Collaboration Confusion: Clarifying Vocabulary
By Denyse Doerries, Ph.D., and Sue Land, M.Ed.

How often do you hear: “We do inclusion.” “I teach the inclusion kids.” “I work in the inclusion class.” “I teach in a collaboration class.” “We don’t do collaboration here.” “I co-teach in three different classes during one block.” Do you ever wonder what these terms mean? The words “inclusion,” “co-teaching,” and “collaboration” are often used interchangeably even though they have different and distinct definitions.

The Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals, the Virginia Department of Education, and the Training and Technical Assistance Center at the College of William and Mary are sponsoring professional development workshops with Dr. Marilyn Friend for administrators and school teams across the state on Collaboration for the Success of All Students. Dr. Friend begins these workshops by carefully defining the vocabulary that is needed for successful collaboration, but that is often confused and misused. Administrators, teachers, other school personnel, and parents benefit from having a common understanding of terms associated with effective inclusive practices. A shared vocabulary helps prevent miscommunication and provides a universal language to promote understanding. The power of words to frame how teachers work together to meet the needs of all students should not be underestimated. “Without a shared vocabulary, it is difficult to design, develop, and evaluate effective practices, and communicate them to staff members and the community” (Friend, 2007, p. 5).

In order to facilitate understanding of the words we use to describe inclusive practices, this article clarifies the following terms: “collaboration,” “inclusion,” “co-teaching,” and “effective inclusive practices.”

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## Vocabulary Chart

**Collaboration** is a style for direct interaction between at least two coequal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal (Friend, 2007, p. 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Non-example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“We collaborated to develop a lesson plan in math to meet the needs of all our students.”</td>
<td>“I teach a ‘collab’ class.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comment:** Collaboration is not a service delivery option; it is a style of interaction (Friend & Cook, 2007).

**Inclusion** is a belief system “in which everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community in the course of having his or her educational needs met” (Stainback & Stainback, 1990, p. 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Non-example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“We believe all our students should have opportunities to participate in all aspects of school life.”</td>
<td>“We believe our students with disabilities can be included in the general education classes when they can handle the content and behave appropriately.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comment:** “Students should never have to earn their way into a general education environment” (Schwarz, 2007, p. 40).

**Co-teaching** is two or more educators who jointly deliver substantive instruction to a diverse group of students in a single space (Friend & Pope, 2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Non-example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The general educator and I share the responsibility of planning, preparing materials, and delivering the content to our 5th-period English class.”</td>
<td>“My co-teacher and I don’t have the time to plan together so I work with the students with disabilities in a small group in the back of the class.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comment:** There is more to co-teaching than placing two teachers in the same classroom space at the same time.

Effective inclusive practices are practices that provide students with disabilities appropriate education within general education classrooms of their neighborhood school, with the supports and accommodations that promote success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Non-example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“We plan to use graphic organizers and add a motivational component to enhance core-content classes to support students with emotional disabilities.”</td>
<td>“We put our inclusion students in classes with other at-risk learners because it will be easier to address all their needs.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comment:** It is important to schedule students and teachers in a thoughtful way based on student needs (Walther-Thomas, Korinek, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2000).
Schools can provide opportunities for teachers, other staff, and parents to explore the vocabulary that often causes confusion. Listed below are activities that may be conducted at faculty or team meetings.

- Provide school faculty and staff with vocabulary terms and definitions on separate 3x5 cards. In small groups, ask them to match the terms with the definitions. This provides an opportunity for participants to discuss the terms and share their viewpoints. Finally, spend time discussing the correct matches and clearing up misconceptions.

- Using the Vocabulary Chart above, school teams can add their own examples and non-examples to clarify the terms.

- Using a chart, teams can describe each term by how it looks and sounds.

### Co-Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Looks Like</th>
<th>Sounds Like</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two certified teachers</td>
<td>“What can we do to help all students?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared classroom space</td>
<td>“What do you think…?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse group of students</td>
<td>“Let’s try…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The foundation for establishing a school that uses effective inclusive practices is to define common vocabulary to enhance communication and articulate beliefs. If we are clear in our vocabulary, then we are clearer in our practices.

To help schools develop effective inclusive practices, Consideration Packets are available through the Training and Technical Assistance Center at the College of William and Mary (www.wm.edu/ttac), including “An Administrative Guide to Creating Inclusive Elementary Schools,” “Strategies to Create Inclusive Schools,” and “Co-Teaching.”

### References


As the end of the school year approaches, it is time to reflect upon the current year and to begin planning for the next. York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere, and Montie (2001) note that “the ultimate goal of schoolwide reflective practice is continuous improvement of practice in order to increase student learning.” (p.123). The questions suggested below by Moody, Russo, and Casey (2005) can guide an end-of-year discussion with either an entire staff or a school improvement planning team.

**As a faculty, do we share a clear understanding of our action plan and its implementation?**
- Has the action plan been clearly communicated and do we have a shared understanding of how it will be incorporated into the work of the school?
- Have team structures been created for teacher support and accountability?

**As a faculty, do we feel supported in our efforts to change instructional practice?**
- Is there a systematic classroom observation protocol that includes a coaching focus, feedback, and reflection?
- Are our teaching practices consistent to ensure that all students achieve their instructional goals?
- Does our professional development plan meet the needs of our teachers?

**Are we focused on student achievement?**
- Are there ongoing conversations about learning outcomes?
- Are we analyzing data in structured conversations to monitor the impact of the changes in our instructional practice?

**What will our next steps be?**
- Do we celebrate our accomplishments regularly?
- How shall we revise action plan goals and objectives based on data analysis to foster student and staff success?
- How do we reflect on barriers that hinder us from reaching our goals? (Friend & Cook, 2007)

York-Barr and colleagues (2001) note that the course of continuous school improvement is not as well defined as previously thought. The influences on student learning, both internal and external, make a one-size-fits-all improvement process ineffective and nonresponsive. However, reflective practice, guided by the principles of complex change, offers teachers and administrators a structure for responding to the influences on student learning, the ultimate goal.

**References**
Check It Out!

Consider enjoying the inspirational books and movies suggested below during your summer vacation! Items available in the T/TAC William and Mary library include the call number; they may be requested by calling 1-800-323-4489. A complete listing of professional resources available through the T/TAC William and Mary lending library may be viewed at http://www.wm.edu/ttac. Simply click on the “Library” link to view holdings, complete an online search, or order materials.

**Books**

**The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time**  
by Mark Haddon  
This engaging story is narrated by Christopher, a 15-year-old boy with autism. The reader is transported into Christopher’s world as he seeks to solve the mysterious murder of a neighbor’s dog. As he investigates, he uncovers information about his mother. (Doubleday, 224 pages)

**Dibs in Search of Self**  
by Virginia M. Axline  
First published in 1964, this classic story tells of a young boy who is nonverbal and will not play with other children. This true story documents how play therapy helps Dibs transform into a gifted and engaging young boy. (Ballentine Books, 224 pages)

**The Memory Keeper’s Daughter**  
by Kim Edwards  
This compelling novel begins as Dr. David Henry attends his wife as she delivers their twins in the middle of a blizzard. While the doctor’s son is born healthy, the daughter is born with Down syndrome. Dr. Henry tells his wife, sedated for the delivery, that the second twin was stillborn. In reality, he asks the nurse who assisted with the delivery to take the baby to an institution. The nurse decides to flee and raise the baby as her own. The novel spans 25 years as both families deal with the consequences of the decisions made the night the babies were born. (Penguin Books, 401 pages)

**Through the Cracks**  
This storybook by Carolyn Sollman with illustrations by Barbara Emmons vividly demonstrates how students can “fall through the cracks” in schools if educators are not mindful of student needs. This book will speak to educators at all grade levels. The T/TAC W&M call number is MI 47. (Sterling, 56 pages)

**Video/DVD**

**Graduating Peter**  
This thought-provoking documentary is a sequel to the 1992 Oscar®-winning documentary *Educating Peter*. It highlights the experiences of Peter Gwazdauskas, a student with Down syndrome in Blacksburg, VA, as he moves from sixth grade through high school. The T/TAC W&M call number is IN 161. (Not rated, State of the Art, Inc., 76 minutes)

**Radio**  
This movie is based on a true story. It follows the friendship of a football coach and Radio, a man with a mental disability who becomes a student at T.L. Hanna High School in Anderson, South Carolina. The movie spans several decades as Radio becomes an inspiration to the community. (PG, Sony Pictures, 109 minutes)

**A Recipe for Life**  
This unique video presents a series of thoughtful affirmations that encourage the viewer to embrace and celebrate inclusive thinking. The T/TAC W&M call number is IN 103 (Idea Group, Inc., 5 minutes)
Parents and teachers have the most direct impact on student success in school. Each grade offers different instructors, new learning expectations, and changes in classroom environment. Parents play an important role in helping students get through each school year. Whether living in affluent or low-income neighborhoods, most parents are eager to support their children, teachers, and school leaders. To do this, they need to know about the curriculum, what the schools are teaching, and how academic expectations change. They also need a better understanding of laws that govern their children’s education.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) began as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), or Public Law 94-142, in 1975. The latest reauthorization took place in 2004 to align with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). High expectations for all children and preparation of students with disabilities to lead productive and independent adult lives were among the congressional intents of IDEA 2004 (Moore-Brown, Estomin, Ferguson, Power-deFur, 2005). Together, IDEA and NCLB try to ensure equal access to education for all students.

Several organizations in Virginia are designed to educate and offer assistance to parents. Many of these organizations provide opportunities for parents to learn more about the revised laws as well as how to do their part in supporting their child’s achievement. Some of these organizations are identified below.

Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center
100 North Washington Street, Suite 234
Falls Church, VA 22046
Phone: 703-923-0010
1-800-869-6782 VA only
(804) 819-1999 (Richmond)
E-mail: partners@peatc.org
Website: www.peatc.org

Parent Resource Center
Judy Hudgins, Specialist
Division of Special Education and Student Services
Virginia Department of Education
P.O. Box 2120
Richmond, VA 23218-2120
Phone: (800) 422-2083; (804) 371-7421
E-mail: judy.hudgins@doe.virginia.gov
Website: www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE(sess

Parent to Parent of Virginia
P.O. Box 38341
Richmond, VA 23231
Phone: (804) 795-1481
E-mail: PTPofVA@aol.com
Website: www.ptpofva.com

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
1027 Wilmer Avenue
Richmond, VA 23227
Phone: (804) 264-1234
E-mail: info@vapta.org
Website: www.vapta.org

The Arc of Virginia
The Arc of Virginia Family Involvement Project
2025 E. Main Street, Suite 107
Richmond, VA 23223
Phone: (804) 649-8481 ext. 103; (888) 604-2677 ext. 103
E-mail: d holloway@arcfip.org
Website: www.arcfip.org

In addition to contacting the organizations listed above, family members may attend sessions at the conferences listed below to continue building their knowledge base in an effort to help children succeed in school. More information is available at TTAC Online at http://www.ttaonline.org


Reference
Problem Solving: Connecting Effective Instructional Strategies with Student Concerns
By Donni Stickney, M.Ed.

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has established Instructional Support Teams (IST) at elementary and middle schools in each of Virginia’s superintendents’ regions. Through this initiative teachers learn a problem-solving process designed to enhance, increase, and improve student and staff performance (Gravois & Gickling, 2003). This process begins when a teacher requests assistance from the school’s IST. One IST member volunteers to consult with the requesting teacher, and the two teachers start working shoulder-to-shoulder to address the student’s presenting academic problem.

Instead of jumping immediately to identifying solutions, the IST process requires that the two teachers first conduct an instructional assessment at the student’s instructional level. The instructional level is the point at which the student has the prerequisite skills to enter the classroom curriculum and benefit maximally from instruction (Rosenfield, 1987). If the student’s presenting problem is in reading, for example, the teachers probe the dimensions of reading to determine what the student knows, what the student can do, how the student thinks, and how the student approaches material about which he or she is unsure. The dimensions of reading addressed by IST in Virginia include the student’s language and prior knowledge of concepts; skill in providing answers orally, in writing, or other forms; word recognition, word study strategies; fluency; comprehension; and metacognitive strategies (Gravois & Gickling, 2003).

Once the two teachers have determined the reading dimension(s) in which the student needs immediate support, they begin to design interventions. Aligning assessment results with appropriate instructional strategies is an important step to ensure student progress. The teachers work together over a period of time to set student goals, gather additional data, and monitor student progress. The IST process is a comprehensive and effective way to address teachers’ academic concerns for their students.

The chart entitled Instructional Strategies to Address Deficits Identified Through Authentic Assessment in Reading (see insert) defines the domains of reading, provides diagnostic questions designed to reveal a student’s strengths and deficits, and offers instructional strategies aligned with each dimension. These strategies are described in detail at http://www.wm.edu/ttac/ist/readingstrategies.htm. This user-friendly site allows the teacher to click on a strategy title to see complete details of how to implement the strategy, as well as the research that supports its use. Once reading dimensions requiring instructional support have been identified and appropriate strategies have been selected, the teacher is equipped to design an instructional intervention plan.

For additional information on conducting an instructional assessment in reading and writing, the Considerations Packet “Instructional Assessment: An Essential Tool for Designing Effective Instruction” may be downloaded at http://www.wm.edu/ttac/packets/consideration.html. The VDOE has awarded model site status to several IST schools. A visit to these schools and other IST sites allows visitors to see the problem-solving process first hand. IST school contact information is provided at http://www.wm.edu/ttac/ist/ist.html.

References
"Burnout is nature’s way of telling you, you’ve been going through the motions your soul has departed; you’re a zombie, a member of the walking dead, a sleepwalker."—Sam Keen

George A. Romero wrote the book on zombies. In his cult classic film, Night of the Living Dead, zombies are creatures that shamble around communicating in grunts and low moans. But what if they weren’t really zombies? What if they were educators, educators suffering from burnout?

As the time of the school year so innocently called “spring” begins, the Standards of Learning assessments loom, special education mandates demand attention, and myriad “other duties as assigned” pile up like the snow in Siberia. The last thing that anyone needs or wants, but often gets, during this stressful period is an increase in students’ disruptive behavior. Many attribute it to “spring fever,” kids having figured out what buttons to push, or familiarity that breeds the desire to push boundaries. But what if the behaviors have not really changed? Maybe it is the teacher’s tolerance for the behaviors that has changed. Perhaps the situation is a product of teacher burnout.

Evers, Tomic, and Brouwers (2004) conducted a study with secondary-level students and teachers regarding their perceptions of teacher burnout. In their report, teachers consistently rated themselves relatively higher than the students in areas such as personal accomplishment (ability to evaluate the self in relation to job performance) and competence in coping with disruptive behavior. Ratings for depersonalization (a negative detached attitude towards coworkers) were considerably lower. The teachers’ positive views of their classroom performance were not supported by the student reports, however. Many students felt that their teachers were closer to burnout, more impersonal, and less tolerant of behavior.

This study shows that we, as educators, need to do a better job of assessing our state of mind and how our students perceive that state. Self-awareness, recognizing how we react to stress, is extremely important (Richardson & Shupe, 2003). Educators need to develop “a more accurate understanding of how students affect our emotional processes and behaviors and how we affect students” (p. 8). Richardson and Shupe (2003) identify a variety of strategies that help teachers increase their self-awareness regarding their interactions with challenging students, though these can be applied to any student. Figure 1 describes these strategies.

**Figure 1. Strategies to Increase Teacher Self-Awareness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Be proactive in recognizing and nullifying emotional triggers. | ✷ Use small timeouts before, during, and after positive or negative interactions with students.  
  ✷ Ask colleagues and supervisors about evident behaviors that impact effectiveness in the classroom. |
| Look for the good, the desired student behaviors.        | ✷ Reinforce positive behavior.  
  ✷ Make sure positive interactions are much more frequent than negative interactions. |
| Nurture mental health.                          | ✷ Think about your conversations regarding students shared with friends and coworkers.  
  ✷ Look for supportive people who will help maintain a positive outlook. |
| Use humor to build relationships, diffuse conflict, engage learners, and manage stress. | ✷ Stay relaxed and upbeat about the many unusual, unexpected happenings in life.  
  ✷ Make sure the humor is appropriate—healing, not harmful. |
| Celebrate the difference you and others are making in the lives of students. | ✷ Let people know that they are a valuable part of the team and school community, and that their efforts are appreciated.  
  ✷ Reflect on a positive impact you had on a student daily. |
So before teachers rail against the behavior of their students or write them off as suffering from Prom-itis, they must pause to honestly evaluate themselves. The last thing they or their students want is for a teacher to one day look in the mirror and see an extra from a George A. Romero zombie flick.

References

Professional Development Opportunities in Virginia
Summer 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>For More Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James Madison University’s Content Teaching Academy</td>
<td>The Content Teaching Academy will be conducted June 25-29, 2007, at JMU, combining essential subject-area content with high-quality instruction in an intellectually stimulating environment.</td>
<td><a href="http://coe.jmu.edu/academy2007/">http://coe.jmu.edu/academy2007/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading First Academies for Special Education Teachers</td>
<td>The Teacher Reading Academies, designed for special education teachers of grades 4-12, will provide focused professional development for special educators serving students with reading difficulties.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.readingfirst.virginia.edu/index.php/vdoeannouncements/index.php">http://www.readingfirst.virginia.edu/index.php/vdoeannouncements/index.php</a>&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.readingfirst.virginia.edu/pdfs/RFFlyerSpecialEd-03-14-07.pdf">http://www.readingfirst.virginia.edu/pdfs/RFFlyerSpecialEd-03-14-07.pdf</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Opportunities</td>
<td>The William and Mary T/TAC website and T/TAC Online offer up-to-date listings of professional development opportunities throughout the year.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wm.edu/ttac/development/index.html">http://www.wm.edu/ttac/development/index.html</a>&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.ttaconline.org/staff/s_events/s_events.asp">http://www.ttaconline.org/staff/s_events/s_events.asp</a>&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.ttaconline.org/staff/s_training/s_training.asp">http://www.ttaconline.org/staff/s_training/s_training.asp</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking for sample content lesson plans that are aligned with the essential knowledge and skills in the Curriculum Framework? Interested in ways to differentiate instruction for all students, grades K through 12? Check out the SOL Enhanced Scope and Sequence PLUS, an invaluable resource available on the T/TAC Online website.

What is it?
SOL Enhanced PLUS is a searchable database of the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) Enhanced Scope and Sequence PLUS lesson plans. These lessons are the result of a collaborative effort between general educators and special educators, along with Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) staff. This resource has been created to provide Virginia teachers with a tool to deliver SOL-based instruction to a diverse population of learners. Currently, curricular and instructional information is available for Mathematics, English and History/Social Studies. Science will be available in the summer of 2007.

The lesson plans and activities are not only aligned with the SOL, they feature strategies to facilitate differentiated instruction in the following areas:
- Technology use
- Multisensory options
- Community connections
- Small group learning
- Vocabulary strategies
- Student organization of content

How do I find them?
- Go to T/TAC Online: www.ttaconline.org and click on your region on the Virginia map
- Click on SOL Enhanced (at the top)
- Click on Search SOL+ Lessons (left margin)
- At Option 1- choose a subject area and choose a grade/course - click Go

- Click on any SOL standard and click Submit (at bottom of page)
- Choose from the lessons listed for the standard
- Click on Word or PDF format to download lesson

You will have a complete lesson plan which includes:
- An objective
- Prerequisite understanding/knowledge/skills
- Materials needed
- Procedures to follow
- Specific options for differentiation

References and Resources
T/TAC Online www.ttaconline.org
Virginia Department of Education: Enhanced Scope and Sequence www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/EnhancedSandS/
Virginia Department of Education: Instructional Services, Standards of Learning Resources www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/sol.html
Local education agencies (LEAs) throughout Virginia have been participating since 2003 in the Virginia Transition Outcomes Project (VTOP), the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Priority Project to improve post-school outcomes for students with disabilities.

The VTOP initiative calls upon LEAs to:

- Select a team of professionals who are trained to conduct an initial file review of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students of transition age,
- Analyze data from the IEP file review to discern elements of transition planning that need to improve,
- Set goals for improving transition IEP development in a manner that meets the requirements of IDEA 2004,
- Design and implement a corresponding action plan, and
- Conduct a post-implementation file review to assess effectiveness of the action plan.

The first three VTOP cohorts have completed post-implementation file reviews, and five LEAs in Superintendents’ Regions 2 and 3 are celebrating significant improvements in their transition planning efforts. File review elements that address transition content of the IEP are summarized in the left column below. Corresponding data in the right column reflect the most significant improvement from pre- to post-implementation among the three cohort LEAs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transition Content of the IEP</th>
<th>Percentage Point Increase From Pre– to Post-Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The IEP reflects the student’s interests/preferences</td>
<td>+58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Present Level of Performance summarizes current transition assessment data</td>
<td>+62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The IEP includes courses of study that increase the likelihood of the student achieving his or her vision for adult life</td>
<td>+73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The IEP includes transition service activities</td>
<td>+56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The transition services represent a coordinated set of activities</td>
<td>+64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The transition activities promote movement from school toward the student’s desired post-school goals</td>
<td>+71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If appropriate, the IEP includes a statement of interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages</td>
<td>+86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six of these seven LEAs have now written “second-generation” action plans that reflect a continuing desire to improve post-school outcomes for students and meet the new transition requirements of IDEA 2004. We congratulate these VTOP participants for their success!

If you would like to participate in the VTOP initiative, please contact:

Region 2: Dale Pennell (dppenn@wm.edu)
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Please share this newsletter with others. It may be copied. Call 1-800-323-4489 to be added to our mailing list or visit our website.

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Old Dominion University T/TAC
Old Dominion University is responsible for training and technical assistance for Regions 2 and 3 in early childhood special education/primary developmental delay (through age 9) and severe disabilities. You may contact T/TAC ODU at (757) 683-4333, or 1-888-249-5529, or visit their website at http://www.ttac.odu.edu.