

# Watertown Public Schools

*All children, all of the time, all of our responsibility*



## Supporting Diverse Learners Handbook

November 2007

**THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK**

# Supporting Diverse Learners Handbook

## Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Introduction and Acknowledgements .....</b>                                      | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Chapter I: Watertown Curriculum Accommodation Plan in General Education ....</b> | <b>9</b>  |
| A. The General Education Team Process .....   | 10        |
| The General Education Team Process.....   | 10        |
| Referrals to the General Education Team .....                                       | 10        |
| Composition and Roles of the Team .....   | 11        |
| Meetings / Timelines .....  | 11        |
| Communication with Families .....   | 12        |
| B. The General Education Team Process ~ Flow Chart.....                             | 13        |
| C. General Education Team (GET) ~ 3 Tiered Intervention Model .....                 | 14        |
| D. Frequently Asked Questions about Curriculum Accommodations.....                  | 15        |
| E. Common Accommodation Strategies.....   | 15        |
| Environment.....  | 15        |
| Pacing .....  | 16        |
| Materials.....  | 16        |
| Assignments .....   | 16        |
| Study-Sheets/Guides.....  | 17        |
| Instruction.....  | 17        |
| Note-taking Assistance.....   | 17        |
| Pre-teach Content Vocabulary.....   | 18        |
| Tests.....  | 18        |
| F. If a student has difficulty... Try this.....                                     | 19        |
| <b>Chapter II: Special Education Services.....</b>                                  | <b>23</b> |
| A. Evaluation Referrals .....   | 23        |
| Initiating a Referral for Special Education Eligibility.....                        | 23        |
| Acting on a Referral for an Evaluation to Determine Eligibility.....                | 23        |
| Initial Referral Process / Timelines.....   | 25        |
| B. Evaluation Guidelines.....   | 26        |
| Required Assessments.....   | 26        |
| Optional Assessments .....  | 26        |
| Evaluation Process .....  | 27        |
| Timelines for Referrals at the End of the School Year.....                          | 27        |
| Waiver of Assessment.....   | 27        |
| Evaluation Reports.....   | 27        |
| Scheduling Evaluations.....   | 27        |
| Parental Requests for Independent Evaluations.....                                  | 27        |
| Extended Evaluations .....  | 28        |
| C. The Reevaluation Process .....   | 28        |
| Initiating the Reevaluation Process .....   | 28        |
| Implementing the Reevaluation Process.....  | 28        |

**Chapter II: Special Education Services (continued)**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| D. Special Education Team Meeting Process .....                                  | 29 |
| Special Education Team Membership.....   | 29 |
| Materials to Prepare for the SE Team Meeting.....                                | 30 |
| Responsibilities of the Special Education Team.....                              | 30 |
| 1. Eligibility Determination.....  | 30 |
| a. Eligibility Evaluation Guidelines / Timelines.....                            | 31 |
| b. Special Education Eligibility Flow Chart.....                                 | 32 |
| c. Eligibility Determination / Timelines Chart .....                             | 33 |
| d. Identification of a Disability.....   | 34 |
| e. Determining Eligibility.....  | 34 |
| 2. Development of the Individualized Educational Program (IEP).....              | 37 |
| a. Specific Elements of an IEP.....  | 39 |
| b. Notes Regarding Special Populations.....                                      | 41 |
| – Children Ages 3 to 5 .....   | 41 |
| – Children Ages 14 to 22 (Transition Planning).....                              | 41 |
| – Age of Majority .....  | 42 |
| – Eligible Students with Behavior Problems.....                                  | 42 |
| c. Amending the Individual Educational Program.....                              | 42 |
| d. Additional IEP Requirements.....  | 43 |
| – When Parents and Staff Disagree.....   | 43 |
| – Timelines for Development of an IEP.....                                       | 43 |
| – Timelines for Parental Response to the IEP.....                                | 43 |
| – Rejected IEPs.....   | 43 |
| – Monitoring Timelines .....   | 44 |
| 3. Placement Decisions .....   | 44 |
| E. Annual Review Meetings .....  | 44 |
| • Purpose of the Annual Review .....   | 44 |
| • Special Education Team Membership.....   | 44 |
| • Timelines for Annual Reviews .....   | 45 |
| • Responsibilities of the Special Education Team .....                           | 45 |
| • Sample Annual Review SE Team Meeting Agenda.....                               | 45 |
| F. Progress Reports .....  | 46 |
| G. Transition Planning Guidelines .....  | 46 |
| H. Discipline .....  | 46 |
| • Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) .....                                  | 46 |
| • Suspension or Expulsion of Students with Disabilities.....                     | 47 |
| • Special Circumstances for Serious Violations of School<br>Discipline Code..... | 47 |
| • Manifestation Determination Meetings .....                                     | 48 |
| • Responding to Criminal Allegations.....  | 48 |
| I. Qualifying for Testing Accommodations in College.....                         | 49 |
| J. Guidelines for Parent/Advocate/Evaluator Visits.....                          | 49 |
| K. Regulations Pertaining to Student Records / Confidentiality.....              | 50 |
| L. Physical Restraint Procedures .....   | 51 |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Chapter III: Section 504 Plans.....</b>  | <b>53</b>  |
| <b>Chapter IV: Enrollment and Education of Homeless Students.....</b>                         | <b>55</b>  |
| <b>Chapter V: Accommodating Diverse Learners.....</b>   | <b>57</b>  |
| A. Differences in Learning Styles.....  | 57         |
| B. Differences in Cultural Perspectives.....  | 59         |
| C. Limited English Proficiency .....  | 61         |
| D. Difference in Gender .....   | 67         |
| E. Enrichment and Challenge.....  | 69         |
| <b>Chapter VI: Accommodating Eligible Students.....</b>                                       | <b>73</b>  |
| A. Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) /<br>Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)..... | 73         |
| B. Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) .....  | 76         |
| C. Deaf or Hard of Hearing .....  | 80         |
| D. Deaf-Blind .....   | 82         |
| E. Emotional Disability (ED) / Significant Emotional Disability.....                          | 87         |
| F. Learning Disabilities (LD) / Perceptual/Communicative Disability.....                      | 92         |
| G. Physical Disabilities .....  | 98         |
| H. Significant Cognitive Challenges .....   | 100        |
| I. Speech/Language Disabilities .....   | 104        |
| J. Traumatic Brain Injury .....   | 111        |
| K. Visually Impaired .....  | 116        |
| <b>Chapter VII: Tips for Parent Communication.....</b>  | <b>121</b> |

Notes:

1. Forms referred to in this manual may be found either on EasyIEP or in the Student Services Forms Conference in First Class. Copies of the forms may also be obtained from the Office of Student Services by those that do not have access to EasyIEP and/or First Class.
2. Required timelines for completing activities are printed in italics to highlight tasks that must be completed within specific timeframes.

**THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK**

# Introduction

This *Supporting Diverse Learners Handbook* was written to support teachers and administrators throughout the process of studying and evaluating individual student learning difficulties, and applying appropriate and varied teaching strategies to reach each learner. The general education system is designed to support the majority of students; however, the goal of the Watertown Public Schools is that all students, no matter what their learning style or abilities, will be successful. This goal requires additional support services built in to the general education system. This Handbook describes the processes and the procedures that classroom and special education teachers and administrators can use to ensure that every student in a diverse student population will be successful.

This Handbook is a compilation and adaptation of several successful curriculum accommodation plans and student services programs from other school districts and professional organizations. We have integrated their best thinking into this Handbook along with our own procedures. We appreciate and recognize their work.

Thank you to:

- The Council of Chief State School Officers: Accommodations Manual, August 2006
- Decatur Texas Independent School District: CARE Team Handbook, September 2006
- Needham Public Schools, Special Education Department: Policies and Procedures, 2004
- Plymouth Public Schools: District Curriculum Accommodation Plan, 2003
- Salem Public Schools: District Curriculum Accommodation Plan for Meeting Individual Student Needs, September 2003
- Scituate Public Schools: District Curriculum Accommodation Plan, 2004

This *Supporting Diverse Learners Handbook* is a resource and evolving reference. New chapters, appendices, and other additions and changes will be incorporated as our work develops and improves. We look forward to learning about how to revise this process, and ultimately improve the success of all learners.

The Watertown Curriculum Accommodation Plan Task Force:

Jason Del Porto – Assistant Principal, Middle School  
Dari Donovan - Principal, Lowell School  
Penelope Giannakopoulos– Special Education, Middle School  
Veronica Knight - Guidance Counselor, Lowell School  
Ann Koufman-Frederick – Assistant Superintendent  
Elisabeth Schaefer – Director of Student Services

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



# Chapter I: Watertown Curriculum Accommodation Plan in General Education

What is a District Curriculum Accommodation Plan?

Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 38Q \_ require the adoption and implementation of a District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP). Such plan is intended to guide principals and teachers in ensuring that all possible efforts are made to meet student needs in general education classrooms and to support teachers in analyzing and accommodating the wide range of student learning styles and needs that exist in any school. The statute also encourages teacher collaboration and parent involvement. Another statute, Chapter 71, Section 59C (Parent Councils), was amended to include involvement of the Parent Councils in the development, evaluation and continuing revision of the DCAP.

*Massachusetts General Laws*

*Section 38Q1/2 added to Chapter 71:*

*“A school district shall adopt and implement a curriculum accommodation plan to assist principals in ensuring that all efforts have been made to meet students’ needs in regular education. The plan shall be designed to assist the regular classroom teacher in analyzing and accommodating diverse learning styles of all children in the regular classroom and in providing appropriate services and support within the regular education program including, but not limited to, direct and systematic instruction in reading and provision of services to address the needs of children whose behavior may interfere with learning or who do not qualify for special education services under chapter 71B. The curriculum accommodation plan shall include provisions encouraging teacher mentoring and collaboration and parental involvement.”*

*Recent amendment made to Chapter 71, Section 59C*

*The school council, including the school principal, shall meet regularly and shall assist in the identification of the educational needs of the students attending the school, make recommendations to the principal for the development, implementation, and assessment of the curriculum accommodation plan required pursuant to Section 38Q1/2, shall assist in the review of the annual budget, and in the formulation of a school improvement plan, as provided below.*

Watertown Curriculum Accommodation Plan in General Education

The Watertown Public Schools DCAP, called “Watertown Curriculum Accommodation Plan”, was developed over a period of several months by a Task Force of principals, guidance counselors, special educators, and district administrators. Initial meetings with principals resulted in draft plans that outlined the circumstances of elementary, middle, and high school settings. Those plans were then reviewed by the Task Force and the principals. The Task Force decided to write the plan as a Handbook for teachers and administrators. This current draft will be shared with staff in building meetings at the elementary level and through department meetings at the middle and high schools. The next version will be shared with Parent Councils for their input. Finally, it will be proposed to the School Committee in December 2007. District and school-based professional development will continue to support the improvement of the teaching and learning strategies identified in the Handbook.

The plan includes a flow chart describing a process for moving from the identification of a concern through communications with parents, staff collaboration, articulation of strategies for accommodations or intervention, and periodic review and evaluation of student progress. The

flow chart represents the pre-referral process that a General Education Team (GET) in each school follows before recommending special education services.

To assist in a clear understanding of appropriate accommodations for all kinds of learners, the Task Force compiled this extensive “Watertown Curriculum Accommodation Plan in General Education” for classroom teachers and specialists at all grade levels. It includes the following sections: General Education Team Flow Chart; General Education Team Process, Frequently Asked Questions, Common Accommodation Strategies, Accommodating Learning Differences, Accommodating Eligible Students, Parent Conference Tips, and Forms.

The Watertown Curriculum Accommodation Plan is the result of researching various model DCAPs and adopting and adapting effective long-standing and innovative teaching and learning strategies. We would like to thank the following school districts and professional organizations for their work and their contribution to the Watertown DCAP: Burlington Public Schools, Plymouth Public Schools, Salem Public Schools, Scituate Public Schools, Decatur Texas Independent School District, and The Council of Chief State School Officers Collaborative on Assessment and Students Standards.

## **A. The General Education Team Process**

The General Education Team Process focuses on students struggling to be successful in the general education classroom. It includes the following components and processes.

### **1. The General Education Team Process:**

Each school has a General Education Team process that is designed to help teachers and staff in using a problem solving approach to address students with academic difficulties. The purpose of the GET is to convene a knowledgeable group of professionals to assist the classroom teacher in analyzing and accommodating diverse learning styles within his or her classroom. Once teachers and staff have identified and referred a struggling student to the GET, members of the Team identify all the areas of difficulty and create an action plan to help address the student’s needs within the general education classroom. The Team develops strategies to assist the student, which the general education teacher implements in collaboration with support staff and in consultation with the special education teacher. As part of the process teachers collect data on the effectiveness of the strategies to ensure that the assistance is helping students learn. Assistance may include changes in: the learning environment, assignments, pacing, materials, methodology, activities, format of instruction, and testing.

### **2. Referrals to the General Education Team:**

Any teacher or parent may refer a student to the GET Team for consideration. Students who are experiencing difficulty learning and/or in taking part in school activities can be assisted by the General Education Team process.

Before referring a student to the GET process, teachers are encouraged to invite a colleague in to observe the student and discuss and try out some accommodations. Another set of eyes and experiences may stimulate some new ideas that are effective and preclude the need to initiate the GET process. Or they may help to document the problem and will provide a second perspective that can assist the GET process.

### 3. Composition of the Team / Roles of Team Members:

Members of the General Education Team (GET) include but are not limited to the following roles: guidance counselor as chairperson, referring staff, general and special education teachers, building administrator or designee, appropriate curriculum coordinators and other relevant support staff (i.e. nurse, speech language pathologist or reading specialist).

Parents are notified of GET meetings but are not required to attend, except at the High School where both parents and students are required members of the GET.

The staff member referring the student to the GET completes a referral form and gives it to the guidance counselor. The referral form includes the student's name / grade / teacher(s), the reason for referral, areas of concern, any support services the student is currently receiving, strategies/interventions that have been implemented and the results of those interventions. Teacher's are encouraged to bring other relevant data to the GET meeting that will assist the Team in understanding the student's learning style and level of academic performance.

The chair schedules the meeting and ensures that: the GET includes persons who are knowledgeable about the student being considered and asks members to bring copies of records and evaluation data which are available for the Team to review. The Team considers all relevant information concerning the student which is available at the time. This may include health records, attendance records, counseling records, disciplinary records, grades, and information from outside sources which has been provided to the school (e.g., information provided by parents, schools previously attended, or professionals not employed by the school).

The student's general education teacher(s) is responsible for providing data on the student's level of academic performance and areas of difficulty at the time of referral. The student's general education teacher is also responsible for implementing the interventions recommended by the GET and collecting and reporting data on their effectiveness.

### 4. Meetings / Timelines:

The General Education Team meetings are scheduled by the guidance counselors once the referral form is complete and parents have been informed of the referral and asked if they have any concerns. The initial meeting is typically held soon after the referral is made.

Teachers implementing the accommodations request additional meetings if they find the strategies they are implementing are not effective. The GET develops new strategies at subsequent meetings that are implemented and evaluated.

All teams reconvene no later than 6 to 8 weeks after the initial GET meeting to evaluate the data on the effectiveness of the accommodations in the general education classroom. If the student continues to struggle after 8 weeks of various interventions, and the data indicates the interventions have not been successful, the Team recommends that the student be referred for a formal evaluation to assess whether the student is eligible for special education or other specialized services. The guidance counselor completes a Referral for Evaluation (EasyIEP) attaches the relevant findings from the GET process and sends the Referral to the Office of Student Services. This referral will result in the Office of Student Services informing the family that their child has been referred for an

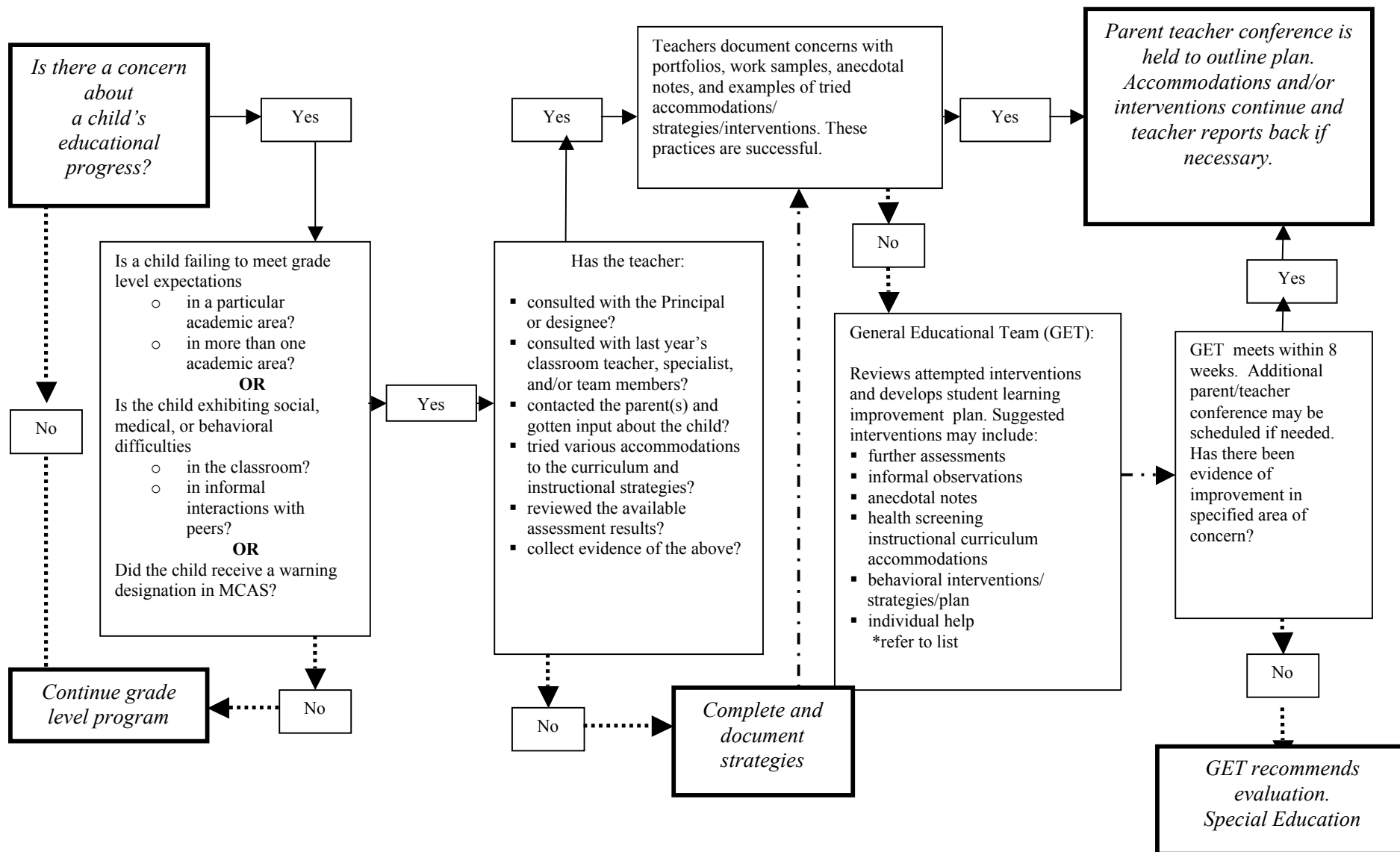
evaluation to assess if they are eligible for special education services. Parents are asked to sign an evaluation consent form stating that they consent and that the district may conduct a formal evaluation of their child to assess if their child has disabilities.

#### 5. Communication with Families:

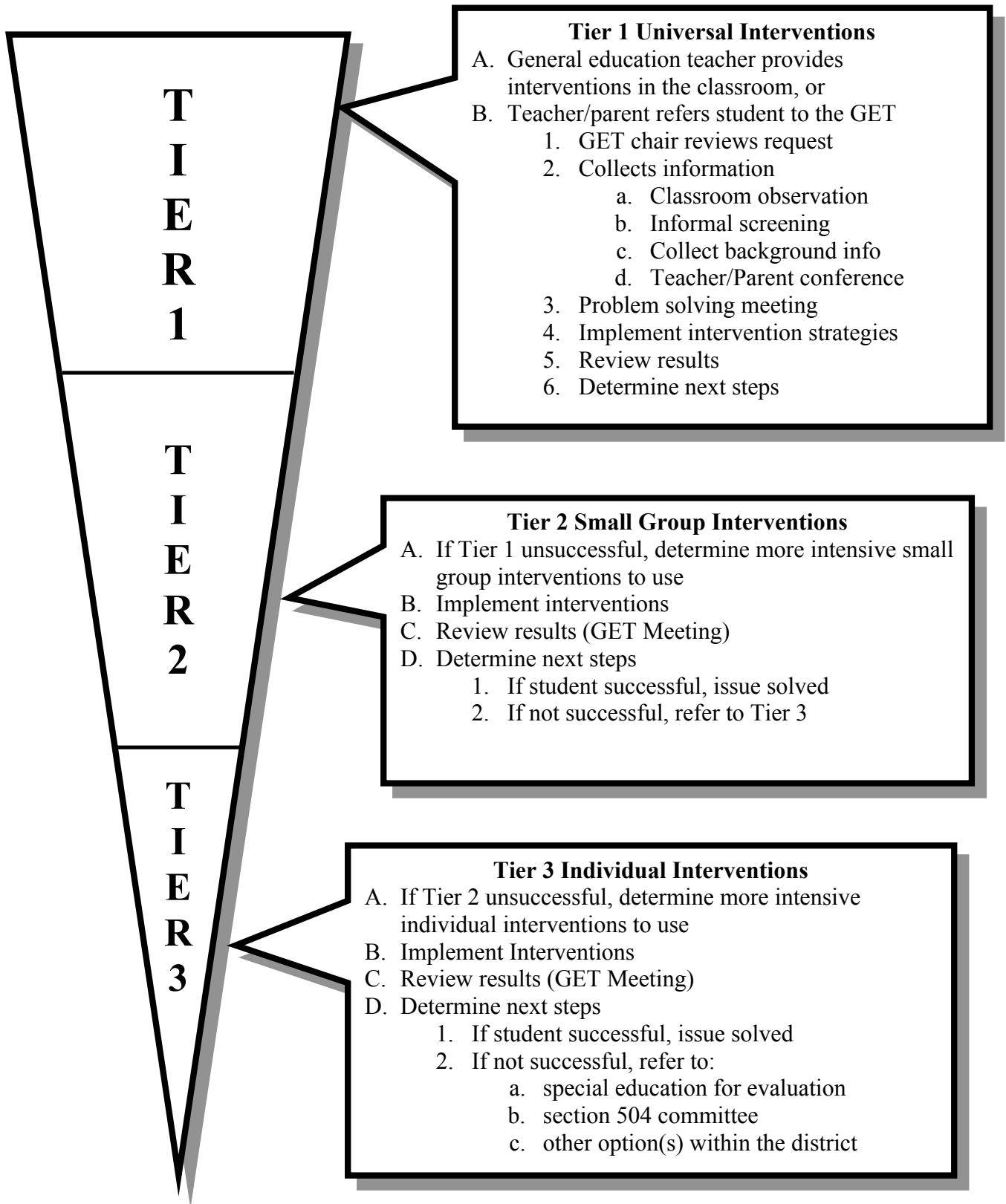
When a student is initially referred to the General Education Team the guidance counselor sends a letter to the parents describing the concerns and the GET process. The letter also asks parents to share any relevant information on their child that may assist the Team in planning. Parents at the Middle and High School are invited to the GET meeting. The Middle School does not require parental attendance the High School does require parental attendance. A member of the GET informs parents of the outcome of the meeting and strategies that will be implemented in the classroom.

Decisions on next steps by the General Education Team at the end of the 8 week GET process are communicated to parents. If the Team decides to refer the student to an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education or other specialized services, parents receive a parental consent form from the Office of Student Service before any testing is conducted. Parents are required to sign a consent form before the formal evaluation process begins.

## B. The General Education Team Process ~ Flow Chart



# General Education Team (GET) ~ 3 Tiered Intervention Model\*



\*Adapted from Dectur ISD CARE Team Handbook, 9/2006

## **D. Frequently Asked Questions about Curriculum Accommodations**

Why use General Education Team process to provide instructional intervention strategies?

- Many of the intervention strategies are effective teaching strategies that benefit all students.
- Interventions often reflect the various learning styles of students, leading to success for all students.
- Interventions often lead to demonstrating application, therefore assessing at a higher level of understanding.
- Interventions are one of the “supplementary aids and services” which allow all students to be educated in the general education classroom.

When is a need to intervene indicated?

- A need to intervene is indicated when:
  - Frustration and anxiety are interfering with learning and assimilation of ideas
  - A student is unable to demonstrate his complete knowledge because of the format or modality of the assignment
  - A student’s basic reading, writing, and spelling skills are not automatic enough to be smoothly integrated with higher order thinking and organizational skills
  - The readability level of the material exceeds the reading level of the student although he can readily understand the concepts

What areas do you address when you intervene? (This list is not exhaustive)

- Attitudes
- Activities
- Daily Assignments
- Environment
- Expectations
- Format
- Interactions
- Materials
- Methodology
- Presentation
- Quantity
- Tests

What if we have collaborated, tried multiple interventions and documented all efforts, and the student continues to have difficulties?

- Refer the student to special education for evaluation, or section 504 committee for evaluation

## **E. Common Accommodation Strategies**

Environment

- Preferential Seating
  - To minimize auditory distractions
  - To minimize visual distractions
  - To maximize auditory input for hearing difficulties
  - To maximize visual input for vision difficulties
  - To maintain focus and academic participation

- To minimize off-task behavior
- To address learning style needs
- Alter Physical Arrangement
  - Lighting
  - Temperature
  - Seating arrangements
  - Muffle/baffle noisy equipment
- Define Space
  - Teach positive rules for personal space
  - Allow for different groupings
  - Provide a properly fitting desk

#### Pacing

- Extend time requirements
  - Oral response
  - Written response
  - Daily activities/assignments
  - Tests
- Allow breaks
- Vary activities
  - Intersperse written/oral
  - Intersperse passive/active
  - Intersperse listening/discussing
- Provide timelines (checklists, calendars)
- Assign tasks in workable chunks or segments
- Provide repetition of key concepts
- Provide drill and practice
- Provide test/reteach/retest

#### Materials

- Supplementary materials (texts, worksheets, tests)
- Lower readability
- Large print
- More 'white space'
- Highlighted
- Color coded
- Audio-recordings
- Manipulatives
- Study aids
- Study guides
- Typed teacher materials
- Peer reader

#### Assignments

- Provide study sheet
- Provide skeleton outline that includes main ideas (student completes supporting details while listening in class or reading assignment)
- Extra time for completing assignments - allow student to type assignment
- Reduce paper and pencil tasks
- Avoid penalizing for spelling errors
- Avoid penalizing for penmanship
- Allow student to sub-vocalize while reading



- Exemption from reading aloud in front of peers
- Lower difficulty level
- Task analysis of assignments
- List steps in process or activity so students know exactly what he is to do
- Emphasis on major points
- Opportunity to respond orally or dictate answers (to teacher, peer, tape recorder)
- Special projects in lieu of assignments.
- Shortened assignments provide necessary practice while allowing the student to complete work in a reasonable time period without undue pressure and frustration.
- Identify terminology, concepts, and skills that are most important and require that these items be completed first.
- Reduce the number of items to be done at one time. Shorter assignments made more frequently provide the same amount of practice.
- Cut a long worksheet (or test) into smaller segments and give the student one segment at a time. When one strip is completed, hand out the next.

#### Study- Sheets/Guides

- Provide students with review outlines to help them focus on the important elements of information which is to be learned.
- List steps in math process or lab activity so the student knows exactly what to do.
- Have student write his own study questions after lectures, discussions, and reading assignments.
- Teach students to recognize signal words in lectures and written material to guide studying. Examples: “most of all,” “a key feature,” “a major event,” “above all,” “remember that”

#### Instruction

- Shorten auditory/verbal instruction
- Provide visual aids (pictures, flash cards, maps, charts, photos, etc.)
- Provide auditory aids (cues, tapes, etc.)
- Provide an opportunity for student to write the instructions
- Provide an opportunity for student to verbalize the steps needed to complete task
- Provide adequate ‘wait time’ (extra time for oral response)
- Allow extra time for written response
- Provide modified reading level assignments
- Simplify vocabulary
- Use manipulatives
- Emphasize critical information
- Allow peer tutoring/paired working arrangements
- Allow oral exams, open book exams, open note exams, exams of reduced length

#### Note-taking Assistance

- Provide skeleton outline (advance organizer) that includes main ideas
- Provide a copy of teacher or “reliable note-taker” notes
- Allow time at the end of class for students to compare notes with classmates
- Highlight important sections of class notes (at overhead or board)

#### Pre-Teach Content Vocabulary

- Students need to learn:
  - Terms that are unique to content area
  - Specialized meanings of common words
  - Unique symbols and abbreviations

- Word connotations
- Decide which words to teach:
  - List key concepts
  - Pick out the most crucial terms
  - Find out which words are known
  - Teach words that will lead to the learning of additional words
- Teach meaning
  - Avoid unrelated exercises
  - Teach strategies for learning new words
  - Use new words repeatedly in conversation
  - Teach ways to figure out new words
  - Context clues
  - Phonic analysis
  - Structural analysis combination

## Tests

- Preview language of test questions
  - Vocabulary
  - Context
  - Syntax
- Short answer rather than essay
  - Mark key questions you want answered and have the student go back and answer the others if time permits
  - Word banks or a list of correctly spelled responses for the test
  - Typed tests
  - Larger print
  - More white space
- Don't penalize for spelling/grammar (unless it is a spelling or grammar test!)
- Allow extended time
- Substitute an assignment for a test
- Test Adaptations
  - Change the format
  - Short answer instead of essay.
  - Multiple choice instead of short answer
  - Matching instead of fill-in-the-blank
  - Fill-in-the-blank: put blank at the end of the sentence - use synonyms or shorter sentences for low readers
- Look at the visual design
  - Primary type
  - Spacing
  - Bold lines to divide sections
  - Place multiple choice alternatives vertically
- Divide long matching
  - Ten or fewer consecutive matching
  - Type the definition on the left side of the page and the term or 'match' on the right side
- Provide visual cues
  - Word banks for fill-in-the-blank questions and for labeling items
  - Use mnemonics for difficult total retrieval questions
- Add Variety
  - Use more than one mode of questioning

## **F. If a student has difficulty...**

## **try this..**

Becoming interested...

- .. tell stories which relate to people's lives
- .. establish relevancy
- .. provide concrete experiences
- .. read aloud a story/article to grow interest
- .. seat student near the teacher

Getting started...

- .. give cue to begin work
- .. give work in smaller amounts ("chunks")
- .. provide immediate feedback
- .. sequence work
- .. provide time suggestions (egg timer helps)
- .. check on progress
- .. peer tutor

Paying attention to the spoken word...

- .. give explanations in small, distinct steps
- .. provide written backup to oral directions
- .. have student repeat directions
- .. use buddies, tape recorder
- .. shorten the listening time
- .. alternate spoken with written tasks
- .. look directly at student
- .. place hand on student's shoulder

Following directions...

- .. use fewer words
- .. provide examples
- .. repeat
- .. have student repeat
- .. provide checklist
- .. use auditory and visual direction

Keeping track of materials...

- .. use a notebook
- .. use large envelope for each subject
- .. keep extra supplies on hand
- .. provide assignment sheets to parents, coaches, club sponsors, special teachers
- .. write assignment on board
- .. give rewards for bringing supplies

Paying attention to printed word...

- .. highlight
- .. underline
- .. number
- .. keep desk clear of extraneous materials
- .. face desk to wall or use a carrel
- .. use overhead projector

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Reading textbooks...               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. use lower level or adapted text</li> <li>.. use books on tape</li> <li>.. shorten amount of required reading</li> <li>.. have students read aloud in small groups</li> <li>.. allow extra time for reading</li> <li>.. omit some/all reading requirements</li> <li>.. put main ideas on index cards</li> <li>.. administer oral tests</li> <li>.. use a buddy or allow group work</li> <li>.. pre-teach vocabulary</li> <li>.. give take-home tests</li> <li>.. use larger print</li> </ul> |
| Completing tasks on time...        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. reduce amount to be accomplished</li> <li>.. allow more time</li> <li>.. write schedules, timelines, and calendars</li> <li>.. provide checklists</li> <li>.. provide closure at points along the way (“chunking”)</li> </ul>   |
| Staying on task...                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. reduce distractions (all senses)</li> <li>.. increase reinforcements</li> <li>.. provide checklist</li> <li>.. give time out/specified ‘make up’ time</li> <li>.. use a time to set short periods of work</li> </ul>  |
| Expressing him/herself verbally... | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. ask questions requiring short answers</li> <li>.. provide prompts/cues</li> <li>.. give rules for class discussion</li> <li>.. allow taped (audio/video) reports</li> <li>.. accept alternate forms of information; written report, bulletin board, art work, exhibit, chart/graph, photos</li> </ul>   |
| Learning by listening...           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. provide visuals (maps, photos, flash cards)</li> <li>.. have student close eyes and visualize info</li> <li>.. spell by visualizing the whole word</li> <li>.. teach the use of acronyms</li> <li>.. give explanations in small, distinct steps</li> <li>.. remove extra words</li> <li>.. provide study guide (note taking assistance)</li> </ul>  |
| Working in groups...               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. provide a partner</li> <li>.. assign responsibility or position of leadership</li> <li>.. provide structure by defining the roles within the group, the tasks to be performed</li> </ul>  |
| Working independently...           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. assign task at the student’s academic level</li> </ul>  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. help student see an end to the task</li> <li>.. give precise directions</li> <li>.. reinforce often</li> <li>.. provide variety of work within assignment</li> </ul>  |
| Understanding what is read...                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. reduce reading level</li> <li>.. become more concrete</li> <li>.. reduce number of new ideas</li> <li>.. provide experiences for a frame of reference</li> <li>.. provide study guide (guided reading)</li> <li>.. provide organizational help</li> <li>.. provide alternate media (i.e., books on tape)</li> </ul> |
| Writing legibly...   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. use formats low on writing (multiple choice, fill in the blank, matching, programmed)</li> <li>.. use graph paper</li> <li>.. allow use of tape recorder</li> <li>.. save papers for 2 weeks and have student read what he wrote</li> <li>.. teach handwriting/penmanship</li> </ul>                                |
| Understanding cause/effect or anticipating consequences... | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. use concrete examples</li> <li>.. use real life situations</li> <li>.. use brainstorming, role playing, simulation</li> </ul>   |
| Expressing him/herself in writing...                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. accept alternate forms of reporting oral reports, taped reports, maps, photo essay, and panel discussion</li> <li>.. have student dictate work to someone else</li> <li>.. have student prepare only notes or outline</li> <li>.. shorten amount/length required</li> </ul>   |
| Drawing conclusions and making inferences...               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. teach thinking skills</li> <li>.. draw a parallel to a situation that the student might have experienced in problem solving</li> </ul>  |
| Seeing relationship. . .                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>.. directly point out relationships</li> <li>.. draw arrows on worksheets or test to show that the ideas are related</li> <li>.. class discussion</li> <li>.. teach directly, relations of: function, category, opposition, sequence</li> <li>.. provide headings or a partially filled in</li> </ul>                  |

chart for an example

Remembering...

- .. provide a checklist
- .. provide cues
- .. have students make notes to self
- .. Teach memory skills
- .. Teach use of acronyms and mnemonics

# Chapter II: Special Education Services

## A. Evaluation Referrals

Any person concerned about a student's progress in school may make a referral for an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services. Once a referral is made the formal evaluation process begins.

The Watertown District Curriculum Accommodation Plan is designed to be implemented before students are referred for a special education evaluation. Ideally the district would have first convened a General Education Team (GET) and developed, implemented, and documented the effectiveness of accommodations to support the student learning within the regular education setting. In an ideal world only if those accommodations are not successful, would a student be referred for a special education evaluation. However, the evaluation process can not be delayed because a school district has not fully explored accommodations in regular education.

### Initiating a Referral for Special Education Eligibility

**School Referral** – If the interventions of the General Education Team (GET) were documented as unsuccessful, a student is referred by the GET for an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education.

The GET chair completes the Referral for Evaluation (EasyIEP), attaching relevant findings from the GET process. The completed form is sent to the Office of Student Services for review and for the compilation and mailing of the Parent Consent Package (see below for contents of package).

**Non-School Referral** – When a parent or person making a referral has concerns about the student's development or a suspicion that the student may have a disability, the Watertown Public Schools promptly sends a Parent Consent Package (see below for contents of package).

### Acting on the Referral for an Evaluation to Determine Special Education Eligibility

*Within 5 working school days* of receiving the completed Referral for Evaluation, the Office of Student Services sends out a Parent Consent Packet consisting of the following:

- Acknowledgment of Referral (Student Services Forms)
- N1 — Notice of Proposed School District Action (Easy IEP)
- Notice of Procedural Safeguards (EasyIEP)
- N1A — Evaluation Consent (Easy IEP)\*
- Parent / Caregiver Data Sheet (EasyIEP)\*

\*Parent must complete and return these forms before the evaluation can begin.

The Director of Student Services notifies the Special Education Team Chairperson in the school the child attends of the referral. The Chairperson is the contact person for the entire evaluation process. The parents are contacted by the Chairperson to discuss the reasons for referral and the nature of the proposed evaluation.

*If the parent does not return the Evaluation Consent Form within 30 days*, the Chairperson calls the parent to discuss any concerns. If after 10 additional days, the parent does not respond, the secretary sends the parent an N1A — Evaluation Consent Form/Second Notice (EasyIEP). If

parental consent is not received within 30 days of the second attempt, the Chairperson reports this to the Director of Student Services.

Additional efforts to obtain parental consent are made and documented. If the parent revokes consent or refuses to agree to an evaluation, and the District determines that such action denies the student an appropriate education, the District seeks resolution through the Bureau of Special Education Appeals.

Upon Receipt of the signed N1A — Evaluation Consent Form the timeline for the evaluation process begins. *The evaluation must be completed within 30 days. The Team Meeting must be scheduled within 45 days.* The Chairperson immediately notifies the Evaluation Team members that they may begin to assess the student. Simultaneously, the Chairperson schedules the Team meeting and sends the following written notification to parents and all other participants:

- N3 — Team Meeting Invitation (EasyIEP)
- N3A — Attendance Sheet (EasyIEP)

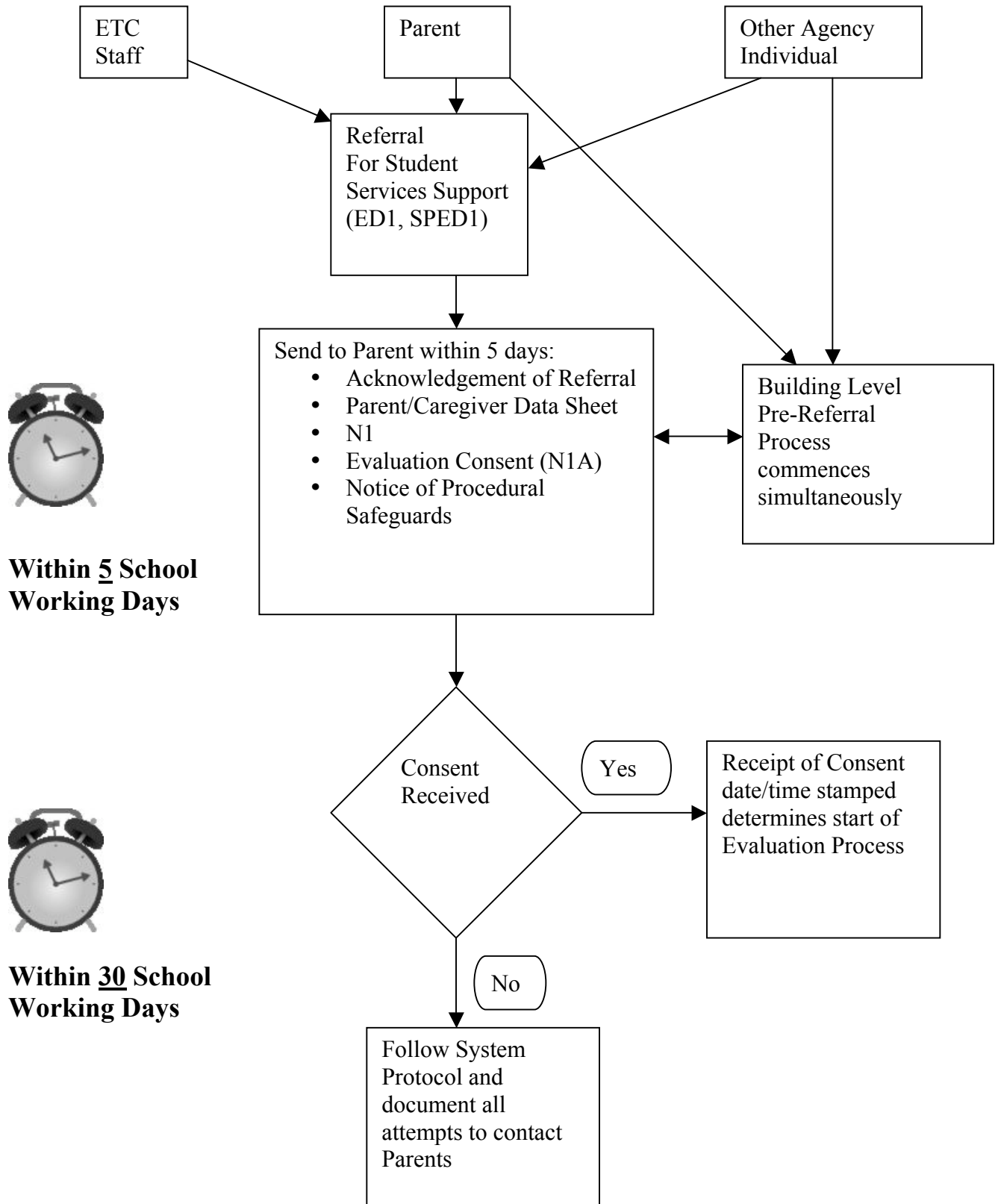
In the event that the parent calls to change the meeting time/date, the Chairperson sends out the N3 — Notice of Team Meeting Date/Change. In the case of a student attending a private or parochial school, the Chairperson invites a representative from the student's school to the Team meeting.

*Evaluators make all testing reports available to the parents and Team Chairperson at least 2 working days prior to the meeting.* Team Chairpersons distribute testing reports to Team members with a cover sheet on regulations pertaining to student confidentiality. Team Chairpersons collect all testing reports from staff at the conclusion of the Team meeting.



## Initial Referral Process / Timelines

This is the initial referral process to initiate an evaluation to determine eligibility for Special Education. Requirements for a referral are made by one of the following sources (staff, parent, other agency/individual):



## **B. Evaluation Guidelines**

Evaluations of the student are made in all areas of suspected disability in order to determine eligibility for special education. Eligibility cannot be based on lack of reading or math instruction or on limited English proficiency. Evaluation activities are tailored to the specific referral questions for the individual student and address whether or not there is a disability, and if the disability affects the student's learning. Evaluations must provide information to determine present levels of academic achievement and related development needs. No single test is used as the sole criterion for determining eligibility. In Watertown a variety of techniques (both formal and informal assessments), including information provided by parents, observation of the student in the classroom, work samples/portfolios, interviews, and review of the record are used.

An observation of the student is made by at least one member of the IEP Team other than the student's teacher to determine a specific learning disability. The Team Chairperson is responsible for the observation or assigning another staff member to do and report on the observation.

Consent for an initial evaluation for wards of the state is not required if the Watertown Public Schools cannot, after reasonable efforts, locate the parent or the parent's rights have been terminated under state law or a judge has subrogated the parent's rights to make educational decisions. Watertown is obligated to seek a surrogate parent, through the DOE, for wards of the state. A ward of the state includes foster children (except if child has a foster parent) and a child in the custody of a public child welfare agency.

Evaluations are required prior to a finding that a student is no longer eligible, except for graduation with a regular diploma or aging out. For those children, the Watertown Public Schools provides a summary of academic and functional performance, including recommendations on how to assist the child to meet post secondary goals.

Evaluations are provided and administered in the language and form most likely to yield accurate information on what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally.

### **Required Assessments for an Evaluation:**

- Educational Assessment: Part A — to be completed by the principal or guidance counselor (Student Services Forms 28R/1)
- Educational Assessment: Part B: - to be completed by teacher (Student Services Forms 28R/1)
- Specialists Assessment(s) — to be completed by specialists in all areas of the child's suspected disability. (Student Services Forms)
- Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) must be conducted if the student's behavior interferes with learning. – process and forms (Students Services Forms)

### **Optional Assessments:**

- Psychological (Student Services Forms)
- Home Assessment. The SE Team should request this only if there are significant concerns related to the home or family environment as they affect student's school performance (Student Services Forms)
- Health Assessment (Student Services Forms)

## **Evaluation Process**

Members of the Evaluation Team coordinate their assessments with the student's teacher(s) and other evaluators so that the child is not over-tested on any given day. The persons conducting the assessments ensure that the child is notified in advance of any pullout from class. *The Chairperson ensures that the assessments are completed within 30 school working days of the parent's signed consent. One week before the Team meeting the Chairperson contacts those conducting the evaluations to ensure testing will be completed and delivered to the parents and Team Chairperson 2 working days before the Team meeting.*

## **Timelines for Referrals received at the end of the School Year**

*If consent is received within thirty to forty-five school working days before the end of the school year, the District ensures that a Team meeting is scheduled no later than fourteen days after the end of the school year.*

Evaluation Team members give the Chairperson and parents a copy of their final, "word processed" evaluation report 2 working days prior to the Team meeting. The Chairperson will distribute evaluation reports to other Team members.

## **Waiver of Assessment**

If a decision is made to waive any assessment, the Chairperson sends a Request for Waiver of Assessment (EasyIEP) to the parent (or to students who have reached the age of majority -18) for signature with the Evaluation Consent Form. It is important to note any time Watertown Public Schools waives its rights of assessment; it places the District in the position of accepting any recommendation(s) made by the independent evaluator(s).

## **Evaluation Reports**

All evaluation reports are written in clear, jargon-free language. Assessors interpret and summarize results and diagnostic impressions to help the Team determine eligibility. The following information is included in an Evaluation Report:

- the student's present levels of educational performance
- areas of need arising from the student's disability
- Educationally relevant accommodations and modifications are identified to ensure the student's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum

## **Scheduling Evaluations**

The District completes special education assessments in all areas of suspected disability. The District's Lead Psychologist works with Team Chairpersons to develop a schedule of evaluations to ensure each one can be completed within the mandated 30 day timeline.

## **Parental Request for an Independent Evaluation**

If parents disagree with an evaluation done by the school district they may request an independent educational evaluation. The Director of Student Services responds to these requests by ensuring that independent evaluations are completed by qualified personnel who are registered, certified, or otherwise approved and abide by the rates set by Medicaid. Higher rates may be paid under unique circumstances. The district offers parents who have been dissatisfied with district evaluations of their child, the option of free independent evaluations that are equivalent to the types of assessments done by the school district. Whenever possible independent evaluations are completed and a written report sent no later than 30 days after the date the parent requests the independent educational evaluation. If publicly funded, the report is sent to the parents and the school district.

Within 10 school days from the time the district receives the report of the independent evaluator the SE Team will reconvene and consider the independent evaluation.

### **Extended Evaluations**

If the SE Team finds a student eligible for special education, but the evaluations information insufficient to develop an IEP the Team, with the parents' signed consent (Extended Evaluation Form (EasyIEP) may agree to an extended evaluation period. The extended period can not be used to deny services. The Team documents their findings and determines what evaluation time period is necessary and the types of information needed to develop an IEP. The extended evaluation period may be longer than one week but no longer than three weeks.

## **C. The Reevaluation Process**

A reevaluation is conducted for each student with a current IEP, every three years or more frequently if requested or recommended. Reevaluations occur not more frequently than once a year unless both parents and the Watertown Public schools agree that evaluation is needed.

Evaluations are required prior to a finding that a student is no longer eligible, except for graduation with a regular diploma or aging out. For those children, Watertown provides a summary of academic and functional performance, including recommendations on how to assist the child to meet post secondary goals.

### **Initiating the Reevaluation Process**

The Lead Psychologist and Team Chairs develop a schedule of reevaluations at the beginning of each year to facilitate reevaluations being completed within required timelines.

The Chairperson orchestrates the reevaluation process. They initiate the process in each building, by having the student's teacher(s) complete a Referral for Evaluation Form (EasyIEP) and send it to the Team Chair for forwarding to the Lead Psychologist. The information on the Referral for Evaluation Form provides evaluators with information on student strengths, areas of difficulty, interventions that have been successful, and significant events in the student's history since the last evaluation. This information is used to develop questions the evaluator's address during the evaluation process. Reevaluation activities are tailored to the specific questions for the individual student in order to help the Team determine whether special education services are needed, and if needed what specific services are to be provided.

If no additional information is needed to determine whether the student continues to be eligible, the District may request that a parent waive particular types of assessments(s). The parent either consents to waive the assessment(s) or chooses to have the assessment completed regardless of the recommendation for waiver.

### **Implementing the Reevaluation Process**

The Lead Psychologist reviews the Referral and determines which types of assessment should be completed. The Office of Student Services will send out a N1A — Evaluation Consent Form (Easy IEP) to the parent, which is completed before the reevaluation process begins.

*If the parent does not return the Evaluation Consent Form (N1A) within 30 days, a N1A – Evaluation Consent Form/Second Notice is sent out by the Secretary of Student Services. If there is no response to the second letter, the Secretary for Student Services calls the parent to discuss any concerns and documents the call. If parental consent is not received within 30 days, additional efforts to obtain parental consent are made and documented. If the parent revokes*

consent or refuses to consent to any reevaluation and the District determines that such action denies the student an appropriate education, the District seeks resolution through the Bureau of Special Education Appeals.

Upon receipt of the signed Evaluation Consent Form (N1A), the Secretary for Student Services emails the Team Chair and Lead Psychologist that the Evaluation Team may begin to assess the student. The Secretary for Student Services also faxes a copy of the signed consent form into EasyIEP for members of the Evaluation Team to access. Simultaneously, the Chairperson schedules the Team meeting and sends to parent(s) and all other participants *10 days in advance of the Team meeting* the following:

- N3 – SE Team Meeting Invitation (EasyIEP)
- N3A — Attendance Sheet (EasyIEP)

In the event that the parent calls to change the meeting time/date, the Chairperson sends out the N3 — Notice of Team Meeting Date Change. If the student is 14 years of age or older, the Chairperson reviews the evaluation process, gives the student an invitation to the Team meeting and obtains a signature on the N3 — Notice of Team meeting. In the case of a student attending a private or parochial school, the Chairperson invites a representative from the student's school to the Team meeting.

The rest of the reevaluation process follows the same process as initial evaluation process. Please refer to the section Guidelines for the Evaluation Process.

## **D. Special Education Team Meetings**

The Special Education (SE) Team meeting process is designed to bring together parents, teachers, and specialists to review the data gathered in the evaluation process and determine if a student is eligible for special education services or not. If a child is found eligible for special education services the Team develops an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) for the student.

### **Special Education Team Membership**

The SE Team consists of the following members:

- the student's parent(s)
- at least one regular education teacher who has taught the student
- at least one special education teacher familiar with the student
- a representative of the District who has the authority to commit resources (i.e. Director of Student Services, Principals, and Team Chairpersons)
- Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and other specialist to interpret evaluation reports
- other individuals(s) who have knowledge or expertise regarding the student
- if appropriate, the student

A Special Education Team meeting is chaired by the Team Chairperson or a special education teacher who is assigned as a liaison to the student. The person chairing the meeting ensures that everyone receives copies of evaluations and progress reports before the meeting. Participants are expected to review all relevant materials before the meeting.

## **Materials to Prepare for the Meeting**

The following materials are prepared ahead of time and distributed at the meeting to facilitate communication and comply with special education regulations:

- Agenda
- Attendance Sheet (EasyIEP)
- Eligibility Flow Chart (EasyIEP)
- Draft IEP (EasyIEP)
- Permission to Dismiss Team Members Form (EasyIEP)
- Specific Learning Disability (SLD) Form (Student Services Forms)
- Transfer of Rights (Student Services Forms) – for students 17 and over
- Transition Plans (Student Services Forms) – for students 14 and over

IDEA 2004 permits members being excused if parent and LEA agree (written agreement from parent). If excused member has input it is provided in writing.

## **Responsibilities of the Special Education Team**

The SE Team manages three important activities:

- Eligibility Determination/Initial and Reevaluation
- Development of the IEP
- Placement Decision

To support each student with disabilities right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) it is the Team's responsibility to develop an IEP which provides special education and related services and needed supplementary aids and services to enable students to be involved in and make progress in the general curriculum. The IEP provides the student with access to the general education curriculum and prepares students with disabilities for independence and employment. The SE Team process is designed to work towards consensus. If no consensus is reached it is the Chairperson's responsibility to make a decision.

### **1. Eligibility Determination**

The Special Education Eligibility Flowchart (EasyIEP) assists Teams in making eligibility determinations and can be found on page 32. The chart is a worksheet which becomes part of the student record only if a student is not found eligible for special education services.

## Eligibility Evaluation Guidelines / Timelines



Within **30** School Working Days

- Team Chair Initiates & Monitors Evaluation Team Process and Timelines
- Team Members begin Evaluation of Student
- Follow System Protocol for Assignment of Psychologist or other Specialist
- Parent Data Sheet Reviewed with Parent
- Home Visit Considered
- Classroom Observation Occurs



Within **45** School Working Days

- Evaluation Team Conference Scheduled
- Written Notification sent to Parent(s) and all Participants
- Meeting Invitation and Attendance Sheet sent to Parent(s)



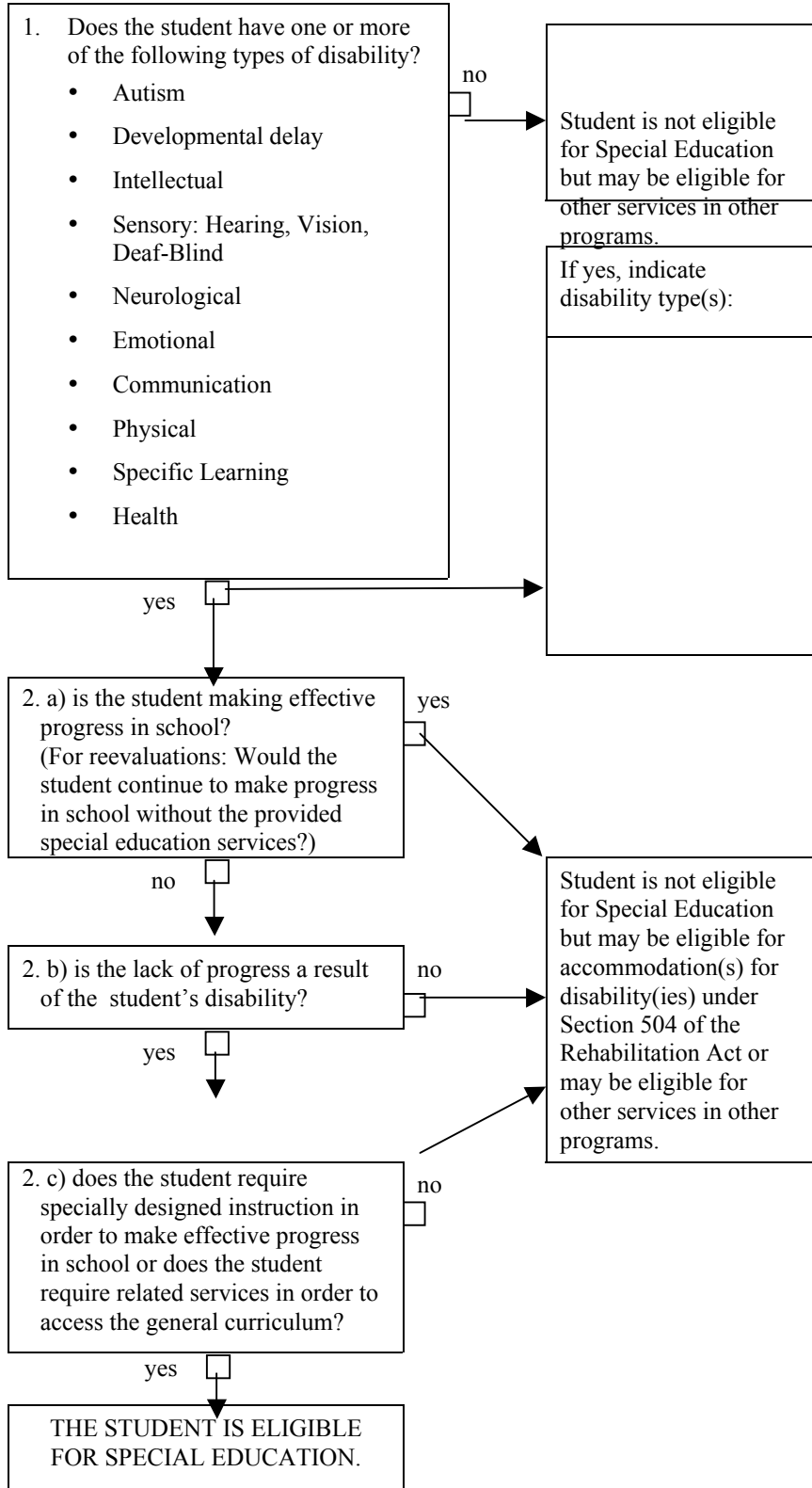
At least **3-5** Days Prior to Meeting

- All Testing Reports sent to Team Chair and made available to Parent(s) or others as needed.

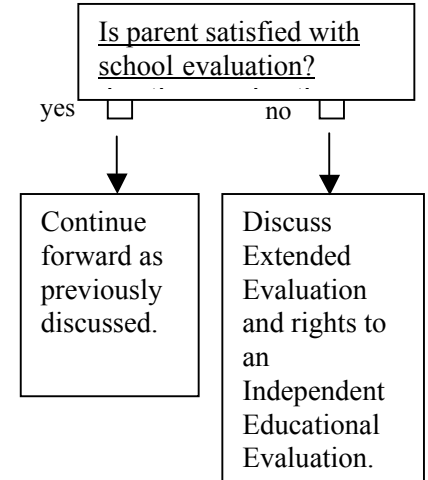
## Special Education Eligibility/Initial and Reevaluation Determination Flow Chart

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_\_\_ ID#: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**A. Proceed through the flowchart until an eligibility determination is reached..**



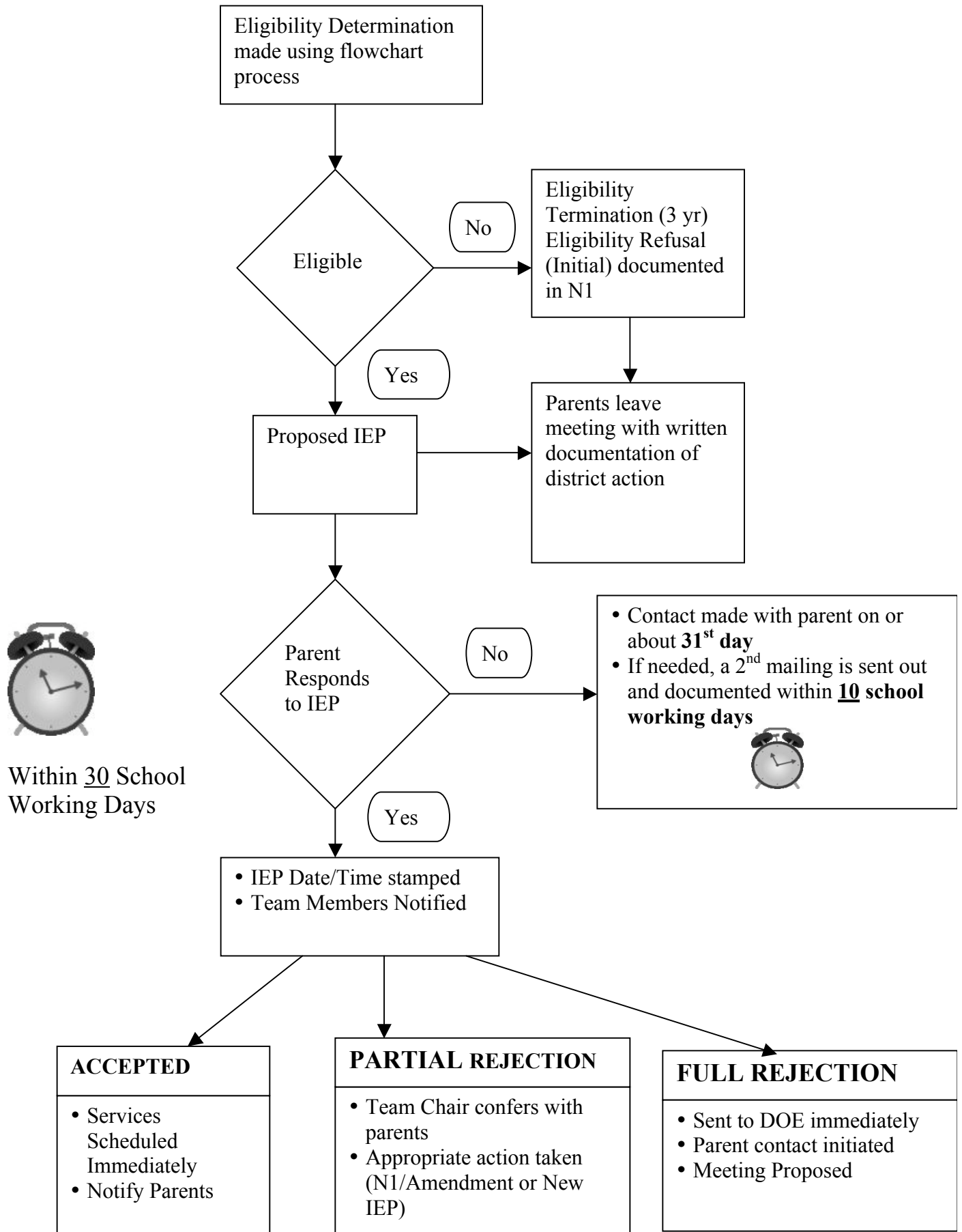
**B. Answer this question for all students.**



KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS  
AND/OR NEXT STEPS



## Eligibility Determination / Timelines Chart



## **Identification of a Disability**

To be eligible for special education services a student must first be found to have a disability that is causal to an inability to make effective progress in school. The Special Education Eligibility/Initial and Reevaluation Determination (ED1-Easy IEP) should be used to assist the Team in making an eligibility determination according to State and Federal Special Education regulations.

Team members should identify the type of disability from the list below before taking the next step in the eligibility process.

- Autism
- Intellectual
- Emotional
- Physical
- Health
- Developmental Delay
- Neurological
- Communication
- Specific Learning
- Sensory: Hearing, Vision, Deaf-Blind

## **Determining Eligibility: Is the Student Making Effective Progress in School?**

The Team makes a judgment as to whether the student is making effective progress in the general education program. To do so, the Team determines whether the student has:

- Made documented growth, with or without accommodations, in knowledge and skills acquisition including social/emotional development, the learning standards set fourth in the Massachusetts Curriculum, and the curriculum of the District
- Made growth according to the chronological age, the developmental expectations, and the individual educational potential of the child

When considering if the student has made effective progress, the Team specifically looks at whether the disability is causal to an inability to make progress. Teams judge whether the lack of progress is a result of the disability. Teams look at the evaluation results to see whether the lack of progress is a result of the disability or a result of other factors. Teams also review a student's grades, attendance and discipline records. If the Team determines the lack of progress is connected to a disability the Team continues to discuss a possible finding of special education eligibility. According to state and federal regulation, a student is not found eligible solely because the student is unable to follow the school discipline code, has limited English proficiency, social maladjustment, or lacked reading or math instruction. These reasons may become part of the Team's deliberations, but the essential finding of the Team must be that the lack of progress is, at least in part, a result of the disability (ies).

After there has been a determination of disability, Teams ask the final question: Does the student require specially designed instruction in order to make progress? Specially designed instruction is a modification not regularly provided for students in the general education program. Specially designed instruction includes modifications that affect content, delivery of instruction, methodology and/or performance criteria and are necessary to assist the student in participating and learning. Specially designed instruction is an absolute requirement for students found eligible for special education. Related services necessary to access the general curriculum are

considered special education and may be provided alone, or in combination with specially designed instruction. If the student only requires accommodations, then that student is not eligible for special education. Accommodations are typically provided by general educators within the general education environment. Preferential seating, pencil grip use, or cooperative learning strategies are some examples of these kinds of typical accommodations. Accommodations do not involve modifying the material content, but do allow students to receive information in more effective manner.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. This law protects a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Students who are making effective educational progress but need accommodations in order to participate in public school programs may be eligible for accommodations under a Section 504 plan and the Team refers them to the 504 Team.

Extra steps are required when a specific learning disability is suspected. Federal regulation requires additional steps in the evaluation process if the Team suspects a student of having a specific learning disability. The District must take the following steps in such cases:

- At least one Team member other than the student’s teacher completes a classroom observation of the student’s academic achievement
- The Team Chairperson with the assistance of the school psychologist, if necessary, completes a written report answering the following questions:
  1. Does the child have a specific learning disability?
  2. What basis was used in making the determination?
  3. What relevant behavior was noted during the observation and how does that behavior relate to the student’s academic functioning?
  4. What educationally relevant medical findings, if any, were found?
  5. What was the Team’s determination concerning the effects of environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage and does the Team agree that the need for special education is not the result of such disadvantage?

Team members certify in writing whether the written report reflects their conclusion of a finding of a specific learning disability using the Specific Learning Disability Determination Form (Student Services Forms). Any individual who disagrees with the written report submits a separate statement to express their differing conclusions.

**A Team may find a student eligible for special education services.**

If a student is found eligible for special education, an IEP is developed. In most cases, development of the IEP occurs within a single meeting after the determination of eligibility is made (see section titled “Development of the Individualized Education Program”).

Any action proposed by the school district should be documented in an N-1 letter, Notice of Proposed School District Action (EasyIEP).

**A Team may also make a finding of no eligibility.**

If the student does not have a disability, if the student does not show a lack of progress, if the student does show lack of progress but it is not due to a disability, or if the student does not require special education, then the Team makes a finding of no eligibility. However, as a matter

of good educational practice, the Team discusses the appropriate next steps to ensure that the District, through regular education options, addresses any identified problem or concern.

Parents receive a Notice of School District Refusal to Act (N2 – EasyIEP) and Special Education Eligibility Determination Chart (ED 1 Easy IEP). Parents have the right to appeal any eligibility determination to the Bureau of Special Education Appeals, including a finding of no eligibility. Parents may contact the Bureau directly.

Occasionally there will be a finding of no eligibility, but there remain some unanswered questions. The Notice of School District Refusal to Act (N2) and the Special Education Eligibility Determination Chart (ED 1) are sent to parents. At the same time if there are additional questions and / or parents request additional testing an Evaluation Consent Form (N1A) are sent to parents asking for permission to do additional assessments.

**Parents are asked if they agree with the evaluation findings.**

Team members should check a parent’s understanding of the evaluation data and their agreement with it. If parents disagree with a particular school assessment, parents have a right to an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE). The Chairperson immediately notifies the Director of Student Services of any request for an IEE. A response to the request is generated through the Office of Student Services.

**Extended Evaluation is an option if evaluations prove inconclusive.**

If evaluation information is inconclusive and the Team has found the student eligible, the Team may want to consider an Extended Evaluation. An Extended Evaluation is used to gather further information needed to write an IEP. An Extended Evaluation is only used if a parent agrees.

Extended Evaluations cannot be used for the following purposes:

- to extend the evaluation timelines for required assessments
- to deny programs or services to a student
- to constitute a temporary placement

The Team writes a partial IEP or Full IEP in conjunction with an Extended Evaluation form. This action ensures, with parental acceptance of the IEP, that a student is not denied services determined necessary at a Team meeting.

An Extended Evaluation may run from one to three weeks. The Team may decide to meet during that evaluation period. However, the Team must reconvene as soon as the additional evaluation data is available in order to review assessment data and/or complete the writing of the IEP.

**Sample Initial SE Team Meeting Agenda**

- Introductions
- Statement of Purpose of Meeting
- Presentation on Progress
- Presentation on New Evaluation Data
- Eligibility Determination
- If Not Eligible, Other Alternative / Accommodations
- If Eligible, Development of IEP
- Determination of Placement
- Summary

**2. Development of the Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

Writing the Individualized Education Program (IEP) is the second step in the process. After finding a student eligible for special education services, the Team develops the IEP. All IEP sections need to be considered by all IEP Teams. No section should be skipped.

The IEP is a formal agreement between a student's parents and the Watertown Public Schools describing the services that will be provided to the student. It is important that everyone participating in the development of the IEP understands the terms of the agreement and the services that will be delivered.

**IEP development is a student driven process.**

The IEP is tailored to the individual student needs as determined through the evaluation process. Good IEPs are responsive to parent concerns and the student's vision and assist the student in moving towards independence.

The IEP helps educators and parents to understand the student and how best to work with that student. The IEP describes how the student learns, how the student best demonstrates that learning, and how the school staff and student will work together to help the student learn better.

The IEP is not intended to be a lesson plan but should provide a clear picture of the student's current abilities and needs, and identifies key goals and objectives that provide a direction and focus for the students learning over the next IEP period.

Although IEP development is a student driven, individualized process, there are some central concepts that should be adhered to during a well-managed Team meeting. A well-managed Team meeting will:

- Obtain parent/student input
- Think about the student's future dreams and goals
- Understand how the student's disability affects the student's learning
- Know how the student performs today
- Address only the areas that are affected by the disability
- Provide a focus for the student's learning during this year
- Reflect high expectations for the student
- Stay as close as appropriate to what the student's peers are learning and doing
- Identify supports and services the student needs for success
- Ensure that the recommended services contain, at a minimum, some specially designed instruction.

**Team meetings are used as a communication vehicle.**

During an IEP meeting, Team members share information and discuss the needs of the student in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the student. The discussion connects one IEP element to the next and ensures internal consistency within the produced document.

A Team meeting works best if:

- The meeting remains focused on the student
- Its members are knowledgeable about the District, special education law, and the student
- Parents are respected participants, giving and receiving information

The IEP does not serve as a guarantee of progress. However, IDEA-2004 clearly states that Districts make a good faith effort to assist students in making progress towards the IEP goals.

**Taping Team meetings is allowed.**

The regulations stipulate that parents can tape Team meetings if it is necessary for them to participate (e.g. if they are disabled and can't write). There are other times that parents feel the need to tape their child's Team meeting. The District allows all parents the right to tape as long as they mention it at the beginning of the meeting. When a parent is taping a meeting, the District does so as well. A tape recorder and blank tapes are kept readily available. Even if the parents offer to provide a copy of their tape, the District records their own tape.

**The IEP serves to focus the special education services.**

The IEP best serves the student if it focuses on what will make the biggest difference for that student and not on every aspect of every school day. IEPs concentrate on offsetting or reducing problems resulting from the student's disability that interferes with learning and educational performance.

**Parents and/or students give input into IEP development.**

Parent and/or student input become the first indicator for defining the IEP focus. The placement of this item as the first order of business is deliberate and in keeping with the importance given to parent input in IDEA-2004. The parent's perspective is unique and important to the Team's work as they have a view of the student that cannot be duplicated by even experienced evaluators.

**Teams focus on the whole child.**

The Team next reviews the student's strengths, interests, personal attributes, and personal accomplishment as well as key evaluation results to enable Team members to keep a whole child perspective when writing the IEP. Teams avoid a segmented look at the student where individual's skills or problems are identified in isolation. The Team keeps the big picture in mind and plans to use the student's strengths in planning steps for the next IEP period.

When developing an IEP for a student with an existing IEP, the Team reviews the content of the existing IEP as they begin developing a new IEP. The new IEP should be revised and updated as needed to shift goals and services and to demonstrate a progression of learning. Each year's measurable annual goals should clearly show a step-by-step increase in a student's learning outcomes. Also, if necessary, any lack of expected progress needs to be discussed and addressed.

**The general curriculum is addressed in all students' IEPs.**

The IEP is a primary tool for enhancing a student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum. As defined by federal regulation, the general curriculum is the curriculum used with non-disable children. All students, regardless of the nature of severity of the disability or their educational setting, have access to and progress in the general curriculum.

Within Massachusetts, the general curriculum is defined as the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in the following areas: English Language Arts, Mathematics, History, Social Sciences, Science and Technology. Other curriculum areas are discussed if the student's disability affects progress in those areas.

School districts maintain high standards for children with disabilities. These standards are consistent with the expectations for all students in the educational system.

General educators play a critical role in the Team process as the experts on the general education curriculum and classroom environment. Their participation in the Team process is required under Federal Regulation.

### **The IEP addresses other areas of educational need.**

The Team also looks at the student's overall involvement within the school including participation in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities and, for preschool students, participation in appropriate activities to ascertain other areas of need. The Team considers how students communicate with others, how the students' behavior effect their learning or the learning of others, how assistive technology could support effective progress or how the student's disabilities effect transition to post-secondary activities.

#### **a. Specific Elements of an IEP**

##### **Vision Statement – IEP 1 (EasyIEP)**

A vision statement is required for all students. The character of the statement changes, as the age of the student increases.

The intent of the vision statement is to look forward to future goals, usually 1-5 years in the future. For younger students, periods of transition from one grade to the next or from elementary to middle school provide a time focus for these statements. The Team steps back from the here and now to take a broader, long-range perspective as it looks to where this student is headed in the future. Knowing where the student is headed makes it easier for the Team to eventually determine what progress needs to be made this year. The following example is given to assist in the development of vision statements.

When Chris begins first grade, we can see him working well with his non-disabled peers for the entire school day.

As the student becomes older and more involved in transition planning, the vision statement becomes the hopes and dreams of the student and not the parent and Team. Also, the statement for older students conforms to federal regulations, is based on the student's preference and interests, and includes desired outcomes in adult living, post-secondary education, and work environments.

##### **Present Levels of Educational Performance**

###### **General Curriculum – IEP 2 (EasyIEP)**

Teams consider how the student's disability (ies) affects performance in the general education curriculum. However, the discussion of the Team centers on those areas of the curriculum where the student's performance is adversely affected by the student's disability (ies). Clear descriptions of how the disability (ies) impact progress will better assist Teams in determining the most appropriate and individualized accommodations and specially designed instruction.

The Team also uses the assessment information and their discussion of the student's levels of educational performance to focus the direction of the IEP goals and services. The levels of educational performance are based on current, relevant information about the student obtained from a variety of sources.

###### **Other Educational Needs – IEP 3 (EasyIEP)**

Teams review the considerations listed on IEP 3. These lists are not exhaustive in nature. Therefore, Teams should describe other identified area(s) of educational needs that affect progress, but may not be listed.

#### **Current Performance Levels/Measurable Annual Goals – IEP 4 (EasyIEP)**

Most IEPs contain no more than an average of three to four goals. Goals relate directly to those areas where the student's disability affects performance and reflect a focus on those areas that make the biggest difference in the student's performance. Goals do not identify multiple curricular standards in a single curriculum area nor qualify as a detailed weekly or monthly lesson plan. Objectives or benchmarks, except for students who are significantly cognitively disabled, are not required. However, a description of how the child's progress towards the annual goals will be measured is required.

Current performance levels and goals relate directly to the previously written Present Levels of Educational Performance.

The IEP is written with a direct connection between the current performance levels and the measurable annual goals. The current performance levels state what the student can currently do and identify key stumbling blocks. The goals state what the student will accomplish by the end of the IEP period. The current performance levels become the starting points for determining the goals and the goals become the end points for student accomplishment for the IEP period.

#### **Service Delivery – IEP 5 (EasyIEP)**

Section A: Indirect services represent services that are provided to someone other than the student. Consultation or training for school staff and/or parents is listed in Section A.

Sections B: Direct services that take place in the general education environment are listed in Section B.

Section C: Direct services that take place in any setting, other than a general education, are listed in Section C.

Although Teams may be identifying service needs for which services will be provided outside of the general education classroom, Teams are not, at this point, determining the student's final placement. The final type of placement is determined after the IEP is developed. There is an exception to this general rule: If the Team has, in the course of its discussions, determined that this student will need a longer school day or school year, then the service delivery information may reflect services beyond the standard school day and, in some circumstances may reflect a need for residential services. In all cases, if extended educational services are required, the goals and objectives developed for the student reflect the comprehensive nature of the student's program.

Start dates should be included for all services; however, end dates should be entered only as appropriate. For instance, if speech therapy is recommended for four months and not for the entire IEP period, then a start and end date should be entered.

#### **Non-Participation, Length of School Day/Year, Transportation – IEP 6 (EasyIEP) Justification of Non-Participation in the General Education Program**

To reinforce, IDEA's strong preference for involvement in the general education environment, the law requires a clear statement justifying why removal is necessary when removal occurs. Justification statements focus on the benefit the student will receive from being outside of the general education environment. The statement refers to any special education and related



services recommended to occur in other settings during the service delivery discussion and not to potential placements.

Most students with disabilities will attend school on the same daily and yearly schedule as their non-disabled peers. However, if the student's needs dictate, the Team recommends a schedule modification and the reasons for such modification. An extended day or year program is identified if the student has demonstrated or is likely to demonstrate a loss of acquired skill and/or substantial difficulty in relearning skills if an extended program is not provided.

Transportation is considered a related service under the Federal statute and is provided to ensure that students receive their IEP services. A recommendation for a student to receive transportation, as with other IEP decisions, relates back to the effect of the student's disability (ies) on transportation. Team members ascertain whether the disability (ies) prevents the student from getting to the local school in the same manner as the student's non-disabled peers would get to the local school. On the IEP under Transportation Services, only check "yes" if the student requires modifications or specialized equipment.

### **State or District-Wide-Assessment – IEP 7 (EasyIEP)**

Teams are responsible for deciding how all students will participate in state and district-wide assessments. However, if no assessments are planned during a particular IEP period, the Team should note that no testing will occur and leave the remainder of the page blank. All students participate in MCAS testing with accommodations outlined in the IEP. MCAS accommodations must be consistent with accommodations students regularly receive in their educational program.

## **b. Notes Regarding Special Populations**

### **Children Ages 3 to 5**

The Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks begin at the Pre Kindergarten level and children age 3 to 5 may have a disability (ies) that affect their progress in the general curriculum. Teams should not hesitate to use IEP 2 to reflect the developmental skills for each of the curriculum areas. Young children's disabilities also effect their participating in appropriate activities or may affect other educational needs. Therefore, a Team may need to describe these student's Present Levels of Educational Performance on IEP 3

### **Children Ages 14 to 22**

#### **Transition Plan (EasyIEP)**

Transition planning is required under Federal law and becomes a major Team focus when a student reaches fourteen years of age. Transition elements are incorporated throughout the IEP for a more integrated approach to transition planning.

The vision statement, included as part of IEP 1, aids Teams Members in determining the student's transition needs that may be reflected on IEP 2 and/or IEP 3. Transition goals should be recorded on IEP 4 and transition services should be recorded on IEP 5. As a student approaches graduation, the Team must also consider the student's graduation status, the need for a Chapter 688 referral and the involvement of adult service agencies.

Transition plans must be discussed and documented when the child is 15 years old. If the child requires services or courses necessary to reach the goals, IEPs must have measurable post-secondary goals related to training, education, employment, and as necessary, independent living.

### **Age of Majority**

As the student nears or reaches age seventeen, the Team must discuss the transfer of rights at age of majority. This information is documented under Additional Information on IEP 8, and a Transfer of Rights form (Student Services Forms) is completed and placed in the student's file.

### **Students in Foster Care**

If the natural parent is unwilling or unavailable for a period of time and the student is in a foster placement, the foster parent may automatically serve as the educational decision-maker. If the student is in a placement other than a foster placement, DSS may request assignment of an Educational Surrogate Parent.

If a child is living with extended family members ("kinship" home) such persons can be considered "foster" parents for the purpose of educational decision-making.

When voluntary custody has been given to DSS or a CHINS petition is in effect and no specific legal action has been taken to remove decision-making rights from the parent, the parent retains educational decision making rights.

If the student is referred for an evaluation for special education services, or is already receiving special education services, it is assumed that the parent, foster parent or extended family member with whom the child lives is the educational decision-maker.

### **Eligible Students with Behavior Problems**

If an eligible student's behavior affects performance in the general curriculum, then the interfering behavior is reflected on IEP 2. If an eligible student's behavior affects other areas of educational need, then the interfering behavior is reflected on IEP 3. If an eligible student's behaviors affects performance in the general curriculum and in other areas of educational need, then the interfering behavior is reflected in both locations on the IEP. Teams are reminded that IDEA-2004 requires pro-active steps in behavior management and in the provision of positive behavioral supports for eligible student whose behavior impedes their learning or the learning of others.

## **c. Amending the Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) Amendment is designed to be a stand-alone document or to be used in conjunction with other IEP pages. The Amendment form is designed to be used for minor IEP adjustments that do not change the type of placement.

The explanation of a proposed change includes the IEP section(s) that the change will affect. Team members may attach an IEP page to the amendment to clarify the recommended adjustments. For instance, if an IEP goal is being altered, IEP 4 with the reworded goal is attached or if service delivery is being altered, IEP 5 with the adjusted services is attached. Attach the Administrative Date Sheet to the amendment before sending to the parent/guardian. The Amendment goes into affect once parental consent is obtained.

## **d. Additional IEP Requirements**

## **When Parents and Staff Disagree**

Every attempt is made on the part of the Team Chairperson/Liaison to resolve any differences of opinion that might arise. However, if there is no resolution, the Chairperson/Liaison should propose an IEP based on the school's recommendations, making it clear to the parents that they can exercise their rights of due process.

## **Timelines for Developing IEPs**

*If a student is found eligible, a Team meeting is held 45 days from the date the parents consented to an evaluation. The goal is Watertown is to generate an IEP within 5 days of the Team meeting.* Some Team Chairpersons and Liaisons bring a draft IEP and a portable computer to the Team meeting so that a final IEP can be generated at the meeting. It is important to generate IEPs while the content of the meeting is fresh in everyone's mind. Completed IEPs should be:

- Elementary Level: IEP sent by the Chairperson/Liaison to the Director of Student Services with an N1 letter. The Secretary to Student Services will mail the appropriate documents to the parents and track/monitor receipt of signed and rejected IEPs.
- Secondary Level: IEP sent by the Chairperson/Liaison to Secondary Special Education Secretary with an N1 letter. The Secretary will mail the appropriate documents to the parents with an N1 letter and track/monitor receipt of signed and rejected IEPs.

## **Timelines for Parent Response to IEP**

- *Parents have thirty days to respond to the IEP. If there is no response after twenty-five days, the Chairperson/Liaison will be asked to call the parents.* Until parental consent is received, the old IEP remains in effect.
- When the parent/guardian returns the IEP, the Secretary will notify the Liaison of the return.
- If the parent/guardian accepts the IEP, the Secretary will then make copies of the IEP and forward them to the persons responsible for service delivery under the IEP. The entire IEP should be implemented immediately.
- No student is placed in a special education program without an IEP signed and accepted by his/her parent/guardian.

## **Rejected IEPs**

- If a parent/guardian returns an IEP or Amendment rejected partially or fully, the Secretary notifies the Team Chairperson.
- The Team Chairperson reconvenes the Team to discuss the rejection and, if necessary, contacts the parent/guardian in an attempt to resolve the dispute *within four days. Any mutually accepted elements of the IEP will be implemented immediately.*
- If the dispute cannot be resolved, a copy of the rejected IEP and cover letter is sent by the Office of Student Services to the Bureau of Special Education Appeals *no later than five days from the notification from the parent/guardian of the rejection of the IEP.*
- For Initial IEPs: Until the dispute regarding the IEP is resolved, the child will remain in his/her current placement, and no special education services are provided.
- For Review-Re-evaluations: Until the dispute regarding the IEP is resolved, the goals, objectives and services of the last accepted IEP will continue to be implemented.

## **Monitoring Timelines**

The Team Chairpersons and the Out-of-District Coordinator will present written reports on the status of all IEPs to the Director of Student Services on the *last Wednesday of the month during the school year* at the Special Education Leadership meeting. The group develops and tests strategies for encouraging parents to return signed IEPs in a timely manner.

### **3. Placement Decisions**

The third and final step in the IEP process is determining the appropriate placement. Placement is discussed immediately after an IEP is developed. The IEP forms the basis for the placement decision. The placement decision is based on a careful reflection of the IEP, including the services that the Team has identified as necessary, and the impact of the disability on the student's learning. Finally, the Team is mindful of the requirement related to FAPE (free appropriate public education) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Only after the needs of the child and the types of services have been discussed by the Team and agreed to in an IEP can the type of placement be effectively chosen by the Team.

The first type of placement option considered for all eligible students is the general education classroom with the use of supplemental aids and services.

Students may not be denied education in age-appropriate general education classrooms because the students' education requires modification to the general curriculum. Other options are considered only when the nature and severity of the disability would prevent satisfactory achievement within the general education environment.

The IEP is not written "to fit" a particular placement. Teams keep in mind this critical fact when moving through the Team process to ensure that the IEP is written to address the unique needs of the student.

### **E. Annual Review Meetings**

#### **Purpose of the Review Meeting**

The purpose of this meeting is to review the student's progress toward meeting the goals and objectives of the IEP. The participants in the Review Team meeting develop a new IEP that reflects student growth and current educational needs, as related to the general education curriculum. If the District suspects that the student may no longer require special education services, then a **reevaluation** is initiated, since no decision to remove eligibility can occur without current and complete evaluation information.

#### **Special Education Team Membership**

The Team consists of the following members:

- The student's parent(s)
- At least one regular education teacher familiar with the student
- At least one special education teacher familiar with the student
- A representative of the district who has the authority to commit resources (i.e. Director of Student Services, Principals, and Team Chairpersons)
- Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and other specialist to interpret evaluation reports
- Other individuals(s) who have knowledge or expertise regarding the student
- If appropriate, the student

#### **Timelines for Annual Reviews**

*A review is conducted within ten months of the Initial Evaluation and, thereafter, every twelve months on or before the expiration of the current IEP. Other review meetings may be requested at any time by any Team member. When a Team member is not satisfied with the child's progress or with the child's program and requests to meet with school personnel, the Liaison arranges for a meeting to be held within five school days. The Liaison informs the Principal and the Director of Student Services of this unscheduled review.*

The Liaison is responsible for ensuring that the review is held in a timely manner. *At least 30 days prior to the review*, the Liaison sends the following documents to the parents and all other participants:

- N3 — Team Meeting Invitation (EasyIEP)
- N3A – Attendance Sheet (EasyIEP)

### **Responsibilities of the Annual Review SE Team**

There is a printed Agenda for the IEP Team meeting to facilitate effective communication and help the Team reach consensus. The Chairperson/Liaison reviews the purpose of the meeting, outlines the process/format, facilitates introductions, and presents a draft of the student's new IEP to the Team.

The Team reviews the student's progress and determines:

- The appropriate goals and objectives for the upcoming 12-month period
- The necessary modifications and specially designed instruction which will allow the student to access the general education curriculum

If the student requires an increase in services, which requires a more restrictive setting, or if the participants cannot explain why the student does not appear to be meeting the goals outlined, or if the student requires services in areas in which testing has not been completed, the Review Team will recommend a reevaluation.

If the student is referred for reevaluation, the Liaison writes an Amendment to extend the current plan or writes a new IEP. The Amendment or IEP will be sent to the parent/guardian immediately following the review meeting along with an Evaluation Consent Form (N1A) attached to a Notice of Proposed School District Action (N1).

### **Sample Annual Review Team Meeting Agenda**

- Introductions and Attendance
- Statement of Purpose of Meeting
- Review of Student's Progress
- Presentation of New Evaluation Data (if available)
- Development of New Goals/Objectives
- Service Delivery
- Placement
- Summary

## **F. Progress Reports**

Progress reports are designed to report on individual student progress on each IEP goal. Multiple copies of the form should be used as required to report on each and every IEP goal. Completed progress reports are sent to the Office of Student Services and filed. Progress reports are reviewed for content and frequency by the Director of Student Services.

Progress reports are required to be sent to parents at least as often as parents are informed of not-disabled children's progress. A Team meeting does not take the place of a written progress report.

## **G. Transition Planning Guidelines**

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities that:

- Are designed as a results oriented process focused on improving academic and functional achievement which will promote movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation
- Build on student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests
- Provide instruction, related services, community experience, the development of employment and other post-secondary adult living objectives and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and a functional vocational evaluation

Beginning at age 15, IDEA 2004 requires a student's IEP to include a statement of the transition service needs of the child under the applicable components of the child's IEP. The statement should focus on the child's course of study and include a statement of interagency responsibilities and any needed linkages.

The Team determines transition activities. The IDEA 2004 requires that Watertown invite the student to the Team meeting, regardless of age, if one of the purposes of the meeting is to discuss the student's transitional services needs. If the student does not attend the Team meeting, the District must ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered.

Discussion about transition services takes place at Team meetings for all students age 15. All necessary services are recorded in the appropriate sections of the IEP. The Team completes the TPF — Transition Planning Form (EasyIEP) and attach it to the IEP for all students 15 and over.

## **H. Discipline**

Each school in Watertown has a Student Handbook which describes the rules for student conduct for that school. Students with disabilities are expected to follow the rules of conduct for their school.

### **Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)**

A Functional Behavioral Assessment is a process for addressing student problem behaviors, the settings under which the problem behaviors may or may not be observed, and the function (the why) of the problem behaviors. Functional Behavioral Assessments provide an excellent tool for analyzing problem behavior. This information is obtained by collecting data from direct observation and is used to develop an effective plan to reduce the frequency of severity of the problem behavior. A Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) is developed and implemented, if appropriate. Functional behavioral assessments are integrated, as appropriate, throughout the

process of developing, reviewing, and, if necessary, revising a student's IEP. Parental consent is obtained on an Evaluation Consent Form (N1A) before the assessment is conducted.

### **Suspension or Expulsion of Students with Disabilities**

In the case of a student with a disability *a suspension of more than 10 day (or a suspension that would, with previous suspensions that year, total more than ten days)* or expulsion (which is viewed as a change of placement) requires a Manifestation Determination Team meeting. The purpose of this Team meeting is to determine if the problem behavior was a manifestation of the student's disability. Relevant members of the Team review all relevant information provided by the parents to determine if the conduct in question is caused by or had a direct and substantial relationship to the child's disability or was the direct result of the LEA's failure to implement the IEP. If any of those circumstances are found, long-term suspension or expulsion may not be imposed.

The IEP Team determines if there is a relationship between the school discipline policy violation and the student's disability in order to make decisions about the consequence for the misconduct as well as the student's continuing educational and behavioral needs. If the behavior in question is not a manifestation of the student's disability, the student may be disciplined under the general conduct code of the school. The IEP Team considers all relevant information, including evaluation/diagnostic results, observations of the student, and the student's IEP.

The Team determines if:

- The IEP is appropriate, including the Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP)
- The IEP is implemented as written, including appropriate behavior management procedures
- The disability prevents the student from understanding the impact and consequences of the behavior in question
- The disability prevents the student from controlling the behavior in question

In summary, the behavior is not a manifestation of the disability if the Team determines that:

- The current IEP and placement are appropriate
- The student is able to understand the consequences of the behavior
- The student is able to control his/her behavior

A Manifestation Determination Discussion Guide (Student Services Forms) is completed to record the findings of the meeting, is sent to the parents, and is placed in the student file.

### **Special Circumstances for Serious Violations of School Discipline Code**

School personnel may remove a student to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting *for not more than 45 school days* without regard to whether the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the disability in cases when the student:

- Carries a weapon
- Possesses or sells illegal drugs or controlled substances
- Causes serious bodily injury upon another person at school, on school premises, or at a school function

The Team conducts a Functional Behavioral Assessment and Manifestation Determination Meeting in the alternate educational setting. *The Hearing Officer can extend the 45 day period.*

The Hearing Officer may order a 45 school day placement in an Interim Alternative Educational Placement if the District proves that the presence of the student poses a danger. Danger is considered as:

- Likelihood to result in injury to the student or others
- Appropriateness of the student's current placement
- Reasonable efforts made to minimize risk of harm, and
- The Interim Alternative Education Placement meets requirements – access to curriculum and program designed to address behavior

### **Manifestation Determination Meetings**

When a student with disabilities exhibits multiple, dangerously assaultive behaviors, the Team Chairperson will hold a Manifestation Determination Meeting to assess whether the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability. The Team Chairperson contacts the parents to:

- 1) Inform the parents/guardian of the student's behavior
- 2) *Invite the parents to a meeting to be held the same day (or the following day if the parents are unavailable)*
- 3) Obtain parental permission for the evaluation
- 4) Discuss an emergency placement if necessary

All reasonable efforts are made to contact the parents before the close of the school day. All efforts to reach parents are documented.

A Manifestation Determination Discussion Guide is available (Student Services Forms) and can be used to document the findings of the Manifestation Determination Meeting.

### **Response to Criminal Allegations**

When a student with a disability is reported to the police for an alleged crime, special education and disciplinary records are furnished to the police.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Regulations at 34 CFR – 300.529 state the following:

Nothing in this part prohibits an agency from reporting a crime committed by a child with a disability to appropriate authorities to prevent State law enforcement and judicial authorities from exercising their responsibilities with regard to the application of Federal and State law to crimes committed by a child with a disability.

An agency reporting a crime committed by a child with a disability ensures that copies of the special education disciplinary records of the child are transmitted for consideration by the appropriate authorities to whom it reports the crime.

An agency reporting a crime under this section transmits copies of the child's special education and disciplinary records only to the extent that the transmission is permitted by the Family Educational Right and Privacy Act. (Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1451(k) (9)).

*A temporary emergency placement if necessary (not to exceed 45 days) will be proposed by the District no later than the day following the Manifestation Determination meeting. No student is placed in an emergency placement without parental consent.*

*No later than 15 days after receiving written parental consent, a Team meeting will take place to review the results of the evaluation and determine appropriate placement.*

## **I. Qualifying for Testing Accommodations in College**



The District provides the College Board with documentation supporting the student's request for accommodation when such documentation is available, consistent with the Massachusetts Student Records Regulations (see 603 CMR 23 00).

The College Board has recently changed its eligibility requirement for testing accommodations. Districts and parents are reporting that the College Board is rejecting many requests for accommodations because the documentation supporting the request is not sufficient under its new eligibility standards. As a result, parents and students are asking school districts to conduct additional evaluations or eligibility assessment to support a student's request for accommodation.

In some cases, the College Board is asking that the student provide documentation of specific additional assessment information that the District may not have. The District is not obligated to provide or pay for updated or additional assessments to support a student's request for accommodation on College Board examinations if such assessment information does not already exist and is not necessary for the appropriate special educational program for the student at the time of the request. The parent is responsible for paying for additional assessments that are required for the purpose of supporting the student's request for accommodation on the College Board examinations.

If the parent requests an evaluation or assessment, whether or not the request describes the reason for the request, the District responds in accordance with the requirements of the state and federal special educational law. The District either agrees or disagrees to conduct such an assessment and provides notice to the parent of the decision. The District's decision not to conduct the assessment is subject to the due process requirements of the law.

If a request for an evaluation is made for the purpose of demonstrating a need for accommodations on College Board tests, and the District has no reason to believe the student has a disability or needs special education services, then the District can deny the request for an eligibility evaluation; the District notifies the parent of the decision.

## **J. Guidelines for Parent/Advocate/Evaluator Visits**

Each year parents exercise their rights to visit classes. Sometimes parents solicit the assistance of an independent evaluator and/or advocate visiting our schools to conduct observations of students with IEPs, interview teachers, and attend a Team meeting. Notify the Principal when you have a request of this nature and follow the guidelines below.

When a parent requests that an independent evaluator conduct an observation or a parent requests a visit, the classroom teacher(s), Principal and Liaison meets to discuss the parameters of the visit. The Director of Student Services is invited to attend the meeting with participating staff to review parent and school rights. The Liaison is responsible for scheduling this meeting.

Observations are scheduled at a mutually convenient time. The arrival and departure of the visitor(s) is established in advance of the scheduled observation and ground rules should be discussed. Adhere to the predetermined observation schedule, and do not extend the visit.

Designated staff members accompany the Visitor(s) and observe concurrently. They document everything observed so that the system has a record of what occurred.

## **K. Regulations and Laws Pertaining to Student Records / Confidentiality**

The Student Record Regulations adopted by the Board of Education and the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) apply to all public elementary and secondary schools in Massachusetts. The regulations and the law are both designed to insure parents' and students' rights of confidentiality, inspection, amendment, and destruction of student records, and to assist school authorities in carrying out their responsibilities under state and federal law.

The regulations apply to all information kept by a school or school district on a student in a way that the student may be individually identified. The regulations divide the record into two parts: the transcript and the temporary record. The transcript includes only the minimum information necessary to reflect the student's educational progress. This information includes name, address, course titles, grades, credits, and grade level completed. The transcript is kept by the school district for at least sixty years after the student leaves the system.

The temporary record contains the majority of the information maintained by the school about the student. This may include such things as standardized test results; class rank; school-sponsored extracurricular activities; evaluations and comments by teacher, counselors, and other persons; disciplinary records; and other information. The temporary record is destroyed within five years after the student leaves the school system.

The following is a summary of the major provisions of the Student Record Regulations and FERPA concerning the rights of parents and eligible students. Under the regulations, "eligible students" are at least 18 years old, they may exercise these rights just as their parents may.

### **Release of Information to Military Recruiters and Institutions of Higher Education**

As required by federal law the Watertown Public Schools routinely releases the name, address and telephone numbers of secondary school students to military recruiters and to institutions of higher education upon request. If a parent or eligible student objects to the release of any of this information the parent/student may state that objection in writing to the Principal of Watertown High School by October 1<sup>st</sup> and the information will not be released.

### **Inspection of Record**

A parent or an eligible student has the right to inspect all portions of the student record upon request. The record is made available within ten days after the request, unless the parent of student consents to a delay. The parent and eligible student have the right to receive a copy of any part of the record.

### **Amendment of Records**

A parent or an eligible student has the right to request the student's education records be amended. Requests to amend records are directed to the school principal and clearly identify the part of the record they wish to have amended and why.

### **Confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Special Education Information**

The Watertown Public Schools protect the confidentiality of personally identifiable special education information at collection, storage, disclosure, and destruction stages. The Director of Student Services is the designated official of the school district and has the responsibility for ensuring the confidentiality of all personally identifiable information. All persons collecting or using personally identifiable information receive initial and annual training and instruction regarding confidentiality procedures.

A Log of Access is maintained in the Office of Student Services. This Log includes the names of the party accessing the records, the date access was given and the purpose for which the party was authorized to access the records.

Copies of personally identifiable information are made only upon written parental consent.

Five years after the termination of special education services, parents are informed that the personally identifiable information is no longer needed. Parents are given the opportunity to pick up this material prior to it being destroyed.

## **L. Physical Restraint Procedures**

Physical restraint 603 CMR 46.00 is the use of bodily force to limit a student's freedom of movement. Physical escort is touching or holding a student without the use of force for the purpose of directing the student. Physical escort is not physical restraint and is not covered by these procedures. Physical restraint is only used as a behavior management tool when other less intrusive alternatives have failed or have been deemed inappropriate. In the event that physical restraint is required to protect the safety of the student and others in the school, the District has enacted the following procedures to ensure the proper use of restraint and to prevent or minimize any harm to the student as a result of the use of restraint.

### **Physical restraint is only used in the following circumstances:**

- When non-physical interventions would be ineffective, and
- The student's behavior poses a threat of imminent, serious, harm to self and/or others

### **Physical restraint is prohibited in the following circumstances:**

- As a means of punishment or
- As a response to property destruction, disruption of school order, a student's refusal to comply with a school rule or staff directive, or verbal threats that do not constitute a threat of imminent, serious, physical harm. However, if the property destruction of the refusal to comply with a school rule or staff directive could escalate into, or could itself lead to serious, imminent harm to the student or to others, physical restraint is appropriate.

Only school personnel who have received required training or in-depth training pursuant to this policy can administer physical restraint on students with, whenever possible, one adult witness who does not participate in the restraint. The training requirements do not preclude a teacher, employee or agent of the school from using reasonable force to protect students, other persons or themselves from assault or imminent, serious, physical harm.

Physical restraint is limited to the use of such reasonable force as is necessary to protect a student or others from assault or imminent, serious, physical harm.

A person administering physical restraint uses the safest method available and appropriate to the situation. Floor or prone restrains are only administered by a staff member who has received in-depth training as specified in this policy and, when in the judgment of the trained staff member, such method is required to provide safety for the student or others.

Physical restraint is discontinued when it is determined that the student is no longer at risk of causing imminent physical harm to self or others.

#### Additional Safety Requirements:

- A restrained student is not prevented from breathing or speaking. A staff member continuously monitors the physical status of the student, including skin color and respiration, during the restraint.
- If at any time during a physical restraint the student demonstrates significant physical distress, as determined by the staff member, the student is released from the restraint immediately, and school staff shall take steps to seek medical assistance.
- Program staff review and consider any known medical or psychological limitations and/or behavioral intervention plans regarding the use of physical restraint on an individual student.

At an appropriate time after release of a student from a physical restraint, a school administrator or other appropriate school staff:

- Review the incident with the student to address the behavior that precipitated the restraint
- Review the incident with the staff person(s) who administered the restraint to discuss whether proper restraint procedures were followed
- Consider whether any follow-up is appropriate for students who witnessed the incident

The staff member who administered such a restraint verbally informs the principal of the restraint as soon as possible and by written report no later than the next school working day.

The principal or his/her designee verbally informs the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) of such restraint as soon as possible and by written report postmarked no later than three school working days following the use of such restraint.

#### Students with Disabilities

- Restraints are administered to a student with a disability pursuant to the student's Individualized Education Program or other written and agreed upon plan developed in accordance with state and federal law, subject to the following exceptions:
  - (1) The limitations on chemical, mechanical, and seclusion restraint as stated above applies, and
  - (2) The training and reporting requirements described in this policy applies

## Chapter III: Section 504 Plans

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is designed to provide for students with disabilities that are making effective progress in school, but who may require special accommodations in order to participate in school.

### Referral for a Section 504 Evaluation

Section 504 services are a part of the Watertown Public Schools system of services to support the success of all students in school. The system of services begins with the General Education Team process. Accommodations are made in the general educational program and data collected to assess the success of accommodations. If the accommodations were successful no other systems will be deployed. If the student continues to experience problems the student will be referred for an evaluation to assess his/her eligibility for special education or Section 504 services.

### Evaluation Guidelines

Evaluations of the student are tailored to assess specific areas of educational need in order to determine eligibility for Section 504. Evaluation activities should be tailored to the specific referral questions for the individual student and need to address whether or not there is a disability, and if the disability affects the student's learning. Evaluations must provide information to determine present levels of academic achievement and related development needs. No single test is used as the sole criterion for determining eligibility. Rather, a variety of techniques (both formal and informal assessments), including information provided by parents, observation of the student in the classroom, work samples/portfolios, interviews, and review of the record are used.

No evaluations are conducted without parental notification and consent.

### Section 504 Team Meeting

Section 504 Team Meetings are convened and chaired by the guidance department in each school. The Team includes the student's parent(s), teachers and appropriate specialists such as nurses, guidance counselors, psychologists, and therapists. Students are invited to meetings once they reach the age of 14. The Team reviews the evaluation data and develops a plan.

### Elements of a 504 Plan

The Section 504 Plan (EasyIEP) includes the following elements:

- Demographic information
- Description of the mental or physical impairment
- Data used to determine impairment
- Documentation of a substantial limitation in a major life activity
- Recommended accommodations

An attendance sheet with signature is kept with the 504 Plan. A sheet summarizing Parental Rights under Section 504 should be sent out to parents with a copy of the plan.

### Parental Signature of Section 504 Plans

The Section 504 Plan has a place for parental signature and it is recommended parents sign the plan, but a parental signature is not required. If a student needs more supervision due to a specialized service outside of the regular classroom, or a medical treatment, service providers are encouraged to obtain a signature to ensure parents are aware of the services / treatment.

**Eligibility Determination**

A student has a documented physical or mental disability to be eligible under Section 504. The disability must substantially limit one or more major life activities, such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.

Information used to determine eligibility includes:

- demographic information
- a description of the information used to determine eligibility including medical records, evaluation information, and effect of mitigating factors such as medications
- documentation of a substantial limitation in a major life activity

The Eligibility Flow Chart used to determine a student's eligibility for specialized services is useful in determining both special education and Section 504 eligibility and can be found on page 32.

**Progress Reports**

Each student's progress is reviewed annually and a summary included in the file and sent to parents.

**Section 504 Reevaluation**

A reevaluation of students on 504 plans is conducted every 3 years and before any change in placement.

**Discipline**

Students on 504 Plans are subject to the same disciplinary procedures as apply to students eligible for special education services. Please see the discipline in the special education section of this Manual.

## Chapter IV: Enrollment and Education of Homeless Students

Watertown works with homeless students and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Special attention is given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school. Homeless students are provided district services for which all Watertown students are eligible, including full access to general and special programs and services.

Homeless students are defined as lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including:

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship
2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative, adequate accommodations
3. Living in emergency or transitional shelters
4. Being abandoned in hospitals
5. Awaiting foster care placement
6. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings
8. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transit stations or similar settings
9. Migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples

The Director of Student Services is the district's liaison for homeless students and their families. To the extent feasible, homeless students continue to be enrolled in their school of origin while they remain homeless or until the end of the academic year in which they obtain permanent housing. Instead of remaining in the school of origin, parents or guardians of homeless students may request enrollment in the school in the attendance area in which the student is actually living. Attendance rights by living in attendance areas, other student assignment policies, or intra and inter-district choice options are available to homeless families on the same terms as families resident in the district.

If there is an enrollment dispute, the student is immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian is informed of the District's decision and their appeal rights in writing. The District's liaison carries out the dispute resolution. Unaccompanied youth will also be enrolled pending resolution of the dispute. Once the enrollment decision is made, the school immediately enrolls the student, pursuant to district policies.

If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student is admitted under a personal exception. Students and families are encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, with the assistance of the District liaison.

Records from the student's previous school are requested from the previous school pursuant to District policies. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with District policies, including compliance with the state's address confidentiality program when necessary. Homeless students are entitled to transportation to their school of origin or the school where they are to be enrolled. If the school of origin is in a different district, or a homeless student is living in another district attends his or her school of origin in Watertown, the districts will coordinate the transportation services necessary for the student, or will divide the

costs equally. The District's liaison for homeless students and their families coordinates with local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youths and their families; other school districts on issues of transportation and records transfers; and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies. This coordination includes providing public notice of the educational rights of homeless students in schools, family shelters and soup kitchens. The District's liaison will also review and recommend amendments to District policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students.



# Chapter V: Accommodating Diverse Learners

## A. Differences in Learning Styles

### LEARNING STYLES

Since people are multi-faceted, we each have more than one way of learning. But, most of us have preferred channels or approaches. It is important to recognize the preferred style of your students and plan to incorporate strategies and approaches that allow all students access to the learning. There are several theories related to learning styles and multiple intelligences. Among these are:

### VISUAL LEARNERS

Visual learners need to see, watch, and observe. Their eyes are the keys to learning

- Approaches
  - Color coding
  - Visual pattern of word (word families)
  - Visual structure of word (configuration or shape of the word)
  - Graphics, pictures, and written key words to support auditory information
  - Gestures and cues to support auditory information
  - Charts
  - Webs
  - Outlines
  - Story maps
  - Diagrams
  - Flash cards
  - Maps
  - Films
  - Models
  - Model skill/task for the student
  - Puzzles
  - Sentence strips for sequencing information matching activities
  - Seat student where they can see the speaker's mouth
  - Use the sight word approach, experience stories, and whole word configurations to
  - Teach reading
  - Teach the student visualize acronyms such as:
    - H** Huron
    - O** Ontario
    - M** Michigan
    - E** Erie
    - S** Superior
- Strategies
  - Repeat oral instructions as follows:
    - In steps
    - With visual clues
    - Ask the student to repeat them
  - Encourage the student to keep an assignment log
- Highlighted Texts and Materials / Visual Aids
  - Use markers to highlight important material in texts or handouts - this will help make the most important information clear to the student.
  - Highlight key words or main ideas

- Highlight graphs, maps, charts, boldface type, terms, important names, dates, places, vocabulary, and picture captions [Color code (red for names; green for dates; etc.)]
- Use markers to highlight overhead transparencies
- Use colored chalk to differentiate activities
- Teach highlighting techniques - provide exercises which allow students to work together in highlighting important information
- Write directions on handouts, overhead, or chalkboard and leave them for future reference
- Use charts, posters, flashcards, sentence strips, and other visual aids to increase interest and meaning
- Have students watch television shows or video tapes which reinforce important concepts
- Have students make visual models of maps, charts, graphs and other items using play dough, clay, or other media

## AUDITORY LEARNERS

Auditory learners benefit from hearing information.

- Approaches
  - Verbal instruction
  - Self or oral reading
  - Lecture
  - Discussion
  - Brainstorming
  - Oral reports
  - Creative dramatics
  - Phonics
  - Poetry
  - Self-talk
  - Verbalize the steps needed
  - Books on tape
  - Listening centers
  - Partner activities
  - Oral activities prior to independent work
- Strategies
  - Sub-vocalization while reading to self
  - Consider an alternating seating arrangement - seat the student to the front on board work days and to the back on lecture days
  - Teach the student to talk through tasks
  - Provide auditory and rhyming cues
  - Use jingles, catchy stories, mnemonic devices, cheers, or songs to aid the student in mastery and/or retention of skills
  - Color code math symbols or important written information
  - Use oral tests occasionally and require oral responses
  - Encourage student to use a ruler, marker, or card to complete his paper and pencil tasks
  - Allow the student to use a ruler when drawing lines for matching activities

## TACTILE/KINESTHETIC LEARNERS

These learners learn by doing, touching, and direct involvement.

- Approaches
  - Hands-on activities
  - Projects
  - Manipulatives
  - Laboratory experiences
  - Performance/acting out experiences
  - Crafts
  - Drawing
  - Construction
  - Computers/technology
  - Tap/clap syllables
  - Number lines
- Strategies
  - Allow the student to trace over projected images on the wall or board
  - Give instructions first, and then pass out materials
  - Touch the student or hold his hand while talking to him
  - Color code handouts and materials
  - Let the student make materials for you, run errands, pass out papers
  - Allow the student to move around the room as part of the learning experience
  - Cut a long worksheet into smaller segments, give the student one segment at a time
  - Have the student chart his own progress - the number of books read, the number of completed assignments, his daily grades, etc.
  - Keep the work period short and gradually lengthen. Vary daily activities to offset long periods of sitting because these students learn best when active.

## **B. Differences in Cultural Perspective**

### ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS FOR STUDENTS:

Students from all cultures need to learn:

- To have high expectations of self and of the educational environment (e.g., teachers, rules, school, safety, communication/information, physical plant, support staff, etc.)
- The skills of duality (learning to live in a world of a dominant culture that is not their own and feeling positive about both)
- Self-identity and respect
- A curriculum that is multicultural and multiethnic
- Tutorial access from a skilled educator or knowledgeable peer
- Literacy-vocabulary-sight vocabulary
- Different ways of learning and being responsive to different ways of teaching
- Career exploration options begin early in education
- Problem solving skills, ways to study and scheduling free time
- Conflict resolution and mediation skills
- Anger management (anger/impulse control)
- Communication skills
  - Assertiveness
  - Active listening
  - Audience appropriateness
- Work skills (K-12)
  - Organization
  - School readiness

- Social skills
- Timeliness
- In-school and district-wide resources
- The “rules” of the game of life
- Appreciation for life-long learning
- Acquisition of vocabulary
  - Home and pre-school programs of language enrichment
- Relevance to school, workplace and every-day living
- The primary language of home and secondary language of the school culture
- Academic study skills, test-taking skills, how to use internal/ external resources, organizational skills and research methods

#### CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS:

To provide effective classroom practices for students of all cultures, educators need to:

- Know and teach cultural duality and how it is valuable in the school and community
- Aid parents and others to access the school system, understanding the rules and regulations
- Teach basic skills
- Use diagnostic teaching
- Understand the community
- Provide a variety of interventions and instructional strategies rather than making a quick referral to special education when students are having difficulties learning
- Recognize many modes of communication to reach all students
- Examine quality vs. quantity of essential material presented
- Examine relevance to student and usage
- Provide inclusion in curriculum and classroom activities from a multicultural, multiethnic and multilingual perspective
- Validate students’ cultural duality
- Research contemporary multicultural education practices
- Create opportunities for all students to share their personal histories and cultures
- Provide instruction in all learning styles especially through visual/spatial and/or hands-on experiences
- Replace social promotions of all students, especially ethnic-minority students
- Study ability and age grouping throughout the system; investigate demonstrated skills as an option
- Provide a variety of exposures to the humanities such as art, music, dance, etc.
- Provide timely feedback of students’ test scores to the parents/guardians, especially multilingual families
- Teach academic study skills, test-taking skills, how to use internal/external resources, organizational skills and research methods
- Create a nominative culture that enhances relationships with everyone in the school (staff, students and parents) especially with students empowering, supporting and affirming each other
- Confront students on behaviors, words and comments that have negative impact on a positive racial learning environment
- Create a positive, safe environment in which learning can take place
- Provide high expectations of all ethnic minority students
- Affirm, recruit and provide opportunities for ethnic minority student leadership and participation in all school and community activities
- Connect learning experiences to the world of work

#### ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS:

In assessing the learning of all cultures, educators need to:

- Develop assessments that are essential to real life and life-long learning
- Provide a variety of assessments
  - Portfolios
  - Observations (peer-teacher)
  - Standardized tests
- Develop assessments that measure multiple intelligence/learning styles
- Be aware that districts with significant minority enrollment should provide an improvement plan with specific strategies and time lines for bringing minority students to competencies where needed

#### SERVICE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

For students of all cultures to have adequate opportunities to learn, schools need to:

- Ensure appropriate advocacy on staffing committees
- Provide basic academic skills for parents who need them
- Provide child care / literacy programs / discipline/parenting skills
- Provide workshops for parents in Family Math, Science, and Literacy
- Enable parent advocacy to access school/community services
- Use parents, peers, business, community service organizations as experts in classroom resources and mentors
- Provide university-college partnerships with schools
- Smaller teacher student ratios
- Personalizing curriculum
- Role models
- Emotional support
- Maximize the current technology to create opportunities for learning
- Maximize collaboration with members of the multi-ethnic/lingual diverse community

### **C. Limited English Proficiency (LEP)**

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS:

Research has shown that students acquire a second language in the same way that they acquire the first language. It is an exploratory process with verbal expression increasing as confidence and knowledge are gained through trial and error. Researchers have defined the following stages with corresponding expectations. Since language acquisition is an ongoing process, stages may overlap and growth may occur at varying intervals.

- Silent/Receptive Stage  
The student does not verbally respond to communication in the second language although there is receptive processing. The student should be actively included in all class activities, but not forced to speak. Employing the natural approach and total physical response strategies will allow the student time and clues to encourage participation. Students are likely to respond non-verbally to peer buddies, inclusion in general activities and games, pictures, audiovisuals, and ‘hands on’ projects. As students progress through this stage, they will provide one word verbal responses.

Characteristics:

- Verbally unresponsive advancing to one word responses
- Hesitant, often confused and unsure
- indicate comprehension nonverbally
- develop listening skills
- Associate sound and meaning

This stage can be as short as a few weeks, and as long as months. During this stage teachers should be very careful about what they say about the student in front of him/her. They may look like they do not understand, but may know exactly what you are saying.

- Early Production

The student begins to respond verbally using one or two words and to develop the ability to extract meaning from utterances directed to them. The student continues to develop listening skills and builds up a large recognition (passive) vocabulary. As students progress through the stage, two or three words may be grouped together in a short phrase to express an idea.

Characteristics:

- relate words to environment
- improve comprehension skills
- grasp main idea without understanding all parts
- focus on key words and contextual clues
- One word verbal responses advancing to groupings of two or three words

- Speech Emergence

The student begins to respond in simple sentences if he or she is comfortable with the school situation and engaged in activities in which he or she is receiving large amounts of comprehensible input. All attempts to communicate (gestures, attentiveness, following directions, etc.) should be warmly received and encouraged. It is especially important that neither instructor nor students make fun of or discourage attempts at speech.

Characteristics:

- produce words that have been heard many times and understood, but may be mispronounced (young students' pronunciation will improve naturally as they interact with peers)
- errors of omission
- produce what is 'HEARD' such as common nouns, verbs, and adjectives

- Intermediate Fluency

The student gradually makes the transition to more elaborate speech so that stock phrases with continued good comprehensible input generates sentences. The best strategies are to give more comprehensible input, develop and extend recognition vocabulary, and give students a chance to produce language in comfortable situations.

Characteristics:

- errors more common as utterances are more complex
- grammar not acquired yet (concentrating on grammatical elements is counterproductive to the process of language development)
- extensive vocabulary development

- Advanced Fluency

The student begins to engage in non-cued conversation and to produce connected narrative. This is appropriate timing for some grammar instruction, focusing on idiomatic expressions and reading comprehension skills. Provision should be made for activities designed to develop higher levels of thinking, vocabulary skills and cognitive skills, especially reading and writing.

Characteristics:

- level of comprehension higher but not advanced enough for all academic classroom language
- can interact extensively with native speakers
- fewer errors in grammar
- many students in transitional English reading program

- although many reading skills transfer from one language to another, extensive vocabulary development in English is still required
- student may still be functioning in BICS (Basic Interpersonal Conversational Skills) language proficiency level

(Adapted from ‘Project Talk,’ a Title VII Academic Excellence Program, Aurora Public Schools.)

#### ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS FOR STUDENTS:

Students with Limited English Proficiency need to learn:

- Language
  - Since thoughts and rhetoric vary across languages students need an understanding of these patterns
  - The student needs to learn listening with comprehension
  - The student needs to learn speaking with clarity
  - The student needs to learn reading for understanding
  - The student needs to learn writing for effectiveness
  - The student needs supplemental instruction and support to learn social and academic language
  - The student needs supplemental instruction and support to learn content area vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, modals (i.e., will, could, should) and tag verbs (i.e., make: make-up, make-believe, make-out)
  - The student needs supplemental instruction and support to learn note taking
  - The student needs supplemental instruction and support to learn test taking
  - The student needs supplemental instruction and support to learn phonics, spelling, and grammar, in addition to the syntactic and semantic aspects of the second language
- Classroom
 

Skills and strategies in cross-cultural communication include:

  - How to express opinions and thoughts
  - How to seek and interpret feedback
  - Understanding strengths and capitalizing on those strengths
  - Strategies of active learners
  - How to work competitively as well as cooperatively
  - How to ask for help
  - How to take risks
- Rights and Responsibilities
 

Skills and strategies in cross-cultural communication include:

  - Learning attendance, discipline and all other school and district policies such as grading, holidays, standards and assessments
  - Learning grievance policies and procedures
  - Learning strategies and knowledge for successful interaction both within/without own culture

#### CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS:

To provide effective classroom practices for students with limited English proficiency, educators need to: (These recommendations need to be evident in every classroom with a language minority student at the elementary and secondary levels.)

- Use Effective Teaching Strategies

There is a broad range of instructional practices and strategies that need to be employed in assisting language minority students to learn content area concepts as they learn the English language. These teaching strategies include, but are not limited to:

- Giving students flexible time for learning
- Teaching to different styles including cross-cultural mediation in groups avoiding cultural conflict
- Using content area materials leveled to the English language proficiency of the students (native language when appropriate and possible)
- Guiding students in the acquisition and improvement of academic and social skills
- Use Effective Instructional Strategies

There is a broad range of instructional practices and strategies that need to be employed in assisting language minority students to learn content area concepts as they learn the English language. All teachers should:

  - Develop curriculum around thematic units
  - Before presenting new materials, check on knowledge of vocabulary and content
  - Teach vocabulary that will be crucial for understanding before the lesson
  - Design challenging content area assessments tailored to English language proficiency of students
  - Provide linguistically meaningful activities and instruction that allow students to attain or exceed content area standards
  - Provide direct instruction for language development as it relates to the content areas
  - Utilize classroom activities that teach to diverse learning styles that are culturally based
  - Develop and provide reading and writing instruction in all content areas that is consistent with the district/school wide language policy
  - Begin every lesson with an identification and preview of key content vocabulary and concepts
  - Review key concepts and vocabulary in a variety of ways and modalities
  - Use team teaching and creative student scheduling to utilize language and content expertise of staff
  - Provide content learning and language usage through meaningful activities
  - Employ a variety of strategies to monitor student comprehension which go beyond simple yes/no responses
  - Allow “thinking time” for student to process information before requiring a response
  - Acknowledge that beginning second language learners will be silent learners
  - Create a learning environment that is language rich
  - Provide instruction in how to read course texts, handouts and other classroom materials by looking at questions first, and searching for answers in the text
  - Encourage parents to use the native/home language with the student
  - When a student responds with incorrect grammar or pronunciation, repeat sentence correctly without making an issue about a wrong answer
  - When giving directions, repeat, rephrase, ask student to repeat or rephrase to check for understanding
- Establish a Positive Learning Environment
  - Understand and utilize the language policy of the district/school
  - Understand cultural and linguistic code-switching
  - Understand and support psychological saturation point related to second language learning
  - Avoid stereotyping or comparing ethnic groups



- Provide support with commitment to the expectation that language minority students are to meet high content standards
- Use Support Strategies
  - Time/scheduling, materials, technology, community
  - Use a buddy system to provide peer tutoring and other cultural/social help as needed
  - Provide a comprehensive training on language minority students' education to the entire district staff (i.e., first/second language acquisition, culture, etc.)
  - Utilize parents and community resources for linguistic and cultural enrichment

#### ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS:

In assessing the learning of students with limited English proficiency, educators need to:

- Develop Procedures
  - Assessments should be consistent with the language of instruction and individual linguistic abilities.
  - Assess prior learning in the native language whenever possible and applicable to establish appropriate instruction.
  - Utilize bilingual/ESL program staff to provide detailed information about students' language proficiencies in order to develop language appropriate assessments.
  - Skill being assessed must be identified—academic knowledge and skills being assessed must be distinguished and separated from competency in the English language (Is language usage or math computational skills being assessed?).
  - Instructors must realize that most assessments will actually assess both the content area concepts and the students' language ability (especially reading/writing skills)
  - Assessment of English language proficiency must include all skill areas—reading, writing, understanding, speaking, and viewing
  - alter the procedures used to administer the assessment.
  - give instructions orally using English as appropriate to level of proficiency
  - allow students to respond orally using English as appropriate to level of proficiency
  - Set and assess additional performance benchmarks and linguistically appropriate goals to measure students' progress towards attainment of content standards.
- Consider the Type of Assessment
  - Utilize language appropriate alternative forms of assessments to provide students opportunities to demonstrate both prior knowledge and progress toward attainment of content standard(s).
  - Portfolios with rubrics
  - Individual and group projects
  - Non-verbal assessments: visuals, drawings, demonstrations, manipulatives
  - Self-evaluation
  - Performance tasks
  - Computer assisted assessments
- Consider Timing
  - Allow for time flexibility in assessment administration to accommodate students' linguistic competencies
- Determine Whether or Not a Student Has Met Standards
 

Assessments for possible placement in special education programs must take the following into consideration:

  - Language dominance must be determined before any further assessments are

- administered
- Length of time the student has been exposed to English
- Previous educational history
- Appropriate use of qualified translators, diagnosticians, and/or other trained personnel
- Bilingual evaluation instruments administered by trained bilingual teachers
- In the absence of reliable native language assessment instruments, appropriate performance evaluations should be used.

#### SERVICE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

For students with Limited English Proficiency to have adequate opportunities to learn, schools need to:

- Implement personnel practices that:
  - Provide the services of trained bilingual or ESL (English as Second Language) specialists
  - Provide the services of trained translators and interpreters
  - Provide systematic professional development in first and second language acquisition principles and supporting classroom practices
  - Canvass all district personnel to find untapped bilingual resources
  - Recruit bilingual classroom teachers and special educators
  - Recruit and train bilingual/biliterate paraprofessionals and volunteers to provide native language and English support in the classroom
  - Recruit bilingual, non-instructional support staff (office, custodial, transportation, etc.)
- Develop supplemental instructional programs that are offered outside the traditional school day or as otherwise appropriate to student need, such as:
  - Before and after school, and/or summer school programs that focus on standards and language proficiencies
- Create partnerships with businesses and community organizations that value bilingualism to provide:
  - Opportunities for students to apply bilingual skills
  - Corporate internships for language minority students
- Develop and support family literacy programs that provide:
  - Opportunities to develop English language proficiency and literacy
  - Opportunities to develop home language proficiency and literacy
  - Support for home-school connections that promote parental involvement
- Provide all teachers with instruction and practice in second language strategies that include:
  - The ability to discern essential content area concepts and vocabulary (Sheltered Language Techniques)
  - Allowing language minority students to see, hear and experience content area concepts and vocabulary using visuals, and other hands-on materials in a variety of different settings: reading, writing, listening, speaking, action dramatization, small group work, contrast/compare, matching, etc. (Sheltered Language and Total Physical Response Techniques)
  - Delivering content area curriculum using clear, easily understood language. Systematic checks need to be made to monitor student understanding (Sheltered Language Techniques)
  - Understanding the role of first and second language acquisition - this includes how social language precedes academic/concept language learning
- Provide all school staff (administration, teaching, office, and professional, custodial, paraprofessional) with instruction, understanding, and resources for the affirmation of

students' home language and cultural diversity. Staff training is necessary in order to develop culturally appropriate home/school partnerships by:

- Teaching communication strategies to staff as well as to the parents of language minority students in order to foster understandings across language and cultures
- Teaching how to utilize bilingual staff and trained translators that are available for school meetings, parent-teacher-student conferences, and home visitations
- Teaching culture-specific social interactions

## **D. Difference in Gender**

### ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS FOR STUDENTS:

Students of both genders need to learn:

- A variety of learning styles
  - to take risks
  - to have high expectations for themselves
  - to mutually respect each other
  - to know and learn about differences in communication styles based on gender
- Essential learnings for females
  - to believe they can learn
  - that success is OK
  - to use direct communication styles, i.e., “no” as opposed to “I don’t think so!”
  - to motivate for success and reduce the concern about competition from the perceived conflict between femininity and achievement.
  - respect goes both ways, girls should respect boys
- Essential learning for males
  - to believe they can learn
  - to believe that success is OK
  - to be able to communicate with words vs. actions
  - to be able to reflect, think, and feel which includes the development of a feeling vocabulary
  - that success is earned
- Social/emotional needs
  - Feel safe-physical safety, emotional, free from sexual/racial harassment
  - Assurance of each student’s right to learn
  - Self expression for all students needs balance; girls need encouragement to express ideas equally and openly (Native American & Asian Pacific male and female students may need additional encouragement and permission; African American males may need to be assured that someone consciously hears their contribution.)
  - External affirmation (i.e., males need to affirm themselves, other males, especially girls for their skills and abilities and not their appearances; females need to affirm themselves, other females especially males for their sensitivity and nurturing characteristics and not their aggressiveness and competitiveness.)
- Academics
  - Critical thinking skills to recognize unfair representation of females and males in their environment in the media
  - All genders/races need math, science and technology — girls tend to stay away from upper level courses and minority students are not encouraged to participate
  - Females need to affirm that they must prepare to be economically self-sufficient
  - Understand the coping skills needed in a school climate and the behavior practices that support them
  - Need role models from both genders in every area of achievement
  - Need and understanding that child rearing is not restricted by gender

- Need balance by gender in communication
- Sensitize females and males to appreciate and utilize one another's interests and abilities
- TV and music lifestyles are very difficult to achieve; not all we see and hear is how these people live (ex. radio's interpretation of a gangster's life)

#### CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS:

To provide effective classroom practices for students of both genders, educators need to:

- Encourage the display of equitable responses based on gender
- Hold high expectations for all students, performance (i.e., males being praised for poetry writing; females being praised for technological development)
- Provide equitable rewards and consequences
- Encourage students to take pride in their abilities—especially African American, Native American and Hispanic females
- Use a variety of teaching and evaluation strategies (i.e., cooperative activities, and independent ways of learning)
- Use gender fair, bias free, equitable language and behaviors in the teaching environment
- Intervene and confront others immediately to reduce instances of gender bias, gender stereotyping and harassment
- Discuss sexual harassment, sexism and identify their impact and power
- Explore the dual cultures and expectations that confront minority females and males
- Develop classroom activities that may meet the different needs of females and males of different culture
- Eliminate traditional groupings (i.e., lining up by sex for the bathroom or boys competing against girls)
- Encourage females and males into activities, assignments and tasks where they have historically been underrepresented
- Help students visualize gender in a variety of new roles as in careers, especially the new technology

#### ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS:

In assessing the learning of both genders, educators need to:

- Provide assessments that are gender fair
  - Language appropriateness
  - Non-stereotypic model
  - Inclusivity
- Offer a variety of assessment strategies based on gender and cultural locality
- Provide performance or authentic assessment, based on measurable gender outcomes of achievement and learning
- Provide gender relevance to experience
- Develop reliabilities and validities across gender and ethnic groups
- Record assessment results across gender and ethnic groups

#### SERVICE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

For students of both genders to have adequate opportunities to learn, schools need to:

- Make community and parent involvement meaningful
- Seek programs and community volunteers to lead and encourage students, especially minority females and males, participation
- Maximize parent's desire to contribute by creating an award system for parent's time, energy and commitment
- Develop and complement policies/procedures to support gender equity - all means all

- Utilize community service activities for all students to connect/expand the in-school educational activities

## **E. Enrichment and Challenge**

### CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS:

Students who need more enrichment and challenge can generally be characterized by:

- Extraordinary learning strength or ability apparent through behavioral traits, performance, or aptitude
- Capacity to learn with unusual depth of understanding, to retain what has been learned, and to transfer learning to new situations
- Capacity and willingness to deal with increasing levels of abstraction and complexity in their areas of talent or intellectual strength earlier than their chronological peers
- Ability to make unusual connections among ideas, concepts, and bits of information
- Ability to learn very quickly in their areas of talent or intellectual strength
- Unusually strong curiosity or inquisitiveness; unusually strong desire to find answers to questions or problems that interest them
- Unusual insightfulness and/or intuitiveness, especially in their areas of talent or intellectual strength
- Tendency toward heightened emotional and/or physical sensitivity
- Tendency to hold high expectations (sometimes unreasonably high) of one's self and others
- Capacity for intense concentration and/or focus

### ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS FOR STUDENTS:

Students who need more enrichment and challenge need to learn:

- Self-directed learning skills (e.g., study skills, organization skills, time management skills, etc.) which allow them to maximize their learning effectiveness and to excel at optimal levels of performance
- Critical and creative thinking skills and problem-solving strategies, integrated with solid learning content
- Knowledge about and skills necessary to manage potential difficulties in learning often experienced by exceptionally able individuals, such as perfectionism, risk-taking, stress, heightened sensitivities, pressure to perform, and high expectations of self and others
- Attitudes and skills necessary for accurate and fair self-criticism and evaluation of one's own products, performances, and progress in learning
- Research strategies and skills essential for in-depth study and advanced learning, taught as early as possible in student's educational career
- Knowledge of self (including learning abilities, learning styles, interests, etc.) and knowledge about other individuals as a resource for personal development
- High-level development of effective communication, collaboration, and self-advocacy skills
- Self-understanding gained from consistently experiencing learning situations that are challenging enough to make hard work necessary

### CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS:

To provide effective classroom practices to students who need more enrichment and challenge, educators need to:

- Use teaching methods and learning opportunities shown by research and practice to be especially effective with gifted and talented students, including, but not limited, to:
  - curriculum compacting and acceleration strategies

- fast-paced instruction and provisions for progress through curricula at the student's personal rate of learning
- direct instruction in basic and advanced research and study skills and in the use of a wide variety of technology
- instructional planning that anticipates differences in diverse learning needs and characteristics of individual students (differentiated instruction, personal learning plans)
- interdisciplinary instruction and cross-disciplinary application of learning content
- thematic instruction
- emphasis on involvement of student choice, interests, and learning strengths
- in-depth learning projects and independent investigations, done both individually and in small groups
- judicious use of competitions
- Provide content learning that requires these students to be engaged a majority of their learning time in higher-level thinking, abstract thinking, problem-solving, creativity and innovation, and high level research and study skill development
- Use flexible, non-permanent instructional grouping practices designed to facilitate accelerated/advanced academic learning (e.g., cluster-grouping, cross-age grouping, grouping by achievement level for specific instruction, interest grouping, collaborative problem-solving groups, etc.)
- Offer counseling and guidance strategies specifically designed around the unique affective needs of high ability students (e.g., feelings of being different, effects of uneven development, need for effective self-advocacy, motivation, interpersonal skills, coping with learning barriers, etc.)
- Provide opportunities for 'real world' investigations and experiences, both inside and outside of the regular classroom (e.g., in-depth study of real problems, work-study, exploration of local and global issues, career exploration, community service experiences, etc.)
- Use flexible scheduling allowing for a variety of learning opportunities and purposes.
- Provide access to scholars and expert practitioners
- Provide opportunities for students to demonstrate achievement and excellence through competitions, exhibitions, performances, presentations, etc.
- Provide exposure and access to advanced ideas, research, and works of eminent producers in many fields
- Provide frequent and regular opportunities to learn and work with peers of like ability and interest

#### ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS:

In assessing the learning of students who need more enrichment and challenge, educators need to consider:

- Allowing enrichment and accelerated students to test out of required course work, 'challenging' a class or unit of study, or waiving requirements based on satisfactory demonstration of prior knowledge, skill, or ability
- Pre-testing before instruction in order to make decisions about appropriate instruction for the student
- Creating assessment tasks that require complex and abstract thinking, are appropriately challenging, allow divergent responses, emphasize both the depth/breadth and quality of the student's learning, and motivate students to show their highest level of performance
- Using portfolios of the student's work and/or performance over time that:
  - Keep track of continuous progress in the curriculum
  - Incorporate evidence of learning through a variety of assessment methods

- Make accommodation for different learning styles
- Show evidence of complexity of learning
- Provide opportunity for timely and constructive feedback on student's products or performances, including opportunity for student to revise or improve his/her work
- Give evidence of affective growth and development
- Emphasizing student self-evaluation using agreed-upon or predetermined standards of excellence in evaluation criteria
- Providing supportive assessment environments that both encourage and allow high-level performance and risk-taking
- Using out-of-level tests (e.g., 5<sup>th</sup> grade level test for a student currently in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, end of unit exam from a class above current grade level, taking Scholastic Aptitude Test as a seventh grader, etc.) to determine student knowledge and/or aptitude in a curricular area

#### SERVICE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

For students who need more enrichment and challenge to have adequate opportunities to learn, schools need to:

- Offer accelerated learning opportunities (advanced academic classes, advanced classes in the arts, advanced placement programs, honors classes/programs, International Baccalaureate Program, grade-skipping opportunities, early admissions, etc.)
- Provide grouping arrangements that provide intellectual and interest peer group interactions (e.g., cluster groupings, pull-out programs, seminars, magnet programs, collaborative problem-solving groups, self-contained programs, pre-school programs, etc.)
- Create personalized Learning Plans developed cooperatively by students, parents, teachers, and counselors, covering a variety of time frames (e.g., unit of study, semester, school year, multiple years, etc.)
- Offer supplemental inside-of-school and outside-of-school enrichment and extended learning programs and activities (e.g., Super Saturdays, summer academic and enrichment programs, clubs, field trips, extended travel, student exchange programs, academic contests and competitions, mentorships/internships, community service activities, etc.)
- Provide career exploration and career counseling programs, including future education planning, counseling, and guidance
- Offer counseling and guidance services (e.g., self-awareness programs at the elementary level, advisor advisee groups at middle school, special counseling and advisement at high school)
- Design efforts to coordinate, combine, and/or share resources, people and facilities within a district or building in order to maximize access to and utilization of available resources for supporting student learning (e.g., very talented younger students utilizing studios or laboratories at high school or college, high school teachers working with talented middle level students in accelerated academic programming, etc.)
- Consider offering programs for providing information and training about enrichment and accelerated education for parents, teachers, and administrators
- Facilitate cooperative agreements between K-12 schools and institutions of higher education providing for concurrent enrollment, dual credit, and other advanced and/or post-secondary options

# Chapter VI: Accommodating Eligible Students

## A. Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) / Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

### CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS:

A student with ADD/ADHD may exhibit many of the characteristics listed below:

- Hyperactivity may or may not be present
- Easily distracted
- Appears to daydream
- Lack of organizational skills
- Difficulty staying on-task
- Limited impulse control
- Age inappropriate behavior
- Consistently inconsistent
- Limited task follow through, may not be able to sustain effort
- Talks excessively and/or blurts out or interrupts others
- Learns information, but has difficulty demonstrating knowledge in traditional ways
- Lack of motivation
- Low frustration tolerance and low work productivity
- Social/emotional health may be impacted (i.e., social skills, peer acceptance, self-image)
- ADD may co-exist with other conditions (i.e., Learning Disabilities or Emotional Disturbance)

### ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS FOR STUDENTS:

Students with Attention Deficit Disorder and/or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder need to learn:

- Organization - students need to be taught/learn the following organizational skills for use in a variety of environments including school, home, and community:
  - Strategies for starting/finishing a task
  - Study skills
  - Time management skills
  - Decision-making skills
  - Strategies for transitioning between activities
  - Memory strategies
  - Talking self through a task
  - Goal setting skills
  - General organization and coordination of materials and assignments
- Self Advocacy - students need to be taught/learn the following self-advocacy skills for use in a variety of environments including school, home and the community:
  - Knowledge of ADD/ADHD, legal rights, and impact of ADD/ADHD on self
  - Skills for expressing own feelings and needs
  - Negotiation skills
  - Skills for using technology/alternative formats for assignments
  - Strategies for building on strengths
  - Ability to know needed modifications and the ability to request that modifications be made
  - Knowledge of strengths, weaknesses, personal learning style and their application in daily schoolwork, community life, and career options



- Self-Control/Monitoring - students need to be taught/learn the following self-management skills for use in a variety of settings, including school, home, and the community:
  - Strategies for staying on task
  - Skills for thinking and waiting before acting
  - Skills for paying attention to what is important and ignoring the unimportant
  - Skills for matching energy level to task and/or environment
  - Skills for consistently producing quality work
  - Strategies for dealing with change
  - Skills for becoming accountable and responsible for behavior and learning.
- Social Skills - students need to be taught/learn the following social skills for use in a variety of environments, including school, home, and community:
  - Skills for resolving conflicts
  - Skills for making and keeping friends
  - Skills for complimenting others
  - Skills for learning to stop inappropriate interactions
  - Skills for accepting feedback about behavior and not using ADD as an excuse
  - Skills for anger management
  - Skills for understanding body language and reading social cues
  - Skills for appropriate self-expression
  - Skills for taking turns and working in groups
  - Attending and listening skills
  - Skills for making requests appropriately

#### CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS:

To provide effective classroom practices for students with ADD and/or ADHD, educators need to:

- Learning Environment
  - Create a structured environment — consistency, routine, preparation for change, visual cues and reminders
  - Reduce distractions — Use study carrels, headphones, alternative settings for work
  - Teach/promote/allow the use of technological aids — Spell checkers with/without auditory feedback, calculators with/without auditory feedback, recorders including variable speed machines, computers and appropriate software including word processing
  - Limit transitions (class-to-class, number of teachers, etc.)
- Instructional Techniques
  - Teach organizational techniques/study skills — color code/highlight materials and assignments; break down long term projects into small steps; create daily assignment notebook, use memory strategies such as summarizing and paraphrasing; teach test taking and note-taking skills; teach reading strategies (i.e., outlining and mapping) teach editing, prioritizing and list making strategies
  - Provide clear, concise directions, expectations and rules — repeat directions, model directions, demonstrate task with student imitation; use a multisensory approach; limit number of rules; create clear concrete rules that are limited in number; teach routines
  - Allow for movement — provide opportunities for movement with a purpose and use of manipulatives (silly putty, balls, clay, etc.); allow frequent breaks and recess
  - Promote use of peer helpers and improved peer relationships — create cooperative learning groups with appropriate peers, peer tutoring; facilitate peer acceptance
  - Provide/allow modified or adapted assignments — Eliminate excessive copying from board or books to paper; use of recorded books; alternative assignment formats; provide set of books and materials for home use

- Communicate with involved persons on an ongoing basis — Use a home/school communication system; maintain a list of “what works” for the student; provide feedback to medical/mental health personnel as needed; encourage consistency across environments
- Develop a system with the student to facilitate medication delivery at school
- Allow the student processing time for questions and information
- Provide desirable alternative activities for students to access after completing assigned tasks
- Behavior Management
  - Clearly state and consistently implement expectations and consequences
  - Catch students being good
  - Develop behavior plans to address problem situations across the day/settings
  - Provide meaningful positive reinforcement systems
  - Reward partial accomplishments
  - Increase supervision during unstructured times
  - Set up behavior management systems and frequently review and update
  - Promote use of charting of student progress/promote student use of self-charting
  - Avoid power struggles; pick your battles, and maintain a calm neutral response

#### ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS:

In assessing the learning of students with ADD and/or ADHD, educators need to:

- Consider Contextual Factors Related to Assessment
  - Test in one-on-one or small group settings
  - Provide alternative settings
  - Allow for movement/standing instead of sitting
  - Provide extended time with breaks
  - Break tests into smaller parts
  - Give clear descriptions/expectations of what will be assessed
  - Test only what is taught
  - Use community and career development activities to assess skills and abilities
- Provide Alternative Formats
  - Offer students a choice in testing/assessment formats, including the following:
    - Allow verbal/oral responses
    - Encourage use of technological aids (computers, calculators)
    - Promote the use of project portfolios and/or other tactile project choices
    - Provide alternatives to computerized answer sheets
    - Provide practice tests
    - Provide a study format identical to the test format/no surprise quizzes
    - Allow open book/open resources
    - Provide word bank for vocabulary or fill-in-the-blank tests
    - Allow take home tests
    - Provide readers or scribes for tests
    - Allow tape recording of test and/or student responses
  - Use teacher/team observation
  - Promote self-evaluation/rating

## SERVICE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

For students with ADD/ADHD to have adequate opportunities to learn, schools need to:

- Ensure training, support, and resources for teachers, staff, parents, students, community members and employers in needed areas, including the following:
  - Discipline
  - ADD/ADHD
  - Instructional practices
  - Behavior management
  - Technology
  - Legal requirements
  - Treatment options
  - Teaching and learning style
  - Teaming
- Provide adequate planning time for consultation, teaming, collaboration and communication with parents and staff and with service providers outside of the building
- Provide environmental modifications to allow for movement, flexibility of workspace, etc.
- Allow for accommodations in learning style; match teaching style with learning style
- Lower student/teacher ratio in regular classroom based on severity and need, curriculum, age. Use volunteers, mentors, aides, small groups, etc. to assist with all students
- Provide access to full-continuum of service options (i.e., one to one, small group, full class, etc.)
- Encourage alternative/flexible schedules and curriculum
- Ensure accommodations for diverse learners are built into school improvement plans
- Provide counseling services and social skills groups (large, small, and individual)
- Institute a mentor program for students and teachers
- Ensure the availability of support groups for students, teachers, parents, peers, siblings, and the community
- Provide tutorial services before and after school (e.g., academics, motor skills, social skills, organizations, etc.)
- Assist students in connecting with community agencies that can provide support in a variety of environments including home, school, community, and employment

## **B. Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)**

### CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS:

- Autism exists on a continuum from mild to moderate to severe. It is a spectrum disorder, meaning it incorporates varied but similar conditions which are neurological, not psychological or environmental.
- Students diagnosed with PDD (Pervasive Developmental Delay) and PDD-NOS (Pervasive Developmental Delay Not Otherwise Specified) and Asperger Syndrome are considered 'high functioning'. Students diagnosed with Kanner Autism (classic) are in the moderate range of functioning on the spectrum, and those with Mixed Autism (coupled with other diagnoses such as mental retardation or Fragile X syndrome) are considered less able or low-functioning.
- General Characteristics
  - Concrete thinker, thinks in pictures
  - Rote learning and memory can be a strength
  - Atypical or difficulty with regulating social behavior - (standing too close, staring, abnormal body posture, failure to understand gestures or facial expression)
  - Inability to understand another's perspective - Lacks Theory of Mind

- May engage in one-sided, non-reciprocal language/conversation - may have difficulty initiating, sustaining and/or terminating conversation
    - Odd prosody in speech/peculiar voice characteristics—speaks and reads without intonation, pitch, stress or rhythm
  - Idiosyncratic, repetitive, stereotyped language - speech may become pedantic in adolescence (overly formal)
  - Difficulty understanding the rules for conversational interaction (quantity, quality, relevance and clarity)
  - Restricted repertoire of interests or a tendency towards specific and intense interests - may perseverate or talk incessantly on a subject or topic of particular interest
  - Lack of or poor eye contact - unable to maintain joint-attention (look at a speaker while listening to them)
  - Students with the diagnosis of PDD, PDD-NOS and Aspergers Syndrome often appear to understand and use language well. In fact, while their language may be advanced for vocabulary and grammar (superficially sophisticated), it is deficient or awkward with regard to pragmatics and the function of communication.
  - Difficulty generalizing or associating information from one context to the next
  - Rigid, rule-bound thinking; lack of cognitive flexibility
  - Preference for predictability, insistence on sameness and routine - sometimes appear “driven” - may have difficulty adapting to unexpected changes in schedule or daily routine
  - Difficulty rapidly shifting from one activity to another; may be unable to leave work they consider unfinished, incomplete or incorrect
  - May have difficulty accepting failure and may not readily learn from his/her mistakes
  - Difficulty understanding abstract or inferred language/information, making predictions
  - Difficulty reading facial expressions and body language
  - May present with repetitive motor mannerisms (self-stimming behaviors) such as rocking, flicking fingers, flapping hands, or twirling hair
  - May have some or significant difficulty engaging in imaginative activities, may not be able to distinguish the difference between reality and fantasy
  - Lack of varied, spontaneous symbolic (make-believe) play or social imitative play
  - May have Sensory Integration Deficits or difficulties with proprioception
  - May have difficulties with initiating and maintaining attention
  - Difficulty with planning and organization
  - Difficulty with empathy and perspective-taking
  - May sub-vocalize when working or listening to classroom discussion
- General Needs
    - Staff who are trained in ASD. Useful web sites include: AANE (Asperger’s Association of New England) [www.aane.org](http://www.aane.org); OASIS (Online Asperger Syndrome Information and Support) [www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/](http://www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/)
    - Assistance with ‘reading’ and interpreting social context -may include modeling of correct verbal/behavioral response
    - Assisting with developing an organizational system and specific instruction on its use
    - Well-established and predictable school routines
    - Clearly defined rules of behavior
    - Previewing of schedules, including time allotment
    - Advanced notice of any known changes in routine or schedule
    - Social or Story Scripts. Useful resources include: Future Horizons (1-800-489-0727) provides a variety of booklets, videos, textbooks by Carol Gray which describe the instructional technique of social stories
    - Definitions for abstract language

- Assistance with comprehension strategies
- May need a Sensory Diet developed under the supervision of an OT

#### ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS FOR STUDENTS:

- Students with ASD must learn specific rules for competent social conversation.
- A good reference is Diane Twachman's Four Maxims of Conversational Interaction (1996): Quantity, Quality, Relevance and Clarity.
- Learn to make eye contact at the end of a conversational turn
- Students with ASD need to enhance social competence
- Learning to recognize and interpret the meaning of facial cues and body language
- Learning to identify novel situations and use pre-planned, well rehearsed list of steps to take in these situations
- Gaining an awareness of the impact of his/her actions on other people's feelings
- Learning alternate behavior(s) to replace socially inappropriate motor mannerisms
- Refraining from imposing intense interests and preoccupations on others
- Learning rules of conversation
- Learning to read and respond to non-verbal cues
- Learning strategies to help adapt to or cope with change
- Students with ASD must learn strategies to improve comprehension
- Reading chapter summaries prior to reading chapter
- Using graphic organizers before, during and after reading
- Defining abstract terminology or metaphors and keeping a personal dictionary of same
- Learning how and when to ask questions or ask for help
- Students with ASD need to improve communication skills
- Initiating, sustaining and appropriately terminating conversation
- Initiating and responding appropriately to social greetings
- Interpreting non-verbal language
- Developing strategies for detecting and then defining abstract or inferred language.
- Improving prosody when speaking and reading
- Learning how to ask for help

#### CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS:

- Predictable class routine. Preview any changes - avoid surprises
- Provide firm expectations for completion of class work - can include timed work sessions
- Provide written schedules, calendars, checklists, instructions
- Specifically teach student how to use graphic organizers, day planners
- Provide chapter summaries/give big-picture
- Carefully monitor reading comprehension
- Highlight key phrases in instructions
- Couple verbal instructions with written instructions when possible
- Avoid verbal overload
- Maintain consistent communication between all team members, including parents
- Provide definitions for abstract/figurative language. Explain metaphors and words with double-meanings -be as concrete as possible. Allow for repetitive practice
- Develop Social Stories or Scripts
- Teach rules for conversational turn-taking, including eye contact at the end of an utterance to indicate that the speaker is finished
- Teach student to monitor his/her own speech with regard to voice volume (adjusting according to distance from speaker, background noise, context)

- Educate peers (as appropriate) about how to respond to the student's difficulties with social interaction
- Teach student how to react to social cues by giving them a repertoire of skills (reactions/responses) to use - provide structured social skills groups to practice specific skills
  - Teach the student to 'read the room' - use other students as models to indicate appropriate behavior/response
  - Limit perseverative discussions or questions about isolated interests - provide a specific time during the day when these topics can be discussed
- Develop a private set of cues to redirect and maintain attention
- Provide extra time for tests, writing assignments
- Allow the student to use the keyboard/computer for written work
- Teach the student how to ask for assistance/help
- Work with OT, parents, previous teachers to understand student's sensory sensitivities (ex. background noise may need to be minimized)
- Work with OT regarding writing speed and legibility - may need adaptive technology or highly individualized writing program to develop automaticity (print or cursive)
- Do NOT try to process (talk to) a student immediately following a melt-down
  - DO provide a safe-place for a student to go to regain control either before they become overwhelmed or after a meltdown
  - Inhibit inappropriate self-stimming behavior (motor mannerism) if it is disruptive socially or it is interfering with learning - replace it with something more appropriate if it serves a purpose (such as helping to calm or maintain attention)
- To reduce quantity of written work, reduce amount of drill and practice for secure skills
  - Teach skills for topic management, shifting topics, responding, expanding or elaborating on topics initiated by others

#### ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS:

- Avoid the use of abstract or inferred language embedded in test questions
- Allow extra time or avoid timed tests when possible
- Clearly define the expectations for quality and quantity
- Pop-quizzes or unscheduled assessments should be avoided at all times
- Always administer the test with a familiar person
- If a student subvocalizes, allow them to take the test in a separate room
- Review format of test, if different from what is typically seen by student
- Portfolio assessment to support standardized test scores

#### SERVICE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

- Provide staff training for ASD in general and specific to individual students
- Provide regularly scheduled opportunities for collaboration between teaching staff, ancillary staff and parents
- Provide classrooms that provide highly predictable routines and ample visual supports
- Provide opportunities for on-the-spot interpretation of social language and behavior - a classroom paraprofessional can be trained accordingly
- Carefully plan IEP or 504 support services to maximize the amount of classroom-based instruction and minimize transitions
- Assure that the student has access to at least one familiar adult in the building with whom to build a trusting relationship
- Designate a safe-place for the student to use to regroup before or after a melt-down
- Provide assistive technology training to augment learning and improve access to the curriculum
- Develop behavior plans, when appropriate

- Communicate with outside agencies and support services for student and family
- Provide social skills groups led by trained staff, when appropriate
- Provide specific instruction for organizational strategies, comprehension strategies, and social interaction strategies

## C. Deaf or Hard of Hearing

### CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS:

- In General
  - An estimated twenty one million Americans have some degree of hearing loss, mild to severe.
  - Ten percent of students who are deaf/hard of hearing have parents who themselves are deaf.
  - Hearing loss is not connected to cognitive ability.
- Communicative Characteristics
  - Speech production is generally affected by hearing loss, especially voice and articulation quality. (Speech is a skill learned through imitation. It is hard to learn to say that which you have trouble hearing.)
  - A delay in language development, telegraphic, incomplete sentences, pervasive difficulty with syntax, and a lack of facility with idiomatic language are all prevalent. None of this is necessarily related to intelligence.
  - Sign language, if used, may be a “PIDGIN” form of English; it may be straight English; or it may be American Sign Language (ASL)—the sign system used by the deaf adult community. ASL is neither English nor a sign system with a written form.
- Behavioral Characteristics
  - Often, may appear to understand, but really doesn’t; require frequent checks for understanding
  - Will speech read (lip read) -this is not an exact science, the most skilled deaf adults ‘get’ about 35% of what is said
  - May fail to respond to questions, or responds with seemingly irrelevant answers
  - Occasionally, takes a peculiar listening posture
  - May seem more aware of movements than sound
  - Confuses words that sound or look alike
- Learning Characteristics
  - For the most part, these students are visual learners
  - They often miss multiple meanings of words and idiomatic language
  - They take a very literal translation of written material, missing subtlety
  - They require constant rephrasing — not necessarily simplifying — of information
  - They will require repetition of presentation
  - Generalization and transfer of learned material is not a given — it must be modeled and required

### ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS FOR STUDENTS:

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing need to learn:

- Adequate language and vocabulary to understand the instruction
- Adequate language and vocabulary to ask questions
- Sufficient skills to attend to instruction, to study the new material, and to prepare for tests. This includes:
  - Sufficient skill in self-advocacy or sense of personal responsibility to ask questions whenever and wherever needed, and to “manage the conversation” in order to get needs met
- Ability to organize, generalize, and transfer learning

- Communication skills sufficient to express needs related to deafness
- Social skills sufficient to participate in the classroom and in unstructured times
- Knowledge of home community and rights as a disabled citizen in any setting, the ability to ask for any changes necessary to ensure clear communication in any environment
- The knowledge of how to work with all support staff, including how to access and use a variety of technology/equipment

#### CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS:

To provide effective classroom practices for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, educators need to:

- Create an “interactive” learning environment in which:
  - the deaf/hard of hearing child is an active participant
  - the student can manage, visually, all the input required to attend to instruction
- Instruct using student’s preferred mode of communication
- Given the student’s mode of communication, teach at a pace commensurate with his ability to process and respond to new information
- Instruct at appropriate language/linguistic levels
- Repeat and reinforce concepts throughout the instructional day
- Provide frequent opportunities to apply new concepts
  - rephrase to accommodate for idiomatic, figurative, and/or complex language
  - set context for new concepts, tying instruction to child’s own experience; establish a “need to know” for the material
  - provide materials at appropriate reading levels
  - tie all academic teaching to language and communication
  - provide frequent examples of- as well as exceptions to- the concept
  - teach with frequent use of clear, visual aids
  - speak at a normal rate, without over-articulating, and with slightly greater than normal intensity
  - frequently check for understanding
  - modify curriculum as needed, e.g., community based
  - demonstrated willingness of staff to make accommodations (e.g., interpreters, assistive listening devices)
- Within the learning environment, ensure that:
  - there is the possibility of block scheduling for vocational education, community based instruction, etc.
  - there is an appropriate pace to the instructional day, including providing necessary breaks
  - there is organization to the class such that teaching does not occur while the teacher is facing the blackboard, passing out papers, or walking around the classroom
  - a variety of teaching strategies are used especially to promote generalization and transfer of what has been learned

#### ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS:

In assessing the learning of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, educators need to:

- Ensure that instructions are clear and in student’s preferred mode of communication
- Allow for a variety of ways to assess understanding (e.g., projects, demonstration, reports, signed vs. spoken)
  - Ensure that assessment is tied to content and not necessarily tied to the ability to read and write English
- Allow for more time as needed and for the possibilities of individual versus group testing and/or testing in a separate room



- Ensure that what is being tested is that which was taught (e.g., testing vocabulary comprehension versus child’s ability to speak/speechread/sign)
- Allow for a variety of settings in which to assess understanding (e.g., community, at work)
- As appropriate, allow for use of calculator, word processor, and other technology
- Connect/compare standardized assessment with alternative assessments
- Consider informing the student of the need for or benefit of the assessment being done

#### SERVICE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

For students who are deaf and hard of hearing to have adequate opportunities to learn, schools should:

- Provide interpreters in any situation requiring them
- Provide regular consultation, in-service and other support to mainstream teachers
- Ensure that all service providers can communicate effectively with the student including through the use of an interpreter
- Ensure that each student will have access to speech, language, speech reading, auditory training, and/or sign language as part of instruction
- Ensure that all instructional staff is skilled—expressively and receptively—in communication mode of child
  - Managed instructional environment: minimum of distraction, specialized seating, adequate lighting, acoustics, safety (flashing alarm)
  - Access to note takers and peer tutors
  - Access to captioned films, videos
  - Educational transition services: level-to-level and including interagency coordination for transition to college or the world of work
  - Access to needed assistive devices/auditory equipment
  - Ensure that educational and extracurricular options are not limited by availability and quality of service providers

### **D. Deaf-Blind**

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS:

Vision and hearing are key “distance senses”. They provide sensory information from locations away from one’s body. When they are absent or impaired, in some combination, the child’s development may be greatly challenged. Age of onset, the severity of the sensory loss, and the presence of other disabilities all contribute to the extent of developmental challenge. These three factors and others are responsible for the great diversity of the population of learners who are deaf-blind and the need for specialized supports to achieve the best education possible. As a result of this diversity, the needs and abilities of individual learners who are deaf-blind will vary highly. Four areas of primary educational concern for the learner who is deaf-blind include: (a) a system of communication; (b) a means of developing social relationships; (c) personal care and life skills management; and (d) travel skills. These skills must be taught systematically with carefully planned strategies to the child since any incidental learning by observation is severely affected by sensory loss and specialized adaptations or techniques are often required.

#### ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS FOR STUDENTS:

Students who are deaf-blind need to learn:

- Sensory and Individual Learning Style
  - An awareness of objects and people in the environment and recognition of what the child hears, sees, touches, smells or otherwise experiences
  - Functional use of senses (hearing, vision, touch, smell, etc.) to acquire and process information
- Communication Skills
  - Vocabulary which is meaningful to the child in his or her home, school, and community environments
  - A variety of methods of expressing and receiving information, wants and needs, and feelings in a variety of ways such as speech, sign languages, gestures, picture or object boards, Braille, communication devices, large print, audiotapes, etc.
  - Skills in using technology, including adaptive aids, to enhance both visual and/or auditory skills: computers, closed circuit televisions, magnifiers, hearing enhancement devices
- Concept Development
  - Concepts of body, space, and time (e.g., schedule and sequence of activities)
  - An ability to apply academic learning to everyday life (e.g., functional reading and writing, money used and time and calendar etc.)
- Orientation and Mobility
  - An awareness of body position in relationship to environment
  - Skills to travel as independently as possible in familiar and unfamiliar environments including use of devices such as a long white cane, monoculars, communication cards, etc. (with the method of their choice)
  - Familiarity within specific environments (e.g., living environment, classroom, etc.)
- Life Skills
  - Strategies for organizing personal space, items in the environment, and daily care routines (how to prepare for getting dressed or eating, making one's bed)
  - Daily personal care skills such as eating, dressing, grooming, personal hygiene, and toileting independently
  - Skills to manage one's living environment (e.g., making one's bed, preparing a meal, doing own laundry etc.)
  - Home and personal management skills for grocery shopping, cleaning, cooking, and paying one's bills
  - Skills in accessing community for shopping, transportation, medical needs, leisure time and other personal needs
- Social-Emotional Skills
  - Body postures and facial expressions which help facilitate social interaction with others and replacement of inappropriate behaviors with socially acceptable behaviors
  - Problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills with family, friends, and adults
  - Strategies for initiating and maintaining interaction, and making and keeping friends
  - An understanding and appropriate expression of one's sexuality
  - Self-protection and refusal skills
  - Age appropriate leisure activities
  - An awareness of age appropriate dress and hygiene in relation to peer group
- Self-Advocacy Skills
  - An awareness and assertiveness regarding individual abilities and needs related to both vision and hearing loss (e.g., need to move closer to the board, need to turn on one's hearing aid, etc.) in order to be comfortable in all situations
  - An awareness and skills to select the choices available in everyday life and long range
  - Strategies for becoming an active participant in the classroom or community by communicating what he or she needs to be comfortable, to learn, and to feel safe

- Methods necessary to obtain information for safety and medical purposes, as well as getting materials and resources at school, home, and in the community
- School to Work
  - An understanding of student work responsibilities, teacher/parent/employer expectations, and the roles of various people within the student's environments
  - An understanding of work habits and skills such as finding and keeping a job, maintaining relationships with co-workers and employers, using time clocks, etc.
  - A realistic and accurate concept of self, abilities, post school training potential and future employment potential

#### CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS:

To provide effective classroom practices for students who are deaf-blind, the educators need to:

- Methods
  - Teach to each individual's unique learning style
  - Make use of other educators including specialists in meeting the needs of students who are deaf-blind
  - Provide a system of time organization such as daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly calendars with objects, pictures, and/or words
  - Give the student appropriate and frequent acknowledgment (e.g., verbal praise, a physical token system) when his or her behavior or responses are correct or incorrect and/or socially appropriate or inappropriate
  - Expect the student who is deaf-blind to follow the same rules of behavior that apply to other children in the classroom and when they are within the child's capacity to learn and understand
  - Be sensitive for the need to provide extra time for the child to respond, extra time for task completion, and provide an individualized pace for presentation of new information
  - Use individualized and multiple methods of communication including a variety of options to match the student's learning abilities (e.g., gestures, sign language, Braille, enlarged print, audiotapes, tactile sign language, technological devices, use of interpreters, etc.)
  - Check frequently to ensure the student is understanding the task and what is expected of him or her
  - Use, as needed, a high degree of repetition
  - Ensure consistency related to specifics of communication by all service providers
  - Ensure that each student is challenged and encouraged to perform and advance academically at his or her ability level
  - Provide new information in practical settings where the child will use the knowledge (cooking in the kitchen, walking the usual route to classes or to the bathroom, etc.)
  - Take into account the child's culture/ethnicity and adapt accordingly
  - Provide purposeful, intensive, structured learning experiences – it may be necessary to systematically teach each new concept and task
  - Provide opportunities for the student to review and successfully practice using new skills in a variety of settings
  - Accept and encourage the student's individual approach to learning (e.g., he or she may use the sense of touch before engaging the sense of sight or use several senses at the same time)
  - Expose student to new concepts and vocabulary before introducing to the large group
  - Use verbal, written, and/or physical prompts to initiate and to maintain work habits, knowing which prompt works best for each child
  - Use appropriate cues to help the student anticipate the next activities

- Provide the students with opportunities and materials that ensure he/she is an active participant in his/her daily routine (e.g., choice making, turn taking, problem solving, decision making)
- Individualize learning experiences to match the student's level of ability by modifying the content of the curriculum and/or making appropriate changes in the materials (e.g., enhancing the visual, auditory, or tactile information)
- Provide consistency and predictability in the daily activities of the child as a way of facilitating independence
- Facilitate activities that encourage peer interaction and friendship
- Set up activities that help the child adapt to events out of the routine and emergencies.
- Facilitate activities that teach and offer opportunities for peer interaction and friendships
- Use a high degree of "hands on", experiential learning
- Provide hand-over-hand assistance, verbal, and tactual cues only when necessary. Allow independence whenever possible
- Materials
  - Use real life materials to reinforce functional learning and provide the student with opportunities to make choices in his or her daily routine
  - Use specialized materials, equipment, and technology that allow the learner full access to classroom information that the child who is deaf-blind may not see or hear (e.g., amplification devices, low vision aids, Braillewriter, closed caption video/film, descriptive video, Braille, large print, sign language, interpreter, TDDs)
  - Provide tools for independent mobility, as required
- Environment
  - Ensure physical consistency of the environment by structuring the classroom to allow the learner safe movement (e.g., clear obstacles from travel pathways), maximized travel independence, and increased access to personal storage space and materials within the classroom (e.g., designated coat hook or locker, specific items are kept in the same place)
  - Ensure that the student is in a comfortable and supported position for learning tasks
  - Minimize auditory and visual distractions, and enhance the environment to optimize auditory and visual reception (e.g., attention to lighting, contrast, color, angle, and distance of materials, etc.)
  - Provide extra space for specialized materials available to the group and available only to the individual child
- Instructional Content
  - Teach communication throughout every activity and experience. Start simple and build to complex
  - Teach communication skills in the context of meaningful social and education activities by using alternative or assistive communication systems such as sign language, object or picture boards, adapted for each individual child
  - Teach adaptive living skills by means of functional practice within the setting where these skills normally occur
  - Provide for physical activity to promote fitness
  - Teach mobility skills by means of predictable routes with easily identified landmarks, possible use of equipment such as a long cane, etc.
  - Orient the student with the surroundings in any new setting
  - Provide support for learner to grieve for sensory losses, if the disability worsens suddenly or gradually
  - Provide opportunities for recreation and leisure time activities (at school, home and in the community)

- Provide opportunities to explore & learn about a variety of jobs and/or additional work skills
- Provide support for choosing a job and getting started
- Provide opportunities for retraining, if vision or hearing status changes with age

#### ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS:

In assessing the learning of students who are deafblind, educators need to:

- Develop an evaluation strategy based upon the educational concerns for the student, which may or may not involve the use of standardized test instruments
- Use a functional skill assessment (skills within natural context of learning and in a variety of situations)
- Eliminate inappropriate assessment items (those that are solely based on a visual and/or auditory response)
- Analyze test items to assess what skill or concept is actually being measured -then adapt activities and materials to assess these skills in a way that is appropriate for the child
- Modify materials and methods of the assessment procedures to meet the sensory and/or physical needs of the child without compromising the intent of the assessment task (for commercial, as well as teacher-made materials)
- Utilize a team approach of assessment and include individuals who are familiar with the student
- Conduct an assessment in multiple sessions and across a number of environmental settings such as the home, school, and places within the community
- Use ongoing observation to evaluate the child's proficiency
- Be sensitive to language and cultural implications of the assessment process and assessment materials
- Use extreme caution with the interpretation of assessment results (especially standardized tests) with learners who are deaf-blind
- Provide assessment materials in appropriate "literacy medium" such as Braille, large print, etc.
- Request and acknowledge family input into the assessment process by using parent interview and/or participation in the actual assessment process
- Take into consideration the influence of medication and medical condition(s) upon the child's behaviors, responses, and performance
- Allow more response time when presenting material and extra completion time for the task at hand
- Be aware of the size and contrast of the testing materials
- Become familiar with the child's preferred mode of receptive communication and communicate with the child in the most appropriate manner
- Acknowledge "subtle behavioral" changes as responses to the assessment item.
- Provide breaks for sensory and/or physical fatigue.
- Ensure comfortable and supported positioning during the assessment process

#### SERVICE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

For students who are deaf-blind to have adequate opportunities to learn, the schools need to:

- Provide a low student-to-teacher ratio. (e.g., the student may require one-to-one for some tasks)
- Use a team approach in all aspects of the child's programming which may include the following members: child, his/her family, interpreters, regular and special educators, orientation and mobility instructor, teachers of children with sensory impairment(s), communication specialist, physical therapists, occupational therapists, medical personnel, psychologist, paraprofessionals, social worker, rehabilitation counselors, employers, transition people, and other persons who are directly involved with the life of the child

- Collaborate with the student's family in all aspects of the child's educational programming
- Strive to ensure programmatic consistency between the child's home and school life
- Build in appropriate time for team meetings
- Consider a variety of service options to best meet the student's individual needs
- Examine the need for extended school day and/or extended school year
- Address medical needs during school placement hours and identify the personnel who will need to tend to these needs (e.g., medications, suctioning etc.)
- Employ co-teaching between special education and regular education teachers
- Use a supervised paraprofessional who has ongoing specialized training
- Provide a skilled interpreter, whenever appropriate, to the child in the classroom
- Access a source of Braille materials, as appropriate, for the child
- Provide families with information about deafblindness, related resources, educational options, and about the special education process and legal rights
- Commence transition planning for students entering adult life, at the recommended age of 14 years and earlier when appropriate –transition planning should include the family, school personnel, and appropriate rehabilitation personnel
- Provide training for parents to provide communication and use of skills at home
- Provide families and the individual with deaf-blindness with information on counseling and support resources, this is especially important for the individual who has a progressive or sudden hearing and/or vision loss
- Provide timely and thoughtful transition planning anytime there is a change in the child's program

## **E. Emotional Disability (ED) (Significant Identifiable Emotional Disability)**

### CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS:

- May exhibit pervasive sad affect, depression and feelings of worthlessness; cries suddenly or frequently
- May display unexpected and atypical affect for the situation
- May display excessive fear and anxiety
- May persist in physical complaints which are not due to a medical condition
- May exhibit withdrawal, avoidance of social interaction and/or lack of personal care to an extent that maintenance of satisfactory interpersonal relationships is prevented
- May appear out of touch with reality; have auditory and visual hallucinations, thought disorders, disorientation or delusions
- May have difficulty getting mind off certain thoughts or ideas; unable to keep self from engaging in repetitive and/or useless actions
- May display consistent pattern of aggression toward objects or persons to an extent that development or maintenance of satisfactory internal relationships is prevented
- May demonstrate pervasive oppositional, defiant or noncompliant responses
- May demonstrate significantly limited self-control, including an impaired ability to pay attention
- May exhibit persistent pattern of stealing, lying or cheating
- May demonstrate persistent patterns of bizarre and/or exaggerated behavior reactions to routine environments

### ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS FOR STUDENTS:

Students with Emotional Disabilities need to learn to:

- Understand and Maintain Physical Health
  - Know the effects of behavior on health in order to make healthy, personal choice
  - Know and understand the effects of nutrition and medication on managing behavior and emotional well-being
  - Know about the relationships between personal lifestyle choices and resulting diseases
  - Know about the use and abuse of medication, drugs, and alcohol
  - Learn the signs that indicate a need for seeking health care
- Develop Personal Responsibility
  - Learn strategies to prevent and respond to potentially harmful behaviors and situations
  - Learn and practice personal hygiene, promoting social acceptance and personal relationships.
  - Learn how to play an active and responsible role in determining the outcomes of events
  - Learn when it is necessary to comply with social expectations, and community norms and rules
- Develop Coping Skills
  - Learn a variety of strategies to plan, organize and manage daily routines & meet personal goals
  - Learn to identify and manage big and little stresses
  - Learn how to identify and deal with personal emotions and those of others
  - Learn strategies to cope with challenging people and situations
- Develop Problem Solving and Decision Making Strategies
  - Learn to define a problem and select a strategy from a variety of options
  - Learn and use a variety of strategies for solving problems and making decisions
  - Learn how to recognize when change is necessary
  - Learn strategies for handling change
- Self-Advocate
  - Know how to get community resources that provide support such as mental health, job and housing, and legal assistance
  - Learn strategies for asking for help and how to request the supports that you need
  - Learn personal strengths, weaknesses, needs, and abilities and how these relate to your daily functioning
  - Learn how to resolve issues of fairness and differing opinion with adults and peers
- Understand Human Behavior
  - Learn how to identify and manage feelings
  - Learn about the wide range of human social and sexual behavior
  - Learn how behavior is affected by cultural values and personal experiences such as parenting and upbringing
  - Learn to tolerate diversity in people and experience
  - Develop personal behavior management skills
  - Learn to identify the outcomes achieved by specific behaviors such as attention getting behaviors and the need to belong
  - Learn new behaviors which replace the ineffective ones and practice in a variety of settings
  - Learn to recognize situations and events that cause emotional or behavioral responses and develop ways to manage those responses
- Use Effective Student Behaviors
  - Learn to manage time and materials
  - Learn to work independently and as part of a team
  - Learn effective skills for interacting with adults as well as peers in social and academic settings

- Learn to recognize when you are getting nervous or anxious in academic and social settings and use effective coping strategies
- Demonstrate how managing time effectively, using organizational strategies, and other learning aids can increase your ability to focus on learning new skills
- Learn to recognize and accept authority
- Make and Keep Friends
  - Learn how to select, develop and maintain friends who support appropriate behavior
  - Learn how to resolve issues that occur as friendships grow
  - Learn to support appropriate behavior of your friends
  - Learn to separate personal needs and goals from those of a peer group and the skills for coping with peer pressure
  - Learn effective social skills
- Live Independently
  - Learn to set long and short term goals
  - Develop a specific career goal which matches with personal strengths and interests
  - Develop a system of supports for coping with life after high school

#### CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS:

To provide effective classroom practices to students with emotional disabilities, educators need to provide a safe, nurturing and accepting environment:

- Physical Environment
  - Arrange tables, desks, chairs, and work spaces so that the physical space suits the need of each student
  - Allow students whose activity levels are high to listen and do work in flexible seating arrangements (i.e., sitting on the floor, standing, using a table rather than a desk)
  - Create private spaces for students where they can withdraw from the group when they need to be alone
- Routines and Procedures
  - Encourage student input when creating classroom rules and procedures
  - Post rules and routines and adhere to them
  - Notify students whenever possible in advance when routines will be interrupted
  - Schedule activities, small and large group instruction, and other classes in such a way that the activity and attention spans of students are accommodated
  - Teach and review the routines and procedures that students need for transition from a variety of activities such as large to small group activities and from the classroom to the lunchroom
  - Create opportunities to practice routines and procedures
- Social Environment
  - Support failures as learning opportunities
  - Use humor with students
  - Provide students with opportunities to make choices and discuss the outcomes of those choices
  - Teach students to work and play with their peers through positive interactions
  - Model and reinforce appropriate social interactions with peers and adults
  - Encourage students to take responsibility for the classroom atmosphere and to improve it when it is unsatisfactory
  - Allow students time to evaluate their own interactions with others
  - Be able to recognize and admit mistakes
  - Establish a group identity for a class or class period by allowing everyone to play a critical role
  - Establish and maintain clear boundaries between adult and student

Help Students to Learn to Manage Their Own Behavior



- Classroom Management Systems
  - Set clear, concise and achievable standards for behavior in your classroom and make sure that students and their families know what the standards are
  - Use structure, consistency, reinforcement, feedback, consequences and cues to assist students to meet the standards
  - Understand that students have different abilities and modify your expectations based on those individual abilities
  - Use logical and natural consequences to help your students learn to manage their own behavior
  - Reinforce students to meet standards and encourage students who are less successful
  - Promote an atmosphere that respects students' feelings and abilities
  - Recognize when students are frustrated with an activity so that it can be modified
  - Address issues of fairness

#### Know and Use Effective Teaching Practices

- Practice Strategies
  - Provide feedback and encouragement as students try out new skills
  - Provide homework that students have the ability to complete
  - Provide opportunities for students to role-play and practice interpersonal skills
  - Provide ongoing feedback to students
  - Provide practice of new skills in a variety of environments
- Instructional Strategies
  - Use a variety of age appropriate activities, methods and materials when teaching
  - Create simulations or provide hands on experiences that help students understand a new concept
  - Encourage students to try new ideas, ask questions, and risk failure
  - Use examples from your students' lives to teach concepts
  - Review daily what has been taught
  - Provide opportunity for cooperative learning
  - Incorporate social skills and life skills throughout the curriculum
- Crisis Management
  - Plan for potential crisis situations that include necessary building staff.
  - Provide a variety of options for students in crisis and reinforce their use (i.e., voluntary time out, going to the counselor, principal)
  - Teach students in non-crisis times to use options
  - Learn to recognize a crisis, when to ask for assistance, and when to follow the crisis procedures
- Individualizing Discipline Procedures
  - Write individual plans and evaluate their effectiveness regularly
  - Involve students, their families and other school professionals in developing an individual behavior support plan
  - Balance proactive with reactive strategies and consider students' strengths and needs when writing behavior plans

#### ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS:

In assessing the learning of students with emotional disabilities, educators need to:

- Consider Evaluation Methods

- Use a variety of ways to test for knowledge including verbal responses, portfolios, shortened tests, open book tests, self-evaluation, illustrations, computers and peer evaluation
- Develop the criteria on which students will be evaluated and provide those criteria to students at the beginning of a unit or class
- Include teachers, parents, peers, and other significant people in the students' lives in evaluating how the students are doing in using both academic and social skills
- Assess students' knowledge when they are in a non-agitated, non-crisis mode
- Allow students to use alternative environments, move around or change seats during testing, or complete testing at a later time if that may improve performance
- Critique works in progress and provide a series of tests over time so that the student receives useful feedback
- Provide students with information on performance relative to themselves and their peers
- Provide opportunity to retake test or redo lessons using feedback from the first attempt
- Consider Environmental Modifications
  - Provide people and/or technology as support (i.e., tape recorders, scribes, readers, and computers)
  - Be flexible in choosing the environments in which assessment takes place (i.e., secluded area)
  - Make time adjustments when needed that allow for extra time, shorter time frames or varied time of day
  - Be flexible in methods of testing such as written or verbal
  - Match written test design to students' strengths (i.e., multiple choice, fill-in the blank, true-false, essay, matching)
- Include Opportunities for Demonstrations
  - Create situations where students exhibit their skill acquisition and evaluate their performance
  - Evaluate the student's problem solving process as well as the end product
  - Use portfolios that show examples of work from the beginning to the end of a unit or class
  - Allow for group presentations
  - Assess students in real life situations and evaluate their use of skills (i.e., behaving in social settings, relationships with others in personal and community settings)

#### SERVICE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

For students with emotional disabilities to have adequate opportunities to learn, schools need to:

- Assure that each student has access to an adult in the building to build a trusting relationship
- Provide opportunities for collaborative co-teaching to occur between mental health faculty, special educators, and general educators through common planning times, flexible scheduling, team meetings, and shared professional development
- Use community resources such as recreation facilities, clubs, and other experiential education activities to augment the school curriculum
- Coordinate with other human service agencies to ensure that the mental health, social and legal needs of students is met
- Provide a variety of career and work opportunities and the necessary supports so that students will graduate from school and support themselves through work
- Provide off-campus learning opportunities such as job sites in the community, job shadowing, service projects, and experiential/outdoor education
- Work with families to involve them in their student's education through a variety of means including the use of conferences, telephone calls, voice mail, computers, regular written logs and home visits

- Work with families to assist in providing parenting skills, understanding their child's unique needs, understanding legal issues which relate to their children, and accessing community resources
- Provide students with opportunities for support in crisis including access to a supportive adult, counseling and support groups
- Provide students with the opportunity to remove themselves from the classroom setting when their emotional or behavioral needs indicate a need for a physical change
- Allow for flexibility in scheduling including adjusting start and finish times to the school day, class scheduling, use of breaks, involvement in community activities, and alternative course options
- Consider student-teacher ratios in programming for students with social and behavioral needs which accounts for the need for individual and small group instruction and behavior and classroom management
- Provide staff development and continued support to assist personnel in understanding and working with students with significant social, emotional and behavioral needs
- Provide critical information regarding behavior issues to appropriate school personnel

## **F. Learning Disabilities (LD) (Perceptual/Communicative Disability)**

### CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS:

- Students with learning disabilities often tell us things like:
  - “It’s just harder for me to learn than for the other kids.”
  - “I feel frustrated when I can’t do it.”
  - “Sometimes I don’t feel very smart.”
- Teachers often say things like this about students with learning disabilities:
  - “I know she’s bright, but she can’t perform tasks that other students can. She has so much trouble reading (or writing, or doing math).”
  - “He’s so disorganized, nothing ever gets done.”
- Parents may tell us things like:
  - “She doesn’t have many friends.”
  - “He doesn’t like school.”
  - “She’s just slower than her younger sister.”
  - “He’s just not motivated.”
- Research and experience tell us:
  - Students with learning disabilities:
    - Are capable of learning and can be productive, participatory students and citizens
    - Form a heterogeneous group with a wide range of skills, talents and needs
    - May experience difficulty learning throughout their lives
    - Learning disabilities are related to differences in central nervous system functioning which affect perception and language and cognitive processing. This leads to difficulty acquiring academic and social skills. As a result students may be less actively involved in learning and may be less efficient learners.
  - Students with learning disabilities may experience difficulty:
    - Developing effective social skills
    - Acquiring academic skills
    - Applying what they’ve learned
    - Making appropriate decisions
    - Expressing themselves and understanding others
    - Remembering information
    - Utilizing effective, efficient learning strategies

- Learning disabilities are not caused by mental retardation, emotional disturbance, sensory impairments, or other disabilities

#### ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS FOR STUDENTS:

Students with learning disabilities need to learn:

- The essential, component skills necessary to learn to read, write and do mathematics
- The skills of reading, writing, speaking/listening and mathematics are essential learnings for students with learning disabilities and are inherent to the acquisition of all other learning - the development of these skills are ongoing and should be incorporated across content and grade levels
- Essential, component skills for reading that may prove difficult for students with learning disabilities include:
  - decoding skills
  - vocabulary skills
  - accessing essential background knowledge
  - comprehension skills
  - summarization
  - self-monitoring for accuracy and comprehension
- Essential, component skills for writing that may prove difficult for students with learning disabilities include:
  - development of ideas
  - retrieval of background information
  - organization for and of writing
  - sentence formulation
  - mechanics and spelling accuracy
  - penmanship
  - self-monitoring of writing process
- Essential, component skills for mathematics that may prove difficult for students with learning disabilities include:
  - understanding the language of math
  - understanding and applying math concepts
  - fluency and automaticity in using math facts and procedures
- Effective techniques, strategies and tools to compensate for their learning difficulties:
  - Memory strategies
  - Study strategies
  - Listening strategies
  - Attending strategies
  - Computers and calculators
  - Manipulatives
  - Multi-sensory strategies for perceptual deficits
- The self-management skills necessary to control their learning, their behavior and their lives.
  - Self-monitoring techniques
  - Time-management techniques
  - Effective organizational strategies
  - Long and short term goal setting techniques
  - Coping/stress management techniques
  - Conceptual maps and notebooks, clear assignment sheet for grades
- The social skills necessary for successful interpersonal relationships.
  - Initiating and maintaining conversations
  - Cooperating with peers and adults
  - Interpreting verbal and nonverbal cues

- Resolving conflicts through positive and socially acceptable methods
- Identifying and using various roles appropriately in the family, community and school
- The skills necessary to be an effective self-advocate.
  - An understanding of their own personal strengths, skills and needs
  - The ability to build on and develop strengths and talents
  - The reasons for personal success and failure, including understanding the positive results of persistence
  - Negotiation skills
  - The ability to seek assistance, including knowing when, where, & what to ask of whom
- The problem solving techniques to respond flexibly in various situations.
  - Decision-making
  - Critical thinking
  - Awareness and knowledge of cause and effect
  - Determining appropriateness of risk taking
- Practical life skills necessary to function effectively and with satisfaction at home and in the community.
  - Maintaining health and hygiene
  - Developing leisure activities
  - Managing personal finances
  - Choosing and maintaining appropriate living arrangements
- Career development skills to make and pursue appropriate personal employment choices.
  - Behaviors necessary for successful employment and training
  - Awareness of career interests and aptitudes
  - Skills for considering and pursuing future education and training options
  - The specific skills necessary to obtain and maintain targeted employment when needed
- Language skills necessary to adequately express themselves and understand others.
  - Vocabulary
  - Grammar
  - Pragmatics

#### CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS:

To provide effective classroom practices to students with learning disabilities, educators need to:

- Teach using effective instructional strategies
  - Present the same information and directions through various modalities
  - Utilize materials such as charts, maps, tapes, overheads, flannel boards, chalk boards, VCRs, video cameras, and hands-on materials to present information
  - Color code written material provided to students when appropriate - for example, all information that needs to go home could be on yellow paper, all science material could be on blue paper, the student can edit or highlight with different colors, or written directions can be consistently highlighted in the same color
  - Give directions in both oral and written formats - written directions may be on the chalkboard, on the overhead, on chart paper, or on handouts or outlines
  - Provide opportunities for active learning
  - Provide a variety of experiential activities such as math manipulatives, music and physical movement, role playing, science experiments
  - Provide opportunities for students to have frequent, short exchange of ideas and information with each other
  - Present challenging, relevant problems to students to solve
  - Establish relevance so the student can relate learning to real life experiences
  - Provide opportunities for community members to work with students to enhance the relevancy of the skills being taught
  - Provide opportunities for students to learn and apply skills outside the school setting

- Provide outlines, study guides, and graphic organizers prior to and during instruction.
- Have visual charts and diagrams to help students see relationships between and among concepts
- Help students learn to develop their own visual organizers
- Modify assignments and tests when appropriate.
- Provide: a) alternative assignments, b) shortened assignments, c) alternative resources (large print books, reading materials on tape, calculators, alphabet strips, Franklin spelling devices) and d) worksheets with clear and limited print e) simplified language
- Give students more time and support to process information
- Allow extra time for students to answer oral questions or opportunities to “pass” and answer later
- Provide quiet time and/or extra time to facilitate the processing of new information
- Ask students to repeat or rephrase directions
- Redefine terms or rephrase information to facilitate student understanding
- Thoughtfully and deliberately select and use specific instructional methods for students needing alternative approaches to develop essential reading, writing and mathematics skills
- Select from a variety of approaches so that the instruction matches student’s learning style and needs
- Select from a variety of approaches including direct, explicit instruction and exploratory, discovery activities as determined by student need and task constraints
- Select from a variety of approaches including multi-sensory phonetic, linguistic, and whole language to teach language skills
- Check frequently to ascertain student understanding.
- Have students paraphrase or put information in their own words
- Have students use hand signals to indicate whether they are with you or not (thumbs up, “yes”, thumbs down, “no”)
- Use frequent, short quizzes
  
- Establish supportive classroom environments
  - Group and regroup students using a variety of arrangements
  - Group and regroup students by multi-age, ability and mixed ability levels, learning styles, and cooperative learning
  - Provide small group or one-on-one instruction
  - Arrange the classroom so there are quiet places and social places
  - Provide areas in the classroom for students to be away from others (a study carrel, sofa, bean bag, or desk which is separated from the other desks)
  - Provide seating arrangements and activities to facilitate development of social skills
  - Establish and communicate high, yet realistic and specific expectations for performance
  - Provide opportunities for learning from errors and for overlearning through review, repetition, drill and practice, direct instruction
  - Provide grading criteria prior to student beginning a project so student knows what is expected of him/her
  - Consistently and positively reinforce students when they meet the expectations
  - Consistently provide immediate and informative feedback on student performance when appropriate
  - Allow opportunities for the student to monitor, evaluate and describe to others his/her own progress and record growth and changes on graphs, learning or behavior contracts, or incentive
  - Charts

- Provide ongoing home-school communication about student progress, resources for appropriate emotional and academic support, and appropriate way parents can help students
- Establish and follow classroom routines
- Teach with enthusiasm
- Provide frequent opportunities for student success and acknowledge the strengths and positive aspects of students' work and behavior.
- Provide opportunities for enriching, challenging work in strength areas
- Assist students in understanding and using their strengths and talents
- Assist students to understand and explain to others their learning strengths and needs
- Deliberately focus instruction on what students need to learn
  - Identify and focus on the most important information/concepts of the curriculum
  - Develop a master list of essential information to be learned for each class, unit, or subject area and teach it
  - Model and provide guided practice of material presented in class before expecting the student to practice on his/her own
  - Teach concepts in several different ways to facilitate student's application to several different situations
  - Make sure that the important terminology is clear
  - Provide direct, explicit instruction in essential vocabulary
  - Teach procedural terms as well as subject and concept vocabulary
  - Develop students' thinking skills.
  - Provide direct instruction, modeling and practice to develop problem solving and decision making skills
  - Plan activities that require students to remember facts, understand information, apply learned information, synthesize information, analyze information, and evaluate information
  - Teach specific skills necessary to be a successful student and learner
  - Provide instruction, modeling and practice in listening, speaking, and attending
  - Provide instruction, modeling, and practice in memorization strategies such as clustering and mnemonic devices
  - Provide instruction, modeling and practice in self-monitoring and regulation skills
  - Teach the skills necessary to be successful in cooperative learning activities in which each student is responsible for decision making, responsibility, and sharing his/her portion of the work
  - Provide and teach the students to use learning aids and technology
  - Alphabet strips, number lines, Franklin spelling devices, calculators, word processing, computer-aided instruction, tape recorder, amplification devices, and spell checkers when appropriate
  - Teach career related skills.
  - Provide career awareness, exploration, choice and preparation experiences as part of various thematic units

#### ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS:

In assessing the learning of students with learning disabilities, educators need to:

- Consider the following factors in the development, norming and standardization of tests used to determine whether students meet a standard:
  - Alternative assessment methods specific to individual strengths and needs (i.e., portfolios, paper-pencil tests, demonstrations, interactive computer presentations)

- Language and readability levels (i.e., simple instructions with controlled vocabulary and short, declarative statements are most easily understood)
- Test format
- Variety of question formats (multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching, etc.)
- Computerized presentation versus paper-pencil tasks
- Enlarged print as appropriate
- White space on paper to provide organizational cues, work space for problem-solving and assist in visual tracking
- Assessment of a range of thinking skills (for instance, representative of a hierarchical taxonomy, i.e., Bloom's).
- Test design to allow for various response methods
- Untimed administration
- Expression of learning through oral, written and graphic/pictorial responses
- Oral versus written responses
- Short and long forms of the test
- Score is based on content mastery rather than quality of written response (i.e., avoid grading content acquisition based on grammatical structure, spelling, neatness)
- Consider the following in administering standards-based assessments:
  - Provide for technological accommodations for student responses
  - Computer access, calculator, tape recorder, an extra copy of the test (to mark or write on), etc.
  - Provide individuals with procedural accommodations
  - Readers, writers for oral responses,
  - Extra paper for making notes,
  - Extended time
  - More than one opportunity to take the test
  - People to supervise procedural changes, i.e., when the time allowed for taking the test is extended, when the test is administered a second time, when taped administration/ responses are to be used
  - Provide for environmental accommodations
  - Preferential seating based on specific needs (seating away from windows or hall noise)
  - Control for distractions (separate room or smaller room rather than a large group setting)
- Consider the following for classroom assessments of standards
  - Teacher observation across time and settings
  - Anecdotal records
  - Student self-assessment
  - Mastery of skills related to 'essential learnings'
  - Hands-on performance
  - Demonstration of learnings (written, oral, projects, visual arts, performing arts)
  - Interviews of students
  - Assessments of developmental milestones for age appropriate skills
  - Social skills assessment
  - Reports/observations from internships and vocational experiences
  - Products from cooperative groups
  - Grading assessments using alternative grading methods

#### SERVICE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

For students with learning disabilities to have adequate opportunities to learn, schools need to:

- Provide staff development and follow-up activities to assist staff in working with students with learning disabilities
- Provide trained staff to help students acquire communication skills, motor skills, social skills, academic skills, and affective skills



- Support collaboration between special educators and classroom teachers by establishing common planning time, flexible scheduling, and team meetings
- Utilize teams (including parents, teachers, students, and agencies) to problem-solve and determine appropriate and timely interventions for students experiencing difficulties
- Adjust student-teacher ratios to allow for effective instruction, frequent student feedback, opportunities for individual instruction, and effective classroom management
- Provide opportunities for students to receive direct instruction in small group and individual settings—in or outside the regular classroom—to address student needs
- Provide alternative scheduling options for students
- Enhance the learning environment through the use of current technologies and multimedia equipment to compensate for students' learning differences
- Provide planning and instruction for students' post secondary goals
- Collaborate with parents and families to gain mutual understanding of their child's needs and strengths
- Provide opportunities for students to help other students
- Help parents and students explore community resources to provide experiences for students to participate in community groups and activities
- Collaborate with community agencies to help students, preschool – 12<sup>th</sup> grade, attain the skills needed for educational success and independent living

## **G. Physical Disabilities**

### CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS:

- General Characteristics
  - Difficulty with fine/gross motor skills
  - Possible lack of independent mobility
  - Difficulty with activities of daily living
  - Possible communication difficulty (written, verbal, non-verbal)
  - Fatigue
  - Frequent medical and educational interruptions or interventions
  - Families with extra ongoing responsibilities
- General Needs
  - Special seating, positioning, lifting, transporting (self and materials)
  - Adaptive equipment/assistive technology
  - Physical assistance
  - Adaptive communication
  - Specially trained staff
  - Flexible scheduling including allowance for extra time for mobility
  - Environmental considerations
  - Provisioning of materials – ex. 2<sup>nd</sup> set of books at home
  - Access to building/classroom(s), school grounds
  - Mobility training
  - Liaison between school, home, community, health care provider

### ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS FOR STUDENTS:

Students with physical disabilities need to learn:

- Skills to help manage their environment and decrease their real and perceived dependence
- Different ways to communicate verbally, non-verbally and in written language in order to facilitate effective interactions with others

- Skills to accomplish maximum independence in activities of daily living, transportation, health, safety and accessing services to compensate for physical limitations
- How to safely use special equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, adapted book holder, communication devices, etc. to maximize abilities and mobility
- How to effectively build friendships to facilitate positive socialization due to physical dependence
- Skills to realistically explore and prepare for meaningful employment choices
- Effective skills for requesting assistance to accomplish personal goals in a socially constructive manner
- Adaptive strategies to enable participation in physical and leisure activities to improve muscular control, socialization and life-long leisure skills

#### CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS:

To provide effective classroom practices for students who have physical disabilities, educators need to:

- Make available and provide the opportunity to safely use adaptive (special) equipment and assistive technology such as computers, videos, books-on-tape or special air filters
- Allow for additional time to complete educational activities, activities of daily living and specific health procedures
- Provide an accessible environment with adequate space available for movement and equipment
- Modify curriculum and performance criteria
- Assure proper positioning for learning and testing
- Modify written expectations
- Provide smaller groupings to promote peer interactions, master skills and sensitize others to special needs
- Allow for flexible scheduling, shortened day or lengthened day (ex. PT after school hrs.)
- Provide opportunities to explore, try out meaningful jobs and activities
- Provide opportunities to explore or participate in leisure activities
- Adapt homework assignments to accommodate physical abilities
- Differentiate between drill & practice vs. new learning

#### ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS:

In assessing the learning of students who have physical disabilities, educators need to:

- Allow for use of augmentative devices or assistive technology
- Use parent, teacher, support staff, student and peer observations, evaluations and checklists to gain understanding of student's current level of proficiency
- Allow for additional time to complete assessments
- Allow for demonstration of learning in a variety of familiar settings
- Allow for alternative test forms such as taped, verbal or scribed responses and reduced number of test items
- Allow for "hands on" assessment for activities of daily living in settings where it actually occurs
- Use a portfolio of work that may include audio or video tapes
- Allow for group or alternative projects
- Provide adaptive P.E. assessment
- Schedule assessments with consideration for learning/medical needs

#### SERVICE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

For students who have physical disabilities to have adequate opportunities to learn, schools need to:

- Provide well trained personnel to:

- Safely assist with/provide daily living skills
- Provide and/or delegate, teach and monitor health care procedures
- Provide alternate educational strategies
- Develop Health Care Plans when appropriate
- Provide transition planning – multidisciplinary and ongoing with parent input
- Ensure collaboration of student, parent, school, community agencies to procure necessary augmentative and medical equipment and supplies
- Provide liaison between school, home, community and health care provider
- Offer support for maximum appropriate participation with typical peers (may include team teaching and/or support personnel)
- Facilitate business-community-school partnerships to assist in the preparation for employment related and daily living skills
- Provide direct instruction for use of assistive technology by student and staff
- Offer student assistance teams (CST) for providing support and strategies to teachers
- Facilitate interagency coordination to develop a system of community support for the student
- Provide opportunity for academic support

## **H. Significant Cognitive Challenges**

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS:**

Characteristics of learning which appear to be common for students with significant cognitive challenges include specific learning traits which require more direct and intentional strategies, and provide multiple opportunities for practice in a variety of learning environments. Certainly all students with cognitive challenges do not exhibit the same combination of learning traits nor to the same degree. In addition, characteristics may vary within a particular child at different ages. Through an understanding of the unique learning characteristics of each student, curriculum can be selected and instruction designed to maximize learning opportunities throughout the day. Opportunities must be present for direct instruction, ways in which to compensate for skills with which the student may currently be struggling, and functional, life skills practiced in “real world”, natural environments. The intent of instruction must focus on recognition that certain approaches may provide better learning opportunities for some students than for others. The goal is to build on individual strengths and aptitudes, while providing support in areas of need. Each student with cognitive challenges must be supported in a manner which facilitates development of new skills and abilities which result in participation in an ever changing world. One key aspect of supporting learning for students with cognitive challenges is a sense of belonging. The student must feel that she/he is accepted by a peer group, recognize that acceptance, and choose to see him/herself as a full participating member of that group, wherever that group functions, be it home, school or community.

### **ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS FOR STUDENTS:**

Students with Significant Cognitive Challenges need to learn:

- Skills for age appropriate participation in school/community activities including:
  - Making transitions from one activity/person/situation/environment to another
  - Functioning independently and interdependently with relevant others in a variety of environments/activities
  - Solving problems by making decisions
  - Self-initiating (start independently) communication
  - Self-initiating activities of the student’s choosing and those required by the routines of school, home and community life
  - Managing time and schedules

- Being aware of one's own behavior, needs and feelings (by using self-monitoring strategies, as necessary)
- Setting goals, making plans to achieve goals and evaluating progress toward goals (i.e., self-determination skills)
- Advocating for one's self
- Establishing work related skills and habits to be successful in chosen careers
- Developing job skills required for specific employment opportunities
- Communication skills for contributing and responding including:
  - Expressing needs, wants, feelings and information
  - When needed, using alternative communication systems and/or modalities to effectively communicate
  - Understanding others' messages as demonstrated by: the ability to follow directions, acknowledge and honor others' statements of needs, wants, feelings, understand and use information provided by others
  - Gain and maintain attention and end interactions in an appropriate fashion
- Interaction skills for establishing and maintaining relationships including:
  - Demonstrating socially acceptable behavior in a variety of school, home and community settings
  - Using conflict management techniques to manage stress, frustration and anger in social situations
  - Initiating social amenities (i.e., greetings, being helpful, follow expected social interaction patterns)
  - Developing a repertoire of interests, abilities and leisure skills which provide opportunities for interactions with others

#### CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS:

To provide effective classroom practices for students with significant cognitive challenges, educators need to:

- Create instructional environments to meet individual student needs and encourage active participation of all students, including:
  - Instruction provided in multiple natural, age appropriate, school and community environments
  - Utilization of a variety of people to support the student
  - Insuring the building, classrooms and other school settings allow access to learning for all students
  - Extending time to participate in and/or complete activities
  - Assuring availability of age-appropriate/functional instructional materials
  - Creating environments and schedules that are comfortable, predictable and safe for the student and that allow for flexibility in physical positioning
  - Creating space in classrooms to support active participation of all learners in small group activities/centers
- Provide a variety of instructional opportunities/methods to meet students' unique needs, including:
  - Activities that foster interdependence among all students
  - Role playing, experiential learning, activity based instruction
  - Varied methods to accommodate individual learning styles
  - Opportunities for learning and practice in large group, small group and individualized situations
  - Classroom learning linked with home and community
  - Opportunities for a career awareness/exploration, development and real work experiences across all age levels
  - Activities designed to allow practice of functional communication skills

- Opportunities for direct/intentional instruction and practice
- Use of positive reinforcement/feedback by all people involved with the student
- Instruction on identifying and responding to natural cues
- Activities designed to build on student's strengths
- Support optimal development and implementation of individualized education programs by:
  - Empowering the IEP Team, including the student and his/her family, to identify and prioritize educational goals/objectives that are most meaningful for the student's current and future life
  - Individualizing curriculum to meet the educational needs of the student by adapting or modifying assessment, instruction and performance expectations and/or providing additional supports required by the student to participate, learn and demonstrate knowledge
  - Developing and using behavioral plans based on identification of motivation for behavior (as needed)
  - Incorporating related services and supports into natural settings (including general education classes)
  - Teaming to solve problems and celebrate successes by regular/special educators/students/families and other IEP Team members
  - Developing an array of supports for general educators and typical peers active in supporting the learner
  - Creating collaborative partnerships with parents
  - Establishing a mechanism for peer review (including feedback and suggestions from all members of the IEP Team)
  - Sharing information among all individuals who know the student to identify individualized learner outcomes
  - Providing ongoing opportunities for professional development.

#### ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS:

In assessing the learning of students with significant cognitive challenges, educators need to:

- Design assessments that evaluate a variety of types of information, including:
  - Student's skills, abilities and interests
  - Student's preferred learning styles and/or environments
  - Level of assistance required for success
  - On-going student progress
  - Information for program planning and revision
- Offer assessments that are designed to allow the student to demonstrate his/her best level of performance.
- Select a variety of assessment methods, depending on the purpose of the assessment and the needs and preferences of the student. Options include:
  - Conduct assessments in natural environments
  - Collect information in varying ways (i.e., teacher observation/report; review of student history and previous assessment information; video tape student activities for review by one or more service providers; self-report, etc.)
  - Utilize a variety of people to construct, conduct and interpret assessments (parents, friends, employers, etc.)
  - Limit sensory stimulation if necessary
  - Present information and allow responses in ways that match the student's preferred learning style and mode of communication
  - Utilize portfolios—accumulate examples of work, projects, video tapes, etc. which show student progress.

## SERVICE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

For students with significant cognitive challenges to have adequate opportunities to learn, schools need to:

- Ensure that the district philosophy/vision includes statements which support all children having the same rights, choices and opportunities within their neighborhood/community such as the following:
  - All students can learn
  - Families are partners in the educational experience
  - Learning in the classroom extends to the school, home and general community
  - The appreciation of diversity is evident in all school activities
  - All students are included as members of their appropriate grade level class and benefit from learning together with appropriate supports and services
  - Encouraging schools to be caring communities which foster peer relationships and friendships
  - Students are served in their neighborhood schools or as close to home as possible with involvement of the neighborhood school
- Encourage and actively support the use of a variety of instructional methods as evidenced by:
  - Devotion of resources to support instructional personnel in using expanded teaching strategies which include experiential learning, curricular modification/adaptation, cooperative learning, co teaching/team teaching, technology-based strategies, use of peers for instruction/support and other alternative learning methods
  - Support and encouragement for the use of multiple forms of performance based assessment and accommodation strategies
  - Effective teaming practices for developing meaningful IEPs and instructional programming based on individual needs but reflective of District content standards
  - Availability of training for students in the development of skills relating to friendships and effective student relationships
  - Service providers performing in a transdisciplinary manner and related services infused throughout the student's school day
- Support collaboration between team members, family members, the community and other agencies as evidenced by:
  - Ongoing activities occurring between educators and families to facilitate shared understanding of all student needs
  - Flexible instructional options jointly provided in various environments by regular and special education which demonstrate the use of shared resources and which require the sharing of information across grade levels/buildings
  - Systems created which facilitate shared planning time, training, scheduling of meetings, etc. with all educational team members including families and which allow for the sharing of staff/family expertise across and outside of the District
  - Options available for addressing students' transportation needs and for providing access to extra-curricular activities
  - Opportunities provided for teachers/families to jointly observe other programs
  - Opportunities available for educators to develop mentoring relationships
  - IEPs developed reflect effective teams which include students (when appropriate) and families in the process

## **I. Speech/Language Disabilities**

### CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS:

- In general, speech/language disabilities may:

- Interfere with ability to communicate with friends, teachers, family members, and people in the community
- Interfere with learning in school and the community
- Interfere with the student's ability to progress in school
- Interfere with ability to understand and process information
- Lead to students needing more time to respond
- Lead to students requiring strategies to improve processing and expressive organizational skills
- Lead to students exhibiting behavior difficulties as a result of poor communication skills
- Make social communication difficult
- Students with language disabilities may:
  - Have limited speaking vocabulary
  - Use sentences which are grammatically incorrect when speaking or writing
  - Speak or write only in short simple sentences
  - Use incomplete sentences or thoughts when speaking or writing
  - Misunderstand or use questions inappropriately when speaking or in writing
  - Have difficulty:
    - Understanding and responding to oral and written questions
    - Following oral and written directions that have not been broken down into small, sequential units, taking class notes, conveying messages, copying information from the blackboard, or writing to dictation
    - Remembering and following directions, memorizing information, or recalling and making associations with previously learned information,
    - Understanding and explaining similarities and differences,
    - Understanding concepts involving time, space, quantity, quality, and directions giving location
    - Understanding, explaining, or interpreting what's wrong with a picture or a sentence
    - Solving math word problems or understanding math vocabulary.
    - Understanding what he/she reads
    - Understanding and using words with the same meaning, words with opposite
    - Meanings, words that sound the same with different meanings, comparisons, and multiple-meaning words
    - Understanding idioms, (e.g., "It's raining cats and dogs.")
    - Understanding the meaning of words which indicate a question
    - Describing objects or events
- Students with difficulty with pragmatic/social language skills may have difficulty:
  - Understanding and using spoken and/or nonverbal language
  - Providing reasonable or logical responses to questions
  - Understanding humor, sarcasm, inference
  - Inferring and predicting
  - Asking for help, clarification, or additional information
  - Understanding that what happens provides a result
  - Beginning a conversation, keeping a conversation going, ending a conversation
  - Using information learned in one setting in a different situation
  - Pretending, role-playing, imagining
  - Being spontaneous or original producing information
  - Understanding and using polite or formal language forms including giving greetings and good-byes, requesting, etc.

- Using a variety of sentence forms in social/verbal interactions
- Giving an immediate response
- Give a response that is off-topic or socially inappropriate
- Students with speech difficulties may:
  - Exhibit fluency disorders such as sound or whole word repetitions, hesitating or blocking the flow of a sentence, substituting another word for the expected word, or weaving “ah”, “uhm”, the repetitive use of “like” into oral expression
  - Show tension, i.e. tightness in the neck or face muscles or other physical signs of stress
  - Show interruptions/tension(s) that interfere with daily communication and cause negative reactions from the listener
  - Show signs of frustration
  - Be fearful, be anxious or avoid speaking situations
  - Use unusual word substitutions in an avoidance attempt
  - Demonstrate inadequate breath support
- Students with voice disorders may:
  - Have a voice quality that sounds different from other students of the same age/sex
  - Avoid speaking or exhibit a speech volume that is too loud or too soft
  - Have a voice pitch that is too high or too low
  - Exhibit limited inflection or speak in a monotone
  - Have a medically diagnosed condition
  - Demonstrate inadequate/abnormal breath support patterns
- Students with articulation difficulties may:
  - Substitute one or more sound(s) for another sound(s)
  - Omit a sound(s) in a word(s) or put an extra sound(s) in a word(s)
  - Distort or mispronounce words or sounds
  - Have difficulty imitating speech sounds
  - Show signs of frustration when misunderstood
  - Have difficulty putting speech sounds and syllables in correct order
  - Speak too fast or too slow
  - Have difficulty hearing the difference between speech sounds
  - Have difficulty coordinating the structures and muscles of the mouth

#### ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS FOR STUDENTS:

Students with speech/language disabilities need to learn:

- Language
  - Strategies to expand the student’s understanding and use of vocabulary
  - Strategies to understand and use concepts like direction/position, shape, texture, amount/size, etc.
  - Strategies to understand and problem solve which may include identifying a problem, recognizing causes and possible solutions and what effect they have, planning, making changes to a plan when necessary
  - Strategies to express thoughts and ask questions in complete sentences, in oral and written form, using appropriate syntax/grammar
  - Strategies to help the learner understand when they need assistance
  - Strategies to increase the number of words used to express a thought
- Social Language
  - Strategies for talking to others in a variety of settings and situations with peers and/or adults, individually and in groups. Talking with others involves a variety of skills – in a conversation a learner must be able to begin, join, continue, and end a conversation, interrupt appropriately, greet others, give their feelings and opinions, give enough information for a listener to understand, take turns, etc.
  - Strategies for asking and answering questions



- Strategies for requesting help when needed
- Strategies for using and understanding body language – body posture, eye contact, personal space, gestures, facial expressions
- Auditory Listening Skills
  - Strategies to listen to and respond accurately to auditory directions
  - Strategies to listen to and recognize different and similar sounds
  - Strategies to listen and respond to sounds in daily life
  - Strategies to improve short term auditory memory and long term retention skills
- Articulation/Correct Production of Speech Sounds
  - Strategies for recognizing differences between sounds
  - Strategies for using correct speech sounds in words, phrases, reading and conversations
  - Strategies for using the best speech possible when there are physical or coordination limitations
  - Strategies for ways to help the listener understand when speech is unclear
- Assistive Technology
  - Strategies for the learner to use their assistive technology to help them communicate and be more independent in their home, school and community. Strategies include both teaching the learner how the technology works as well as how to use it to interact in a number of situations
- Fluency (Stuttering)
  - Strategies to reduce the number of disruptions and the severity of dysfluent speech
  - Strategies to help the learner and others to understand the disorder
  - Strategies to help the learner teach others how to help him/her
- Voice
  - Strategies to produce the best quality voice possible so that it is not distracting to the listener
  - Strategies to use appropriate loudness levels for the situation
  - Strategies to modify vocal patterns and breath control, in order to avoid vocal chord abuse
  - Strategies to recognize vocal changes and to inform a responsible adult if the changes are associated with discomfort or pain

#### CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS:

To provide effective classroom practices for students with speech/language disabilities, educators need to:

- Focus on speaking skills/communication
  - Be a good speech, language, and behavioral role model
  - Use a multi-sensory approach when teaching so that students with different learning styles can benefit from auditory, visual, and kinesthetic stimulation
  - Use alternate modes of communication: Be sure that all forms of communication are encouraged. Students may use other ways to communicate such as gestures, communication boards (which may have letters and/or pictures or objects on them), an electronic device, computer, a switch, sign language, and so on - include these students in all activities and encourage their communication.
  - Provide extra time for the student
  - Respond (may need extra processing time) and complete their thoughts
  - Provide extra time for task completion
  - Provide a slower pace for presentation of new information (as the student requires)
  - Provide playing experiences
  - Encourage role playing where the student can be a speaker, listener, and person older and/or younger than themselves
  - Support learning refusal skills

- Support social situations – focus on taking turns, changing topics, beginning a conversation, ending a conversation, continuing a topic, etc.
- Conduct mock interviews
- Structure classroom activities/assignments so that multiple kinds of communication (e.g., discussion, asking questions, requesting, summarizing, commenting, describing reporting) is encouraged in an accepting and comfortable environment.
- Provide students with idea starters, story starters, fill-in-the-blank ideas, picture cues or actual objects (as you would with written language) to help with oral language, conversations and oral presentations.
- Provide students with opportunities to make choices and to learn from them.
- Call attention to specific sounds or sentence patterns in their speech that the child needs to work on by signaling that they used the sound, emphasizing it in their speech, underlining in printed material.
- Share humor with students and help them to understand why it is funny - this may include explaining certain vocabulary words, experiences, and/or relating it to the student's experiences
- Use equipment and technology that allows full participation in learning such as:
  - Talking books
  - Manual or computerized communication boards
  - Computers
  - Switches
  - Special seating and positioning (cube chairs, corner chairs, side lying, appropriate chair and table size, etc.)
  - Alphabet strips
  - Number lines
  - Calculators
  - Tape recorders
  - Amplification systems
  - Spell checkers, etc.
- Understand the influence of cultural differences and various dialects
- Attend to listening and remembering
- Provide clear, concise directions and expectations by:
  - Repeating directions; have student repeat directions
  - Modeling directions
  - Demonstrating task with student imitation, use visual aids
  - Limiting length of directions, break long directions down into small parts
  - Checking with the student for understanding of directions given
  - Being prepared to explain the directions in another way
- Provide extra time for the child to respond, extra time for task completion, and provide a slower pace for presentation of new information (as the student requires).
- Preteach vocabulary of the lessons and questions they may be asked during the lesson so that student understanding may be increased.
- Provide a variety of strategies/opportunities that will facilitate the student's ability to remember information such as:
  - Grouping information
  - Note taking
  - Outlining
  - Mnemonics
  - Small group instruction
  - Peer/study buddy
  - Extra time to process information
  - Scripts or outlines of lesson

- Flexibility to leave classroom/area for quiet time
- Provide instruction, modeling and practice in:
  - How to listen
  - Why listening is important
  - How to monitor your own degree of listening
  - How to show that you are listening
  - How to ask questions
- Provide instruction, modeling and practice in:
  - How to pay attention
  - Why paying attention is important
  - How to monitor your own degree of paying attention
  - How to show that you are paying attention
  - Provide students with cues, signals or reminders in their classroom to help them remember a behavior
- Focus on social communication/body language
  - Model and reinforce appropriate social interactions with peers and adults
  - Provide role playing experiences for:
    - Learning refusal skills, stranger awareness
    - Social situations (for example, focus on taking turns, changing topics, beginning a conversation, ending a conversation, continuing a topic.)
    - Mock interviews
    - Practice appropriate body language and facial expressions
- Help students learn problem solving and understanding instruction
- Plan activities that require students to:
  - Use learned information
  - Pull pieces of information together and use it to make a decision
  - Take pieces of information apart
  - Evaluate information
  - Comment on how a decision was reached
  - Comment on the appropriateness of decision
  - Use logical and natural consequences to help students learn to problem solve. Be sure to discuss consequences with students rather than just letting them happen.
- Allow opportunities for the student to monitor and evaluate his/her own responses and progress and record growth and changes on graphs, learning or behavior contracts or incentive charts
- Provide help with organizational skills
- Provide outlines, study guides and/or notes prior to instruction to help the student with organizational skills and with their learning
- Provide instruction, modeling and practice in organizational skills through the use of student notebooks, note taking, color coding, planners, etc.
- Teach and write out the routines and procedures as well as how students should be able to move between routines and discuss with students in advance when routines will be interrupted

#### ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS:

In assessing the learning of students with speech/language disabilities, educators need to:

- Utilize appropriate evaluation methods/ procedures
  - Use a variety of ways to assess a student's progress:
    - Classroom observation and descriptions of classroom performance
    - Language samples with peers and adults
    - Video tape
    - Self evaluation

- Peer evaluation
- Cooperative group assessment
- Real life situations
- Study format identical to test format
- Portfolios
- Practice tests
- Shortened tests
- Open book tests
- Take home tests
- Verbal or written responses
- Projects
- Interviews of teacher, parent, peer, student and other significant people
- Provide assistance as needed:
  - Staff proficient in PECS (picture exchange communication)
  - Staff proficient in signing (sign language communication)
  - Reader
  - Writer
  - Augmentative and alternative communication materials and assistive technology
  - Computers
  - Tape recorders, etc.
  - Listening devices
- Allow an opportunity for student and teacher to discuss instructions to be sure that they are understood
- Contract with the students at the beginning of a unit for what will be tested
- Evaluate/grade daily/weekly or unit work instead of or in addition to tests
- Develop the criteria by which students will be evaluated and provide those criteria to students at the beginning of a unit or class
- Provide all students with information on how they did relative to themselves, their peers and the set of teacher expectations in the form of a graph or chart
- Provide environmental modifications
  - Make time adjustments as needed that allow for extra time, shorter time frames or varied times of day
  - Simplify the vocabulary within instructions to help students understand what to do
  - Change the format of written tests (i.e., size of type, number of problems, length of test, etc.)
  - Match written test design to student's strengths (e.g., multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, true/false, matching, essay, word banks, etc.)
  - Teach students how to take tests and monitor their performance
  - Be flexible in choosing the environments and the time requirements for assessments
  - Allow opportunities for students to retell what needs to be done and to ask questions during the assessment
  - Give credit for attempting to use strategies to complete a task even if the task is not fully completed
  - Assess for auditory/listening skills in a natural vs. quiet environment
- Utilize appropriate grading methods
  - Create narrative report cards instead of grades
  - Create individual grading scale
  - Determine grades on number of items completed, not total number of test items
  - Give grade based on efforts of cooperative group

#### SERVICE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

For students with speech/language disabilities to have adequate opportunities to learn, schools need to:

- Enhance the language environment and communication abilities by providing picture exchange and signing options and the use of current technologies (computers, telecommunications, adaptive/assistive devices, phones, audio/video tapes, assistive listening devices, etc.) to compensate for communication disabilities
- Provide training to assist staff in working with students with communication disabilities including observations of classrooms where language is encouraged
- Provide training for peers of students with communication disabilities so that these peers can encourage appropriate communication
- Provide for the adaptation/modification of curriculum, including accommodating communication needs
- Encourage parental and student participation in the development of IEPs
- Assist parents and families in understanding their child's needs and strengths and provide information regarding ways to improve communication at home
- Provide flexible scheduling to maximize opportunities so that communication needs may be met
- Provide for collaborative co-teaching between Speech/Language Pathologists (SLPs) and classroom teachers by allowing for common planning time, flexible scheduling, team meetings, training, etc.
- Provide opportunities for speech language services to be provided and acquired in a variety of settings with SLPs and other service providers, as appropriate
- Utilize teams (including parents, teachers and SLPs) to problem solve and determine appropriate interventions and provide alternative teaching strategies for students experiencing communication difficulties

## **J. Traumatic Brain Injury**

### CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS:

The overriding critical attribute of Traumatic Brain Injury is that every person with a brain injury is affected uniquely, depending on factors associated with the injury. The attributes generally associated with a traumatic injury to the brain include the following:

- Learning and understanding new knowledge is more difficult after the injury and the student may adopt different learning styles
- Although healing is life-long, the person with a Traumatic Brain Injury may experience spurts of rapid recovery and erratic changes in behavior, especially in the first two years after the injury - the effects of a brain injury are long lasting and may be permanent, but these effects not always easy to predict
- Cognitive functioning is often affected by:
  - Slow processing or interpretation of what is seen or heard may delay response reactions
  - Memory problems
  - Organization problems
  - Sensory overload and fatigue
  - Attention and concentration problems, impulsivity, distractibility
  - Problems seeing the “whole picture” or getting a concept
  - Difficulty with initiation
  - Varied performance
  - Inappropriate repetitions of thoughts or behaviors
- Perceptual problems may result in difficulty with orientation to time or body in space, and difficulty with tasks which require visual/auditory interpretational skills
- Speech and language difficulties or changes may appear in understanding others or expressing him/herself, including word retrieval problems, slurred speech, understanding abstract language, the need for a longer response time, and the tendency to make things up inappropriately
- Rapid fluctuations in emotions are commonly associated with Traumatic Brain Injury, as seen in frequent mood swings, overreactions, impulsive crying, inappropriate reactions, aggressiveness, apathy, and/or errors in judgment - the sense of cause/effect may be impaired, which may impact emotional responses to situations
- Self concept may be affected by the impact of dealing with newly acquired disabilities. A person with a Traumatic Brain Injury may or may not have a clear sense of being different from who he/she was before the injury - different persons have different degrees of awareness about the changes
- Social readjustments are often necessary - due to the combined effects of the injury and its impact on the student and his/her family, the student may experience a change in social activities and friendships
- Physical problems may be evident, including:
  - Decrease in energy: General discomfort and/or fatigue are often present and may be compounded by the effects of medication, stress, illness, and other physical conditions.
  - Motor planning (movement), balance and coordination
  - Constant or intermittent pain, headaches, or dizziness
  - Sleep disturbances, appetite control, and nausea
  - Seizure activity
  - Visual and auditory impairments
  - Paralysis and/or spasticity
  - Problems with urination, defecation, incontinence

## ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS FOR STUDENTS:

Students with traumatic brain injury need to learn:

- Organizational and management skills, for time and materials, at school, home, and in the community
- How to develop skills and techniques to assist and improve memory, such as use of a daily planner, wall calendars, visualization strategies and memory-retrieval strategies
- How to select and use socially acceptable and sexually appropriate behaviors in response to feelings of anger, frustration, or confusion. The student needs to learn which behaviors are appropriate for a variety of social situations, e.g. school, community, home, and work
- How to transfer skills and abilities from one environment to another
- How to understand the nature of his/her own injury and its effects on personal learning styles and abilities
- How to set realistic academic, social, recreational, and career goals that are consistent with his/her healing and abilities
- Skills to improve and help concentration and attention to task, such as selecting the appropriate environment in which to study
- How to compensate for impaired judgment, balance and coordination problems, increased fatigue, and impulsivity
- How, when, and where to be an effective self-advocate, to ask for what he/she needs, or to find an advocate
- To use verbal and non-verbal communication skills with peers and adults in problem solving, conflict resolution, and social interactions
- Strategies for word retrieval and verbal expression, such as word association memory cues or taking time to organize thoughts before speaking
- Study skills such as:
  - when and how to ask questions
  - how to prepare for tests
  - how to take tests
  - where and how to find information
  - how to identify and separate essential information from nonessential information
  - active learning strategies such as note taking and outlining
- Strategies to enhance comprehension, such as rereading, summarizing main ideas, and self-questioning, using checklists, and role playing
  - how to re-learn skills, to the extent possible, that were mastered prior to and affected by the injury and to compensate for missing skills in an ongoing process
  - how to prevent a second brain injury by not entering the hallway at the busiest passing times, using seat belts and protective headgear, and not drinking and driving

## CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS:

To provide effective classroom practices for students with Traumatic Brain Injury, educators need to:

- Focus on instructional strategies
  - Teach organizational skills, e.g., with color coding, labeling of materials, assigning specific places for belongings, use of assignment notebooks, progress reports, daytimers - provide written schedules/assignments that are systematically checked by student, teacher and family
  - Specifically teach rules and routines of the learning environment, including building orientation, school and workplace rules, class policies, and room design
  - Provide numerous opportunities for repetition, reinforcement and practice for all daily routines and skills

- Provide learning in the community to ensure the transfer and application of skills learned in one environment to another - these experiences should include using self care skills, volunteer experiences, social activities, academic preparation and work
- Provide concrete learning experiences to reinforce abstract reasoning, memory, and language. Avoid subtleties and ambiguities
- Allow the student adequate time to respond to questions and information - specifically ask the student to paraphrase questions or instructions
- Give explicit written and oral directions and have the student repeat or demonstrate to check for understanding - the teacher should encourage the student to ask questions to increase understanding
- Offer a variety of ways to learn information including visual, auditory, verbal, and hands-on opportunities
- Build new skills from old, familiar, learned skills
- Written materials may need to be modified to account for perceptual or scanning problems, e.g. larger print, double spaced, reduced quantity
- Homework assignments may need to be modified and strategies provided for organization and completion, e.g., have a system of sending notes home to the family
- Provide students with materials appropriate to both age and performance levels
- Provide classroom support strategies
- Provide frequent, ongoing reevaluation, (e.g., every 6 weeks) due to rapid, variable recovery in the first two years following a Traumatic Brain Injury
- Provide technical devices, (e.g., computers, spell checkers, alarm watches, beepers, planners, tape recorders, etc.) to compensate for organization and memory deficits
- Use a buddy system to provide help as needed for peer tutoring, note taking, finding one's way around, social skills, physical assistance, class routines and safety
- Give peers, building and community personnel information about Traumatic Brain Injury and how it affects the student. Offer the opportunity for the student to speak about his/her disability
- Provide daily home/school/employer contact through use of a notebook to ensure organization, communication, daily situations and changes that may affect the student
- Include environmental management strategies
  - Provide scheduling that allows for appetite/nutritional needs, accommodates fatigue, and maximizes alert periods with provisions for necessary rest periods
  - Provide an environment that reduces distractions (noise, light, movement) as much as possible, e.g., consider seating arrangements, or use items such as headsets and study carrels
  - Allow the student to move from the situation to rest and regroup when noticeably stressed, overwhelmed or tired
  - Work with those who are providing support for the student with Traumatic Brain Injury to arrange appropriate schedules and places to meet
  - Provide for bathroom breaks/incontinence care
- Develop behavioral management strategies
  - Teach students how to ask for help and where to go to get their needs met
  - Teach non-verbal or verbal cues for use in getting help and assistance from other students and teachers
  - Establish a system to assist students to begin work (e.g., buddy, teacher proximity, non-verbal cue, work partner), since students with traumatic brain injury may have difficulty initiating tasks
  - Monitor students to assist with time on task, to decrease distractibility, and to ensure safety. Teach students to do this on their own as they are able
  - Use alternative strategies for behavior management if needed (e.g., physical or verbal cues, discussion before or after behaviors occur.) - traditional behavior management



techniques which reward or provide consequences may not take into account problems with cause and effect, memory or impulsivity of the student with Traumatic Brain Injury

- Develop and teach a system to the student and his/her peers for how to deal with a crisis, such as when things go wrong, are not in the right place or when the student with Traumatic Brain Injury becomes confused
- Develop a new sense of success, since the students may not be able to perform tasks which they previously could - they should be encouraged to do their best and to look at failure as not trying, rather than not succeeding

#### ASSESSMENT PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS:

In assessing the learning of students with traumatic brain injury, educators need to:

- Consider time factors
  - Adjust time limits as determined by student's needs.
  - Determine the best time to assess, when the student is not fatigued
  - Provide intermittent breaks (e.g., allow for rest breaks or assess over the course of several days)
  - Allow flexibility in set time (e.g., change day, time or length of assessment)
  - Eliminate or modify time limits
  - Allow intermittent nutrition breaks to compensate for fatigue
- Develop appropriate procedures
  - Assessments should be ongoing and varied
  - Evaluate how to best assess (e.g., oral, written, hands-on, observations, with assistive technology, or a combination, etc.)
  - Utilize strongest learning styles (e.g., hands-on, oral, written, visual, etc.)
  - Repeat opportunities to demonstrate skills since healing is ongoing
  - Provide necessary assistance as determined by the task (e.g., reader, writer, large print, computer, etc.)
  - Provide opportunities for student and teacher to discuss instructions to ensure understanding
  - Provide frequent encouragement
  - Check to see how medication might affect testing/consult with nurse re: medication side effects
  - Check to see if physical and/or emotional condition(s) (e.g., cold/allergies, tolerance, stress level, busy schedule, conflicting deadlines) are factors when assessing
  - Speak slowly when giving directions or asking questions
  - Break down complex tasks
- Consider the environment

The assessment setting should be adapted to the student's individual needs so the student can display his/her best effort, and a variety of environments should be utilized, including school, community and work settings.

  - Be sure the testing environment is:
    - Quiet
    - Private
    - Calm
  - Be sure the testing environment has:
    - Decreased auditory or visual distractions
    - Appropriate lighting
    - Comfortable seating
    - Proper seating or positioning available
- Provide a variety of types

Alternative forms of assessment need to be considered, in order to demonstrate what the student has learned. Student and family input is essential in determining the format of

assessments. Below are a few examples of assessments that could be used for various purposes, to be used alone or in varied combinations.

- Peer and family feedback – checklist
- Video tape
- Oral reports
- Assess skills used in context vs. skills tested in isolation
- Self-evaluation (How does the student feel about his/her performance?)
- Portfolio (i.e., a collection of the student's work)
- Cooperative group assessment
- Individualized assessment
- Gather information from various school personnel and family members
- Interdisciplinary (e.g., assessing students about maps can cover two disciplines – math and social studies)
- Classroom observations
- Observations during unstructured times
- Utilize other disciplines available – OT, PT, Speech, etc.

#### SERVICE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

For students with traumatic brain injury to have adequate opportunities to learn, schools need to:

- Maintain frequent communication between educational and medical providers and family.
- Have more frequent IEP updates due to changes in abilities and needs.
- Designate specific time frames for on-going contact. Schedule team meetings as necessary depending on the student's needs
- Continued communication with M.D. through school health office
- Provide information on general characteristics and possible behaviors of children with Traumatic Brain Injury
- Identify areas to monitor, such as stress, medication, illness, and family changes or any accidents which occur during recreation or sports activities
- Identify techniques or modifications to use
- Identify resources and experts in Traumatic Brain Injury
- Explain how to talk to medical professionals
- Provide a consistent, coordinated system of case management which includes all responsible agencies - ideally, this would be a person who is available all year long for multiple years
- Provide technological devices as necessary for reminders, references, repetition, retrieval of information, to block out distractions and to increase mobility and independence - Examples: Communication devices, books on tape, computers, headphones, carousels, recorders, timers, word boards, etc.
- Increase classroom support for students with Traumatic Brain Injury through the use of trained peers, paraprofessionals, volunteers
- Provide services as determined by the staffing team, for occupational therapy, physical therapy, therapeutic recreation, speech and language, social work, etc., to assist the student in the classroom as appropriate - these services need to be on-going and long term due to changes in the student's abilities
- Provide counseling support as needed for the student and family (including siblings) around issues of grief, depression, denial behavior, delusions, finances and effects of disability
- Access local support groups for families, and form peer support groups for students with Traumatic Brain Injury with emphasis on coping skills and social development
- Reduce overall student teacher ratio

- Provide space for flexible accommodations, so that areas are available for quiet, individual work or rest, as well as for group work
- Educate community members through one-on-one contact, round-table meetings, and group presentations, so that students with Traumatic Brain Injury can participate and learn in the community

## **K. Visually Impaired**

### CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS:

- Every student with a visual impairment is unique - visual functioning can change from day to day, hour to hour or minute to minute
- Individual learners with visual disabilities may present a wide range of cognitive and other disabilities (severe cognitive needs, deaf-blindness, enrichment and challenge, physically challenged, etc.)
- Each student may need learning materials in alternative media that may change over time
- Incidental learning (learning without specific instruction) is affected by lack of or limited day to day visual observation
- Learners may have difficulty traveling independently and safely without direct intervention
- Learners need to have visual information presented in multisensory modalities
- Learners may need alternative organizational skills to be directly taught
- Learners will have difficulty in physical environments that are not consistent and predictable
- Many learners cannot visually receive nonverbal communication and must be specifically taught how to express thoughts and feelings nonverbally
- Learners depend upon adaptive equipment and technology to facilitate learning in the general classroom and on the job
- Learners require specialized strategies in order to acquire independent living skills (cooking, marking appliances, etc.)

### ESSENTIAL LEARNINGS FOR STUDENTS:

Students who are visually impaired need to learn:

- Literacy skills
  - Skills in the use of all appropriate media for reading and writing in a variety of settings to include but not be limited to the following:
    - Auditory
    - Print
    - Print enlargement
    - Braille/tactile
  - Skills for the use of technology associated with reading and writing media (keyboarding, electronic texts, closed circuit television, Braille access technology, screen readers, screen output devices, tape recorders, etc.)
  - Skills for using adapted and non-adapted tools -- rulers, maps, graphs, globes, calculators, abacuses, optical aids, corrective lenses, compasses, protractors, watches, signature guides, etc.
- Orientation and mobility skills
  - Fine and gross motor development
  - Concept development (time, distance, interpretation of physical objects)
  - Orientation skills to new environments (home, school, community)
  - Pre-cane skills
  - Sighted guide technique (using and teaching untrained guides)

- Knowledge of different modes of mobility (cane, dog guide, electronic travel aids, adapted aids, etc.)
- Techniques for cane travel
- Soliciting and refusing aid
- Street crossings (urban and rural settings)
- Cardinal directions
- Planning and using routes
- Knowledge/ familiarization with community
- Using public transportation (buses, taxis, planes, and trains)
- Sensory use
  - Understanding concepts not directly accessible when one has little vision
  - Eccentric viewing (positioning to see when central vision is unavailable)
  - Visual efficiency (or maximizing remaining vision)
  - Tactile exploration and skills
  - Identification and localization of sound listening skills
- Self advocacy/social skills
  - Taking responsibility for self in the learning environment
  - Devising strategies for seeking help and assistance
  - Explaining needs to others
  - Acquiring adaptations and materials
  - Adjusting light, seating, and location of materials
  - Transferring self advocacy skills to different environments
  - Understanding eye condition and its impacts
  - Dealing with psychological issues associated with blindness
  - Acquiring knowledge of and accessing agencies that can provide support
  - Participating in social activities with peers with sight and peers with visual disabilities
  - Acquiring knowledge and use of nonverbal communication skills
    - Body language, facial expression, eye contact gestures
  - Finding solutions to problems, establishing a safe physical environment, and handling emergencies
- Skills and knowledge related to employment and career options
  - Strategies for dealing with preconceived biases of employers regarding impact of visual loss
  - Exploring a variety of job experiences
  - Developing a realistic and accurate concept of self and abilities
  - Acquiring skills in technology to be competitive in the job market
  - Linking with adult services
  - Acquiring strategies for planning and setting goals after high school
- Life management skills (strategies to include but not limited to acquiring the following skills with little or no vision)
  - Eating independently in different settings
  - Dressing
  - Personal hygiene
  - Recreation/leisure
  - Telephone use
  - Shopping
    - Familiarization
    - Money
    - Using a guide
    - Calling ahead
  - Laundry
  - Cooking

- Money, finances, checking, budgeting
- House cleaning
- Handling emergency situations
- Organizational skills (particular to visual impairment/blindness)
  - Generalizing organizational skills from one environment to another
  - Labeling and marking
  - Study skills
  - Note taking
  - Tape recording
  - Organizing notebooks and other data sources
  - Outlining research
  - Accessing computer bulletin boards
  - Goal setting
  - Time management

#### CLASSROOM PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS:

To provide effective classroom practices for students who are visually impaired, educators need to:

- Provide adapted tools, texts, and materials
- Provide disability awareness for peers with sight
- Provide materials in appropriate media
- Provide environmental modifications
  - Lighting
  - Positioning
  - Increasing/decreasing visual information
- Encourage use of a variety of literacy options
- Adapt assignments and tests as needed
- Provide opportunities for pre-teaching skills
- Provide opportunities for direct instruction and practice of nonverbal communication skills
- Provide opportunities for students with visual disabilities to discuss the impact of their disabilities with other people with visual disabilities
- Provide opportunities to role play social situations
- Provide audio descriptions of visual presentations
- Provide community referenced instruction
- Provide adaptations and opportunities to practice life management skills
- Provide opportunities to learn organizational systems for home, school and work
- Provide direct instruction in travel skills in the home, school and community
- Provide instruction in and opportunities for proactive self advocacy skills

#### ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS:

In assessing the learning of students who are visually impaired, educators need to:

- Provide tests in appropriate media.
- Provide alternative methods of assessment (oral response, format change, time change, etc.)
- Explain unusual or difficult-to-access test format
- Use technology and adapted tools
- Create and assess attainment of IEP goals to specify learnings, in addition to state and local content guidelines
- Provide environmental changes for assessments

## SERVICE OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS:

For students who are visually impaired to have adequate opportunities to learn, schools need to:

- Provide one-on-one and small group instruction
- Offer consultation with general education teachers and other service providers
- Offer parent training in skills specific to students with visual disabilities
- Provide extended school day or school year
- Provide team meetings with service providers and parents
- Ensure specialized instruction by Orientation and Mobility Specialist and teacher for students with Visual Disabilities (Braille, cane travel, specific technology, etc.)

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

# Chapter VII: Tips for Parent Communication

## Working Together Toward Common Goals

This list of tips comes from NEA

Communicating with parents is one of the most important things we do as teachers. When we can work together with a child's parents toward common goals, we improve the atmosphere for learning. Most successful teacher-parent "teams" begin with a conference, usually one conducted before there's a real need to meet. Of course, while parent conferences can be one of the most helpful techniques in a teacher's "bag of tricks," we also know that sometimes they can be a discouraging waste of time or even turn into ugly confrontations. Here are some tips to help make all your parent conferences productive and successful:

- Invite both parents. Encourage both parents to attend conferences when possible. Misunderstandings are less common if both parents hear what you have to say, and you'll be able to gauge the kind of support both parents give the child. (Of course, remember that both mother and father may not be available. Today, when some 60 percent of adult women work outside the home, it may not always be the mother who's available to meet. And many children come from single-parent homes; you could unwittingly hurt a child's feelings by always asking to meet the "mother").
- Make contact early. You'll get your relationship with parents off to a good start if you contact them early in the year, perhaps with a memo or newsletter sent home to all pupils. Give parents an outline of what their children will be studying, and let them know you'll be happy to meet with them during the year. (Be sure to say how and when they may contact you for conferences).
- Allow enough time, schedule plenty of time for the meeting. Twenty to thirty minutes is usually adequate. If you're scheduling back-to-back conferences, be sure to allow enough time between them (10 minutes or so) so you can make necessary notes on the just-concluded conference and prepare for the upcoming one.
- Be ready for questions. Be prepared to answer specific questions parents may have. They're likely to ask questions such as:
  - -What is my child's ability level?
  - -Is my child working up to his/her ability level?
  - -How is my child doing in specific subjects?
  - -Does my child cause any trouble?
  - -Does my child have any specific skills or abilities in schoolwork?
- Get your papers organized in advance. Assemble your grade book, test papers, samples of the student's work, attendance records and other pertinent data together ahead of time. That way you won't be fumbling through stacks on your desk during the meeting.
- Plan ahead. Have in mind a general but flexible outline of what you're going to say, including a survey of student progress, a review of his or her strengths and needs, and a proposed plan of action.



- Greet parents near the entrance they will use. You'll alleviate anxiety and frustration (nothing is more confusing to the uninitiated than wandering around those look-alike school hallways trying to find the right classroom) and makes parents feel more welcome.
- Get the name right. Don't assume that Jennifer Peabody's mother is Mrs. Peabody. She could well have been married again since Jennifer was born. Check your records ahead of time to make sure you've got the parents' names right. And don't assume that the wrinkled gray-haired gentleman coming in with Johnny is his grandfather. It could be his father, or an uncle. Politely ask. Try not to talk to the Smiths about their son "Stan" when their son's name is "Steve".
- Avoid physical barriers. Don't sit behind your desk, while forcing the parents to squeeze into the children's desks on the front row or perch miserably on folding chairs. Arrange a conference-style seating if possible so you'll all be equals together.
- Open on a positive note. Begin conferences on a warm, positive note to get everyone relaxed. Start with a positive statement about the child's abilities, work or interests.
- Structure the session. As soon as the parents arrive, review the structure of the conference--the why, what, how, and when so that you'll both have an "agenda".
- Be specific in your comments. Parents may flounder if you deal only in generalities. Instead of saying "She doesn't accept responsibility," pin down the problem by pointing out "Amanda had a whole week to finish her report but she only wrote two paragraphs."
- Offer a suggested course of action. Parents appreciate being given some specific direction. If Jane is immature, it might be helpful to suggest parents give her a list of weekly chores, allow her to take care of a pet, or give her a notebook to write down assignments. (Of course, when you offer advice, let parents know you're only making a suggestion.)
- Forget the jargon. Education jargon phrases like "criterion-referenced testing," "perceptual skills" and "least restrictive environment" may be just too much double-talk to many parents.
- Turn the other cheek. In routine parent conferences, it's unusual to run into parents who are abusive and hostile. But it can happen, so try to not be rude, whatever the provocation. Hear out the parents in as pleasant a manner as possible, without getting defensive if you can.
- Ask for parents' opinions. Let parents know you're interested in their opinions, are eager to answer their questions and want to work with them throughout the year to help make their child's education the best.
- Focus on strengths. It's very easy for parents to feel defensive since many of them see themselves in their children. You'll help if you review the child's strengths and areas of need rather than dwelling on criticism or stressing weaknesses.
- Use body language. Non-verbal cues set the mood of the conference. Smile, nod, make eye contact and lean forward slightly. You'll be using your body language to let parents know you're interested and approving.

- Stress collaboration. Let the parent know you want to work together in the best interests of the child. A statement like "You need to see me as soon as possible to discuss Johnny's poor study habits" only arouses hostility, while "I'd like to discuss with you how we might work together to improve Johnny's study habits" gets the relationship off on the right foot.
- Listen to what parents say. Despite the fact that we spend nearly a third of our lives listening, most adults are poor listeners. We concentrate on what we're going to say next, or we let our minds drift off to other concerns, or we hear only part of what a speaker is saying. You'll get more out of a parent conference if you really listen to what parents are saying to you.
- Ask about the child. You don't want to pry, of course, but remember to ask the parents if there's anything they think you should know about the child (such as study habits, relationship with siblings, any important events in his or her life) which may affect his or her school work.
- Focus on solutions. Ideally all parent conferences would concern only positive events. Realistically, many conferences are held because there's a problem somewhere. Things will go smoother if you focus on solutions rather than on the child's problem. Discuss what you and the parents can do to help improve the situation. Plan a course of action together.
- Don't judge. It may not always be possible to react neutrally to what parents say, but communicating your judgments of parents' behaviors can be a roadblock to a productive relationship with them.
- Summarize. Before the conference ends, summarize the discussion and what actions you and the parents have decided to take.
- Wind up on a positive note. When you can, save at least one encouraging comment or positive statement about the student for the end of the conference.
- Meet again if you need to. If you feel you need more time, arrange another meeting later rather than trying to rush everything before the kids get back from art class.
- Keep a record of the conference. You may find it helpful later to have a brief record of what was said at the conference, what suggestions for improvement were made and so forth. Make notes as soon as possible after the conference while the details are still fresh.