special education,” 2005)
Qualifications -

Below are the following qualifications that you are responsible for demonstrating and maintaining throughout your employment in this position.

Knowledge of:

- English usage, punctuation, grammar and spelling
- General concepts of child growth and development; child behavior characteristics of the specific learners in the program of employed position
- Special Education goals and objectives
- Routine record keeping
- Basic mathematical concepts
- Basic First Aid principals

Ability to:

- Assume responsibility for supervising students
- Learn and utilize standard teaching aids and office machines
- Perform routine clerical work and light typing
- Learn and utilize basic methods and procedures to be followed in instructional settings in special education employed position
- Demonstrate an understanding, patient, warm and receptive attitude toward children with special needs
- Understand and carry out oral and written directions
- Maintain cooperative working relationships with students, staff, parents and the general public
- Type proficiently
- Pass a district administered general knowledge proficiency test

Training, Education and Experience:

- High School degree or recognized equivalent
- Either an Associates of Arts (AA) degree or have completed 48 college/university semester units or equivalent quarter units or passage of the Fallbrook Union Elementary School District examination for this classification
- Experience working with a variety of cultures (“Special education,” 2005)

Note: You are responsible to the site administrator (principal), however you are expected to follow the direction of your supervising teacher.
Roles and Responsibilities at a Glance

The following table will show you the difference between a teacher’s and instructional assistant’s role in the classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teacher’s Role</th>
<th>Assistant’s Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching</strong></td>
<td>Teaches lessons to students in small groups and individually</td>
<td>Teaches lessons to students in small groups and individually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment</strong></td>
<td>Administers formal and standardized assessments. Develops informal assessments for progress monitoring</td>
<td>Administers informal assessments; may develop informal assessments under teacher direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation</strong></td>
<td>Develops and prepares individualized goals and instructional planning for students; creates/designs instructional materials</td>
<td>Assists with the development of instructional materials; look over instruction provided prior to teaching groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classroom Organization</strong></td>
<td>Plans schedules, lessons, rooms arrangements, centers, activities</td>
<td>Implements as specified by the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting Objectives</strong></td>
<td>Determines objectives appropriate for individuals and groups of students</td>
<td>Delivers instruction to meet objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavior Management</strong></td>
<td>Observes behavior, plans and implements behavior management plans and strategies for individuals and groups</td>
<td>Observes behavior and carries out behavior management plans and strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitating a Classroom Partnership</strong></td>
<td>Arranges meetings/professional development, philosophy and goals with assistants; organizes job duties for assistants</td>
<td>Share ideas and concerns during meetings and carry out duties as directed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(“Special education,” 2005)
Special Responsibilities

Home-School Communication

Some students have difficulties with communicating to their families at home in regards to how their day went or the events that happened at school. Some families need daily communication about how their child’s behavior was throughout the day in order to maintain an effective home/school unified front. The reasons a student may require weekly or daily communication with their family at home are endless and very important. You may be required to fill out a daily log of a variety of activities every day in a separate binder that goes to and from school everyday. You may also be responsible for making a note everyday in a student’s planner to inform parents of their child’s choices that day. Notes could be as simple as a happy or sad face to indicate to parents who do not speak English that their child was either on task or off task most of the day.

Homework

Many of our students will require checks to ensure they have correctly written down their homework in their planner as well. You may need to accommodate or modify how students record their homework in their planner. It is also important to know what the actual homework assignments are before the homework goes home with students. Often homework will need to be accommodated or modified in length and/or level for students to be successful at completing their homework. You have the power and responsibility to accommodate and modify homework as you find appropriate to individual students. See Try This! in chapter 7 to get ideas on how to accommodate or modify homework for students.

For some students, homework packets will need to be put together and monitored by staff in the learning center. You may be responsible for putting together a weekly homework packet for individual students for language arts and/or math, making sure the student receives the packet and collecting it at the end of the week.
Confidentiality

Law requires maintaining confidentiality. The Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act mandates that school staff respect the legal and human rights of students and their families. It is essential we maintain confidentiality to protect our students and ourselves (Family educational rights, 1974).

Guidelines to Follow

- **Understand Need to Know versus Want to Tell.** Do not share any information (verbal or written) about a student or their family to anyone that does not need to know.
  - Please do not discuss grades, behaviors, etc. with anyone other than the student’s teachers

- Never talk about a student, their family or situations involving the student outside of school
  - Refrain from talking negatively about students or staff amongst other staff (i.e. break room, office)

- If you have a question or concern, please find an appropriate time and place to discuss the matters with your supervising teacher (Pickett, 1999).

Examples of Confidential Information

- Test Scores/Report cards
- Special Education IEP Disability Category
- Medical records or Medications
- Behavior problems, or family issues
- Any personal information (Family educational rights, 1974)

What Can Happen When Confidentiality is Violated?

Students and families can be affected.

Trust can be impacted.

Jobs can be lost.

Districts can be sued and your name could be in the lawsuit (Alexander, Ashbaker, Fillmore, Giddings & Likins, 2009).
**Housekeeping...**

**Schedules** — Schedules will be developed at the beginning of the year, however schedules ARE subject to change throughout the year. Schedule changes with general education and students moving in and out of the Learning Center constitute a possible change in the daily schedule. These changes may or may not have advanced notice, but will be accompanied by a new written schedule posted and available to take.

**Attendance** — Be there. Be on time. Students pick up on and thrive on consistency. Students notice when you are late or absent and it can have an impact on their day. They are disappointed when you do not show up or you are unreliable. The Learning Center relies on your punctuality and dependability, too. Staying on schedule helps maintain momentum for student learning day after day. It is completely understandable if you have an illness or family emergency, just please be sure to call the school and keep your supervising teacher informed (Alexander et al., 2009).

**Absences** — If possible, please provide advanced notice of absence. If you know you will be out, please take a few minutes the day before you are out at the end of your day to write down some notes about what your schedule looks like for the sub. I will provide this time for you during your work hours.

   **Note:** Make sure you turn in your absence form to the Office either prior to your absence or the day you return to work as per district policy.

**School Rules** — Posted on the wall by the door for staff and students to see.

**Dress Code** — Please dress appropriately to your job responsibilities (i.e. Do not wear heels to work if you’re required to monitor a student on the playground or a skirt if you will be sitting on the ground). Do not wear anything too revealing. As per site administration, jeans should typically be reserved for Fridays if possible and no rubber flip-flops at any time. Be mindful to any clothing or accessories you would not want damaged performing your responsibilities. Think about how others will perceive what you are wearing when you are communicating with other staff members or parents.

**Professional Development** — Periodically, there will be opportunities for you to attend trainings and seminars. These opportunities will be posted on the staff message board in advanced time to plan for any necessary arrangements. These opportunities are highly encouraged, but will not be mandated; the district will compensate you for your time.

**Mail** — Every staff member has a mailbox in the staff lounge and a personal email. Please check your box daily and your email often in order to stay informed with upcoming school events and important information personal to you.
Chapter 3

Communication

Communication is essential to creating and maintaining an effective team in the classroom. With open communication comes the opportunity for growth and success for the students and the staff as well. A team works best when all members of the team strive for personal growth in addition to meeting the needs of the students being supported. Good communication is an unselfish act of teamwork where feelings, perspectives and ideas are heard as opposed to be focused on oneself (“Area special,” 2003).

Types of Communication:
• Verbal
• Non-Verbal
• Written

You may not always recognize it, but students pay attention to our communication and often view adults as role models. Therefore, it is important to remain professional at all times, listen when necessary and respond appropriately (Alexander et al., 2009).

Effective Communicators Will:
• Remain calm and cool
• Demonstrate professionalism
  o Use correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, etc.
  o Speak and write clearly.
  o Avoid slang and profanity.
  o Be a positive role model to students in the way you speak and act.
  o Avoid negative talk about other staff members, students, and their families.
• Listen to understand and create meaning
• Ask questions
  o Encourage others’ thoughts and opinions
  o Paraphrase for understanding
  o Ask for clarification
• Stay positive
• Be able to explain a situation clearly and objectively
• Focus on the positives, even in a negative situation
• Acknowledge the expertise and knowledge of others (Alexander et al., 2009).

Note: See Strong Voice in Chapter 5 to learn more about verbal communication
Relationships with…

…General Education Teachers
- Respect the classroom teacher’s classroom management and teaching style
- Do not discuss student behaviors, progress, or specific situations outside of school with other teachers without your supervising teacher present and in an appropriate setting (Pickett & Gerlach, 2003).

Note: If a gen. ed. teacher asks you about personal information about a student or wants to discuss specifics about a student, please politely ask the teacher to bring up the matter with the student’s case manager and/or state you will bring the matter to the case manager’s attention, but you are unable to discuss those matters.

…Staff/School
- Respect all staff members
- Refrain from discussing personal problems
- Accept responsibility
- Know school policy and procedures (Pickett & Gerlach, 2003).

…Parents
- Discuss student progress, incidents and behaviors only with your supervising teacher and in the appropriate location.
- Discuss school issues and confidential matters only with necessary personnel.
- Respect the privacy of students and their families
- Present yourself as a positive and professional role model (Pickett & Gerlach, 2003).

Note: If a parent wishes to speak with you about their child or about a specific situation, whether on campus or off campus, please politely direct the parent to the supervising teacher. It is not your role or place to discuss such matters with parents.
Chapter 4

IEPs – Important Components to Understand

Present Levels – Includes a written statement about a student’s present abilities, at the time of the IEP meeting, in a given area including: reading, writing, math, communication, health, and social skills. Present levels also discuss a student’s ability to participate in general education (Rebhorn, 2009).

Goals – Goals are based upon present levels and developed around what skill a student can achieve over the course of a year. Goals are written to address the needs of the students and set the student up for success (Rebhorn, 2009).

Accommodations/Modifications – The accommodations and/or modifications are put into place to support a student in attaining their goals, successfully participating in general education and extracurricular activities and being involved with their peers (Rebhorn, 2009).
### IEP at a Glance

In an effort to create simplicity and ease in understanding key points of the IEP, I developed a 1-2 page document, IEP at a Glance, for each student and can be found in the front pocket of each student’s binder. Below is an outline of what you can expect to be familiar with when working in small groups in the Learning Center. It contains the heading in bold with possible descriptions underneath.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IEP at a Glance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP Due:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Ed Services:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized Academic Instruction (Learning Center)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAI in General Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech and Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapted P.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Category:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Learning Disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech and Language Impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allergies, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Levels:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key points from present levels in IEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short description of the <em>what</em> and <em>how</em> for each goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aides, Services, Accommodations, Modifications and Supports:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. Assessment accommodations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playground/lunch support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In class support, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Ideas, Things to Work on:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer programs/accommodations to use in general education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5

Progress Monitoring

The goal of collecting and recording good data is to monitor a student’s progress and be able to make informed decisions as to whether or not a student is making progress in a certain area. Data collection and record keeping is important in order for the team to determine if the current strategies and accommodations and/or modifications are effective in the student acquiring new skills to meet their goals as outlined in their IEP. The written “data” will serve as more of a permanent record to account for the student’s progress thus far (Pickett, 1999).

Observation is the key to collecting good data and keeping accurate records. Observations must be seen and recorded with an objective point of view. An objective point of view means the individual collecting data is free from biases, judgments and interpretations. Through observation we can learn about a student: their likes, dislikes, strengths and weaknesses (Pickett, 1999).

Observation should:

• Be done for a specific reason
• Provide samples of a students behavior and/or work
• BE OBJECTIVE

Caution: Sometimes we may find ourselves being tempted by our biases. For example, we may like one student better than another and tend to overlook that student’s behaviors. It is very important that do not overlook these actions and to objectively record exactly what is seen or heard to avoid inaccurately recording data.

What is Objective Observation in a school setting?

Objective observation is intentionally watching what a student does and/or says while recording the behaviors in order to make instructional decisions. Objective observation refers to an observer watching without biases/prejudices or judgments whether good or bad, and watching what is happening without guessing the ‘whys.’ During or directly following an observation, the observer must develop a written record containing the specifics about what was seen and/or heard (Pickett, 1999).

Note: Student behaviors could be a student’s physical actions, choice of words or an academic behavior such as solving an addition problem or writing a sentence.
Recording and Collecting Data

Below are the most common ways we will collect data in the Learning Center.

**Checklists** – These forms will often be teacher made and developed for a specific task such as addition/subtraction or keeping track of a student’s oral reading fluency. Checklists require the observer to watch the student perform a task while the observer records accurate information according to the data sheet checklist (Pickett, 1999).

*Note:* See the binder titled, “Progress Monitoring Data Sheets,” to find the checklist that measures the student goal you will be working on with a student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiplication/Division Math Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student’s Name:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Anecdotal Records** – This type of data collection consists of writing a sentence or two about a specific situation or event that occurred with a student. The observer writes what is seen/heard and remains objective. Any behaviors that can be counted should be recorded here. This type of record keeping will usually be done to record a student’s actions and behaviors such as the events occurring at recess or engaging in aggressive or unwanted behaviors. This type of record will typically be recorded in a notebook designated for one student (Pickett, 1999).

**Frequency or Duration Notes** – Sometimes it is necessary to know how many times or how often a behavior is occurring with a student. With a frequency or duration method of data collection, observer(s) will count and record each time a behavior occurs through tally marks or a specific data sheet with check marks (Pickett, 1999).
Quick Reminders with Progress Monitoring

• Data collection should be taken at least once a week for all student goals (Most likely a checklist).

• Keep the data sheet checklist in the student’s binder in the section it matches and attach the student’s work to the back of the sheet.
  ◦ Multiplying numbers in the Math section

• Be sure to note on the data sheets which (if any) accommodations were accessed by the student

• Know what materials you will need to complete the data collection prior to starting.
  ◦ You may need a timer for a one-minute task

• **ALWAYS...** If you have a question or need clarification on a specific type of data collection... **ASK 😊**
Assessment Procedures

**Standardized Assessments** – Every year there are assessments provided by the state that are required for all students to take. These assessments determine how well a student performs with a given task or subject area in comparison to the way in which many other students the same age have performed. Standardized assessments have a “norm” or an “average” score already established.

**Standardized Tests are:**
- Always given in the same way, with the same instructions and same materials
- Scored with the same method

**Expect to administer the following:**
- CST/CMA (Spring)
- CELDT (Fall)

**Standardized Assessments in Special Education** – Students with an IEP are not exempt from taking state tests, however students may be able to access accommodations and/or modifications based on decisions made by the IEP and allowable by the state. These accommodations and/or modifications will be reported on the student response booklets from the assessment (teacher responsibility).

**Classroom/District Assessments** – Students will often have assessments in the regular classrooms and in the Learning Center for progress monitoring. Most students with an IEP will have accommodations and/or modifications accessible to them. Students are allowed to access any and all accommodations/modifications that are written into the student’s IEP. Do not prompt the student more than permitted or give additional help during assessments, as assessments are a vital tool in understanding where a student is currently performing.

**Most Common Assessment Accommodations/Modifications**
- Extended time to complete test
- Test in a separate classroom
- Test in a quiet, small group
- Questions and answer options read aloud
- Clarified test directions
- Access to multiplication chart
- Use of corresponding textbook
Remember!...

Standardized Assessments

• Be sure to check the IEP or ask which accommodations/modifications are accessible to a student PRIOR to administering the assessment.

• Do NOT vary from the permitted accommodations/modifications – It is important to protect the nature of the standardized assessments and respect the necessity for establishing norms across the board.

• Schedules will be developed prior to assessment days, please review and ask any questions

District and Classroom Assessments

• Please check their IEP or IEP at a Glance to determine which accommodations/modifications are allowable.

• Be sure to make note of which accommodations/modifications were provided to the student on the assessment or on a sticky when the assessment is returned to the teacher.
Chapter 6

Supporting the Educational Environment

School-Wide Techniques

A school-wide effort is necessary to ensure the success of all students. It is important for all teachers, assistants and staff to be on the same page. This can be achieved by implementing the same techniques in their general education and special education classrooms. Our principal introduced a book, Teach Like a Champion, by Doug Lemov, to all certificated staff and expressed his strong beliefs in the 49 techniques presented within the book. Below are the following techniques you will be expected to following both in the Learning Center and in General Education. While we will not implement all 49 techniques, there are several that blend perfectly into the Learning Center and will be practiced by their general education teachers (Lemov, 2010).

Right is Right

When a student answers a question, it is okay to say, “No, that is incorrect.” Right is Right explains accepting an incorrect answer from a student does more harm than good. Giving credit for wrong or only partially correct answers tells a student they answered correctly and sets a low standard for correctness. Students then remember the incorrect answer because they heard they were right. When a student is answering a question, hold out for a 100% correct answer. To get 100%, you may need to prompt the student along or include other students into the answer. Always go back to the student who answered incorrectly and make sure they answer correctly before moving on. Students will remember the last thing they hear; it must be the correct answer (Lemov, 2010).

Use these phrases:
- No, not quite...
- Almost there...
- No, let’s try again

No Opt Out

“I don’t know,” is a simple three-word phrase that gets a student out of working. It is a passive phrase that teachers often accept and move on. This tells a student if they do not want to participate, just say, “I don’t know.” No Opt Out does not allow a student to get out of work. If a student replies with they don’t know, ask another student the answer or demonstrate the answer yourself. Then go back to the student and insist the student answers the question correctly. Students will learn they will have to answer the question at some point and “I don’t know,” will not get them out of answering the question in the long run. It holds students accountable (Lemov, 2010).
What to Do

Students too often hear what not to do in school. Instead, we should tell them what we do expect and how they should behave. Students can be held accountable for their actions when they have been told exactly how to act and what are the expectations. Be specific and concrete when giving directions. Use specific words and attainable actions rather than an abstract direction. For example, “Pay attention,” what does that look like? Instead of saying pay attention tell students face forward, pencils down and eyes on me. Now students know exactly what is expected. This example also demonstrates how you should use sequenced directions and observable actions from students. You can see students are now paying attention and you told them in what order they should show they are paying attention (Lemov, 2010).

“*The object of teaching a child is to enable him to get along without a teacher.*”

-Elbert Hubbard

No Warnings

You should act early, reliably and proportionately. Keep emotion out of student behaviors. If you find yourself irritated or angry, you have waited too long to address a situation. Giving a warning is not taking action; you are simply threatening that you might take action. It leaves room for students to misbehave and cause a disruption again. Warnings suggest that a certain amount of misbehavior is acceptable until they reach a certain point. General reminders to students to keep their behavior in tact are acceptable and different from warnings. We want students to be successful and do not want to be giving out consequence after consequence. When you find yourself about to give a warning, this is the time in which you would deal out an appropriate and fitting consequence in order to stop the behavior quickly and permanently. Always be calm and fair in your consequences and be private when you can. Plan ahead what consequences should look like for various possible behaviors. Do not have a set sequence of consequences. Be unpredictable (Lemov, 2010).
**Strong Voice**

Some people just have “it,” but what “it” is cannot be defined. Some teachers just walk into a classroom and command student attention and compliance. Having a strong voice is one key factor in maintaining control in a classroom. There are five components:

**Economy of Language** – Less is more. “Fewer words are stronger than more” (Lemov). Be clear, concise and straight to the point. **Know what it is you need to say and say it.** Avoid being chatty, indecisive or show nervousness as it conveys a message that you can be ignored.

**Do Not Talk Over** – Wait for all students to give you their attention before giving directions or instruction. You control the floor. What you are saying should be important and every student needs to hear it. You should not be repeating the same directions over and over because students are not paying attention.

**Do Not Engage** – Avoid engaging in a student’s change of topic. Once you have given a direction, do not accept excuses or explanations from students. Instead repeat your exact instruction, wait for compliance and move on. Do not find yourself in a struggle conversation with students. If you tell a student to stop doing something and they reply with an excuse, “But she hit me first,” or “I didn’t do it,” do not reply to their excuse in any way. Do not address the other student being accused or acknowledge what the student said. **Simply restate your direction and be done.**

**Square up/Stand Still** – You send a message nonverbally with your body. Stand or sit up straight, face the student(s) and use direct eye contact. Lean forward and move in close to a student to stress the seriousness of your directions. Stand still and face students when giving direction; do not engage in other activities such as passing out papers. It sends a message that your directions are not that important.

**Quiet Power** – When you get nervous or find yourself in a situation, do not talk louder or faster. It sends a message that you are out of control of the situation. Students see this as an opportunity to elevate the intensity of the situation because you are worked up. **Do talk slower and quieter to gain control.** Students now have to strain to hear you and you appear calm and in control.

---

**Strong is calm, quiet and demonstrates control.**

—Doug Lemov
Re-Cap...

Some of these techniques are demonstrated on a CD and available for you to view for further understanding. The CD is located in the back of this book. Below are the corresponding Clip numbers to watch the videos and the page numbers to read the full descriptions and examples from the book. The book is located in the same cupboard as this handbook.

**Right is Right – Clips 2 & 3 Page 35**
- Accept nothing less than a 100% correct answer
- It’s alright to tell a student straight that they answered incorrectly

**No Opt Out – Clip 1 Page 28**
- Students do not get out of answering a question because they don’t know the answer; always return to the student to repeat the correct answer

**No Warnings – No Clip Available Page 199**
- Don’t give warnings, act promptly and appropriately

**What to Do – No Clip Available Page 177**
- Tell students what you expect and how they should act
- Be specific, concrete, sequence directions and ask for observable behaviors

**Strong Voice – Clip 17 Page 182**
- Economy of Language
- Do Not Talk Over
- Do Not Engage
- Square Up/Stand Still
- Quiet Power

**Note:** Look for these techniques embedded within other chapters throughout this handbook to see how each technique blends into instruction and managing student behaviors.
Motivation!

Motivated students cause fewer distractions and exhibit fewer discipline problems because they are actively engaged with the task at hand. When students are participating in lessons, they do have the time or effort to become distracted and cause problems. When a student finds himself or herself bored or not active with the task at hand, they often begin to act out and become a distraction (Alexander et al., 2009).

10 ways to increase MOTIVATION

1. Increase student response opportunities
2. Call on students equally
3. Foster excitement about new ideas
4. Incorporate self-assessment in lessons
5. Exhibit high expectations for all students
6. Help students direct their own learning
7. Stress accomplishments, not winning
8. Create a trusting environment
9. Help students learn with different modalities
10. Incorporate feelings and thoughts and connect to real life

Students find strength and determination to attempt tasks and complete assignments when they feel good about themselves. It is our job as professionals in special education to instill positive feelings towards our students and provide words of encouragements and acts of understanding (Alexander et al., 2009).

Note: There will always be those students who are seemingly un-motivate-able and in these cases, it is important to persist, keeping in mind the benefits of encouraging motivation.

“It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.”

- Albert Einstein
Instructional Strategies

“The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires” -William A. Ward

Learning Center – Small Group Environment

When students come to the Learning Center, we will work in small groups focusing on Direct Interactive Instruction (DII). This type of instruction refers to high levels of student engagement with the use of structured lessons and materials developed or gathered by the teacher. Students do not have to guess what they are learning or what is expected of them with direct, explicit instruction, rather the teacher tells the students what they need to know, teaches it and then reviews through practice. Learning goals are clearly identified prior to each lesson and are reviewed at the closing of each lesson.

Our district trains staff in Direct Interactive Instruction (DII) at the beginning of every school year. DII emphasizes the sequenced use of specific components to increase student learning during the allotted instructional minutes (“Direct interactive,” 2012).

Lesson Structure and Sequence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Standards/Measurable Objectives and Access to Prior Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>Input and Model (I do)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>Structured Practice (We do – Teacher Led)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>Guided Practice (We do – Student led)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 5</td>
<td>Independent Practice (You do)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 6</td>
<td>Assess Mastery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lesson Structure and Sequence

Stage 1 – Standards/Measurable Objectives & Access Prior Knowledge

Introduce state standard and the object of today’s lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers should:</th>
<th>Students should:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o Prompt</td>
<td>o Think</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Clarify</td>
<td>o Discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Monitor</td>
<td>o Listen and Respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Connect</td>
<td>o Connect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stage 2 – Input and Model (I do) – New material is taught here with direct instruction and modeling of target skill. Students are not working through problems with the teacher. Rather, students are watching, listening and echoing what they teacher says. During modeling:

- Tell students what step is being modeled
- Check for understanding
- Clearly perform skill
- Stick with examples only and introduce non-examples only after students understand skill
- Finish on a correct demonstration of the skill

Teacher: “I tell and I do it.”    Students: “I watch, listen and repeat.”

Stage 3 – Structured Practice (We do – Teacher Led)

Most Important Step –

Teacher and students practice the new skills together. Think of this as a give and take step where the teacher is still leading the practice, but students are interacting by answering questions posed by the teacher and working the problems at the same time as the teacher does. Students are following the teacher’s pace, not working ahead.

- Remember to connect the skill you are working on back to the standard and measurable objective.
- Think about what evidence is it you are looking and listening for to know if students are understanding the objective.

“We do it together.”
Stage 4 – Guided Practice (We Do – Student Led) – Students practice new skill with positive and corrective feedback. This is a crucial point in the lesson where students practice and receive corrective feedback in a productive manner. If a student makes a mistake, the teacher needs to model again before asking the student to try again.

Be sure to:
- Closely pay attention to students performing the skill
- Provide plenty of opportunities for students to demonstrate the skill correctly and independently as possible
- Intervene immediately once a student has made a mistake and provide corrective feedback
- Always PRAISE!

Stage 5 – Independent Practice (You Do) – Once a student has successfully demonstrated a skill in the practice portion of the lesson, allow the student an opportunity to demonstrate the skill independently. This may be done at the same table, at another table or even for homework.

Caution: ONLY move on to this step when you feel the student has successfully completed the guided practice. Take note of any assistance or errors made by the student. Modeling and guided practice may be necessary again (Alexander et al., 2009; “Direct interactive,” 2012).

Stage 6 – Assess Mastery – This can be formal or informal. Find a way at the end of the lesson to quickly assess the level of understanding students are walking away with.
- Ticket out the door
- Thumbs up/down
- Whiteboard check

Important Note: This is a fluid structure and sequence and at any point during the lesson, the teacher can go back a step and repeat a stage if the teacher notices students are no longer understanding and need to be re-taught or participate in more practice (“Direct interactive,” 2012).
Explicit Feedback

Confirming Feedback

When a student provides a correct response, tell them! Provide the student with direct, explicit and objective feedback. Leave out “I” statements. Do not tell a student, “I like…,” or “I love…,” rather use “You” statements, “You identified…,” or “You completed…,” to ensure students remained confident of their own abilities and skills. Confidence fosters students to take more chances. It leaves no room for ambiguity and the student knows specifically what they should do again (“Direct interactive,” 2012).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ambiguous</th>
<th>Explicit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good job! You got it!</td>
<td>Good job! You identified the correct sequence for the order of operations for problem #1. You are meeting today’s objective.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Corrective Feedback

It is crucial a student does not practice “wrong-learning”

(Action Learning Systems)

There are two types of corrective feedback: Pre-Correctives and Correctives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Corrective</th>
<th>Corrective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Think “yellow light.” Caution and pre-warn students of common mistakes that often occur and help student avoid making mistakes by pointing out a tricky part in the lesson.</td>
<td>Remember 100% Correct (Right is Right) Corrective feedback requires immediate feedback to identify where the mistake occurred and how to correct the mistake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. Don’t let the next paragraph confuse you. Remember the main idea is not always the first sentence.</td>
<td>Ex. No, that is a verb. We are looking for a noun. A noun is a person, place or thing. What is the noun?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Don’t Forget...

Before a lesson

• Introduce the standard to be addressed in the lesson and clearly state the expected goal for each student

• Establish expectations (What to Do)

During a Lesson

• Actively look for opportunities to provide explicit confirming and corrective feedback to students
  o Pause students as soon as they make a mistake and correct
  o Hold out for 100% correct (Right is Right)

• Don’t settle for “I don’t know.” (No Opt Out)
• PRAISE often!
• Maintain control of the lesson (Strong Voice and No Warnings)

After a Lesson

• Review! Allow students to lead and re-tell what they learned
• Assess Mastery
  o Formal
  o Informal

“Never compare one student's test score to another's. Always measure a child's progress against her past performance. There will always be a better reader, mathematician, or baseball player. Our goal is to help each student become as special as she can be as an individual—not to be more special than the kid sitting next to her.”

-Rafe Esquith
Now What?

Now that you have an understanding of the basic teaching structure for lessons and specific school-wide techniques, try these different strategies within your lessons to engage and enhance student learning.

When reading:
• Read aloud
• Choral read
• Silent read
• Popcorn read
• Read in partners

Give students a **personal goal** to accomplish for the day.

Each center has “Goal Cards”
Write an obtainable goal for that lesson on the card and put it in front of the student

**Computer Time**

Computers should be used to support instruction after it has been taught.

**ELA Programs**
Basic Skills
Treasures Online
Read Naturally

**Math**
Math Magician
Khan Academy
First in Math

Use Response Cards
Students write answers on:

- Whiteboards
- Post – its
- Index Cards

Students show answers at the same time

Refer to the **objective** posted on the board often.
*Encourage and reinforce* students for actively referring to the objective.

**Change up the Environment**

Sit on the floor
Sit at a table outside

Use a variety of pre made visuals
Create their own visuals

Teach songs for math operations
Use math manipulatives, playing cards, dice, calculators, etc.

*Carefully select times to be spontaneous with the students, but keep fidelity with the objectives*
# General Education Classroom

## Do's

- Support students by making accommodations or modifications to class assignments or homework
  - Be familiar with their individual IEP accommodations (See IEP at a Glance)
  - Use common strategies (See Try This!)

- Keep proximity with your students in mind
  - Stay within a few feet to immediately be able to intervene or provide assistance
  - Ensure students are seated in an appropriate and accessible location.

- Work with small groups during rotations
  - Groups should include mostly students with IEPs, but you can work with similar ability general education students at the same time

- Ask the general education teacher any questions you may have about any curriculum or tasks you are being asked to use with students in small groups

## Don’ts

- Do not replace student curriculum or practice math during language arts.
  - Students should stay on task to the best of their ability and remain practicing the same content area as their peers

- Do not sit right next to one student in particular
  - This action makes the students stand out even more and can create unnecessary dependence on you during class

- Do not run a small group with only general education students
  - If you engage in this action, you are no longer able to support the students you are in the class to support

- Do not discuss personal or confidential information with the general education teacher
  - Avoid having private discussions or sensitive subjects across the room or in front of other students during class time.


Try This!

It is common for instructional assistants to be capable of adapting, accommodating and modifying curriculum in the general education setting and special education setting. Assistants will also often find themselves needing to implement a variety of strategies to adapt, accommodate or modify the environment in order for students to be successful at school. Below you will find many possible strategies and ideas to use with students.

Common Strategies to Support Student Success

- **Adapt** worksheets to show fewer problems by folding or covering with post-its.

- Make **checklists** of tasks that need to be completed

- Create a visual or written **schedule** to maintain structure

- Break assignments into smaller chunks

- Alternate sitting and standing during tasks

- Use **learning aides** – computers, calculators, manipulatives, etc

- **Write** directions or command on a whiteboard or post-it (rather than or in addition to orally giving directive)

- **Increase** the amount of **time** a student needs to complete an appropriate assignment

- **Decrease** the amount of **time** a student must spend focusing on a single task.

- Work with the general education teacher to assign a peer buddy to help a student during class

- Offer options for participation: Ex. student can hold up materials while another student talks about them

- **Substitute Curriculum**: provide different instructional materials/practice at the student’s level during general education when appropriate – During math, provide the student with math practice that meets their IEP goals if the general instruction is not appropriate to the student.
• Use **highlighters** to select certain problems to solve (skip every other one or identify which problems are at the students level and support their IEP goals) or highlight to find answers in a reading passage

• **First/Then** – First teacher or assistant selects the task to be completed, Then the student gets to pick their preferred activity

• **Must Do’s/May Do’s** – List of teacher/assistant selected activities that must be done before student may choose from a list of more preferred activities.

• Use different types of **response methods** – Choral response, write on a whiteboard, tell a partner

• Allow students to verbalize their response to a question rather than writing the answer or when acceptable, scribe for the student

• **Think-Pair-Share** – This may require teacher or assistant prompting when students are learning to converse with each other; some situations may require the assistant to participate in the pair-share instead of another student when the concept needs to be clearly explained or ask specific questions

• Use of **Visuals**: realia, pictures, and hands on materials; this can be in particularly beneficial during vocabulary and math instruction (especially EL students – See next section)

• Use of a **Token Economy System**
  o Students can work for a choice activity or reinforcer
Supporting English Language Learners (ELLs)

Our school has a large population of students who are English Language Learners. A large majority of the students being supported by the Learning Center are learning English as a second language in addition to having special needs due to a disability. Research has shown there are specific strategies that further support language acquisition and academic understanding. Differentiating and supporting students who are ELLs looks similar to the strategies used with students in special education. Often strategies that are referred to as best practices, research based strategies and activities to use with all students, support students with disabilities and/or their development in the English Language. Below you will find specific strategies to promote the learning of ELLs.

• **Scaffolding** – Defined as temporary supports to ensure students gain access to the curriculum and are successful at a task. Scaffolding may be the single most important strategy to use with ELLs because it is how a teacher or assistant provides a student the ability to complete a task they would otherwise be unable to successfully complete. Scaffolding is a complex strategy that requires a great deal of planning on the instructor’s part. Scaffolding requires that you teach every detail of a task. If you want a student to ask questions with a partner, you must teach what kinds of questions you would ask in that situation: when to ask the question, how to listen, how and when to pause and respond to questions asked, etc. You would need to model, monitor and debrief with the students.

---

**Common Scaffolds**

- Think aloud
- Point out and highlight high frequency words or vocabulary words
- Use picture symbols with key words
- Use CLOZE strategy (leave out key words in sentences that the student must fill in – works well for taking notes)
- Sketch pictures as you read
- Make connections to their knowledge and culture
- Visuals and real life objects
- Circle or highlight the operation sign in math problems
- Total Physical Response (TPR)
  - Write words in the air with fingers
  - Create gestures to go with a vocabulary word
• **Activate Prior Knowledge** – Frontload information to introduce the concept or task. Often this is where targeted vocabulary is introduced and defined. Select key words that are crucial to the understanding of the passage or task to provide a definition, example and opportunity for application.

• **Multi-modal Learning** – Use a variety of learning modalities (visual, verbal, hands-on) during instruction. Use a variety of activities and materials/resources.

• **Check for Understanding** – Repetition, clarification and elaboration are the key ideas here. Frequently check for understanding to ensure students know what they should be doing and understand key vocabulary terms (Lewis & Doorlag, 2006; Quiocho & Ulanoff, 2009).

“When one is building a ship, one does not begin with gathering timber and cutting planks, but rather by arousing in people the yearning for the great wide sea.”

— Antoine de St. Exupery

"You can't direct the wind, but you can adjust the sails."

- Anonymous
Bloom’s Taxonomy

Bloom’s Taxonomy has six levels of competence used to classify different learning objectives. Each level has a different educational objective and can relate to the process of how students acquire higher order thinking. With an understanding of this process, specific questions can be used with individual students to differentiate instruction whether students are typical learners, have a disability and/or are an English Language Learner (“Direct interactive,” 2012).

On the following page you will find examples of how to start questions based on the level of your students. If you are introducing a new concept or re-teaching a difficult concept, you would choose question starters from Knowledge or Comprehension to build students’ understanding prior to moving forward with high order thinking and complexity of understanding.
Bloom’s Taxonomy – Competency Levels

**Knowledge**

This is the lowest level of objectives; it refers to remembering previously learned material. Examples of question starters:
- Define
- Fill in the blank
- List
- Name, spell, match, etc.
- Underline
- Identify

**Analysis**

Students must have mastered the previous three levels to be able to analyze. Analysis requires a student to break down concepts. Examples of question starters:
- Categorize
- Compare and contrast
- Examine or specify
- Determine the factors
- Diagnose

**Comprehension**

This is next step after knowledge or simple recall. Students begin to show understanding of information. Examples of question starters:
- Describe
- Explain
- Put in order
- Retell in your own words
- Summarize

**Synthesis**

Once students understand the parts in analysis, students must understand the whole, or the big picture. Examples of question starters:
- Pretend
- Rearrange
- Visualize
- Generate
- Construct

**Application**

Students begin to apply concepts learned to real life or concrete examples. Examples of question starters:
- Compute
- Conclude
- Demonstrate
- Determine
- Give an example
- Show or solve

**Evaluation**

This is the highest level of learning. Examples of question starters:
- Give your own opinion
- Justify
- Support
- Value
- Conclude
- Prioritize
- Rank or rate
Chapter 8

Facilitating Positive Student Behavior

Proactive Management Strategies

- Establish clear expectations for behaviors during instruction and transitions
  - (See “What to Do” – School Wide Techniques)
- Use non-verbal skills – Smile, thumbs up, eye contact, proximity, etc.
- Show respect for all students – Say thank you; always keep a calm voice
- Provide praise to the whole group – Use explicit confirming feedback
- Provide praise to individual students – Use explicit confirming feedback
- Address students by name – Use their name in examples
- Restate tasks to the whole group – Ex. “We’re answering number 12”

Supporting Students in General Education

When a behavior challenge arises during a whole class lesson, provide support in a non-instructive manner. The ideal situation is for the lesson to continue without interruption.

- Stand near the student, but your attention remains on the teacher
- Touch the student’s back and step away. Your attention remains on the teacher
- Communicate with student non-verbally: eye contact, hand gestures, etc.
- If necessary, provide a private redirection to the student (Lemov, 2010). Provide exact expectations
  - See “What to Do”
  - Say thank you and move away

Supporting Students in Small Groups

Ignore the behavior if:

- You can still teach
- Other students can learn
- Behavior will not escalate

If behavior cannot be ignored:

- Use non-verbal communication – eye contact, hand gestures, body language, etc.
- Give redirection to whole group
- Praise students who are on task
- If necessary, give a private redirection to individual student – Say thank you
- Give student a choice that could result in a consequence (Lemov, 2010)
- Re-occurring behaviors – See “No Warnings”
Giving Effective Directions

1. **Don’t ask.** Tell students what you want/expect
2. Don’t nag. Give two requests. Then refer to “No Warnings”
3. Use eye contact
4. Monitor your voice – “Strong Voice”
5. Keep calm
6. Use more “start” questions and less “stop” questions
7. Give students time to comply – **Wait time**
8. **Praise** student when he or she complies

Students need to be told what is expected of them. Too often we want to be polite and will ask students commands rather than direct them as to what we want them to do. Consider that if you ask a student a directive, “Jay, would you like to open your book please,” Jay now has the option to say no (Alexander et al., 2009). Since you asked a question, the student answered the question honestly and now a possible opportunity for misbehavior has opened. A better directive is to tell the student, “Jay open your book please.” The following page describes this process called precision commands in more detail and visually.

**You get more of what you reinforce**

(Positive and negative behaviors)

Praise students for positive behaviors – correct answers, good choices, being polite, etc. When you praise a student for positive things, you are likely to get more of what you praise (Alexander et al., 2009). The same goes for negative behaviors. If you give a student attention for making bad choices, the student is likely to continue to make bad choices to get your attention. Look for opportunities to praise for good choices.
Precision Commands

**Talk low. Talk slow. Don’t say too much!**  
- Jo Moscarro

1. " (Name) ___ (Direction) please."  
2. " (Name) you need to ___ (Direction) ."

It is important to use the same wording in the same order with ALL directions. (e.g. "come here," "sit down," etc.)

(Alexander et al., 2009).

**Example:**
1. “Jay, turn around please.” If student complies – Reinforce.  
   If student does not comply, move to step 2.

2. “Jay, you need to turn around.” If student complies – Reinforce.  
   If student does not comply, enforce consequence  
   (Alexander et al., 2009).
Redirection

Redirection is a very effective technique to use to correct or minimize negative behaviors. Redirection is constantly used throughout instructional time and unstructured time (recess, lunch, hallways). Redirection should also be the first go-to behavior technique when unwanted student behaviors arise. There are many ways or strategies to use to redirect a student’s attention to an acceptable action before giving a consequence. An assistant can ignore what the student does or says and change the subject or direct the whole group back to the objective of the lesson or activity currently taking place. Students can also be redirected by being distracted by a positive statement or an unrelated question or direction. Refer back to Proactive Management Strategies at the beginning of this chapter for more examples of redirection.

Toolbox of Consequences

There will be times when redirection and proactive strategies do not work and a student continues to behave unacceptably. As talked about in “No Warnings” in the section on School-Wide Techniques, being unpredictable is key when following through with a consequence. Having an idea in mind of what types of behaviors earn a certain consequences will help maintain an effective learning environment. Consequences should be natural and appropriate to the behavior. If the same consequence is constantly given over and over, it is not effective. If a student is not responding to a consequence, do not use that consequence again. It is wasting instructional time and taking away from your power.

Following this page, you will find a “toolbox” of possible consequences to use during instruction. These are not a sequential order of actions to follow. Most common use of sequential order is the green, yellow, red behavior charts. If a student gets to yellow this will happen, if a student gets to red that will happen. This allows a student to know how far they can push the system and stop before they get the consequence they can no longer live with. Instead, use the toolbox to match an appropriate consequence to the negative student behavior. The purpose of a consequence is to extinguish the behavior immediately and effectively in an appropriate manner.
## Toolbox of Consequences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consequence</th>
<th>Possible Student Behavior</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sit away from the group</td>
<td>Student cannot control themselves from talking to others; shouting answers, not being respectful to others</td>
<td>Student must be placed somewhere so they can still access the instruction and are responsible for following the lesson despite not being with the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult calls home</td>
<td>Bad behavior choices; breaking school or classroom rules</td>
<td>Phone call can be immediate or at the end of the lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student calls home</td>
<td>Bad behavior choices; breaking school or classroom rules</td>
<td>This may be more effective than teacher calling home for students who are capable of this option.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of recess or lunch minutes</td>
<td>Not paying attention; not being prepared; not participating to their potential; refusal to work</td>
<td>If the student is wasting instructional time, you can take their time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lose chair</td>
<td>Student is threatening their own safety or the safety of others with the chair; keeping their head on the table</td>
<td>Student can stand or kneel on their knees until they earn their chair back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lose privileges or preferred activity</td>
<td>Refusal to complete task; ignoring direction; lack of respect</td>
<td>Once loss has occurred, students need the opportunity to earn it back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean up their own mess</td>
<td>Student throws, dumps or creates a mess</td>
<td>Do not clean up for student. Leave the mess for as long as it takes for student to calm down and then go clean up their mess.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student writes or tells 3</td>
<td>Student has an irrational response; has an emotional outburst</td>
<td>Prompt student if they are unable to come up with better options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternate acceptable options</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Important!

- Students must have the opportunity to earn losses back even after a consequence has been earned. Follow through with the consequence, however if something was taken away, student needs to be able to earn it back. Or, students need to be able to continue working towards their preferred activity with the token economy system.
- The adult who gave the direction or directive that was not complied with by the student must carry out the consequence. It is essential students have consistency and trust in all assistants in addition to the teacher. This means assistants need to have the authority to implement consequences, but also assistants must not show an inability to following through. Giving out meaningless warnings and threats that will not be carried out by the assistant diminishes any authority the assistant had.
All student behaviors happen with an interaction to something prior to the behavior. Before we can begin to change unwanted student behaviors and replace with more acceptable behaviors, we need to know what is causing the behavior in the first place. Once we know what is happening prior to unwanted behaviors, we can implement proactive behavior management strategies to avoid and eventually replace the unwanted behaviors. See the ABC chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedent</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What happened prior to the situation involving the student or the student's behavior?</td>
<td>What did the student do?</td>
<td>What happened immediately after?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You may be asked to fill in a chart that looks identical to this in the event that a student engages in a serious behavior that requires a running record. Please consider the following questions when recording the situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedent</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What events led up to the incident? Did something happen immediately prior to the behavior or was this something that had been building all day/week?</td>
<td>Describe the behavior. What exactly did the student do and say?</td>
<td>What did the student do? What was said to the student and by whom? Did the student receive a consequence?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Behaviors can be extremely complex and will not have a simple solution. Do not expect behaviors to change after implementing a change in the antecedent. It may take several trial and errors before finding a proactive behavior strategy that is effective.
## Facilitating Social Skills

### Do's

- Provide verbal or visual cues to prompt students to act or respond in a particular way
  - Ex. Give a visual cue to stop talking during a lesson
  - Prompt a student to say “Thank you”
- Provide opportunities for students to interact with peers during structured and non-structured activities
  - Ex. Recess – Bring board games to play at the tables
  - Ex. Small groups – assign a peer buddy
- Maintain appropriate distance from student during structured and non-structured settings
  - When you are shadowing a student, you should be within visual distance appropriate to the student’s needs
- Role play or provide a script to a particular situation before or after it occurs to teach appropriate responses
- Model or think aloud through common situations such as self-management skills – Be a role model

### Don’ts

- Avoid hovering over a student or sitting next to a student in class
  - This can make the student stand out from his peers more than necessary and the student could become inappropriately dependent towards you
- Avoid calling student out in front of other students
  - Ex. If a student is talking during a teacher’s lesson, avoid disrupting the class and drawing more attention to the student
- Avoid being too close to a student, both physically and personally
  - You should not be walking arm in arm with a student
  - Your job is to ensure their safety and encourage positive social interactions, not be their best friend
  - Refrain from personal conversations with a student
Please! Keep in Mind…

We may think we are making thing easier for the student or we are just being nice by being protective or doing something for a student, but the truth is we are doing the student a disservice. Students are not learning socially acceptable behaviors or how to effectively cope in situations independently if they do not have the opportunity to try. Students will face difficulties and will make mistakes, but that is where our job is vital; we use those situations as teachable moments. We will not always be there for the student and students need to develop healthy skills and be able to cope appropriately. It is essential students learn self help skills and self control.

Use caution in the ways you touch students. You may be accused of molestation if you touch students improperly. It can also lead to unexpected situations. Avoid hugging students. Avoid touching a student frequently. Avoid sitting right next to a student in general education or at the lunch tables/recess.

Some acceptable ways of being friendly and supportive include praise, rewards, high-fives and smiles. You may have to explain to students that we save our hugs and affectionate physical expressions only for family and very close friends. They need to learn the boundaries of general society. Indiscriminate hugging may set up a student for possible abuse outside of the school setting (Alexander et al., 2009).

Person First Language

Please also be aware of the words you choose when talking about our students and any individuals who may be considered different from the typical person. Person first language refers to putting the person or child first, not the condition or disability first. A person or student should be recognized first as just that, not by the situation they live with. If a student has Autism, we would say, “the student with Autism.” We would avoid saying, “the autistic child.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person First</th>
<th>Avoid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The person with a disability will be here today.</td>
<td>The disabled person will be here today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you help me with ideas to help support the student with ADHD?</td>
<td>Can you help me with ideas to help support the ADHD student?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please check on the patient with cancer.</td>
<td>Please check on the cancer patient.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When you put the condition or disability first, you are defining the individual by the situation in which they live with everyday. You are taking away the fact that he or she is a person or a child first. Not using person first language implies all you see is the condition or disability and you are looking past the individual.
Appendix

Characteristics of Learners

**Autism (Aut) —** “means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, and that adversely affects educational performance. Characteristics often associated with autism are engaging in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to changes in daily routines or the environment, and unusual responses to sensory experiences” (IDEA, 2004).

**Deaf-Blindness —** “...means simultaneous hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness” (IDEA, 2004).

**Deafness —** “...means a hearing impairment so severe that a child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects a child's educational performance” (IDEA, 2004).

**Emotional Disturbance (ED) —** “...means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

(a) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
(b) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
(c) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
(d) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
(e) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems” (IDEA, 2004).

**Hearing Impairment —** “...means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance but is not included under the definition of deafness” (IDEA, 2004).

**Intellectual Disability (ID) (Mental Retardation or MR) —** “...means significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently [at the same time] with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance” (IDEA, 2004).

**Multiple Disabilities (MD) —** “...means concomitant [simultaneous] impairments (such as mental retardation-blindness, mental retardation-orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in a special
education program solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness” (IDEA, 2004).

**Orthopedic Impairment (OI)** – “...means a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by a congenital anomaly (e.g. clubfoot, absence of some member, etc.), impairments caused by disease (e.g. poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis, etc.), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures)” (IDEA, 2004).

**Other Health Impairment (OHI)** – “...means having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that—

(a) is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, and sickle cell anemia; and

(b) adversely affects a child’s educational performance” (IDEA, 2004).

**Specific Learning Disability (SLD)** – “...means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities; of mental retardation; of emotional disturbance; or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage” (IDEA, 2004).

**Speech or Language Impairment (SLI)** – “...means a communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment that adversely affects a child’s educational performance” (IDEA, 2004).

**Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)** – “...means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech. The term does not include brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or brain injuries induced by birth trauma” (IDEA, 2004).

**Visual Impairment including Blindness** – “...means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness” (IDEA, 2004).
**Glossary**

ABA – Applied Behavior Analysis
ADA – American’s with Disabilities Act
ADD – Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
APE – Adapted Physical Education
ASD – Autism Spectrum Disorder
ASL – American Sign Language
AT – Assistive Technology
AYP – Annual Yearly Progress
BIP – Behavior Intervention Plan
BSP – Behavior Support Plan
CP – Cerebral Palsy
CPS – Child protective Services
DI – Direct Instruction
ED – Emotionally Disturbed
ELA – English Language Arts
ELL – English Language Learner
ESL – English as a Second Language
ESY – Extended School Year
FAA – Functional Analysis Assessment
FAPE – Free Appropriate Public Education
FAS – Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
HI – Hearing Impaired
HOH – Hard of Hearing
ID – Intellectual Disability
IEP – Individual Education Program
IFSP – Individualized Family Service Plan
ITP – Individualized Transition Plan

NCLB – No Child Left Behind Act
LRE – Least Restrictive Environment
OCD – Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
OT – Occupational Therapy
PT – Physical Therapy
PDD – Pervasive Development Disorder
PECS – Picture Exchange Communication System
RtI – Response to Intervention
RSP – Resource Specialist Program
SDC – Special Day Class
SH – Severely Handicapped
SLD – Specific Learning Disability
SLP – Speech and Language Pathologist
SPED – Special Education
SST – Student Study Team
TBI – Traumatic Brain Injury
VI – Visually Impaired
Questions and Answers

Please write down ANY questions you have here. Sometimes our days will become busier than others and you may be unable to ask your questions right away. This is where non-urgent questions can be written down and answers will receive a written response in the same location. This area will also serve as a place to open discussions at our monthly Wednesday meeting.