

SPED NEWS

Staff Edition



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Special Education

Sevier County Schools

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Social Development for Special Needs Students

by Dr. Cecil Blankenship, ETSU

Social development begins when a child is born. A child's first social interactions are usually with family members. As the child grows older she/he is introduced to a greater range of people, many of whom are not related to the child and are unfamiliar with the behavioral norms within the child's home. As the child encounters other people in settings outside the home s/he must learn to socialize and interact in ways that may

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Directors MEMO

Section 504

Comparison between Section 504 and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Because of the increasing numbers of students requesting Section 504 plans, it is appropriate that we examine the process and responsibilities.

Much more information can be found by accessing Section 504 under Forms or Info at <http://www.slc.sevier.org> and Sevier County 504 plans and other related forms can also be downloaded.



1. Purpose

IDEA: To insure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free, appropriate public education.

SECTION 504: To prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability in any program receiving federal funds.

2. Who is Protected

IDEA: Students who are eligible under the 13 categories of qualifying conditions.

SECTION 504: Much broader. A student is eligible if s/he meets the definition of "qualified handicapped person," i.e., has or has had a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits a major life activity, has a record of or is regarded as disabled by others. Parents are also protected.

3. Duty of Local Education Agency to Provide A Free Appropriate Education

Both require the provision of a free appropriate education, including individually designed instruction, to students who qualify.

IDEA: Requires the district to provide an individualized education program.

"Appropriate education" means a program designed to provide "educational benefit."

SECTION 504: "Appropriate" means an education comparable to the education provided to students without disabilities.

4. Special Education vs. Regular Education

IDEA: A student is eligible to receive special education services only if a multidisciplinary team determines that the student has one of the handicapping conditions and needs special education.

SECTION 504: A student is eligible if s/he meets the definition of "qualified handicapped person"; i.e., has or has had a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits a major life activity, or is regarded as

Flexible In-service

Determining the Need for Extended School Year A Guide for Policies and Procedures Based on Case Precedent and Current Law

by John Enloe, SPED Director

March 25th 3:45-5:45

Trula Lawson Early Childhood Center
550 Eastgate Road, Sevierville

Teachers be sure Parents
and Paraprofessionals
know they are all invited!

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Positive Behavior *continued*

are especially boisterous, pushing and yelling as they joke with friends. The morning kindergarten students have been teased repeatedly during their walk from the bus to their classroom, and the bus drivers have reported recently that kindergarten students are crying and becoming disobedient as the bus arrives at school in the morning.

Old: More teachers are required to patrol the hallways before school, sending disruptive students to the office for any inappropriate behavior.

New: Bus drivers and teachers meet with the building team to discuss the problem and strategies. The team and staff determine that older students have nowhere desirable to go when they arrive at school early. The younger children play on the playground and the kindergartners go straight to their classroom from the bus. A decision is made that students can go to the gymnasium or adjoining cafeteria if they are not on the playground. Teachers who were formerly required to be roaming the halls will now rotate through the cafeteria or gym, with only one teacher needed to monitor the hallways. Basketballs will be available in the gym for student use.

Once a problem behavior and its replacement(s) are identified, all teachers are notified using the previously agreed upon communication system, so students can be taught the new behavior explicitly.

Continuing with the Smith Elementary School example:

Teachers and staff at Smith Elementary School agreed that notes in their mailboxes would be the most reliable and efficient method of communication for their building. Following discussions between team members and staff, the team writes a one-page summary of the problem behavior, its replacement behavior, and some suggestions for incorporating the new behavior into the instructional day.

In the morning, Mr. Jones, a fifth grade teacher, notices the communication slip in his mailbox. He doesn't have many students who arrive at school before the buses, but knows that consistency is a key component of effective school-wide efforts. He begins the day with his students by discussing different places to "hang out" before and after school. The students discuss the positive and negative aspects of each location and how these aspects relate to the school rule of "Be Safe." Mr. Jones leads them in a discussion on possible alternative places to hang out before disclosing the designated locations for free play before school. Throughout the week, and especially as the weather gets colder and buses are delayed, he reinforces the use of designated locations with further reminders and discussion. He even rehearses going to the gym or cafeteria from the student drop-off location with his students.

continued

Developing maintenance structures

In order to maintain the behavioral skills that all students have been taught, the staff and team must determine how to incorporate new students into the school culture, positively reinforce students who have demonstrated the expected behavior, and further assist students who continue to demonstrate undesirable behavior after classroom intervention.

The team decides that one way to encourage expected behavior is to present tangible "Go Getter" slips to students seen performing appropriate behavior. Previously, students received slips from teachers only if referred to the office for a disciplinary infraction. Now students would also receive "Go Getter" slips that could be redeemed in the school store and would be displayed on the cafeteria wall toward a potential school-wide party at the end of the semester.

When Sam, who normally rides the bus, arrives at school by car early one morning and immediately goes to the gym for a game of pickup basketball, Mr. Jones gives Sam a "Go Getter" slip and verbally praises him for remembering the rule and going directly to one of the designated hangout locations before school.

When Mr. Jones combines verbal praise with the tangible reward of a "Go Getter" slip, he increases the likelihood that Sam will correlate verbal praise and the "Go Getter" ticket with the good feeling he has internally. This practice of tying tangible and external rewards with positive feelings helps Sam move toward self-fulfillment and intrinsic motivation.

In order to assist transfer students throughout the year, incoming students are paired with classmates to find their classes, learn the culture, and become acclimated to the school setting. Students who continue to demonstrate undesirable behavior after classroom intervention are referred to the team to assist the teacher in brainstorming additional supports and interventions. The team also acts as a gatekeeper for referrals for more intensive interventions such as at-risk services and special education evaluations.

The team monitors office referrals by grade, teacher, gender, location, student, and type of problem behavior on a monthly basis. When it seems that there are trends in the data, the team organizes activities to problem solve the issue. Sometimes the activities provide additional skills to be taught to a group of students, the whole student body, or particular teachers or staff members. In any case, the process is an ongoing activity to teach skills, encourage expected behavior, and monitor new concerns and effectiveness.

Adapted from the Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, Special Education Publications. First Printed: January 2001

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disabled by others. The student is not required to need special education in order to be protected. Section 504 is a function of regular education.

5.Funding

IDEA: Yes

SECTION 504: No

6.Accessibility

IDEA: Not specifically mentioned although if modifications must be made provide a free appropriate education to a student, IDEA requires it.

SECTION 504: Detailed regulations regarding building and program accessibility.

7.General Notice

Both require child find activities.

IDEA: Requires notification of parental rights.

SECTION 504: Districts must include notice of nondiscrimination in its employee, parent and student handbook and, if the district has more than 15 employees, must specify the district's 504 coordinator(s).

8.Notice and Consent

Both require specific notice to the parent or guardian about identification, evaluation and placement.

IDEA: Requires written notice. Notice requirements are more comprehensive and specify what the notice must provide.

SECTION 504: Requires notice. (A district would be wise to give notice in writing.)

IDEA:Written notice is required before any change in placement.

SECTION 504: Requires notice before a "significant change in placement."

IDEA:Requires consent for initial evaluation and placement.

SECTION 504: Consent not required, but if a handicapping condition under IDEA is suspected, those regulations must be followed.

9.Evaluations

The regulations are similar.

IDEA:Requires consent before an initial evaluation is conducted.

SECTION 504: Requires notice, not consent.

IDEA:Reevaluations must be conducted at least every 3 years.

SECTION 504: Requires "periodic" reevaluations.

IDEA:No provisions

SECTION 504: Require a reevaluation before a significant change in placement.

IDEA:Provides for independent evaluations.

SECTION 504: No provisions.

continued

10.Determination of Eligibility, Program and Placement

IDEA:Done by admission, review and dismissal committee. Parent is a member of the committee.

SECTION 504: Done by a group of persons knowledgeable about the child, the evaluation data, and placement options. While parental participation is not mentioned in the regulations, parental notice is required.

11.Grievance Procedure

IDEA: Does not require a grievance procedure or a compliance officer.

SECTION 504: Districts with more than 15 employees must designate an employee to be responsible for assuring district compliance with Section 504 and provide a grievance procedure

Blankenship continued

differ from the social interactions the child has experienced in the home. If the child is unaccustomed to saying please, thank you and excuse me in the home, she/he may be uncomfortable in public situations that call for such expressions of politeness. People are often judged on manners or a lack thereof when interacting with others in social settings. One of the best ways to assist a child/adolescent with socialization is to teach her/him the conventional and appropriate behavior and language expected in certain public settings.

Children also need to be taught that certain behaviors and verbal expressions are unacceptable in a public setting even though they be routinely expressed in the home. Behaviors such as chewing with your mouth full, cleaning your ears, cutting your toenails or sticking out your tongue at someone are not considered to be good manners.

Children/adolescents who are unfamiliar with social expectations in public settings or who express public behaviors that are considered rude or inappropriate will be at a distinct disadvantage in their socialization skills. Parents and teachers can help children/adolescents with their socialization skills by teaching them the proper responses and behaviors in public situations and by insisting that they practice these in their daily lives.

Happy Spring!

Positive Behavior Intervention & Support (PBIS) System

When teaching social skills or any other behavioral skill, there are five steps to making the instruction effective:

5 Steps to Teaching Social Skills

- ▷ **First**, all students must understand when the skill is to be used. Therefore, the teacher must teach the rule.
- ▷ **Second**, the skill must be demonstrated.
- ▷ **Third**, students must have an opportunity to practice that skill.
- ▷ **Fourth**, the skill should be reviewed and tested to ensure that all students have a clear understanding of the skill and the ability to complete it successfully.
- ▷ **Finally**, the skill must be embedded into the curriculum.

Effective Practices

Increasingly, media attention has focused on outstanding moments of crime and violence in schools across the United States. Political venues at the federal, state, and local level argue for more stringent disciplinary actions against students who misbehave in or around school property. School districts and state Boards of Education take up “zero tolerance” mantras to curb school violence and instill order in classrooms. This movement toward zero tolerance, however, flies in the face of federal requirements for students with disabilities, found in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA '97), and is generally found ineffective for students without disabilities (as reported more extensively in the *Missouri Innovations in Education* newsletter, November 2000).

The following article will discuss the particulars of implementing a school-wide positive behavior intervention and support (PBIS) system. There are five steps involved in implementing this type of systems-based change:

1. *Forming a team*
2. *Establishing need, priorities, and commitment*
3. *Drafting a mission statement*
4. *Developing working structures*
5. *Developing maintenance structures*

Each step will be discussed in further depth.

Forming a team and establishing need, priorities, and commitment

In order to affect change, it is important to have building-level teams with active administrator participation or support. These teams meet at least monthly and have the support of other staff members, who know and understand the team purpose and its progression. The building based team may already be in place as a teacher assistance team, school-support team, at risk referral team, or other building-based group. This team will operate as the gatekeeper for

more intensive behavioral interventions and supports.

The team then establishes a standard system for communication within the team and among staff members. It conducts a needs assessment, analyzes the assessment data, and generates an action plan that includes any needed staff development. The team is in charge of developing regular staff development training on PBIS strategies and for sharing information with community stakeholders.

Drafting a mission statement

While naysayers discount mission statements, developing a statement of purpose is actually a key component to effective change. There may be a significant difference between implementing a mission of “promoting obedient students and minimal disruption” and “promoting safe and effective school settings.” When participants are confused during the implementation or maintenance phases, a mission statement is a handy tool for refocusing the school community on the team’s original goals. When making decisions, the team can refer to the mission statement and ask whether the item for discussion meets the objectives of this statement. Clarifying the team’s purpose from the start eliminates the need for backtracking and answering the question, “Why are we here?” at a later date.

Developing working structures

Developing an action plan involves describing staff responsibilities, securing staff commitment, and detailing activities, resources, and schedules for achieving the school’s behavioral support needs. The plan is developed based on the data and needs assessment. A clear data collection approach should be established before implementation in order to guide any necessary modifications. A solid understanding of the goal, the plan, and what constitutes success should be agreed upon by all participants.

In the action plan, the building or district needs to identify and define clear rules that cover all people and all settings in the school environment. There should be just a few rules—no more than five—rather than endless pages of regulations and requirements. Adults dislike convoluted regulations and so do young people. The rules should be positively and briefly stated.

Once five or fewer rules have been identified and stated, the team, with staff participation, identifies replacement behaviors. Replacement behaviors specify what the staff members want the students to do instead of what they are currently doing.

An example:

Smith Elementary School is a K-8 building that is generally thought to be a safe place. The current concern is the amount of before-school hallway loitering. The older students