An Antidote to Teacher Stress
By Denyse Doerries, Ph.D., and Lee Anne Sulzberger, M.Ed.

The demands on a professional educator in today’s schools are challenging, intense, and stressful. Research indicates that 50% of beginning teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Anderson, Levinson, Barker, & Kiewra, 1999). To make matters worse, although teachers in both general and special education report the same levels of stress, the yearly turnover rate for special education teachers at all experience levels is 30%. Special education teachers who serve students with emotional disturbance report the highest stress levels (Anderson et al., 1999).

According to teachers’ self-reports, events that trigger stress are those in which educators perceive that their options or internal resources are too limited to meet current challenges (Burmark & Fournier, 2003). That is, stress results from the perception of an imbalance between school demands and resources for coping with them (Esteve, 2000). Symptoms of highly stressed teachers may include feeling overwhelmed by the workload, feeling inadequate and helpless, increased physical complaints such as headaches, heart palpitations, insomnia and digestive disorders, and high absenteeism rates. Highly stressed teachers are less tolerant, less caring, less patient, less likely to implement innovative teaching strategies, and less involved with students (Evers, Tomic, & Brouwers, 2004). Stressed teachers also appear less confident in their abilities to perform (Zimmerman & Martinez Pons, 1990).

Specific stressors commonly reported by teachers include inadequate time to prepare and plan, feelings of incompetence in managing and meeting the behavioral and instructional needs of challenging students, isolation from colleagues, and role conflict whereby job expectations differ significantly from beliefs about good teaching (Burmark & Fournier, 2003).
Typically, stress management strategies such as relaxation techniques, physical exercise, and an improved diet are recommended. Another approach to reducing stress is to increase teachers’ resources for dealing with the demands of their job (Burmark & Fournier, 2003). One way to increase resources is to use effective professional development to enhance confidence by providing the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to deal successfully with students who are most at risk for school failure.

As teachers choose professional development activities that will provide them with needed skills, they should be aware of the characteristics of good professional development. The following principles of effective professional development can help guide teachers as they seek to reduce stress by increasing their educational knowledge base with meaningful information.

**Principles of Effective Professional Development**

- Adult learners learn best when they work with colleagues to develop solutions to collective concerns.
- Effective professional development provides support to individuals based upon their immediate concerns.
- Professional development that includes follow-up after implementation of a new skill or strategy enables adult learners to achieve at high levels.

Effective professional development activities should:

- Focus on narrowing the gap between actual and desired levels of student achievement
- Involve stakeholders in identifying content and objectives
- Help participants understand both the theoretical and the practical aspects of the new learning
- Be part of a larger change process that focuses on improving student achievement

(adapted from Collins, 2000)

Teachers can help ensure that their professional development pursuits serve as an antidote to stress by choosing meaningful opportunities that adhere to the principles of effective professional development. For more information on assessing professional development needs, refer to the related article on page 4. For further information on planning for professional development, see *Considerations: Designing Effective Professional Development*. This free T/TAC W&M publication and others may be ordered online at http://www.wm.edu/ttac/packets/consideration.html.

**References**


Summer Professional Development Opportunities

The following opportunities represent some of the rich professional development opportunities that are available to educators in Virginia this summer. Information on more opportunities is available by visiting http://www.wm.edu/ttac/development/index.html. TTAC Online also posts a comprehensive listing of professional development events. Go to http://ttaconline.org, select your region, and click on the green “Events” tab to view offerings.

7th Annual Colonial Institute
Running on Empty? Refill Your Tank with Effective Strategies
June 29, 2006, Williamsburg, VA

The Colonial Institute is designed to enhance the planning and instructional skills of educators who teach students with disabilities in the SOL curriculum. The 2006 Institute will focus on research-based behavioral and instructional strategies. Instructional strategies will include Content Enhancement Routines and Learning Strategies developed by the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning. The Colonial Institute is designed for administrators, special educators, general educators, and remedial teachers and/or related service personnel who work with students with mild to moderate disabilities in grades 4-12 in the SOL curriculum. Registration materials are available at http://www.wm.edu/ttac.

Academy for Teachers of Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities
June 25-29, 2006, Staunton, VA

The Virginia Department of Education, Consortium for Preparation for Severe Disabilities, and the Training and Technical Assistance Centers of Virginia are sponsoring a Teaching Academy for veteran teachers (one or more years of experience) of students with significant cognitive disabilities who have not met Highly Qualified requirements. Participants will attend a full-day session on each of the four core content areas. A certificate and 3 graduate course credits will be awarded if participants complete all assignments and requirements of each daily session. The certificate may be submitted to your local school division to request a Highly Qualified designation. This Academy will satisfy the HOUSSE institute requirement (option B). Registration information is available at http://www.sporg.com/registration?link_type=reg_info&form_id=38891.

Shining Stars: Virginia’s Early Childhood Conference
July 19-21, 2006, Virginia Beach, VA

Virginia’s 3rd Annual Early Childhood Conference, “Shining Stars: Charting the Future for Today's Children,” will be held at the Ramada Plaza Resort Oceanfront in Virginia Beach. This year’s theme is increasing access to inclusive opportunities for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, with and without disabilities. Registration materials are available at http://ttaconline.org under the “Events” tab.
As the school year winds down, building administrators along with school teams begin to plan summer professional development activities for their faculty. An important question in that regard is “Have staff members received adequate professional development on pertinent topics related to effective inclusive practices (e.g., differentiation, behavior management, co-teaching)?” To answer that question, consider conducting a needs assessment (see the insert Inclusion Needs Assessment). Based on the results from the needs assessment, teams can create a staff development plan for the summer and upcoming school year.

When engaging in such efforts, there is a danger of adopting a “one size fits all” approach. This is the assumption that all teachers need the same information presented in the same way at the same time. Beninghof and Singer (1998) recommend following the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) developed by Hall, Wallace, and Dossett (1973). This tool identifies an individual’s need for staff development from the awareness stage to the refocusing stage and allows for the most appropriate staff development activities to be determined.

Following is a list of the stages of concern and examples of staff development activities tailored to each stage:

- **Stage 0: Awareness**—Very low level of involvement. This is the staff member who has not heard of the word inclusion. Provide an awareness-level videotape on inclusion for discussion such as Creating a Unified System (available from the T/TAC Library at www.wm.edu/ttac). This video profiles a successful elementary school that created a system of inclusion to ensure that the needs of all students were met.

- **Stage 1: Information**—General awareness and interest, but still relatively uninvolved. This is a staff member who realizes that something to do with inclusion is going on in the building or district, but does not believe it will affect him or her. Provide a workshop on general inclusion issues given by “seasoned” professionals such as a school team who has included students with disabilities successfully. They would provide the “nuts and bolts” of their program.

- **Stage 2: Personal**—Beginning to consider the personal impact of the innovation. This is the staff member who is beginning to worry that he or she may be asked to include students with disabilities in his or her classroom. Provide opportunities for group discussions around specified issues such as effective classroom practices and building collaborative relationships. Also, provide time for visits to classrooms where students with disabilities are included successfully.

- **Stage 3: Management**—Focusing on efficient and effective methodologies. This is the staff member who has been given a class list that includes the names of several students with disabilities and who is determined to find out what to do. Provide practical books and articles such as Case Studies in Co-Teaching in the Content Areas: Successes, Failures, and Challenges in the May 2005 Intervention in School and Clinic (volume 40, number 5) or problem-solving sessions with a group or a consultant.
• **Stage 4: Consequence**—Attention to student outcomes and accountability. This is the staff member who, after including students for a short period, begins to raise questions of outcomes, fairness, progress, evaluation, and/or success. Provide highly focused skill-building workshops or establish communities of practice groups.

• **Stage 5: Collaboration**—Focusing on working with others involved with the change. This is the staff member who recognizes that colleagues, especially those with inclusion experience, may be able to help. Provide peer-coaching opportunities.

• **Stage 6: Refocusing**—Interest in refinement, improvement, and innovation. This is the staff member who, based on some successful experience, is ready to make the situation even better. Provide opportunities for presenting own experiences to others or form “teachers as readers” clubs.

To accommodate teachers’ stages of concern, a variety of professional development activities or a “menu” listing activities may be offered on the same day. Teachers choose or are assigned to the appropriate professional development activity.

As schools become more inclusive, administrative involvement and support is needed to sustain change. Careful planning for professional development is one way to ensure successful implementation of effective inclusive practices.

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**Save the Date!**

**Say YES to College**

A College Transition Program for Students with Disabilities

June 2-3, 2006

Campus of Old Dominion University (ODU)

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The transition from one school setting to another can be extremely stressful for families of students with disabilities (Rose & Hallam, 1998). Yet, families are in positions to play key roles in the school lives of their children as they transition from preschool to kindergarten, grade to grade, elementary school to middle school, and finally middle school to high school.

Demchak and Greenfield (2003) suggest that one way to facilitate these transitions is to put together a folder of important information about your child. Begin by recording identifying information such as your child’s nickname, special interests, hobbies, feelings about learning and school, and academic strengths and needs. Write a short paragraph to be kept in the folder that includes a description of family members with whom the child lives, names of other significant family members and their locations, as well as family dreams and concerns for the child. Along with identifying information, a useful portfolio also contains medical information, an up-to-date educational profile, successful reinforcement strategies, and positive behavioral support plans. Descriptions of the qualities of favorite teachers may also provide useful information for the portfolio. As students get older, they may even be able to contribute to the development of their own transition portfolios.

Listed below are additional tips suggested by Demchak and Greenfield (2003) for how to help children transition from one academic setting to another.

- Include transition planning strategies in the IEP.
- Keep a current copy of the IEP.
- Provide the new school adequate notice of and preparation for your child’s first day of school.
- Contact an administrator at the next school to advise him or her of transition activities that must occur during the summer.
- Hand-deliver copies of permanent records to the new school.
- Take your child to school in the summer to familiarize him or her with the new surroundings.
- Call the transportation office to make clear your child’s special transportation needs.
- Meet with new teacher(s) prior to the student’s first day of school.
- Share the transition portfolio with all of your child’s teachers prior to the first day of school.

Advance planning using strategies such as these will increase the likelihood that educational transitions will go smoothly for both students with disabilities and their educational team members.

References
Check It Out!

The following materials are available on loan from the T/TAC William and Mary lending library. To request materials, please call 1-800-323-4489 and leave a message. The 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.

Informal Assessments for Transition Planning
By Gary M. Clark, James R. Patton, & L. Rozelle Moulton

Based on sound transition assessment practices, this valuable resource is written to provide practitioners with a comprehensive guide to assessment procedures that help determine the transition needs of students. Informal Assessments for Transition Planning is best used with the Transition Planning Inventory also developed by Clark and Patton, and included in this resource. Clear instructions coupled with ready-to-use materials equip practitioners with a package of assessment techniques that can be used immediately and with ease. Transition plans developed using this assessment resource address all major areas of adult functioning and reflect students’ interests and preferences. (TR 120.2)

A Practical Guide for Teaching Self-Determination
By Sharon Field, Jim Martin, Robert Miller, Michael Ward, & Michael Wehmeyer

This useful practitioners’ resource is designed for K-12 special education instructors, transition specialists, vocational coaches, guidance counselors, and other support staff. Using a question-and-answer format, the guide discusses fundamental topics related to promoting student self-determination, such as assessment of self-determination, the relationship between career development, transition, and self-determination; self-determination methods, curricula, and materials; and self-determination in transition planning. Because it spans K–12, this guide provides self-determination methods for addressing students’ needs throughout their educational careers. (TR 42.1)

Family Involvement in Transition Planning and Implementation
By Michael L. Wehmeyer, Mary Morningstar, & Doris Husted

As part of a PRO-ED series on Transition, this resource addresses the barriers often inhibiting successful collaboration between professionals (educators, transition specialists, and adult service providers) and families, and provides practical strategies for overcoming those barriers. The authors present a brief but complete legislative history of family participation in education and its benefits, supported by research-based evidence supporting the value of family involvement. A discussion of the current state of parent involvement and the barriers to parent involvement, with an updated review of family systems, is followed by a set of strategies for family involvement in transition planning and implementation is offered. (TR 104.1A)

Unlocking Potential: College and Other Choices for People with LD and AD/HD
Edited by Juliana M. Taymans, Ph.D., & Lynda L. West, Ph.D., with Madeline Sullivan, M.A.

Updating the original guide, Unlocking Potential by Barbara Scheiber and Jeanne Talpers, Taymans and colleagues present the significant strides made in the last 15 years in preparing secondary students challenged by LD and ADHD for the transition from high school to employment or postsecondary educational opportunities. Recognizing the challenges faced by individuals with LD and/or ADHD, the guide supplies the reader with a host of resources for individuals, families, and professionals. (TR 108.1)
The Long Road to Nowhere, or How I Learned to Roll with VDOT
Teaching Students Coping and Tolerance Skills
By Kristin Holst, M.Ed.

The Virginia Department of Transportation – VDOT. Next to “SOL,” there is no acronym in Virginia more likely to stir passions and incite controversy. VDOT – the four letters that conjure up images of drivers creeping along highways and byways throughout Tidewater, yearning for the day they will reach their destinations without having to merge into one lane or dodging cones on the shoulder. Just as commuters may be frazzled by their driving experiences, so too are students made anxious by the pressure of impending local and state assessments, teachers' grading practices, and the questions of promotion vs. retention. Although there seem to be no quick remedies to the road situation, fortunately, there are effective strategies to help students (and educators) survive until June.

Sometimes teachers take preventive measures designed to reduce anxiety that in reality contribute to challenging student behaviors. But some stressful situations (e.g., mandatory testing, certain project deadlines) cannot and should not be avoided. In such cases, students must be taught how to be tolerant and cope effectively (Bambara & Kern, 2005). Stress and anger management training provides coping and tolerance skills that some students need to effectively adapt to the ever-changing demands of life.

In order to reduce testing anxiety, Cheek, Bradley, Reynolds, and Coy (2002) taught students a relaxation strategy based on "Stop, Drop, and Roll," a well-known fire safety rule that many children are taught in school. Students were instructed that, when they physically felt the "fire" of anxiety and stress, they were to "stop" (actually put down their pencils and place their hands on the table while concentrating on the coolness of the surface). They are then to "drop" their heads forward and "roll" them around gently while taking three deep breaths.

Haggerty, Black, and Smith (2005) created a social story to decrease a 6½-year-old student’s anxiety and ensuing difficulties with transitions, waiting periods, following directions, and cooperating with peers. Social stories are brief narratives that provide students with cues and a set of specific responses to use when confronted with a difficult situation (Gray, 2000). The particular social story used in this example included pictures that the student drew of desired social behaviors and was entitled “Kirk’s Calming Book.” The innovative aspect of this study was that the authors used a multi-sensory approach to teaching coping and tolerance skills. Two weeks after the social story was introduced, the student was able to act out scenes in the story through an apron storyboard. The authors attached large felt pieces representing particular school environments (e.g., playground, classroom) to a canvas apron with a pocket. They also created “puppet pieces,” laminated photos and pictures from the storybook for the student to manipulate or “act out” on the apron while repeating the social story.

VDOT tells commuters improvements are in sight; teachers remind students that June is right around the corner. Neither declaration addresses the present reality, but everyone can learn it is possible to cope and be tolerant of immediate situations. And if all else fails, one can always, “Stop, drop, and roll.”

References
Save the Dates!!

17th Annual Symposium on Professional Collaboration and Inclusive Education

Williamsburg Marriott Hotel
Williamsburg, Virginia
Monday and Tuesday, November 6-7, 2006

Keynote Speakers

Dr. Jo Lynne DeMary, former VA Superintendent of Public Instruction
“Commitment to Collaboration: Maximizing Student Learning”

Dr. Clifton Mitchell, Psychologist and Motivational Speaker
“Precision Communication: Using Your Mind for Change”

The 2006 Symposium will provide participants with an exciting array of professional development opportunities in beautiful Williamsburg. This year’s program addresses highly relevant topics for school teams engaged in promoting the academic and behavioral success of students with disabilities and other subgroups at risk for school failure. Motivating keynote presentations, skill-building workshops, and practical concurrent sessions offer research-based strategies and tools to ensure effective instruction, successful teamwork, and productive inclusive learning for all students.

Some of this year’s topics include . . .

★ Effective Inclusive Programs
★ Successful Co-Teaching
★ Teaming & Communication
★ Positive Behavior Management
★ Leadership for Collaboration
★ Updates from the VDOE
★ Access & Success in the General Curriculum
★ Assessment Options
★ Curriculum Differentiation
★ Improving Test Scores
★ Content Area Strategies
★ AND MANY MORE!

Target Audience: The Symposium is designed for general & special educators, building & division administrators, related service professionals, families, university students, and others interested in effective instruction and support for students with disabilities and others at risk within the context of general education. Schools are encouraged to send teams of educators to share this professional development experience. Event registration opens August 15, 2006.

The 2006 Symposium is co-sponsored by the College of William and Mary School of Education and the VDOE W&M Training and Technical Assistance Center
Summaries of Performance must be written for students with disabilities when their eligibility for special education services is terminating because they are graduating from high school with a regular diploma or when they are exceeding the age of eligibility for special education services. Under these circumstances the local education agency (LEA) “shall provide the child with a summary of the child’s academic achievement and functional performance, which shall include recommendations of how to assist the child in meeting the child’s postsecondary goals” (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, Section 614(c)).

LEAs may also write Summaries of Performance for students who are dropping out of school, earning a GED, or graduating with a Modified Standard Diploma, Special Diploma, or Certificate of Attendance before their eligibility for services terminates. Otherwise LEAs must locate these students prior to their deadlines for eligibility and write their Summaries of Performance.

In addition to summaries of academic achievement and functional performance, useful information that may be incorporated into the Summary of Performance (SoP) includes:

- A description of how the student’s disability has impacted academic achievement and functional performance
- The student’s vocational or extracurricular achievements
- Special awards the student has received
- The diploma the student has earned
- Results of the student’s most recent evaluation for special education services
- The student’s postsecondary goals

The required recommendations to assist students following their departure from high school should relate directly to students’ postsecondary goals. Consider the examples below.

**Example 1**
**Postsecondary Education Goal:** By June 2009, Maria will complete the requirements to earn an Associate’s Degree in Accounting.

**SoP Recommendation:** Provide the Disabilities Services Office at your community college with the documentation required to determine your eligibility to receive instructional accommodations you require.

**Example 2**
**Integrated Employment Goal:** By September 2007, Patrice will be employed as a hairdresser.

**SoP Recommendation:** Contact your rehabilitative services counselor for employment assistance once you have received your state license.
**Example 3**  
**Independent Living Goal:** By May 2008, Augustine will live in a group home.

**SoP Recommendation:** Complete Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center’s Independent Living program before you move into a group home.

Students with disabilities and their families rely heavily on educational professionals for support lost when they leave high school. Educators possess information and life experiences students lack. Often they possess knowledge of supports unknown to parents. Sadly, sometimes educators are the only support system on which some students can rely. Local education agencies have invested heavily in these students and want them to be successful once they leave school. The recommendations contained in a Summary of Performance reflect task analyses or plans that will enable students to successfully pursue their postsecondary goals after they leave high school.

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**The Council for Exceptional Children's Virginia Division on Career Development and Transition**  
**Presents**

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- IDEA 2004 Federal Regulations: How to Implement Regulations for Transition Age Students
- People with Autism and Aspergers Syndrome: Connections within Communities
- Transition Mapping: Utilizing Mapping Resources for Effective Transition Planning
- Transition Portfolios: Strategies for Implementing Portfolios to Maximize Student Success

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