Co-Teaching: Tips for Enhancing Practice  
By Sue Land, M.Ed., and Lee Anne Sulzberger, M.Ed.

Co-teaching as a service delivery option for students with disabilities is not a new phenomenon. Bauwens, Hourcade, and Friend (1989) used the term cooperative teaching 20 years ago to describe the practice of a general education and a special education teacher jointly delivering instruction in the general education setting. More recently, Friend and Cook (2007) refined the definition of co-teaching as a partnership between two or more professionals who share instructional responsibility for a diverse group of students in a shared classroom space. Today, co-teaching is becoming a more common service delivery model as schools seek to support students with disabilities in general education settings (Friend & Cook, 2007).

Co-teaching partners may use the following questions to reflect upon the status of their co-teaching relationship. “Yes” answers to the questions indicate that the foundation for a productive co-teaching partnership has been established. “No” answers would suggest that foundational work remains and co-teachers would benefit from further exploration of the questions.

- Have we discussed each other’s teaching style and preferences?
- Are we aware of the strengths each of us brings to the co-teaching partnership?
- Do we have and act upon a clearly articulated understanding of how we will work together?
- Do we meet regularly to co-plan our lessons?
- Is our co-planning time focused on meeting the needs of all learners in our room?
- Does each teacher have a meaningful role during co-taught lessons?
- Do we provide and accept suggestions that will enhance our co-teaching relationship and improve student learning?

Inside this issue ...  
Co-Teaching: Tips for Enhancing Practice.................................................................................Page 1  
Collaborative Leadership: The Principal’s Role in Sustaining Effective Practices...............Page 4  
Making it Happen: Encouraging Self-Determination in Early Adolescence .......................Page 6  
Designing Transition Activities That Prepare Students for Vocational Education and Integrated Employment ...........................................................................................................Page 8  
Reading Deep in the Content.....................................................................................................Page 10  
Check It Out................................................................................................................................Page 13  
Behavior Strategies: Focusing on Academic Enablers ..............................................................Page 14
Once the basics are in place, experienced co-teaching partners can more closely examine their planning and teaching practices to improve and strengthen overall instruction.

**Planning for Joint Instruction**
Friend and Cook (2007) note that co-teaching partners should “plan and use unique and high-involvement instructional strategies to engage all students in ways that are not possible when only one teacher is present” (p. 116). How can co-teachers ensure that they are delivering powerful instruction? After observing and interviewing co-teachers in three high schools, Simmons and Magiera (2007) determined that “quality co-teaching is predicated on common co-planning time, which leads to more consistent and thoughtful implementation of co-teaching” (Recommendations for Future Co-Teaching Practices section, ¶ 6).

Co-teachers also benefit from formalizing and structuring their planning process. A structured process provides teachers the opportunity to plan content, integrate IEP goals into lessons, differentiate instruction and assessment, and determine appropriate accommodations. It also allows teachers to select appropriate co-teaching variations or approaches, form deliberate student groups, and assign teaching responsibilities. Detailed information regarding this planning process may be downloaded in the new Considerations Packet, *Co-Planning for Student Success*, at [http://www.wm.edu/ttac/packets/consideration.html](http://www.wm.edu/ttac/packets/consideration.html).

Another area of growth for experienced co-teachers to pursue is examining the delivery of “specially designed instruction” for students with disabilities. This requires addressing the unique needs of each child based on the child’s disability and ensuring access to the general curriculum so that he or she can meet the educational standards (IDEA 2004 §300.26(b)(3)). One way to address “specially designed instruction” is to differentiate instruction. To aid in differentiating instruction and assessment during the planning process, co-teachers discuss the “big picture” issues or critical concepts related to the content before turning to content delivery. For example, before beginning a unit of study on the Civil War, teachers determine that students will need to understand the concept of “civil war.” Hawbaker, Balong, Buckwalter, and Runyun (2001) recommend analyzing the content for potential difficulties by “thinking about what was difficult for students in previous years, analyzing the abstractness and complexity of the concepts, and thinking about the specific learning difficulties of students with special needs” (p. 25). It is here that planning partners determine how they will deliver the content to ensure accessibility (e.g., multimedia presentation, dramatization, reading of historical literature, showing DVD of current events) and design differentiated practice activities and assessments to meet the specific needs of the students.

**Delivering Joint Instruction**
Experienced teaching partners should expand their use of co-teaching approaches beyond one teach-one assist to meet the needs of their students and to achieve instructional objectives (Santos & Wolfe, 2007). For example, co-teachers may choose station teaching because they want small groups of students to rotate through a variety of stations to complete a writing activity. Teachers first group students based on the results of a writing skills assessment. Then one teacher works with a group of students at the prewriting station. The other teacher instructs students on conducting research on a topic. The last group works independently on reports at the computer station. Kloo and Zigmond (2008) suggest that co-teachers also consider approaches that provide numerous opportunities for students to respond and for teachers to give frequent corrective feedback (parallel and alternative teaching). A complete description of co-teaching variations or approaches is provided in the Considerations Packet, *Co-Teaching*, found at [http://www.wm.edu/ttac/packets/consideration.html](http://www.wm.edu/ttac/packets/consideration.html).
Tips for Professional Growth
Co-teaching partners are encouraged to consider ways to enhance their practice and share their experiences with colleagues. The following are ways in which co-teachers can continue to refine their partnership:

- Special education teacher can take content course work
- General education teacher can take a special education strategies course
- Open classroom to visitors
- Serve as mentors to new co-teaching pairs (Lock, 2008)

Co-teaching partners can also use One Teach/One Observe to provide each other with specific feedback and coaching.

Further information on planning for professional development is provided in the Considerations Packet, Designing Effective Professional Development, found at http://www.wm.edu/ttac/packets/consideration.html.

Continuous reflection upon and refinement of co-teaching practices will increase the likelihood that co-teaching is an effective way to deliver services to students with disabilities. The following websites provide additional information on co-teaching: http://www.k8accesscenter.org/index.php/category/co-teaching/ (The Access Center) and http://www.cec.sped.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&CONTENTID=7504&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm (Council for Exceptional Children).

References
Collaborative Leadership
The Principal’s Role in Sustaining Effective Practices
By Sharon deFur, Ed.D.

Breaking News: Eastern Virginia School Implements Inclusive School Initiative – Community Asks Will It Continue? Principal Provides Plan to Sustain and Grow the Initiative …

Let’s assume that over the past few years, you and your staff have worked hard to make a change in how your school includes students with disabilities in the general curriculum. Together you chose an evidence-based practice to be a focus for your school. Collectively you developed a shared vision. As the instructional leader, you joined your staff in professional development and coaching to learn the skills associated with the initiative. Further, using a team approach, you developed an action plan and implemented the plan. Faculty, students, and parents responded positively to the efforts. You and your leadership team believe that continuing this practice will help all students succeed.

However, slippage in initiatives is commonplace and not without reasons. Since beginning the initiative, you have hired new staff. Some of your faculty who led the initiative may feel overworked. Undoubtedly, you have a new group of students and parents. You may be asking, can this initiative continue?

Don’t get discouraged. Collaborative leaders plan for sustainability. Questions to consider as part of your sustainability plan include the following (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Lambert, 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; RMC Research Corporation, n.d.):

- How will our school sustain a shared sense of purpose related to this inclusive practices initiative?
  - Is everyone on board? (Reach for more than 90%!)  
  - Are teacher, administrator, and staff skills sufficient? (A good sign is when teachers collaborate with their peers to problem-solve how the initiative can improve student achievement.)
  - What evidence do we have that this initiative is working, and have we shared it with the relevant stakeholders? (Data on student improvement, parent support, and faculty/staff satisfaction will be key.)

- How will our school culture provide ongoing support for this inclusive practices initiative?
  - Have we hired new staff with the initiative in mind? (Have these individuals received adequate professional development to participate fully in the school-wide effort?)
  - What are the plans for ongoing professional development related to the initiative? (Everyone needs ongoing renewal.)
  - How do I as school leader create time for faculty and staff to engage in collaborative discussion, planning, and problem solving? (Teachers constantly name planning time as a critical practice to any inclusive initiative.)

- How will we maintain energy and commitment to inclusive practices?
  - Do we celebrate small victories as well as large successes? (Meaningfully and memorably!)
  - Do I make sure that major responsibilities rotate or are distributed so that people do not burn out? (Collaborative leadership teams help!)
- Do I give sufficient time for faculty and staff to consolidate skills before expecting new growth? (The research says it takes 3-5 years to implement a reform.)
- Do I support extension and adaptation of the initiative based on the needs of faculty, staff, and students? (Teachers want to use their skills in curriculum development.)

- Would the inclusive practices initiative be sustained if school leadership changed?
  - Have we identified what aspects of the initiative are to be sustained, what resources are needed, and how those resources are accessed?
  - Have we created a system of shared leadership with faculty and administrators?
  - How will we convert successful practices associated with the initiative into policy or procedures at the classroom, school, or district level?

The field of education is sometimes criticized for a tendency to adopt new approaches without measured reason or without evaluation. Initiatives need to be evaluated and they need time to become part of the school culture. Choosing to implement an initiative assumes that administrators believe the initiative will be effective. If true, then a plan for sustaining the effort that addresses the questions posed above must be part of the decision to begin the initiative in the first place.

References

8th Annual Autism Conference
Autism: Making a Difference Together
Crowne Plaza, Richmond, VA
March 11-13, 2009


Find more details on the W&M T/TAC website:
http://web.wm.edu/ttac/development/index.html
Adolescence is an exciting, yet challenging time for both parents and their children. As youngsters emerge from childhood they must satisfy a new set of developmental needs. These new demands of adolescence include becoming more self-aware, maintaining high levels of self-esteem, enjoying greater independence, seeking opportunities to take risks, and assuming increased control and mastery over their lives. As challenging as the accompanying behaviors may be, the ability to satisfy these developmental needs is critical for gaining a sense of self-determination.*

Ward (1988), who was among the first to define self-determination, described it as “the attitudes which lead people to define goals for themselves and to take the initiative to achieve these goals” (p. 2). Although families may be uncertain of the extent to which their adolescents with disabilities can engage in self-determined behavior, parents are in key positions to help their children master the skills necessary to behave in self-determined ways (Zhang, Wehmeyer, & Chen, 2005). The following suggestions support self-determined behaviors aligned with important developmental tasks of adolescence.

1. Help your adolescent understand the nature of his disability.
2. Teach your adolescent how to explain her disability to others.
3. Support your adolescent’s participation in activities at school and in the community that enable him to learn new things about himself.
4. Encourage your adolescent to acknowledge and describe her personal qualities and accomplishments.
5. Allow your adolescent to participate in community and extracurricular school activities that capitalize on his interests, talents, skills, and aptitudes.
6. Permit your adolescent to follow harmless trends in clothing, music, and entertainment that enable her to “fit in” with other adolescents – an especially important component of self-esteem during the middle school years.
7. Structure opportunities for your adolescent to do things for himself that you usually do for him, even when it might be easier and more productive for you to do them.
8. Have your adolescent assume responsibility for her homework and household chores and accept the consequences if these activities are not completed satisfactorily.
9. Encourage your adolescent to reflect on results of decisions he has made so that he may recognize that consequences are directly linked to decisions.
10. Talk to your adolescent about results of choices he has made. Help him analyze his decision-making process, identifying outcomes that were successful and considering alternative strategies for choices that did not bring about desired results.
11. Allow your adolescent to participate in structured social and community service activities away from the family (in supervised, safe environments).
12. Encourage your adolescent to set personal goals and plan the steps to achieve them; then have her monitor progress toward achieving her goals (Wehmeyer, 2002).
The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA of 2004) acknowledges the importance of student self-determination. Further, federal regulations provide for active student involvement in the secondary transition IEP development process by requiring that students be invited to their IEP meetings. Indeed, data provided by students become the framework upon which IEP teams design postsecondary goals, annual goals, and transition services. Parents committed to encouraging self-determined behavior during early adolescence are preparing their children to be meaningful participants at their IEP meetings. The April/May Link Lines Parent Partnerships article will discuss how the skills of self-determination support students with disabilities as they navigate the process of developing the transition IEP.

*(A description of specific self-determination skills may be found in the November/December 2004 Link Lines Transition Time, www.wm.edu/ttac/Newsletter/index.html.)*

**References**


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**Say YES (Your Education Solution) To College**  
**Campus of Old Dominion University**  
**May 29-30, 2009**

**Who should attend?**

- Students with disabilities who are planning to secure a two- or four- year college degree are invited to apply. Applicants must be current high school sophomores, juniors, or seniors pursuing an Advanced Studies, Standard, or Modified Standard Diploma, or students of high school age seeking a GED. Participation is limited to 50 students.

- Parents of students who participate in Say YES to College are encouraged to attend, as well. Parent workshops provide suggestions to help families prepare their children for college life and explore the changing roles of parents as children transition to college.

Find additional details on the W&M T/TTAC website at:  
http://web.wm.edu/ttac/development/2009%20Say%20YES%20TO%20COLLEGE%20index.htm
This is the third in a four-part Link Lines series. Part I (September/October 2008) defined the domains of transition planning for which LEAs must consider students’ readiness and seven kinds of activities that may be designed to address identified needs. Part II (November/December 2008) presented potential activities that prepare students for postsecondary education and continuing/adult education (see www.wm.edu/tta/Newsletter/index.html).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) requires that IEP teams design transition activities, one-time or short-term events that prepare students for adult life. This article illustrates activities that support students’ transition to postsecondary vocational education and integrated employment environments.

Services that support the transition to postsecondary vocational education consist of activities that prepare students to complete coursework in vocational schools or programs that provide entry-level job skill training. The table below provides examples of such activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Needs (identified in Present Level of Performance—PLoP)</th>
<th>Sample Activities Student will Complete</th>
<th>Who might support student’s completion of these activities?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Identification of aptitudes student possesses that will support student’s assessed career | Complete Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)  
(functional vocational evaluation activity) | School counselor schedules student to complete the ASVAB and shares assessment results with student |
| Knowledge of vocational education programs that relate to postsecondary employment goal | Select and visit vocational education programs that provide entry-level job skills necessary for the student to realize his postsecondary employment goal  
(community experience activity) | Career and technical education teacher identifies potential vocational education programs that will prepare student to pursue his postsecondary employment goal  
Parent安排s for student to visit selected programs |
| Knowledge of pre-requisite skills that will enable student to be successful in vocational education program | Use the Internet to research sites that provide this information  
(employment activity) | School media specialist assists student in identifying sites to research to obtain needed information  
School counselor identifies secondary-level courses that will assist student in acquiring prerequisite skills |
Knowledge of financial aid that may be available to assist students planning to attend vocational education programs

Meet with school counselor to identify potential sources for financial aid

(adult living activity)

School counselor assists student in identifying potential financial aid sources

Services that support transition of students with disabilities to integrated employment consist of activities that enable students to successfully obtain and maintain competitive employment among people without disabilities. The table below provides illustrations of such activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Student Needs (identified in PLoP)</th>
<th>Sample Activities Student will Complete</th>
<th>Who will support student’s completion of these activities?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of job modifications that can be made to enable access to job site for persons in wheelchairs</td>
<td>Meet with Department of Rehabilitation Services counselor and rehabilitation engineer to identify job site modifications to ensure wheelchair access</td>
<td>Occupational therapist assists the parent in scheduling the meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of how to complete a résumé</td>
<td>Attend a course at the local Workforce Development Center on résumé writing</td>
<td>Transition specialist arranges for the student to attend the course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of work ethic</td>
<td>Obtain a part-time summer job</td>
<td>School counselor assists student in identifying available summer jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of rights and protections provided under the Americans with Disabilities Act in relation to employment</td>
<td>Interview a representative of the Virginia Office of Protections and Advocacy (VOPA)</td>
<td>Case manager puts student in touch with a VOPA representative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The May/June Link Lines Transition Time will address transition activities that prepare students for independent living and community participation.
The current generation of adolescents is more plugged in, tuned in, and hard wired than any previous generation, but are they developing the reading skills necessary for tackling their current and future academic needs?

The most current National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results indicate that today’s youth are not making the progress necessary to acquire grade level comprehension skills (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). While the No Child Left Behind reading initiative specific to pre-school through third grade has resulted in stronger basic language acquisition skills, comprehension of grade level text continues to be a more elusive skill (Manzo, 2008). Given our ever-changing, technologically advanced environment, we might not expect any constants to exist related to skill acquisition. However, Chall noted in 1983 and again in 2003 that fourth grade is the time of transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” (Chall & Jacobs, 2003). The current data indicate no significant improvement within this transition group. These results and the notion that fourth grade is a critical time for developing comprehension skills suggest that teachers need more targeted, thoughtfully developed, and deeper reading instruction for adolescents.

Reading Next (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004), a report from the Alliance for Excellent Education to the Carnegie Corporation of New York, outlines 15 elements of effective adolescent literacy programs to address the needs of this group. (The entire report may be downloaded at www.carnegie.org/literacy.) An effective program would include elements such as the following:

- direct, explicit comprehension instruction;
- effective instructional principles embedded in context;
- diverse texts;
- intensive writing;
- ongoing formative and summative assessment of students and programs;
- extended time for literacy.

A review of the literature reveals recurring themes surrounding these recommendations to assist in literacy instruction of this critical group. Thus, in combination with Reading Next’s elements, the following have been found to be essential to effective instruction for adolescents: vocabulary instruction (e.g., Boyle, 2008; Biancarosa & Snow, 2003; Torgesen, 2007); strategic instruction (e.g., Beers, 2004; Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Tovani, 2000, 2004); relevancy of material (e.g., Gallagher, 2004; Biancarosa & Snow, 2003; Tatum, 2005); and prior or background knowledge (e.g., Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2007; Gallagher, 2004; Torgesen et al., 2007). Application of these themes and elements before, during, and after reading activities will ensure that students are “reading deeper” in the content, and thus improving their academic comprehension skills (Gallagher, 2004).

Before Reading

Before introducing reading activities, activate students’ prior knowledge, frontload vocabulary, set the purpose, and “spark” interest in the upcoming reading (Flanagan, 1995). For example, anticipation guides (Rozzelle & Scearce, 2009; Tovani, 2000) prepare the reader to connect with the text and can also be used as an after-reading activity to assess knowledge gained during the reading. Prior to reading the book, I Read It, But I Don’t Get It (Tovani, 2000), an anticipation guide could be used to assess prior knowledge.
The reader would agree or disagree with the statements before reading. After completing the reading, the reader would again agree or disagree with the statements as a way of demonstrating comprehension of the concepts.

Further, use of the Frayer Model to pre-teach vocabulary as referenced in the English SOL Enhanced Scope and Sequence PLUS (www.ttaconline.org) will increase the students’ engagement in the proposed reading. Students analyze and categorize words based on their attributes, thus encouraging a deeper study of the vocabulary.

During Reading
Students with disabilities or limited English proficiency need strategies and accommodations to access text during reading. Various authors (Beers, 2003; Gallagher, 2004; Tovani, 2004) recommend the use of accessible texts, either through leveled texts or audio text, dependent on the goal of the reading. For example, the Self-Questioning Strategy (SIM®) (Schumaker, Deshler, Nolan, & Alley, 1994) prompts students to ask questions as they read text to ensure comprehension. Further, text comprehension can be enhanced through the use of strategic instruction practices (such as monitoring comprehension, using “fix-up” strategies, questioning during reading, making connections, and using non-linguistic representations), as suggested by Tovani (2000) and Marzano, et al. (2001).

After Reading
Finally, after-reading activities assist with retention of information gained during reading, build connections and deepen comprehension. Experts recommend re-reading of the text prior to beginning other after-reading strategies for struggling readers (Beers, 2003; Gallagher, 2004; Tovani, 2004). Re-reading the text provides students a second, less stressful look at the text for a fuller understanding of the reading. Writing activities after reading take retelling a step further and deepen comprehension. One such activity, “Save the Last Word for Me,” allows students to critically consider the text (Gallagher, 2004). Students choose an impactful passage from the reading and silently present it on a poster board to fellow students who then reflect on the choice. At the conclusion of the process, the student who selected the given passage has “the last word” about what the selection meant to him or her.

Beers (2003) recommends interactive bookmarks for a variety of purposes during reading, with the messages being revealed as after-reading activities. Types of interactive bookmarks might include Mark My Words – interesting or unusual words encountered are recorded; Marking Time – setting changes are noted; and Question Mark – questions noted are discussed after reading.

In summary, teachers can build a high-performing community of readers when they engage adolescents with thinking tools before, during, and after reading (Daniels & Zemelman, 2004).

References
References (continued)

Visit the William & Mary Training & Technical Assistance Center Website for Details on Workshops and Professional Development being offered.
http://www.wm.edu/ttac
The following materials are available to individuals in Regions 2 + 3 on loan from the T/TAC William and Mary lending library. To request materials via telephone, please call 1-800-323-4489 and leave a message. The requested materials will be sent to you along with a postage-paid return mailer. 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.

The resources below are companions to the articles in this issue of Link Lines, providing more in-depth, coverage of the topics in the newsletter.

**The Road Ahead: Transition to Adult Life for People with Disabilities**  
By Keith Storey, Paul Bates, and Dawn Hunter  
This book provides strategies and ideas on a variety of secondary-school transition topics. Specifically, the authors offer information on transition assessment, instructional strategies for secondary school students, and supported living resources. (TR 174)

**Start-to-Finish Computer Books**  
By Don Johnston  
The T/TAC W&M Library contains a series of leveled novels with text presented auditorially in a cassette or a CD-Rom format. The novels have been leveled for readability at the second- to fourth-grade levels. The electronic books highlight the words of the text as they are read and include a quiz for comprehension accountability at the end of each chapter. Further, a passage is presented following the cloze quiz where students can record their reading of that passage. The teacher and students can review the recording and the graph of their cloze quiz scores with each completion or at the conclusion of the novel. Classic titles such as Treasure Island, The Tuskegee Airmen, and Black Beauty are available in packets that contain a printed book, an audiocassette, and a CD-Rom. (CRD241.2A, CRD241.1A, CRD243.C, CRD243.A, CRD243.B, CRD241.1E, CRD241.1D, CRD241.1F, CRD241.B, CRD241.C)

**Inclusion: A Service, Not a Place**  
By Alan Gartner and Dorothy Kerzner  
The authors provide a road map for educators developing a whole-school approach to inclusive practices. The book includes a summary of IDEA and its implications. (IN152B)  
A companion video is also available.(IN152.A)

**Instructional Practices for Students with Behavioral Disorders**  
By J. Ron Nelson, Gregory J. Benner, and Paul Mooney  
This book presents a broad range of instructional programs and practices shown to be effective for students with behavioral disorders. This includes clear strategies for promoting mastery and fluency in early reading, writing, and math, while tailoring instruction to individual students’ needs. A special chapter outlines instructional management procedures for enhancing student engagement and promoting positive behavior. (BM296)

**Parenting with Positive Behavior Support**  
By Mame Hieneman, Karen Childs, and Jane Sergay  
This practical guide helps parents and professionals bring Positive Behavior Support (PBS) to life. The book introduces a creative problem-solving approach to behavior and translates the research behind PBS into concrete strategies that everyone can understand and use. Parents and professionals alike will find easy-to-follow guidelines for identifying behaviors of concern, understanding the reasons behind the behaviors, and effectively intervening using three basic methods: preventing problems, replacing behavior, and managing consequences. (FA60)

**Differentiating Instruction for Students With Learning Disabilities: Best Teaching Practices for General and Special Educators**  
By William N. Bender  
Whether teaching inclusive or special education classes, instructors need differentiated and brain-compatible methods for learners with learning disabilities, at-risk students, or students who may have learning difficulties. Demonstrating how to differentiate instruction in any classroom, this second edition of the best-selling book Differentiating Instruction for Students With Learning Disabilities shows teachers how to support learners through flexible, practical lessons to help them achieve significant gains in reading comprehension, language arts, and math. (LD122)

**Evidence-Based Reading Practices for Response to Intervention**  
Edited By Diane Haager, Janette Klingler, and Sharon Vaughn  
This cutting-edge book on early literacy is written by experts in the field of literacy instruction. Their collective knowledge is applied to tiered models of intervention and implementation related to Response to Intervention (RtI). A sampling of authors and chapters include Foorman, Carlson, and Santi – Classroom Reading Instruction and Teacher Knowledge in the Primary Grades – and Lynn and Doug Fuchs – The Role of Assessment in the Three-Tier Approach to Reading Instruction. (CRD262)
When a student is struggling academically, DiPerma and Volpe (2001) suggest that assessment and intervention around proficiency in reading, mathematics, and writing may not be enough to achieve desired outcomes. Non-academic skills, or academic enablers, should also be thoughtfully considered and assessed (DiPerna & Volpe, 2001). Academic enablers, including social skills, study skills, motivation, and engagement, are student attitudes and behaviors that allow a student to be involved in and benefit from classroom instruction (DiPerna & Elliott, 2002). The strength of a student’s academic enablers can improve or hinder academic success. To prevent academic failure, students need encouragement and explicit instruction in these areas (DiPerna, 2006; DiPerna & Elliott, 2002).

DiPerna (2006) suggests using an assessment hierarchy when evaluating a wide range of both academic and behavioral skills for intervention. Since current academic achievement is the strongest predictor of future academic success, assessment of and interventions surrounding academic skills must occur first. Academic enablers should subsequently be assessed to identify possible relationships between deficits in these skills and the area where the student demonstrates academic difficulty (DiPerna & Volpe, 2001). Curriculum-based measures and standardized assessments can be used to determine academic achievement. The primary tools for assessing academic enablers (DiPerna, 2006) include direct observation and self- or teacher-reported behavior rating scales.

If a teacher determines that a student is having difficulty with a specific academic enabler, the choice of the intervention should depend on the student’s current skill level. For example, if a student does not demonstrate the skill at all, interventions such as modeling and coaching would be appropriate, as these strategies provide a demonstration of the desired skill to the student and directly teach the necessary steps to acquire it. When a student displays the desired skill, but performs it with less than the desired frequency, behavioral rehearsal and reinforcement should be used. As these strategies provide additional practice and positive reinforcement of skills the student already possesses (DiPerna, 2006).

The table below lists skills necessary for academic success in the order in which they should be assessed. Descriptions of these enablers, explanations of their relationship to academic success, and questions to guide assessment and intervention decisions are also provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Enabler</th>
<th>Relationship to Academic Success</th>
<th>Decision-Making Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Skills:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Prior academic achievement is the strongest predictor of future academic success</strong></td>
<td>• What is the student’s current academic skill level?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td>• How do the student’s skills compare to performance expectations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Does the skill need to be taught or developed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mathematics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Critical Thinking</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Motivation:** A student’s willingness to participate, persist, and achieve at a task | - Belief in one’s ability to perform a task in a particular setting  
- Belief based on past success in the same setting | - Is the student’s motivation to engage in learning appropriate?  
- What types of motivation are appropriate for the task and the age of the student? |
|---|---|---|
| **Engagement:** Student participation in instruction and group tasks, reading aloud, asking and answering questions | - Instructional delivery that encourages student engagement | - What types of engagement are necessary for academic success?  
- Is the student actively engaged in instruction?  
- Does the student have opportunities to be engaged in instruction and learning? |
| **Study Skills:** Recording, organizing, synthesizing, remembering, and applying information | - Mastery through explicit instruction and repeated practice  
- Requires motivation | - What study skills are necessary to be successful in the class?  
- Does the student use study strategies?  
- Has study skills strategy instruction been taught? |
| **Social Skills:** Social interaction skills like sharing, helping, initiating conversations, and requesting help that allow one to receive positive and avoid negative reactions from others | - Skill level impacts student motivation, willingness to engage in instruction, and achievement | - What social skills are important for success in this class?  
- Has the student consistently demonstrated these skills?  
- Do these skills need to be taught or developed? |

(Adapted from DiPerna, 2006)

**References**
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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.