Farewell to Dr. Mary Mehaffey and Welcome to Our New T/TAC Co-Directors
By Lori Korinek, Ph.D.

With very mixed feelings, the faculty and staff of T/TAC W&M bid good-bye to our director, Dr. Mary Mehaffey, as she assumes her new position as assistant superintendent for Isle of Wight County Schools. Mary has worked diligently to promote the work of T/TAC as a director of special education in Region 2 and as our T/TAC W&M director during the past two years. Thanks to Mary, we feel that our relationships have never been stronger with our various partners in the schools, the special education directors and school administrators in Superintendents’ Regions 2 and 3, the Virginia Department of Education, and our sister T/TACs across the state. Her efforts and initiatives, individually and collaboratively, have helped us to reach out to new audiences and serve greater numbers of educators and parents of children and youth with disabilities than ever before. Within the W&M T/TAC, Dr. Mehaffey was a driving force to help us reorganize to work more effectively and efficiently in delivering our services. Thanks to Mary’s tireless efforts, skilled leadership, and many talents, we have moved forward in times of increasing accountability and changing service delivery. For her many accomplishments and for the person of integrity and commitment that she is, we will greatly miss Dr. Mary Mehaffey, but we wish her continued success and much happiness in her new position in Isle of Wight.

Two new outstanding individuals will take over Mary’s position. Dr. Denyse Doerries is the new co-director and moderate disability/behavior specialist. She has 30 years of experience as a school psychologist working with both general and special education students and professionals from preschool through college. She received her M.S. in School Psychology from the University of Rhode Island and a Ph.D. in Counseling from the College of William and Mary. The instructional support team state initiative is a particular area of interest for her. Contact Denyse for assistance with functional behavior assessment, positive intervention strategies for students with significant attention problems and mental health challenges, teambuilding, and assessment issues.

Sue Land is the new co-director and inclusion specialist. Sue joined the T/TAC in 2000, bringing with her 26 years of teaching students with disabilities and administering special education programs. She earned a B.A. in Elementary Education/Special Education from James Madison University and a M.Ed. in Special Education from the College of William and Mary. Contact Sue for assistance with inclusion, collaboration, co-teaching/co-planning, best practices for students with mild/moderate disabilities, and training in content enhancements.

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One of the intents of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 is that “all limited English proficient students will become proficient in English and reach high academic standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics” (http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/nclb/nclbfinal.ppt).

A limited English proficient student (LEP), as stipulated by the NCLB act, must be a student age 3 through 21 who is currently enrolled in, or preparing to enroll in, an elementary or secondary school. In order to be classified as LEP, students must come from an environment where English is not the dominant language. Thus, students whose native language is a language other than English may be classified as LEP, whether they are born inside or outside of the United States. LEP students may include migratory students whose native language is not English, and who come from an environment where English is not dominant, as well as students who are Native American, Alaska Native, or native residents of outlying areas. Students who come from environments where a language other than English has had a significant impact on their level of English language proficiency may also be classified as LEP if difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language are significant.

A student in the groups considered for LEP may be classified as LEP only if the language difficulty denies the student the ability to meet state achievement standards, the ability to achieve successfully in classrooms where English is the primary language of instruction, or the opportunity to participate fully in society (http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/nclb/NCLB_QA-t3paa.pdf).

In order to serve students classified as LEP effectively, teachers and other professionals must first become aware of typical phenomena associated with second-language acquisition. According to Roseberry-McKibbin and Brice (2000), the following are typical processes related to second-language acquisition:

- **Interference or Transfer from the Native Language to English.** For example, in Spanish the phrase “más guapa” literally means “More prettier.” A Spanish-speaking student who says, “That girl is more prettier,” therefore, is exhibiting the typical phenomenon of language transfer.

- **Silent Period.** As students begin to learn a second language, they typically spend a great deal of time focusing on listening and aural comprehension, with little time dedicated to speaking. Very young children may remain in the silent period for up to a year; older children may remain in the silent period for several weeks or months.

- **Codeswitching.** This practice occurs when second-language learners include elements of both languages in the same sentence or phrase. For example, the speaker might say, “I’m hungry. ¡Vamos a comer!” instead of, “I’m hungry. Let’s eat!” Such switching back and forth between languages is exhibited by many fluent bilingual individuals as well.

- **Language Loss.** In some instances as children learn English, they experience a loss of fluency and skills in their native language if the first language is not used as frequently.

Roseberry-McKibbin and Brice (2000) also note that many students may appear fluent in conversational English, but have difficulty in what is known as cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). In other words, it usually takes longer to develop the complex language and vocabulary of academic courses than basic interpersonal communication skills. This, too, is a normal process in second-language acquisition.
However, for some LEP students, the challenges of second-language learning are compounded by the presence of a learning disability. It is important to note that LEP cannot be a reason for automatically denying an evaluation for special education, nor can it be the sole reason for referring a student for special education services.

In order to ensure that students with disabilities who are learning English have full access to the general curriculum, Fanta (2002) proposes that language and cultural needs be considered along with special learning needs. Specifically, she suggests that both general and special education teachers consider using the following selected strategies with English language learners (ELL) with disabilities in inclusive classrooms.

**Reality-Based or Experiential Models.** Teachers should use real-life settings to teach skills. For example, Fanta (2002) suggests teaching young language learners language skills related to manners and food during snack or lunchtime rather than in isolation during a language arts period. Students are then more likely to see the relevance of what is being learned.

**Understandable Input.** Teachers and other staff should use short sentences and phrases and allow the student time to process an initial question before asking for additional information.

**Multimodal Approach.** Teachers should use all learning modalities when presenting information. Frequent use of visual materials and cues (e.g., facial expressions, gestures) is very helpful to the LEP student with a learning disability. Fanta (2002) also suggests that teachers use drama and music as well as pictures, diagrams, objects, computer graphics, or visual organizers to enhance student learning for ELL.

Roseberry-McKibbin’s Dynamic Dozen (as cited in Haley, 2000) are additional multimodal strategies that teachers may use in order to meet the needs of exceptional English language learners effectively. These strategies include the following.

- The use of mnemonic devices
- The use of visualization
- Focusing on and writing down key words
- The use of categorization or grouping to aid memory

(For specific vocabulary-building activities, please refer to Vocabulary Strategies for English Language Learners in this issue.)

Growing numbers of LEP students in local schools will require teachers to increase their repertoire of instructional strategies and expand their knowledge of the cultural and linguistic diversity of their students. Such knowledge and skill will be essential to ensure that students have access to the general education curriculum and the English language so that they may achieve the goals set forth by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

References


The goal of the final issue of Link Lines for this school year is to provide you with information that will assist you in providing quality educational services to limited English proficient (LEP) students. This resource list may help you in understanding the needs of English language learners and in determining appropriate referrals of LEP students for consideration for special education.

Organizations
Council for Exceptional Children          www.cec.sped.org
National Association for Bilingual Education www.nabe.org
National Association of State Directors of Special Education www.nasdse.org

Clearinghouses and Technical Assistance Centers
National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Education Programs www.ncela.gwu.edu
IDEA Local Implementation by Local Administrators (ILIAD) Partnership www.ideapRACTICES.org

Federal Offices
Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA) www.ed.gov/offices/OBEMLA

Books, Articles, and Guides

I hope these resources will benefit you in your quest to provide quality services to students with limited English proficiency under No Child Left Behind (NCLB).
Listed below are websites to assist you in obtaining resources for professionals who work with students with limited English proficiency.

http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/ESL/
This Internet site offers Virginia’s educators information about Standards of Learning for English Language Proficiency, English Language Proficiency assessments, No Child Left Behind, upcoming professional development opportunities, as well as links to additional resources relevant to ESL. Roberta Schiler at the Virginia Department of Education is the contact person for English as a second language instruction.

http://iteslj.org
This monthly Internet web journal, created by the organization Teachers of English as a Second Language (TESL), provides lesson plans, teaching ideas, articles, and research papers for teaching students whose second language is English. It also links students to activities, quizzes, crossword puzzles and treasure hunts.

http://www.tesol.org
The Teachers of English as a Second Language site showcases an international professional association for teachers of English who work with students who speak other languages. Teachers can become members and gain current information about the English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) profession at this Internet site.

www.eslkidstuff.com
Students as well as parents are invited to use the resources provided by this Internet site. Numerous activities for students, ESL job postings for teachers and links to popular ESL Internet sites are available.

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/els/index.html
The Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL) offers this site to meet the needs of middle and high school students and teachers. The site provides access to online journals and an annotated bibliography for ESL instructors. A variety of challenging activities are also available for teenage students.

http://exchanges.state.gov/forum
The U.S. State Department provides this electronic journal for English language programs. Articles focus on the theory and practice of teaching students for whom English is a second language. Readers are encouraged to submit journal articles for publication.

http://www.englishclub.com
This “web club” is dedicated to providing teachers, students, and schools the resources they need to make learning English as a second language fun. The club was founded by Josef Essberger and is free to join. The site offers a live chat room where students can practice English. Activities for all ages are provided to engage students in learning.

http://eslmag.com/
Educators can subscribe online to this bi-monthly English as a second language (ESL) magazine that offers articles about current trends and issues in ESL relating to the K-12, college and adult levels.
Self-determination is critical to the transition process for students with disabilities (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998a). The professional literature offers many definitions of self-determination, all of which share common themes embraced in a summary definition offered by Field, et al.:

Self-determination is a combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in a goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior. An understanding of one’s strengths and limitations together with a belief in oneself as capable and effective are essential to self-determination. When acting on the basis of these skills and attitudes, individuals have greater ability to take control of their lives and assume the role of successful adults. (1998b, p. 2)

This combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs includes:

- Self-awareness
- Self-knowledge
- Self-concept
- Self-esteem
- Self-efficacy
- Assertiveness
- Self-advocacy
- Choice making
- Control (internal locus)
- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Goal setting and attainment
- Self-observation skills
- Self-evaluation skills
- Self-reinforcement skills

(Adapted from St. Peter, Field, & Hoffman, 1992; St. Peter, Field, Hoffman, & Keena, 1992; Wehmeyer, 1997)

Students with disabilities may not be as accomplished in self-determination skills as their age- or grade-level peers. However, it is important that students begin to learn and practice these skills where they are in their own lives (Sitlington, Clark, & Kolstoe, 2000). Self-determination skills are best learned in school environments that encourage, nurture, and support self-determination, values, thinking, and behavior.

Future editions of Transition Time will discuss the meanings of individual components of self-determination, methods for teaching them and suggestions for incorporating self-determination into the IEP process.

References


Vocabulary Strategies for English Language Learners
By Dale Pennell, C.A.S.

Teachers may find the following strategies helpful for instructing students for whom English is a second language.

**Keyword Method**
A keyword is a word that is familiar to the student but sounds acoustically similar to the target word that is being introduced. In the keyword method, the student is taught to select a keyword and construct a visual image that connects the target word with the familiar, concrete keyword. For example, if the target word is the English word “dormant,” the Spanish-speaking student links it to “dormir,” which means to sleep in her native language, and draws a picture of a sleeping plant (Baumann & Kameenui, 1991).

**Word Map**
The word map technique is useful for helping students develop a general concept of “definition.” It focuses on three questions, “What is it?” “What is it like?” and “What are some examples?,” to make students aware of the types of information that make up a definition and how that information is organized (Schwartz & Raphael, 1985). A word map for milkshake is provided below.

![Word Map Diagram](image)

References
Learning Disabilities and the Foreign Language Requirement
By Denyse Doerries, Ph.D.

Students with learning disabilities who plan to attend a four-year college may find the high school graduation requirement of three years of one foreign language or two years of two different languages a daunting hurdle to reach their dreams. The following are common questions and answers about the foreign language requirement.

**Does a learning disability affect a student’s ability to learn a foreign language?**
A learning disability may interfere but it depends upon the specific type of disability. Students with learning disabilities who in the early years experienced problems learning to speak, read, and write may find becoming proficient in a foreign language challenging (Scott & Manglitz, 2000). Early difficulties with spelling, grammar, and mechanics may also negatively impact performance in a foreign language class (Schwarz, 1997).

**Should a student with a learning disability take a foreign language?**
If a student with a learning disability has established that he can handle the academic demands of an advanced diploma, the answer is “yes.” If a student with a learning disability is unsure whether he should take a foreign language because the disability continues to have an impact on reading and written language, the answer may still be “yes” if his goal is to be accepted at a four-year college.

**What are some strategies that can assist students with a learning disability in learning a foreign language?**
Students need to take a foreign language early in high school or middle school in order to give them time to assess their progress. A student might consider auditing a course before taking it for credit in order to be better prepared. Scott and Manglitz (2000) suggest that if the student’s listening and speaking skills are strong, she may want to attempt Spanish because of its consistent sound systems. These authors also recommend that if the student is a proficient reader, she may try Latin because typically it is not a conversational language and because of the added benefit of enriching the student’s English vocabulary due to the many words of Latin origin.

Students can also consult with their special education teachers about strategies that might help them retain vocabulary and enhance comprehension. Strategies that teachers use to enhance the learning of students with disabilities in their native language can also be helpful in learning a foreign language.

**Do most colleges require students to take a foreign language in high school?**
Yes. Some colleges also expect to see documentation that a student with a disability had difficulty with a foreign language or at least had prior experience with a foreign language in high school in order to be eligible for accommodations at the college level (interviews with college admissions personnel, 2003).
Do colleges provide students with any assistance toward meeting the college’s language requirements for graduation?

Yes. Some, but not all, colleges provide substitutions for the foreign language requirement to students with documented disabilities. Although colleges may make reasonable accommodations for a student’s disability, they are not obligated to waive the foreign language requirements (Moore, 1995). However, some colleges are beginning to offer a foreign language course specifically designed for students with learning disabilities. Students with disabilities need to consider their foreign language needs when searching for colleges or universities.

References

Upcoming Events

“Career Discovery Day”
Saturday, May 17, 2003
7:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Landstown High School,
Virginia Beach, VA

Sponsored by the Junior Achievement of Greater Hampton Roads

This seminar is open to high school juniors and seniors throughout Hampton Roads. It will cover educational topics such as interpersonal communication, workplace conflict, building rapport, teamwork, and several other “soft skills” an employee needs to be successful.

For more information, contact Shannon King at 757-455-9503

T/TAC Technology Network Conference
AT and Aug Com Making the Connections
June 26-27, 2003
Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center
Roanoke, VA

Teachers, service providers, administrators, paraprofessionals and parents who want to learn more about using technology to support students with disabilities or students who are at risk for school failure should plan to attend this conference.

For more information, contact Glenna Gustafson at 540-231-3836
or visit http://www.conted.vt.edu/ssl/augcom/
Please share this newsletter with others. It may be copied. Call 1-800-323-4489 to be added to our mailing list.

1-800-323-4489  FAX: (757) 221-5053  http://www.wm.edu/ttac

Dr. Denyse Doerries, Co-Director and Behavior/Moderate Disabilities Specialist  
(757) 221-1927, dbdoer@wm.edu

Sue Land, Co-Director and Inclusion Specialist  
(757) 221-1925, saland@wm.edu

Dale Pennell  
Secondary and Transition Specialist  
(757) 221-1708, dppenn@wm.edu

Donni Stickney  
Inclusion/Instructional Support Team Specialist  
(757) 221-7736, dlstic@wm.edu

Lee Anne Sulzberger  
Secondary Education Specialist  
(757) 221-2313, lasulz@wm.edu

Cindy Catlett  
Administrative Assistant  
(757) 221-5052, cacatl@wm.edu

T/TAC LINK LINES EDITORS:
Sue Land  
Managing Editor

Dr. Lori Korinek  
Executive Editor

Cindy Catlett  
Layout & Design

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 8) 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.