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Final Project/Thesis

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REVAMPING THE CLASSROOM:
IMPROVING THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

by
Kathryn Lynn

A Research Proposal Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

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ABSTRACT

Revamping the Classroom: Improving the Education of Students with Disabilities

A teacher in-service presentation was developed that sought to improve the education of students with disabilities through teacher communication and education about pertinent strategies. The program presented is titled “Agreed To Succeed”. The “Agreed To Succeed” program is based upon the three I’s: (a) initiating communication, (b) integrating learning, and (c) incorporating strategies. In the presentation, teachers were offered an approach to opening communication among teachers, students, and staff. Additionally, strategies were presented to encourage teachers to modify curriculum for their students with disabilities in their classrooms.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The goal of special education and regular education teachers is to provide the best environment for students with disabilities. Ideally, this environment would consist of congruent instruction by both teachers. However, often, students with disabilities are in an environment in which there is no strong communication between both teachers. By recognizing the time limitations that all teachers face, the need for differentiation of instruction, and for some, a lack of experience in special education, an inservice presentation was developed that promotes strategies to facilitate communication between teachers, parents, and students with disabilities.

Statement of the Problem

Frequently, the relationship and communication between regular classroom teachers and special education teachers are continuous. When there is a lack of communication, students with disabilities suffer because instruction and curriculum are not congruent. The specific cause of this dissonance is not apparent. Since both of these two individuals work with the student directly and have the student's best interest in mind, then why do they not plan together? One factor that influences the amount and quality of teachers' communication is time. Conciseness may be problematic as well. While these factors are valid and reasonable, they can be overcome. Since students with disabilities may require the aid of two teachers, both teachers should look at this opportunity as most

beneficial for the student. Teachers must realize that communication and teamwork can be accomplished with the implementation of a few strategies and a little dedication.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to design an inservice presentation to provide regular classroom teachers and special education teachers with strategies for ways to communicate with one another in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities. These strategies were drawn from an extensive review of the literature about how students with disabilities learn best and what educators can do to help their students. With the implementation of ideas, neither educator will feel overwhelmed by differentiation and be able to remain in constant contact with the student, the parents or guardians of the student, and the other teacher(s) as well.

Definition of Terms

The following list of words and phrases are terms that will be used throughout the proposal:

Individualized Education Program: An IEP is a part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. An IEP is a written description of an appropriate instructional program for a student with disabilities. The IEP is designed to guide classroom instruction (IEP; Colorado Department of Education, 2005).

Individuals with Disabilities Act: A United States federal law, 20 U.S.C. 1400, which was amended in 2004 most recently to ensure *a free appropriate public education* for students with disabilities, designed to their individualized needs in the *least*

restrictive environment. The Act requires that public school staff provide the necessary learning aids, testing modifications, and other educational accommodations (IDEA, 1997).

Least Restrictive Environment: The LRE is part of the IDEA (1997) and identified as one of the six principles that govern the education of students with disabilities. It means that a student, who has a disability, should have the opportunity to be educated with peers to the greatest extent possible. The student should be provided with aids and services necessary to achieve the requisite educational goals (IDEA, 1997).

No Child Left Behind: The NCLB Act of 2001 is a United States federal law that promotes a number of federal programs in order to improve the performance of U.S. primary and secondary schools by increasing the standards of accountability for states, school districts, and schools (NCLB, 2001 as cited in Close-up, 2005).

Chapter Summary

Presented in this chapter were the problem and proposed solution in regard to special education in schools. Also included in this chapter are terms that were used throughout the project. The design of the inservice presentation referred to in this chapter was based upon research in this field. In Chapter 2, a review of literature is presented that provides history, instructional strategies, and a communication system that will become the basis of the inservice presentation. Detailed in Chapter 3 will be the method for the presentation.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this project was to design an inservice presentation for regular classroom and special education teachers that can be used to facilitate communication between the parents, students, and teachers so that they can work together efficiently and collectively. In order to accomplish this goal, the crucial strategies that help students with disabilities must be outlined. The process by which students with disabilities are educated has evolved substantially with advancements in research and with the implementation of special programs (Bui, 2003). Although the research and programs in the field of special education have progressed, there are many unsettled issues concerning implementation and effectiveness. One relevant factor is that, often, teachers, both regular classroom educators and special education teachers, do not collaborate sufficiently with each other and with parents. Even with teamwork and communication among these three groups, there are concerns over the implementation of strategies and about which methods help students with disabilities learn best.

Historical Background of Special Education and the Regular Classroom

Although, as a whole, the field of education has developed greatly over the years, the area of special education has made many strides (Bui, 2003). The first discussion in regard to the inclusion of all students in public education in the United States began with

the civil rights movement (Schirmer, Casbon, & Twiss, 1995). In 1954, *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* (347 U.S. 483) became a landmark case and established that all students had the right to an equal opportunity to education. The government acknowledged that all students had the right to, not only an education, but an education that was equal for all students. This case was essential to the civil rights movement because it was a first step toward the inclusion of all students.

While *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) decision and the right to an education had a great impact, people with disabilities did not believe that they were protected sufficiently by this right. In 1973, a civil rights law was created, titled the Rehabilitation Act/Section 504 (1973). This law protected the rights of individuals with disabilities in regard to the receipt of federal financial assistance. According to this Act, a student is protected under Section 504 if he or she has had, or does have a physical or mental impairment that limits a major life activity. If the student is protected by Section 504, he or she is entitled to receive special education services and/or accommodations.

Closely following the Rehabilitation Act/Section 504 (1973) was the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975). The authors of this Act stated that:

Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of handicapped children from the regular educational environment occur only when the nature or severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (para. 3-5)

This act was amended last in 1997 and retitled the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. As this act has evolved, several more stipulations have been added.

The Individuals with Disabilities Act

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA; 1997) is a federally funded statute that provides states with monetary aid to ensure a free appropriate public education for children with disabilities. Also, this education must be within the least restrictive environment (LRE) possible. The LRE has become the core of the inclusion model (LRE Coalition, 2001). The authors of IDEA identified specifically what qualifies a student under this act and there are 13 conditions: (a) autism, (b) deafness, (c) deaf-blindness, (d) hearing impairment, (e) mental retardation, (f) multiple disabilities, (g) orthopedic impairment, (h) other health impairment, (i) emotional disturbances, (j) specific learning disability, (k) speech or language impairment, (l) traumatic brain injury, and (m) visual impairment. A student is eligible to receive special education services if he or she is diagnosed with one of these conditions. Under IDEA, a student must first be eligible for special education before he or she is entitled to any other related service.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

The most recognizable aspect of IDEA is the Individualized Education Program (IEP; Colorado Department of Education, 2005). An IEP is a tool established by the authors of IDEA in order to guide the education of students with disabilities. An IEP includes the accommodations necessary for success in the general classroom. In the documentation of these needs, the following must be present: (a) the student's present level of performance, (b) the long term and short term goals, (c) dates for evaluation of progress, (d) how those goals will be achieved, (e) clearly stated program modifications, and (f) the name of the person responsible (Atwell, 2005). Currently, the IEP is reviewed

and updated yearly, although there is a pilot program focused on the effectiveness of a multiyear IEP (Close-up, 2005). Generally, in regard to parents, consent is required before action is taken in regard to a student's special education program. These plans are very effective for teachers and parents because they document specific areas of need as well as particular strategies that will be used to address that need.

Current Legislation that Affects Special Education in Schools

Although the principles behind the IDEA have been in place for years, the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB; 2001, as cited in Close-up, 2005) propelled these values back into the educational and political spotlight. The NCLB was signed into law by President George W. Bush, and his intention was for the NCLB to restore and renew the factors that influenced the IDEA. While the NCLB Act was meant to apply to education at all public schools, there have been specific implications for the field of special education.

NCLB Implications for Special Education

Under NCLB (2001, as cited in Close-up, 2005), the administrators of public school districts must account for all students, including students who have documented disabilities. Since students with disabilities have IEPs and other needs unique to them, the NCLB was adapted to better accommodate these students. One of these accommodations is that parents do not have to participate in a formal IEP meeting with school staff in order to make amendments to their child's program; instead, they can make changes informally. Also, under NCLB, school staff cannot force parents to medicate their students in order to

attend school or receive services. In addition, in Colorado, there is an alternate version of the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP; as cited in Colorado Department of Education, 2000) test that students may take who are severely cognitively impaired. The CSAP is used to calculate the annual yearly progress (AYP) of a school and, therefore, students with severe cognitive disabilities are allowed to take an alternate test. The AYP results are representative of school effectiveness.

Meeting the Needs of Students with Disabilities

Chalmers (2000) noted that modifications in the classroom involved the students, parents/guardians, and the regular and special education teachers. In order to effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities, there must be involvement at home and at school.

The Needs and Responsibility for Students with Disabilities

Every student has needs that must be met by educators who have a responsibility for his or her own education. In a study conducted by Yang, Shaftel, Glasnapp, and Poggio (2005), the purpose was to examine the effectiveness of grouping special education students for instruction instead of by individual particularities. Students, who were identified with mental retardation, were more likely to have a lower mathematical problem solving ability than those students who had a less cognitively severe disability such as a speech/language impairment. It was found that the relationship of mathematical problem solving ability and degree of impairment was associated with the cognitive ability of the individual student. Furthermore, the researchers concluded that, if a student was a

high achieving student in mathematics, her performance would match that of other high achievers regardless of her disability. According to Yang, et al., students with disabilities should be taught at their individual cognitive level.

Gardner and Multiple Intelligences

Gardner (1993) developed a theory in which he provided an explanation about the unique ways in which students learn. The theory is called Multiple Intelligences (MI). The intelligences identified by Gardner are: (a) logical/mathematical, (b) linguistic, (c) spatial, (d) musical (e) bodily/kinaesthetic, (f) interpersonal, (g) and intrapersonal. All students have a higher intelligence in some areas and lower intelligence in other areas. Each intelligence affects the way a student learns best and, therefore, teachers must be cognizant of their students' different learning styles within their classes. Gardner (1995) explained:

We are not all the same; we do not all have the same kinds of minds; education works most effectively for most individuals if these differences in mentation and strengths are taken into account rather than denied or ignored. . . . At the theoretical level, one acknowledges that all individuals cannot be profitably arrayed on a single intellectual dimension. At the practical level, one acknowledges that any uniform educational approach is likely to serve only a minority of children. (p. 7)

Also, this method of differentiation could be applied as a way to modify instruction and assignments for students with disabilities. Koplewicz and Goodman (1999) suggested that students with disabilities need to be shown their natural intelligences in order to discover the educational skills and strategies that can be used to compensate for their impairments or areas of struggle.

Student Responsibility and Effort

In a study conducted by Meltzer, Katzir, Miller, Reddy, and Roditi (2004), these researchers explored how students with disabilities were affected by their own self-perceptions of their intelligence and academic ability. Metzler et al. identified the students' (i.e., with and without disabilities) academic self-esteem by use of the Student Self-Report System (SSRS), developed by the Research Institute for Learning and Development (Research ILD, 2000, as cited in Metzler et al.). This assessment is used to determine how students perceive their own strategy use as well as how they feel about the following five areas: (a) reading, (b) written language, (c) spelling, (d) mathematics, and (e) organization.

Based on the preassessments (Meltzer, 1993, 1996; both cited in Meltzer et al., 2004), significant ($p < .001$) differences were found for three subject areas between students with and without disabilities ($p < .001$). On the preassessment, students with disabilities reported more difficulties in: (a) reading ($p < .001$), (b) writing ($p < .001$), and (c) spelling ($p < .001$). Students with learning disabilities reported that they made less effort than students without disabilities ($p < .01$) and used fewer strategies ($p < .001$). From these data, it was found that, as the students' perceptions of difficulties increased, the less effort they made. The student is responsible for his effort at school yet, often, how he perceives himself can affect his academic performance.

Parents/Guardians of a Student with Disabilities

Henderson (1998) reported that students perform better in school when their parents are involved in their education. However, there are parents who want to help their child at home but have reservations for several reasons. Kay, Fitzgerald, Paradee, and Mellencamp (1994) believed that the new vision of parental involvement is partnership. They discovered that there were five common topics that parents wanted to be addressed by their student's teacher.

1. Parents felt ill-prepared to help their children with homework.
2. Parents wanted more information about the classroom teachers' expectations of their child and of their role as parents in helping with homework.
3. Parents wanted their children to be given individualized homework assignments.
4. Parents valued hands on homework and projects.
5. Parents wanted a two-way communication system that would allow them to become partners on their child's instructional time. (p. 550)

Also, Thousand and Villa (1999) perceived parent involvement as a crucial factor in student success. In an inclusive environment, school staff need to provide support for their families. It was suggested that educational programs should be provided for both students and parents because parents should become engaged as co-learners alongside their children. Also, parental involvement is essential for the parents of students with disabilities because, often, these students feel isolated because they perceive themselves as different from their peers. However, when all participate in activities that include the parents and students with and without disabilities, the feeling of separation is decreased. Although it is very beneficial for parents to become involved in school programs and

activities, it is absolutely vital that they become an advocate for their child with a disability. Koplewicz and Goodman (1999) encouraged parents to know their child's rights in regard to the services that are available and must be provided for them. Also, by being aware of the child's rights as a student, parents can feel more comfortable when they talk to teachers and school officials about the needs of the child.

Teachers' Responsibilities

Both the regular classroom teacher and the special education teacher have vital roles in the education of a student with disabilities (Meltzer et al., 2004). Although there are factors that inhibit that learning of students with disabilities, identification of these factors is the first step toward the elimination or amelioration of them. Through experience and knowledge about the strategies that can help students with disabilities learn, teachers can be more effective.

The Regular Classroom Teacher and the Special Education Teacher

Every year, data are collected annually by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs in concurrence with IDEA (IDEA, 2003). Nationwide, there were 6,711,834 students in 2003 and 6,726,670 in 2004 between the ages of 3-21 years old who were served under IDEA (IDEA, 2003; 2004). Although statistics were not reported for the year 2004, in 2003, there were 446,175 special education teachers, including vocational education teachers and physical education teachers, who served students ages 3-21 (IDEA, 2003). This is an average of 15 special education students per teacher. Since students with disabilities have unique needs, based

on these data, there is a grave need for cooperation between special education teachers and the regular classroom teacher.

In a study conducted on inclusive teachers' attitudes toward their students with disabilities, Cook (2004) found that teachers, who had classrooms without paraprofessionals, had more negative feelings toward students with disabilities. In a classroom without a paraprofessional, of the students that the teacher listed as troublesome, 29.9% were students with disabilities. However, in classrooms with paraprofessionals, of the students who were a concern, 17.2% were students with disabilities. Based on the teachers' reports, students with disabilities made less effort ($p < .001$) and used fewer strategies when they did school work ($p < .001$). However, Meltzer et al. observed that a teacher's attitude toward a student may be connected to how she perceives the student's performance.

In regard to teacher experience, Cook (2004) found that those teachers, who had less than 11 years of total teaching experience, had a higher percentage of students with disabilities in the group of students about whom they were concerned. Teachers, with less teaching experience, reported that 31.4% of the students who were problematic were students with disabilities, whereas teacher with more than 11 years of experience listed students with disabilities as only 12.2% of their concern group. Cook stated that, "Experienced teachers, by virtue of their enhanced ability to deal with problem students may, then, be more effective at coping with the problem behaviors of included students with disabilities and therefore less likely to reject them" (p. 317). Undoubtedly, teacher

experience is a contribution to the profession because, over time, teachers become more aware of their students' needs and the strategies that can be used to help them.

Instructional Strategies for the Inclusion Model

Although experience is something that many teachers acquire naturally, there are factors that can influence a teacher's attitude and perceptions about students with disabilities. Knight (1999) identified the following concerns that must be addressed in inclusive environments.

1. How can general and special educators collaborate in the classroom?
2. How is full and active participation by students encouraged?
3. Is there a need for modification of the regular curricula?
4. What support do teachers need?
5. What support services are available to students?
6. How will the school monitor the effectiveness of individual programs and services? (p. 5)

To maximize the instructional effort of both the teacher and the paraprofessional in the classroom, Cook (2004) provided specific recommendations for the paraprofessional: (a) reduce their physical proximity to students with disabilities when appropriate to decrease student's sense of dependence, (b) make sure that the student with disabilities knows that the regular classroom teacher is the instructional leader, and (c) develop a plan and schedule to slowly reduce the dependency on the paraprofessional in the classroom. Thousand and Villa (1999) suggested that there are two effective models that the regular classroom teacher and the special education teacher should adopt. The first model is the co-teaching model. In this model, both teachers instruct alongside one another. The other model is parallel teaching. This latter model is more common in the regular classroom. In

this example, the special education teacher works with a small group of students within the general education room.

Because of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA, 1997) and No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001, as cited in Close-up, 2005), and the effect of the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular classroom, some strategies have emerged.

According to Cohen (1994), the use of cooperative learning promotes achievement for all students across the curriculum.

Cooperative Learning

Webb and Farivar (1994) maintained that, for students with disabilities specifically, the use of cooperative groups is conducive to learning for several reasons. One reason why students with disabilities benefited from cooperative groups was because, often, the other students were more sensitive to what they do not understand. Also, they found that mainstream students can help students with disabilities focus on what is essential information and what is extraneous. The final reason that they cited was that when peers gave explanations, they were in terms that could easily be understood by the student with disabilities.

Also, Panacek and Dunlap (2003) supported the use of cooperative learning as an integral part of an effective inclusion classroom. However, they used different supporting research for their endorsement of cooperative learning. They insisted that the use of cooperative groups helps students with disabilities to establish supportive relationships that are not associated with special education. Panacek and Dunlap maintained that

students with disabilities have very limited social opportunities, and their participation in the cooperative learning environment encouraged them to make relationships that otherwise would not exist. Lavoie (1994) emphasized the importance of group interaction in the lives of students with disabilities. He believed that social incompetence has more far reaching consequences than the effects of the learning disability. He suggested that one of the ways a student with disabilities can acquire and fine-tune his social skills is through participation in cooperative learning groups.

Guralnick, Hammond, and Connor (2003) conducted a study about group and solitary play behavior. Students with delays ($p < .001$) engaged in more nonsocial play than students without delays. Also, students with delays engaged ($p < .05$) in more unoccupied behavior than students without delays. In addition, students with delays ($p < .05$) displayed more solitary/functional play than students without delays. Guralnick et al. maintained that, since students with disabilities were more likely to play alone or to watch others play, they needed to be placed in an environment where they were forced to interact and gain social skills. Since students with delays, who began as solitary/passive, were more likely to move to solitary/active play over time ($p < .01$), Guralnick et al. believed that students with disabilities would eventually participate actively in a group if they were given the opportunity and time.

Classroom Inclusion Modifications

Along with cooperative group work, modifications can be made for students with disabilities in order to enhance an inclusive classroom. Chalmers (2000) reported that

there were six areas that regular classroom teachers should address when they make modifications for students: (a) attitudes, (b) interactions, (c) expectations, (d) learning environment, (e) daily assignments and activities, and (f) tests. The first three areas (i.e., attitudes, interactions, and expectations) are related to the student and teacher relationship. A teacher should have the same attitude, interaction, and expectations for a student with a disability that she has for a student without a disability because students are very perceptive about how someone treats them in comparison to others. The fourth area is the learning environment. The environment of a classroom is established by the teacher. Chalmers suggested that teachers of students with disabilities should: (a) be aware of where students are placed, (b) make sure that the room is color coded, and (c) allow students to type assignments rather than handwrite them. The last two areas are related to assignments and tests. For both assignments and tests, modifications should reflect one goal: Does this assignment or test with modifications meet the purpose for which it is intended? When teachers make modifications, they should ask themselves, What is it that this student needs to learn and remember? When accommodations are focused on the objectives, teachers can differentiate assignments based on students' abilities.

Modifications for Behavior

Lavoie (1994) developed several techniques to help teachers make the inclusion of students with disabilities a successful and positive experience. One of the problematic times for a student with learning disabilities is the transition from one activity to the next. Since, often, the student is behind other students, he needs to be given a warning for when

the transition will occur. That gives the student more time to prepare himself to change gears. Also, a student with disabilities may *space out* which is problematic for a teacher. Lavoie suggested that, instead of calling for his attention, the teacher should call his attention to something in particular. This relieves some of the embarrassment for the student. Another suggestion is to refrain from labeling the student and, instead, label the behavior. A final suggestion for modification of the behavior of students with disabilities is to assign a small portion of new material along with a larger portion of old material to be reviewed. When only a small amount of new material is assigned, the student is less likely to feel intimidated or overwhelmed by the assignment. When positive behavior modifications are used, the student will feel safe in the classroom and have an optimistic attitude toward learning.

Modifications for Literacy

According to Schirmer, Casbon, and Twiss (1995), the regular classroom teachers reported that their largest concern was their ability to provide literacy instruction to students who had reading and writing levels that were inconsistent with their grade level. However, there are strategies that teachers can use to address the literacy gap of some students with disabilities.

It is critical that all beginning readers understand phonics and have phonemic awareness (Cooper, 2006). The best way to teach phonemic awareness is to combine it with oral language. With the use of sounds from oral language, the phonics of language can be broken down in a way that students with disabilities can understand. The concept

of phonics and oral language should be related to rhyming, segmenting, and breaking down words into syllables. By use of this method, phonics and oral language are put into a system, such as rhyme, with which students with disabilities can hear, say, and relate.

In addition to phonics and phonemic awareness, understanding vocabulary is another influential aspect of literacy fluency. Marzano and Pickering (2005) suggested that new vocabulary should be taught in a six step process.

1. Provide a description, explanation, or example of the new term.
 2. Ask students to restate the description, explanation, or example in their own words.
 3. Ask students to construct a picture, symbol, or graphic representing the term or phrase.
 4. Engage students periodically in activities that help them add to their knowledge of the terms.
 5. Periodically ask students to discuss the terms with one another.
 6. Involve students periodically in games that allow them to play with terms.
- (pp. 17-26)

With the use of these steps to learn vocabulary, teachers can address students' different intelligences. A linguistic student would produce a verbal or written detailed explanation. A student, who is a kinesthetic learner, can construct meaning and make a representation of the word. When students work with one another through partnerships and games, the interpersonal student is engaged.

Modifications for Mathematics

Although modifications in mathematical reasoning can enhance any student's understanding, it is especially important for a student with disabilities because it provides the student with more than one problem solving option. According to Blanton and Kaput (2003), when students are encouraged to justify their generalizations, they can internalize

what they learned. In addition, the use of manipulatives such as blocks, base 10 cubes, tiles, and play money can help kinesthetic and visual learners grasp concepts. For students with illegible handwriting or motor problems, it is helpful to use graph paper to align numbers in computations problems. Altieri (2005) developed a way to reinforce mathematics concepts through the use of words and poetry. With this method, students with disabilities can make better connections and, therefore, increase their comprehension. With the use of this method, students are encouraged to find the everyday mathematical concepts that surround them. When students are able to see tangible mathematics concepts, they do not feel intimidated by them.

Modifications for General Use

Chalmers (2000) found that, throughout the school day, students spend a large amount of time in work on independent assignments. In order to guide students with disabilities through this process effectively, she suggested that students be provided with a purpose for all of their reading. When a student is assigned a chapter to read, he should be given something specific to look for before he begins to read. Use of this strategy helps to improve comprehension and enables the student to focus on major points. After the student has completed reading, he should be provided with a short, focused review guide to help him check his own work.

The way in which a student with disabilities records information affects learning as well (Chalmers, 2000). Chalmers found that many students with disabilities prefer to record notes by computer, instead of by hand, or have someone else take notes for them.

The effort and amount of time it takes to hand write information, coupled with comprehension can be overwhelming. However, if a student needs to take her own notes, there are several strategies that can be used to accommodate the specific needs of students: (a) bullet note-taking, (b) two column note-taking, and (c) fill in the blanks note-taking.

Another way to modify curriculum for activities is to choose and develop graphic organizers for students with disabilities (Chalmers, 2000). The purpose of a worksheet should facilitate the student's learning. In order to achieve this goal, the graphic organizer should not be too complicated. Also, it should include plenty of space between sections and items, and it should not have too many illustrations. The use of too many illustrations can cause a student with a disability to be overstimulated, distracted, and unable to focus on the concepts on the page. It is helpful to break worksheets into boxes or separate sections. Finally, the directions should be concise and parallel the purpose of the worksheet.

Chapter Summary

An overview of the historical background of special education and what must be done to meet the needs of students with disabilities was presented in this chapter. In order to meet the needs of students with disabilities, there must be cooperation between three groups: (a) the student with disabilities, (b) the parents/guardians of the student, and (c) the teachers and school officials. With strong communication among these three groups, and the use of effective strategies, students with disabilities can be successful in an

inclusive classroom. In Chapter 3, this author will describe how the program was developed.

Chapter 3

METHOD

The purpose of this project was to develop a presentation to improve the education of students with disabilities through improved teacher communication and education about pertinent strategies. This aim was derived from specific legislative acts, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA, 1997) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001 as cited in Close-up, 2005), that have called attention to this area of education. With the implementation of these acts, school staff have begun to scrutinize special education and the service that teachers provide in this area. Through this examination, the lack of communication between teachers, students, and parents emerged as a need for the execution of useful instructional strategies.

Target Audience

The individuals, who will benefit from this presentation, are special education teachers, regular classroom teachers, and, although not designed particularly for them, parents of students with disabilities. Both regular and special education teachers would find the strategies useful for instruction and for communication among teachers. They would be able to use knowledge taken from the presentation to enhance the learning of their students with disabilities. From this presentation, parents would gain knowledge about their child's education as well as the strategies that are being applied. Also, parents

would achieve insight into their child's rights and the responsibility that the school staff has for the education of their child.

Presentation Objectives

There were three main goals to the presentation. The first goal was to provide teachers with instructional strategies that they could use daily in their classrooms. The strategies were modifications in mathematics, literacy, and the environment. These strategies were research based and were meant to help teachers educate students with disabilities so that they may gain success now and in the future.

The second goal was that, after participation in the presentation, teachers would be able to establish a system of communication among teachers, parents, and students based on the guidelines and foundation that were addressed. The specific goal of this system of communication was to arrange a way to determine what the daily needs are for a student with disabilities and make sure that everyone, teachers, parents, and student, is aware of the plan. Communication about the student's needs and goals will minimize the risk of repeated lessons and assignments and provide a consistent set of expectations. When this level of communication is present, students with disabilities will experience a learning environment in which they are challenged to grow, yet still receive the support that they need.

The third objective of the presentation was that a relationship would be established among teachers, parents, and students with disabilities. The goal of the presentation was to encourage each individual in this unique relationship to become an active member in the

student's education. The role of each person should be clearly defined. With this structure, blame will be minimized when issues arise, and, instead, success will be celebrated by the whole group. By the establishment of a consistent line of communication among all individuals involved, everyone will feel empowered and responsible for the education of the student. The essential tasks of this relationship are: (a) daily communication, (b) goal setting, (c) evaluations, and (d) reflection about strategies. An effective program of communication should be thorough, time saving, and flexible so that all parties will continue to use it to ensure student success.

Peer Assessment

In order to evaluate the usefulness of the strategies, several experienced teachers were asked to review the presentation. For this assessment, each teacher was given an assessment worksheet in which she could record professional feedback concerning additions and deletions to the presentation. Included in Chapter 5 will be the recommendations from these teachers.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter the method of the presentation was outlined, including the targeted audience and the objectives of the presentation. In Chapter 4 the presentation, designed in Microsoft Powerpoint, is provided. The presentation included instructional strategies and foundational examples of communication systems. In addition to the presentation, graphic organizers were included to help assimilate the information presented.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this project was to develop a presentation to provide to teachers that aims to improve the education of students with disabilities through teacher communication and education about pertinent strategies. The program presented is titled “Agreed To Succeed”. The foundation of the “Agreed to Succeed” program is based on extensive research in the special education field. The goal of this program was derived from specific legislative acts, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA, 1997) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001 as cited in Close-up, 2005). These two acts have brought a spotlight to special education. In the presentation, teachers are offered an approach to opening communication among teachers, students, and staff. Additionally, strategies are presented to encourage teachers to modify curriculum for their students with disabilities in their classrooms.

Project Introduction

The three main objectives, presented as the three I’s, are initiating communication, integrating learning and incorporating strategies. Initiating communication is extremely important because it is the first step toward establishing relationships. The term integrating learning stands for the necessity for collaboration among teachers, students, and parents. Teachers must collaborate to set standards and expectations school-wide for students. The last objective, incorporating strategies, provides teachers with ways to modify curriculum to encourage students with disabilities to succeed.



Good morning educators! My name is Kathryn Lynn and I am so lucky to have this opportunity to talk with you today. In accordance with my Master's program, I have developed a presentation dealing with issues that face teachers of students with disabilities. "Revamping the Classroom: Simple Steps to Improving the Education of Students with Disabilities" will get you thinking about strategies for increasing the success of these students by enhancing the communication and relationship among teachers.

Why Am I Here?

- ☐ Students with Disabilities
- ☐ Relationship between Regular Classroom and Special Education Teachers
- ☐ Communication Dissonance
- ☐ Time is Always an Issue
- ☐ Principal Said So

The first question that I would like everyone to ask themselves is: Why am I here? (Reveal only title of slide) In the space provided, please take a moment to write down the issues or constraints that you face when teaching students in special education. (Wait about one minute) Now that everyone has had a chance to reflect, what are some of our ideas? (Get ideas from participants) Now here are some reasons that I came up with for why I am here. (Reveal the rest of the slide) Hopefully, everyone is here today because they want to increase the success of the students with disabilities in their classroom. Also, sometimes the relationship between the regular classroom and special education teacher can become strained. This dissonance is usually caused by some sort of breakdown in communication. The final issue that we all face as educators is a lack of time. Being in

constant communication with other teachers does take time so often the communication is the first thing to go out the window. However, is it worth your TIME to increase the success of students with disabilities in your classroom?

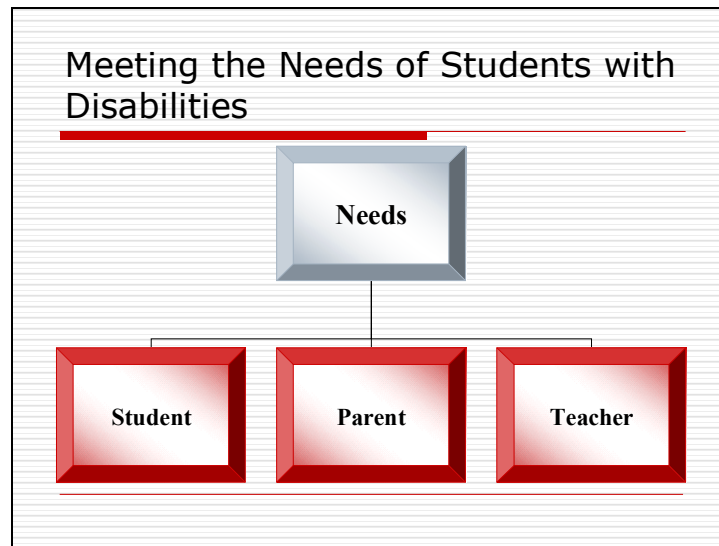
What Do I Want to Accomplish?

- ☐ Learn New Instructional Strategies and Modifications
- ☐ Establish a System of Communication
- ☐ Solidify and Improve Relationships

(Reveal title of slide only) What do I want to accomplish in regards to teaching students with disabilities? Please take a moment to think about goals for yourself. (Wait one minute) Who wants to share some of their goals? (Reveal the rest of the slide)

These are the “takeaways” for this presentation. First, I hope that everyone learns at least one new instructional strategy or modification that they can use everyday in the classroom.

Next, I hope to give you the foundation and structure for an effective system of communication between parents, students with disabilities, and teachers, both regular and special education. Finally, if communication is maintained, relationships will become more meaningful and will increase the level of success for everyone involved and especially the student with disabilities.



The overall goal of this presentation is to ensure that students with disabilities are given the opportunity to be successful. The first step toward this goal is to recognize the unique needs of students with disabilities and who is responsible for meeting these needs. The classroom climate and environment is extremely important. Students with disabilities want to know whether or not they will be safe, both physically and emotionally, while in your classroom. Also, students with disabilities want to know if you know how to TEACH them. Do you know how to help them learn, even though they learn different than others? Finally, students with disabilities want to know if they can count on you to know where they are at academically. Will you be able to challenge them and hold them accountable for their work? Will their parents be able to share responsibility for their needs? Will this be communicated to them? While the needs of students with disabilities seem to be overwhelming, considering that they represent a small percentage of your class

population, these needs can be met with the collaboration of everyone involved. This involvement comes from the student, parent, and teachers.

Student Responsibility

- ☐ Perception of their Intelligence and Academic Ability
- ☐ Willingness to Learn/Effort

All students have a responsibility for their own education. Students with disabilities must be held accountable for their education to the degree that is appropriate for them. Also, students can meet some of their own needs by cultivating a positive attitude toward academics and school. Students must be in charge of their own learning; they need to show the willingness to accept challenges.

Parent Responsibility

- ☐ Be Involved
 - ☐ Be an Appropriate Advocate
-

As teachers, we want the parents of all our students to be involved in their child's education. Parents of students with disabilities **MUST** be involved in their student's education. Also, it is the responsibility of the parent to become an appropriate advocate for his or her child. By understanding their child's rights, parents feel more comfortable when meeting with officials from the school in regard to the needs of the student.

Teacher Responsibility

- “Agreed To Succeed”
 - The Three I’s
 - Initiating Communication
 - Integrating Learning
 - Incorporating Strategies

Parents and students definitely have their role in the students’ educations, however, we as teachers are extremely influential in the actual upkeep and progress toward success. Today, I would like to talk with you about a program I designed called “Agreed To Succeed”. ATS focuses on building communication and relationships among teachers, students, and parents with the goal being to help the student with disabilities succeed. The foundation of ATS is based on the three I’s—Integrating Learning, Initiating Communication, and Incorporating Strategies. Through teamwork, communication, and the use of modifications, success is obtainable for students with disabilities.

Agreed To Succeed

- ❑ Initiating Communication
 - ❑ Monthly Goal Setting and Evaluation
 - ❑ Agreed To Succeed (ATS) Calendar

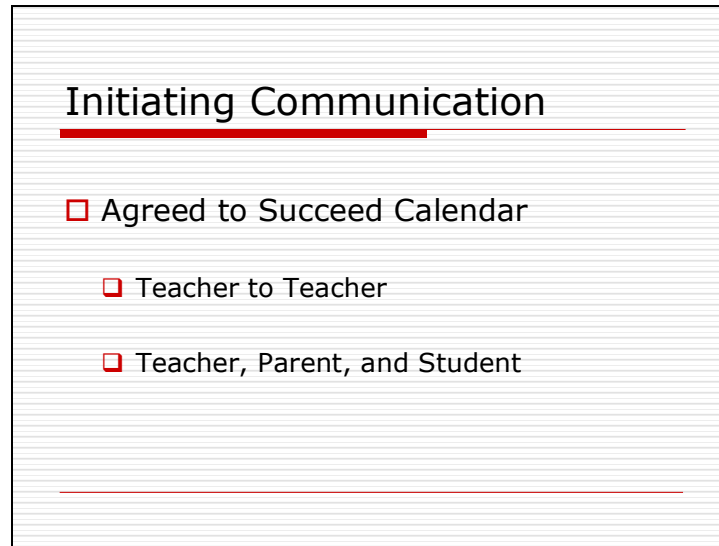
Initiating communication is the first step towards the implementation of the Agreed to Succeed Program. Communication among teachers, parents, and students is essential to keep the student on-track for success. For this program, communication is established through monthly goal setting with evaluation and the Agreed To Succeed Calendar.

Initiating Communication

- ❑ Monthly Goal Setting and Evaluation
 - ❑ Continuous Progress on Long-Term Goals
 - ❑ Shows Growth
-

I would ask that everyone find the GOALS Booklet and take a look at it. This booklet mirrors an IEP in that it focuses on the areas that students need to improve in. However, it is different than an IEP because it is in “Kid-friendly” language and the booklet remains in the student’s possession. This booklet should be kept in an assignment notebook and revisited monthly. Each month goals should be established. These goals can be new, or ongoing. The goals must be agreed upon by teachers, student, and parents. However, there are various ways to come to agreement: (a) Each party member writes one goal, all read and sign, (b) teachers establish goals with student at school and parents sign, (c) parents establish goals at home with student and teachers review and sign. The maintenance of this GOAL booklet does not have to be time-consuming. Monthly conferences with all members present would be great, but as we all know, not feasible.

The goal of this booklet is to allow the student, parents, and teachers to have a tangible form of monitoring the student's progress. Unlike an IEP, this form is reviewed monthly by not only the teachers, but the student and parents. Also, this booklet will be extremely motivating for the student who will be able to see his own progress.



Please take a moment and look at the graphic organizer titled, Agreed To Succeed Calendar for Jenny Dryers. This is the key to the communication portion of ATS. This is a weekly calendar. The top portion of the calendar is used by the regular education and special education teacher. This section is completed during the articulation meeting. Listed in bold are the subjects in which the student is receiving special education. Under each of these subjects, the teachers will give an outline of what needs to be accomplished by that student for the week. (This can be done ahead of time, as teachers often know what they will teach before that week arrives.) Then, the calendar is sent home. The parent and student are asked to agree with what the teachers want accomplished and what effort will be taken at home. The calendar must be returned by the Monday of the calendar week. A reward system may have to be instituted to ensure calendars come back

on time. Copies should be made of the calendar and be distributed. The student's copy should remain in her assignment notebook.

Agreed To Succeed

- ❑ Integrating Learning
 - ❑ Collaboration Between Teachers
 - ❑ Monitor Effectiveness of Programs

Integrated learning is the collaboration between teachers. Common forms, formalities, and agreements must be established and followed by staff members. Monitoring effectiveness of programs is also an important part of integrating learning. Evaluating student achievement, both formally and informally, must be completed regularly to validate the use of certain instructional strategies.

Integrating Learning

- ❑ Collaboration Between Teachers
 - ❑ Articulation with Special Education
- ❑ Unified Set of Expectations
 - ❑ Headings
 - ❑ Procedures
 - ❑ "Body Basics"

The next step toward implementing the ATS program is to articulate with special education and regular education teachers together. All staff must agree to meet once a week to establish the week's plan. This ensures that the students will be held to the same expectations by both teachers. This meeting does not have to last longer than 5 minutes if both teachers are prepared. It is the classroom teacher's responsibility to come prepared with the week's plans for the student and, if possible, any modifications of assignments. It is the responsibility of the special education teacher to accept the week's plan and inform the classroom teacher of the student's progress from the past week. Please take a moment to look at the ATS Calendar to locate where this information is recorded. This articulation meeting does not have to be formal or time-consuming.

As part of ATS, as a school, you must adopt school-wide policies. It is up to the teachers to maintain a unified set of expectations for the student with disabilities. These

expectations should be set collaboratively and enforced the same. The first step, a school-wide heading must be determined and practiced by everyone in the building. Next, a school-wide set of procedures must be determined. These procedures include attending an assembly, eating lunch, walking down the halls, and etc. One school-wide procedure that I have seen be extremely effective is “Body Basics”. There are specific procedures for walking down the hall, sitting during assemblies, and etc. This must be adopted school-wide. While these expectations are meant for the entire student population, they are helpful to students with disabilities because they are consistent.

Integrating Learning

- ☐ Monitor Program Effectiveness
 - ☐ Formal or Informal
 - ☐ Objective Assessments
 - ☐ Share at Articulation

It is the teacher's job to find an effective system to monitor student's success.

Besides standardized tests, how are students with disabilities being evaluated? How often are they being evaluated? Effectiveness can be determined with both formal and informal assessments. As part of the ATS program, teachers will be expected to take weekly notes on the progress of students. These notes can be formal or informal. This information will be shared during the articulation meeting. Please take a moment to look at the ATS Calendar to locate where this information can be recorded.

Agreed To Succeed

- ❑ Incorporating Strategies
 - ❑ Modification of Regular Curriculum through Instructional Strategies

One of the most common mistakes that teachers make is that they are afraid to make accommodations for students with disabilities because it is not “fair” to the rest of the students. However, look at each student individually, not as a whole.

Accommodations are meant to help students succeed who are not able to without them.

Incorporating Strategies

- ☐ Behavior
- ☐ Literacy
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ "Everyday" General Use

I have separated the accommodations into five distinct areas. According to the classroom inclusion model, there are six things that a teacher needs to consider when making modifications for students. Using these areas as a basis, I will share some modifications with you for behavior, when teaching literacy, mathematics, and for everyday use.

Behavior Modifications

- ☐ Feeling Overwhelmed
 - ☐ Trigger Signs
 - ☐ New vs. Old Material
 - ☐ Spacing Out
 - ☐ Attention to Something Particular
-

I have listed three potential trouble spots in the day when a student with disabilities may encounter a behavioral issue. The feeling of being overwhelmed is one that no student wants to face. For a student with disabilities, this feeling may be present more often than with other students. In order to prevent or alleviate feeling overwhelmed, teachers must monitor students and learn to recognize their trigger signs. Often times students with disabilities do not know how to monitor their own behavior and do not realize until it is too late that they are feeling overwhelmed. As the teacher, it is important to set up a “secret” signal between you and the student that helps the student know he is becoming irritated. When the signal is given, by either the teacher or the student, the student is allowed to “relax” in a predetermined manner. Ways in which the student can relax could be to put his head down on the desk, to go to the restroom, or read a book. However the student relaxes, it is important that he returns to work when he has control

over himself. Although the teacher may be giving the sign at first, eventually the goal is that the student be able to recognize when he is losing control of his emotions. Another way to prevent feeling overwhelmed is to assign a small portion of new material along with a larger portion of old material to be reviewed. By doing this, the student experiences a feeling of mastery yet is still being challenged. She feels less intimidated by the assignment and develops an optimistic attitude toward learning.

Although not only students with disabilities do this, spacing out is another “problem” behavior. When a student spaces out in class, it is important not to embarrass or intimidate the student. Instead of calling for the student’s attention, call the student’s attention to something in particular. This allows the student to become engaged without the rest of the class knowing that she was not paying attention.

Behavior Modifications, cont.

- ☐ Transition Time
 - ☐ Give Verbal Warning
 - ☐ Head Start
 - ☐ Use Personal Timer

Transition time can often be a problematic time for teachers. Students may lose interest and want to transition too soon or they may not be ready to transition. There are many remedies to try in order for students to change from one activity to another in a time-appropriate manner. The first way is to give students a verbal warning of the time. By letting a student know that she has two minutes until she must change activities, she is able to manage her time so that she can be ready when the change occurs. Another way to make transitions smoothly is to allow the student a head start. Tell the student discreetly that he may begin making the transition to the next activity before the rest of the class is given the signal. Finally, the use of a personal timer or watch to signify transitions is helpful for some students with disabilities. The timer helps the student to know how much time he has left before the next transition will occur.

Modifications for Literacy

- ❑ State A Purpose For Reading
- ❑ Vocabulary
 - ❑ Preteach Vocabulary
- ❑ Combine Phonemic Awareness with Oral Language
 - ❑ Rhyming, Segmenting, Syllables

When giving reading assignments, it is important that students with disabilities know the purpose for their reading. Give the students something specific to look for before they start reading. This keeps the students on task because they have a goal in mind. Here are some examples of stating a reason for reading. “Please read this chapter and find out why Lucy was sad.” Or “Read this story and be ready to describe the setting.” When a purpose is stated, students can feel prepared and empowered to participate.

Next, there are modifications that can be made concerning vocabulary. First, when beginning a new unit, section, or book, look for vocabulary that may be unfamiliar to the student. Before you begin teaching the lesson, teach the vocabulary. This introduction to new vocabulary gives students more practice with these words, and provides them with an opportunity to participate in discussions. Here are a few ways to preteach vocabulary.

First, provide the list of terms with their definitions to the special education teacher so that she can review with the student. Another way is to make a list of the terms, with their correct definitions, and give them to the student so that she can practice before or after school. The last suggestion would be to provide students with exercise in which they can work independently with the vocabulary.

For beginning readers, teaching phonemic awareness is extremely important. Combining phonemic awareness with oral language allows students with disabilities to put sounds into a system, such as rhyme, and then they can hear, say, and relate. Oral language is a powerful tool because it is the first aspect of literacy that children learn. As students, they can relate something they know how to do to something that is new to them.

Mathematics Modifications

- ☐ Mathematical Reasoning
 - ☐ Use of Manipulatives
 - ☐ Graph Paper
 - ☐ "Real World" Math
-

In addition to modifications in literacy, math accommodations are also necessary.

Mathematical reasoning is an instructional strategy that helps internalize learning.

Reasoning can enhance student understanding and also provides the student with more than one problem solving option. By encouraging students to justify generalizations, or to explain how they found an answer, proves to students that it is ok to find a solution in a different way.

Next, the use of manipulatives is another modification to use in the classroom.

Manipulatives such as blocks, base 10 cubes, tiles, and play money can help kinesthetic and visual learners grasp concepts.

For students with poor fine motor skills or illegible handwriting, it is helpful to provide graph paper to align numbers in computations problems.

Since math is often a challenging subject for students to conceptualize, encourage students to relate math to themselves by finding everyday mathematical concepts that surround them. When students are able to see tangible math objects, they do not feel as intimidated by them.

"Everyday" Modifications

- ☐ Focus on Intelligences (Gardner)
- ☐ Graphic Organizers
- ☐ Note-Taking

Daily instruction should be based on students' intelligences. Provide opportunities for students to learn in many different ways. Focus on their intelligences, ie. mathematical/spatial, linguistic, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and verbal. By varying assignments to fit your students' particular strengths, helps them become successful. Some ideas are: acting out the definition of a vocabulary word, making a clay atom, journaling, working with a group, write a song about the war, and to give a speech about animals.

When designing graphic organizers for your students, there are a few factors to consider. First, and foremost, ensure that your intended purpose is being met by the worksheet. Next, decide if the purpose of your worksheet is quantity or quality when determining the number of things you are asking the student to complete. Modifications should reflect one goal: Does this assignment or test with modifications meet the purpose

for which it is intended? When teachers make modifications, they should ask themselves, What is it that this student needs to learn and remember? When accommodations are focused on the objectives, teachers can differentiate assignments based on students' abilities. Next, make certain that you have already taught all concepts to be practiced on the worksheet; the purpose of the worksheet should not be to do the teaching. Also, take into account the visual presentation of your graphic organizer. Use lots of spacing and limit color and/or pictures. A busy looking graphic organizer can often be distracting. In addition, make sure that the directions are clear and concise so that the student knows the exact expectations for that graphic organizer. Finally, vary the format of the graphic organizers. Use different types of word banks, webs, and matching formats in order to find out what works best for the student.

The way in which a student with disabilities records information affects learning as well. Oftentimes students with disabilities prefer to record notes by computer, or have someone else take notes for them. The effort and amount of time it takes to hand write information, coupled with comprehension can be overwhelming. If it is necessary, a part of the objective, that a student take her own notes, other modifications can still be used. Some of these strategies are allowing students to take bullet notes, two column notes, and fill in the blanks notes.

"Everyday" Modifications, cont.

- ☐ Assignment Notebooks
- ☐ Alternate Assignments
- ☐ Manipulatives

Part of the classroom routine should be to have students record assignments and other important information into an assignment notebook. This helps students to organize themselves. Also, have the students adopt a color-coding system for their folders. Each color can represent a different subject. In addition, students should record their own progress in the ATS Calendar kept in their assignment notebook.

When appropriate, meaning the objective is still being met, allow students to complete an alternate assignment or choose how they wish to demonstrate their knowledge. Adapt the assignment to meet the needs of the student.

The use of manipulatives is an everyday modification. These manipulatives are things such as a number line, alphabet chart, cue cards, math fact tables, and

calculator. These items are used as modifications because they enable the student to continue to learn new concepts who would otherwise not be able to because of memory issues.

Which Ones Will You Use?

- ☐ Reflect
- ☐ Find a Partner
- ☐ Share Your Ideas

Now that I have shared some ideas for modification, in the space provided, list which modifications you will incorporate and any modifications not mentioned that you use in your classroom. (Wait 4 minutes) Now, please find a partner and share your reflections with this person. I encourage you to write down any new ideas that you hear. (Wait 5 minutes) Does anyone want to share either a modification that they will use or one that they already use in the classroom? I hope that we all feel more prepared to make modifications using instructional strategies.

So Now What?

☐ Agreed To Succeed Creed

As you can see, the foundation of the Agreed To Succeed Program relies upon the relationship caused by communication among the teachers, students, and parents and using instructional modifications for students with disabilities. If you believe that you are ready to implement this type of program, to conclude my presentation I would like everyone to repeat the Agreed to Succeed Creed. Please repeat after me.

I have Agreed To Succeed

at **Initiating Communication**

at **Integrating Learning**

And

at **Incorporating Strategies.**

Chapter Summary

In this chapter the presentation, “Agreed To Succeed” was offered. This PowerPoint presentation detailed a system of communication that established relationships among teachers, students, and parents. It also offered specific modifications to differentiate curriculum for students. In Chapter 5 a discussion concerning the contributions of the project, limitations, and suggestions for further study will be presented.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The objective of this project was to provide teachers with a program that focuses on relationships, communication, and useful strategies for teaching students with disabilities. The aim of special education and regular education teachers is to provide the best environment for students with disabilities. Ideally, this environment would consist of congruent instruction, expectations, and procedures established by both teachers. However, often, students with disabilities are in an environment in which there is not a strong relationship between both teachers. Consequently, this lack of communication affects the relationship among the teachers, students, and parents. An inservice presentation, “Agreed to Succeed”, was developed to promote strategies to facilitate communication between teachers, parents, and the students with disabilities.

The inservice, “Agreed to Succeed” was presented to a group of professional educators. This group consisted of special education and regular education classroom teachers. While their endorsements are similar, their backgrounds are diverse. One of the educators is an elementary special education teacher in a middle-class, suburban school district in the state of Colorado with over 20 years of teaching experience. The next reviewer is a third grade classroom teacher in a Montana school district with a high population of special education students. This reviewer has 5 years of teaching experience. The final reviewer is currently teaching special education in Wyoming but has been a regular classroom teacher as well. She has over 20 years experience overall,

with 10 years of teaching in special education. The reviewer's comments and suggestions will be used as the basis of this chapter.

Objectives Achieved

There were three main objectives of this project. The first objective was to identify barriers or areas of improvement that exist between special education and regular education teachers in regards to the success of the student. There was a consensus among the reviewers that communication and the formation of relationships are definitely major problems within their schools. One reviewer noted that while there is a framework at her school to help form relationships among teachers, no follow-up or communication occurs to enforce the framework.

The second objective was to provide a system that enhances communication among teachers and therefore creates relationships. One reviewer believed that the calendar handout would be helpful when evaluating IEP objectives or progress reports. In addition, this reviewer thought that the monthly goal booklet would be helpful for students to see their own progress on IEP goals. The booklet is student-friendly and therefore encourages the student to feel accountable for their own progress.

The final objective was to supply teachers with teaching strategies that they can use daily within their classrooms to differentiate learning. The reviewers appreciated the "Pocket Reference" handout because it could be used as a quick reference. Also, one reviewer noted that she has found that color-coding classrooms is extremely effective. Another reviewer found this section of the presentation the most helpful. She commented

on the modifications that pertained to math such as using graph paper for computation, allowing students to rationalize their thinking, and how appropriate manipulatives are for all students.

Limitations to the Project

Developing any educational staff development program relies upon the knowledge and experience of professionals in the field. A limitation to the project is the credibility of the researcher. While this researcher has examined many credible sources in the education field, she does have limited experience in an elementary school environment.

Other limitations offered by the reviewers concern the “Agreed to Succeed” program specifically. Accountability was a limitation that was echoed by all of the reviewers. The reviewers questioned the accountability of everyone involved; parents, students, and teachers. One reviewer asked what would occur if parents agreed to participate but then did not continue the process at home. Also, the reviewer was concerned that some parents might not agree to be involved at all with the process. In regards to the students, one reviewer asked what would happen to a student if she did not participate in the program. Also, even if a student wanted to participate, this reviewer believed that the goal booklet would be too overwhelming for the student to complete. Another reviewer suggested that students be offered some sort of motivation to participate in the program. When referring to the teachers’ accountability, one reviewer was unsure how teachers knew who was responsible for what action. It was suggested that by adding the days onto the calendar would allow teachers to check off tasks that

were completed on that day. Another reviewer believed that the manner in which goals are evaluated must be clear. This reviewer suggested that there be a specific process for evaluating goals so that everyone is held accountable. In order to hold parents, students, and teachers accountable, there needs to be specific consequences for non-compliance.

Recommendations for Future Research

Since this program has not been implemented, there is no way to actually measure effectiveness. One reviewer suggested researching other programs and/or schools that have implemented similar processes that attempt to connect special education and regular classroom teachers. Another reviewer recommended that the use of technology be investigated in future research. This reviewer hoped that there was computer software that could assist in the paperwork to expedite the process. In addition, a reviewer believed that future research should be focused on different ways that schools have developed learning communities. This reviewer thought that the meetings between the regular classroom and special education teachers could convene as a learning community to help the students who have disabilities.

Project Summary

The goal of special education and regular education teachers is to provide the best environment for students with disabilities. Ideally, this environment would consist of congruent instruction by both teachers. However, often, students with disabilities are in an environment in which there is no strong communication between both teachers.

An in-service presentation was developed that promotes strategies that initiate communication, integrate learning, and incorporate differentiation techniques.

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APPENDIX A

Handouts

AGREED TO SUCCEED CALENDAR FOR JENNY DRYERS

For the week of 07/19 - 07/23/06

(Top half completed by teachers at Articulation Meeting first)

Reading

- ❖ First task or achievement
- ❖ Second task or achievement
- ❖ Third task or achievement

Writing

- ❖ First task or achievement
- ❖ Second task or achievement
- ❖ Third task or achievement

Mathematics

- ❖ First task or achievement
- ❖ Second task or achievement
- ❖ Third task or achievement

Miscellaneous

- ❖ Work on Handwriting—Letter M

Family Connection

(Calendar is sent home, filled out by parents and student, and returned by that calendar's Monday)

Reading

- ❖ First task or achievement
- ❖ Second task or achievement
- ❖ Third task or achievement

Writing

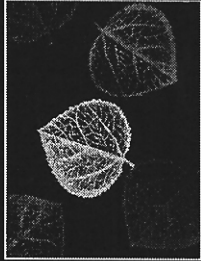
- ❖ First task or achievement
- ❖ Second task or achievement
- ❖ Third task or achievement

Mathematics

- ❖ First task or achievement
- ❖ Second task or achievement
- ❖ Third task or achievement

Miscellaneous

- ❖ Jenny will be gone on Friday

Jenny Dryers	
GOALS	

Month of July

Goal # 1: (Description Goes Here)
Status: New
Progress:
Goal # 2: (Description Goes Here)
Status: New
Progress:
Goal # 3: (Description Goes Here)
Status: New
Progress:
Goal # 4: (Description Goes Here)
Status: New
Progress:

The Cast

Jenny Dyers	Signature
Mrs. Dyers	Signature
Mr. Dyers	Signature
Mrs. Workman	Signature
Mrs. Lynn	Signature

Month of August

Goal # 1: (Description Goes Here)
Status: New
Progress:
Goal # 2: (Description Goes Here)
Status: New
Progress:
Goal # 3: (Description Goes Here)
Status: New
Progress:
Goal # 4: (Description Goes Here)
Status: New
Progress:

The Cast

Jenny Dyers	Signature
Mrs. Dyers	Signature
Mr. Dyers	Signature
Mrs. Workman	Signature
Mrs. Lynn	Signature



Revamping the Classroom: Instructional Strategies for Modifications

Modifications in

Behavior

Literacy

Mathematics

"Everyday" Use

BEHAVIOR

- ☐ Feeling Overwhelmed
 - ☐ Trigger Signs
 - *Secret Signal and Take a Break
 - ☐ New vs. Old Material
 - *More review, Less New
- ☐ Spacing Out
 - ☐ Call Attention to Something Particular
- ☐ Transition Time
 - ☐ Give Verbal Warning
 - ☐ Head Start
 - ☐ Use Personal Timer

Literacy

- ☐ State A Purpose For Reading
- ☐ Vocabulary
 - ☐ Preteach Vocabulary
- ☐ Combine Phonemic Awareness with Oral Language
 - ☐ Rhyming, Segmenting, Syllables

Mathematics

- ☐ Mathematical Reasoning
- ☐ Use of Manipulatives
- ☐ Graph Paper
- ☐ "Real World" Math

Contact Me

Kathryn Lynn

someone@example.com

“Everyday” Use

- ☐ Focus on Intelligences (Gardner)
- ☐ Graphic Organizers
- ☐ Note-Taking
- ☐ Assignment Notebooks
- ☐ Alternate Assignments
- ☐ Manipulatives

APPENDIX B

Assessment Handout for Project



Assessment of Project

WHAT ARE THE ***STRENGTHS*** OF THIS PROJECT?

1. Agree that this is an issue that my school needs to address
2. School wide policies are very important
3. Color coding is a great tool especially with schedules on students desks
4. Pocket Reference handout is a great quick reference.

What are your ***suggestions*** for improvement?

1. What would you do if you had a student who showed no emotion in caring for school?
2. Parent involvement—agree to work with children but then do not
3. The goal sheet may be too overwhelming for the student to complete
4. If a school wide policy cannot be adopted, implement a classroom policy so that the SPED student does not feel singled out
5. Is this program too time consuming?

Thank you for your time! Please be honest in your responses. Your feedback is extremely valuable.



Assessment of Project

Thank you for your time! Please be honest in your responses. Your feedback is extremely valuable.

WHAT ARE THE ***STRENGTHS*** OF THIS PROJECT?

- **Using graph paper for math problems is a great modification I had never heard of!
- **Use of graphic organizers
- **Having students rationalize their thinking is extremely helpful for that student and other students who may be struggling
- **Use of manipulatives is great—make them available to all students so that the one who needs them will not feel singled out
- **Definitely an issue at my school, framework is laid, but there is not action behind it-no communication

What are your ***suggestions*** for improvement?

- **What if parents refuse to cooperate?
- **What motivates the student to participate?
- **Is there any technology that could make the paperwork easier?
- **Meetings are like the PLC meetings?
- **What will the consequences be if the weekly schedule does not get returned to school on time?
- **What are the consequences for teachers who do not keep up the system?



Assessment of Project

WHAT ARE THE ***STRENGTHS*** OF THIS PROJECT?

1. The calendar handout would be helpful when evaluating IEP objectives/progress report
2. The monthly goal handout would be helpful for students to see progress on IEP goals because the student has the handout with them daily.
3. There were many good suggestions that teachers can use in the regular classroom.

What are your ***suggestions*** for improvement?

1. On the Agreed To Succeed calendar, if parents return the form to school, then they do not have a home copy.
2. How will teachers be held accountable—who does what? Might be helpful to add days and allow teachers to check off tasks when completed on that day.
3. How are the goals evaluated?
4. Could you make a cheat sheet that pertains to primary and then another that concerns secondary elementary age students?
5. Research schools that have implemented the RTI program to get ideas for improvement.

Thank you for your time! Please be honest in your responses. Your feedback is extremely valuable.